

**BEFORE JUSTICE ARUN KUMAR MISHRA  
FORMER JUDGE, SUPREME COURT OF INDIA**

**OMBUDSMAN,  
THE BOARD OF CONTROL FOR CRICKET IN INDIA**

**Reference No.1/2025**

(Arising out of Inquiry Report dated 06/01/2021 filed by Ravindra K.  
Doiphode, Sr. Investigation Officer, forwarded to Ombudsman, BCCI, by  
Head Anti-Corruption Unit, BCCI)

**In the matter of:**

**Sonu Vasan**

....

**Respondent**

**sonu.vasan@gmail.com**

**ORDER**

1. Briefly stated the facts of the case are thus. An inquiry was made under the Anti-Corruption Code (hereinafter, in short referred to as the Code) of the Board of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (hereinafter, in short referred to as BCCI). The inquiry was conducted by the Anti-Corruption Unit (hereinafter, the ACU). Upon completion of the inquiry, the Head of the ACU forwarded its report to the Ombudsman, BCCI. A match fixing attempt was made by the Respondent, acting at the behest of one Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah. Bhavin Thakkar was the player approached by the Respondent with the corrupt offer. This was done via a WhatsApp call made by the Respondent to Thakkar. Another player namely, Dhawal Kulkarni was witness to the telephone conversation. The audio recording of this call was made by Kulkarni using his telephone device. The ACU collected evidence, and also recorded the statements of Thakkar, Kulkarni etc., the Respondent



as also of Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah. Inquiry Report has recommended that respondent be banned from entry into Cricket Stadium or any other Establishment belonging to BCCI or any of its affiliated units.

2. The match fixing attempt relates to the second edition of Mumbai T20 League hereinafter, in short referred to as 'The League'. This tournament was held in May 2019. The League had been inaugurated in 2018. The match at issue was the semi-final of the 2019 League. Thakkar was a part of a Team called Aakash Tigers in 2019. However, in the first edition of the League i.e. in 2018, Thakkar played for the Team owned by Bhamrah, namely, SoBo Supersonics. This is how Thakkar had become acquainted with Bhamrah. The Respondent was a close aide of Bhamrah. Both lived in the same locality. As such, Thakkar and the Respondent also came to know each other during the course of practice matches.
3. The following discussion of evidence has been made in the Inquiry Report, relevant portion is extracted hereunder:

**"STATEMENT OF BHAVIN THAKKAR**

29. At 1500 hrs. of 7<sup>th</sup> June 2019, Ravindra Doiphode, Sr. Investigation Officer, ACU and Dheeraj Malhotra, Manager, ACU conducted an interview with Bhavin Thakkar.

30. Bhavin Thakkar informed that Mr. Sonu Vasan, a close associate of Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah, Owner of Team SoBo Supersonics had contacted him on a WhatsApp call and offered him money to fix the Semi-Final match of the Mumbai T20 League.

31. Bhavin Thakkar informed that he had the recordings of the WhatsApp call(s) as evidence.

32. Bhavin Thakkar also informed that he had reported the entire incident to Mr. C.S. Naik, CEO, MCA and also informed him about the evidence in his possession.

33. Bhavin Thakkar gave a written statement of the corrupt approach made to him.



33.1. Bhavin Thakkar is a First Class cricketer and has participated in various organized by the BCCI.

He has represented Mumbai Cricket Association in various age group tournaments and in Ranji Trophy.

He has represented Kerala Cricket Association, Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association and Jharkhand State Cricket Association as well in previous years.

33.2. Being a registered player with the Mumbai Cricket Association, Bhavin Thakkar got a chance and played in both the seasons of the Mumbai T20 League.

Bhavin Thakkar played for Team SoBo Supersonics (via auction) in MT20L 2018.

Bhavin Thakkar played for Team Aakash Tigers (via auction) in MT20L 2019.

33.3. Bhavin Thakkar first came to know Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah in 2018 as he was the Owner of his team SoBo Supersonics.

Like others who know him, Bhavin refers to Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah as *Paaji*.

33.4. Bhavin Thakkar came to know of Sonu Vasan as a friend of Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah in 2018 during one of the practice matches (of SoBo Supersonics).

Bhavin Thakkar recalled that Sonu Vasan was also present with SoBo Supersonics during the auction of the MT20L 2018.

