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**DYNAMISM, THE MANTRA OF POST MODERNISM GURUS: FROM PETER DRUCKER TO STEVE JOBS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The history of management extends to several thousand years back into the past. A number of monumental examples of development and use of management practices can be traced from history. Egyptians (5000 BC), Sumerian (3500 BC), Chinese (1000 BC), Greek (400 BC), Mayan and Roman civilizations have shown significant signs of the use of management practices. The application of management practices is as old as human race, but the documentation of its theories and conceptual framework started in eighteenth century. The systematic management thought voyage travelled through Classical era, Neo-Classical era and Modern era. Thinkers in each era focused on different perspectives. Classical theorists advocated the economic rationale, while the Neo-classicists kept the human element as the central figure. The modern thinkers kept the complex man view point as a focus of their management thoughts. In the last some decades of twentieth century the management thinkers supported the view of Dynamism in their theories. As the whole world became a global village, post modernism thinkers realized that organisations can't survive without being dynamic and innovative. This paper concentrates on the thinkers who advocated the concept of Dynamism in the post modern era of management. By considering the contributions of six pioneering thinkers (Peter Drucker, Tom Peters, Michael Hammer, C.K. Prahalad, Peter Senge, Steve Jobs) the major thoughts that appeared after 1980s have been discussed. The first section of paper describes the brief history of management thought. The second section deals with six thinkers who proposed new ideas and really made a difference through their thinking in post modern era.*

**KEYWORDS**

dynamism, post modernism, management, theory, organisation.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Management thought has a vast historical background since the era of civilizations. The management theories that we investigate today didn't arise out of the blue, it took many years to evolve them. The application of management practices is as old as human race, but the documentation of its theories and conceptual frameworks began in late eighteenth century. According to Hodgetts and Altman<sup>1</sup> (1981), systematic management thought is a distinctly modern development and most of the systematic contemporary management thoughts are a late nineteenth and twentieth century phenomenon (cited by Sri-dhar).<sup>2</sup> The voyage of management itself is eclectic (Smith, 1994) and today's management is both a reflection of and a reaction to the past management theories (Hitt, et al., 1979)<sup>3</sup>.

Some eminent thinkers systematically gave shape to their ideas with their proven studies. The era of classical theorists stressed on scientific principles to raise productivity, while the neo-classicists tried to emphasize the human element in the organisations. Taylor, Fayol and Weber were the centre of attraction in Classical while Elton Mayo and Mary Parker Follett grasped the attention in Neo classical era of management literature. As the management thinking was approaching towards the second half of twentieth century, many thinkers started giving their viewpoints by latticing up various concepts on how to manage people. This was the time when even the basic terms such as management, organisations were being described differently by different thinkers. This mushroom growth and explosion of a variety of theories made Harold Koontz call the intact position as "Management Theory Jungle" in 1961. A such times Modern Management Thought emerged where the thinkers tried to manage this theory jungle first by categorizing the theories under certain heads. These thinkers proposed four categories: Quantitative theory, Contingency Theory, System Theory and Operational Theory. The aim was to untangle the theory jungle and to make separate gardens for each theory. But the growth of theory jungle continued even after this categorization and this jungle became denser after 1990s.

A rich mixture of many new theories emerged in the Post Modernism era. Many new concepts emerged and old concepts got new meanings, but the concept on jungle has not ended up even today and it will not come to an end. The business environment will keep on changing, therefore management theories will always keep on evolving. The thinkers in this era gave their unique contributions, as many of the ideas don't fit in any particular school. The popular catchphrases in this period were MBO and knowledge workers (Peter Drucker), Quality Circles and Zero defects (Philip Crosby), reengineering and radical redesigning (Michael Hammer), Search for excellence (Tom Peters), learning Organisation (Peter Senge), Customer relationships and many more. The theorists stressed on different ideas, but a common ground that converge all the thinkers on one point was the idea of Dynamism. The contemporary era began when the entire world was turned into a global village. The techniques that worked for a day were becoming inapplicable next day. Thus the manager thinkers who rose up in this era were having a common theme, to be dynamic and innovative.

