

Collector's Edition



ALWAYS YOU FIRST



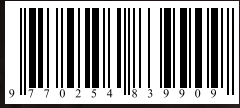
THE INSPIRING STORY OF AMITABH BACHCHAN

**KASHMIR
FORCE REDUCTION**

**NITISH KUMAR MISSION
OPPOSITION UNITY**

**UJJAIN MAHAKAL
MAKEOVER**

www.indiatoday.in



OCTOBER 17, 2022 ₹75

INDIA TODAY

AMITABH BACHCHAN AT 80

STILL THE SHAHENSHAH

**FROM ANGRY YOUNG MAN TO NATIONAL TREASURE,
A TRIBUTE TO THE AGELESS SUPERSTAR**



India's Pride: **Amitabh Bachchan**

When the foundation is strong, you can build a great bank for the ages

IDFC FIRST Bank was created by the merger of IDFC Bank and Capital First in early 2019, and we were an early stage bank. Our Bank, though highly respected, was not very well known at that stage. In one of our discussions, we came up with the idea of signing up the iconic Mr. Bachchan. Someone suggested we use the ad agency to contact him or his manager. Almost by instinct, I remarked, "Forget agents and agencies, let us just go across to his place and meet him".

The same evening, we were sitting in his beautifully decorated office at around 8 pm. Believe it or not, we hit it off straightaway and the warmth was instinctive. Within a fortnight, we had closed the contract and Mr. Bachchan was our brand ambassador! There was no agent, no intermediary - it was all simply straight and a hop across to his office.



To be as exceptionally talented in the early 20s, someone who can sing, dance and be naturally gifted in terms of physique, voice, diction, and persona, is an extraordinary God-gifted combination. That he reached the heights he did is not a surprise. But what struck me was his simplicity and humility despite his extraordinary successes. For example, the second time I met him for discussions, he had come down the stairs to see me off to my car which was in itself a gesture. But even more, my driver who had ferried me to his house asked me if he could get a picture with him. You will be surprised to know that he readily put his arm around my personal driver and gave him a picture. And all this when we had not even signed him up and were in exploratory discussions. That tells you something about him.

We all know Mr Bachchan as an iconic personality of our times. His performance as an action hero in movies like Zanzeer, Sholay, Deewaar, Yaarana, Laawaris or in sensitive roles such as Anand and Silsila, or Baghbaan are for the ages. Over the years he has reinvented himself again and again into more new generation movies like Paa, has been a television host of the popular show Kaun Banega Crorepati and so on. **What is more amazing is that through all this evolution, during his extraordinary 60 years of public life, he has conducted himself with extreme grace all through, and has been an inspiration to one and all. He is a well-deserved recipient of the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan awards.**

He visited our office for the sign-up ceremony where employees cheered and screamed with excitement. After the ceremony, some of us gathered in our Board room and exchanged pleasantries and concluded the signing ceremony. Later at our offices, he spoke to our employees, who greeted him with applause. Amazingly, he was exceptionally well prepared, had done a pre-read about the Bank and could relate anecdotes and interesting points about us; the high point was when he ended his speech with 'Always You First', our brand's tagline. And with no briefing from any of us!





IDFC FIRST Bank – a relationship of trust, transparency and integrity

Mr. Bachchan had this to say on the occasion, "The energy I see today and the happiness with which all of you have greeted me has overwhelmed me. I have read up and have known about IDFC FIRST Bank, I'm extremely proud to be associated with this prestigious bank. The single-most reason I love IDFC FIRST Bank is because it has been founded on great values and great ethics. This is what the country needs. The Bank is transforming the lives of a large population of our country with new-age products and services. It is my great pleasure to be the brand ambassador of IDFC FIRST Bank."

At IDFC FIRST Bank, the vision statement of our bank is, "To build a world-class bank in India, guided by ethics, powered by technology, and to be a force for social good". We thought hard about every word in this vision statement. We take each one of these words seriously. We believe, to build a world class bank in India, is one of the greatest privileges of our lifetime and we are making efforts day and night to make this happen. The foundation has been laid and we are improving by the day. We are determined to build a bank India will be proud of.

Everything we build at IDFC FIRST Bank, we always think of building for the long run. We take no shortcuts. We have taken three years building the foundation of our bank with a strong deposit base, among the highest CASA in the industry at 50%+. We have a high-quality loan book seasoned for over a decade, and we have great corporate governance. Whatever the challenges, we took them head on and dealt with them fairly and squarely.

