

# Is Peter Thiel funding Dr Shiva Ayyadurai's \$35mn lawsuit against Gawker?

By Rashmi Menon, ET Bureau | 30 May, 2016, 11.41AM IST



Ayyadurai says he is unaware of any behind-the-scenes financial arrangements involving his lawyers.

The American media and Silicon Valley are currently glued to a high-profile battle between PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel and online news website Gawker. Last week, Thiel admitted that he had bankrolled Hulk Hogan's defamation lawsuit against Gawker for which the wrestler was awarded \$140 million in damages.

In an open letter to Thiel, Gawker managing editor Nick Denton raised suspicions about Thiel's involvement in other lawsuits that were filed against his media house. One of the cases was filed by Indo-American scientist Dr VA Shiva Ayyadurai on May 11.

In his letter, Denton writes, "Represented also by the lawyer you (Thiel) hired, Ayyadurai is suing Gawker for \$35 million for defamation, though not the other news organisations that made the same point."

On Saturday, Ayyadurai posted his response on a social media platform. He said that he had no contact with Thiel and was unaware of any behind-the-scenes financial arrangements involving his lawyers and anyone else.

"If it is Peter Thiel who made that representation possible, I am very grateful. Although I have had no contact whatsoever with Peter Thiel and my attorney has never mentioned him to me, I would certainly like to shake Peter Thiel's hand. None of this is about Gawker's First Amendment rights, free expression, censorship, or anything similar. It's about the fact that big money runs media and those without big money are victimised by bullies who write trash and destroy lives just because they can."

Ayyadurai vs Gawker in the past In February 2012, Gizmodo, Gawker's technology website, wrote a piece titled 'The Inventor of Email Did Not Invent Email?'. The article was a detailed rebuttal of Ayyadurai's claim of having been the original inventor of email as we know it.

"The article was extremely damaging to me personally and professionally to be called a 'fraud' on a site with millions of viewers," said a press response from Ayyadurai's office. "I am not a 'fraud' and never have been. Leaving aside the issue of who is "the pioneering mind behind email" (whatever that means) fraudulence is a form of lying, and lying must include the intention to lie. When I truly believe and straightforwardly assert that I invented email, that assertion is in no way fraudulent. Calling me a fraud in a widely read publication is blatantly libelous and legally actionable."





Peter Thiel (Image: AFP)

In March 2012, Gizmodo did a following piece on Ayyadurai titled 'Corruption, Lies, and Death Threats: The Crazy Story of the Man who Pretended to Invent Email'.

In this piece, Ayyadurai claims the author "conveniently invokes 'anonymous sources'. The bottom line is that Gawker publicly called me an 'a\*\*hole' a 'loon' and a 'd\*\*k' in an online publication directed at the tech industry in which I work.

There have been hurtful consequences of that article for me. Now there will be consequences for Nick Denton and his publications."

**Read also: [In Gawker fight, Hogan may have billionaire Peter Thiel in his corner](#)**

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