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‘DS View’, an academic activity in which students, researchers and faculty are encouraged to write short academic essays on the Development discourse, aims to generate discussion on issues concurrent to the times we are living in. The topical range may include academic debates on issues such as poverty, inequality, gender, conflict and human security. The essay for DS View can be expository, argumentative, persuasive or analytical.

The topic of 12<sup>th</sup> DS View is ‘**Foucauldian Power**’ authored by Shah Bukht Fatima.

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## Foucauldian Power

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Michel Foucault (1926–1984) was a prominent French social theorist and philosopher. The renowned post-structuralist and post-modernist has given highly influential works regarding multiple subjects including power, sexuality, knowledge, medicine and prison among others which remain prominent in guiding academics. Foucauldian concepts have been a great influence in multiple academic disciplines such as Anthropology, Sociology, Feminism and Cultural Studies to name a few. The theories and ideas theorized by the philosopher are rooted in the system of power; power and knowledge are the core concepts discussed by Foucault, where their relation was taken as the foundation for social control.

Foucault's power differs from the conventional ideas of power; the tyrannical outlook of the term states a negative notion which is usually present in other perspectives here. The power for Foucault has various attributes, making it different from the majority of the related theories and concepts. Power is not only coercive and concentrated in certain social pockets, rather it is present everywhere. This point makes the main difference between the idea of Foucault from the other conventional power theories which usually take power as a highly negative, coercive and episodic phenomenon. No one entity wields the power; the notion of subject hood and agency states a widespread presence without a particular 'subject', it has multiple sources and is thus dispersed everywhere (Gaventa, 2003). The very fluid presence of the powerful and powerless creates 'points of resistance' everywhere in the framework due to the power being present everywhere (Stoddart, 2007). The resistances in the power network are thus termed as 'struggles' by Foucault (1983); as stated in Stoddart (2007), the power-over is practiced between partners to exert social power. The resistance or struggle is translated through the 'privilege of knowledge' (Foucault, 1983).

The power/knowledge concept is the key of power dynamic to Foucault. When he states a privilege of knowledge, the notion presiding over the power is of the knowledge which is claimed to be independent of a certain speaker (Stoddart, 2007; Hayward, 2000). Power is taken as a function of knowledge while the knowledge is present as the working of the power. The construction of truth remains the focal point; various truths are produced in a social setup, they create the very systems of thoughts which give way to various systems of knowledge existing simultaneously. As power exists everywhere—the truths as *knowledges* create 'discourses'. Discourse is a normalised system of thoughts, a way of producing meaning through knowledge, power relations and social practice (Weedon 1987, quoted in Pinkus, 1996) which speaks about the reality and separates truth from fiction, these truths provide the rationality based on expert knowledge (Stoddart, 2007). The expert knowledge or the validated speech acts are produced from the specific episteme, thus creating various truths and discourses at the same time (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). The speech acts are the communications of the discourses mainly existing as texts. The discourses are therefore complete organised bodies of knowledge produced through validated rationalised statements which are fluidly operated in the power network in the social relations. Specializations, academic disciplines, theories or state ideas are many forms of discourses.

Simultaneous existence of multiple discourses regarding similar ideas creates the power and resistance dynamic. Discourses providing multiple truths may become dominant discourses

thus becoming more powerful, widespread and widely accepted while other discourses might remain marginalised, resistive, alternate or subjugated by the dominant discourses (Pinkus, 1996). The dominant discourses therefore produce an internalisation or normalization of their specific truths in the subjects, sometimes taking those notions to naturalisation of the concepts and are translated through the social behaviours and practices. When the multiplicity of social actors and individuals take up the discourses as natural or simply as facts, the inequity is stated in the social relations as a result by being negotiated and accepted in the society (Stoddart, 2007).

The discourses and knowledge are used in the discursive domains; the 'discursive fields' refer to the areas where the discourses are acted upon. Family, school, law (for instance) are fields of action where multiple discourses work. These fields or social spaces are present, where the discourse, power and social institutions work together (Pinkus, 1996). '*Dispositif*' states these social institutions as family, law, media etc. and the discourses as a collection for the normalisation of the social practices and facts in the society (Gaventa, 2003).

Foucault describes the modern power to be present as the word of the experts which communicates the facts and fiction of any social matter, majorly through the humanity sciences (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). This notion is explained through the concept of 'bio-power'. The bio-power points to a productive power (Hayward, 2000) spread across the society in the shape of discipline, order, ranking, visibility and subjection to knowledge as explained by Gaventa (2003). Here, through this concept Foucault sees the disciplining and the use of power over on individuals as taking the human body as a social object. Populations are controlled, disciplined and subjugated through control of the body; the social practices under health, medicine, law, gender and sexuality and the like are used in strategic ways for the discipline.

The normalization therefore becomes the major result of the bio power (Cisney & Morar, 2015). Ideas are normalised through the social institutions with the dominant discourses, creating 'docile bodies' which are productive still, able to serve the norms (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). The concepts of what are normal and what falls in abnormal creates alienation for the perceived abnormal; the abnormal is drawn to be normal through the power as abnormality is undesired of the docile body. Therefore, corrections, disciplining and regulations take place through the social institutions to push the abnormal into the normal (Cisney & Morar, 2015). Norms regarding gender, health and sexuality can be seen as prominent examples of the bio-power. Cisney and Morar (2015) state the prevalence of 'pathologization of sexual perversion' as one of the concepts which create the normal/abnormal dichotomy and exercises power through the norms over the bodies considered abnormal. Similarly, a dominant discourse regarding health in the 1920s stated cigarettes to be healthy as validated through medical research. The discourse changed as the new dominant discourse suggests its own validated truths regarding the highly adverse effects of smoking.

The development discourse has been a prominent international discourse in contemporary world. The ideas of how nations must develop thus produce related discourses—each stating their truths. The dominant discourses are waged by the dominant nations as being producers of the expert knowledge. Alternate discourse of 'post development' to the development discourse is also present as a resistance to the ideas of development (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). Human development discourse, post-colonial discourse, Feminist discourses are all examples of the modern discourses present in the global societies where many of these discourses remain

subjugated while some remain dominant and exercise their norms over populations (Gaventa, 2003).

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