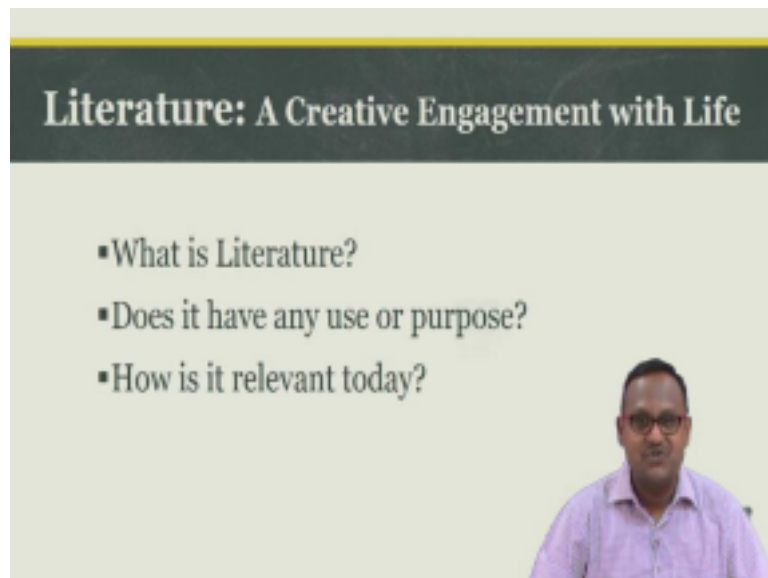


**Elements of Literature and Creative Communication**  
**Prof. H S Komalesha**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur**

**Lecture - 01**  
**Elements of Literature and Creative Communication**

Hello, welcome on board the course, Elements of Literature and Creative Communication. It is a pleasure meeting all of you in this digital forum and especially in this NPTEL online certification course. I am Komalesha, I teach in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Kharagpur.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:38)



Before we introduce you to this course, what this course is all about, why we study that, is there any relevance studying this course at all, especially in this pandemic hit world, I would like to begin with a kind of a short story, this is more in line with the spirit of the course we are dealing with. Please remember we are dealing with a course called literature, and literature is about stories and life and things like that. So, therefore, let me begin this with a riveting story.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:09)



## Elements of Literature and Creative Communication

Invisible... yet present!  
Unravelling with the story of 17  
cows and 3 brothers!

You may have heard the story in some form or the other. But, for the sake of convenience, we can call this **The Story of 17 Cows and 3 Brothers**. Of course, ours is an agrarian society, all of us know that very well. So, cows play a major role; Let us see how this story about cows and people is relevant in the context of Literature.

Once upon a time, there was a father and he had 3 sons; and, all that he had as his property was 17 cows. Before dying, he made a will and distributed his property, his 17 cows, in the following manner: He said that his first son would get half of the property, the second son would get one-third of the property and the third one would get one-ninth of his property.

Well, in due course of time, the father died and now when the children came across this will, they were absolutely puzzled, they did not know what to do; because, how do you divide 17 cows into half, into one-sixth, into one-third? How do you do that? They did not know what to do; they were at a loss for a while; then as a kind of a final resort, they went to a friend of his father and that friend happened to be a wise man.

So, after a pause, he said do not worry; I was very close to your father, so you are also like my children to me. So, what I will do, I have a cow of my own, and I am going to add it to your cows. Now the total tally of your cows is 18. Right? Now you make the calculation.

So, when 18 cows are there, half of the 18 cows is 9. The first son is very happy because

he gets to have 9 cows; so, he takes 9 cows and leaves. Then he asks the second son, well, what his share was. He says 'mine is one-third', ok. What is one-third of 18? It is 6 cows; he takes his 6 cows and leaves.

And the third son; his share is one-ninth of the property, which means 2 cows, so he takes his 2 cows and leaves. Now, if you are a clever learner, you would have already understood the mystery here; because if you add up all the cows,  $9 + 6 + 2 = 17$ ! So, where is the 18th cow?

