

CAREERS



PRIVATE INVESTIGATION

by SUNNY THOMAS

Through the eyes of private eye Ramesh Madan.

There are no colleges that turn out trained private detectives. For one to get started, apprenticeship is the best course. There are agencies like the Goliath Detectives which train aspiring young boys and girls into private detectives, provided they have an aptitude for the profession.

Before admission, the candidate is thoroughly screened for four qualities:

- determination • patience
- sharp observation and • IQ.

A no-fee, no-stipend terms is waived for the meritorious, who will get Rs 400 as pocket expense. The six-month training covers the theory and practice of identification, civil and criminal investigation, photographic investigation, perfection in the use of wireless sets and tape recorders, sound judgment, interrogation and cross-examination, intelligence and evidence mopping, and location study.

During training, their progress is assessed and their aptitude tested, and then placed accordingly in different cadres and departments. For example, a dare-devil will excel in open investigation while the more intelligent but shy sleuth can do discreet investigation. A person with technical aptitude naturally comes to the technical department while some one fond of the camera will choose photographic investigation. The lectures and classes during training will come in handy for the novice in operation. The beginners always operate under the supervision of a senior detective, lest they mess up a case. The Private Detective need not be a graduate, although that is the minimum qualification specified. Starting on a salary of Rs 1,000 plus perks (conveyance, housing, medical and PF facilities), the scale goes up to Rs 5,000. The really enterprising start their own agency.

Here is a break-up of the nature of cases the Private Detective has to handle: marital infidelity (50 per cent), industrial

espionage (20 per cent), family feuds (10 per cent) and legal issues (20 per cent). The complex nature of modern living and the emergence of the emancipated woman has strained the wedlock, with more and more enquiries for surveillance on the spouse's activities. It is becoming a lucrative business for the Private Detective. Industrial espionage includes employer's suspicion of the fidelity of his employees, specially those on the top. Certain employees whose conduct is suspect, are shadowed closely. In the corporate world, there is so much that has to be kept a secret from one's business rivals. Information passes from one company/professional to the other and no one is the wiser. The expertise of the Private Detective is needed here more and more. Family feuds can become so bitter that the Private Detective needs to be hired to settle them.

A case study will illustrate the point. Once a forest contractor was sentenced to death on the charge of murdering his *munim* (supervisor) with whose wife, it was common knowledge, the contractor had illicit relations. In the most suspicious circumstances, the woman had disappeared after the murder. Going by circumstantial evidence, the police arrested him and put him behind bars. Later he was sentenced to death by the lower court. On appeal, the Private Detective was asked to help. On studying the post-mortem report, the Private Detective (Madan) came to the conclusion that the "murder weapon" presented in the court was not the actual weapon with which the murder had been committed. The English rifle does a clean job, and the exit is always wider than the entry of bullet into the body of the victim. Innocent of the technical niceties, the judge asked for a live demonstration for which the date was fixed. The judge ordered the police to bring a country revolver and a goat's skin.

The police found that the only country

revolver available was with the SHO who had taken it for an identification case and was on leave since then. The judge ordered a search of his quarters and the pistol was traced. On examination, the Private Detective found that that was the very weapon with which the murder had been committed. Ballistic technology proved beyond doubt that the killer bullet was fired from that country-made pistol. The Private Detective's men who had visited the SHO's native village traced the missing wife of the deceased, too, to the SHO's house. The rest of the case was simple. An extremely pretty girl, she had two paramours at once, the SHO and the forest contractor. The innocent contractor was saved from the gallows; the subsequent death sentence on the SHO was commuted to life-term and the *munim's* wife went scot-free.

Another case study may be relevant to cities like Delhi, where hit-and-run accidents are common. A youth lay dazed and baffled on the road after being hit by a speeding car. As the car sped away, he noted three digits of its licence number, the fourth just eluded his eye. He knew for certain it was a foreign car. From the 4,000 and odd imported cars then in Delhi, 1,000 cars were picked by tallying the three digits from the Imported Car Authority. The figure was narrowed down to three from the description, and out of the three one was owned by a Sikh and was traced to a garage where it had been given for change of colour. Timely discovery prevented the removal of the scratches on the old paint and was produced as it was in the court as unmistakable proof. The culprit was booked and punished.

Now that you know about the life of a Private Detective, do you want to become one? It is, of course, more exciting to read about him than to be one. In reality, he courts danger in life for the thrill of solving a mystery.

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