Employees' and Employers' Perception on Empowerment in Organisation: Insights from Arthashastra & Bhagavad Gita

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Abstract:

This article explores the multifaceted concept of employee empowerment within organizations, focusing on its significance, strategies, and theoretical underpinnings. Drawing from various studies and perspectives, it delves into the importance of empowering employees for enhanced engagement, loyalty, and organizational success. The discussion encompasses strategies such as involving employees in decision-making and planning processes, offering praise and continual support, and fostering a collaborative work environment.

From theoretical frameworks like the Need Theory to Indian perspectives exemplified by Kautilya's SHASTRA model, the article examines empowerment through the lens of motivation, leadership, and cultural ethos. It underscores the holistic approach needed for empowerment, encompassing psychological dimensions, organizational practices, and leadership philosophies. Moreover, it emphasizes the role of continuous learning, transparency, and social networking in fostering empowerment within organizations. By blending empirical research with theoretical insights and cultural wisdom, the article provides a comprehensive understanding of empowerment's dynamics and its implications for organizational growth and sustainability. It highlights the interconnectedness of individual empowerment, organizational culture, and leadership ethos in driving success and fostering innovation. Ultimately, the article advocates for a proactive approach towards empowering employees, viewing it as essential for achieving organizational goals and fostering a thriving work environment.

Key words: Organization Empowerment, Arthashartra and Bhagavad Gita

1: Introduction

Employees' and employers' perception on empowerment in organizations is a critical aspect that influences employee engagement and loyalty. Studies have shown that while there may be a cordial relationship between management and employees, there is a need for management to strengthen their strategies to empower employees and engage them more effectively in the working processes (Zafer, Bekirogullari., 2019). Employee empowerment is a management approach that has numerous benefits for organizations, such as higher work satisfaction, lower turnover rates, and enhanced productivity (Poliana, Cardoso-Gustavson, 2023). It has been found that servant leadership, perceived organization, and empowerment have a significant effect on employee loyalty directly, and empowerment can mediate the effects of servant leadership and perceived organization on employee loyalty (Fitriyana et al, 2023). Additionally, the use of employees' attitudes and opinion surveys can play a crucial role in the process of empowerment,

providing a roadmap for managers interested in strengthening the position of employees in the organization (Konrad, Kulikowski., 2017). Furthermore, structural empowerment has been found to have a positive impact on employees' perception of empowerment, with certain dimensions such as opportunity, information, support, and resources contributing significantly to this perception (José, Román.,2019).

In a competitive environment in which organizations must be faster, leaner, provide better service quality, be more efficient, and more profitable, an empowered and proactive service worker is thought to be essential (Melhem, 2004). Universal brotherhood, pursuit of knowledge, righteous living, clarity about the 'goal of life', focus on action and peaceful coexistence have always been part of Indian ethos. However, delegation of authority for a long period of time in the past, dominated the management field. In fact, this view changed into the "empowerment" concept as mentioned by Kocel (1998). It covers the participation and delegation of authority along with the motivation of the employees. Managers began to prefer a style, which liberates the creative and innovative "energies" and potentials of employees while benefiting shareholders, suppliers, and customers as well (Gandz 1990; Appelbaum, Hébert, Leroux, 1999). Thus, the past three decades have been full of empirical and conceptual research dealing specifically with employee empowerment and autonomy (Berber and Karabulut 2002).

Employee empowerment is a term used to express the ways in which non-managerial staff can make autonomous decisions without consulting a boss/manager. These self-willed decisions can be small or large depending upon the degree of power with which the company wishes to invest on employees. Employee empowerment can begin with the training and converting a whole company to an empowerment model. Conversely it may merely mean giving employees the ability to make some decisions on their own. For employee empowerment to work successfully, the management team must be truly committed to allowing employees to make decisions. They may wish to define the scope of decisions made. Building decision-making teams is often one of the models used in employee empowerment, because it allows for managers and workers to contribute ideas toward directing the company according to its goal and vision. No matter what business we are doing, employees are the backbone of the company. When they are happy and productive, sales will flourish and through which the stake holders of the company get satisfied and through which the organisation also will grow. However, if employees feel dissatisfied or as if they are lacking control, their discomfort will come across to the customers. As a result, the business may suffer. In order to keep the company on track, the employers need to empower employees for optimum performance and greater job satisfaction.