Where is the cow that our friend added to the lot? This story is very relevant for very many reasons. In fact, the so called imaginary added cow and the so called imaginary cow that disappeared, they all form an interesting crux of an important factor that we are going to discuss at a later stage. But for time being, we can say that literature is like that 18th cow which is invisible, but still there.

In the absence of that cow, they could not have solved the problem; but when you want to actually see it, it is not there to see, ok. Let us leave the story here and proceed. But as we leave this, as we leave you with the story, I am sure the story is going to remain with you and this concept of missing cow; invisible cow, but mysteriously present cow you can go on applying it at various levels, you can call it a kind of a divine being who you do not see, but still who you account for in your day to day activities, in your day to day life and things like that.

This story can unravel itself at multiple levels. So, for time being, for our convenience, we call literature that 18th cow, alright?

(Refer Slide Time: 05:58)

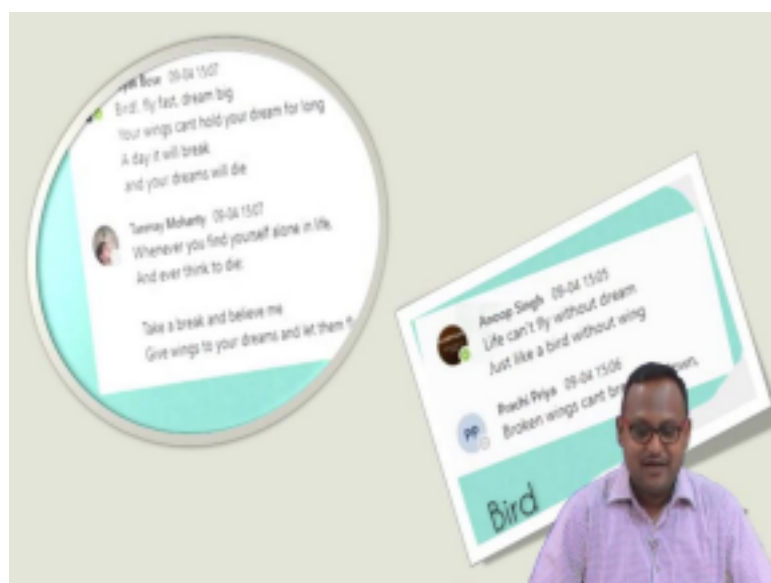
## A Date with Imagination!

▪ Life, hold, fly, fast, bird, die,  
break, dream, wings, can/can't  
in/on/to/a/an/the/this/that

Now, the question comes what actually is literature? But since we are dealing with literature, I would not rush you with theories of literature or definitions of literature; by and by, you will learn why I do not want to emphasize on the so-called definitions of literature.

So, before I take you on a ride with the definitions and theories of literature, I want to take you on a date with imagination. I am sure you have had some interesting dates in your life so far.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:32)



So, this is a very important date and this date is with imagination. So, now, please take a look at the words that we have displayed here; not extraordinary words per se, because I do not think there is any word here that you are not familiar with, all of them are words that you and I are very much familiar with.

Just take a closer look at these words. Life, hold, fly, fast, bird, die, break, dream, wings, can, cannot and then you have in, on, to, a, an, that you can add one or two words here and there. You do not need to maintain any sequence here; they are not arranged according to any sequence, they have been put in some kind of a random fashion.

What I want you to do? Just take a minute or two; let us pause here for two minutes. Using these words, can you construct an interesting sentence or maybe a short poem or maybe a kind of a very mysterious sentence, anything. Let creativity be your guide; using your own imagination, let your imagination run amok.

Using your imagination, you can assemble these words in any way possible and create a meaningful sentence or if you are really well versed with a poem, you can as well compose a short poem. So, let us take a pause for about a minute or two here and by the time you finish, I will come up with some interesting ideas related to literature and with the activity you have done.

In a sort of way, we can call it the first test of lab, the so-called concept of lab in literature. So, this is the first lab activity of this course, ok. I hope you enjoyed this date. As I said in the beginning, your creativity should guide you to compose whatever you could compose.