While Sonu Vasan was involved much in the 2018 season of MT20L, he was not much involved with SoBo Supersonics in 2019.

33.5. After conclusion of MT20L 2018, both Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah and Sonu Vasan have remained in contact with Bhavin Thakkar, over WhatsApp and calls and would chat relating to the Canada Premier League.

33.6. Sonu Vasan often visits Bhavin Thakkar's home. Sonu Vasan's son and Bhavin Thakkar's daughter are of similar age and have often played together at a garden near their home.



33.7. In MT20L 2019, as Bhavin Thakkar (part of Aakash Tigers) was not bought by SoBo Supersonics, up till the league stage neither Bhavin Thakkar nor Gurmeet Singh/Sonu Vasan communicated with each other except on one occasion when after Bhavin Thakkar's good performance in a match, Sonu Vasan congratulated Bhavin Thakkar on WhatsApp

5/23/19, 11:07 PM – Sonu Vasan: Bhai Sensational Performance

*Earlier on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, Bhavin Thakkar in Aakash Tiger's match against Shivaji Park Lions had scored 65 runs (49 balls; 8 boundaries and 1 six). Aakash Tigers beat Shivaji Park Lions by 7 wickets.*

33.8. On 24<sup>th</sup> May, at around 12:00 pm Bhavin Thakkar received a WhatsApp call from Sonu Vasan.

33.9. Sonu Vasan asked Bhavin Thakkar if he was alone and if he could call him back on WhatsApp.

Bhavin Thakkar replied he was with Dhawal (Dhawal Kulkarni) in his room.

Sonu Vasan told Bhavin Thakkar to call him back when he was alone.

33.10. Bhavin Thakkar stated that he found this request from Sonu Vasan suspicious and told about this conversation to Dhawal Kulkarni.

After discussing among themselves, both decided that Bhavin Thakkar should call Sonu Vasan and to record the conversation.

33.11. Bhavin Thakkar made a WhatsApp voice call to Sonu Vasan at 12:32 pm on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

The phone was switched to speaker mode.

33.12. The conversation was then recorded by Dhawal Kulkarni on his phone using video recording feature of the camera.

34. Bhavin Thakkar played the three recordings for us.

34.1. The recordings showed a mobile phone with a WhatsApp call in progress.

34.2. The call is on speaker and two voices can be heard distinctly.

34.3. Bhavin Thakkar informed that the other voice is of Sonu Vasan.

34.4. Multiple instances of reference to *Paaji* are made by Sonu Vasan.

34.5. Bhavin informed that *Paaji* is Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah.

34.6. The display picture shown on mobile screen is the profile picture of Sonu Vasan's WhatsApp account.

Bhavin Thakkar informed that the photograph was of Sonu Vasan's son.

35. The conversation started with Sonu Vasan referring to a phone call from *Paaji* (Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah) on the intervening night of 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May 2019 asking Sonu Vasan to come and meet him.

Sonu Vasan then refers to his meeting with Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah (*Paaji*) earlier that day (on the morning on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

36. The excerpts pertaining to the corrupt approach by Sonu Vasan on instructions of Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah are:

Excerpts of recording 1:

0.00.06	Sonu Vasan	Arre tu akela hi hai na abhi
0.00.09	Sonu Vasan	Arre mere ko no... <i>Paaji</i> ne kal raat ko phone kiya tha 12/12.30 baje.  Subah 8 baje bulaya tha ghar pe. Matlab mera kuchh aur kaam tha.
0.00.18	Sonu Vasan	Main abhi pata nahi... ab tere ko kaise bolu yaar.. mere ko to ye sab maloom nahi hai.  Wo bola Bhavin se baat kar.. Ab unse tumhara match hai na?

Excerpts of recording 2:

0.00.46	Sonu Vasan	Haan.. mere ko vahi bola.. bola Bhavin se baat kar (voice breaks)
0.00.50		Setting vetting hota hai to jo 5 lakh rupaye deta hu..
0.00.54		Main bola paaji ye sab maine kabhi usse baat kiya nahi aur na mere ko maalum hai. Mai kisko jaanta hai?