But what exactly does it mean to empower the employees? Empowerment means making people feel valued by involving them in decisions, asking them to participate in the planning process, praising them, and continually providing adequate training and support. It's giving the employees the opportunity to contribute to the company's overall success. When the employers allow the employees to think independently and take any decision in the company, they will respond with increased work effort and greater efficiency. Most of the researcher, academician and business consultant have pointed out too many on empowerment of employees in the organisation, few common points are found that the following are four keys to employee's empowerment that can help a particular company grow.

1.1: Involve the employees in the decision – making process

In many companies, important decisions regarding the business come from senior level management. While a prudent approach to ensure the company's overall success, many times these decisions directly affect the lower-level employees. If the final outcome of the decision is a less than positive one for the employees, often they feel mistreated and unappreciated.

Employers can keep morale high and empower the employees by involving them in business decisions that directly relate to them. For example, if the company is considering a dress code change, allow its employees to voice their opinions on the new dress code and offer suggestions for portraying more professional image. This does not mean that the employers have to follow every decision of employees make; it simply offers them an outlet to feel a part of the team and contributor to the company's overall success.

Employees who are not given opportunity to make decisions tend to become passive and lethargic. Although they may perform tasks and meet expectations, they do so without that spark of enthusiasm and excitement that brings meaning to what they do and to what the customers see.

1.2: Involve the employees in the planning process –

In few companies, self-directed work teams meet regularly to brainstorm ways to save money and work more efficiently. They take an active role in the goal setting and planning process for the company as well as themselves. By doing so, they are not only becoming empowered, but they are also learning about their own capabilities and limitations.

Whenever possible, allow the employees to take an active role in planning the company's future. Instead of simply declaring new goal to the employees need to reach, ask the work team to come up with their own realistic monthly goal and plan to reach that number. Then work team/employees can analyze the goal to make sure it's feasible and attainable.

By allowing the employees to be an active part of the planning process, they know their input matters in to the company's bottom line. Additionally, they will be more apt to strive to meet the goal if they know they set it themselves and laid a plan to reach it.

1.3: Offer praise freely

when was the last time the employer praised an employee for a job well done? In too many companies, management inadvertently neglects to offer praise on a regular basis. As a result, many employees are left to wonder how their performance rates. Without such guidance they can easily become apprehensive about their job requirements and how to handle challenging situations. In order to empower employees and develop a sense of competence and confidence, praise them for their performance, encourage them to take risks and acknowledge their accomplishments, no matter how small. This is particularly important when employees are beginning to work on new tasks or when an employee moves into a new jobs description. When the employees know that they are doing a good job, they will want to repeat the process again and again. They will also be more willing to try new ideas and challenges in order to meet customers' needs. The result will be motivated employees who are eager to help the company grow.

1.4: Provide continual training and support

if the employers want the employees to feel confident of their abilities, they need the proper job training and support for long lasting in an organisation. Many companies offer an introductory training period when a new employee comes in to organisation, but then the training stop after a certain length of time. Unfortunately, most job responsibilities are continually evolving as the company matures, and employees are left without the skills they need to complete their newly assigned tasks. Hence, most of the companies are failure to tackle some work activities when new technology absorbed in the organisation.

Employees should always be encouraged to ask for assistance and support. If the employees feel intimidated to seek out training, they can become frustrated with their job and lose their interest. Let the employees know that asking for help is not a sign of weakness; rather, it is sign of strength. When the employees approach their supervisor/boss for help, supervisor/boss is to be sure not to turn them away

with comments such as, "you still don't know how to do that?" Instead, ask. "Where are you having problems? What can I clear up for you?" when they know that they can get the assistance they need, they will be empowered for greater job efficiency.