**2. MAJOR SUPPORTERS OF DYNAMISM****a) Peter F. Drucker (1909-2005): Creator and Inventor of Modern Management**

Peter F. Drucker has grasped an elevated position in the management literature. Having a multidisciplinary more than 60 years of varied experience in the fields of management, psychology, sociology, law, journalism<sup>4</sup>, he gave multidisciplinary ideas. Most of the modern management theory has its premises on the thinking of Peter Drucker, therefore he is well known as 'Father of Modern Management Thinking'.<sup>5</sup> He could foresee the upcoming challenges in business environment, many of them discussed in his book Management Challenges for 21<sup>st</sup> Century in 1999. He had the talent to express complex ideas in simple way. He stressed on the power of observation, creating connections and listening which can bring out astonishing results. Drucker could foresee the future which is depicted in many concepts. His philosophy has been summarized under following heads:

- **Innovation and creativity:** He stressed on being innovative and creative while managing the organisations and people. For him the definition of creativity was much wider. In a way he stood against the thinking of Max Weber who emphasized on bureaucratic type of organisations in scientific management era.
- **Dynamic organisations:** Organisations must be dynamic enough to incorporate changes in their systems. The business world is dynamic and organisations have to face change without any option. Thus static organizations can't survive for long term.

- **Knowledge worker concept:** He advocated that the workers are assets rather than liabilities for organisations. They are not only the cogs in machines, but a crucial component of organisation. They carry varied skills and calibers, they must be considered as knowledge workers. They need to be trusted and respected for their performance.
- **Unique Skills:** Drucker considered management as the most crucial organ in the entire organisational system, which has no functions of itself, but it exists through functions. Managers need unique skills to achieve objectives, vision and mission, organise tasks, motivate people and to manage social impacts of working. A manager must possess administrative skills, entrepreneurial skills, decision making, communication skills and managerial skills to manage the organisations well.
- **Objective setting:** Managers perform variety of functions, out of which objective setting is the most crucial. He categorised eight areas where he stressed that objective setting is essential: market standing, innovation, productivity, physical and financial resources, profitability, managerial performance and development, worker performance and attitude, public responsibility.
- **Balanced organisational structure:** Drucker' views were completely opposite to Weber's bureaucratic organisational structure idea. He emphasized on the adoption of a balanced structure which is both task as well as people oriented. The purpose should be to design such an organisational structure which is simple with least number of levels and where the goals can be attained in an organised way.
- **Young manager concentration:** The young managers should be trained well to make them successful future managers.
- **Federalism:** He suggested that the organisations should function as federal government and state governments do. He advocated the idea of centralized control in a decentralized structure. The top managers must be relieved from routine tasks to concentrate on crucial areas.
- **MBO:** He considered MBO as the philosophy of managing which requires a complete change in organisations. The technique aims at matching the individual goals with organisational goals. The process of setting objective should be made participative as far as possible.

Drucker taught gigantic concepts in simple terms. He taught upcoming generations of managers the importance of picking the best people, focusing on innovation and change, thinking being on customers' side, the need to understand their competitive advantages and to continue to update.

#### b) Tom Peters (November 7, 1942): Search for excellence

The place of Tom Peters in management literature can be highlighted through the words of Warren Bennis "If Peter Drucker invented modern management; Tom Peters repainted it in Technicolor."<sup>6</sup> Peters focused on proposing easy and practical solutions to the business challenges and to improve the decision making skills of managers working at varied levels of organisations. He advocated that management role is not to look at the numbers or figures, rather aim must be to attain its vision through productive leadership. His contributions to the field of management are summed up here:

- **Search of Excellence:** Peters published an article 'Search for Excellence with Robert H. Waterman Jr in 1982. He selected forty three fortune companies which had shown excellent performance over last 20 years some of which were Mc Donald, Procter and Gamble, IBM etc. he studies that the business environment is ever evolving and how these excellent organisations perform successfully in this environment. He analysed how these organizations work successfully in the radically changed environment having new consumers and technologies. From his analysis he identified eight common areas which contribute towards the success of these companies: a bias for action, closeness with the customer to learn from him, autonomy and entrepreneurship, productivity, value driven management, stick to the knitting (doing what you know), lean and simple staff. He further gave views opposite to the thought of F.W. Taylor, as the focus of Taylor was only on task. Peters emphasised on the role of people and customers.
- **Dynamic Leadership:** The leaders can't remain static. Good leaders emphasize on enhancing productivity, but by moving hand in hand with people. He further added that most of leadership that is observed today is grey, dull and indistinct leadership. A leader shouldn't create followers, but future leaders.
- **7-S Framework:** He proposed a unique model known as Mc Kinsey 7S model, which can be a method of self assessment for the organisations. he considered Strategy, Structure, Systems as Hard S's and Staff, Style, Skills and Shared Values as Soft S's in his model.
- **Liberation management:** Tom Peters challenged the assumption of strict organisational structure. He supported the idea of being innovative and creative while managing the organisations. He advocated that the organisations come in direct contact with many internal and external forces, so the structure should be flexible and liberal enough to incorporate upcoming challenges. The new ideas from organisational members must be welcomed. When power and individual liberty move together in organisations, he called such system as liberation management.

Peters' ideas were considered as the most influential ideas of modern time. Fortune has tagged him with the status of 'Ur Guru' of management (guru of gurus) and economists called him Uber-guru.

#### c) C.K. Prahalad (1941-2010): Core Competency

Coimbatore Krishna Rao Prahalad a professor, researcher, an author, speaker, and prominent management consultant based in US<sup>7</sup>. Business Week called him a brilliant teacher at University of Michigan<sup>8</sup> and quoted that 'he may well be the most influential thinker on business strategy today'.<sup>9</sup> Prahalad gave new strategic concepts for the organisations which were quite different from traditional ideas on strategy.<sup>10</sup> He worked as a non-executive director at Hindustan Unilever, the NCR corporation, Pearson (publisher of financial times) and was a member of Microsoft's Indian Advisory Board<sup>11</sup>. He presented the very best of Indian intellect that found a global home.<sup>12</sup> His novel strategic outlook was extensively welcomed in the U.S. organisations. He was one of the most sought after business advisors as well. Coimbatore Krishnarao Prahalad proposed two major ideas to the field of management which were: the idea of core competencies of the organization and the idea of looking at poor as source of profit than an object of charity. His work contributed immensely in the upliftment of the poor, helped various businesses and also showed the world the real key to success.

- **Idea of co-creation:** C.K. Prahalad developed the idea of co-creation together with Venkat Ramaswamy in the book 'The Future of Competition' in 2004. He advocated that the organisations can't produce at their own, rather customers should be involved in every stage of value chain of the product such as idea, design, services etc. Dynamic organisations would be able to incorporate the suggestions proposed by customers at a faster pace. Thus the organisations need to be in continuous contact with customers and must be dynamic enough to incorporate their proposals. This, according to them, would offer a new customer experience in addition to the obvious customer satisfaction, as the customers would be able to get exactly what they desire.
- **Idea of core competency:** Joint ventures and collaborations were quite common in the decades of eighties and nineties. The organisations were entering into partnerships with related as well as unrelated businesses to reduce the risk level. In such times, Prahalad proposed a unique idea and advocated that the corporations should focus on their main strength i.e. core competency. He compared the 'Diversified Company' as a tree and major limbs as core products, smaller branches as business units' leaves and fruit as end products and the root system which nourishes and stabilizes all things as core competencies. Thus the organisations should concentrate on improving core competencies only. An organisation may have more than one core competency, but in actual core competency is the peculiar skill that makes an organisation distinct from its competitors.