So, before I ask you what your version was or you could even post it later; we have an online forum, we could discuss, I am going later maybe towards the end of this lecture I am going to share that forum with you. Whatever you have composed during this pause, you can as well upload it there and some of the brilliant ones we can as well take it up and have a discussion on that in subsequent classes, if time permits and opportunity arrives, ok.

In the meanwhile, when I gave this activity to a couple of learners like you and me, this

is what they came up with. Now, look at the diversity of expressions. What I have done here is; I have given you a limited set of words, I have given you a limited set of words, not more than, let us say, 20 words.

So, using these 20 words, look how diverse and how rich one can go, here are some sample compositions using this particular set of words. If you can see here, I mean if I can just give voice to some of these expressions: bird fly fast, dream big, your wings can not hold your dream for long, a day it will break, and your dreams will die.

Another learner: “whenever you find yourself alone in life and ever think to die; take a break and believe me, give wings to your dreams and let them fly”. Now, look how brilliantly this guy has captured a fleeting moment of depression and how during those fleeting moments of depression, you should let the dreams take you to newer heights.

Here is a ray of hope, a brilliant composition. We have some more brilliant lines by some other learners, “life cannot fly without dream, just like a bird without wing”; beautiful; a beautiful comparison of life with bird, like “bird cannot fly without wings, life cannot move without dreams”, a brilliant philosophical statement put in a very terse and beautiful way. “Broken wings cannot break me down”.

So, here is a kind of an indefatigable kind of spirit, nobody can break you down as long as you have wings to take you to new heights, nobody can break you down something like that a kind of a ray of spirit, a ray of indomitable spirit that can never be put down. Now as I said, the meaning in all these compositions it varies; look at the diversity of expressions, look at the diversity of meanings.

Whereas what was limited was set of words; using that limited set of words, look how creative one can go. Is not this the beauty of literature; that when words are given to you, you can put them in any beautiful random fashion and then construct something remarkable, that adds beauty to language and meaning to life. After all this is where we can recollect Coleridge’s definition of literature or poetry best words in best order.

When you put best words in best order, you can come up with something remarkable like these. So, I deliberately began this course or introduction to literature not with some

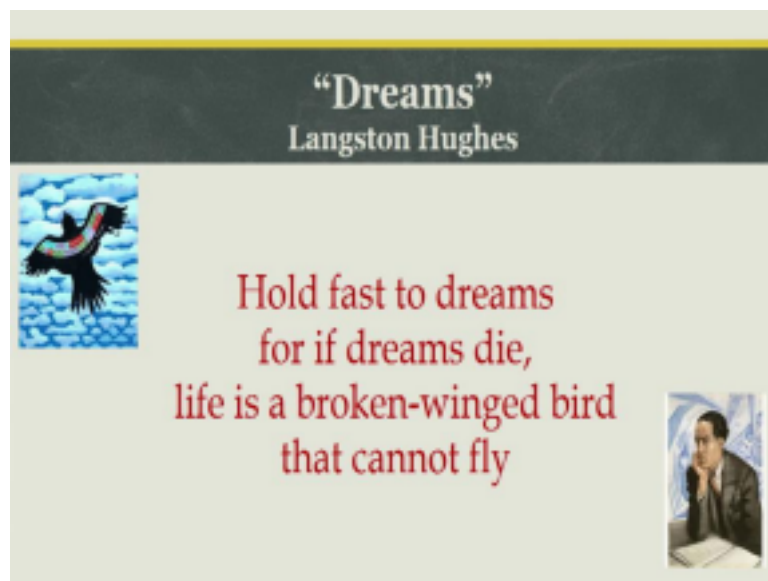
theoretical insights, but with a practical taste of literature because once when you are hooked on to the beauty and elegance of literature, then, well, my job is half done, because you already are hooked on to literature and then the task becomes easier. As weeks go by, as classes go by, we will have more of such interesting activities.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:31)



Some other expressions like this, we have many more of course; some interesting ones you can just take a look at them and you can discuss it with yourselves or maybe with your closed ones, how the beauty, the alchemy of limited set of words giving unlimited, number of sentences and how with a little bit of help from your imagination, how you can construct unlimited sentences; something like that.

