

The dark (and light) side of divorce

When Vandana Shah was thrown out of her marital home, all she had was a few clothes and Rs 750 in her bank. From rebuilding her world bit by bit, to founding the first Indian support group to help people going through a divorce, it's been an incredible journey. Now, she's come out with a book *The Ex-Files – The Story of My Divorce*, that dares to look at the 'tragic' subject in a humorous way. A chat with the author – a divorce lawyer, and Social Entrepreneur all rolled into one deejay, advertising professional all rolled into one!

1) Why did you feel the need to write a book on your divorce? Wasn't it difficult to relive the experience?

A book on divorce is extremely relevant at this stage of India's socioeconomic growth where the changes in the societal structure and global changes are impacting everyone. Marriages are breaking, children are leaving homes and more women are working. We don't talk about divorce and continue pretending that it doesn't exist because of our belief that marriages last for seven lifetimes. In fact, our courts have recognised divorce barely a 100 years ago. So I wrote this book to emphasise the reality of divorce in a changing socio-economic world, and more importantly diminish the stigma around it by talking about it. No one would want to share their experience of divorce due to the stigma and pain involved. I feel confident sharing my story; it can be a learning experience for others - they can avoid the blunders I made. I write with empathy and expertise having been in the shoes of a litigant.

2) You have adopted a very light, even humorous tone to convey something dark. Reason?

No one till date has written a book on divorce that is upbeat, happy, and humorous and talks about the socio-legal implications of divorce, not just the legal implications, because in this country everything is dictated by the society. After all divorce is not always to mourn about, it may be a good thing in a lot of cases especially in abusive marriages, adulterous marriages and marriages where children are abused, harmed and face psychological trauma. Maybe also I invoke humour to bring about a lightness in a sad topic (high time we break away from this sadness – it's just divorce, not death). Or maybe humour is a mask and self defence mechanism for concealing pain.

3) This book will surely resonate with anyone who's been through a divorce. What value does it have for readers who haven't experienced it?

This is an inspirational book as it has a happy, positive ending and is a fun breezy read. It is about taking responsibility of your life and not about blaming others. You can rebuild your life from nothing. Life has its ups and downs and you must know how to combat them and then you will emerge a winner. It's about success in the face of all adversities. It's a book about HOPE.