In terms of culture, we say this to our employees "We have one constituency to please - the customer. Go all out and make them happy. If we do this well, all other constituencies will be happy with us". We are a new bank and we have embedded the 'customer-friendly' ethos in our DNA. In this direction, we became the first universal bank in the country that began crediting interest on savings accounts to our customers on a 'monthly basis'. We decided not to charge premature FD breakage charges for senior citizens. We don't charge fees for 'non-home-branch' transactions. We don't charge for cash transactions at the branch, NEFT charges, RTGS charges, IMPS charges, Chequebook issuance charges, ECS return charges, stop payment charges, standing instructions charges, and a whole host of charges, which are normal banking charges. The list is long and keeps our customers happy.

India has had credit cards for 30 years. Yet when we launched credit cards, we found so many specials to give our customers - we offered low interest rates starting at 9% for revolving - carry over facility, based on credit scores and other criteria. Truly caring for our customers, we started a practice of reminding customers of due dates and over-limit ahead of time, so that customers don't get charged fees for inadvertent mistakes. So, we gave away this source of income in the interest of customer friendliness. We made our rewards points 'evergreen', so no one misses on the entitlements. We introduced the concept of 'zero joining fee and zero annual fees' without any minimum spend conditions. We introduced the concept of letting customers redeem their rewards points against their next online purchase. All these customer-friendly concepts reflect our approach to our customers. We tell our employees to only design such products which we can sell to our nearest and dearest family members. We call it the 'Near-Dear' test. Once our customers experience our products and services, they see the spirit of our conduct, they then stick with us and spread the good word about us.



Back to Mr Bachchan, we are delighted to have such an iconic personality, the superstar of the millennium, as our brand ambassador. His appeal cuts across all ages and generations, in cities, towns and villages, domestically and internationally. He is a great ambassador not just for us but for our beloved country and for our millions. On behalf of all of us, I wish him a very happy 80th Birthday.

V Vaidyanathan
MD & CEO
IDFC FIRST Bank

STAYING STRONG: 80 YEARS



ALWAYS YOU FIRST



MR. AMITABH BACHCHAN

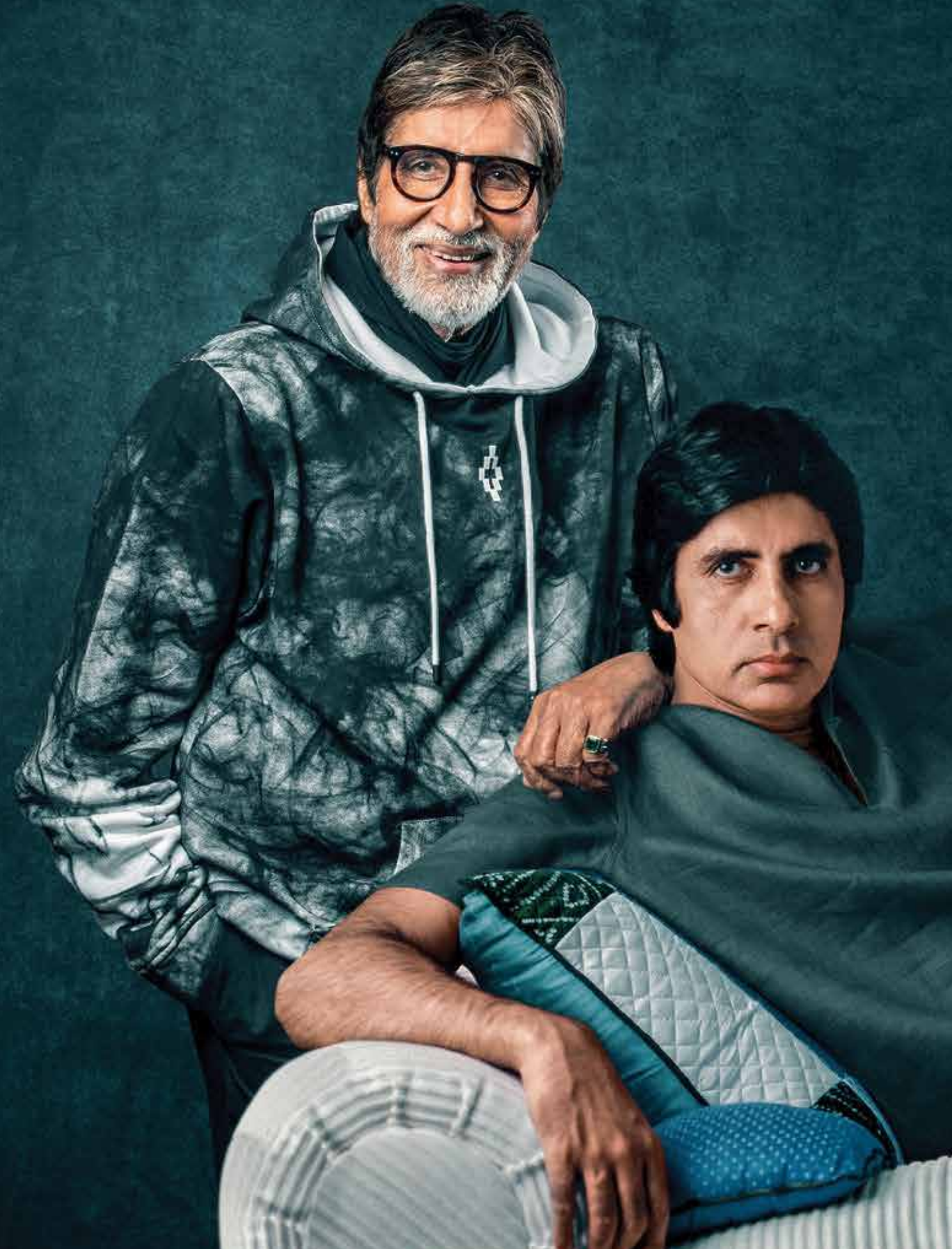
"A CHAMPION IS ONE WHO IS REMEMBERED. A LEGEND IS ONE WHO IS NEVER FORGOTTEN."