Excerpts of recording 3:

0.00.23	Sonu Vasan	Wo bola ki Bhavin se baat kar.. ok.. ki agar match ka kuchh wo kar sakta hai... yap hir.. ya wo Dhawal se kuchh baat kar ke kar sakta hai. 40-50 lakh rupees mai dene ko taiyaar hu.
0.00.35		Matlab Paaji maine use kabhi aise baat vaat kiya nahi hai. Who mera aisa dost hai.. mere ko milta.. ye sab mere ko...
0.00.39		Bola.. nahi tu ek baar baat kar.. agar who kuchh interested rehta hai to main milta hu unse.. ye ye wo wo..s

0.00.49	Sonu Vasan	Nahi nahi.. mere ko bhi maalum hai yaar.. ye sab cheez.. to mere ko wo abhi Paaji ne mere ko kuchh bola hamare ko udhar Asst. Coach. Manager chahiye Canada mei.. main usko wo bhi kar dega.. ye kar dega..
0.00.59		Paaji mere ko bilkul idea nahi hai.. per main.. wo kuchh maalum nahi hai.. main usko poochhta hu.
0.01.05		Bola agar wo khud try/trial (unclear) Karega to 2-5 lakh rupaye usko de dunga.. ye vo...
0.01.10		Main bola Paaji mere ko idea nahi hai.. aap bol rahe ho main usko message deta hu. Uske baad uska kya response hai aapko bata deta hu.
0.01.17		Bola agar rahega to usko mere saath line pe le le

0.01.20		Main abhi kya karu wo bata yaar.
---------	--	----------------------------------

37. Bhavin Thakkar states that he had told Sonu Vasan at the end of call that he will not 'fix' the match.

He said that this part (his rejection of the offer and refusal to fix) of conversation is not in the recordings being submitted by him because the complete recording was with Dhawal Kulkarni, who was travelling, and Dhawal was not able to send the complete file on WhatsApp because of size limitations.

38. Statement of Bhavin Thakkar is attached at Annexure 8.

39. 3 video recordings were shared with ACU officials by Bhavin Thakkar.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> file is a partial recording of the video file which was on Dhawal Kulkarni's phone. Dhawal Kulkarni had forwarded this (via WhatsApp) to Bhavin Thakkar in part because the entire recording was too big to be sent on WhatsApp.

40. The full transcript of these 3 recordings is attached at Annexure 9.

41. The recordings are available on the pen drive with the following names:

PART#1 – Bhavin Thakkar calling Sonu Vasan (24 May 2019 – 12.32pm)

File name: Annexure (A – VID-20190607-WA0007 BT-SV.mp4

PART#2 – Conversation between Bhavin Thakkar and Sonu Vasan (24 May 2019 – 12.33pm)

File name: Annexure 9B – VID-20190607-WA0009 BT-SV.mp4

PART#3 – Sonu Vasan calling Bhavin Thakkar (24 May 2019 – 12.35 pm)

File name: Annexure 9C – VID-20190607-WA0008 BT-SV.mp4

42. A review of the WhatsApp call history on Bhavin Thakkar's phone shows that the time of WhatsApp calls is a match to the time shown on mobile phone display in the recording clips.

43. The call log details displayed in the end of the recording are a match with the screenshot received from Bhavin Thakkar during interview.

In addition to the time of call, the screenshot clearly shows that these calls were made on 24<sup>th</sup> of May, 2019 as reported by Bhavin Thakkar.

44. Screenshot of WhatsApp call history from Bhavin Thakkar's WhatsApp to Sonu Vasan is attached at Annexure 10.

45. The phone number of Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah as +91-9820119285 & the phone number of Sonu Vasan as +91-9930070372 (contact saved as Sonu Vasan) were provided by Bhavin Thakkar.

46. It is evident from the call recordings that Bhavin Thakkar has been offered money to 'corrupt' the Semi-Final match between Bhavin's team (Aakash Tigers) and SoBo Supersonics (Owned by Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah) scheduled on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

46.1. Sonu Vasan started his conversation stating that Gurmeet Singh had told him to speak with Bhavin. "Vo bola Bhavin se baat kar.. ab unse tumhara match hai na?"

46.2. Sonu Vasan says Gurmeet Singh has offered Rs. 5 Lakhs. "Han.. mere to vahi bola.. bola Bhavin se baat kar.. setting vetting hota hai to.. jo.. panch lakh rupye deta hu."

