

**Disability Studies: An Introduction**  
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**Lecture: 12**  
**Interdependency**

All right, welcome back to the second part of the talk on dependency. I have titled it “Interdependence: How can we make it work?” So far we have talked about dependency independence, movements, self-help group and so on, but when we get into the notion of interdependence we have to be somewhat careful about the topic. Otherwise, we will end up saying something politically correct, but not necessarily meaning anything. Interdependence what is it? Interdependence is based on the idea that on the one hand we are part of the larger system, larger picture, as it were. My supervisor is to talk about the tree and the wood problem. Meaning when we go to the forest, say woods and with the aim to observe plant life two things are possible. First you look at the tree one particular tree, say eucalyptus tree, observe it very carefully with all the knowledge you have gathered via reading botany and plant sciences, and so on and start writing about ecology based on your observation of that tree.

The second possibility is roam around the woods observed generally what is happening and then still write about plant life in general terms about. You know what both should complement each other. A close observation of a tree has a virtue of close observation, step-by-step systematic approach, and scientific approach to any problem. A general panoramic picture across may on the other hand, make you put things in the larger picture, forestry forest, how big it is, how what is its, what are its limitations, or the shades of it that is it and what are what is its future and what is it, say about ecology in the society and so on many, many pictures can come up. Similarly, interdependence is a larger ecological problem, at the same time it is so much connected to notions tied around disability. That's the crux of the issue here. How? Leonard Davis, I strongly recommend that you read his essay on this modernism in the book Disability Studies Reader edited by him. I'm going to basically borrow from that essay in soliciting certain remarks on interdependence. Given the fact that we are part of the larger ecology and humanity

itself is ecology. For example, we have huge diversity people with disability children, people of different races, communities, nations, persuasions, ideologies, different types of consumers. We are also dependent on others systems like the animal world and so on.

Having said that, we need to evolve a system where we respect and cherish and preserve this interdependence among the ecosystems embedded in humanity, that in a nutshell, what is called interdependence. For example, Davis talks about things like care for the body care of the body and care about the body. What are the differences? Care for the body just means that one cares about one's own body or a community cares about its own needs. For example, an individual will buy cosmetics may be health drinks, healthy food- ragi, bajra and all that. A community would immune itself and prevent others from accessing certain resources, food resources mineral resources that it claim it is one's own, advance world would make Third World sweatshop in building health devices for drinks and gadgetry and so on. So, care for the body is by and large a consumer habit. Care of the body it could mean not direct consumption, but building indirect establishments that has to do with the body. For example, making gyms, gym amenity swimming pools, architecture is that are more accessible for people with a disability, old age, children, making parks for community health and so on. Care about the body this is an interesting concept, where body is in some sense, conceived in a larger context, meaning vulnerability, dependence are seen as an integral element of the body. I may be hailed and healthy now but how can be hailing he anally if there is woefully bad health service in my city. Now one thinks about city health at large and one cares about mental-health at-large, one cares about animal and human conflict at-large, one cares about the environment and its impact on human body at-large. This is a systemic thinking much beyond one's capacity to consume and flash. What I'm arriving at is to see interdependence that one is dependent on the whole, and the whole is dependent on the part, mother needs a child and so will child need a mother, an individual needs of society and so will society need an individual see everything as integral part.

So what, what will happen if one sees like that well an ethics of caring will emerge. In the previous lecture, we were talking about independence, dependence and all that but underlying all this discussion is caregiving, care receiving straightaway one should make it very clear that caregiving and care receiving should not be seen as a synonym for nondisabled and disable.

People with disability can also give care. A classic case is Aruna Shanburg, she was a celebrity and she was bedridden and went into coma stage because of her sexual violence, actually, and then had no function or consciousness, but the nurses in the hospital in Bombay gave her care and care for years together and that got media attention. Pinky Virani's book got the limelight and so on. She passed away recently. But the crux of the problem that I'm talking about is well Aruna has given equal care to the nurses in realising therefore the potential for affection. The nurses who gave care were also dependent on her, her happiness her muscle memory reflects actions smile pain happiness glee care-freeness protest anger that all went through Aruna's care was actually mutually dependent. It is just not possible any human contact to be just one way traffic. So having established that we need to recognise that care is a fundamental requirement of human condition sometimes care may involve servitude, giving oneself totally to the other. Sometimes care may involve selflessness. It may involve among other things, other centredness approach. It may simply involve mundane chores, motherhood and other conditions basically meaning care-giving. In fact there is sufficient evidence created from feminist scholarship that the disabled women get discriminated because they are seen not to be potential mothers.

