CHAPTER 2
The Politics of Economic Power and Exclusion: A Critique of Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times*

“Dickens was a great comic artist and a great entertainer, and his influence over his public was strongest, perhaps when he struck a vein of sentiment which ran deep in Victorian society” (Wall 72). Born in February 1812 at Portsmouth, England, Charles Dickens was the son of Elizabeth Barrow, a housewife and John Dickens, a clerk in Navy Pay office drawing sufficient salary but was often in debt because of his habit of spending lavishly to show off his hospitality. In 1814 the Dickens family moved to London and then to Chatham to get education, but he was only twelve years of age when he had to discontinue his studies for earning livelihood as the family was in great financial trouble. His father was sent to the Marshalsea prison for non payment of debts and Charles started working at a London warehouse, working daily for twelve hours at a stretch in a shoe factory where shoes were manufactured, cleaned and packed and the small wages which he got was sufficient to support his family at this difficult time. This period of hardship played a significant role in his life as he has faced the sufficient unpleasant experiences as a growing young man which he depicted in many of his works. As he was a child labourer, exploited, poor, destitute and not properly educated; his anxiety, disillusionment and dejection is reflected in his articles, stories, novels and journals. Lyn Pykett remarks:

No words can express the secret agony of my soul as ... felt my early hopes of growing up to be learned and distinguished man crushed in my breast ... day by day, what I had learnt and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and emulation up by, was passing away from me...cannot be written. (Pykett 1)

When his father was released from the Marshalsea prison for the debtors, Charles could not heave a sigh of relief as his mother compelled him to continue working in the factory for the sake of the family; this fact emotionally shattered the small child. His father grew a bit kind to him and sent him to study at Wellington House Academy in London from 1824 to 1827 which enabled him to get the job of a law clerk and later on a shorthand reporter in the Parliament where he got the first hand information of the inner working of the judicial system which helped him in depicting such scenes in his novels in a life like and realistic manner. *Hard Times* is a
novel about general state of affairs in which the lives of people are inhibited or restricted and in which people are prevented from giving a free and spontaneous outlet to their natural feelings and sentiments. This implies a kind of bondage to routine and calculation which result from mechanization and industrialism. Hilary Schor remarks:

*Hard Times* has also been described as a novel which asks most clearly to be read not as a mere fictional work but as a commentary on the contemporary crisis… (Schor 67)

Schor means to say that the text of the novel should be read as an interpretation of contemporary social set up. The novel is written in the tradition of great social thinker Carlyle whose observation of society influenced Dickens immensely.

E. A. Baker contends that Dickens’s early childhood experiences influenced him “into becoming a realistic novelist, and he based his novels on the social conditions surrounding him” (Baker 5). It is a fact that Dickens wrote his novels with the intimate and first hand knowledge of the persons and places just as he visited Preston to survey the effects of the strike of manufacturers before writing *Hard Times*. He emphasized the importance of reality in his novels by having sympathy for the poverty facing labourers who were also neglected and suffering lot, all this added an appeal to the novel. Deborah Vlock rightly emphasised that Dickens’ popularity is due “to his intense human sympathy, his unsurpassed emotional and dramatic power and his aggressive humanitarianism zeal for the reform of all evils and abuses, whether they weigh upon oppressed classes or upon helpless individuals” (Vlock 18). Dickens has been rightly classed as the most touching and pathetic mouthpiece of the poor people. Michael Slater well remarks, “It is doubtful whether any English writer has ever been so popular as Dickens was in his lifetime, popular not only with one class or one generation, but with all classes, the rich and the poor, the young and the old alike” (Slater 24). He was one of the most prominent social critics who aimed at pinpointing social, economic and moral problems of the Victorian age. He highlighted the weak and poor sections of the British society to bring social reforms and to ignite awareness in the reading public. As a novelist Dickens has been viewed and studied from different perspectives by literary critics. They attribute his fictional style to a varied number of literary and artistic schools and affiliations; and give him the identity of a realist, feminist, naturalist and a satirical novelist.
Victorian England witnessed the inhuman dawn of industrialism which brought a gulf between the rich and the poor, the workers and the capitalists. The labour laws of the country were old and outdated which caused much harm to the common people. It also resulted in urbanization which harshly hit the poor labourers on their conditions. Altick has rightly commented, “The presence of abject poverty and its contrast with the affluence of the relatively rich, if the seemingly degradation of the physical environment and massing of people into overcrowded cities, and of worsening of relationships between the rich and the poor…” (Altick 57). So it was very natural that the writers and economists of the time took keen interest in bringing these issues to the mind of the reading public. Hard Times written in 1854 was one of the significant writings bearing social criticism and economic disparity. The novel is a severe attack on the industrial vices and faulty political economy which was responsible for the exploitation of the poor working class and weak section of the society. The novel also highlights the current issues like strike at working place which refers to the Preston strike in 1853-54 which was eight months old and had deep impact on the political economy of England. In the word of David Daiches, "*Hard Times* is based on the morality of the utilitarian industrialism and its effect on the possibilities of human happiness” (Daiches 1056).