When empowering the employees, the employer creates an environment where people are encouraged to explore, discover, take risks and develop trust. The employer enables employees to succeed by providing them with the means, opportunity and capacity they need to excel. The result is growth, innovation and satisfaction. If the employer will give importance, and they one among company's growth and its future, the employees will get more satisfaction; they will convey those feelings to the customers through improved service and ultimately the organisation will grow gradually to attain its long term tem goal. So, if the company wants to grow to new heights, begin by empowering the whole employees in an organisation is very essential. Empowered employees will always rise to the occasion; do the best job possible, and help the employer compete in the global market place.

1.5: Collaborative work as empowerment

"Employees often think of empowerment in terms of self-empowerment. They lose sight of the fact that teamwork and cooperation depend on each element in the system working in concert with every other element." (Landes, 1994). The team concept of empowerment probably developed out of the quality circle efforts of the 1970s and 1980s (Sims, 1986). Empowerment from this perspective is "an act of building, developing, and increasing power through cooperating, sharing, and working together" (Rothstein, 1995). In other words empowerment means managing organizations by collaboration where workers have a voice (Gorden, 1995).

2: Multi-dimensional Perspectives on Empowerment

Macy, Thompson, and Farais (1995) identify the major components of high performing organizations to be very similar to those found in the literature on empowering organizations. They include activities such as multi-skilling, cross training, self-directed work teams, and horizontal design; human resource systems such as learning and development, job enrichment/enlargement, peer review, and innovative compensation plans; and total quality management that involves line employees such as statistical process control techniques, just-in time inventory and delivery, and formalized supplier/vendor partnerships. In addition to the empowering aspects, they identify the use of technology as a key component of high performance. The psychological dimension of empowerment moves away from the traditional study of management practices and instead emphasizes employees' perceptions (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001). Through such an approach, the emphasis is upon perceptions and beliefs of power, competence, control and self-efficacy (Psoinos and Smithson, 2002). Conger and Kanungo (1988) claimed that empowerment involves a motivational concept of self-efficacy. This notion was further refined by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) who developed a cognitive model of empowerment. They defined empowerment as increased intrinsic task motivation and outlined four cognitions, which they claim are the basis of worker empowerment: sense of impact; competence; meaningfulness; and choice. A very similar definition of empowerment was outlined by Lee and Koh (2001) who described four dimensions (listed below) as describing the psychological state of the subordinate:

1. Meaningfulness - The meaning of a value of a task goal or purpose judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards.
2. Competence - Competence is an individual's belief in his/her capability to perform task activities skillfully.

3. Self-determination (or choice) - Autonomy in the initiation and continuation of work behaviors and processes.

4. Impact - The perception of the degree to which an individual can influence certain outcomes at work.

2.1: Definitions

Empowerment - The Oxford English dictionary defines the verb empower as "to enable". In contrast to the earlier definition of empowerment as delegation (of authority and resource sharing), enabling implies motivating through enhancing personal efficacy.

In the management literature on power and empowerment, often both meanings are fused together, and their relationships to each other are not clear. For instance, whetten and Cameron (1984) alluded to power as both gaining control over limited resources and as a sign of personal efficacy.

Employee's Empowerment – "Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behaves, take action, and control work and decision making in autonomous ways. It is the state of feeling self-empowered to take control of one's own destiny".

"**Empowerment** is not just a matter of delegating job authority to the jobholders. It means that 'everyone can take action to enhance his or her work, either in personal or organizational terms'. Instead of the traditional bureaucracy, with its emphasis on control, standardization and obedience, empowerment could also focus surround of innovation, flexibility, commitment, zero defects and continuous improvement in the organisation".

