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Anjali Singh Jaiswal

[Saturday, May 20, 2006 11:02:26 pm TIMES NEWS NETWORK]

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That's how smart women in the city are cashing in on their marital disputes.

Marital disputes are fast becoming a popular way to rake in the moolah and legally at that. Legal eagles in the city claim that the abla nari now is the one laughing all the way to the bank.

Confirming the trend, lawyers at family courts say they are seeing a rise in cases where economically independent women are exploring ways to make the most of their failed marriages.

Says Ranjana Dixit, advocate and president of the American Library Bar Association (Family Courts), "A large number of cases coming to us are of women seeking maintenance despite not being entitled to the same.

The law clearly states that if a woman is economically independent, she cannot demand financial help from her husband. But that does not deter women from making quick money through marital disputes.

With marriage laws tilted in the women's favour, it's not difficult either. An added advantage is the ignorance of the husband and his family about their own rights."...

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With a Supreme Court ruling legalising live-in relationships, Dixit informs, "Even those who remarry don't declare their second marriage by presenting it as a live-in relationship, in order to continue claiming maintenance from their ex-husband.

Since such women come from affluent homes, the sum they receive as maintenance is sizable."

Making matters worse is the family interference from both sides, say city sociologists. Explains Pallavi Bagchi, a city based sociologist and a counsellor for an NGO dealing with marital disputes, "Ambitious women today are encouraged to teach their husbands a lesson.

With her standard of living too having risen, she refuses to be taken for granted. These reasons can lead her to consider ways that are immoral to maintain a steady flow of money and the marital dispute is seen as the easiest way to ensure that."

Agrees Kailash Nath Sahu, secretary Agarwal Samaj, who was called upon by the parents of a groom to bail them out of such a situation, "The marriage was solemnised in a mass mas marriage ceremony sans any dowry.

Unable to adjust to the family in Gorakhpur, the girl returned to her parents in Sitapur after a few months and refused to go back. A case of dowry harassment was filed and money given as dowry was demanded back.

The boy's side then approached us to testify in court that no dowry was taken at the time of marriage. The intention was to financially gain as much as possible through a marriage turned sour."

But feels Ranjana Bajpai, president, State Women Commission, "I don't deny such cases occur, but these are exceptions.

In fact, the lawyers and police egg on the warring parties to demand a fat sum which can be shared between them. So why blame only women?"

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