

**Introduction to Political Theory**  
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**Lecture – 18**  
**Power & Knowledge; Different Conceptions of Power**

Hello and welcome friends to the concluding lecture on power. Today, we will be focusing on the connection between power and knowledge, where we will be using Foucauldian conception of power. We will discuss about how his conception of power as a radical departure from the usual common understanding of power. In ordinary sense, of the term, power is understood as domination of one over the other. And in that conception of power, we will see how for Foucault, power is not merely a negative or a suppressive thing, but it also a productive thing for individuals and society.

We will study and discuss on power through Foucauldian conception of power. Then, we will discuss about some other conceptions of power like the feminist, Marxist and pluralist notions of power. Finally, we will conclude our lectures on power.

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**Power/Knowledge**

- The relationship between power and knowledge is unique. A radical view on this relationship is put forward by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. He emphasized upon a different aspect of power as productive, rather than the usual or ordinary understanding of power as coercion or repression or subjugation.
- The term 'power is productive' explains the subtle nature of power available in society. Knowledge of individuals or subjects is integrally related or linked to the power or effects of power.
- It generates an integral relationship between power and knowledge which also talks about how power operates to monitor or control people in society. It defines how both knowledge and power works simultaneously and cannot be thought of separately.

To understand this idea of radical conception of power, it is necessary, to understand this relationship between power and knowledge. This relationship is very unique and many scholars have argued and some of us may be familiar with the idea that knowledge is power. If we are knowledgeable about something, that knowledge empowers or gives us

power to do something, then knowledge is understood as a kind of enabling thing for an individual about doing something or to use that knowledge for certain purposes in society, for the self or for humanity.

Knowledge is seen as power. For Francis Bacon, the knowledge is power which is something, very crucial to understand. So, this relationship between knowledge and power, we conventionally, or in ordinary sense, understood as knowledge is enabling power. It gives power to the person who holds knowledge about something. In Foucault, we will see the departure from this relationship between knowledge and power, where how certain forms of knowledge is regarded as knowledge in the first place and it is the exercise of power.

For example, in modern times, it is the healing exercise. We have many methods of healing like Ayurvedic, Unani, or Allopathic. Now, why, allopathic is regarded as the solution for medical problems in modern times. Precisely, because in modern times, the power is structured and it is hierarchy which creates a condition, where medical knowledge, especially, the allopathic is regarded as the most authoritative and acceptable forms of healing. Therefore, the other modes of healing is regarded in that hierarchy as not really, effective or not as effective a knowledge in modern times.

But at one point of time, these other modes of healing were also, regarded as effective modes of healing. In many parts of India, there is a still struggle to assert those modes of healing. The point, I am trying to make here is that how knowledge is regarded as the knowledge is itself, the creation of power structure. That is what, Foucault, contributed to this relationship between knowledge and power.

In this relationship, the radical view about this relationship is put forward by Foucault and he emphasized upon a different aspect of power as productive. So, usually, we see, power as a kind of repressive or power suppresses something. But in Foucauldian understanding, we will find that power is not merely a negative phenomena or a kind of suppressive thing, but it also has some productive elements to it.

In the ordinary understanding of power, as coercion, repression or subjugation, Foucault moves beyond that. The term power is productive and it explains the subtle nature of power. So, the way, power functions or operates is not in some terms of actual domination or subordination. Power, in Foucauldian sense, is invisible, but it is always

there and it flows through the system, when domination, subordination or contestation or assistance to the exercise of power happens which shows the effects of power. There is nothing, without the exercise of power. So, the term power is productive through the subtle or nuance or invisible pervasiveness of power throughout the system, where domination, subordination and resistance to such dominations and subordinations, occurs.

So, knowledge of individuals or subjects is integrally, related or linked to the power or effects of power. In one of our topics on governmentality, when we will discuss state, we will come again, to this point of how state uses knowledge or the knowledge of subjects or citizens as a tool for governmentality. Here, the knowledge is also used as a tool for the exercise of power. Thus, it is about knowing the subject to make population visible or to make the administration aware of the population. It helps the state to exercise its power more effectively. Knowledge, in that sense is helpful for the exercise of power.

