

Power to Decide: Women and Decision Making

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All of us have heard of Swami Vivekananda, the wandering monk who lived from 1863 to 1902 was one of the finest minds that our country ever produced. Vivekananda's spirituality was a reflection of his understanding of life. He viewed life dispassionately and saw divinity in every being. This understanding of the broader meanings of life also made him a champion of women's rights. He wanted the women to be empowered so that they could deal with their lives themselves. His advice to men was, "our right of interference is limited entirely to giving education. Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. And our Indian women are capable of doing it as any in the world."

Empowering women may sound simple but is not that easy to execute. It involves a series of interconnected aspects. The solution may differ from case to case depending on the context. It involves two main processes.

- ❖ Creation of the right environment.
- ❖ Women being able to act in such an environment.

While the task of creating the right environment is mostly external, something which has to be done by the society, the second one – viz women being able to act is such an environment – is an individual choice. A woman can choose to act or not to act in a particular situation. But this would require her to make an informed decision. It is this decision making process that we are going to focus in this lecture.

The dictionary meaning of "decision" is "a conclusion or resolution reached after consideration" and decision making is the step by step process through which one reaches such conclusion. What this basically tells us is that "decision making" is a mental process but it depends on several external factors.

Let me explain it with a story. There once lived a naughty child. While he was growing up, he happened to notice for the first time a fire burning and wanted to know what it was. His father told him that it produces a lot of heat and advised him to stay away from it lest it burn him. But the kid wasn't convinced and decided to try. He tried to touch the fire and got his hands burnt.

So the child made a decision to touch the fire though his father had told him not to and burnt his hands. This means that though he had someone advising him against doing it, his own mind was not mature enough to understand it. This means that the decision making capacity of a person is not only dependent on external factors, but also has to do with the mental maturity of each person.



Women are roughly 50 percent of the world's population and have a key role to play in the day to day affairs. Womanhood is a gift of nature and women are blessed with some unique traits. We are called the weaker sex by the West but the truth is they are mistaking our kindness as weakness. A woman has to play several roles in her personal and professional life. She is a daughter, a student, a professional, a mother, a wife, an aunt, a teacher, a cop, a minister, a lawyer, a grandmother and what not. The different roles require her to take different decisions depending on the facts and circumstances.

What should I study today, what should I eat today, what should I wear today, what should I say today, what job should I do, am I happy in my job and life, should I marry that particular person or should I marry at all, should I have kids, should I be bothered only about my rights or should I think about others too – these are questions all of us ask ourselves in some point in our lives.

The answer to each depends on our decision making capacity. And this capacity matures with time. Looking back at our teens, haven't we all wondered how silly we were then? What it actually means is that the decision that we made then appears to be immature to us now.

So those aiming for women empowerment should strive to create not only the tangible infrastructure in which women can take their own decisions, but also the intangible infrastructure to groom their minds to be mature enough to take those decisions. The intangible infrastructure begins right at home; with the kind of emotional support you are willing to give your child. Parents are the first teachers and only then comes the school.

The girls should also get the right support in school as it where they pick up the basics of social living. These are days when cases of child sexual abuse are on the rise. Such disturbances can upset the emotional balance of the child and affect their growing up process and make their decision making process clouded.

Women Empowerment refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their own for their personal benefits as well as for the society.

It also refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to women, and to make them confident enough to claim their rights, such as:

1. Freely live their life with a sense of self-worth, respect and dignity.
2. To have complete control of their life, both within and outside of their home and workplace.
3. To make their own choices and decisions.
4. Have equal rights to participate in social, religious and public activities.
5. To have equal social status in the society.



6. To have equal rights for social and economic justice.
7. Determine financial and economic choices.
8. To get equal opportunity for education.
9. To get equal employment opportunity without any gender bias.
10. To get safe and comfortable working environment.

Lack of decision making skills makes one indecisive and fills life with uncertainty which is a huge drain on our faculties. Thus making the right decision not only gives us peace, but also save time.

In life each action you do is based on the decision you take. You make a lots of decisions everyday. A decision is one when there are different you can do and you pick one of them. Some decisions are easy taken while some decision making is difficult. A decision varies according to the situation you are into. Taking the right decision at the right time is a very crucial activity.

Concept in detail:

a) **“Women”** the most beautiful creation on the earth.

You can feel her passion in form of beloved. You can feel her divinity in form of a mother. You can feel her dedication in form of a wife. You can feel her warmth in form of a friend. You can feel her care in form of a sister. So naughty. So melodious. So charming. So sharing. Her heart is so tender. Yet she is so tough too.
She is a **Woman**.

