

Hello my name is Miro Griffiths. I am a Disability Studies Scholar and an Executive Editor of the International Journal of Disability and Social Justice. This series is called Meet the Author. The series provides an opportunity to learn more about the work ideas and interests of authors who have published through our journal. In this episode Prayathna Kowitz to discuss their publication titled: "Spivak and Rethinking the Agency of Disabled Children." Let's start,

Please can you introduce yourself?

My name is Praya Kowitz, I'm a PhD student at the University of Frankfurt in Germany and I currently live in Mumbai, India. I broadly work with disabled children, I'm a disabled woman myself, and the focus of my dissertation was also on the life of children with intellectual impairments in India.

What was the inspiration for writing this article?

I grew up as a disabled child myself in India right, and it was, you know. Personally for me the motivation is you know I grew up disabled, I grew up, you know, in a gendered body in a strictly, very strictly patriarchal society. And when I moved to Germany and I started this Master degree program, it's a program, it's a Master of Arts in Childhood Studies and Children's Rights. Two things struck me, one is that there wasn't very much, I love the program, however I noticed that there wasn't much of a focus on disability and disabled childhoods; and definitely not as much as I would have liked. So the issue of representation came up there. And the second was that we did a module on Postcolonial Studies right, and there was no representation of disabled children within postcolonial studies itself right. So although India in itself, right just India, is a nation of about 1.3 billion people and if you say about 10% of any given world population is disabled. It struck me, you know, how remarkable it was that there was no talk no murmur, no representation of childhoods like mine, childhoods like ours you know. So that was the motivation behind writing, not just this particular paper. This was a paper, the idea of this paper came about during my Master studies when we were doing that module on postcolonial studies.

That's when I got the idea for writing this paper and the idea was representation basically and inclusion. Even if it meant, well on the one hand you can look at it as participation. Participation of you know immigrant people in shaping their own discourse, but, or you can look at it as inclusion, maybe a mix of both. So that's, that's where the idea came from yeah.

What was the most challenging part of writing this article?

A lot of representation of disabled childhoods in Postcolonial Studies and vice versa, meaning in post, you know, in Disability Studies, you know, Postcolonial. The idea of Postcolonial Studies beyond our childhoods, our life goals are not represented as much. So on the one hand, while it has been interesting and engaging to work on a subject that is so close to my heart, it also means that the Eurocentricism of disability studies, right being that a lot of the research comes out of say Europe the UK or the US. It also means that when I do say a literature review, or I have to look for references for a particular part of my essay I have trouble finding a link bit back

to research that is from the subcontinent or from India. So I find that, this is a topic that I continue to find very challenging, also during my doctoral studies. And it is something I keep bringing up quite regularly with my PhD advisor as well. So that's, that's kind of the challenge yeah.

What do you hope readers will take away from this article?

Spivak, and reinterpreting Spivak as a Postcolonial theorist within, you know, Disability Studies is, it's not very common to refer to Postcolonial theories, you know, when you're, when you're in Disability Studies. But I do hope that people read the paper of course, and that people visit the journal and find you know a journal that is inclusive of Scholars from the Global South. But I also hope that this leads to, look this work is never going to be complete. This is not something I can finish by myself, so I just hope somewhere I lay a little bit of foundation for somebody to pick up some of this work and continue. I'm really hoping to lay the foundation for, you know, whoever follows from the subcontinent to carry on the work, to carry on the legacy. And to bang on about inclusion, and participation and representation. So yes.

What are you currently working on that do you think would be of interest to Disability Studies Scholars?

So the topic of my PhD thesis is, I'm working on, this is a discussion that is currently going on in the UK. It is part of, you know, it's being covered a lot in the a bit in the media but also in academic discourse. It's non invasive prenatal testing for Trisomy 21. So I'm trying to contextualise it within India, within our own social, religious, cultural parameters. So what it means, not just to be a child with an intellectual impairment in India, but what does this test really mean from a social justice perspective. So that's what I'm doing as part of my PhD dissertation. And generally, if I were to take the step back for disability studies itself, I'm currently also working on the paper with Physicians, obstetricians and gynaecologists and geneticists to find out, right because they are the ones who recommend these tests to pregnant people, so to find out from their position, what they deem as a social and ethical challenges of non-invasive prenatal testing for Trisomy 21; but also other impairments. So I'm, I'm hoping I get some interesting data in terms of social and cultural perspectives.

What are your hobbies and interests outside of Academia?

So I went through the questions and I thought this was the most challenging a lot (laughs). Because I'm a disabled person, you know, and I, I have a child, and it's really challenging. I wish I could say I have a ton of hobbies, but sadly that is not the case, because there's barely any time for personal hobbies. I read a lot. So there isn't that much of a demarcation between free time and study time, because I find field in itself is just vast. There's so much of work to be done, there's so many studies to be carried out. So I'm kind of very excited about where I am, the work I'm doing, what lays ahead. That I haven't really thought too much about free time.

[Miro Griffiths] I hope this episode was interesting, useful and enjoyable. Please remember all publications within the International Journal of Disability and Social Justice are open access. This means you can read them in full at no cost to you. Please visit the journal's website to find out more information about the Articles and issues we have published. You can search for the International Journal of Disability and Social Justice through online search engines such as Google or visit [www \[dot\] IJDSJ \[dot\] online](http://www.ijdsj.online). You are welcome to subscribe to our channel, so you can be kept updated about newly released episodes and content. Until next time, Goodbye.