

Prologue

A few years ago, I came across a notable number of friends and relatives who were either contemplating divorce while married or lived separately from their spouse and had filed for a divorce. Their life changed in a variety of unpredictable and unmanageable ways. During my insightful and in-depth conversations with some of them I discovered that I knew little about the divorce experience as well as what the person is undergoing internally. Having no answers or opinions I made attempts to refer to books and articles on divorce in India and found very few. Around the same time my professional interest in the discipline of women's issues was evolving. Running parallel to all this was my academic goal to do a PhD.

Being single and having crossed the ideal marriageable age I too face social pressure to get married much like my friends in unhappy marriages were pressured to adjust and divorced friends were pressured to remarry. Some questions boggled my mind continuously: what do we need to save? Marriage? Or the individual within the marriage? What is important? A happy marriage or a happy individual? I was gradually digesting the fact that the institution of marriage was so powerful that the plight of a divorced or separated person was conveniently ignored.

For me these reflections presented a great scope and opportunity to embark on a scientific study aimed at understanding the issue of divorce in general. Thus, a blend of three elements, that is, social experiences of self and others, academic goal to gain a doctorate and interest in the area of Women's Studies were the key factors which influenced the inception of this study. Initial ideas were too broad and the specifics of the study were drawn out only after some focused discussions with my research guide, doing a literature review and conducting a pilot study.

The slow but steady increase in divorce rates will require the society to cater to more and more divorced and separated individuals. Hence it is advisable that we begin to understand the issues involved. I hope that the findings of this study on women's experiences of divorced and separation will throw some light upon an issue which is much ignored. The primary aim of this research is to understand the experiences of women who are divorced or separated.