It generates an integral relationship between power and knowledge, where the relationship between power is not really, one supporting the other, but it is interdependent, where knowledge is regarded as a knowledge in itself, the outcome of the structure of power, but knowledge as a tool also, which enables the agent or the institutions or the state, to exercise its power more effectively in the society. It defines how both knowledge and power works simultaneously, and not independently. Thus, the exercise of knowledge and power is understood simultaneously, and not separately.

In Foucauldian understanding, this relationship is not of one enabling the other, but how it simultaneously, creates the effects of power, where power and its exercise become more effective, in terms of controlling or governing the population, society or individuals.

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➤ The Foucauldian understanding of knowledge/power relation points out to new ways of observing human beings in a society. For him, power is not always repressive or brute or punishes people but exercise of power is more about 'techniques' or use of techniques like surveillance or gaze to gather knowledge about subject people and to make effects of power that is realized over the docile subject bodies.

➤ Here, again the relationship between power/knowledge is reflected through the use of techniques like surveillance to gain knowledge or to know about how people works or how they behave or how the self reacts under effects of disciplinary power.

➤ Thus, power not only restraints or constraints but in most ways, power produces something called knowledge. Knowledge is an exercise of power and power is a function of knowledge.

Now, the Foucauldian understanding of knowledge-power relations points out to the new ways of observing human beings in a society. So, through this interconnection between knowledge and power, it enables the state and its institutions to see individuals in the society in a new way. For him, power is not always, then repressive or brute or punishes people, but exercise of power is more about techniques or use of techniques like surveillance or gaze, to gather knowledge about the subject people and to make effects of power which is realized over the docile subject bodies.

So, the exercise of power is not a kind of repressive or brute exercise, but it uses the techniques, such as surveillance. In prison, if we know the way, how the inmates are controlled or governed or managed is something, the exercise of this constant supervision or surveillance over them. Similarly, any state, while governing or controlling the population uses certain techniques of power and that techniques of power is not just about merely, brute or suppressive exercise of power, but it is something, where the role of knowledge, techniques or modes of such techniques like surveillance and gaze enables the state to gather knowledge about the subject and then that knowledge simultaneously, enables that institution to govern and control them in a more effective manner.

Here, again, the relationship between knowledge-power is reflected through the use of techniques like surveillance, to gain knowledge or to know about how people works or

how they behave and how the self reacts under effects of disciplinary power. The power of state is more about disciplining the body without directly, or physically, using brute ways like forcing or repressing someone to do something.

We will discuss about it again, when we will discuss on governmentality, when governmental power is more effective. It creates a condition or structure or conditions that lead the individuals to act, to behave and express in a certain way, and the invisibility of government is a reflection of its most effective use of power through the techniques of governmentality or disciplinary power.

So, power not only restraints or constraints, but in most ways, power produces something called knowledge and knowledge is an exercise of power. Power is a function of knowledge. There is again, the inter-relationship exists between these two phenomenons which we called as knowledge and power. It is not as if, it functions independently, from each other, but it is a kind of interdependent phenomenon.

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➤ Foucault in order to understand the relationship between power/knowledge also emphasized on the subjugated knowledge. He made a distinction between 'subjugated knowledge' or disqualified knowledge and knowledge which is imposed by an order based on scientific significance or having 'scientific hierarchism' over local knowledge.

➤ For him, 'subjugated knowledge' is understood as a set of disqualified or local or believed to be inadequate or insufficient knowledge which is considered inferior to the knowledge derived from science or under scientific hierarchism. Some of the disqualified or 'subjugated knowledge' that Foucault talked about were psychiatric patient, ill person, of the nurse, of doctor as they had knowledge of the medicine.

➤ However, he argued that the re-emergence of such disqualified or 'subjugated knowledge' makes us realize that historical struggles or conflicts of opinions took place between hierarchy of knowledge available on grounds of its having scientific validity or not.