Prahalad was a man with great vision. His other contributions to the field of management were idea of bottom of the pyramid, strategic intent etc. He was a remarkable teacher, researcher, entrepreneur, and a management guru. He saw the future and introduced various theories that made people believe that the world can be made a better place. His theories made a great difference to India and other developing countries worldwide.

#### d) Michael Hammer (1948-2008): Business Process Reengineering

Another thought that appeared during the postmodern era was the idea of BPR (Business Process Reengineering) by a well-known American engineer, a management author Michael Martin Hammer. He supported the process oriented management view in 1990s. Hammer defined BPR as 'the fundamental rethinking and radical redesigning of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical measures of performance.' His ideas coined the terms such as process improvement, process excellence and process innovation. This unique idea became popular among many companies of that time but it was argued that the radical redesigning of firms led to layoff at a very large scale. Hammer's contributions to the field of management are summarized here:

- **Need of innovativeness:** Hammer advocated that innovation is needed at each and every stage and can't be ignored at all. In his paper titled 'The invention and deployment of new ways of doing work' (2004), he stressed on the issue of operational innovation. He discussed that successful companies achieve success not because of what they do, but due to how they do. He gave description of many giant companies such as Dell, Toyota, Apple, Google and Southwest Airlines who have expanded their businesses by stressing on operational innovation. These companies have proved themselves to be much better than their

competitors. He explained that only those companies will be able to sustain themselves which will work for innovation. Offering innovative products and services to customers is the only option to be successful in the marketplace.

- **Process and customer orientation:** Hammer's ideas were focused on customers and processes that provide and enhance value for customers. He stressed on redesigning the processes of organisation so that customers' value is maximized. He advocated that 'putting oneself into customer shoes' can assist in process improvements. The organisation should continuously take care of what customer wants and the actual product should correspond to the customer requirements. Hammer supported the view that in twenty first century, only those organisations will be successful which will concentrate on improving their processes. Excellence in processes will give competitive advantage to future successful organisations.
- **Complete reorganization:** Hammer argued that to be distinct in the marketplace the organisations require complete reorganization. Process excellence is going to be the only criteria for success in the organisations. The processes in these organisations must be designed to give customer satisfaction.
- **End of Adam Smith era:** Hammer advocated that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations, where changes occur every second, the principle of division of labour doesn't apply. The nature of organisations has changed, so reengineering of these organizations is must.
- **Information Workers:** When the organisations will be reengineered, the managers need to be facilitators not supervisors. They need to empower their employees and to provide them guidance and support. The employees should be made ready to give their best for value added processes. They must be recognized for their contributions.

The concept of BPR was a unique idea, but critics took this idea similar to downsizing and it led to firing of a huge number of workmen. In an interview Hammer said that the word reengineering has been hijacked and used in wrong sense in organisations. In actual this concept was aimed at increasing output and creating more jobs.

#### e) Peter Michael Senge (1947 till date)

Peter M. Senge, an American system scientist also walked on the idea of change and dynamism. He worked in the area of how the modern organisations can inculcate adaptive capabilities. The well popular concept to his credit is 'Learning Organizations'. He advocated for the organisations which improve and update themselves on continuous basis. He discussed his ideas in 1990s (revised in 2006) in his famous publication 'The Fifth Discipline: Art and Practice of Learning Organisation'. Due to this work he became popularly known as 'Strategist of the Century'. His major areas of work are:

- **Dynamism and change are must:** Senge advocated that while performing in business markets, the organisations face both opportunities as well as certain restrictions. In many organisations adaptation to change is restricted due to cultural and interpersonal aspects. But change is needed to be a part of organisations. When a change is productive and a precondition for success, people will certainly support such change. The things need to be discussed with all and problems must be anticipated instead of seeking expert advice on the issue of change.
- **Learning Organisations:** Senge coined the concept of learning organisations, which got acceptance in modern organisations very quickly. He foresaw the vision of having learning organisations which would be exemplary for their workings. Learning organisations are the organisations where people work as a group and move with the idea of continuous enhancement of their capabilities, new thinking patterns are welcomed and people learn on regular basis. To create and maintain a learning organisation, the flexibility and adaptability in the organisational structure is must. The designing of the organisations must be such that it can lead to desired outcomes and whenever there is mismatch it should take the required steps to come at the point of equilibrium. Besides being adaptive learning organisations need to know how the talent and commitment of organisational people can be tapped to make them learn the things. The human element has to be convinced and a shift in their thinking is required. They must be trained and guided in such a way that they could handle unpredictable situations as well. He replaced the idea of survival learning with adaptive and generative learning i.e. learning should not be for survival but to cope up with change and to be creative. He further identified five areas to create learning organisations: System thinking (how individual interacts with the other constituents of the system/organisation and with the system itself), personal mastery (organisations learn only through individual learning, thus focus must be on continual/lifelong learning of individual by knowing their own competence and skills together with in competencies), mental models (assumptions that affect how an individual thinks and acts, it can be changed by being open with others), building shared vision (when people excel not because they are told but they want) and team learning (moving together through free dialogue).

Senge's vision of learning organisation required a new view of leadership. He advocated that leaders must perform certain important tasks such as being designers, stewards and teachers. He was able to add many new thoughts in the literature of management by turning normal organisations into learning organisations.

#### f) Steve Jobs (1955-2011): Supporter of Change and Innovation

Inventor and co founder, Chairman and CEO of Apple Inc. Steve Jobs contributed immensely towards management thought in Post Modernism Era. He gave unique ideas for managing and leading people over his life time. He advocated that technology is ever evolving and upcoming technologies constantly extricate the established business winners. Thus an organisation is needed to be dynamic enough to make use of new technologies to fight with global competition. Steve's leadership style didn't match with any of the text books, but it was liked too much in the business world. He was in full favour of dynamism and he used to spend many months for introduction of products, public appearances and rehearsals. He made the lives of people different by thinking differently. His management ideology can be visualized from following points:

- **Supporter of Change:** Steve was thinking of changing the world. He once quoted that he wants to put a dent in the universe. He made revolutionary changes in the areas of mobiles, computers, music and animations. He advocated that only those businesses will survive in long run, which will be adaptive to the technological changes.
- **Unique management style:** His management style was far different from that of text books styles. He managed people with the uncompromising style. He used to threaten and embarrass people inside and outside his organisation. He converted Apple into an icon in business world by ignoring the traditional management style of building consensus. He never cared what other feel about anything, people agree with him or not. He believed that he knows far better than his subordinates and even the consumers. He pushed the employees to come out of their comfort zones and work towards the targets they didn't believe they could achieve. Further he emphasised on creating best products rather than selling.

No doubt Jobs grasped a special place in the business world. He chose a different road and believed in 'managing by meaning'. He hadn't stressed on listening to customers, rather he gave new meanings through his unique products. He constantly engaged himself in making such products that could make more sense for the customers. His approach was not user driven, but he made his own proposals to them. He made his people work hard on visionary projects and meeting targets. His devotion, skills, innovative mind and different thinking led him towards unparalleled success.

### 3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The period of Postmodernism rejected a rational systems approach regarding the organizations and management. Highly flexible, free-flowing and fluid structures with the ability to change quickly to meet present demands form the basis of the new organization. Most of the thinkers in this era supported the concept of dynamism. Peter Drucker (the father of modern management) stressed on creating dynamic organisations through innovation and creativity, Tom Peters through his search for excellence stressed on dynamic leadership, Michael Hammer stressed on redesigning the business processes, Peter Senge on continuous learning, while Steve Jobs advocated for continuous innovation and creativity in the organizations. Thus the thinkers in the post modern era realized the fact that same technique or theory can't be applied forever, as business environment would never be static. The thinking that emerged in the Post Modern era directly challenged the view point of classical thinkers who were in favour of static organisational structures.

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