★★★★★
BIG B @ 80
COVER STORY

STILL THE SHAHENSHAH

Age hasn't dimmed his aura; if anything, the luminescence that surrounds Amitabh Bachchan has only grown, born of a man who is constantly reinventing himself. A tribute

By Suhani Singh / Photo Montage by Bandeeep Singh



★★★★★
BIG B @ 80
COVER STORY

I

In Juhu, Mumbai—pin code 400 049—stand two edifices that must count as the mecca of Indian cinema. The structures themselves inspire no great awe, betray no special aura beyond what any bungalow in an upmarket neighbourhood may be accused of exuding. But like with any shrine, it's about who resides within. Generations of filmgoers have been so enamoured of the man—so filled by a strange energy at his mere appearance on that screen on which their desires are projected—that he seems to approach a numinous stature. Here, on the road outside, vehicles slow down so passengers can quickly take photos, even if it is just a shot of the wooden gate. Pedestrians refresh themselves with water from a giant earthen vessel and prayers begin for a miracle sighting. Vigilant safari-clad men blow their shrill whistles to ensure there's no crowding. It's pointless. There's always one, especially in the evenings. From 1976 to 2000s, this scene used to unfold at Prateeksha, now it is Jalsa. There's also Janak nearby, a kind of workspace, which has escaped attention. Not surprising perhaps, because it's at the primary abode that the devout feel the magic of nearness. The hero they have come to worship...He Lives Here. And his name is Amitabh Bachchan.

It's a Sunday evening, a day when Bachchan, if he's in

town and in the mood, is known to greet and wave at his fans. A quick sampling of the crowd reveals something about the man—the way his force-field has overflowed the usual embankments of space and time. There are fans of all age groups. And the catchment area is also pan-national, not usual for a Hindi film personality. Jessy and Smita, a lawyer and a teacher, respectively, are from Kerala. They have ditched their friends in Juhu beach in the hope of sighting the man they adored in *Piku*. "There's something very interesting about him," says Jessy, as she makes her way to Prateeksha from Jalsa. Standing across the road from them is Vikas Singh, a doctor from Patna, who refers to Bachchan as a "superhero". Singh's words are tinged with awe as he shares his long list of favourite Bachchan films. "He is a league apart," he says. "So many have gone, but he is still performing."

