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Divorce In India: Not The Emperor's New Clothes Anymore

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Boy meets girl... girl meets boy... they both fall in love... the family agrees to get them married and they live happily ever after... forever loving each other... for the next seven lifetimes.

That's the story of majority of marriages in India, I don't have the complete statistics, but I would venture a guess of about 80 percent. That's a whopping number considering our population of over 1.3 billion and counting.

What happened here? Why isn't there any inbuilt detector for discontent in a marriage and an exit plan, or are you stuck for a minimum of a long lifetime tallying 25 to 40 years, or worse still, for seven lifetimes keeping in mind the religious scriptures.

I shudder with fear at the thought.

Imagine being chained in an unhappy marriage, especially where the spouse doesn't think twice before using you as a punching bag, and the pet names he gives you are synonyms of 'whore, harlot and tramp'--and that's on a good day. I was in that position once, but I am glad that I had the guts to walk away with nothing apart from around 12 dollars in my bank account and the clothes on my back, but with dreams worth billions in my mind and most of all--my life intact.

Ironic, I should write about this. When I got married about a decade-and-a-half ago on 3rd December, we too made a promise of being together for seven lifetimes. But here I am sharing all my experiences about divorce, close to the date of my marriage, which seems like many lifetimes ago.

But really, I am not going to go into the story of my divorce, which is a story of courage-under-fire, positivity, humour, triumph, faith in humanity and most of all 'Hope'. You can read all about that in my new book '[Ex-Files: The story of my divorce](#)'.

The truth of the matter is that divorce is a common occurrence in an economically evolved India. People are not willing to put-up with all the unhappiness and sorrow that bad marriages entail. They are learning to look beyond the concept of being chained down for seven lifetimes to a spouse who you can't even stand for seven seconds. Look at the unofficial statistics that are available: there are about 60 divorce matters on board in the Bandar Family court where I practise, and the building has seven floors, so that's about 420 matters in a day, though a number of them are ongoing. Still, those are staggering numbers compared to a decade ago where there were only 25 matters on board daily. But hey, who's counting?

Surely not us Indians, because we are so busy denying the existence of divorce, the voices ranging from 'No! it doesn't exist in India, actually we are all very adjusting, look at my dad and mom they have been married for over 40 years,' and so on and on go the reasons for pretending that divorce is not like the emperor's new clothes. Wake Up India and smell the petition--divorce exists in India and is here to stay and it is not an evil Western conspiracy defiling Indian values and the so-called pure supremacist Indian culture.

The reasons for divorce surfacing its hydra head in India may be many but we'll talk about that another time. What's important is that it's here to stay and we better learn how to deal with it and believe me, being an ostrich is not the efficient way.

So get organised with your 'Divorce Kit' in case the petition comes knocking at your door.

The first step really is accepting that yes it's happening and it's not going to go away merely by wishing it away. Just confront the truth that the marriage is over and look at effective ways to take the next step.

Check your finances, because believe me, whatever anyone might say, divorce is an expensive proposition even if you aren't getting the hotshot law firm. An ideal amount to put away for a half-decent lawyer would be about Rs 35,000-50,000 a month in a city like Mumbai.

Next up on your checklist should be friends who will support you unconditionally and unquestioningly. The battle for divorce in India is long and emotionally strenuous, and you need all the emotional armour that you can gather and I've found friends to be better than relatives who have an agenda.

Then get your job sorted, whether for money, or emotional sanity, or a bit of both, as you can't just be sitting and plotting your days around the next divorce date, so go ahead use your brain cells more effectively and forget all about the next court date while you immerse yourself in work.

Also, get a good lawyer who matches your temperament especially since divorce can be a lengthy battle (mine lasted for 10 years!) in court so rather than grabbing the next celeb lawyer get someone who can also become your friend and is extremely astute.

Next up, join a support group as no one can empathise better than someone in the same predicament. (You can join [360 degrees back to life](#) a support group started by me about a decade ago. Phone: 022 26401439)

Once you've got all these covered don't forget to pray, pray and pray some more.

And then you are all set to set off to navigate successfully in the precarious, prickly territory of divorce, which really is not the Emperor's New Clothes but more like the mandatory bridal lehenga designed by Manish Malhotra for every Bollywood babe.

Till next time, hug yourself, love from me and keep smiling.