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Etah dowry death 'victim' comes alive

Now, we have to arrange for the security of the woman. Her husband might bump her off: Etah SP Anand Swaroop

AMAN SHARMA

FEEDBACK - EMAIL PRINT

Posted online: Tuesday, December 21, 2004 at 0137 hours IST

ETAH (UP), DECEMBER 20: It's a story right out of the potboiler Andhaa Kanoon. A married woman disappears with her paramour and plots a conspiracy with her father to get her husband imprisoned in a case of dowry death. Five years later, Sushila resurfaces and her husband, Brajesh Kumar, is now threatening to kill her.

The UP police had put Kumar, a factory owner in Noida, and his mother behind bars for 14 months and submitted a chargesheet in court within 22 days of the FIR being filed without even tracing the body. The twist in the tale was that the case rested on the testimony of two witnesses — close relatives of the 'dead' woman. Kumar paid Rs 1 lakh to the woman's father to get the witnesses to turn hostile and the court acquitted him and his mother in the 'murder' for lack of evidence.

Police say that Sushila claims to have run off with a truck driver and bore him two children. A case of providing wrong information has been registered and Gendalal has been arrested.

"We have now got to arrange for the security of the woman. Her husband might bump her off," said Senior Superintendent of Police (Etah) Anand Swaroop. It been a major embarrassment for the police, he concedes. "There was a fundamental error on the part of the police in the investigation. We should have been more careful with the witnesses as well before arresting innocent persons."

Brajesh Kumar, who remarried last year, is seething with rage ever since he spotted Sushila near his village after five years of her 'death'.

"I can very well kill Sushila now for she is already dead in police records. She made me and my family suffer so much. We ended up being humiliated as murderers. She and her father should spend their rest of lives in jail for this," he said.

Kumar and Sushila were married for only three years when the 20-year-old woman disappeared from Kanchangari village in Etah while he was away. On November 23, Sushila's father Gendalal told the Etah police that his daughter has been murdered and her body disposed of in the river.

The same day, an FIR was lodged under Sections 498A (dowry harassment), 304A (dowry death) and 201 (destruction of evidence). The FIR claimed Sushila was being harassed for a gold necklace and a cow as dowry.

Two men, Ram Niwas and Mahavir came forward to say that they saw the body being dumped into in the river. The police arrested Brajesh and his 65-year-old mother Brahma Devi and on December 15, a chargesheet was also submitted in court. The bail applications of both mother and son were dismissed in district and sessions court; finally Brahma Devi got bail from the High Court after spending four months in jail.

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Later, both witnesses and Gendalal turned hostile in court, saying they had not filed an FIR and their signatures on the confessional statements before police were forged. On December 18, 2000, District Magistrate (Etah) Jagendra Singh acquitted Brajesh and his mother.

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