In *Hard Times*, the social consciousness of urbanization and industrialization is portrayed very effectively because the writer was touched to the heart by the prevailing conditions. Although some critics celebrate it as a moral fable, and this consideration still affects the general perception of Dickens's novels. It is noteworthy that *Hard Times* throws light on the actual conditions of life of the poor and the prosperous of the nineteenth century England. Furthermore it can be considered a defence of fancy, of which Dickens was a great supporter, against the philosophy of Facts. However, in *Hard Times* and in the utilitarianism doctrines, fancy and imagination are avoided. Dickens describes a city regulated by the utilitarian rules that affect life in every aspect, in family and work, from infancy to adulthood. *Hard Times*, more than any other of his novels exposed the conditions of England, its social problems like education of the poor people, industrial relations and the unequal rights of people which showed class distinction. The divorce laws were not easy. Cazamian observes Dickens in this novel as an “intermediary link between the social thought of Carlyle and Ruskin” (Cazamian 173). In this novel, Dickens created a 'condition of England', which were directly engaged with contemporary problems and social issues. He lays bare the exploitation of the labour class by merciless industrialists. He also
shows the consequences of suppressing feeling and imagination to teach them only Facts. Though Dickens is critical about utilitarian laws yet he aimed at ensuring justice through ethical and moral means.

*Hard Times* is highly faithful and reflects radical criticism of the poor workers in lately industrialized British economy which was turning individual human beings into machines. This was affecting not only industrial workers at various levels but also private existence of family life as the very personal decisions of love, marriage and family life were hard hit. The growth and development of children as imaginative individuals was also crushed by the advocates of this capitalism in the character of Gradgrind and Bounderby. In the middle of the nineteenth century when social and economic scenario was taking a new shape, there was the supremacy of the monotonous life of facts in private and public life, in values and institutional structure. As Barry Westburg pointedly remarks, “*Hard Times* interrogates a society quickly growing industrialized, a society organized, maintained and sanctioned to a large degree by a philosophy Dickens considers obnoxious” (Westburg 137).

*Hard Times* is a novel in which Dickens fiercely attacks what he regarded as some of the evils afflicting Victorian society. He gives preference to emotions over rationality, intuition of heart over head gained knowledge when he assails the system of education which was based on facts and statistics to feed the business minded spirit, cruelty, selfishness and pride of the rich people. Dickens violently attacks the motive of self-interest promoted by industrialism and utilitarianism, condemns the unsatisfactory relationship between labour and capital, and the callousness of factory-workers and pig-headedness and aggressiveness of trade unionism. He attacks the hectic but useless routine followed by the Parliamentarians and the fruitlessness of Parliament itself. He satirizes at the society which oppresses the poor and destitute and indirectly suggests and reforms which are urgently needed to improve the political, economic and social conditions of the country. *Hard Times* reflects a general state of affairs in which the lives of the people are inhibited or restricted and in which people are prevented from giving a free and spontaneous outlet to their feelings and sentiments. This implies a kind of bondage to routine and calculation which result from mechanization and industrialisation.