Foucault, in order to understand the relationship existing between power-knowledge emphasized on the subjugated knowledge. So, what is the knowledge or what we term as knowledge is the exercise of power or to understand the relationship between them or rather the inter-relationship between knowledge and power. He tried to argue, it through this idea of subjugated knowledge.

He made a distinction between the subjugated knowledge or disqualified knowledge and knowledge which is imposed by an order based on the scientific significance or having scientific hierarchism over local knowledge. So, in a society, we have different modes or kinds of knowledge. Why in modern society, for example, only, the scientific education or the technological education is regarded as superior to the traditional or conventional knowledge.

Now, at one point of time, those traditional knowledge or conventional laws may be useful or relevant and those are still relevant for many people and communities, today. But, in this hierarchy of knowledge in modern times, the scientific and technological education is regarded far more superior to the conventional or traditional knowledge. Here, the traditional or conventional or local knowledge is regarded as far more inferior or subjugated knowledge than modern, scientific and technological knowledge.

So, for him, subjugated knowledge is understood as a set of disqualified or local knowledge and they are believed to be inadequate or insufficient knowledge which is considered inferior to the knowledge derived from science or under scientific hierarchism. These are the forms of subjugated knowledge which is understood as a disqualified, local or believed to be inadequate or insufficient knowledge, in comparison to, the knowledge derived from science or under scientific hierarchism.

Some of the disqualified or subjugated knowledge which Foucault talked about were psychiatric patients, ill persons of the nurse or doctors and knowledge about the medicine. He talked about the forms of subjugated knowledge which reflects the constant power struggles in terms of creating or positioning one form of knowledge as superior or scientific over others. Hence, the acceptable and other forms of knowledge are inferior, traditional, conventional or insufficient, inadequate knowledge.

He argued that the re-emergence of such disqualified or subjugated knowledge makes us realize about the historical struggles. This point is very crucial to understand how a particular form of knowledge becomes an authoritative form of knowledge or superior forms of knowledge is about the historical struggles or conflicts of opinions which took place between hierarchy of knowledge is available on the grounds of whether having scientific validity or not.

So, here, the basic argument about the knowledge and power, and the hierarchy of knowledge is that nothing which we can take for as granted or which we assume as superior. It is not superior or it has not been superior throughout the history. There has been a constant struggle or conflicts of opinions about a particular knowledge or forms of knowledge, whether it is superior or not. This idea of scientificism or rationality, and other things comes much later, but this struggle over, what constitutes knowledge and what is not, or which form of or what method of knowledge or enquiry can be regarded as a superior or not.

In modern times, many things happened. For example, I give this example that a form of knowledge is most scientific which is based on the experiment and that experiment legitimizes that knowledge. That means, any person in any laboratory sitting across the globe is involved in the same experiment which should arrive at the same result, and only that form of knowledge is considered as the most scientific or acceptable forms of knowledge. However, human beings, also, have other modes of knowing. For example, intuitions or gut feeling.

Now, those modes of knowing through our gut feeling which we know, but we cannot experiment with it, or we cannot explain it scientifically. That form of knowledge is regarded as inferior in the hierarchy of knowledge. So, those are the questions which lead us to understand the making of any knowledge as superior or inferior. It is part of the historical struggle, where scientificism, rationality and methods of enquiry becomes merely, as a tool for establishing some modes of knowledge as superior and de legitimizing or disqualifying other modes of knowledge. The structure of power and knowledge is thus, in constant inter-relationship or creating this kind of power structure or hierarchy of knowledge.

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➤ The re-emergence of such kinds of local or disqualified or subjugated knowledge also provides perhaps, scope to critique knowledge or to argue or find out the differences existed or existing between different kinds of knowledge.

➤ Thus, in Foucauldian perspective we find power is understood as productive. It produces newer identities and subjectivity. It is like a 'capillary – flowing throughout the system like blood in the capillaries of our bodies.'

➤ This definition of power may appear similar to say Parson's analogy of *money* or Arendt conception of *power to*. However, in Foucault we have very radical and most comprehensive account of power, where the exercise of power in terms of controlling or disciplining is really its effect. Power is already present and flow through the system which produces newer identities and subjectivities through the techniques of 'governmentality'.

