



The Honorable Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs

June 29, 2006

The Hyatt Century Plaza, Los Angeles (Meeting in person)

Subject: MOIA Officials repeatedly ignore NRI Interests, works Exclusively with NCW to unleash anti-NRI laws, brings out an NRI-Hating Booklet on NRI Marriages.

Dear Sir,

Thanks for taking time to meet with us. We would like to also thank Consul General of India at San Francisco, Mr. B. S. Prakash for arranging this meeting.

As the Indian legal system considers all complaints filed by a wife as genuine by default, laws made to protect women from dowry harassment are rampantly being misused as a weapon to blackmail, extort money and seek revenge on NRI husbands and their India-based families. This is taking a huge toll on the personal and professional lives of Overseas Indians. Overseas Indians who unwittingly land in India for various reasons have been arrested, ill treated and exploited in the name of dowry laws. The economic and emotional damage resulting from this "legal terrorism" is creating a fear psychosis among Overseas Indian men when it comes to marrying women of Indian origin.

Is MOIA interested in this wholesale social division between resident and non-resident Indians?

MOIA Booklet on Marriages to Overseas Indians

As if this trauma is not enough, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has recently released a booklet on marriages with Overseas Indians. The booklet, published after an obstinate and rude disregard for all suggestions made by NRI organizations representing the husbands' point of view, are literally an example of MOIA's hatred for Overseas Indians projecting them all as fraudulent, violent and abusive towards women. While there are instances of abuse and violence in marriages with Overseas Indians (just like those in marriages with Resident Indians, some acts of violence, including well-publicized murders, directed at men), the booklet, primarily led by the MOIA official Ms. Sandhya Shukla, is causing deep and widespread resentment among Overseas Indians. Does Ms. Shukla's definition of Social Services include only targeting Overseas Indian Men and their families?

The MOIA booklet makes the following blatant generalizations against Overseas Indians:

1. Only NRI husbands and their families are responsible for failed and fraudulent marriages to Indian women.
2. NRI husbands physically and financially harass their wives frequently.
3. NRI husbands get married for dowry and abandon/divorce their wives after a short honeymoon.
4. NRI husbands and their family hide/lie about their marital status, job, visa status etc.
5. There are countless cases Indian wives of NRI husbands harassed by NRI families

MOIA has ignored suggestions made by "Pariwarik Suraksha Sanstha (PSS) and Rakshak members" to balance out the MOIA booklet on marriage to overseas Indians. Following suggestions were made to Ms. Sandhya Shukla and the committee over viewing the booklet contents on 14th February and 18th February. Some of the important points are:

1. Fraudulent marriages are prevalent from both bride and bridegroom, not only from NRI bridegroom.
2. The Booklet should be gender neutral and should not only address or talk about harassed people.
3. 'Wife' should be replaced by 'Spouse'. Ms. Shukla agreed to this, but we have not seen any change in the booklet yet.
4. It should specify do and don't to NRI while marrying an Indian bride.
5. It must mention that dowry case in India can be legally started by the Indian bride against the NRI's extended family without any proof.

Disregard for the Exploitation of NRI Husbands

Overseas Indians trapped in false criminal cases are expending their valuable time, effort and money to fight their cases that drag on for several years due to the inefficient Indian police and judicial systems. Their extended family go through enormous torture. This trend is impeding the progress of extremely talented, intelligent and resourceful young Indians in India and abroad.



Pariwarik Suraksha Sanstha (PSS)

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MOIA officials have blatantly ignored several attempts by Overseas Indians to draw their attention to this exploitation through the misuse of anti-dowry laws:

1. On April 18th, 2006, a memorandum was sent to the Indian Ambassador in Washington D.C. with copies to all Consuls General in the US, Officials in the MOIA and The President of India. We did not hear any response from Mr. Sen.
2. On May 15th, 2006, Mr. Prabhat Kumar Singh, San Francisco Consul, forwarded the concerns to Mr. Malay Mishra, Joint Secretary, MOIA, about the misuse of 498A against Overseas Indians. We did not hear any response from Mr. Mishra.
3. On Feb 18th, 2006, representatives of "Pariwarik Suraksha Sanstha (PSS)" had attended a meeting at MOIA when they reviewed the draft of the "Marriage to Overseas Indians" booklet and had presented their concerns (<http://moia.gov.in/showinfo1.asp?linkid=245>). We have not seen any cognizance of their suggestions to the review committee until now.
4. On Feb 14th, representatives of "Pariwarik Suraksha Sanstha" had attended a meeting with Ms. Sandhya Shukla about the contents of the booklet and voiced their opinion, no action/cognizance has been taken on their suggestions.
5. Before Pravasiya Bhartiya Divas in January our members sent several e-mails to MOIA officials to take cognizance of crime against NRI husbands/families and to include this in their seminar chaired by Mrs. Girija Vyas (Chairman, NCW). This plea was also ignored.

Whose affairs the MOIA is Looking After? Only undermining NRIs through vile characterization to be plum targets for criminal exploitation?

MOIA About to Unleash Anti-NRI Laws in Cahoots with NCW

Representatives of "Pariwarik Suraksha Sanstha, (PSS)" met NCW and MOIA officials and have raised their concern over the MOIA booklet. Still neither MOIA officials nor NCW in their statements to the public/press state the problems NRI families face, including elderly people.

Just as we were waiting for a response on the booklet, the MOIA organized a two-day meet on June 21st and 22nd, 2006 entirely to NCW's script, proposing to unleash the latest draconian laws against NRI husbands. The meet was organized without giving any voice to NRI husbands but exploited by MOIA officials to generate a huge anti-NRI propaganda in Indian newspapers, even the Times of India projecting in it's editorial all NRI husbands as evil wife abusers. We came to know about the meet only through the newspapers. It wasn't even announced on www.overseasindian.in or <http://moia.gov.in>. Typical NCW accusations are "Lying, cheating, false promises, unreasonable dowry demands are just some of the things unfortunate NRI brides have to put up with, not to mention divorce, desertion and abduction of children."

Will the MOIA stand up for Overseas Indians' Interests?

All of our efforts to get MOIA/MEA to acknowledge/act/understand our concerns for past several months have been unanswered. We fail to understand what is the agenda and role of MOIA and MEA for overseas Indians. All Counsel Generals in USA (except San Francisco every other consul Generals ignored over repeated requests.

We would like to know an easy and fast way to reach to -

- Indian Government officials at MOIA.
- Indian Ambassador and Indian Consulate Generals at the 4 consulates in United States.
- How to ensure that our concerns are not overlooked by MOIA when discussing the issues relating to overseas Indians.

Thanking you and with regards,
Rakshak Team

CC:

Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam, President of India

Ambassador Ronen Sen, 2107 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington D.C., USA - 20008

B.S. Prakash, Consulate General of India in San Francisco, 540 Arguello Boulevard San Francisco, CA 94118

Neelam Deo, Consulate General of India in New York, 3 East, 64th Street, New York, NY 10021

Arun Kumar, Consulate General of India in Chicago, 455, North City Front Plaza Drive, Suite 850, Chicago, IL 60611

Consulate General of India in Houston, 1990 Post Oak Blvd. # 600 3 Post Oak Central Houston, TX 77056

Shri Vayalar Ravi, Minister, MOIA, 9th Floor, Akbar Bhawan, Chanakya Puri, New Delhi - 110021, Shri R. Narayanaswami, Secretary, MOIA Shri Malay Mishra [Diaspora Services Division], MOIA Dr. R.K.Verma [National Informatics Center], MOIA Ms. Sandhya Shukla [Social Services Unit], MOIA