A part of the present research project is an attempt to scrutinize the relevance of the Foucauldian concept of Power/Knowledge Discourse in Dickens’s celebrated novel *Hard Times*. It will be very significant to mention here that *Hard Times* belongs to the Victorian era after the
Industrial Revolution in England. So far, this text has been analyzed from the traditional point of view by critics. For example, Percy Marshall says that *Hard Times* is “a savage attack on capitalism and on those who kept on working in the general disadvantage and in defence of the laws of charity” (Marshall 42). F. R. Leavis opines that “the adult mind does not find any great challenge and seriousness in Dickens. Dickens, the moralist always distinguishes between good and bad and he always indicates some evil of this era of rapid industrial expansion but in no other book as harshly and consistently as in *Hard Times*” (Leavis 18). Earle Davis says that *Hard Times* is “of all Dickens’s books the clearest in its statement of his economic belief. Its thesis is a satire on Utilitarian philosophy” (Davis 27). J. Hillis Miller says that “In *Hard Times*, Dickens dramatizes in strikingly symbolic terms the opposition between a soul destroying relation to a utilitarian, industrial civilization in which everything is weighed, measured, has its price, and in which emotion is banished, and the reciprocal interchange of love” (Miller 226). Lionel Stevenson remarks “*Hard Times* is more strictly centred upon a single social theme than his other novels, and that he had not absorbed this theme through his pores from childhood onwards. He began with the conscious purpose of examining the relationship between industrialists and workers in the new manufacturing cities, and of discrediting the utilitarian philosophy which has the ideological basis of current capitalism” (Stevenson 312). Paul Edward Gray remarks, “In *Hard Times*, whatever Dickens understands he humorously represents ... whatever he does not understand, he humorously misrepresents...” (Gray 4). K.J. Fielding proclaims, “The aim of this novel was to highlight that any method of conduct which does not have sympathy, love and understanding among human beings...bitterly destructive” (Fielding 132). Angus Wilson comments, “*Hard Times* is of the utmost importance in the extension and sharpening of Dickens’s attitude to Victorian society. In it, he comes out strongly against Victorian progress as it was viewed by the materialist, laissez-faire capitalists. He had consistently attacked that aspect of Benthamism which treated human beings as cyphers” (Wilson 235). Dickens felt that a dependence upon capitalistic practicality without reference to sympathy and human understanding causes continued difficulties in the relations of capital and labour. Thus we observe that the existing criticism of *Hard Times* is based on the traditional point of view. In the modern times when literary theories have become so prominent, Foucault’s theory of Power/Knowledge is quite relevant, and another valuable and significant way of understanding the text and its major thematic concerns.
Hard Times deals with industrial power and it is a scrutiny and a damnation of the moral principles of industrialism. This book is divided into three sections: Sowing, Reaping and Garnering. These names refer to the Bible where it is manifestly written 'as you sow, so shall you reap'. F. R. Leavis comments on Dickens's art in Hard Times, "With this kind of thing before us, we talk not of style but of dramatic creation and imaginative fiction" (Leavis 121). It is a veritable truth that Dickens was violently hostile to industrial capitalism, so in this novel he professes the doctrine that the social evils and injustice should be removed as this will not be tolerated in the coming times because people are demanding individual freedom, economic security and social equality. As the novel stands, its thesis is a satire on utilitarian economy. In Hard Times, Dickens assailed Industrialism, Utilitarianism, New Education and difficult and costly Divorce laws in Victorian England. He believed that industrial progress cannot solve human problems by power and knowledge alone. The novel fiercely attacks industrialism and utilitarianism because it maintains a huge gulf between the rich and the poor where the poor become victims of discourse of power because they are powerless and these aspects receive a telling expression at the hands of Dickens in Hard Times. Thus, as the novel’s plot and narrative form convey, the whole Victorian atmosphere is knitted in power relations. In this context of the novel Barry Smart proclaims, “Power is not possessed or appreciated as a commodity or piece of wealth, rather it has the character of a network, its threads extend everywhere” (Smart 83).

Thomas Gradgrind, the major character in the novel, serves as an embodiment of the beliefs of utilitarianism and industrialism. Through his narrative and characterization, Dickens explains the ideals as well as the harmful effects of industrialization and utilitarianism. Dickens felt that a dependence upon capitalistic practicality without reference to sympathy and brotherly understanding causes continued difficulties in the relations of capital and labor. G.B. Shaw contends:

Here you will find, no more villains and heroes, but only oppressors and victims, oppressing and suffering in spite of themselves, driven by a huge machinery which grinds to pieces the people…(Shaw 126)

Shaw means to say that in this novel the oppressors are so much callous and self-centred that they can go to any extent to nourish their monetary interests and one can find everywhere poor and helpless victims. Dickens has presented the increasing anger of the sufferers into a revolt against the repression and suppression of the prevailing industrialism.
In *Hard Times*, the utilitarian principle finds its exponents and champions in the two leading characters, Gradgrind and Bounderby. Gradgrind’s theory of education is evidently an offshoot of utilitarian attitude to life. At the initiation of this project, it is worthwhile to mention the basic principal characteristics of conventional thoughts of power, which in Foucault’s term is named ‘juridical-discursive model of power’ in analyzing the utilitarian principles of facts and figures. As Foucault perceives, power is an object to be captured and possessed. Such an assumption pictures a fixed and unchangeable diagram of power structure, in which particular agents or persons who seize power occupy higher positions in the structure of power, and others who lack power deserve lower sites. The force that holds power firmly stands as dominators and allows none of the dominated to make any transformation in reverse orders of power structure. *Hard Times* represents this reality when Gradgrind emphasizes the importance of facts, and fails to attach any importance to feelings and emotions when the novel opens, significantly in a schoolroom, where the children are to be indoctrinated in the tenets of practicality i.e. facts and figures, encouraged to think of nothing except in terms of use, crammed full of information like so many “little vessels … ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim” (Dickens 1). When Dickens starts writing the novel by giving the details of the classroom at Gradgrind's school, stating that "the scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom" (1), he deprecates and disapproves the schoolroom when he compares it to a vault which refers to a grave. As mentioned above, this classroom has been deliberately built as a factory which produces future workers for their profits and material gains. The method of teaching children in this school is strictly according to Utilitarian principles. In this context, Schlicke contends:

> These ideas can be presented as Utilitarianism and Political Economy. Broadly speaking, the two concepts are closely related and for Dickens they came to the same thing in the end…(Schlicke 10)

Schlicke further elaborates his point of view that Utilitarianism is the concept of renowned philosopher Jeremy Bentham who held the view that it is concerned with the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Gradgrind's philosophy of facts had deleterious effects on society because children were regarded as empty bottles waiting to be filled with knowledge, pure facts. The innocence, fancy and imagination of the children are brutally killed by this type of education. Gradgrind is
commanding his power when he addresses the teacher Mr. M’Choakumchild: “Now what I want, is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of service to them… Stick to Facts, sir!” (1). This is in a sense a reflection of Foucault’s notion of ‘repressive hypothesis’ which stands for laws, rules and order, where power is confirmed as a repressive force to forbid, to prohibit, to say no, and to punish while someone breaks laws and rules. In this context Foucault remarks, "Thou shall not speak, thou shall not show thyself; ultimately thou shalt not exist, except in darkness and secrecy" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. I* 84) The threat of being punished informs individuals to maintain their manners and abide by all constraints. Here Herald Fawkner rightly proclaims:

Gradgrind has to learn the lesson that life cannot be understood by a scientific positivism that merely analyses the present order of things as a fixed predetermined given with invariable, eternal laws like those discovered in the natural sciences. (Fawkner 58)

Foucault stresses that the notion of discourse is very significant in the analysis of power because discourse produces power and knowledge. He argues that discourses are those set of sanctioned statements which have some institutionalized force, which also means that they have a profound influence on the way individuals can act and think. He further says that discourses are not simply grouping of utterances, clustered around a theme or an issue but that discourses are highly regulated groups of utterances. Foucault is less concerned with whether discourse is true or false, rather he is concerned that it should be influential in nature. Moreover, the notion of exclusion is very important in Foucault’s idea of discourse which is based on constraint. It means that the discourse of a powerful man cannot be challenged who is the representative of the society because his discourse, whether true or false, is always influential. This characteristic of discourse is apparently visible in *Hard Times* because in the world of Gradgrind, there is to be no imagination, no fancy, no emotion, only fact and utilitarian calculus. “No little Gradgrind had ever learnt the silly jingle, Twinkle, twinkle little star; how I wonder what you are!” (Dickens 10). Even the very name Gradgrind represents the qualities of measuring reality in an insensible manner and emphasizes the effect of grinding something to pieces. In this novel, one can observe that the students are not called by their names but by numbers. Addressing Sissy Jupe, the
utilitarian Gradgrind calls her pupil number twenty and asks her to define a horse factually. As she is the daughter of a horse rider at circus, she is not able to describe a horse as Gradgrind wanted. In that class, there is another student named Bitzer who is a devoted follower of the philosophy of facts, when he is asked to define a horse accurately, he says, "Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive…Age known by marks in the mouth” (6). Then Gradgrind tells Sissy now she knows what a horse is. So it is a classic example of Foucauldian theorization of discourse because though the philosophy of Gradgrind’s facts and figures is not justified yet it is so influential in nature that everyone has to imbibe it and here the notion of exclusion is also reflected as Gradgrind has excluded fancy, imagination and wonder from his discourse which shows that his discourse is very selected and organized. Foucault manifestly observes “In every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures …”(Foucault, The Order of Discourse 52).

This is the presentation of utilitarian logic and education as Gradgrind who is also a staunch utilitarian, believes in facts only. The more the individuals are taught facts, the more prosperity he will have. This mechanizing effect of industrialism on the innocent minds of children is beautifully delineated. Power, according to the principles of juridical-discursive notion is defined as ‘laws’ and its effect is defined as ‘obedience’. Roy Boyne remarks, “Power demands obedience. Power, ultimately, is repression; repression, ultimately is the imposition of the law, and the law, ultimately demands submission”(Boyne 125). Here Bentham’s plan for the Chrestomathic school is finally realized; these schools, like ‘factories, Panopticon style, turning out finished products under the eyes of monitors, were never built, but Dickens erects a Chrestomathia in Coketown. But the fact in which ‘Grandgrindery’ is interested are only the cut and dried facts of intellectual definition, not the facts of living and breathing reality. However, the fancy, the love, the compassion which Dickens brings to his picture of Coketown work out to erupt spasmodically, but they do finally and forcefully make themselves felt, win their small victories.