The 'still' is pertinent because Bachchan turns 80 on October 11. He made his feature film debut at the age of 27. A different epoch: the Beatles were still playing, a fledgling Doordarshan had not even reached Bombay, and women in Hindi films were still cycling to picnics with their hair in beehive buns, singing pretty songs. Fifty-three years later, all that is water down the bridge, but he is 'still' on top of his game. So much so that he puts far younger peers

THE LEGEND, AND HIS CREATORS
Amitabh Bachchan
with directors Prakash
Mehra (left) and
Manmohan Desai (right)





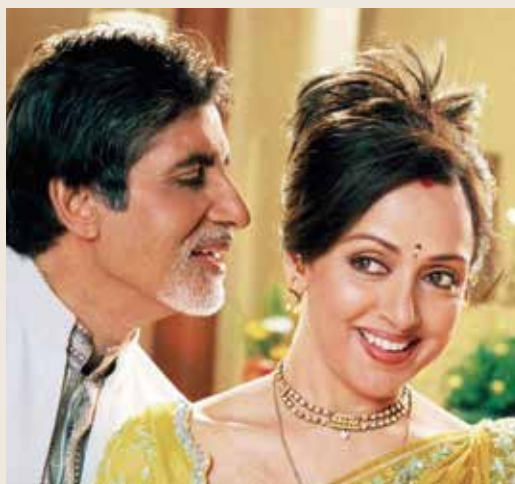
By HEMA MALINI

“Amitji is a unique phenomenon”

Seldom in the annals of Indian public life has an individual garnered so much respect and adoration as Amitji has done in his long, eventful career as a film artist and public figure. From his days when he assumed a screen persona of an ‘angry young man’ to a polished host of TV shows, Amitji has traversed complex terrains with ease. All have been accomplished without compromising on the aesthetics that surround

his every movement. It’s heartening to see him enter his 80th year with the same verve that marked his entry into films some 50 years ago. I was fortunate to share film and public space with Amitji and will cherish the hits we delivered. The world may not see such a unique phenomenon for a long, long time. ■

Actress Hema Malini has worked with Amitabh Bachchan in films like Sholay, Trishul and Baghban (below)



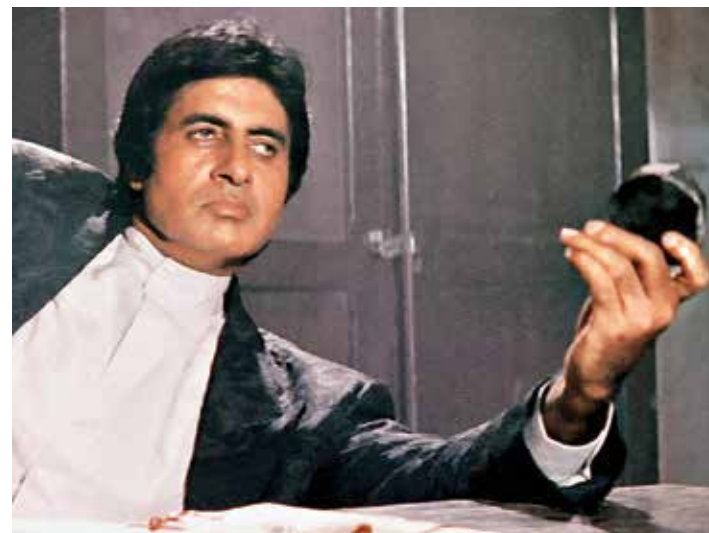
BIG B @ 80 COVER STORY

to shame with his sheer, jaw-dropping volume of work, as with his still-undimmed work ethic.

But even a phenomenon has to start somewhere. A quiet, dignified entry in a film called *Saat Hindustani* (1969) performed that historic function, but done by the old writer-director Khwaja Ahmad Abbas—the man behind *Dharti Ke Lal* (1946) and many of Raj Kapoor’s films—his idealistic vein also kept it off-Broadway, so to speak. The mainstream largely shunned the tall, gangly youth for a few more years, with only a trickle of minor films coming his way. Navin Nishchol, who debuted a year after Bachchan, rose to stardom faster—and got paid more. It was still a world made for romantic heroes with *khubani ka meetha* faces. So nobody could have anticipated what happened thereafter.

A supporting role in Hrishikesh Mukherjee’s *Anand* (1971) was a bend in the road—even next to the bravura, author-backed role of superstar Rajesh Khanna, Bachchan’s quiet intensity filtered through. Filmmakers slowly learnt to harness that flame. Finally, *Zanjeer* (1973) scaled that up to full-scale arson. Bachchan’s honest cop, tormented by inner and outer demons, burst forth on the Seventies with such a primal force that it caught the zeitgeist. It was a time of inner ferment for the nation and its youth, beginning to chafe in such rage at the corrupt, stagnant system that the Emergency was soon imposed in a vain bid to bottle it up. Bachchan’s ‘Angry Young Man’ became the very embodiment of that larger storm. And stayed there, like a one-man forest fire, through the decade and beyond. With films like *Deewaar*, *Sholay*, *Trishul*, *Don*, *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar* and *Kaala Patthar*, what changed was not merely Amitabh Bachchan’s fate, but the very heart and culture of Hindi cinema. Its very tone and tenor. Through those times, he towered over everything precisely because he had co-authored those times, like some deity in an act of Creation.

