

NRIs Allege Misuse of Dowry Laws

New Delhi, January 5, 2007: Indian Dowry Laws have made Marriage a nightmare for NRI husbands, so say members of a group representing falsely accused men and their families.

Section 498a of Indian Penal Code was brought in through an amendment in 1983 to accord protection to women against cruelty and dowry related issues.

The group alleges that this Law has been misused given the low rate of conviction in such cases. It claims to have received more than 325 complaints from NRI husbands in the last 10 months, out of which 150 are from USA. Most of them in US are either Software Engineers, Doctors or professionals. Many amongst these NRIs are from India's elite Institutions like IITs.

"The government has failed to identify the true reasons for failing marriages, and has instead started resorting to penal measures which only adds to the harassment of NRI husbands and their families in India", said Dr. Anupama Singh, a member of 498a.org, a group representing thousands of men and their families, victimized by Dowry Law abuse.

Recent Media Reports confirm that Indian Government's pact with Interpol resulted in issuing of 300 Red Corner Notices and another 27 extradition notices by Interpol, for NRIs hailing from Andhra Pradesh alone.

"Are all 300 guilty and fit to be treated on par with criminals like Dawood Ibrahim and Abu Salem?", she asked.

NRIs are being unfairly targeted by the Indian Government despite their meaningful contribution to development of India, so is the sentiment of the members who feel frustrated on being neglected by the Government.

"To add insult to injury, the Ministry of Overseas Internal Affairs has brought out a highly biased, factually inaccurate booklet, titled **Marriages to Overseas Indians** which paints NRI men as crooks out to dupe their Indian brides and claims that a high percentage of NRI marriages fail", she said.

A CSR study in 2003 had confirmed that only 2 out of 100 cases are found fit for conviction. The study also quoted that 'educated and independent minded women' misuse such laws.

"Why then are the NRI husbands singled out?"

National Commission for Women do not have clear statistics on whether the law is intentionally misused. This was reportedly confirmed by the Legal Officer of NCW who said that data on misuse is not available.

Interestingly, a recent survey by Hindustantimes.com concluded that about 60% of Indian women have had sexual relations before marriage, and they felt threatened at the prospect of being honest with their husbands.

The group says that such findings are a pointer to the changing mindset of Indian Woman and the Government should have taken such facts into account before resorting to any measures which tend to malign NRIs.

"Such misuse of legal provisions create a cascading negative effect on society. It promotes Elder Abuse when parents back home are unnecessarily harassed and jailed. Extortion is the main reason as also child custody which instigates women to file false complaints", said Anupama.

Growing concern towards abuse of dowry laws are cited not only by NRI husbands but thousands of families in India too.

About 498a.org :

498a.org is a Leading International organization focused on researching the impact of misuse of Section 498a of Indian Penal Code. The organization was founded by a group of concerned Indian citizens positioned globally, comprising of intellectuals from India's elite Institutions. 498a.org aims to undertake research and action directed towards preventing and ending grave abuses of the statute promulgated as Section 498a of IPC. The organization seeks to address barriers to justice and equality perpetrated by misuse of Dowry Laws in India. The ultimate objective of 498a.org is to strengthen the moral fiber and social fabric of India through preserving the Institution of Family.

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