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‘Dead’ woman returns alive

Statesman News Service

KENDRAPARA, June 11: Police had proclaimed the death of a woman. Then followed the arrest of people, accused of burning her alive. Now in an ironic turnaround, the dead woman has come back alive, lending a new twist to the bride-burning case, reported in the Rajnagar police station area. The woman was allegedly killed by her spouse and in-laws during a dowry-related dispute. But the offence was never committed.

Those who authored the sinister design of slapping the dowry-death offence against the relatives, are now cooling their heels behind bars.

This episode has triggered a public outcry at a seaside village of Kendrapara district's Rajnagar tehsil.

The unsavoury incident also brings into focus oft-raised allegations that complaints of dowry torture and harassment lack substance.

“We had received a complaint that a newly-wed woman, Kuntala Mohanty, of Santhapada village was burnt alive by her spouse, Nakul and her father-in-law, Digambar Mohanty. The complainant also claimed that they had cremated the remains of the deceased.

The crux of the complaint was that the bride met her end, as she failed to bring home the dowry as demanded by the accused,” police said.

After preliminary investigation, the father-son duo was booked under Section 302, IPC and Section 4 (Dowry Prevention Act).

“We should have exhumed the body. But we believed the heart-rending tale of the complainants, and went ahead and registered the



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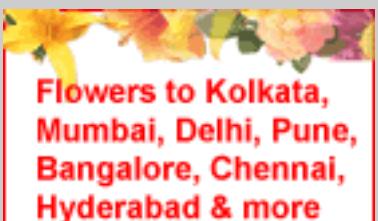
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8TH DAY



case. Later, acting on reports that the complaint was a fabricated one, the case had been reopened for a thorough investigation. More surprise was in store for us, as the deceased was found alive in a monastery in Arua-kadaliban village near Pattamundai.

“The local court was informed of the mistake, and the accused were acquitted. The woman, along with her parents, is now behind bars for implicating false cases against her spouse and father-in-law,” police said.

As a senior police officer put it, a majority of the police stations in the district are flooded with dowry-related cases daily. A sizeable number of such cases is false. But the police have to abide by the legal provisions here, as the victims happen to be women.

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