46.3. Sonu Vasan says Gurmeet Singh has offered Rs. 40-50 Lakhs for Dhawal Kulkarni. "Vo bola ki Bhavin se baat kar.. ok.. ki agar match ka kuchh vo kar sakta hai.. yap hir.. ya vo Dhawal se kuchh baat kar ke kar sakta hai, 40-50 Lakh rupye mai dene to taiyar huy".

46.4. Further, Sonu Vasan says "Abhi Paaji ne mere ko kuchh bola, haamare to udhar assistant coach, manager chahiye Canada mai.. mai usko vo bhi kar dega.. ye kar dega..."

47. From the conversation it is evident that Sonu Vasan, himself, is aware that he is asking Bhavin Thakkar to 'fix'/cheat in his match.

Sonu Vasan is aware that he is making a corrupt approach to Bhavin Thakkar.

48. Bhavin Thakkar in his statement said that he had rejected the offers made to him and he had told Sonu Vasan he would not do any wrong things.

Bhavin claimed that the same can be verified in the full recording which was with Dhawal Kulkarni.

49. Bhavin Thakkar claimed he was scared of Sonu Vasan and felt threatened for his young daughter.

Sonu Vasan knows Bhavin's place of residence and knew where his daughter studied and played.

Bhavin Thakkar was not sure of reporting this matter to anyone and told about his concern to Dhawal Kulkarni.

50. Bhavin Thakkar and Dhawal Kulkarni decided to focus on the next day's match as it was an important semi-final game and to report the matter to Mr. C.S. Naik, CEO, MCA after the match.

51. On 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2019, Bhavin Thakkar met with Mr. C.S. Naik, at the reception of Garware Club House, and informed him of the 'corrupt approach' made to him by Sonu Vasan, friend of Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah, and informed him of having necessary evidence against him.

52. After 2-3 days, Bhavin Thakkar once again met Mr. C.S. Naik and narrated the entire incident. Mr. Naik asked him to report the matter in writing. Bhavin Thakkar feared the safety of his daughter, so deferred submitting any written complaint.

53. Bhavin Thakkar also emailed his WhatsApp chat history with Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah to ACU at [integrity@bccci.tv](mailto:integrity@bccci.tv). Copy of the email is attached at Annexure 11.

There are multiple instances where Bhavin Thakkar addresses Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah as *Paaji* in the chat.

The WhatsApp chat history is for the period 21/06/2018 to 24/05/2019.

The transcript is attached at Annexure 11A.

53.1. The excerpts of the WhatsApp chat for date 24/05/2019 with Gurmeet Singh are :

5/24/19, 7.51 PM – Gurmeet Singh: Congratulations seen ur bating loved it n u still have a great potential, God bless

5/24/19, 8.04 PM – B: Thank you paji ....

5/24/19, 9.17 PM – Gurmeet Singh: Kal k liye good luck ji

5/24/19, 9.21 PM – B:

*This congratulation refers to Bhavin's performance in the match (Aakash Tigers v Shivaji Park Lions) on 23<sup>rd</sup> May in which Bhavin scored 65 runs in 49 balls.*

54. Bhavin Thakkar emailed his WhatsApp chat history with Sonu Vasan to ACU at [integrity@bccci.tv](mailto:integrity@bccci.tv). Copy of the email is attached at Annexure 12.

The WhatsApp chat history is for the period 04/04/2018 to 05/06/2019. The transcript is attached at Annexure 12A.

54.1. The excerpts of the WhatsApp chat for date 23/05/2019 to 05/06/2019 with Sonu Vasan are:

5/23/19, 11:07 PM – Sonu Vasan: Bhai Sensational Performance

5/24/19, 1:15 AM – B: Thank you bro.

5/24/19, 9:09 AM – Sonu Vasan: Missed voice call

5/24/19, 9:20 AM – Sonu Vasan: Missed voice call

5/24/19, 12:32 PM – Sonu Vasan: Missed voice call

5/24/19, 12:41 PM – Sonu Vasan: Sorry bro I hope you understand my situation

5/24/19, 12:55 PM – B: Okay

54.2. The message dated 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 12:41 pm ("Sorry bro I hope you understand my situation") was sent by Sonu Vasan immediately after the WhatsApp call and an indication that Sonu Vasan is feeling apologetic that he had asked Bhavin Thakkar to cheat and also clarifying that he had done it on behest of Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah (*Paaji*).

54.3. The message dated 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 coincides with the date media reported "Mumbai T20 – Player says approached to underperform".