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The re-emergence of such kinds of local or disqualified or subjugated knowledge also, provides, perhaps, a scope to critique knowledge or to argue, or find out, the difference existed or existing between different kinds of knowledge. It happens in the contemporary times, also, when the authority of allopathy as a mode of healing is widely, acceptable. However, there are constant challenges or criticisms to this mode of healing by the practitioner of unani or homeopathy or ayurvedic medicine.

Thus in Foucauldian perspective, we find power is understood as productive. It produces newer identities and subjectivities. We may assume, I will discuss this point again, when I will discuss the next sentence in his definition of power. It is more like capillary flowing throughout the system or like blood flowing in our bodies.

This is the most radical or comprehensive understanding of power which believes power is not just domination or subordination. It is not the physical or brute force of one over the other, but it is seen as productive. How it is productive, I will discuss. So, the circulation of power in the system is like capillary in the veins, the blood which flows through our capillary throughout our bodies. Similarly, power circulates throughout the system, when we see the instances of domination or subordination or resistances to such domination and subordination. Those are the effects or particular instances of power, but power is always, and it is already flowing throughout the system.



It flows through between a doctor and the patient, teacher and the pupil, the superior officials or the subordinate officials. So, the circulation of power is already, and always present there. When a superior or a teacher or a medical practitioner uses that power is the particular instance or effects of power. Both the teacher or pupil, subordinate or superior, doctor and the patient are the subjects of power. The power over whom, it is exercised and the one who is exercising the power. Both are the subject of this circulation of power throughout the system.

In this definition of power, we may find this definition, similar to, Talcott Parsons idea of power as money functions in the economy. For example, Hannah Arendt's, idea of 'power to'. It is a kind of positive power. However, in Foucault, we have very radical and most comprehensive account of power, where the exercise of power is in terms of controlling or disciplining its effects of power which is already, present and flow through the system which produces newer identities and subjectivities through the techniques of governmentality.

Now, there may be a kind of misconception, when we get to know about power is all pervasive phenomenon, then what is the scope of any alternative or newer identities or subjectivities that can be produced. This is precisely, the point which Foucault is trying to argue that power is not just about suppression, but it also, has an enabling capacity.

So, human subjectivities, when is conditioned by the structure of power is in operation, it also, gives him or her, the opportunity to resist those power or such domination and that resistance is again, coming from the same structures of power. But it enables or creates the possibilities of creation of newer identities or subjectivities. Thus, it is not like power when understood as all pervasive, limits any possibilities or restrain any alternative imagination of identities or subjectivities.

In fact, power is like an enabling thing, where individual can create newer identities and newer subjectivities, and not just become merely, the subject or the victim of power.

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**Feminist Conception of Power**

- Feminists question the women's systemic, structural, and unequal access to power. Feminists believe that the system of patriarchy subjugates or dominates and deprives women of resources and equality. *family*
- Patriarchy as a system of domination operates at different levels like social, economy, political, cultural and so on. And at the same time, it overlaps other systems of power like race, class, and caste. For instance, a Dalit or lower caste woman is affected differently under the system of patriarchy in India than a white upper caste woman. But oppression or subjugation of women exists in different set ups across the globe.
- Liberal feminists particularly highlight the shortcomings of concepts of liberty, equality, rights and justice that fails to pay attention to women or gender issues prevalent in society. They argue that power should be equally distributed among men and women so that women too enjoy equal power like men in society and can live with dignity, respect and an identity of her own.

That is the conception of power by Foucault which we have seen through the dichotomy between knowledge and power. Again, there is the feminist conception of power, where the focus is basic idea about how the structure of society or family or the state which claims to be neutral makes this suppression or discrimination of women almost, invisible in its discourse.

So, the focus of feminist writings or feminist scholarship is how power relationship operates in society which makes half of the population vulnerable or discriminate them against the other half of the population. Thus, how, the subjugation of women or suppression of women is ensured through these particular modes of power which radical feminists, argues, as the patriarchy.

