

Women harass husbands

Wanting to leave the joint family, many women lodge 'fake' dowry complaints in Anti-Dowry Cell and make their husbands victims of emotional blackmail

By Priyamvatha P

Chennai, November 13

WHAT has been a weapon for women to tackle dowry harassment is now becoming a tool for them to bend things their way.

In the last one year alone, many complaints received by the Anti-Dowry Cell in the city have not been genuine.

"Most of the complaints have been placed to threaten their husbands," said police officers attached to the cell. On an average, the cell receives 60 complaints per month. Of which only five are found to be genuine cases of dowry harass-

ment by the husband and the in-laws.

Many women, according to the police, misuse the Dowry Prohibition Act to threaten their husbands to move away from their in-laws and form nuclear families.

Take for instance the case of Raju. His wife filed a dowry harassment case against him after 13 years of married life. The couple have two children. Her father-in-law said, "She wants us to leave the house otherwise why should she complain of dowry harassment after so many years?"

Later when the police enquired, they found that the petitioner was emotionally blackmailing her husband to move away from the joint fam-

ily. The police said, "She would initiate the fight and then remain silent when the husband reacts. She blackmailed her husband indirectly even in front of us," said a police officer.

"We talk to petitioners and their husbands. What we find is women fight with husbands over some other issue, not for dowry, and then approach the police," said an officer.

This trend has been on the rise for the last one year. In 2005, the cell had received 260 complaints of which 200 were found to be complaints filed in

the pretext of dowry harassment.

Similarly, till October 2006, the cell had received 285 complaints of which about 220 were not genuine. "The number of complaints is also increasing," said police officers.

Not that the cell does not get genuine cases, "We receive real ones also. We try to talk to both husband and wife and investigate. Many unite with the spouse. Mostly, women want to have power in the house," said police sources. In the last few months, the cell has been able to unite at least two dozen families.

U Vasuki, of the All India Democratic Women's Association, said, "The statistics given by the police is dangerous and so is the message sent out. But the veracity of the issue has to be verified."

She also said her organisation received a minimum of 20 cases of "genuine" dowry harassment cases per month in the city. "The difference is vast and we have to analyse why these women do not approach the police," she said.

Vasuki also argued that there has always been a campaign against any law taken up to protect women's rights to discourage them from coming out. "Any Act can be misused," she pointed out.

Tell-tale figures

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