For those who came in late, there were more unbelievable twists in the plot—careening between the demigodly status and destitution. A bout of injury and ill health, a diversion to politics that ended as ignominiously as it started gloriously, a filmography that sputtered down to largely inconsequential films that sought to ride on his past popularity without ever recreating anything like his past incandescence, and then a fateful turn to business. A company was set up that dared to think big but managed to end small...very small. As the century wound down, the Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Limited was winding up in bankruptcy—and taking down a human piece of history with it. Then as the clock struck the new millennium, the pendulum swung again to the other side. A remarkable second innings started. *Kaun Banega Crorepati* (KBC), a quiz show on Star TV, got Bachchan right into drawing rooms...and people reacted as if divinity was paying a visitation in humanised form. And slowly, the films started striking a second burst of efflorescence too—like a



“He defines the very word stardom”



By RANVEER SINGH

He’s one of the most versatile actors in history. An iconic figure. He defines the word ‘stardom’. He’s one of a kind. Simply put, THE GREATEST. OF. ALL. TIME.

Amitabh Bachchan is to Hindi movies what Michael Jordan is to basketball. Sure, it’s a loose comparison, but both are considered to be the unanimous GOATS in their respective disciplines. Amitabh Bachchan is intrinsic to Indian culture, such is his place in our lives. His body of work deserves a giant museum.

What does he mean to me personally? Let’s just say that the chambers of my heart are walled with posters of him. I say unequivocally that he’s my greatest idol, a deity I have revered.

It was my grandmother who ushered me into the fantastic world of Amitabh Bachchan and his artistry. She’d feed me her special home-cooked Sindhi delicacy sael bread whilst playing VHS

after VHS of Amitabh Bachchan movies. And she would emphatically tell me, “One day you have to grow up and be like him!” He was the exemplar in inspiring me to become an actor. I was mesmerised by him in *Shahenshah* and *Agneepath* (above). I even loved *Ajooba*, *Jaadugar* and *Toofan*. I have been in awe of him all my life. I have literally grown up dreaming of becoming like him.

Can you imagine what an unforgettable moment it was for me when I received my first ever Best Actor award for *Bajirao Mastani*

and he was present in the audience, applauding me! At my wedding, my then newly-wedded wife, Deepika, and I danced with him on ‘*Jumma Chumma*’. That meant the world to me too. The memories connected to him constitute the highlight reel of my life. He has seen some of my work and sent across handwritten letters expressing deep appreciation. I have kept them in a safe among my most treasured belongings.

His generous deeds are a testament to how magnanimous an artist he is. His bearing as a pre-eminent member of society is impeccable. I could elaborate on the depth and range of his craft and the power of his emotive faculties, but it would run into volumes.

His legacy and contribution to the arts are beyond comparison. He’s a Titan, a Colossus. He is THE Amitabh Bachchan. ■

Ranveer Singh is a leading Bollywood actor

“What does he mean to me personally? Let’s just say the chambers of my heart are walled with posters of him. He’s my greatest idol, a deity I revere”

SAVINGS ACCOUNT

PRESENTING

MONTHLY INTEREST CREDITS ON YOUR IDFC FIRST BANK SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Earn interest on interest with the power of monthly compounding



Scan the QR code to unlock the #PowerOfMore



ALWAYS YOU FIRST

Call 1800 10 888



Nilgiri kuringji plant flowering after a gap of 14 years. Why is Amitabh Bachchan a piece of living history? Because that phase, again unbelievably, is still with us.

THE MARATHON MAN

For, there was no escaping Bachchan in 2022—as he was going on 80. In April release *Runway 34*, he was playing a no-nonsense head of the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau, grilling and lecturing a pompous pilot (Ajay Devgn, a next-generation hero who's himself no spring chicken now). In September, Bachchan was a wise, sword-wielding mentor in *Brahmastra*. The film, having earned Rs 247 crore nationwide, is still running in cinema halls. But he has another one slated for the marquee—*Goodbye*. His co-star is Rashmika Mandanna of *Pushpa* fame, who is just a year senior to Bachchan's granddaughter, Navya Naveli Nanda. Audiences will see him on the big screen in November too, in Sooraj Barjatya's *Uunchai*, alongside Anupam Kher and Boman Irani. And he's still on the small screen, clocking in 14 hours a day to shoot *KBC*, which is in its 14th season. With this kind of a chock-a-block calendar, one would think this is the 1970s-80s, with Bachchan working at such a pace he hardly had time for family.

