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'Reverse dowry' gang haunts bachelors

Radha Sharma

[Monday, June 19, 2006 11:31:00 pm TIMES NEWS NETWORK]

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AHMEDABAD: Marriage proved a nightmare for Devrat Patel of Satapar village in Rajkot district of Gujarat.

Devrat, who could not find a bride in his community, was a sitting duck for marriage agents on the prowl looking for desperate bachelors willing to pay a price for a wife.

Kingpin of this racket, Mukesh Ahir, and his cronies got Devrat married to one Payal for Rs 60,000. Days later, Payal left for her parent's house and just disappeared.

"Devrat and his brother Chamanlal were forced to sell their land and house to repay the Rs 40,000 debt taken for buying the bride. They have also left the village," Devrat's uncle Rawat Kala told *TOI*.

The demand for brides from communities hit by a low sex ratio is leading to this unique gang of social criminals.

The modus operandi of these gangs is simple: locate boys desperate for marriage, sell them girls for a price as high as Rs 30,000 to 90,000 in marriage.

Within days of the wedding, the girl leaves for her parents' house and vanishes into thin air, leaving the bride-groom high and dry.

In fact, Gujarat police have busted at least eight such marriage rackets recently. These cases have been especially rampant in badly-hit districts like Mehsana and Rajkot...

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"Cheating under the guise of marriage has become rampant due to shortage of girls in certain communities. The problem is much bigger as majority cases go unreported due to social embarrassment or plain shock," says SP Rajkot (rural) Ajay Chaudhary.

In Mehsana district, police busted six rackets where a gang duped gullible bachelors.

One such racketeer couple from Vadodara, Ashok and Sharda Vasava, struck Opera village in Unjha, which has the lowest sex-ratio in Gujarat.

Girish Patel and Jitendra Patel were married off to Suman and Jyoti respectively after the boys agreed to pay Rs 35,000 each.

After few days, the two girls disappeared with jewellery, valuables and clothes from their husbands' home. It later turned out that the girls were married before.

In Visnagar, Mukesh Patel was similarly duped by an Ambaji-based gang that had got him married to one Leela for Rs 30,000. Police officers said three other rackets were busted in Mehsana taluka.

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