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Had the goody-goody Shashi-baba finally turned bad? The answer to that was provided by his sacked secretary, who fired the first volley and revealed the seamier side of Shashi. It was a Brutus-like cut which irreversibly changed the lovable Shashi-baba into a Badmaash-baba! But what a time we had getting the guy to talk. He was afraid Shashi would skin him alive, would set 'goondas' after him for being a 'namak haram', etc. But so enraged and hurt was he with his boss, that he bravely decided to spill the beans. . . and leave town! He's alive and still has his skin. So, we reckon, Shashi wasn't that mad at him after all.

FROM SHASHI BABA TO BADMAASH BABA!

Producers who've always loved this thoroughly professional, no-problem actor, are getting quite fed up with his temper-tantrums at the slightest, and sometimes no provocation whatsoever. Once, when Shashi was making his (of late) usual scene over something trivial, the harassed producer turned around and told him tersely, "Aap kab se star ban gaye? Aap to kabhi aise nahin the!"

Actresses who've always flipped headlong for the famous Shashi-baba charm, now prefer to keep their distance with the man. Many have been complaining about his "double-standards". He minces no words while poking fun, making cracks and throwing insults their way. But he himself becomes highly uptight and nasty to the most harmless of digs at him. It has to be all-give-and-no-take; and as one young heroine said heatedly, "Apne baap ka raaj samjha hai kya?" This girl is doing one film with Shashi, and she declares openly, "Even once is too much!"

The press also has always played favourites with Shashi-baba. Journalists have fought to interview him, and often stretched the interviews for as long as possible — a day, two days. But recently, when Shashi suggested to a reporter that she drive down with him to the studios (which takes about half-an-hour), and do her interview in the car, she retorted, "That's a hell of a long time to waste on an interview. All I want is ten minutes with you!"

It's ironical, really. Shashi Kapoor was the one who'd grumbled the loudest about Rajesh Khanna's superstarry behaviour during his 'Phenomenon' days, and complained about how much inconvenience it caused. And now, Shashi himself is becoming as impossible to take, and he doesn't even have Rajesh's overwhelming success to excuse (justify?) his (mis)behaviour.

Whatever is happening to Shashi Kapoor? That's a question that's puzzling a lot of his filmland cronies today.

The enormity of the change in the star was struck home, when his long-faithful secretary, Shakti, walked out on him in August last year. Coming from a man who'd stuck by Shashi all through his low period, who'd worked with him to make his career successful, helped organize the success (a hundred and odd films) into neat schedules, re-shuffled dates to suit Shashi's changing priorities, wrangled the best advantages for him, badgered to get his instalments on time, even abandoned his ambition to become a producer be-

"I have always considered Shashi Kapoor as my boss. But I can't let anyone treat me like kachara. I haven't been paid to take insults!" — Says Shakti who was Shashi's secretary for six years.



cause Shashi had asked him to wait till he was less busy — people realised that something must be terribly wrong.

The Shashi-Shakti break-up was not an overnight thing. It had been brewing for quite some time. It wasn't as if Shakti had been blind to how unpopular Shashi was making himself — he couldn't be, considering he himself was the butt of the same inconsideration and unpleasantness so often. But he nevertheless, took up for his star at every step and defended him against everybody. "He's overworked," Shakti told anybody who'd listen. "He is under so much tension. That's why he gets irritated so soon. That's all."

And it also wasn't as if Shashi himself was unaware of how much he owed Shakti. In fact, he used to proudly admit, "I'm lucky that I have a well-organised office and an efficient secretary who works in a computerized way." It was a case of mutual dependence, and mutual trust, and what made it even better was that Shashi treated his secretary, not as a paid emp-

ex-secretary reveals all!

loyee, but as a co-worker. And as a *yaar*, off-working hours.

But with his growing success, Shashi started moving more and more into the *dus lakh* circles, and Shakti was slowly, but surely, relegated to the position of secretary, nothing more. All along, Shashi had allowed his secretary a lot of liberty. Shakti could tick his boss off for signing every film that came his way, and Shashi would justify himself, "Every actor has his time. This is mine — let me make the most of it." Shakti could get Shashi to alter his plans by giving him a few sound reasons

that Shakti was never available when they wanted to discuss something, but Shashi had ignored them. Now when they did the same, Shakti was questioned, "*Aap kahan the? How come whenever I need my secretary, you are never there?*"

According to Shakti, he has never shirked work. "I've always been absolutely sincere to Shashi, and I challenge anybody to prove it otherwise." He explained that there were legitimate reasons for his 'unavailability'. "There are producers who just land up at the office without an appointment. Naturally, I may not be there, I

Poona, Sirgudi, etc., early last year, even though he knew Shakti had done all the planning and the organising, he gave the other guy the credit, "I realised then that it pays to advertise what one does," says Shakti sadly.