It was in 1980, when he was at the summit and at his prolific best, that INDIA TODAY featured him on the cover and christened him 'The One-Man Industry'. Perhaps too happening to be considered an 'institution' yet, like older thespians like Dilip Kumar would have been then. But with a good ensemble of films that showcased an eclectic actorly repertoire, comparisons may have started getting made. Two years later, the two came face to face in *Shakti*. But four decades later, Bachchan's career has outlasted other thespian luminaries not just by the sheer volume of films he has done—over 180 and counting, excluding the innumerable ones as narrator—but also with the range of his work. Now, though he's still happening, no one would hesitate to confer on him nobler encomiums—like 'the legend', or 'an institution'. His iconic status, as well as his ease before the camera, is precisely what makes him one of the most-trusted names among brands who seek his face and, more significantly, that deep baritone to sell their products and services. The Duff & Phelps Celebrity Brand Valuation Study of 2021 ranked Bachchan sixth, with a brand value of \$54.2 million. Even governments have counted on him for their public service advertising campaigns like 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' or to urge citizens to be cautious during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Age usually slows a person, but in Bachchan's case, his zeal to perform and engage with his fans—whether via his films or many social media accounts, including the blog Bol Bachchan—is untouched by senescence. As soon as the second lockdown ended, eager to face the camera again, he



By JAVED AKHTAR

“Every shot for him is his first shot”

was one of the very few in the industry who could see and appreciate the immense talent in this young actor, even as his films were not doing well. There was Raaste ka Patthar (1972), a flop—I think besides its producer, I must have been the only one to have seen it thrice. But I could see that Amitabh Bachchan had done a great job. His performances were commendable even in films like Parwana (1971) and Mehmood's Garam Masala (1972), in which he had a guest appearance playing a comical character

called Robert Taylor. I felt that the only thing going against him was a bad script and bad direction.

It took some time to convince Prakash Mehra to cast Bachchan in *Zanjeer* (1973) because he was looking for a 'viable' actor. During the film's production, I remember Mr Mehra saying: 'Javed, thank you for recommending him because I can't imagine making a film without this actor.' I have great respect for Mr Mehra's conviction in the script, because by then every 'viable' actor had refused to play the role, but he didn't



INDIA PICTURE COLLECTION

abandon it. *Kismet ki baat hai, warna Amitabh ko yeh mauka nahin milta. Zanjeer* went on to become a golden jubilee hit and heralded the rise of Amitabh Bachchan.

Salim Khan and I wrote 22 films, and 11 of them featured Bachchan. He'd never ever change a single word. We didn't have to explain the nuances of the language; he'd know. Writers tend to be a finicky lot, but in all the films we did, not even for one line did I feel that he had not enunciated and

'EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCES'

Shakti (1982)

Whenever you ask someone about their favourite Bachchan performance, the most common replies are *Zanjeer* (1973), *Deewaar* (1975), *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977), *Trishul* (1978), and *Don* (1978). But there are some exceptional performances that have not been given their due. At the peak of his career, Bachchan played the angry but submissive and respectful son to Dilip

Kumar's overimposing father in *Shakti* (above). At no stage Bachchan showed his arrogance. He could have taken the performance a few notches up to show his persona and none would have objected, but he didn't.

Mili (1975)

Jaya is obviously fabulous, but his work is unbelievable. When they talk of his angry young persona, I am surprised they never mention this film.

expressed the dialogue the way I had imagined. *Is mein koi shaq nahin hai ki jo performance Zanjeer aur Deewaar mein Amitabh Bachchan ne di hai, woh koi doosra nahin de sakta tha.* Let me not be too modest though. Nobody but Salim-Javed could have given him the kind of scripts he did in the '70s-'80s, and nobody could have given Salim-Javed the kind of performances he did.