Bhavin Thakkar has not responded to the message.

55. Bhavin Thakkar further informed us that Dhawal Kulkarni was in Singapore and would return to India in 2 or 3 days.

## LETTERS FROM MUMBAI CRICKET ASSOCIATION

56. On 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 at 12:30 pm, in reference to ACU's email dated 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 C.S. Naik, Chief Executive Officer sent (by hand) two letters to ACU. Both letters were dated 06<sup>th</sup> June, 2019.

57. In letter 1, signed by Mr. C.S. Naik, CEO, MCA and Prof. Dr. Unmesh Khanvilkar, Authorized Signatory, MCA stated that "we have not received any written complaint from the player of this, nor to the ACLOs appointed for the tournament who worked under the supervision of esteemed officers of ACU from BCCI till date."

The letter is attached at Annexure 13.

58. In letter 2, signed by Mr. C.S. Naik, where he states that Bhavin Thakkar has met him on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2019 at about 2:30 pm at the residence reception counter of Garware Club House.

58.1. Mr. Naik states that Bhavin Thakkar had verbally told him that some person approached him before the semi-final match of T20 Mumbai League.

58.2. Mr. Naik states that Bhavin Thakkar did not inform him in writing the details of the person and/or conversation with him and the person approached to him.

58.3. Mr. Naik had advised Bhavin Thakkar to follow the ACU protocol and give in writing to Association immediately to inform the said matter to Anti-Corruption Unit.

58.4. Mr. Naik further states that Bhavin Thakkar had failed to do so.

The letter is attached at Annexure 14.

## STATEMENT OF DHAWAL KULKARNI

59. Dhawal Kulkarni, met with ACU officials in Mumbai on 11<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 and recorded his statement regarding his knowledge of corrupt approach made to Bhavin Thakkar.

The full statement of Dhawal Kulkarni is attached at Annexure 15.

59.1. Dhawal Kulkarni confirmed that he was present with Bhavin Thakkar when the conversation between Sonu Vasan and Bhavin Thakkar took place on a WhatsApp voice call.

59.2. Dhawal Kulkarni stated that it was Bhavin Thakkar who had suggested, before the call, to record it to be on the safer side.

59.3. Dhawal Kulkarni acknowledged that the WhatsApp voice call being made from Bhavin Thakkar's phone was switched to Speaker Mode and video-recorded by them.

59.4. Dhawal Kulkarni played the recording on his phone of the entire conversation between Bhavin Thakkar and Sonu Vasan.

59.5. Dhawal Kulkarni stated that Bhavin Thakkar had rejected the 'offer' made to him by Sonu Vasan.

This claim is verified in the recording. Bhavin Thakkar refused to fix the match.

Dhawal Kulkarni played the recording in his possession.

\*\* partial (end parts) excerpts from full recording as received from Dhawal Kulkarni.

0.01.31	Bhavin Thakkar	Kyunki maine ye sab cheez ... kabhi life mein .. aisa sab kuchh kiya nahi hai .. (sound overlap) kyunki mere liye ek dum..
0.01.36	Bhavin Thakkar	Mera dekh bhai maine .. pet mera cricket se hi chala hai life mei.. to ye sab cheez se.. tere ko pata hai.. main..

59.6. Dhawal Kulkarni stated that he did not know Sonu Vasan or Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah until Bhavin Thakkar told him about them.

59.7. Dhawal Kulkarni informed that Bhavin Thakkar told him that *Paaji* was Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah. Owner of Team SoBo Supersonics.

59.8. Dhawal Kulkarni stated that he advised Bhavin Thakkar to report the matter to the BCCI ACU and to the Team Manager.

However, Bhavin Thakkar said that he was scared for the safety of his daughter as Sonu Vasan had visited his home and knew where his daughter played etc.

59.9. On 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2016, because their team (Aakash Tigers) had lost in the semi-final, Dhawal Kulkarni checked out of the hotel and returned to his home.

60. Dhawal Kulkarni left it to Bhavin Thakkar to decide on reporting this corrupt 'approach'.

61. On 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2019 around 11 am, Dhawal Kulkarni had met with Mr. C.S. Naik at MCA Garware Club House, when Bhavin Thakkar was already present and informed him about the entire incident.