The new 'friends' convinced him that he was too 'humble' and that he didn't behave like the *bada* star he was, Shashi took his cue promptly. He forgot his manners, banged down the phone while the other party was still talking, looked through people he knew and generally went about making things difficult. The focal point of attack, once again, was Shakti.

For a long time the secretary took it quietly, making excuses for the star, "He's overworked and tired. He has to take out his tensions on someone. Perhaps I remind him of problems — that's why he gets irritated the minute he sees my face. . . ." So, he kept mum when Shashi pulled him up and shouted at him in front of others. He didn't retaliate when Shashi made him a scapegoat for his own mistakes. Shakti took the blame for everything to keep the star's image in tact. Everything worked fine, and to Shashi's advantage . . . until . . . Shashi overstepped his limits.

It happened on August 4th, '77, Shashi had returned from abroad a week earlier. To give him time to get himself geared for three-shifts again, Shakti had arranged all of Shashi's shootings in studios close to each other, to save him the tiresome journeys from one end of town to the other.

Then the producers of 'Muquaddar' approached him to squeeze in two hours for them every morning. Despite Shakti's insistence that it couldn't be managed because Shashi's schedule was tight enough as it was, Shashi reported for 'Muquaddar' every morning. The two hours stretched into four hours, and all the other timings were thrown topsy-turvy. The producers were raising hell, and Shashi was getting worried. He again turned to Shakti to get him out of the scrape, but for once Shakti refused. Shashi was furious. He told Shakti, in a voice cold with sarcasm, "Okay, I will manage it. And what will you do?"

Later, on the sets, when another producer was confirming some point with Shakti, Shashi called out to him loudly, "Speak to me. Who's he?" That was when Shakti handed over the charge to Shashi and walked out of the job. Like he told a mutual friend, who was trying to coax him to make up with Shashi, "I have always considered Shashi as my boss. But I haven't been paid to take insults. There are secretaries who've been given flats and cars, so they have to swallow insults from their stars. But not me. I can't let anyone treat me like *kachara*! I want Shashi to give me the same love and affection he used to before, and I'll do anything for him.



for it. Once, Shashi even cut short his annual foreign holiday by a couple of days because Shakti had convinced him that the two extra days would benefit a producer (of 'Aap Beati') tremendously!

Naturally, it was difficult for Shakti to adjust to the change in his star — from a most understanding and accommodating master, Shashi became autocratic and overbearing. Now, if Shakti tried to talk out of signing so many bad films, Shashi firmly cut him short with a "Don't tell me my job. I know what I'm doing!"

Still, Shakti accepted the fall from grace stoically enough. "I am his secretary, aren't I?" he said matter-of-factly. But what wasn't so easy to accept was the fact that Shashi was lending his ear to whatever stories anybody cared to spin against his man. So far, Shashi had been the one star who'd remained quite immune to any attempts to antagonise him against his own people. Shakti had always declared confidently that though people were constantly carrying tales to him, Shashi always knew *what* and *whom* to believe. Now, however, it seemed as if he was getting the chaff mixed with the grain. Previously also, producers had complained

may be out on some other work. Then, despite my telling them a hundred times that Shashiji has no dates to spare, some producers keep pestering for one day, two days. I try to avoid these people, till I can confirm something definite for them. Also, sometimes when I am sitting with producers, Shashi rings up and calls me over. Naturally I go — I have to give him priority over everything else. But if after a month, he asks me, '*Aap unse kyon nahin mile?*' — how can I remember what had happened that particular day? Why can't he understand that?"

The problem was that Shashi was falling a prey to *chamchas* — the very species he'd expressed such violent disgust for in the past. His *dus lakh* 'friends' filled his ears with sugar-coated flattery from one side, and *khokhla* suspicion from the other. They told him that Shakti was taking too much credit for his success (which Shakti vehemently denied — "I've always told everyone that Shashi is the Captain of the ship, I'm just his worker!") and Shashi deliberately started playing up another employee (his legal adviser) to cut Shakti down to size. So much so, that when he held all those star shows for charity, in

But I'll never stay with someone if I feel he doesn't need me."

