

Treat girls as adults from age 16, court says

A Delhi court Tuesday acquitted a young man on charges of raping and abducting his lover, and urged parliament to amend the law to treat girls as adults from age 16.

Pointing out that girls were maturing faster in the present social conditions and environment, Additional Sessions Judge Rajendra Kumar Shastri suggested that they should be treated as adults from age 16.

The judge made the observation after dismissing charges against the young man, Kapil, who had faced trial for three years for no fault of his.

The case pertained to 2004 when Kapil and his girl friend fled from their homes here and got married in Nepal.

The young woman's father registered a case with the police accusing Kapil of running away with his daughter who he claimed was a minor.

After a week, the young couple returned to New Delhi. Kapil was arrested on charges of raping and kidnapping his girl friend.

The young woman initially recorded a statement under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code stating she was not a minor. Later, she changed her version and turned against Kapil.

However, the court acquitted Kapil noting that the woman had retracted from her earlier statement after pressure from her family.

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