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Murder he wrote

Has author and screenplay writer **Farrukh Dhondy**’s novel “*The Bikini Murders*” (Harper Collins) been inspired by the life of playboy-criminal **Charles Sobhraj**?

On Wikipedia, Sobhraj’s profile starts as: “...a French serial killer of Indian and Vietnamese origin, who preyed on Western tourists throughout Southeast Asia during the 1970s. Nicknamed “the Serpent” and “the Bikini killer” for his skills at deception and evasion, he allegedly committed at least 12 murders and was jailed in India from 1976 to 1997, but managed to live a life of leisure in prison. He retired as a celebrity in Paris, then unexpectedly returned to Nepal, where he was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment on August 12, 2004.”

In *Hindustan Times*, Farrukh Dhondy on the man and his book:

The narrative is largely a confession by one Johnson Thhat, born  in Saigon to a Vietnamese mother and Indian father, a devious man with a natural proclivity towards crime. The novel is replete with a likeness to Sobhraj both physically and in incident, which makes it hard to desist comparison. Dhondy does admit that the book didn’t exist until Sobhraj sought him out. “He was fresh out of Tihar and was referred to me as the best man in Europe to find him a publisher. I was with a channel and thought there was something for me in this alliance,” Dhondy mentions casually.

Over three years of knowing the elusive and most wanted Sobhraj, Dhondy couldn’t elicit a confession, save for that of a jewellery theft and his real name. “It’s Gurudev Bhavnani. His father’s name is Sobhraj Bhavnani, but his French stepfather wouldn’t call him that, hence Charles,” Dhondy shares as testimony to their association.

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