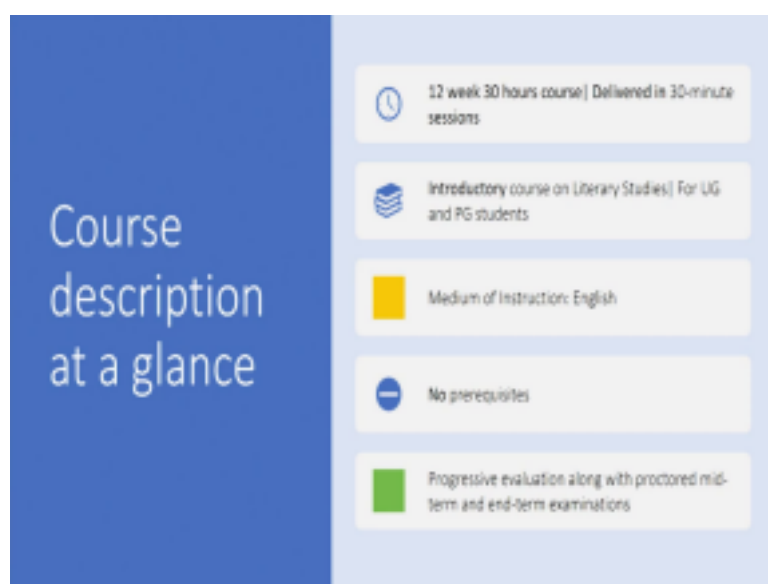
(Refer Slide Time: 16:07)



Now, the set of words I gave are from this poem by Langston Hughes called Dreams. Langston Hughes is a major African-American poet. So, in order to inspire his people, he came up with this lovely short poem; “hold fast to dreams for if dreams die, life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly”; such a brilliant one, in fact the set of words that I gave were from this.

Now, using the same set of words, look how differently and how aesthetically our learners came up with their own compositions, something remarkable, right?

(Refer Slide Time: 16:58)





Now, coming to the kind of the outline structure, the outline of this course, the overall structure of this course; it is a 12-week course, you know that by now and a 30-hour course, you also know that by now. So, every day we have a short lecture of about 30 minutes, a couple of minutes here and there, so that is the duration of the course.

As far as who can take this course is concerned, this course is ideally for anybody who is interested in tasting the nectar of literature; that means, for anybody who is open to that idea and especially for undergraduate students and postgraduate students, who need to study literature as part of their course curriculum.

Especially for them it is all the more relevant added to, I mean they have an added advantage; because apart from enjoying the pleasure of reading that literature offers, they can also do a course in this. So, it also serves a practical purpose for them, something like that. And as part of our lectures, we are going to distribute some interesting short pieces, may be short stories, poems and we are going to even recommend a couple of novels, plays; and obviously, the medium of instruction would be English.

So, as long as you come with an open mind, there is no other prerequisite; it is not that you need to be a graduate, you need to be a post graduate, you need to be... you do not need to have any kind of formal qualifications as such, the only prerequisite, if it is any, is an open mindedness. You need to be as broad minded as possible, because literature at its core is catholic in nature.

When I say catholic or catholicity, it does not refer to any particular religion; it means being broad minded, being open minded, that is all, ok? And of course, towards the end of the course, you will have proctored examinations. And if you wish to take a certificate in that, then you need to give this; otherwise you are free to listen to this and enjoy.

If you need a certificate, well you need to undergo a kind of a proctored examination and depending on your performance, you will get your scores and you will get your certificate.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:47)



And what are the objectives of this course? Before I discuss the objectives of this course, one of the reasons why courses like these are offered is, because in the new education policy 2020 that gradually many states are implementing; just recently we have heard a couple of states announcing that from this particular year onward, they would be implementing the new education policy of the government of India and there are many other states who have lined it up for implementation from 2022 onwards. So, it is an important thrust area.

