

"Penelope's film will reveal the truth"

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'Penelope's film will reveal the truth'

Penelope Cruz was so charmed by the book detailing the real-life story of a Spanish girl who married the Maharaja of Kapurthala that she decided to make a film on it. But controversy is brewing as royal descendant Tikka Shatruijit Singh claims author Javier Moro has 'portrayed people wrongly'



Javier Moro

Seventeen-year-old Spanish girl Anita Delgado's marriage to the Maharaja of Kapurthala, Jagatjit Singh, in 1908, is making headlines once again, more than a 100 years later. And this time, because one of the royal descendants, Tikka Shatruijit Singh, has objected to the "wrong portrayals of some erstwhile family members" in the book *Passion India*, written by Javier Moro.

A book that has charmed Penelope Cruz enough to want to buy the rights and make a film on the Spanish queen of Kapurthala. "It was Penelope's mother who first read the book about Anita Delgado. She was fascinated enough to tell her daughter that here was a role, a rags-to-riches story that was tailor-made for her," says Javier. "Added to this was the fact that Penelope is a total Indophile. She visits India often, especially Kolkata, where she's adopted a home for destitute children. In fact, all this, including the book, has been part of her seduction by India," informs Javier.

Little wonder then, Penelope promptly called up Javier to tell him she wanted to buy the rights to make a film. "Although I was on the verge of signing the deal with someone else, I decided Penelope would be able to do justice to it all, since this would be a co-production between Spain, Hollywood and Bollywood," adds he. The shooting of film, Javier says, should start sometime next year.

Although the cast of the film is still being decided, Javier's personal choice for the role of the rajah of Kapurthala would be none other than Amitabh Bachchan. "Other than him, I wish Shekhar Kapur would also be a part of the project," he says.

Javier's own India connection commenced when his fa-



Penelope Cruz

'Javier has hurt our family honour'

With this book, Javier Moro has done nothing but hurt our family honour. His insinuations about some of the characters in the book, who were once real people, are all wrong. Who's there to stand up for them now? He's betrayed our family honour. And that's not a humane thing to do.



Tikka Shatruijit Singh

Javier says his research is based on Anita Delgado's diaries, which were published in

1992. This one's a disaster, because he's fictionalised facts. He's just written a piece of garbage. Even Anita would have called it 'gutter press'! Before she died in 1962, she wanted to publish her diaries. The Spanish paper, *Madrid*, carried excerpts but after adding their own bit of spice to them. That's when her son pleaded, 'Leave her alone'. Now her own compatriot is doing the same thing, reopening her grave and sensationalising her life.

The Spanish version of the book says it's a real story, while the Indian translation says it's a work of fiction. What a racist!

I have nothing against Ms Cruz making a film on Anita Delgado, and will even assist her provided she changes all that he's changed to sell his book.

— Tikka Shatruijit Singh, grandson of Jagatjit Singh

ther brought him to Mumbai. "Although I was just 14, the city left a lasting impression on me," he says. The association continued with him coming to India with his uncle, author Dominique Lapierre. "I once stayed on in Bhopal for seven months at a stretch, since we were working on a book on the gas victims. That's when I learnt so much about Indian society," informs he. The idea of doing a book on Anita Delgado took root when he came across an old lady who knew the princess very well. And while doing the research - he had access to several diaries which were left with the princess' niece Victoria and at the Kapurthala archives in London.

However, the portrayal of the king of Kapurthala may not have found favour with the royal's descendants, Javier asserts he has "no idea what Tikka Shatruijit Singh's problem with the book is. On my part, I have portrayed the character of Jagatjit Singh in a very humane way. It's not a caricature at all. Something that the book, and the film, when it will be made, will reveal."

PURNIMA SHARMA