The novel ironically subverts this complacent picture of an invincible Gradgrindian system, of course, for it is Sissy who functions as the principle of juxtaposition of Sissy Jupe and Thomas Gradgrind. The novel sets heart against head, loving compassion for the particular human heart against soul deadening uniformity, uniformity that it represents as the product of the
mid-Victorian social movements and reform efforts. *Hard Times* represents a system of disciplinary scrutiny, a hierarchical system of multiple hazes that enforce docility and obedience. Foucault’s notion of Discipline is very significant in the exercise of power within a power structure. It is a type of power that coerces the body by regulating and dividing up its movements. Discipline consists of a concern and control which is internalized by an individual over one’s posture and bodily functions, concentration and sublimation of immediate desires. In *Hard Times*, this reflection of discipline can be observed when the circus serves as a figure for the pervasive, multiple-layered system of surveillance at work in the novel as a whole, for the representation of the circus makes that system highly visible. Foucault rightly comments, "In every society, the body was in the grip of strict powers, which imposed on it constraints, prohibitions or obligations" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 136). As Gradgrind approaches Sleary’s horse riding establishment at the circus, he is horrified to see that his own children are peeping at the circus people through a hole in the tent. They watch with a curiosity and their fancy and imagination start working. For the first time in their life, they see real horses, elephants, acrobats and clowns are wonderstruck to see the world unknown to them. They had no clear picture of the things, creatures and people who lived in the world. They begin to wonder if life had anything else than facts which were offered to them. He is greatly hurt and displeased to see that his children are not sorry for going against the principles which are taught to them and under which they have been brought up. In this context of the novel, it is worth mentioning that the main aim of Foucault’s idea of discipline is docility, and docility can be achieved through discipline and observation because the individual movements and gestures are subject to power to achieve the desired effect on the body without any physical violence. Gradgrind wants to discipline the activities of the children and his disciplinary techniques are similar to that of Foucault's notion of inner confinement or penal system but Foucault also admits that the penal system has never fulfilled its promise and it has never worked properly and this aspect reflects apparently in the novel when the disciplinary code of Gradgrind is violated by the children by watching the circus.

The industrial mechanization had damaging effects on personal and family life and relations of Gradgrind and Bounderby also. The house of Gradgrind aptly called 'Stone Lodge' as it was hard, factual and devoid of all sentiments. All these qualities are the qualities of stone and as a result his children Tom and Louisa were so full of facts that they were tired of this
monotonous life and they wanted some welcome and refreshing change. As he admonishes the children, they tell him that they wanted to learn more than they had. From the cradle, Tom and Louisa have been breeding with facts; but Tom surrenders to the doctrines of his father, instead Louisa knows that there is something missing in their lives. She tries to spy to circus, she tries to wonder, she even tries to express her feelings but every time, her attempts are stopped by her father. Tom and Louisa talk about the rebuking to ‘never wonder’ – as Dickens writes, the keynote of Gradgrind’s educational system. Tom is disgusted with his education; indeed, he writes that he could use gunpowder to blow up the doctrine of ‘Facts and Figures’. According to Barry Smart, “Power is not possessed or appreciated as a commodity or piece of wealth, rather it has the character of a network, its threads extend everywhere” (Smart 83). In sum, our social fabric is knitted by power relations. Power, Foucault proclaims, is everywhere. In fact the web of power is spread everywhere and it has affected the most intimate relations – husband-wife, parent-children, teacher-student,-doctor-patient and employer-employee - all are engulfed by power. Thus power relations are rooted in the system of social networks. Dreyfus and Rabinow rightly observe, “A society without power relations can only be an abstraction” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 222). In fact, the system of power is just like a machine, of which everyone becomes a part. Power can be observed through any relations, and in this way, it is noticed that power comes from everywhere and is omnipresent. In Hard Times, student-teacher relationship, parent-child relationship, and employer-employee relationships are interlocked and interface with each other somehow. The operation of power in Hard Times constantly exercises in relationships that are stated above. So far as the conception that power is everywhere is affirmed, whereby we learn that no one can be outside power. Foucault declares:

It seems to me that power is ‘always already there’, that one is never ‘outside’ it, that there are no ‘margins’ for those who break with the system to gambol in. But this does not entail the necessity of accepting an inescapable form of domination or an absolute privilege on the side of the law. To say that one never be ‘outside’ power does not mean that one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what. (Foucault, Power/Knowledge 142)

In contrast to these, Sissy Jupe, the strolling juggler’s child, also resisted the utilitarian education system of Gradgrind that she could not be filled with facts only. She has vitality, generosity and uncalculating goodness. It is significant that she has been born and nourished among a people
whose activities are not dominated by pure utility, but have at least some association with those of art, self-fulfilment, and self-satisfaction. Schlicke rightly comments, "The utilitarian principles of education do not work on Sissy as she is a simple and tender-hearted girl who lives with the Circus' people which with their horses, riders, acrobats and clowns…existed precisely as a stimulus to the vital power of fancy and thus Sissy embodies all the values of this imaginative world" (Schlicke 151). Sissy, like a character in a morality play, illustrates all the ideas opposite from the utilitarian philosophy. The contrast between her ‘dark-eyed and dark haired’ warmth and Bitzer’s cold eyes and colourless hair renders in pure sensation, as F.R. Leavis points out, the opposition between “the life that is lived freely and richly from the deep instinctive and emotional springs and the thin blooded, quasi-mechanical product of Grandgrindery” (Leavis 231). Though the father of Louisa is very rigid in his thoughts, it is very painful for her to reconcile to his world where there is no place for excitement, wonder and curiosity. Louisa laments to her brother Tom:

As I get older, and nearer growing up, I often sit wondering here, and think how unfortunate it is for me that I can’t reconcile you to home better than I am able to do. I don’t know what other girls know. I can’t play to you. I can’t talk to you so as to lighten your mind, for I never see any amusing books that it would be a pleasure or a relief to you to talk about, when you are tired. (50)

When Foucault claims that power is always present, he means power appears when it is in action. Within the structure of power, multiple forces exercise with each other, and by this exercising, power shows up and mobilizes too. The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners or individuals; it is a way in which certain actions modify others. In *Hard Times*, so utilitarian is Gradgrind that, even in the matter of his daughter Louisa’s marriage, he does not care to take into account her feelings. The interview between Gradgrind and Louisa, when he puts before her Bounderby’s proposal of marriage, is fraught with irony, and is a powerful attack on Gradgrind’s utilitarianism. The great example of Industrial rationalism is the marriage of Louisa to Bounderby who is twice older than her and there is no love or affection in this marriage. This shows that even the sentiments and emotions of heart are sacrificed for the sake of hard facts. Though Louisa very clearly and explicitly tells Gradgrind about this loveless alliance yet the values of her father Gradgrind on human relations are utterly mechanized and
hence he pays a deaf ear to what Louisa has said. His strict Utilitarian philosophy compels his daughter to accept that passionless and loveless relation. Thus in power relations, a subject’s supremacy is especially and easily confirmed by initiatively taking actions to influence others. It is also evident that our social fabric is knitted by power relations and the web of power is spread everywhere and it has effected the most intimate relations in the society, as we observe in the case of Gradgrind’s relations with his daughter. Foucault contends in this context, "Power is omnipresent in the social body because it is co-terminous with the conditions of social relations in general" (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 246).

The principles that dominate Mr. Gradgrind’s school are the principles that dominate Coketown and its industry. His philosophy of facts is a perfect example of the callous and ruthless aspect of materialistic Victorian society where Gradgrind and Bounderby are the chief exponents of this ideology. Bounderby is described as a “man perfectly devoid of sentiment”(15). While Gradgrind does show some signs of human feeling by taking the abandoned Sissy under his protection and he certainly changes his outlook upon life by the time the story ends, Bounderby shows no sign of any human feeling and remains till the end what he is at the beginning – cold and impervious to human needs. According to Briggs, *Hard Times* can also be considered a dark fable. The industrial city represents the sad reign of the fables, colonised by soulless humans" (Briggs 19). Bounderby is a man made out of a coarse material who constantly boasts of his being self-made. He looks upon his workmen as tools by using them properly he wants to grow richer. Bounderby’s only purpose in life appears to check these workers to go upwards in society and improve their economic condition. In this context, the Foucauldian hypothesis of bio-power is reflected as Paul Rabinow states, "Bio-power was, without question, an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes" (Rabinow 263). So he keeps them confined to abject poverty and sub-human level of existence. Bounderby is depicted as formidable, dominating, powerful and highly mechanized person who represents the negative and destructive influences of the industrial Coketown on its citizens as he promotes his own selfish interests. Actually Bounderby occupies a privileged and dominating position in Coketown who wants to assert his authority and power for his material gains and he expects docility and obedience on the part of the workers. He is frankly contemptuous of the needs,
requirements, and demands of his workmen. Mukesh Williams remarks, "*Hard Times* is a harsh indictment of the relentless industrialisation of the 19th century made in the name of progress that was making men into machines" (Williams 380).