2.2: Theoretical frameworks:

Need theory – It was written by David McClelland, psychologist. It is a motivational model that attempts to explain how the needs for achievement, power, and affiliation affect the actions of people from a 'managerial context'. It is often taught in classes concerning management or organizational behavior. This theory discusses broadly three dimensions of human needs as follows;

Need for Achievement

People who are achievement-motivated typically prefer to master a task or situation. They prefer working on tasks of moderate difficulty, prefer work in which the results are based on their effort rather than on luck, and prefer to receive feedback on their work.

Need for Affiliation

People who have a need for affiliation prefer to spend time creating and maintaining social relationships, being a part of groups, and desire feeling loved and accepted. People in this group do not typically make effective managers because they worry too much about how others will feel about them.

Need for Power

This motivational need stems from one's desire to influence, teach, or encourage others. People in this category enjoy work and place a high value on discipline. The downside to this motivational type is that group goals can become zero-sum in nature. For one to win, another must lose. However, this can be positively applied to help accomplish group goals and to help others in the group feel competent about their work.

From the understanding of need theory, we could get insight and further we analyze that how we utilize the theory to empower the employees in the organisation. Above mentioned definitions talks enabling and authorizing an individual to think, behave, take action, control work and decision making in an autonomous way. Hence, we can see some commonality concept between the theory and definition of empowerment. Employers/managers could satisfy stake holders of the company and achieve organisation goal by empowering employees by creating social relationship among the employees within the

organization, giving feedback against their work, authorize power to take decision at least in the work profile

2.3: Empowerment in Organisation – Indian Perspective

According to Kautilya the organization's philosophy should be clearly defined and the leadership should be such that it complements the organization philosophy (Manrai, R., & Goel, U. (2016). Manrai, R., & Goel, U. (2016) proposed SHASTRA model (See Figure 1). 'S' highlights that the purpose of all business organizations is social development of all stakeholders of the firm and not just profit maximization. 'H' stresses that top management should not just concentrate on self-development but must be devoted for higher purpose which is maximization of shareholders wealth and growth of all stakeholders. 'A' signifies the importance of good administration and authority which stresses the principles of effective corporate governance as suggested by Kautilya. The next 'S' lays emphasis on the importance of having higher standards and values in management. This derives from the principles of value-based management. 'T' signifies the importance of continuous training and development of all employees including top management to increase their skill and knowledge level. 'R' lays high emphasis on reliability and transparency of the system. This is achieved if the business follows effective corporate governance practices. Finally, 'A' highlights the importance of association and group dynamics i.e., it stresses on significance of group discussion, consultation with area experts and brainstorming.

- S stands for Social and society development
- H stands for Higher propose
- A stands for Authority and administration
- S stands for Standards and values
- T stands for Training and development
- R stands for Reliability and transparency
- A stands for Association and group dynamics

Figure 1: Showing the SHASTRA model of Management.

In Arthashastra we learn that a leader must have a strong network to gain information of external and internal forces. This information helps him to formulate policies and plans to have a competitive edge over his enemies. A leader must verify every information from other sources. This will help the leader to adopt a sustainable approach which will be beneficial for the organization. Correct data will support in having a correct decision for the betterment of employees and the organization.

Chanakya outlines the advantages of networking/socializing with influential people, as well as those with greater experience. And not surprisingly, makes a rather persuasive case for hanging out with those of greater experience, strength, intelligence, and power and adopting the best practices which has passed the litmus test of sustainability. Adopting the best practices which are those methods or programs that have been found to be successful in accomplishing the goals of "Mitra" Organisations and that can be used, or adapted for use, in present organizations (Patki, P., 2014).

