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Make life easy for dowry victims

Believe it or not, though anti-dowry laws are aimed at protecting women from domestic violence, a dowry case affects all involved—husband wife and the children the most. In an interesting statistic which may not be exactly related to dowry cases, most suicide victims in the country turn out to be men. As per National Crime Record Bureau statistics, between 2005 and 2007, about 165,528 married men have committed suicide, as against 88,121 married women. These revelations have been made by Karnataka Law Commission, in its 11th report for amending Sec 498 A and 320 (2), which deal with dowry harassment cases. The Law Commission has recommended that the government make certain amendments to these clauses, making dowry harassment cases bailable and allowing an amicable settlement. The Commission, headed by Justice V.S. Malimath was considering a petition made by 'Save Indian Families Foundation,' which made a submission, citing eight reasons, including misuse of the provisions by women to settle scores with family members of husband. Besides, whenever a woman files a dowry harassment case under Sec 320(2) in a fit of rage, there is no scope for reconciliation with the family. The onus will be on the husband and his family members to prove his innocence, sources said. Following the petition, the Law Commission had appointed senior researcher Dr S. Krishnamurthy to look into the issue and submit his findings. Dr Krishnamurthy's report endorsed all the issues raised by the Foundation. Dr Krishnamurthy, who analyzed all dowry cases disposed between 2005 and 2009, found that the conviction rate in these cases was 4.97%. About 6.3% cases ended in a compromise while the acquittal rate was 88.99%. Expressing concern over the social implication of dowry harassment cases, the Law Commission noted that once the case was filed, there was no way the spouses could withdraw the case. After citing many court ruling, where the courts have exercised power and allowed the spouses to withdraw cases, the Commission has recommended that the government make suitable amendments and make dowry harassment a bailable offense. Besides, if the wife wants to reconcile with her husband, she should be allowed to do so, it added.

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