So far, neither has made a move to patch up their differences. Though Shakti feels that he's the loser in the break-up, "Shashi is not going to stop getting films, but I'll have to start from scratch," he is not doing too badly for himself. He's looking after Sarika's business affairs temporarily, and he has received other lucrative offers from Nadiadwallas, Film Centre and Manoj Kumar.

And Shashi is also managing on his own. Once when Shakti went over to confirm some dates for 'Kranti' on Manoj's behalf, he found the star in the midst of papers and files, trying to sort things out into some kind of order. Both men were cordial and polite and Shashi even sent regards to Shakti's wife.

The going is not as easy for Shashi as Shakti'd imagined it would be. The first sign of this was that Shashi who had all along been adamant about not working after 9 p.m., now was shooting till midnight every day. Obviously, Shashi is determined to please as many producers as he can, and prove that he can be as well-organized without a secretary. But he has had to revise his priorities. For instance, he'd intended to keep the whole month of October '77 for a film he's producing with Shyam Benegal, but he had to drop those plans for the time being.

However, the strain is definitely showing on the star. Even Raj Kapoor was commenting about how haggard Shashi looked in all his recent releases. "*Koi usse samjhao*, please," he told friends, "*woh sambhal nahin payega* if he goes on this way. . . ."

And Shakti, who for six years, took on Shashi's headaches as his own, is now getting a well-deserved chance to relax, and it's doing him good. While he was Shashi's secretary, Shakti's blood pressure seldom went below 185 — so much so that his doctor advised him to leave the job if he couldn't stay detached and unwind after work hours. But two days after he left Shashi — on August 6th — the pres-

listening to the wrong people — which is very bad for him — because such people think only of their own *bhala*, not of his good. But I'll still say that basically the man hasn't changed. He's so weighed down with work that his mind has stopped functioning. Perhaps when it starts working again, he'll realise what is what."

But the point to ponder over is — if the 'realization' is going to be so long in com-



A STAR at last

sure was down to 145, and now it's normal!

But Shakti holds no bitterness towards Shashi. Instead, he says, "It's so sad — he's becoming so *kaan ka kachcha*. He's

ing, won't it be too late to do any good? For, like Shashi himself will admit, his success is not going to last forever, and then it won't be so easy to make amends. And he can confirm that with Rajesh Khanna.



WHAT WIFE JENNIFER HAS TO SAY...

**"Shashi knows his success
is not going to last forever..."**

Everyone is talking about how much Shashi Kapoor has changed. Do you feel it too?

Well, he is more tired these days. And I don't get to see him very often. Other than that I can't think of anything else that's changed. . . .

The general criticism is that he behaves like a STAR nowadays. . . . ?

I don't know how stars behave. Tell me.

Shashi has become overbearing, arrogant, he treats people as he pleases, doesn't bother about his manners, etc. . . . ?

I'll be very surprised if Shashi is forgetting his manners. It wouldn't be like him at all! But he is less patient with people these days. All along, he has been extremely easy-going, tolerant, generous-minded — I don't know anyone else who is as patient — I'm not! And people have always taken him for a ride. Now, after so much experience, I guess he's rebelling against that and

standing up for himself. It's about time, isn't it? And if Shashi is doing it — good luck to him!

Isn't his new moodiness, irritability, touchiness a sign of insecurity about his success?

Insecurity? I think it would have been more likely for him to feel insecure when he wasn't doing so well. Success brings insecurity only to those for whom it is the most important thing in their lives. The social setup here is such that you can't afford not to be successful in India. But I don't think being a Hindi film star is the greatest thing in the world. I'm not fascinated by stardom. And neither is Shashi. There are so many other things we are interested in — only now, we have less time to do them because he is so busy. Shashi knows his success is not going to last forever and he accepts it for what it is worth.



**Shashi and Jennifer—
The family
comes first!**

To what do you attribute his recent hyper-sensitivity to the slightest criticism? Is Shashi losing his sense of humour?

Did he ever have one? Shashi has never struck me as being a particularly jovial, always laughing and joking sort of a person. He puts on that act sometimes. Yes, he does get upset when people criticize him for taking on so much work. But he can still laugh at himself. Only the other day he was joking about his flops!