In Bhagvadita of Chapter 2.54 how does a empowered person How does an enlightened person talk? How does he sit? How does he walk? In reply to Arjuns query Bhagavan Krishna gives a clear description key characteristic of empowered individual in the following verses of 2.55 to 2.60 in The Yog of Analytical Knowledge, Sankya Yoga of Bhagavad Gita

Verses (Samskritham)	Verses (English)	Meaning
प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्पार्थ मनोगतान् । आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥ 55 ॥	prajahāti yadā kāmānsarvānpārtha manōgatān ॥ ātmanyēvātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñastadōchyatē ॥ 55 ॥	When one discards all selfish desires and cravings of the senses that torment the mind, and becomes satisfied in the realization of the self, such a person is said to be *transcendentally* situated.
दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः । वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥ 56 ॥	duḥkhēṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukhēṣu vigataspṛhaḥ ॥ vītarāgabhayakrōdhaḥ sthitadhīrmuniruchyatē ॥ 56 ॥	One whose mind remains undisturbed amidst misery, who does not crave for pleasure, and who is free from attachment, fear, and anger, is called a sage of *steady wisdom.*
यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् । नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ 57 ॥	yaḥ sarvatrānabhisnēhastattatprāpya śubhāśubham ॥ nābhinandati na dvēṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā ॥ 57 ॥	One who remains unattached under all conditions, and is neither delighted by good fortune nor dejected by tribulation, he is a sage with *perfect knowledge.*
यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः । इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ 58 ॥	yadā saṃharatē chāyaṃ kūrmō'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ ॥ indriyāṇīndriyārthēbhyastasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā ॥ 58 ॥	One who is able to *withdraw the senses* from their objects, just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs into its shell, is established in divine wisdom.
विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः । रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥ 59 ॥	viṣayā vinivartantē nirāhārasya dēhinaḥ ॥ rasavarjaṃ rasō'pyasya paraṃ dṛṣṭvā nivartatē ॥ 59 ॥	Aspirants may restrain the senses from their objects of enjoyment, but the taste for the sense objects remains. However, even this taste ceases for those who realizes the Supreme with *persistence.*

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः । इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥ 60 ॥	yatatō hyapi kauntēya puruṣasya vipaśchitaḥ । indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabhaṃ manaḥ ॥ 60 ॥	The senses are so strong and turbulent, O son of Kunti, that they can forcibly carry away the mind even of a person endowed with discrimination who **practices self-control**.

The STITHPRAGYA model is an example of simplified wisdom from Indian culture that focuses on positive social change through empowerming of oneself. The new concepts lile Self leadership, positive psychology and emotional intelligence have gained lot of attention recent times. It would be interesting to explore the prevalence of these concepts in a deeper, more subtle format in the Indian Knowledge tradition and give management students an opportunity to discover the unlimited potential within every human being. Mind Management would equip every future professional with a heightened level of Self Awareness, self empowerment and ability to focus on action rather than results, a sense of equanimity, a 'viveksheel mind' guided by empathy, compassion and kindness; motivated by the ideal of "vasudhaivakutumbakam" and a well integrated wholisitic development of personality. The proposed empowrement model of STITHPRAGYA highlights the key characteristics of empowered individual (See figure 2).

S: SELF CONTROL

T: TRANSENDTAL KNOWLEDGE

I: INSIGHTFUL

T: TIMELY

H: HARMONY

P: PERFECT KNOWLEDGE

R: REGULATION OF SENSES

A: ACCEPTANCE

G: GRATITUDE

Y: YOGA

A: AWARE

Figure 2: Showing the Sthithaprgana Model

An effective work culture is about vigorous and arduous efforts in pursuit of given or chosen tasks. Sri Krishna elaborates on two types of work culture "daivi sampat" or divine work culture and "asuri sampat" or demonic work culture. Daivi work culture - involves fearlessness, purity, self-control, sacrifice,

straightforwardness, self-denial, calmness, absence of fault-finding, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of envy and pride. Asuri work culture - involves egoism, delusion, personal desires, improper performance, work not oriented towards service. Disinterested work finds expression in devotion, surrender and equipoise. The former two are psychological while the third is determination to keep the mind free of the dualistic. (Usually taken to mean "materialistic") pulls of daily experiences. Detached involvement in work is the key to mental equanimity or the state of 'nirdwanda." concentration on the task for its own sake leads to the achievement of excellence (Bhattathiry, M. P, 2004).