These structures of power, we will discuss. Feminists question, first, women's systemic, structural and unequal access to power. Feminists believe that the system of patriarchy subjugates or dominates and deprives women of resources and equality. It started right from the family and not necessarily, in the society or state. So, what happens, to women in the society and state is the extension of domination and discrimination that women faces in the family.

The real power struggle or justice or quest for justice starts with the family, where men and women should be treated, equally. They should be given equal opportunities right from the family to the society and to the state. Therefore, they do not just talk about

discrimination in the society or state, but also, in the family and patriarchy, as well. It is that structure of power which subjugates or justifies, this subjugation and discrimination of women and put them in the inferior condition.

Patriarchy, as a system of domination operates at different levels in society, economy political and cultural, and at the same time, it overlaps, with other systems of power also. For example, the idea of race, class and castes divides the population on the issue of race, class or caste. Sometimes, the structure of patriarchy overlaps with these structures of power based on the class, race or caste. For instance, a Dalit or a lower caste woman is affected differently, under the system of patriarchy in India, than a white upper caste woman.

Their operation or subjugation is not equal. That shows, the inter-sectionality in terms of how, power structure often, comes together to treat a particular subject in a different way, depending upon his or her social, and historical status. But operation or subjugation of women exists in different set-ups across the globe. In the context of India, I have given examples, similarly, between black and white women, although, they are both women facing different kinds of subjugation or discrimination.

We have different kinds of feminists. So, liberal feminists, particularly, highlights the shortcomings of the concepts of liberty, equality, rights and justice which fails to pay attention to them, women or gender issues prevalent in the society. They argue for equality, such as power should be equally, distributed among men and women, so that women too, enjoy equal power with men in society. They can also live with dignity, respect and identity of their own. These are the arguments of liberal feminists.

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➤ Thus, they focused on equal rights, freedom, and justice for women just like their male counterparts to address gender based discriminations and inequalities in society.

➤ Similarly, Marxist feminists argued about the gender blindness of the class analysis. In the analysis of gender-just society radical feminists questions the very basic division of society on the Gender basis. And they emphasize on patriarchy as the major reasons for the subjugated positions of women in the society.

➤ So, for feminists Gender is the prime category of social and political analysis. However, there are significant difference between different feminists. For instances a liberal feminist will differ from Marxist and radical feminist differ from the both or vice-versa. So there are rich differences and debates within feminism. However, the common agenda that unites them is making a society more just by ensuring equal opportunities for the women.

Thus, they focus on equal pay for equal work, equal rights, equal freedom and justice like their male counterparts to address gender based discriminations and inequality in society. The liberal feminists will argue about equality, freedom and justice for women like their male counterparts in order to address gender discrimination in the society.

The Marxist explanation of politics is based on the idea of class. They are almost blind to other kinds of discrimination based on gender or caste. Marxist feminists will argue about the gender blindness of the class analysis while analyzing a gender just society. Radical feminists, further, questions the very basic division of society on gender basis. So, this idea, many of us may be familiar with the difference existing between sex and gender.

This discrimination or difference is based on sex which is the biological right and the gender is something, socially and culturally, constructed. What a particular gender is and what role a particular gender should perform is not biological. It is thus, socially, and culturally, constructed. The radical feminists will go one step ahead than the Marxist or the liberal feminists, who argues about the basic division of society on the gender basis. They emphasized on the rule of patriarchy which is the root cause of all discriminations against women in the society, state and family.

They emphasized on patriarchy as the major reasons for subjugated positions of women in the society. For feminists, gender is the prime category of social and political analysis.

So, they look at the gender and through gender lens, they study the power structure in the society, family and state. However, there are significant differences existing between the families. As I have discussed, the differences between liberal feminists or Marxist feminists or radical feminists is significant and within that there is other kinds of feminist Dalit feminists and black feminists.