To become Amitabh Bachchan, you need many qualities—monumental talent, complete discipline and focus, and perfect social relationships. Even at the age of 80, here is a man who still gives every shot as if it is the first shot of his life, and his career depends on it. He doesn't interfere in your work and gives you the space you need. It's why younger actors, who consider him God, realise on working with him that this God is benevolent. ■

Screenwriter and lyricist Javed Akhtar, along with Salim Khan, played a key role in crafting Bachchan's angry young man image

Deewaar, Sholay, Trishul, Don, Muqaddar Ka Sikandar and Kaala Patthar changed not just Amitabh's fate but the very heart and culture of Hindi cinema



Enjoy **0** Charges

on a host of banking services like NEFT, IMPS, RTGS, etc. on your IDFC FIRST Bank Savings Account

SAVINGS ACCOUNT



Scan the QR code to unlock the #PowerOfMore



ALWAYS YOU FIRST

Call 1800 10 888

IDFC FIRST Bank



By SHATRUGHAN SINHA

“An institution that defines discipline”

It was close to 4 am, but there were still a few people left with enough energy to keep dancing at the party. Amitabh Bachchan and I were among those still shaking our legs. It was his brother's marriage party at a Mumbai hotel. Then, I suddenly noticed that Amitabh had disappeared.

I got a call from Manoj Kumarji in the afternoon: “Kaisa dost hai yar tumhara”, his words dripping with admiration and marvel in equal measure. As it turned out, Amitabh had reached the shooting location for the 7 am shift at Panvel—not less than a 90-minute drive.

Manoj Kumar, the director and producer of the movie, was expected to reach the sets before anyone else. But he found Amitabh, fresh, eager and prepared, waiting for him even before the shift began. Nobody knows where Amitabh took a shower, when he changed clothes and how he reached there even before the director.

I also vividly recall a shot in *Kaala Patthar* (1979, above). Amitabh and I, with a shovel on my shoulders, were to walk towards each other, exchanging unfriendly looks. It was to be filmed against the rising sun. For a person like

me, Yash Chopra had to make a request to wake up early for the shot and I agreed. But Amitabh was already at the spot even before the cameramen arrived: “Chaliye main taiyar hun.”

By God! Punctuality, professionalism, discipline, Amitabh defines all this. He has always been

“I refused the cake he sent for his son's wedding as I had not been invited. I wish him a long and happy life. If he sends me a cake now, I will accept it”

the man yearning for perfection—a superhuman with his inbuilt discipline.

All this explains why he is what he is. For any aspiring actor, or anyone with ambitions to achieve anything big in life, Amitabh's story is something to learn from. If Amitabh is ‘the’ Amitabh Bachchan today, it is because of what he has done in totality.

I firmly believe Amitabh, the forever young man, is an institution. I



INDIA PICTURE COLLECTION

have only called Satyajit Ray and Dilip Kumar institutions before.

Amitabh is also an inspiration because he faced every problem that an ordinary man faces in life—a medical emergency, financial crisis, professional challenges and emotionally difficult moments. It was so difficult to see him at Breach Candy Hospital after the *Coolie* accident (in 1982). It required grit and determination to come out of it and bounce back in life.

I have very fond memories of being with Amitabh. I met him first at Mehmood Bhai's house.

A tall, affable man, I instantly started liking him. Mehmood Bhai's younger brother Anwar and Amitabh would often visit my Bandra flat. Soon, Amitabh and I became good friends, visiting clubs and dancing at the discos together, and I was always mesmerised by his dance.

Our friendship grew because of other reasons. We were from the Hindi belt—I was from Bihar, he from UP—and both were seen as underdogs. Both were self-made and from the same Chitransh community. We both praised each other's sense of humour. There were some

quirky reasons too. Just count the number of the letters in our names—15 each in both. We valued all this a lot. We even shared the same secretary—Pawan Kumar—for several years, and it was a unique thing for two Bollywood stars. But such was our friendship.

Amitabh was *thoda* junior to me in Bollywood, but in terms of stardom, he reached much, much higher than me. Then the days of his superstardom arrived. We remained friends, having done several films together like *Shaan*, *Naseeb*, *Dostana* and *Kaala Patthar*. And I was supposed to do some of his movies—*Sholay*, *Deewar* to name a few. Similarly, I heard Amitabh wanted to do *Kalicharan*, but I did it eventually.

There were a bit of ups and downs in our relationship, and you can attribute those to the stupidity of our respective stardom and the free spirits of our youth, making a few people speculate about us—*Kaun bhari pad gaya Kaala Patthar mein* and *kaun chha gaya*. But I distinctly remember we always had pure warmth for each other.