2.4: Implications for Management

To harness the tremendous power of the human mind, there is a need to nurture it with patience and care. Whether it is Managerial Economics, Marketing, Accounting or Finance: the stability of the human mind behind the steering wheel is crucial in all cognitive processes such as problem solving, decision making etc. In addition to teaching participants of Management Programs how to manage resources, processes, structure, and people; it is important to ensure they know how to manage themselves well in different environments. Stress, conflict, and change are inevitable ingredients of professional life.

The philosophy of management and the Gita propound that all human actions are directed towards a goal and that man will not relent unless and until he attains the goal. Gita offers a framework for stimulating high levels of motivation and provide vital clues for alternative paradigms of management. A careful study of Gita from leads to important principles that managers must inherit to create rightful and long living organizations (Mahadevan, B., 2015).

The insights from Arthashastra and Bhagavata on empowerment will give a wholistic approach in understanding the employee and employer perception of empowerment. From the Arthashastra perspective, empowerment is not an emotional or egalitarian gesture, but a strategic instrument to ensure organizational efficiency, ethical governance, and long-term stability. It calls for a balance between delegation and control, freedom and responsibility, and individual growth and institutional purpose.

1. **Self-Leadership through Karma Yoga**
   o *Karma Yoga*, as described in the Bhagavad Gita, advocates performing one's duties selflessly without attachment to outcomes (Easwaran, 2007). This fosters **intrinsic motivation** and accountability.
   o **Managerial Implication**: Organizations can promote empowerment by fostering environments where employees are encouraged to focus on effort, ethics, and learning over mere results. This supports decentralized decision-making and trust.

2. **Understanding Employee Dispositions through Triguna Theory**
   o The *Triguna* framework (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas) explains behavioral tendencies and psychological traits in individuals (Rao, 2011). This offers a **personalized lens** to empowerment.
   o **Managerial Implication**: Managers can tailor empowerment strategies based on individuals' dominant guna—e.g., encouraging sattvic employees through knowledge sharing, rajasic ones through goals and incentives, and tamasic ones through structured guidance.

3. **Decentralized but Monitored Administration**
   o While the king (leader) holds ultimate authority, the Arthashastra promotes delegation to various departmental heads and regional administrators (adhyakshas), with clear mandates and systems of surveillance and audits to ensure accountability (Kangle, 1960).
   o Managerial Implication: Empowerment involves strategic delegation with strong accountability systems. Employees are given autonomy, but within well-defined roles and monitored outcomes.

4. **Collective Empowerment through Seva and Community Orientation**

- *Seva* or selfless service emphasizes working for the collective good. Empowerment is not only about individual autonomy but about contributing to shared well-being (Tewari, 2016).
- **Managerial Implication**: Teams can be empowered by encouraging collaborative goals, peer learning, and a culture of mutual respect, thus reducing hierarchical rigidity.

Conclusion

Research suggests that employee empowerment is multi-dimensional. It involves how leaders lead, how individuals react, how peers interact, and how work-related processes are structured.

Employee empowerment will not happen naturally in organizations. Too many disempowering structures have been built into them over the years. Changing leadership alone will not engender an empowered organization nor will individuals be learning about empowerment and taking responsibility for what they can in their given environment. Both the leadership component and the individual component will have an impact, but they will not be as successful as they could be. According to the Ancient wisdom literature, only when a multidimensional approach is taken will the organization become empowering. The multi-dimensional constructs that appear repeatedly in the Bhagvad Gita and Kautilya Arthashastra.

The aspects of Teams and collaborative working arrangements; Personal responsibility for performance exemplified in job autonomy, control over decisions directly relating to one's work, job enrichment through multi-skilling and cross training, access to information to measure one's own performance and make good decisions, and allowance of risk taking are governed by organizational empowerment..

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