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## COLUMNISTS

OP-ED/EDIT/AGENDA/FORAY



Devi  
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### Spare a thought for Dowry law abuse

It had been with great joy that I attended the wedding of my friend's brother two years back. So it came to me as a great shock the other day when she came to me for solace. Her sister-in-law, who was considered the Lakshmi of the house, was unfortunately driving the household completely insane. She couldn't blame her brother because it was an arranged marriage.

I wonder if we should be proud or disgusted with our younger generation of girls. Gone are those days when the in-laws harassed the new brides for dowry or just to show them who is the boss, simply on account of the boys' side being considered superior. Actually, this is not the first instance where I have ended up feeling sorry for the boy's side. Thanks to the various NGOs, women these days can really use and misuse all the power to their advantage. Being a woman I do sympathise with my sisters who are genuinely harassed by their in-laws and would want to see them get the severest of punishment. But the change that has come over the girls of today cannot be ignored. An example is the new movie Aitraaz where this young girl goes all out to use her looks and her manipulative and calculating mind to finish off a man. Well, there is a saying that "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned".

I am also dead against the interference of a girl's family once she is married, having realised that it is often the over-ambitious/possessive mother who usually sets off disturbances in her daughter's new home. Coming back to the law isn't it a fact that at least 50 per cent of harassment cases are filed by the girls who want to teach their in-laws/husband a lesson, for not having been able to get their way. After all, today's girls are more independent financially and divorce is no longer a taboo in our society. Further, they only stand to gain sympathy all around. After all, we women too know how to manipulate situations to our advantage.

Somehow we seem to have forgotten to teach our new generation the traditional lessons of patience, sacrifice, respect and family honour. It is sad, because it is always a woman who can make or break a home. I am all for women's rights, I am against dowry, I am for equal status of married partners but I am not blind to biased laws that are used by manipulative girls to torture innocent families who put honour above everything and have to pay a high price for their peace of mind.

This is the dowry system in reverse. If the boy's family refuse to yield to their demands, they are threatened to be put behind bars as the the law is on the girl's side. And shockingly, girls today are marrying for money looking for hefty alimony and property.

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Coming back to my friend's case, the new bride had a history of mental ailment as a child - a fact which was not disclosed to the boy and his family. When he discovered it, he tried to take medical help to make the marriage work and also because his family believed in the sanctity of the marriage vows.

But the girl's family had other plans. Not only did they accuse the entire family of torture, money extortion etc, but have also threatened to lodge a case of dowry demand unless huge amounts of money was paid to them. Would the courts and social activists for woman's rights understand that some such cases may be just for money or for tit-for-tat. In these cases, the ones who gain are really the police in the Crime Against Women Cells or the lawyers who make the most in exploiting the underdog.

Come to think of it, is this another law like TADA which needs rethinking since under this law the whole family is put behind bars or put to ransom whichever is preferred by the girl and her family?

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