

THE RISE OF PRE-MATRIMONIAL INVESTIGATORS

Snooping on financial health, background checks of the family, checking digital footprint and even setting up honeytraps, more and more families are employing detectives to find out more about the prospective match for their son or daughter. **Anand Raj OK** explores the trend

The wedding was just around the corner. Invitations were sent out, venues booked, and the couple, Kiran and Natasha (names changed), was already basking in the glow of their engagement.

But over the course of a few days, a seed of doubt began growing in Kiran's mind. There was something about his fiancée that didn't sit right with him – a few actions of hers left him puzzled and intrigued. Natasha would make long phone calls with someone, try to hide the caller's identity, ask probing questions about Kiran's financial condition... Unwilling to let this doubt fester, Kiran decided to hire a private pre-matrimonial detective. Little did he know, this decision would unravel a web of deception so intricate that it would shake the very foundation of his trust.

What the detective uncovered was nothing short of a scandal. Natasha, they discovered, had been married 16 times before. Each time, she had conspired with a lawyer friend to extract hefty settlements

through out-of-court divorces. It was a con game, one that had left a trail of broken marriages and empty bank accounts. Thanks to the detective's diligence – he followed up this case for five months to gather enough proof against the culprits to make a watertight case against them – both Natasha and her accomplice ended up behind bars.

Vinay Chauhan, the man behind this investigation, is no stranger to such high-stakes cases. "With the surge in online

relationships, the need for these investigations has become almost a necessity," says the founder of India-based Striking Vision Intelligence Network Private Limited, and who was awarded the Investigation Entrepreneur Of The Year in 2009 by the then President of India, Pratibha Patil. "People often present themselves in ways that make them seem more desirable in the marriage market, often using fake profiles or providing misleading information."



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Naman Jain, MD, Sleuths India receiving the Young Investigation Entrepreneur Award in 2012 from then President of India Smt Pratibha Patil



Nidhi Jain, Director, Sleuths India, and Naman Jain

Naman Jain, Managing Director of Sleuths India Detectives, echoes this sentiment. His agency, which handled just 7-8 cases a month 25 years ago, now deals with around 200 prenuptial checks every month. “In arranged marriages, parents often come to us with multiple profiles they want checked. We usually advise them to focus on one profile first, as investigating multiple people can be quite expensive. Once they zero in on someone, we conduct a thorough background check

and report our findings,” say Naman, who won the Young Investigation Entrepreneur Award in 2012.

The cost of these investigations can vary significantly depending on the scope of the inquiry. A basic background check starts at Rs25,000, but if surveillance or a detailed financial background check is required, the price can climb to between Rs50,000 and Rs150,000 – or even higher for more complex cases. For instance, if the boy or the girl lives and works in a



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different city from their parents, the additional legwork involved could push the costs up. And if the investigation extends to another country, expect to pay even more.

Naman breaks down the pre-matrimonial investigations conducted by his award-winning agency into four main categories:

1. Arranged Marriages:

Here, **the focus is on** checking for past affairs, broken relationships, the financial stability of both families, and the medical history of the prospective bride or groom. They also look into any family disputes or debts, and whether any family member has died under suspicious circumstances.

2. Love Marriages:

In about 75 per cent of these cases, Naman says, the parents may have reluctantly agreed to the match but secretly hope to find a reason to call it off. Sometimes, one partner might also hire a detective to ensure they’re making the right decision.

3. Infidelity:

Suspicion often arises post-engagement,

especially if one partner is constantly on the phone, has their phone switched off, or is vague about their whereabouts. “In 90 per cent of these cases, their suspicions are proven right,” Naman admits.

4. Second Marriages:

For those entering a second marriage, the main concerns are the real reasons behind the previous divorce and any past behaviours or habits that could affect the new union.

Sleuths India employs a team of 200 field operatives, many of whom are ex-army or ex-intelligence officers, ensuring the utmost discretion and confidentiality in their work. There are also dedicated



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Sachit Kumar, MD, Globe Detective Agency

back-office teams that play a crucial role in these investigations. Naman recalls one instance where a back-office staff member discovered a prospective groom’s number on a dubious website. “The prospective bride’s parents wanted us to run a check on him. We didn’t jump to conclusions based on the website alone, but when a female team member posed as a client and called him, he agreed to offer his services in exchange for money. We provided the transcripts of this conversation to our client,” says Naman whose company’s network extends globally, enabling them to conduct checks anywhere in the world.

Sachit Kumar, Managing Director of Globe Detective Agency, one of India’s oldest detective agencies, notes that his company has 20 branches across India and a network in 40 countries. “We regularly conduct pre-matrimonial checks in places like Australia, Canada, and the USA. In the UAE, we follow the stringent local laws to perform basic verifications,” he says.

Confidentiality and sensitivity are paramount in this line of work. “Prenuptial checks must be conducted slowly and carefully to avoid jeopardising the person being investigated,” Sachit emphasises. In today’s digital age, where LinkedIn profiles and social media can be misleading, on-the-ground investigation remains crucial. Sachit recalls a case where a couple had been in a long-distance relationship for eight years. They were planning to get married when the woman requested the services of the detectives to run a check on the prospective groom.

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was his wife and he had three children with her.”

Medical and behavioural issues often come to light during these investigations as well. Vinay, recounts a case where a seemingly perfect groom was discovered to have had some major health issues that prevents him from having children.

As more middle- and upper-class families opt for these checks, the challenges for investigators continue to grow. “Many people live in highly secure gated communities, making access to information difficult. If the person being investigated is the child of a prominent person in society, the challenges increase. Address changes also complicate matters, especially in remote areas where our teams might easily be recognised,” Naman explains.

Naman’s team once faced a harrowing situation in a remote village, where a suspicious groom’s family, already on alert, attacked and imprisoned the investigators. “We had to act quickly, using our network to locate them and alert the local police,” Naman recounts. “Fortunately, incidents like this are rare.”

Despite the challenges, pre-matrimonial detectives remain committed to their task: uncovering the truth, whether good or bad. “As investigators, we can’t be judgmental or emotional. Our job is to present the truth and then step back,” Sachit says. While they occasionally receive wedding invitations from satisfied clients, most detectives prefer to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

Vinay Chauhan believes that pre-matrimonial investigations are an essential tool for laying doubts to rest before entering a marriage. “It’s better to know the truth than to live with doubts and suspicions in a new marriage,” he concludes. And in today’s world, where deception can be just a click away, the role of pre-matrimonial detectives has never been more vital. ✨