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**NEWS**

**Complaining hubbies turn to Mahila thana for solace**

**Manish Sahu**

**Lucknow, February 13:** Three years ago, I married Sunita (name changed). We had a son. A few months back, she went to her father's place and now she is not ready to return. She has taken away all the jewellery and the baby too. She wants me to leave my parents and live separately as she can not live in a two-room apartment with my parents. My parents are old and dependent on me. She is not ready to return home and now demands a major share in my salary. She often calls up to ask if I am ready to accept her proposal or not. When I refuse, she threatens to lodge a complaint of dowry harassment. I am under tremendous pressure. This is what Ashutosh Tiwari (name changed) stated in a complaint lodged at the Lucknow Mahila Thana.

The Mahila Thana gets at least three such cases every week and those filing the complaints are the harassed husbands of women who threaten to use the Dowry Protection Act to their convenience. However, with no provision under the law to convert such a complaint, made by a husband, into FIR and book the wife, all that the cops can do is try and mediate between the two parties. After that if the wife is not convinced, the police is left with no option but to dispose of the complaint.

A similar complaint, on the other hand, by a woman against her husband invites a non-bailable offence with imprisonment up to three years.

Mahila Thana Station Officer Vijay Laxmi Pandey says, "In most cases, it begins with an ego problem which finally leads to a threat of dowry complaint. We try our best to solve these cases by providing a non-police station like atmosphere to counsel the couples."

In several complaints, the husband states that the wife has threatened by saying that all laws are in their favour and they can do anything. Pandey says in most of the cases the husband blames his in-laws accusing the wife of acting at their behest. They complain that the in-laws want to interfere in their life. They want the husband to listen and follow their advice, she added.

"Cases of dowry harassment in love marriages are also on the rise. Growing differences between couples after few years of marriage is the reason in most cases and evidences provided against the husband are often found to be very flimsy during investigation," says Pandey.

"At times, the husband pre-empt's a complaint from the wife who may have threatened to move the Mahila Thana. On such occasions, I get to know beforehand the husband's side of the story and if I realise the wife's complaints to be flimsy, I just make a case of minor ill-treatments against the husband," she says.

According to lawyer Rohit Kant, "The Section 498 A (3/4) Dowry Protection Act and 406 of Indian Penal Code are the two Sections which come handy in filing complaints against husbands. The vice-a-versa doesn't work."

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