For instance, a liberal feminist will differ from Marxist and a radical feminist will differ from both or vice versa. So, there are rich differences and debates within feminism. However, the common agenda which unites them together is about making a society, more just, by ensuring equal opportunities for women. In feminist contribution, to social science or philosophy of knowledge and science is then, it opens up new kinds of debates about thinking, to have a just or more equal society.

The point is for a very long time, there was a kind of assumption that state really, do not discriminate between men and women. Because it is neutral and so is the society. But, here, feminist scholarship, questions such kind of assumptions and establishes how the gender discriminations are made invisible by the assumption of state neutrality or neutrality of the society which makes the discrimination or injustices, that is, meted out to women invisible. The relationship therefore, between men and women is not that of equality, but is hierarchical, and one of exercising men's power over the other, i.e- women.

Now, another point that we need to focus is that according to the feminists, how a women is treated by a men is not the result of bad behavior or bad manners of that particular individual, but it is systemic and so it is structural. That means, women faces discrimination or subjugation or oppression in different forms and in different situations historically, across society. Their degree may vary, as I said about the Dalit women or the upper caste women or the white women or the black women. Nonetheless, they all face such discriminations and that unites them on taking up this question of gender and they see power operates through the gender lens.

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**Marxist Conception of Power**

- Marxist conception of power basically emphasize upon the exploitative in nature. It is seen as a coercive tool to exploit the labourers. Marxist theory of power pointed out specifically to a particular type of capitalist mode of production controlled by an economically dominant class.
- In Marxist analysis state in a capitalist society is constitutive of two classes - bourgeoisie and proletariat. Their relationships are determined by the their relationships to means of production. State in such a society is controlled by the dominant class and it is often portrayed as the instrument in the hands of the dominant classes.
- It argues that legal and political equality and freedom in the absence of real social and economic freedom to everyone is hollow and make very little sense to a large number of population. Hence, it argues for social and economic freedom and equality.

The next discussion is on the Marxist conception of power which talks about the idea of exploitation. Marxist conception of power basically, emphasizes upon the exploitative nature of power, where it enables one section of society to extract surplus from the other section of society that gives a tool in the hands of powerful, to exploit those who are vulnerable or those who are in conditions of marginality or vulnerability.

In the Marxist conception of power, it is seen as exploitative. It is seen as a coercive tool to exploit the liberals or the weaker section of society. So, Marxist theory of power, pointed out specifically, to a particular type of capitalist mode of production which is controlled by an economically dominant class. Those who exercise domination economically, they also, get to exercise domination politically, socially, and culturally.

So, Marxist, analysis addresses that state in a capitalist society is constitutive of two classes, basically, the bourgeoisie which owns the modes of production and the proletariat, whose life and very survival is dependent on such modes, without owning that modes of production. Their relationships are determined by their relationship to the means of production. If a person owns the means of production, that is, the bourgeoisie or the capitalist class and the one who is subjected to or whose very survival is dependent on that means of production, without owning them is the proletariat. They are in large number and they are always in minority. We are not going into that details, but

the very relationship between the two is determined by their relationship to the means of production.

If that is a capitalist society, the nature of state in such a society is such that it works on behalf of or on behalf of the dominant capitalist class. It is often, portrayed as the instrument in the hands of the dominant classes. State in a capitalist society, works on behalf of the bourgeoisie or capitalist and it protects the interest of the bourgeoisie. Therefore, in the Marxist writing, we may find many Marxists, who argued about the withering away of the state. There is no need of a state because state is the instrument of class exploitation.

It argues for the legal, political equality and freedom in the absence of real, social and economic freedom to everyone. Without these things a society is hollow and makes very little sense, to a large number of populations. Hence, it argues, for social, economic freedom and equality.

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**Pluralist Conception of Power**

- The Pluralist understanding of power emphasize on the point that power is exercised by different political groups and not by a single, small group of people in a society. Various political groups participate in the decision-making process or influence important policies of the state. *Power*
- Thus, it questions the view that any one person or group uphold or exercise political or economic power in a society. Unlike the sociological account of power which emphasize on the centralization of power, the Pluralists argue about decentralization of power in decision making process. *Liberalism*
- In contrast to pluralist understanding of power C. Wright Mills in his work *The Power Elite* reject the view that USA enjoys separation of power or it enjoys decentralization of power. There are other criticisms to pluralists conception of power. It is argued that it focuses only on the behaviorist approach.