62. Bhavin Thakkar had informed Dhawal Kulkarni that Mr. Naik had advised him to give the information in writing.

63. Later, he had left for Singapore on vacation.

64. Dhawal Kulkarni then submitted the complete recording of the conversation between Sonu Vasan and Bhavin Thakkar to ACU.

This recording is complete recording to the third file submitted by Bhavin Thakkar.

The recording is available under filename "Annexure 16 – IMG\_0892 – Full recording – DK iphone.mov"

Transcription of the recording is attached at Annexure 16A.

#### **STATEMENT OF SONU VASAN**

65. Sonu Vasan is **not** a Participant under the BCCI Anti-Corruption Code.

66. On 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2019 Sonu Vasan was contacted by ACU official on the mobile number provided by Bhavin Thakkar,

After confirming his email address and availability in Mumbai, an email was sent to him to appear before ACU, on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2019, to clarify his position on allegation of his name being mentioned as asking a Participant to underperform in a match.

The email is attached at Annexure 17.

67. Sonu Vasan contacted Dheeraj Malhotra and requested to attend the meeting earlier on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2019. Meeting was rescheduled to his convenience.

68. The interview with Sonu Vasan was conducted on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2019 at 12.30 pm at BCCI Headquarters.

Sonu Vasan was accompanied by his father. However, his father was not present during the interview and waited outside the meeting room.

68.1. Sonu Vasan provided his mobile number as +91-9930070372 and +91-9987817980.

68.2. Sonu Vasan stated that he has been working for the Kotak Bank for past 12 years and is presently Vice President and Head, South Bombay.

68.3. Sonu Vasan is a big fan of Cricket and has been playing cricket since childhood and still continues to play in various cricket leagues like the Box Cricket League in Bandra.

68.4. Sonu Vasan has known Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah since childhood as they lived in the same locality.

68.5. Sonu Vasan refers to Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah as *Paaji*.

68.6. Sonu Vasan and Gurmeet Singh are in contact with each other occasionally and talk about Cricket etc. and Gurmeet's Canada Cricket League.

Gurmeet Singh has a bank account with Kotak Bank and Sonu Vasan would often help him with that as well.

68.7. Sonu Vasan stated that he has done nothing wrong and cricket is like a religion to him.

68.8. Sonu Vasan stated that he has not asked any one to do 'anything wrong'.

68.9. Sonu Vasan demanded that if he had done anything wrong, then we should show the evidence against him.

68.10. Sonu Vasan stated that if someone has made a complaint against him then he is ready to even speak in front of that player to clarify his position.

68.11. Sonu Vasan also offered to show his mobile, give his bank statements and agreed to give his call details to ACU.

68.12. Sonu Vasan said if he may have said something to anyone (had not named any player till that time) he would have done so in ("hasi-majaak") humor or as a joke.

He claimed that often his jokes with his friends were extreme.

69. Sonu Vasan voluntarily showed his WhatsApp chat with Bhavin Thakkar and permitted ACU official to take a photograph of the same.

The photograph is attached at Annexure 18.

70. The photograph confirms Sonu Vasan and Bhavin Thakkar had been in contact with each other on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

70.1. However, Sonu Vasan had deleted his message to Bhavin Thakkar on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2019 at 12.41pm immediately after the WhatsApp call.

The message had been available with Bhavin Thakkar.

In that message Sonu Vasan had stated "5/24/19, 12:41 PM – Sonu Vasan: Sorry bro I hope you understand my situation"

70.2. Sonu Vasan claimed that since his son plays games on his mobile phone a lot, he may have accidentally deleted some of his messages etc.

71. Sonu Vasan was told that a player has alleged that he had made an 'approach' to him to do corruption in a match.

The approach was made on a WhatsApp call.

Sonu Vasan was informed that ACU had evidence of the call in which Sonu Vasan can be heard to be making a corrupt approach to the player. The approach is made on behest of a *Paaji*, who is told to be Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah, Owner of the Team SoBo Supersonics and a close friend of Sonu Vasan.

72. Sonu Vasan demanded the evidence to be shown to him.

73. ACU officials played the call recording between Sonu Vasan and Bhavin Thakkar to Sonu Vasan.

74. When confronted with the evidence of the call, Sonu Vasani was shocked and taken aback.

75. Sonu Vasani was shown the displayed profile picture on the mobile screen and he confirmed that the photograph displayed in the call was of his son.

