

## **Legal Terrorism – Misuse of Laws against Husband and Family**

NEW DELHI, Nov 25<sup>th</sup>. 498a.org, an organization initially founded by ex-IITians, and now embraced by thousands, conducted a seminar on the misuse of anti-dowry (IPC 498A) and other laws related to the husband and his family. The law, which was enacted to protect women from dowry harassment, is being used by thousands of unscrupulous women to legally terrorize the husband and his family for extortion. A large number of cases filed under anti-dowry law IPC 498A are not cases of actual dowry demands, but a reflection of a more sinister design to legally blackmail innocent husband and in-laws for money. This is borne out by the statistics from many sources (including the Council of Social Research) that show that more than 90% of the cases filed under section 498a are without merit. Though projected to be a law benefiting women, 498a has, ironically, victimized countless innocent women related to the husband's family.

The dowry law, its shortcomings and its loopholes were exposed in the seminar. "It is quite clear that the law has lent itself to gross abuse, because arresting and putting a person in jail, even before trial has begun, amounts to prejudging and punishing the accused without due process", said Adv. Omi Taneja. He also discussed the brutal social and financial impact a false dowry case has on the husband's family. He further added, "Unconstrained, this social evil is threatening the foundation of the Indian family system".

The legal aspects of a false dowry case were discussed by Adv. Anantha Krishna. "Fear is a crucial and killer element", he said, "You cough up lot of money in courts, before police, counsel on account of this. Never succumb to this". He then went on to explain the various stages in such cases and the legally prudent strategies to counter a false 498a case.

"Extortion of money, fraudulent marriages, extramarital affairs, personal vendetta, domination and alienation are the most common reasons why a woman files a false case", said Dr. Anupama Singh. She further explained the motivation behind filing bogus cases. "Since there are no legal repercussions of filing a false case, more and more women use this law to facilitate divorce and to make the most of a failed marriage", she said, "The power to fix husbands, send mother in laws scurrying for cover, get leverage for child custody and illegally demand property rights are added bonuses". She then presented several heart-wrenching accounts of victimized families.

Dr. Sudeep Gupta explained the psychological trauma a family undergoes due to a false dowry case. The recently enacted Domestic Violence Law was also discussed. Specifically, Mr. Karan Thapar's views on domestic violence were presented. Victims had come from all over India and several came forward to narrate their tale of suffering and victimization due to the misuse of the dowry law and expressed their apprehensions about the domestic violence law.

Homage was paid to Rajesh Hansmukh Desai, who, unable to bear the forced separation from his daughter and the atrocities meted out to him by his wife, took the extreme step of taking his own life on Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>. "He was legally murdered by his cruel wife who filed a false dowry case on him and his parents, completely devastating them", said his friend Kalpesh Patel. Rajesh was the only son of his father (aged 70) and his mother (aged 69).

A memorandum demanding provisions to prevent the misuse of this law was issued to the Govt. by 498a.org.

### *About 498a.org*

498a.org is an international volunteer based organization consisting of people of Indian origin (all around the world) who have joined hands to fight the evil of 'misuse of 498A' (commonly known as dowry law). 498a.org has volunteers in most major cities in India, USA and many other countries and offers 24-hour help lines for counseling victims implicated in a false dowry case. Please visit [www.498a.org](http://www.498a.org) for more information.