

STARS ARE BORN

HOW



CHUNKY PANDEY
“I never needed Shah Rukh & Salman to give me work”

Revealed
MAHIE GILL'S
SEX
FANTASIES

Shibani Dandekar
THE HOTTEST
IPL HOST
IN A



BIKINI

HOW
SHAIENDRA SINGH
MADE HIS
MILLIONS
& HAD A BLAST
DOING IT

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SHAILENDRA SINGH

M made his MILLIONS & had a blast doing it



SHAILENDRA SINGH IS MANY THINGS TO MANY PEOPLE—MARKETING WIZ, BOLLYWOOD PRODUCER, DEALER AND AUTHOR. HE'S ALSO THE GUY WHO CREATED SUNBURN AND RUNS PERCEPT, INDIA'S LARGEST ENTERTAINMENT, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS CONGLOMERATE. BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, HE'S THE GUY TELLING YOU HOW HE GOT THERE AND HOW HE DID IT ON HIS OWN TERMS.

I

It's 11 am and we're early. It gives us time to soak up the vibrancy of Percept's office. A few minutes later, we're led to its source. And, as we walk towards Shailendra Singh's cabin (or 'palace', as he calls it), beautiful models and crazy props in tow, we realise that at this time, we've been outdone in the crazy department by a long shot. Have a look at the wacky pictures and judge for yourself. But along the way, don't miss Singh's story as he talks about making the most of opportunities, building strong brands and doing what your heart truly desires.

Tell us about how you began your career.

I was a graduate from HR College, my father was a sugar technologist, but my first love was cricket. I tried to play for the country, I tried really hard, but that didn't work out. Those days, it was more about only Maharashtrians playing for Maharashtra. Subsequently, I took amateur contracts in England to make a little money. Then, I worked for 18 months at the Taj Group of Hotels as a waiter. I remember my salary was ₹ 1280. I was serving the same people I hung out with in college, but it was cool, I wasn't embarrassed. Actually, I celebrated it. It levelled me out and taught me reality.

Even then, did a part of you all along know you'd end up here?

Balls, I knew! Are you mad or what? I always thought that I should die poor, so I don't leave too much stress behind if my wealth had to be divided. I never thought I'd be sitting here in this plush air-conditioned office, I thought I'd be coaching or maybe chilling out on a beach.

So, how did you pull it off?

I think it's two things—I have an open mind and good reflexes. Frankly, I'm not intellectually educated to do all the things I did. My brother started the agency in '84 and I joined him in '87 as an equal partner. From advertising, we got an opportunity to do events, from events, we got an opportunity to do PR, from PR, we got to do ad films, from ad films to feature films to talent management to sports marketing. Whenever an opportunity came knocking, I accepted it. I didn't say, 'I don't know this.' That's what happens to us. If someone says, 'Hey, wanna play badminton,' you may say, 'I don't know how to play.' Balls! You'll only learn to play once you start playing. So, never say never.

By Raoul Lobo





What about avoiding failure?

I treat business and life as a sport. If you lose the US Open, you can play the French Open, if you lose the French Open, you can play at Wimbledon. Every day is an Open. If you fail, how does it matter? It's a sport, but the point is to put in your best effort. And, if you're giving your best, you're having a blast. It's not about the consequences because consequences are out of your control. Why is Dawood Ibrahim still alive while a 10-year-old dies of cancer? Where the fuck is the control? None of us have any control, so why intellectualise everything so much?

You've cracked some really big deals over the years. How did you do it?

You have to go full power. But, I don't do it with arrogance, I do it with passion and conviction. See, I'd take you along, but I'll not let you realise that I'm pushing you. And when I say it's a good deal, I really believe it.

Like, when I sold Subrata Roy the sponsorship of the Indian cricket team for ₹ 100 crores and he thought it was the worst deal of his life. I said, 'Firstly, every match, every one of those 280 days of cricket a year will be watched in perpetuity. Secondly, it'll cost you ₹ 12 crores to get (Sachin) Tendulkar individually, here you'll get him anyway along with 18 other chests. Every time Tendulkar hits a century, Sahara will be on the front page of every newspaper. No one will put you on the front page for any success you may have. Thirdly, sir, you're not in any consumer business. (This was before Sahara Airlines and Sahara TV). *Jungle mein mor nacha, kisne dekha?* Once you're on the team's chests, everyone will want to know Sahara.' Now, if you think about it, ₹ 100 crores is a joke. In three years, the valuation of the sponsorship went up to ₹ 9000 crores.