76. Sonu Vasani did not deny that it was not his voice in the call.

77. Sonu Vasani did not brush off the conversation by saying that this was a joke.

78. Sonu Vasani was asked about the context of Rs.40-50 Lakh being offered for Dhawal Kulkarni.

79. Sonu Vasani first said that this was relating to Sikh Premier League, another private tournament where Gurmeet Singh wanted Dhawal to participate. However, Sonu Vasani was unable to provide any further details.

80. Sonu Vasani was requested to give a statement in writing on everything that was discussed.

81. Sonu Vasani, in his own writing, gave only a one line statement stating that ***"I Sonu Vasani attended meeting today at 2/7/2019 12.30pm. I will return back with clarification by 6<sup>th</sup> July regarding conversation, recording of conversation was played to me."***

The statement is attached at Annexure 19.

82. Sonu Vasani refused to give in writing any further details.

#### **FOLLOWUP EMAIL FROM SONU VASANI**

83. On 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2019 Sonu Vasani responded to ACU via email.

Sonu Vasani's response was :

***"With respect to the above mail, I met you on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2019 at your office, as instructed by you. My position in this matter is that I have not done anything wrong or against the law. I am law abiding citizen and have always respected and followed law."***

The email is attached at Annexure 20.

84. In his email, Sonu Vasan did not deny it was his voice that was played to him.

85. Further, Sonu Vasan did not give an explanation on the context of the call.

86. Sonu Vasan did not provide any explanation on the context of the offer of money 2-5 lakhs for Bhavin Thakkar, 40-50 Lakhs for Dhawal Kulkarni.

87. As stated earlier, since Sonu Vasan is not a participant under the ACC, BCCI ACU could not demand any further details including his mobile bills etc. from Sonu Vasan to further ascertain the facts.”

4. Show Cause Notice was issued to the respondent along with copy of Inquiry Report. Respondent has filed his reply wherein he has denied the applicability of the BCCI's Anti-Corruption Code to him. Respondent has claimed that he never offered any monetary or other benefit to Bhavin Thakkar to influence the result of any match. No transaction of money took place, as is clear from the Whatsapp Calls/Text messages. Respondent also submits that the Inquiry Committee did not examine the evidence properly. The conclusions drawn in the Inquiry Report are not supported by objective, independent or corroborative evidence. It has also been contended that he had no chance to cross-examine any witness to or rebut the recording of the telephone conversation. It is argued that there has been a presumption of conspiracy, which is purely inferential.
5. Inquiry Report perused. Reply to the show cause notice considered. Evidence on record examined.
6. Video recording of the telephone conversation between Thakkar and the respondent was submitted to the ACU. Whatsapp between the respondent and Thakkar was switched to speaker mode by Thakkar, whereupon the conversation was recorded by Dhawal Kulkarni's phone, using video

recording feature of the camera. This recording was played before the respondent by the ACU. When called upon to answer this, respondent did not deny before the ACU that the voice that was being played in the recording was indeed his. He requested that he be allowed to come back before the ACU on the following day and to give clarification regarding the recording played to him. This request was made in writing as mentioned in **Para Nos. 72 to 82** extracted above.

7. However, respondent did not come back to the ACU. Instead, the following day, he wrote an email to the ACU. The statement in the email made a denial of any wrong-doing without any explanation or clarification. In this regard **Para No. 83** of the Inquiry Report is extracted hereunder:

“83. On 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2019, Sonu Vasan responded to ACU via email. Sonu Vasan’s response was:

**With respect to the above mail, I met you on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2019 at your office, as instructed by you. My position in this matter is that I have not done anything wrong or against the law. I am law abiding citizen and have always respected and followed law” ”**

(emphasis in the original)

8. It is clear, that respondent himself never offered any explanation regarding the circumstances and overwhelming evidence against him with which he was confronted by the ACU. He never requested for any follow up meeting with the ACU. He did not come for the meeting for which he himself had requested for in writing. His email to the ACU offered no explanation regarding the evidence. In fact, it is the respondent who choose not to participate in the Inquiry. Therefore, it cannot be said that respondent did not have any opportunity to offer his explanation to the Inquiry Committee with regard to the evidence with which he was confronted. He failed to offer any explanation to recorded version of him.
9. Inquiry Report contains a detailed analysis of the mobile bill of Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah. Outgoing and incoming calls of Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah’s calls for



the period 11.05.2019 to 10.06.2019 were analyzed. In the transcript of the call recording of the conversation between respondent and Thakkar, it is seen that respondent told Bhavin Thakkar that Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah had contacted the respondent the previous day at around 1200/1230 hours, asking the respondent to come to Bhamrah's house. This fact is corroborated by Bhamrah's mobile bill. This clearly shows that respondent was in constant touch with Bhamrah during the entire relevant period. The identity of the phone numbers used by Bhamrah and the respondent respectively have never been challenged.

