



Norway NRI row ends, uncle to get kids' custody

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New Delhi: There was finally some good news with the end of an ordeal for an Indian couple in Norway. Anurup and Sagarika Bhattacharya's two children, three-year-old Abhigyan and one-year-old Aishwarya, who were taken by the Norwegian authorities after allegations of poor treatment by parents, will now finally return to India. The Norwegian government has agreed to return the children to their uncle Arunabhash Bhattacharya, but will take assurance from the family. The solution was arrived at after India took up the issue with Oslo at the diplomatic level. The kids' uncle has offered to be their guardian and the parents will have unrestricted visitation rights.

Sagarika expressed her happiness about the developments and hoped that the ordeal would be over soon.

"I am extremely happy that they will give the custody to my brother-in-law. He is like a family. We are fine that a person from the family will come here and take the custody of the children. Both the children are in the same foster family now. Maybe we will get the children as soon as possible. Indian Embassy met the children a few weeks back. They told us that they are fine," said Sagarika.

An out of court settlement has been reached and both the governments were satisfied, but the stamp of approval will have to come from court.

"We hope the children would be able to come to India soon, as soon as we manage to get the signatures that are required. This agreement between the parents and the child support services has been an out of court settlement but it would need the formal approval of the court," said the couple's lawyer Svein Kjetil Lode Svendsen.

One of the kids had shown autistic tendencies. Therefore, Oslo has asked for and got an undertaking that the Indian Health and Child Welfare Ministry will monitor the care the two kids receive.

For the grandparents of the children and the rest of the extended family, this is the best possible solution under the circumstances. Arunabhash is getting set to leave for Norway and he will return with the kids to the relieved relatives soon.

Once the children are under their uncle's custody and come back to India, there would be no problem if the parents came back and met or stayed with their children.

External Affairs Minister SM Krishna personally intervened in this case on Monday. He told his Norwegian counterpart that the best interests of the kids would be served if they were with the extended family.

The pressure paid off, but Oslo still maintains that there were no cultural misinterpretations in this case.