In this regard, Foucault’s emphasis on the notion of resistance in the exercise of power is noteworthy. On account of the non-centralized characteristic of power, it is not appropriate to state that in the operation of power, there is only one way operation of power or its analysis. To fully understand the operation of power, it is necessary to observe the force of resistance. Foucault avers that power is *coextensive* with resistance and in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault remarks, “Where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* Vol. I 93). In *Hard Times*, this resistance is seen when Stephen Blackpool who is not a man of any exceptional intelligence, nor does he occupy any position of importance among the workers but is a good power-loom weaver, is summoned by Bounderby. Actually, Bounderby wants that Stephen should join the workers’ union so that he may have surveillance over them and supply some information regarding their activities. But Stephen bluntly refuses to play the role of an informer and puts up a powerful defence of the aims of the union. In this way, Stephen Blackpool resists the power of Bounderby which also shows that power is multi-directional and operates from the top to bottom and from the bottom to top. This provides us with a more complete view of the exercise of power. This analysis also corroborates the truth that power is constructed by forces of support and resistance. Stephen also communicates to Bounderby the needs, requirements, desires and aspirations of the workers, trying to focus the factory-owner’s attention upon the workers’ problems, though he fails to touch any responsive chord in Bounderby’s heart. For his refusal to supply the required inside information about the workers’ union, he is dismissed by Bounderby on the spot which shows his utter callousness. He dismisses Stephen Blackpool from employment without realizing the enormity of the damage he is doing to a man whom he himself recognized as a 'steady hand'. Stephen also feels compelled to quit Coketown two or three days after Bounderby’s order of dismissal, but strangely, does not get any help from the workers’ union. Thus Stephen pays a very heavy price of his resistance to the dominating power structure of Bounderby and becomes a powerless victim of capitalists' oppressive power. Here we also see the reflection of Foucault’s hypothesis that where there is imbalance of power, one person will surely try to dominate the other. The exercise of disciplinary power of Bounderby is apparent here as he wants to assert his authoritative attitude
on whosoever comes in his contact, whether it is Tom, Sissy, Louisa or Stephen Blackpool. In this context of the novel Stefanie Meier points out:

… it is not only the narrator (Dickens) who mechanizes his characters; there are also a number of characters in his novels who treat other human characters like objects or animals, thereby depriving them of their human dignity. (Meier 88)

It is worth mentioning that Stephen Blackpool is not as self-centred as Mr. Bounderby, because he thinks of others' well being also. When he faces a labour dispute at Bounderby's factory, he refuses to go on strike as he does not want to increase the problem of the workers. The workers have established a union in Coketown and Stephen does not want to join in their plan. He is condemned by the other workers and dismissed from the factory by Bounderby when he does not agree to spy over his colleagues for Bounderby. This act signifies that the discourse of an authoritative man cannot be challenged whether he is Bounderby or the leader of the labour union because the nature of discourse is always influential which has profound influence on others. The expulsion of Stephen Blackpool also shows that here power functions from top to bottom in a descending manner which is quite repressive and oppressive in nature as it has given a great jolt to the life of Stephen who has become a poor victim of power and authority. Stephen feels that he is lonely and has no friends. 'By general consent, they even avoided that side of the street on which he habitually walked; and left it, of all the working men, to him only" (144). It is very difficult for him to be without any friend or company. Rachel further explains the condition of Stephen Blackpool that on one hand he is confronted with his master and the union workers against him on the other though he only wanted to work hard in the factory peacefully which he felt right. Dickens thought that strikes created ill feelings and widen the gulf between the employer and the employees, so personally he was not in favour of strikes. As David Sonstroem explains:

Dickens condemns a labour dispute for the gulf of separation it hourly deepens between…Dickens reveals his belief that the exercise of Fancy could prove very useful in apprehending and encouraging true union. (Sonstroem 521)

The fact based education generates corruption and callousness and this aspect can be well observed in Tom, the son of Gradgrind. He believes in using his family relations to his personal benefits as well as a selfish and cunning man who can fall to any level for his monetary gains. Tom, reacting against the rigidity of his utilitarian upbringing and in order to compensate
himself, takes to evil courses, going to the extent of robbing the bank of Bounderby in which he is an employee. His life is a wreck too, and the manner in which he explains his conduct shows how, as in the case of Louisa, Gradgrind’s philosophy has rebounded upon himself. Tom says to his father, "So many people are employed in situations of trust; so many people, out of so many, will be dishonest. I have heard you talk, a hundred times, of its being a law. How can I help laws? You have comforted others with such things, father. Comfort yourself!" (284). In this way, Tom means to say that whenever the people are employed on responsible and trusted posts, many of them become dishonest. As his father has comforted other people with this, saying that it is a law, he should comfort himself also. Thus the sinister system is once again exposed and derided when Gradgrind finds his son Tom to be a thief, while Gradgrind's own approach rebounds on him.

Foucault maintains that power is not uniform everywhere as it has a very unstable nature and it goes on changing hands. It is not a commodity or a thing which can be possessed by some individual or by some institution. Power relations are deeply unstable and changeable. This characteristic of power is visible in the character of Bitzer, who was a good student at Gradgrind's school and followed everything of utilitarian education. He is selfish to the extent that he becomes spy at Bounderby's bank and even stops Tom from fleeing to a foreign country after it is found that he is the bank robber, not the poor weaver of the crime. Bitzer wants that Tom should be arrested by the police so that he may get a better position in the bank. When Gradgrind requests Bitzer to help Tom as he has been at good terms for many years at school, Bitzer flatly says that the basic principle of his philosophy is that everything should be considered in terms of money whether it is love or respect. Bitzer at this juncture says, “My schooling was paid for, it was a bargain, and when I came away, the bargain ended” (288). The utilitarian form of education which uses Arithmetic as its fundamental tool, demanded that “nobody was ever on any account to give anybody anything, or render anybody help without purchase…every inch of the existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across the counter” (288). So, even education was also considered a business like other businesses where relationships and interactions have their profit and loss balance. The virtues like love, affection, gratefulness and sweetness have no place in the world of calculations. Here we can acknowledge Foucault’s idea of power by relating it to Bitzer. When Bitzer was a student in the school, Gradgrind was all powerful and exerted his power over everyone including
Bitzer, but now Gradgrind has become powerless because now power has shifted into the hands of Bitzer and Gradgrind is begging for mercy for his son. It further shows the true nature of power: power is not the permanent property or possession of some individual or some group as it is not uniform everywhere and it always in a state of flux and evolution. In this context Foucault manifestly comments, "Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the inter-play of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. I* 94). Power relations operate and exist through people in the society as individuals are the vehicles or channels of power because power functions in the form of a chain and changes from person to person and from place to place.

