

LIFESTYLE

Houston oil and gas exec writes memoir inspired by her daughters, offering lessons of leadership



Lindsay Peyton, Correspondent May 11, 2023

Rani Puranik was having brunch with her daughters when inspiration struck: It was time to write a book.

She describes that “aha” moment in her new memoir: “Every so often, a moment of clarity and a ray of light become present, sometimes through song, a conversation, something you watch or experience,” she writes. You realize all the things you’ve learned, how much you’ve grown, sacrificed, shared, faced, overcome, succeeded in, or endured.”

In this case, her two daughters — Bhakti and Sharayu — provided that clarity. Others had suggested that she write about her life, but when her daughters told her, “that’s when I took it seriously,” she said. “7 Letters to My Daughters: Light Lessons of Love, Leadership and Legacy” launches May 24.

Puranik is co-owner, executive vice president and global chief financial officer of Worldwide Oilfield Machine, a privately held, family-owned oil and gas equipment manufacturing firm. Based in Houston, the company operates globally with more than 4,000 employees across 13 locations.

Overcoming the challenges to become a leader in the oil industry is only a small part of her story. The book dives into career, marriage, motherhood, being a daughter and first-generation American, spirituality and adventure.



— Rani Puranik was inspired by her daughters to write her memoir.

Courtesy

Puranik, who lives in the Rice Village area, recounts her most difficult times — from feeling like a disappointment to her father and suffering an attack as a young girl in India to going through a divorce and experiencing the tragic death of her brother near his 35th birthday.

She writes how her mother taught her that hardships in life are lessons, singing the classic Marathi lullaby: “Arey saunsar saunsar, adhi hatala chatake, tewha melatey bhakar.” *“Oh, life, dear life, only when my hands learn from the burn of the stove will I get my bread to eat.”*

“I assumed next-level achievement or progress always meant easier with less stress and struggles,” Puranik says in the book's introduction.

She realized the opposite is true. “Life is a continuous journey of ups and downs, wanes and waxes, tests and tribulations . . . we get to the next level by increasing our skills, recognizing the patterns, learning strategies to maneuver through challenges, and never giving up.”

The book then becomes a gift, as Puranik says, “for my daughters and all daughters of the world, one that provides lessons to equip them to maneuver through the phases of life.”

Puranik started writing the book in 2018. She approached it the way she would any challenge, by organizing. “What is my life composed of? Are there any common threads?” she wondered.

“Then my first draft was an Excel sheet,” she laughed.

Puranik breaks her life into seven-year cycles: becoming a girl, a woman, a daughter and a mother.

She was able to partition her life experiences, starting with her birth in India and childhood growing up in Sugar Land.

Gender and spirituality are through-lines in the story. Puranik is often faced with a certain expectation based on her gender, one that she typically soon shatters.

She credits her maternal grandmother, or “aaji,” Leela Date, for nurturing her strength as a young woman. “She was letting me know at a young age that I was meant to be a girl, and a powerful one at that.”

Puranik’s spirituality evolves throughout her life, starting with a great childhood admiration of the Hindu god Krishna.

“I loved Krishna because Krishna understood love,” she writes. “There are many powerful and important figures in the Hindu pantheon . . . Krishna was the only one who delighted in simply being.”

Book signings

Brazos Bookstore: 6:30-7:30P May 30, 2421 Bissonnet

Tootsie’s: 4:00-6:00P May 31, 2601 Westheimer

Information: www.ranipuranic.com

Puranik attended ninth grade at a Hindu school in India and was introduced to yoga and meditation. Then she went to Lamar High School in Houston.

Later she returned to India to study music. Singing ragas was a way to stay in touch with her spirituality. She also began teaching children, and in the evening, they would chant the Hindu scriptures together.

“For years, my mother pushed and instructed me on Hindu values, but living in India and being with those children made me appreciate the true meaning of the scriptures I once mindlessly memorized.” Puranik writes. “I had discovered a portion of my purpose in life.”

As an adult in Houston, she describes attending worship at Lakewood Church and how her spirituality now also incorporates Jesus.

“I was increasingly interested in the overlap and interplay between Krishna and Jesus, the struggles they faced, the leaders they were, and the values they espoused. I saw them as intertwined, part of the same divine entity,” she writes.

Her story is about determination, passion and adaptability. She received her bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Pune in India, then started a dance school and launched the Integral Search for Harmony through Art, or ISHA, a platform for underserved and underrepresented girls in India.

Puranik served as ISHA's CEO for about 20 years, working as the lead choreographer, program designer and mentor. The confidence and love gained on her spiritual journey guides her as she takes a foothold in the family business.

After returning to Houston, she went back to school, earning an MBA in finance from Rice University at age 40.

The pages of her book are full of practical advice, and her journey continues. The last chapter is hardly a conclusion, and instead demonstrates her continued search for growth opportunities and lust for adventure. She describes steering a sailboat through a storm and taking welding lessons to overcome her fear of fire.

Puranik hopes that the book helps readers while navigating their own challenges. “Every lifetime and every situation provides an opportunity for learning,” she says.

She already has her next book in mind, one that delves into a 200-year plan for business growth.

In the meantime, she says, “I want each individual to know they have the power to choose a full life. Whatever life may throw at you, we have the power to make the next decision and keep a positive mindset.”