

Producer Sheetal Talwar Alleges Death Threats From Godman Followed by Shahid Kapoor and His Family

On March 27, 2019, *Business Today* reported, “In a curious twist in the ongoing saga of Singh brothers' missing billions, an NRI film producer Sheetal Vinod Talwar has approached the Economic Offences Wing of Mumbai alleging he has been threatened with life after his lawyers pursued repayment of \$1.25 million paid supposedly towards Radha Soami Satsang chief Gurinder Singh Dhillon's treatment abroad. "I was coaxed into parting with \$1.25 million towards Gurinder Singh Dhillon's treatment and allied expenses in 2015. Dhillon spoke to me twice to help with funds," Talwar told *Business Today* in a written response. Money was given to Hong Kong-based company Mega Brave Limited run by RSSB's Lakhi Samtani and Manoj Sabnani. This is the second criminal complaint against the Baba and RSSB associates. Earlier, on Feb 5, Malvinder Singh had approached the Economic Offences Wing in Delhi accusing Baba Dhillon of threatening through lawyer Ferida Chopra that Malvinder would be eliminated. Malvinder had sought payment of Rs 8,742 crore towards money loaned to firms owned by Dhillon, his family and RSSB associates.” Based on this report by *Business Today*, Subhash K Jha spoke to Sheetal Talwar.

What is the nature of the threats you are getting from RSSB chief Baba Gurinder Dhillon and why ?

It was a simple and powerful threat, that if I did NOT stop pursuing my debt and did not withdraw my case against the directors and the company Megabrave (where the money was lent), I would face dire consequences and so would my immediate family. Of course in my mind, this threat could not have been from Babaji, but would have been from an over-enthusiastic

member of his inner circle - which is why I documented it down on e-mail to his team and marked even his assistant. To my surprise, no one even attempted to get to the bottom of it, specifically as the call was from a landline in their satsang office, which would obviously have CCTV cameras.

How did your business association with him begin and why did you agree to such an arrangement ?

Let's be clear on this. I had no business association with either the satsang or Babaji directly prior to this lending. Of course, I had a business dealing with Religare where Babaji's family were prominent shareholders, and as is now in public domain, the guiding mentor. My association with Babaji began when he asked Pankajji (Pankaj Kapoor, the actor) to invite us to Beas as he was impressed and moved by *Dharm*. As Religare was expanding in the financial sector, he suggested that the film fund I was putting together, could be partnered with by Religare and that is where the association began and got stronger. That extended into a personal, emotional and continued association with Babaji and his inner circle.

You keep speaking of inner circle. It is pretty much well known that Shahid Kapoor and Pankaj Kapur are ardent followers and part of his circle. Are you insinuating that they are also responsible for this situation ?

Let me be categorically clear. Except for the fact that Pankajji was the catalyst to introduce me to Babaji, there is NO role he or Shahid played in this episode. None of them are at all responsible for any of this. Ever since 2009, it was an independent relationship that I shared with Babaji and the Religare team. Babaji's son Gary, sat on the film fund board. And Pankajji and Shahid's spiritual beliefs and their relationship has nothing to do with this situation. My respect for Pankajji as a human and as an artist is immense and he has never done anything to ever erode that. So my request is not to drag them into this at all.

Dhillon has Lakhs of followers including actors Pankaj Kapoor

and his son Shahid Kapoor. Why would his followers indulge in threat and intimidation which are criminal acts ?

Like I told you, I thought (and still pray) that this was the over enthusiastic act of one of his close lieutenants and inner circle members.

How do you plan to take this forward ?

Well, we think the best way forward is legal and after waiting for this to be solved amicably for a long period, that is the steps we are taking. Sad, as it has come to this. But, I am left with no option.

Do you think this incident reflects on the growing criminalizing of religion in our country ?

I think this reflects not on not only the criminalizing of religion, but if you move to the genesis of it, it actually stems from the growing endemic mix of spirituality, politics, business and money. The power in being a guru or then being thought of as God in Human form by millions of followers is absolute - and like in any other field - such belief and power corrupts.

One last question, you spoke of the mix of politics, business and money - you had done “Rann” which spoke of similar corruption in media, are we seeing a germ of an film idea here?

We are already developing this as a subject for a OTT platform, but we can't speak of that now. So, not a film, but a series yes.

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