Considering Shashi's preoccupation with his career would naturally affect your personal lifestyle, wouldn't it have been wise for you to have dissuaded him from accepting every film he's offered?

I've never really interfered in Shashi's career. I don't know why he's signing so many films — you'll have to ask him that. If I have tried to dissuade him, it's because I think he should not take on more work than he can do. To me, the very idea of anyone making more than one film at a time seems ridiculous. But, the way I look at it, if you can do two, you might as well do twenty. And if you're making twenty, you might as well make two hundred!

Producers resent Shashi's 'I-don't-give-a-damn' attitude towards their films. Many have been complaining that he doesn't report for shooting unless he gets his instalments on time.

On the contrary, Shashi has done a lot of films without bothering about the money. Surely he realises that he can't go on doing that with every film. That's plain common-sense. Besides Shashi has got involved in so many other things, that he needs his success today. The theatre he has built in Juhu, for instance, is his sole contribution. He is not making money for himself. After all, why does a man usually want to make money — to spend on parties, booze, women, gifts, clothes. Shashi's isn't interested in any of these. He still wears his old kurtas and it's a job for me to get him to try out any new trousers!

The pressure of all this overwork is definitely showing on Shashi. Especially on his appearance. . . . ?

He has lost weight, though he stopped dieting long ago. That's good because Shashi doesn't like being fat and I too prefer him this way. Some strain will naturally show on him because he is working so hard, and let's face it, he's not getting any younger. But I honestly think he's looking much nicer these days than he ever did before. In fact, I sometimes wonder what I saw in him twenty years ago. I must have liked him through foresight!

Reportedly, you get the worst deal out of his success — Shashi takes out all his tensions, anger, frustrations on you. . . . ?

He doesn't throw tantrums, if that's what you mean. I can't speak about what happens on the sets because I'm never around. But at home, Shashi becomes very quiet when he's upset or angry. He likes to be left alone. Is that taking it out on me?

Isn't it a pity that for the first time in his life, the family is playing second-fiddle to Shashi's career?

NEVER. In fact, what still upsets Shashi most is when the children have programmes of their own, other than spending the time with their father. But families grow up, everyone has his own life to lead. . . .

How do you tolerate the complete loss of privacy — what with the producers following Shashi even to the house?

On the contrary, it's less now. During the week there's no time for his producers to drop in at home because Shashi leaves so early. And they wouldn't DARE discuss business with him on Sundays — which Shashi reserves exclusively for us.

Don't you resent the fact that Shashi is slowly surrounding himself with a horde of chamchas?

That's absolutely untrue. Shashi doesn't have a single chamcha. Of course people try and advise him about the kind of films, roles, he should do, but none of them are close enough to him to have an effect. Shashi makes up his own mind about what he wants to do. There was a time when Shashi first entered the line, when he had would-be chamchas. But he's never had any chamchas at any stage.

Reportedly, Shashi is seeking an outlet in the old Kapoor weakness . . . alcohol. . . . ?

That's all nonsense. Shashi hardly drinks at all. He may have a glass of beer — or a glass of milk — when he returns from shooting. Why, the other day when I went to buy some beer, the shop attendant was surprised that I wasn't buying any whiskey. Nobody drinks it in this house. We don't throw parties and you know how rarely we attend parties. Of course, Shashi takes a drink there but he doesn't overdo it, it just shows on him, perhaps because he drinks faster. . . .

. . . . and women? How can you turn a blind eye to his affairs with Raakhee, Shabana Azmi. . . . ?

Shabana is MY friend. It's nonsense, all this talk of Shashi having affairs. If it was true, I would be gone. You'd hear that Jennifer has packed up and left! Shashi doesn't have the time to have a glass of milk — where will he find the time to have affairs?

How do you react when Shashi makes out like he's "scared shit" of you? Surely you don't terrorize him?

I don't know why Shashi keeps saying that. Perhaps, it's his idea of a joke. The problem is, he's not scared enough!

All the industry-women insist that the best thing that could've happened to Shashi Kapoor is — you. Do you feel you've been the ideal wife for him?

I don't know. . . . you should ask him about that. I suppose every wife wants to believe she's ideal for her husband — but she's living in a fool's paradise. But one thing that people say — that I am the one who's helped Shashi keep his balance all these years — is quite wrong. Shashi has always been very level-headed.

So, you're not taking credit for anything in his life?

Credit? I'm denying responsibility!

— VANITA BAKSHI