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Harassed by wife? Contact the men's cell

Rituparna Bhowmik in New Delhi | November 11, 2005 12:16 IST

Tiny signboards hang precariously on the central verge at many a traffic junction in New Delhi, inviting the attention of passers-by.

'Are you being harassed by your wife? Contact the men's cell,' the board, which also has a mobile number, says.

One phone call later, you learn that it is a one-man crusade against wives who harass or blackmail their husbands and the crusader is a lawyer-- willing to extend a helping hand.

"There are no laws to protect a man from being harassed and blackmailed by his wife. The anti-dowry laws are highly biased towards women. How does a man protect himself against constant nagging and suspicion?" questions R P Chugh, a Supreme Court advocate who started a men's advocacy group Crime Against Man Cell aka Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Husbands way back in the 80s to take head on cases of 'false charges of dowry harassment and torture'.

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Chugh claims, without naming anyone, the top notch of bureaucracy and judiciary of Delhi have, at some point or the other approached him with marital woes, complaining of harassment by their wives.

Chugh says he has long been campaigning for a legislation for 'Protection of Rights and Dignity of Married Men' is immediately required.

"Almost 87 per cent of women lodged in Tihar jail have been booked on anti-dowry complaints," Chugh claims quoting media reports.

Citing a recent case, Chugh says a woman from Haryana was quick to slap a dowry harassment suit on her husband when she was allegedly caught in a compromising situation with her husband's colleague.

Most crime against men go unnoticed as a man's ego does not allow him to admit that the wife regularly attacks him with an assortment of household items, Chugh says.

The lawyer has taken a war of sorts against the society to defend the 'dignity and rights of men in married lives', and holds dharnas every year on Human Rights Day.

"The Dowry (Prohibition) Act safeguards women's rights but unfortunately it can also victimise an innocent man whose wife wants to blackmail him or draw heavy compensation," he says.

Although crime against women and domestic violence is a reality, through his chequered career in law, Chugh says he has defended numerous men against false claims of torture, dowry harassment and destroying marital harmony.

A similar 'brother' organisation, which reportedly is thriving in Kolkata has also seen men coming out more often to register their protest against 'exploitation' by wives, he says.

"I have a number of cases with me and the complaints vary from silent resistance-- of refusing to speak to their spouse after a row-- or constant nagging or actual physical violence," he says.

Chugh says that many of the rape charges filed against men are 'fake' and are simply examples of 'a woman scorned'.

However, while feminists have criticised his radical views over the years, Chugh says it hasn't deterred him from pitching for men and will not either in future.

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