I also remember selling the *Desh ki Dhadkan* campaign to Pawan Munjal (MD & CEO, Hero MotoCorp) in his private jet. For those two hours in the flight, I chewed his brains. I said, 'Sir, since fucking 1980 you are saying, 'Fill it, shut it, forget it.' But today, you have 20 million customers. *Aap unki dhadkan ho, sir!* If that four stroke engine doesn't start in the morning, your customers' lives will go haywire.' And finally, he gave in. '*Bana le tu, bana le.*' And, that campaign ran for 10 years.

What's the key to building strong brands?

The first thing is to get to know your consumer. So, when you create a brand, you keep the consumer in mind and customise it to their tastes. Like, when I created Sunburn, the question behind everything I did, be it the lineup, security, medical facilities or even confetti, was, 'Will the fans like it?' I didn't care which artist was rated number one. Actually, the fact that I had zero exposure to EDM (Electric Dance Music) before Sunburn was fantastic because I created it raw, real and with the philosophy—of the fans, by the fans and for the fans.



BIKINIS: THE BEACH COMPANY



Tell us about the moments in your journey that have reflected your true self.

When my father died, I realised I wanted to go with him. I just didn't want to stay anymore... life felt boring. That's the realest moment I've ever had. Actually, I'm still waiting to explore myself. But, I've had mini moments like seeing 75 thousand people jumping together at Sunburn, cracking business deals, winning the National Film Award for Best Film for *Kanchivaram*, my book getting nominated by Crossword in the non-fiction category. That's all pretty cool, but nothing great. Money, awards are okay, but I need something bigger to happen. For me, it's more about self-expression.

How do you incorporate self-expression into your work?

See, Einstein expressed himself but he didn't expect anything out of it, so did most of the great artists of the world. Many of them only became famous after they died. I get up every morning at 4:30 and I create. I just sit and free-write. If I have to abuse and get angry, there is one black book. The cover reads, 'Do some epic shit,' so I write shit in that. You've got to express yourself or you'll get frustrated.

Is optimism an important part of your success?

The only way you can survive and live this life is by being an optimist. There's no space for anybody else. Even in a crisis, you have to be an optimist, how else will you overcome it? There are two ways to play a bouncer, one is on the back foot, like Sourav Ganguly and the other on the front foot, like Virat Kohli. I'm like Virat Kohli. I play the bouncer where it is, why wait for it to hit you?





BIKINIS: NIDHI MUNIM

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What are your fears?

Dad's dead, otherwise I'd fear disappointing him. Now, I fear disappointing myself. I put a lot of pressure on myself to do wonderful things. And I don't lie to myself, I know my journey is going to end and I know I'll walk slowly in 15 years. So, when the time comes, I want to have a smile on my face and say, 'Fucking well done, The fuck-it list (Shailendra's version of a bucket list) is completed.'

What's your take on spirituality?

Someone once tried to teach me to meditate on Morjim beach in Goa. He said, 'Sit in the corner, close your eyes.' I wasn't into it, so I asked him what he liked doing the most. He said playing with a frisbee. Fucking sexy! So, he taught me to play frisbee against the wind of the ocean. Afterwards, I said, 'Do you know what you just did? You meditated.' When you do what you like most at that moment, it is meditation. That's my idea of spirituality.

What are your plans for the future?

I have been the king maker, now I want to be the king myself. Lately, I have a phrase that I keep telling myself every day: 'I am not in business, I am the business.' I'm bored of selling myself like a hooker which I do every day, now I want to make love to myself. I've done three decades of servicing, brand-building, making people's careers and I'll keep doing that, but for myself. I want to be the business.

I am going to be an ideater in Bollywood and I'm going to direct a few films. I don't know if people take me seriously. They thought *Fuck Knows* (Shailendra's first book) was a book I couldn't write because I was dyslexic. It's a bestseller, so fuck that.

I'm also going to ideate for talent. Where are Ajay Devgn, Ranbir Kapoor or Hrithik Roshan going to be in the next three years with all this new talent coming in? You already see that it's getting a little uncomfortable for Hrithik. If he doesn't reinvent himself and conceptualise the kind of films he comes out with, he's in trouble. He can't say, 'Papa I don't want to,' and just come up with one film in three years anymore. So, that's the sort of thing I'll be playing a role in.

I've created a new sport and I'm soon going to launch it all over the world. I'm just waiting for the right time and the right partners. I think the world is ready. Whereas, in music, I want to do something called E3 to educate, empower and entertain. I want to unite the world of dance music, bring in top talent and raise money for a thousand lifelong scholarships. Also, I have a couple of cool books that are half-written. So, there's a lot in the pipeline.