The status of women has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. In modern India, women have held high offices including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Leader of the Opposition, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers and Governors.

Kiran Bedi was the first woman to join the Indian Police Service in 1975.

Mrs. Prathiba Patel becomes the first Women President of India from 2007 to 2012.

On 25 March 2017, Tanushree Pareek became the first female combat officer commissioned by the Border Security Force.

b) What are causes of violence against women in India?

Lack of education and awareness
Socio-economic status
Alcohol abuse.



c) What really constitutes violence against women?

Physical, sexual and emotional harm

Whether a threat or depriving her of her rights.

Whether she is beaten up by her husband or other members of the family or she is raped by an un-known individual.

II. Approaches to the decision making

Three primary decision making approaches: **Avoiding, Problem solving and Problem seeking.**

Every decision-making process reaches a conclusion, which can be a choice to act or not to act, a decision on what course of action to take and how, or even an opinion or recommendation. Sometimes decision making leads to redefining the issue or challenge. Accordingly, three decision-making processes are known as avoiding, problem solving, and problem seeking.

a) Avoiding

One decision-making option is to make no choice at all. There are several reasons why the decision maker might do this:

There is insufficient information to make a reasoned choice between alternatives.

The potential negative consequences of selecting any alternative outweigh the benefits of selecting one.

No pressing need for a choice exists and the status quo can continue without harm.

The person considering the alternatives does not have the authority to make a decision.

b) Problem Solving

Most decisions consist of problem-solving activities that end when a satisfactory solution is reached. In psychology, problem solving refers to the desire to reach a definite goal from a present condition. Problem solving requires problem definition, information analysis and evaluation, and alternative selection.

c) Problem Seeking

On occasion, the process of problem solving brings the focus or scope of the problem itself into question. It may be found to be poorly defined, of too large or small a scope, or missing a key dimension. Decision makers must then step back and reconsider the information and analysis they have brought to bear so far. We can regard this activity as problem seeking because decision makers must return to the starting point and re-evaluate the issue or problem they want to address.



III. Making Effective decisions

1. Perception
2. Priority
3. Acceptability
4. Resources
5. Goals
6. Demands
7. Judgments

IV. Barriers to decision making

- Hasty: Making much decisions without having much thought
- Narrow: Decision making is based on limited information.
- Scattered: Our thoughts in making decisions are disconnected or disorganized.
- Fuzzy: Sometimes the lack of clarify on important aspects of decisions causes us to overlook certain important concepts.

V. Decision making in family

Making decisions in life can be a difficult task. Throughout your life you will make decisions that will affect your life. In fact, the decisions you make today will not only impact your future, but also other people at the world in which you live.

Decision making involves thinking talking and searching for information related to a problem. You gather that help you with the decisions you need to make. When families and individuals know their values, they use them as a guide for all aspects of life.

Whether choosing a career, using money, or deciding what to wear, values are the basics for all decisions. Most decisions are not made all at once. Decisions take time to complete.



a) Four Factors Influencing Family Decision Making

- Sex-role stereotypes - separation of decision-making for sex-typed products.
- Spousal Resources - spouse contributing the greater resources (usually, but not always, money) has the greater influence.
- Experience - individual decisions are made more frequently when the couple has gained experience as a decision-making unit.
- Socio-Economic Status - middle class families make more joint decisions than either upper or lower class families.



VI. Types of family decisions

- Husband dominated decisions
- Wife dominated decisions
- Joint decision making
- Child dominated decision making

➤ **Husband dominated decisions:**

Husband takes the purchase decisions. Traditionally in products like Automobiles, Insurance etc.



➤ **Wife dominated decisions:**

Wife takes the household decisions. Traditionally in purchasing items, food and kitchen appliances.



➤ **Joint decision making:**

Both husband and wife makes the decision. Traditionally in school choice, vacations and household matters.”



➤ **Child dominated decision making:**

Child makes the final product decision. Traditionally on child related items.



VII. Career decision making:

A career decision is a lifelong process. It is all about exploring and experiencing the world of work. It is all about understanding abilities, interests, skills, values and combining these to create a meaningful framework for life.

If someone has to join a career course, so many options might be in front of them. They should have the capability to take the right decision. For that they should have self-awareness about the career and what are the different options for it. That finally leads to the decision on career path.





VIII. Conclusion

- No more giving our decision power away to excuses and blaming others.
- No more waiting for Superman.
- From now on, we only need to remember this simple truth:

The only hero that you'll ever need is already in you.



IX. Activity

Create a story-line regarding the following points:

- a) Your friend took this issue seriously
- b) In a public atmosphere
- c) You and your friend
- d) A unknown person is coming and disturbing your friend

Will you support her or not?



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