Louisa is also incapable of adapting herself to the situations which arise after her marriage. She remains unhappy for quite a long time and then she develops extra-marital relationship with James Harthouse without actually having any feeling of love. Neither her father's philosophy nor his teachings can save her from the coming disaster. The first jolt Gradgrind feels when he realises that his own daughter is in agony, trouble and pain when she says, “Father, you have trained me from my cradle…I curse the hour in which I was born to such a destiny…what have you done, O father, what have you done, with the garden that should have bloomed once, in this great wilderness here?” (213). This incident is a great change in Gradgrind’s philosophy of Utilitarian education and at this point he sees the utter failure and defeat of his philosophy. Now he finds that his philosophy was not constructive but quite destructive. Only then in order to help Louisa, Sissy goes to Harthouse and says, “I ask you to depart from this place tonight, under an obligation never to return it” (233). The roles of Gradgrind and Bounderby are contrasting but they are made to talk with each other and therein lies the conflict and theme of the novel. These two characters are the strict followers of the philosophy of facts but in their own way. Schlicke remarks, "For Mr. Gradgrind the Philosophy of Fact is a matter of principle, but for his friend Mr. Bounderby it is a source of slogans" (Schlicke 13). Both of them hold different views on education as Gradgrind supports the teaching of facts but for Bounderby, education should be turned out of doors. This is the viewpoint of Bounderby when Gradgrind shares his inner feeling with him if he has understood the sentiments of Louisa and has given her proper education in life. As David Craig points out:
The stress on schooling is certainly no evasion. This linking of classroom and mill turns out to be one of Dickens's most telling ways of composing his sense of English civilization into a coherent, many-sided image. Both school and town were owned, or at least controlled, by the same men, the masters…" (Craig 20)

Conclusively, we see that *Hard Times*, one of the literary masterpieces of the Victorian era can justifiably be analyzed from the point of view of Michel Foucault’s theory of Power/Knowledge Discourse. The novel apparently portrays how the Utilitarian theory is used to turn out emotions, feelings, imagination and fancy from the life of people and their minds should be filled with facts only. The novel also portrays the damaging effects of such education in a very lucid and graphic manner. According to K. J. Fielding, "The purpose of the novel was to emphasize that any method of ruling conduct or affairs that lack sympathy, love and understanding among human beings is, in the end bitterly destructive" (Fielding 134).

Consequently Louisa does not marry again, Tom is not punished for his crime but he dies all alone in another country. It is only Sissy who leads a happy married life because she has learnt to combine facts and fancy and that is why she finds good results. The mother of Bounderby loves him a lot but he did not accept her love. Stephen suffers endlessly and dies a miserable death and Rachel does not marry in life and keeps working hard at Coketown. Gradgrind's system of education fails and shatters completely and he leads a life full of misery, despair and repentance. Thus the utilitarian principles cannot make people happy; humans cannot exist without fancy and imagination. So this doctrine must be avoided, not only in trades and factories but also in educational institutions. Dickens wants to support an idea by presenting his characters in opposite situations and meeting with failures and frustrations in life. His main aim is to expose the negative aspect of this education system and emotion and fancy are like skeleton and flesh of a body, both vital to make the system worthwhile. Dickens wants to give the idea that fancy is a positive alternative to the philosophy of facts so that people can lead a contented and progressive life and the theme of the novel is vital and outstanding in presenting the social turmoil and transformation in the 19th century Industrial England. Schlicke remarks, "Even Dickens criticised a doctrine that had no allowance for noble human qualities such as generosity, altruism and imaginative system" (Schlicke 9). Though the novel has been set up in Victorian surroundings and the existing criticism is based on this text from the traditional standards, yet Foucault’s analysis of Power/Knowledge Discourse convincingly sets in motion an entirely new
way of examining power relations in the Victorian society. In the sphere of modern literary criticism, Foucault’s theory of Power/Knowledge Discourse is quite prominent and significant which is another alternate and valuable approach to understand and peruse this Victorian text.
WORKS CITED


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