So, as our Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, courses like these help in promoting curiosity and imagination; rather than encouraging a system that encourages a rat race, courses like this help blossom creativity in the learner, that is the reason why courses in literatures are fundamentally offered. Keeping that broad objective in mind, we can, list out a couple of other objectives of this course.

One of the major objectives of this course is to expose students to the finer sensibilities of human existence. How is it exposed, how is it an exposure to a final, I mean finer sensibilities of human existence? Because literature is directly related to life; keeping that broad vision and objective in mind, we have a couple of other objectives of this course. One of the important objectives is to make students aware of the finer sensibilities of human existence.

Because literature deals with life; when they are exposed to literature, they are

automatically exposed to life. To engage learners with one of the most profound, one of the most significant expressions of humanity; let us remember literature is a kind of the most profound expression of humanity, though it is written by an individual, at its core it captures the collective consciousness of society.

Therefore, though it is the product of an individual imagination, an entire tradition, an entire culture, an entire society will have gone behind that individual sensibility. Therefore, while being individualistic at its core, it is definitely collectivistic in its vision and ambition; that is the reason why I said literature is one of the significant expressions of humanity. Therefore, when you read such literary pieces, you would automatically come to terms with the best expressions that humanity has got to offer.

And also, to expose learners to how words, sentences or fragments of sentences, characters, plot lines or literary tropes, reveal who we are as human beings. At the end of the day though when we read a novel; though it is novel is called fiction, that fiction also has another meaning to that something which is made up.

So, though we are dealing with something which is concocted, which is made up, at the core we would be dealing with life; because with the help of what is made up, we would be directly dealing with life, nothing other than life. That is the reason why it becomes interesting; how through these concocted things we get to know something significant about human life, these are some of the broader objectives of the course.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:58)



Now, let us come back to the first slide, which we did not actually answer. We had raised a couple of interesting questions; you remember, the very first slide is what was what is literature, why do you read it, how is it relevant today. So, now, time has come for us to explore the concept with a little more detail.

Kalidasa, who is one of our major poets, who is one of the poetic geniuses that India has seen; defines literature as a combination of [vak] and [artha], he calls it [Vagartha]. He goes ahead and says that [Vagarthaviva samproktou, vagartha pratippathaye; jagatah pitarou vande Parvathi, Parameswara.]; like the primordial pair, Parvati and Parameswara come together to create this universe, word in the sense its sound and sense, when you say a word it has two components, the sound of it and the meaning to it.

The sound and the sense come together to create the universe of literature [vak] and [artha]. So, these are the dual dimensions of word; the dimension of the sound, the dimension of meaning, they have to come together. In other words, literature can be called; a word has a dual dimension, the sound dimension and the meaning dimension, sense dimension you can call it.

Only when these dimensions come together, you create the world of literature, sound and sense; that is why you can call literature a fruition, a fruition of sound and sense, [vagartha] is a fruition of sound and sense. If you try to decode literature, what is literature? At the end of the day, it is language. Is it any language? No, not really; it is a

kind of a language or you can call it, if you want to explain literature using the metaphor.

Literature is also language, but not like any other language that you and I use, probably in a it is in a different state. It is a state of language in which it is highly active; that is why you have a definition of literature where you can call it a dynamic state of language, in which language is very volatile, vibrant and simultaneously moltenly alive, it is something like that.

You can also define literature as a kind of language through which a soul interacts with itself and also with the world around. So, it is basically the language of a soul or the language of a human being through which, it explores its own nature as well as it explores the life around.

So, with these broad definitions, I guess, we can end this lecture and maybe in subsequent classes, we are going to explore some of the dimensions of literature and how and why literature becomes important for us and things like that. But before we go, let us remember, we began this course with the kind of a practical taste of literature.

I gave you a set of words and you came up with brilliant writings of your own; then we compared it with a kind of a brilliant poem that Langston Hughes had written and how some similar set of words enabled you to come up with different sentences with extraordinary meanings and beautiful relevance to all our lives and things like that.

And after that, we gave you an overall idea about the course, the broad objectives of the course and then, beginning with Kalidasa, we came to understand what literature means, the roots of literature and things like that.

Thank you.