

Phoenix Wings

It all started with a fairy tale wedding. Dressed in a beige lehenga I took the seven steps with hopes of a happily ever after life in my heart. Little did I know that my heart was going to be broken into a million pieces crushing my spirit and changing me forever.

Why is it that a woman dreams of her son's wedding from the moment he is born, but the moment her son gets married, she starts seeing her daughter in law as her enemy who is out to steal her son? Troubles started in my supposed paradise soon after honeymoon as nothing I did was good enough for my mother in law and pushed by her, my husband too started finding faults with everything I did. This constant criticism took a toll on our relationship but before I could decide on anything I found that I was pregnant. I hoped that maybe the child would bring some happiness but the moment which was supposed to bring joy only brought tension in my world. While both my mother in law and husband wanted a heir, they were furious at the increased expenses of doctor's visits, medicines and even food. Pretty soon both of them started throwing hints that they only want a male child and craftily kept wondering aloud if my gynaecologist would tell me the sex of the child despite knowing that this is illegal. But when I kept ignoring all their hints my husband suddenly announced one day that he is going for an on-site project to London for a year and that he is leaving next week itself. I was in my last trimester of pregnancy and this announcement hurt big time. I couldn't understand how a father can stay without even looking at

his child for a year.

I wasn't even allowed to bid him goodbye as that right was exclusively of his mother. It would be shameless of me to even try to hold his hand with her around. And so without a word to me, he left. Though I had a nasty feeling in my heart, I didn't know for sure that this would be last we would ever meet. He didn't call for a month and would pick my call only once in a fortnight. I still could not figure out what did I do to get this kind of treatment. A couple of months passed and I was blessed with a beautiful angel - my daughter. Seeing her tiny little hands and feet made me forget all my pain. But more heartache was about to come. For 4 days after the daughter's both, my husband didn't even call me and when I managed to call him despite being in so much pain, he had the audacity to ask me how I could be happy on the birth of a girl child.

I was shattered and confused. On one hand were people telling me that a child deserves both parents and I have no right to deny her one parent's love just because I can't get along with my husband, but on the other hand I didn't want to make my daughter a burden on a man who didn't want her. How could I be sure that my daughter would get the love of a father who wasn't even happy on her birth? Wouldn't it be worse for her to be raised in an environment of such hatred and no love? People around me told me how many problems my daughter will have to face without a father in her life, but I wondered if it would really be a good idea to have just a namesake father or for my daughter

to constantly feel unloved in a place which is supposed to be her home?

My confusion was sorted out by my husband himself when he barged into my parents' home one Sunday only to character assassinate me in front of my neighbours. He thought doing this would kill our reputation in society and force us to probably even leave the city quietly and he would get freedom from me easily. Little did he know that my neighbours were already wondering what kind of man wouldn't visit his new born daughter for six months. And by trying to character assassinate me, he convinced my neighbours of his own cheap mentality. They all stood by me and some even convinced my father that your daughter doesn't deserve such a man and his family. The divorce decision became so much easier with my neighbours' support.

I can't thank my neighbours enough for not just standing by me at that time but also by not isolating me by treating me as a stigma like in numerous Bollywood movies. In fact I was encouraged to take part in every social function and was repeatedly told that I shouldn't isolate myself and should move on in my life for my daughter's sake. I was constantly assured that whatever happened wasn't my fault and so I shouldn't punish myself at all. I started rebuilding my life with my daughter and parents. Took up a part time job to engage my mind and devoted myself towards raising my daughter. She grew up as an adorable and intelligent kid and soon I was about to face another worry.

How to convince the schools to admit daughter of a single mother? But here a friend gave me advice which I follow

till date. She told me if you let others judge you then they will find all sorts of weaknesses in you and never respect you. But if you accept yourself for what you are completely and face world with your head held high, they will be forced to see your strengths and admire you. "Jhukti hai duniya, jhukane wala Chaihiye" the phrase never seemed truer. I approached the school authorities with full confidence and on learning that I am so confident and bold despite being a single mother, they only had words of admiration for me and my daughter managed to get admission easily. Since then her performance at school has proven to the world that a single mother can raise her child just as well as a regular dual parent family. She did face a class bully once who despite knowing that she doesn't have a father wouldn't stop harrasing her asking about her father. But instead of silently crying with my daughter or feeding her any lies, I straight away approached the school teachers as well as the Bully's mother and told them clearly that I would not tolerate such kind of bullying and that bully be better taught some manners. Today despite having changed her school, that bully is one of my daughter's best friends.

So the bottom line is that society will stigmatized you only if you let them judge you. But if you are sure of yourself and can look at the world in its eyes, then the world would bow down to your confidence and eventually will also become your biggest support. Ultimately everyone either needs a weakling to bash or a hero to look upto. It's our choice whether to be a weakling or a hero.

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