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## Trust trapped in deceit and greed - IITian husband's claim of 'dignified life' fails to convince court hearing dowry case lodged by wife

SHASHANK SHEKHAR



Smita and Saurabh in happier times

Bokaro, June 29: She is willing and ready to go back to her husband, asserted a tearful Smita before the court. He is ready to treat her with honour, dignity and care, stated Saurabh in his bail petition before the Ranchi High Court. Still, the two IIT graduates, who got married in 2001 and migrated to USA, are unlikely to live happily ever after; as five days before Saurabh filed his bail petition on May 13 this year, he had filed for divorce in a US court.

The apparently false statement made by the husband was designed to persuade the court to allow him anticipatory bail as he has been evading summons to appear before the trial court in India, looking into the complaint of harassment for dowry. The ploy did not work though and Justice Amreshwar Sahay turned down the bail plea. A warrant for the arrest of Saurabh, son of a DGM at the Rourkela steel plant, has now been sent to the Interpol for execution.

Smita appeared before the court on June 24 and told the judge that she would still like to live with her husband. She had clearly hoped for a reconciliation because her father-in-law had promised that Saurabh too would be physically present at the high court that day. But he did not turn up though and she is now unsure how the legal tangle will proceed, sandwiched between the Indian and the US courts.

According to the US divorce laws, she said, Smita has furnished a financial statement to account for the bank balance and assets she holds; but Saurabh's statement is yet to reach her. Both are supposed to share the pool but distrust now runs so deep that Smita suspects her husband would do everything to deny her dues. She flies to France next month to join INSEAD and, hopefully, to a better life.

Sitting at home here, she recalls that hers was an arranged marriage and everything indicated a happy marriage. Her father-in-law had written to her father, saying how proud and happy they were to have her as a daughter-in-law. The couple flew off to Hawai for their honeymoon before settling down in California with Smita getting a job at Brocad Communications and Saurabh working for Alcatel.



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The fairy-tale wedding went sour, however, soon after Smita's father, Shree Prakash, opted for voluntary retirement from Bokaro Steel. Saurabh, according to Smita, started pestering her for Rs 20 lakh so that his younger brother, Gaurav, can be educated in the US. She was threatened with divorce, forcing her to take a heavy dose of sleeping pills. "The trauma had become unbearable and I did not want to live any longer as the hypocrisy of my husband lay exposed," she said.

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