10. Respondent's assertion that no monetary or other benefit was offered by him is contrary to the extensive transcript of the video-recording quoted in the Inquiry Report itself. Further, respondent's claim that no transaction of money took place is to be noted only to be rejected inasmuch as attempt is expressly punishable. An attempt at match-fixing was made by respondent. Insofar as respondent's culpability is concerned, it is immaterial that Thakkar refused to fix the match. There is nothing to disbelieve version of Bhavin Thakkar, Kulkarni and other evidence on record.
11. In Inquiry Report it has been rightly mentioned that respondent was not a "participant" under the Anti-Corruption Code. As such, recommendation to blacklist the respondent has been made. Having considered the pivotal role played by respondent in the match-fixing attempt, it is entirely appropriate that persons whose actions have had a huge protentional to bring the game of cricket into disrepute must be kept away from the game. Such persons have no place in the game of cricket.
12. As to opportunity for cross-examination was not given by ACU of BCCI, it is clear Sonu Vasan was confronted with material evidence. He was asked to explain recording of mobile call for which he prayed for time. Next day he sent email quoted above in which he did not offer any explanation to recorded version. He did not ask for any opportunity to cross-examine any witness nor in the email

he demanded the same. He has failed to refute the version. The inquiry has been held in consonance with principles of the natural justice. As respondent himself did not turn to participate in the inquiry the ground urged is untenable.

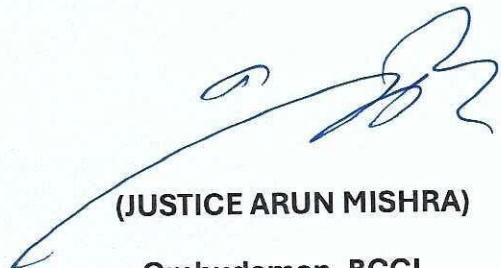
**13.** In order dated 18.04.2025, arising out of the very same Inquiry Report, in the matter of Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah, it was observed as under:

**11.** The game of cricket is a very popular sport in India, with a huge fan following. It has a large viewership, both in attendance at cricket stadiums across the country when the matches are being played and at satellite/electronic live streaming of the matches. Over years, with the advent and development of league cricket, the commercial value in the game has increased manifold. Insofar as it leads to betterment of the playing conditions, betterment in the quality and standards of the game, and betterment of the facilities for the viewers of the game, it is a welcome development. It is a generally held belief that league cricket has also led to an increase in opportunities for the sportsmen/players. It is thus necessary to preserve the spirit of the game and the integrity of the participants in the game, including that of team owners in league cricket. People at large legitimately expect fair play at sporting events. They expect commercial integrity of the participants. Further, league cricket is organized in such a manner that there is mobility of players between different teams in different seasons/editions of a particular league, in that the players of a given team are chosen for any given defined or fixed period, after which auction/bidding process amongst team-owners participating in the league may send a given player to a team different from the one for which he played in a previous season/edition. There are complaints of *betting/satta* in cricket; the popularity of game is at stake in case the matches are fixed. Any attempt towards fixing deserves to be dealt with severely."

14. Considering overall scenario, it is crystal clear that Sonu Vasan was clearly guilty of attempting to induce Bhavin Thakkar to conspire with him and Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah to cheat the owners of Aakash Tigers, the fans of cricket who bought tickets to watch the game and to cause wrongful gain to Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah's team SoBo Supersonics by fixing a match as per the script set by Gurmeet Singh Bhamrah.

15. He attempted to offer bribe in the League match being a non-participant. He cannot be punished with punishment prescribed for participants. Instead, he deserves to be and is hereby black listed from entry in Cricket Stadiums of BCCI or its affiliated units in future.

16. Accordingly, case vis-à-vis Sonu Vasan is disposed of.



(JUSTICE ARUN MISHRA)

Ombudsman, BCCI

Dated: 07.06.2025