

Snooping Means Money



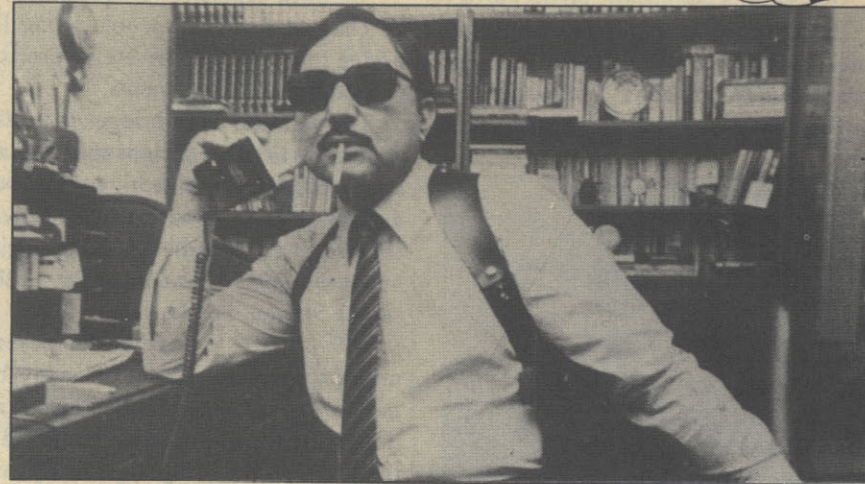
BY NEELAM VERMA

From Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes to Lawrence Sanders Edward X. Delaney to our own TV detective, Karamchand, the 'snoops' are a quintessential part of global folklore.

In India, for nearly three decades, the business of detective agencies had languished with the stray divorce cases coming their way. A husband checking on his erring wife or vice versa were the standard themes for detective agencies most of whom found the going really tough.

But not any longer. Today private dicks have their hands full with different kind of cases, Industrial espionage is the name of the game along with the increasing cases of matrimonial discord.

Industrial security and the upswing in white collar crime has also provided a



Think Before You Speak

new edge to the detective agencies which are mushrooming by the day. In 1971 there were only three agencies, today there are nearly over 800 nationwide. According to industry sources, the growth

rate for detective agencies is nearly 45 per cent in terms of turnover.

Says a senior executive of a leading industrial house: "As the Industrial empire grows and becomes more far flung,

Lady Detective Goes Public

BY ATUL GUPTA.

The signature of a woman was needed in a divorce case. She had no intention of signing. A lady detective was hired to do the job.

The detective went to the woman's house posing as a market researcher. After asking the woman a few questions, the detective asked her to sign the form, as other interviewees had done. The woman, blissfully, unaware of the real identity or intent of the 'researcher', signed it. The job was done.

Raj Dulari Singh, who began her career as a private investigator with this case, almost two decades ago has come a long way today. She is the first woman from the Indian sub-continent to become a member of the Council of International Investigators (CII), the premier international organisation of detectives. Her

husband, Kunwar Vikram Singh has the distinction of being the first Asian member on the Board of the CII.

The Council was established in Chicago in 1955. It is extremely selective about its members and admits only those who have proven their professional capabilities, after making them undergo written examination and other stringent tests. It has just about 400 members worldwide, according to Raj Dulari Singh.

Raj Singh says that, she had always been fascinated by the world of private detectives. She found it extremely exciting and thrilling, in comparison to the routine nine to five office job. Her family members, too never opposed her choice of profession.

"As a matter of fact, a woman can be more successful in it than a man because people usually don't suspect women,"

she feels. Hiding your true identity and intentions is the essence of this profession. Further, there are certain tasks that can only be done by women, Raj Singh adds.

But isn't it dangerous for a woman to work as private investigator? Raj Singh says that since most often than not no one comes to know of your true identity, there is no overt danger involved.

And what happens if your identity is revealed? "Then you are a failure", she says. "The people concerned will become wary of you and you probably won't be able to get the information you are being paid to get. The case will be a failure for you".

Being a woman, has she faced any problems in this profession, since the past eighteen years? "Not at all", says Raj Singh. Eighteen years back, women

it is very difficult for us to keep tabs on factories and regional offices. Detective agencies do a good job and we've hired one on an annual basis."

According to senior detectives, corporate sector comprises almost 80 per cent of the total business generated by detective agencies today. Compared to less than 30 per cent of the total grosses in the early eighties.

Besides the usual run of the mill jobs, the agencies are being asked by corporate bosses to keep tabs on union leaders, scout for duplicate products and private industrial security.

The kind of money the detective agencies are making these days is incredible. Since there are no standardised rates, a case may cost anything from Rs. 3,000 to 50,000. And if the case involves travelling abroad, the cost can skyrocket to a couple of lakhs. In fact, of late a lot of foreign work is being doled out to agencies, usually pertaining to the details of an Indian company with whom a multinational is planning to collaborate. For this they get paid in foreign exchange.

On an average it costs Rs. 1,500 a day

to shadow i.e., follow a person while cultivating a mole in an organisation can cost up to 5,000 a month plus the mole's salary, depending upon the role he plays. And if the mole is at the managerial level, he can cost upto 15,000 a month.

For corporate clients, such costs are incidental as they would pay anything for the right information. Thus even a medium sized detective agency can earn up to 20 lakh per annum. With banks and insurance companies, roping in sleuths to investigate fraud and embezzlement cases, the business is booming.

Yet there are a number of problems detective agencies face today. As the profession is yet to gain the status of an industry, there are no exact figures available about the turnovers lodged by various organisations.

Moreover the intense rivalry between the agencies has not allowed any solid association to be made which can look after the interests of detective agencies. "Why should we work in this direction. We have our own clients and have no problems", says R.P. Soni of Globe Detective Agency, one of the leading ones

in the country.

And since there is no licence system in the country, many fly-by-night operators have set up small detective shops. According to one of the country's leading private eye, R.C. Madan who received the prestigious International Detective of the year Award in 1989 and who has spent nearly 33 years in the profession and owns 'Goliath', "There are many middlemen who fleece the customers in the name of detective agencies. They are bad for the reputation of other genuine detective agencies."

And then there are problem detective agencies face with local police men. It is a well-known fact that nowhere in the world do the private investigators and cops get along, but this problems is even more acute in this country. Private investigators are considered as meddlers by the police who sometimes are accused of scaring away the suspects.

But counters Bhisham Nayyar of 'Private Eye', "The consistent failure of the police in solving cases forces people to come to us". Adds R.C. Madan, who claims to have saved 26 people from the

investigators were required in divorce cases as well as general cases.

When asked to talk about her most exciting or dangerous case, Raj Singh said that each case has its own unique features, and is interesting in its own right. But on being insisted upon, she

talked about one particular case which involved a lot of danger and difficulty. She had to shadow a top government official, who was involved in an extra-marital affair. She was required to collect evidence and identify the protagonists.

Raj Singh's life revolves around her profession. She met her husband when she started her career under him. He has been her guide and mentor ever since. The sharing of common goals and an understanding of the trials and tribulations of their profession brought both of them closer to each other, culminating in marriage.

Kunwar Singh admits the fact that Raj Singh being a detective did influence his decision to marry her. Raj Singh says that she on her part had no special preferences. "We never used to think about such things during our time", she said.

The Singhs have two children, Madhavi, who is 14 years old and 11-year old Shiwindra Pratap.

Do their children too want to follow the footsteps of their parents? Ms Singh



India's First Lady Detective