In the Marxist conception, the idea of power is basically, about exploitative in nature which ensures the domination of one class over the other, where state, functions like an instrument in the hands of dominant classes. In the Marxist analysis, it is said that state is there to manage the common affairs of all bourgeoisie and facilitates. The exploitation of the proletariat or those who not owns the property or means of production, their exploitation is facilitated by the state on behalf of or for the benefit of bourgeoisie. So,

that is about the capitalist mode of economy and how power operates there, according, to the Marxist conception of power.

Pluralist conception of power emphasis on the point that power is exercised by different political groups. In the pluralist conception of power, there is no single or small group of people in societies which exercise power. It is largely, exercised by different groups or individuals. So, various political groups participate in the decision-making processes or influences important policies of the state.

Power is not something in the hands of single or the small group of people, but there are different groups, actors or institutions which exercise power. So, they all participate in the decision-making processes or influence the important policies of the state. Power, really, do not reside in one person or a group of persons or a very few institutions. It is like more plural, in terms of its exercise or in terms of those who yields or holds power.

Thus, it questions, the view that any one person or a group uphold or exercise political or economic power in society. Unlike, the sociological account of power which emphasis on the centralization of power, the pluralists, argues about decentralization of power in decision-making process. The best example is a vibrant democracy. Power, as it operates, leads to centralization but democracy as a system of rule or governance focuses not on one person, one party, one group but it gives scope for other groups, parties and other individuals. This leads to a more decentralization of power away from the sociological understanding or emphasis of power which talks about the centralization of power in the society or in the hands of single or small groups.

In contrast to the pluralist understanding of power, C. Wright Mills, in his work *The Power Elites*, rejects the view that USA enjoys separation of powers or it enjoys decentralization of power. He argues, basically, it is in the hands of elite, where power resides and in turn, elites enjoy the power, but larger section of the society always, subject to that power which is exercised by the elites and power rotates among the elites and not really, among the masses.

There are other criticisms to the pluralist conception of power. It is argued, it focuses only on the behavioralist approach and how power actually, functions and not really, the wider dimensions of or the inherent pervasiveness of power, even when many others are involved who actually, controls the decision-making process.



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➤ P. Bachrach and M. Baratz questioned the pluralists about the organized political agenda where some of the important socio-political issues gets unobservable or invisible such as race and minority interests issues. They also criticized the pluralists for not directly focusing on the power relationships as existing in a society which proliferates in terms of domination and subjugation of various classes in the society.

➤ Thus, in these three lectures on power, we have seen the different conceptualization of power. We have also studied its relationships with authority and legitimacy.

➤ Power, is one of the most complex and 'essentially contested concept' in political theory. It is central in the organization of modern state and politics. However, it is often not that visible or explicit. And, as we have discussed it, through Steven Lukes, or Gramsci, or Foucault among others, power is most effective where its operation is made almost invisible. However, we also need to remember both the negative and the positive dimension of power.

P. Bachrach and M. Baratz, questions the pluralists about the organized political agenda, where some of the important socio-political issues gets unobservable or invisible, such as race and minority interests issues. In this approach, the forms of discrimination or subjugation meant never be made visible or observable, because they do not see the hidden structure of power which puts a particular committee or a group of people in the condition of subordination.

So, they also criticized the pluralists for not directly, focusing on the power relationship as existing in a society which proliferates in terms of domination and subjugation of various classes in the society. In the pluralist approach, they may see the visible participation or exercise of power, but power, by its very nature have some hidden or invisible characteristics, where it puts some individuals or groups precisely, because of certain decisions and policies in the condition of subordination. Pluralists failed to understand those conditions of domination and subjugation of various classes in the society.