How can they give care? A stereotype may ask for such question and that question can do the rounds powerfully stigmatising disabled women. Back to Davis, he says, care about the body norm should have a new culture of interdependence. Interdependence has happened all the time, take pre-modern societies for example. Pre-modern societies, human and gods were dependent on each other. If you read Iliad, Odyssey, Ramayana and Mahabharata it becomes very clear that humans and demons and gods were dependent on each other. There was cosmological dependence happening. Temples, churches, dependent on the communities for their sustenance villages. The whole village knew each other all the residents of the village if there is some festival in one's home the entire village would celebrate and there are villages like that in even in the contemporary period now. So the ethics of interdependence is not coming from Leonard Davis, but his theoretical conceptual framework is useful to hand for us to think about interdependence in a systematic way about disability and beyond. How? One of the things that he talks about is identity politics.

What is identity politics? Well, identity is about how one thinks about oneself, say, a musician or a disabled person. Woman or a person belonging to a particular caste, class or race. Having thought that way how that person identifies with the particular groups. All identity groups can potentially think only about their identity and its benefits, there comes the problem, for example, if blind people come together and think only about blindness and visuality when it comes to disability politics, then they miss the bus about a larger picture about disability ability normalcy and all that. If they come to think that deaf people may not have that much problem because they can see, or people with the limitations of leg movements if they think about them that they can use a wheelchair and wheel away to wherever they want what is such a big deal. If every disabled community thinks parochially that way, then the ethics of interdependence will not emerge only parochialism will emerge.

The idea is to talk about transformation when I talk about blindness and visual culture and reforming visual culture to be more accommodative for example, a lecture can be transcribed to text and transcription may help blind people to read or deaf people to read or a visual culture, its penchant for speed, great speed and so on if that can be checked elderly people can participate that sense of democratic imagination. If one pushes for it can serve blind person, a deaf person as much as an elderly person or a simple homemaker in a village out there in India. This is interdependence and transformation. So, identity politics coming out from a cozy contract, cozy orientation about their own identities can think of large think big, in which case transformational politics is possible, so this approach, Davis would argue call this modern politics. This model, well, you might have heard modern post modern and so on but what is dismodern, or dissing the modern. Running into risk of reductionism or making things crudely simple, let me define all the three things now three phenomena rather. Modern is a time period, mostly begun with the arrival of science in the central stage, science and technology started taking centre stage in human imagination and living, religion took a back seat. Modern also means that humans started making machines, industrial revolution as a consequence, and started expansionism of a serious and huge variety and this modern depends on which world we're looking at roughly last 300 years or more be called modern.

Sometimes modern can also be the thousands years old, arrival of the print or expansion of the

Empire introduction of bureaucracy all this can be called modern. Modernism has a complicated history, but to call it in brief terms arrival of science mechanisation and bureaucratisation, can be called modern. Post-modern is an equally complicated term, but one can say that post-modern is the destruction or dismantling of grand narratives, say, technology, science, truth and all that larger truth they all came under scrutiny. Dismodern on the other hand is neither of this. It is a belief in, in some sense in one truth and one way of doing things about caring about conducting the society. It is about how we imagine things to be mutually interdependent, rather than seeing things as a larger picture and be destructive about it. Dismodern is about paying larger attention about interdependence. So what we do here, how do we make interdependence work, that is the central question of this lecture, which I'm coming to now. But first things perceive things to be interdependent. Second, think about care not in an ideal way, but the somewhat practical and keep going that's the dismodern ethos. But making things work the following three considerations may be there. One in talking about caring one should not idealise it or romanticise it, care-giving is painful. Whether it done by a disabled person or non disabled person, it can involve brutalisation, it can involve pain, it can involve burning out. One should think about it. Second caring should not be seen as a hierarchical system, there is one caregiver and there is one care receiver, it can be mutual. Although the first can be real acknowledging it.

Next see the dependency needs of the society, understand the structure of the society. For example, say, in Chennai, look at its demography and see how many children how many poor people are how many families without houses, thinking that way the house programs and so on conceptualise that way. And lastly address the binary about the mind and the body, caring involves indirectly that somebody has a higher will and somebody else doesn't have. It is useful to in this connection, have medical consultation literary consultation legal consultation think across the disciplines and arrive at some consensus. Concluding remarks, one may say that interdependence that it sounds great it is not feasible to such naysayers, I would say interdependence actually always existed, we need to recognise that and think structurally about it so that we can restore it in our disciplines. We can think about caring more seriously than what it is already and evolve knowledge systems that talk about it. There is already a good beginning in this regard but people in gender studies have done great work on it. It's time that we start thinking about care, interdependence, independence in terms of disability and ability. That is all I

want to say. Thank you.