

New trends in wedding sleuthing

Detectives are being asked to check suitors' sexual orientation, eating habits, credit status and parental history

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Priate detectives in Bengaluru are doing more pre-marital background checks than ever before, and are being asked to check on not just prospective brides and grooms but also their parents.

Some agencies are seeing a 10%-20% rise in enquiries year after year. Others like Venus Detectives, MG Road, receive 2-3 requests daily. Before 2022, they would get 2-3 calls a week.

Multiple partners

An agency in west Bengaluru is looking at a second marriage case. "The man drew up a contract, saying his fiancée should not object if he met female friends or took long calls. The woman, a 32-year-old IT professional, signed it but grew uneasy after the engagement. She approached us. We discovered that the man was staying out at odd hours, and had gone on a trip to Goa with another woman. When she confronted him, he insisted they were just friends," the founder says.

Cheating is rampant, multiple detective agencies told *Metrolife*. They often find individuals seeing three to eight partners simultaneously even after marriage talks have begun.



Private detectives are asked to check on the nightlife and weekend pursuits of potential suitors. Church Street and adjoining areas are popular for pubs and restaurants. DH PHOTO/S K DINESH

A growing concern is that suitors are putting up altered profiles on matrimonial sites and social media, even using AI to change their voices. Some are outright frauds. "A Bengaluru girl was duped of Rs 4.5 lakh by a man who claimed to work in the Afghan army," a detective from a Basaveshwara Nagar agency shares.

No 1 in curiosity

Sleuths India Consultancy operates in 10 Indian cities. Its Bengaluru branch receives the highest pre-marital check requests, averaging 30 a month.

Its managing director Naman Jain explains: "Bengaluru has a large migrant population. Young men and women live independently, away from parental supervision. This often raises suspicions

MODUS OPERANDI

"We don't shadow people or invade their private space," says Naman Jain, MD of a 25-year-old detective agency. Sleuths rely on 'open-source intelligence', that is, gathering information from neighbours, colleagues, relatives, domestic workers, social media and publicly available records.

among families considering them for marriage. The suspicions prove true 90% of the time."

The families want to know whether the potential bride or groom has an alcohol or substance addiction, is involved

in sex work, is straight or is medically sound, particularly in the case of male suitors.

Boy v/s girl checklist

Bangalore Detectives, off Bannerghatta Road, gets about 20 cases in Bengaluru a month.

DK Giri, a former armyman who started the agency in 1970s, notes differences in expectations: "The girl's family enquires about the boy's salary and family's wealth, while the boy's side looks at the girl's education, character, and health."

"Boys often exaggerate their qualifications, claiming to have gone to IIT when they're ITI graduates. They say they are earning Rs 2 lakh when their monthly pay is Rs 50,000. The girl's side tends to lie about age and mood swings," he continues.

According to a representative of Venus Detectives, families often keep a girl's broken engagement hidden. "In Bengaluru, about 70% of men (we investigate) hide their divorce or current marriage," she adds.

In love marriages, Giri says, boys' families suspect girls of being gold diggers, while Jain says girls' families ask them to look for faults in the boy to end the relationship. In case of second marriages, they are tasked with finding out why the first marriage failed. "Domestic abuse, gambling, alcohol addiction, and impotency angles are scrutinised," Giri says.

Giri and Jain have noticed a positive change though—many families no longer care about past affairs, as long as the boy or girl has moved on. Purushotham Mesta's experience has been different. The founder of Rajdhani

WALLET FACTOR

Pre-matrimonial checks by Bengaluru detective agencies can range from Rs 35,000 to Rs 15 lakh. Primarily, middle class, upper middle class, and ultra-wealthy families hire wedding detectives.

Some agencies offer services at Rs 10,000 and get requests from lower middle class.

Investigations can take from five days to several months (especially when suitors are abroad). "Pre-matrimonial verification should be done early, but families often contact us just before or after the engagement when communication gaps become apparent," says Bhavna Chheda, founder of Maratha Detectives, HSR Layout.

Detective, Vijayanagar, says, "Even if a girl claims she has broken up, suspicion lingers."

Surprise results

Some investigations yield unexpected results. "A man earned more than he had told his family. He wanted to use the balance to splurge on his lifestyle secretly," a detective from Pipeline Road says.

A background check on an alliance between two Jain families threw up a surprise. "We found the boy often orders non-veg food. The girl's father was surprisingly calm and said, 'My daughter will not mind,'" says Jain.