Now, in these three lectures, we have seen different conceptualizations of power and we have studied its relationships between authority and legitimacy. Power, remains one of the central but most, complex and essentially, contested concept in political theory. This we have discussed through different scholars and their different perspectives or

approaches to power. Thus, it reflects the contested nature of such conceptualizations of power.

However, it is central in the organization of modern state and politics. So, we cannot think and argue about politics in any society or state without referring to power. Power remains the central category in any discourse on modern society or polity. However, it is often, not that visible or expressed. Through many examples, we have seen that the way power is understood in the common or ordinary sense as suppression or brute force or domination are not really, an adequate understanding of the way power operates.

From Steven Lukes, we discussed about three stages of power or three-dimensional view of power to Talcott Parsons and to Gramsci and to Foucault as well. We have seen how, power is most effective, where its operation is made almost invisible. So, the comprehensive or most adequate understanding is to understand the very functioning or operation of power, where there is no direct or visible agent involving in its exercise, where everybody feels that everything is fine and they are doing for some great thing and yet they are subject to a particular ideology or a power structure. Power in that sense is most effective, when its use or its exercise is made invisible.

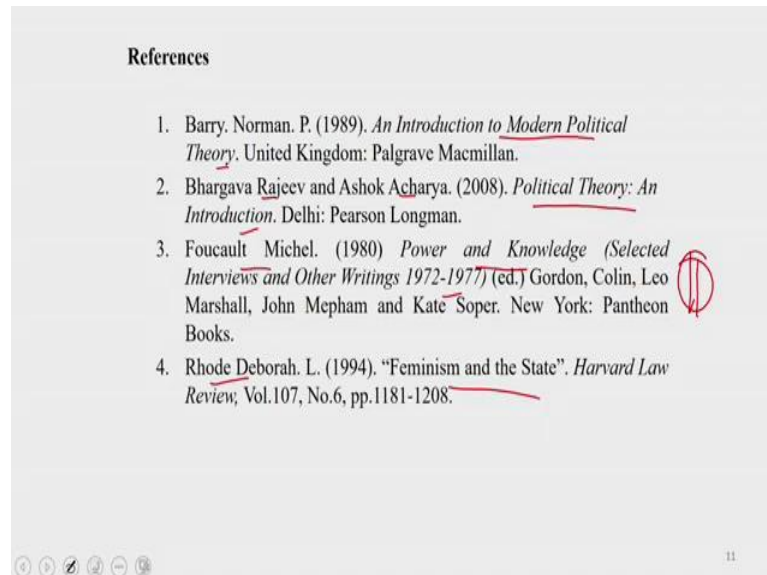
We have to finally, remember both its negative as well as the positive dimensions of power. Power, when operates or it creates a structure of domination and subordination, it does not only have the negative role to play, but it also, have the positive dimensions to it, where it enables one to do something, or to become something and provide them with opportunities, and scope, to produce a newer subjectivity and identity.

For example, I am giving you this hypothetical example, for a very long time, Indians were ruled by the British and generation after generation, they believed that British rule would be there and that is their fate, then they should abide by or subject themselves to the British rule. But gradually, they in the same power structure realized, mobilized and formed or created newer subjectivities which gave them the confidence to fight against the British.

Now, how, you understand that situation, if it is just or power is just about domination and subordination. But power also, has the productive or a positive dimension to it, where it enables the subjects of power to create newer subjectivities and identities which

we must also, take into account, when we discuss and debate about power. It is not merely, about domination and suppression.

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To conclude this lecture, you can refer to some of the writings like Norman P Barry's, *An Introduction to Modern Political Theory* and then in Rajeev Bhargav and Ashok Acharya's book, *Political Theory: An Introduction*, there is a chapter by Nivedita Menon on power. On Michel Foucault, you can read from *Power and Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. This is an original text on Foucauldian conception of power and the relationship between power and knowledge. From Rhode Deborah, you can study, "Feminism and the State".

These are some of the readings for this lecture today, and with that we conclude this lecture on power. In the next lecture, we will take up a new topic called state and sovereignty. Please write to us, what you feel about this lecture and also, write to us your queries. We will be happy to respond.

Thank you for listening.

Thank you all.