There used to be a sweeping sense of pure awe the moment Am-

itabh entered the set. Though he was friendly, and one could hear peals of laughter in the makeup room, he always maintained his dignity. On the sets, I guess he preferred to be alone, perhaps to stay focused on the job at hand. Sometimes, he seemed a lonely man at the top. He often praised me for my ability to memorise long dialogues, and when I think of him, I always found him coming prepared from home. He would slip into the character in his car, or in the vanity van. His commitment to work was phenomenal. It still is.

I find him as one of the few in the film industry with exceptional command of the language. A very good orator, a learned man and a real intellectual. Though at times, some may find him artificial, he is natural and self-made, and his biggest forte, like me, has been his confidence and an unshakable belief in his abilities. We are friends, and will always remain the same. I hold him in high esteem. ■

Sinha has been Bachchan's co-actor in films such as Naseeb, Dostana and Kaala Patthar (As told to Amitabh Srivastava)


called his go-to photographer Avinash Gowariker over.

“Our country has seen many superstars, but stardom with his kind of longevity is a rarity and I think it will be very difficult to match up to it,” says *Dangal* maker Nitesh Tiwary, who directed Bachchan in *Bhootnath Returns* and also worked with him in the *KBC* ad campaigns. Like many directors of today, Tiwary grew up on a healthy diet of Bachchan films. He wept for his hero at the end of *Muqaddar ka Sikandar*; he smiled when he couldn't get tickets to *Hum* in Gwalior...because it meant Bachchan had finally had a hit after a bad run; and he was “nervous as hell” when, as executive creative director of Leo Burnett, he sat in Bachchan's office in Janak to narrate the “*Koi sawal chhota nahin hota*” promotional campaign for *KBC*. His mother and her family, he notes, were more proud when they learned he was working with Bachchan than when he got into IIT Bombay. “A childlike curiosity keeps him going,” adds Tiwary. “He approaches a 30-second commercial or a two-and-a-half-hour film with the same rigour.”

Four decades on, Bachchan's career has outlasted other thespian luminaries not just by the volume of his films but also the range of work

Almost everyone who has worked with him credits Bachchan's long shelf-life to his discipline or “*anush-aasan*”, as his character in *Mohabbatein* would say. Leena Yadav, who directed him in *Teen Patti*, recalls how she'd tell the four newcomers in the film—which included Shraddha Kapoor—to seek inspiration from his sense of punctuality and preparedness. In the unlikely event of him running late, he is known to message and inform the director directly and expects an acknowledgement, as Tiwary would learn one day. Then there's the humility. Nothing holds him back from setting aside years of experience and countless accolades to learn from new creators, regardless of their age. Filmmakers mention how he is totally open to retakes and suggestions. And yet, there's a dignified kind of gravitas. “*Ek thahraav bhi hai*,” as Leena Yadav puts it. “He doesn't underline his own presence, but

SAVINGS ACCOUNT



Get higher daily ATM withdrawal and POS limits

with IDFC FIRST Bank Savings Account




Scan the QR code to unlock the #PowerOfMore



ALWAYS YOU FIRST

Call 1800 10 888



then you can't help not underline it. However humbly he is sitting there, he is Amitabh Bachchan."

THE MYTHICAL BEING

This aura, what R. Balki calls the "myth and mystique", also transmits itself to viewers. And that's why audiences cannot get enough of him. Balki, one of his most frequent collaborators in the past 15 years and who has written yet another cameo for him in the 2023 release *Ghoomer*, puts his finger too on that X-factor. It's born of "his effort and the effort of the world which has

preserved the myth", he says. "What has happened due to it is that we are not able to fathom this entity, which will never come again. Cinema is never going to have stars like Bachchan because they (the present lot) are too accessible and don't have that kind of bigness." The enigma endures, especially since Bachchan has cut down his media interactions in the past decade. Even those who worked with him in the early stages

If there's one platform where audiences come closest to getting to know Bachchan, it's KBC. Here, he shares vignettes of his life and career

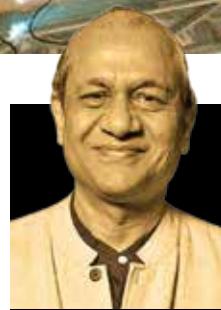
of his career, like renowned screenwriter-lyricist Javed Akhtar, who co-wrote some of Bachchan's most iconic roles in *Zanjeer* and *Deewar*, say, "Anybody who claims to know Amitabh Bachchan is lying. He is a very reserved and private person."

If there's one platform where audiences come closest to knowing Bachchan, it is *KBC*. On it, you see him switch from being the teasing paternal figure prodding a contestant on marriage to the empathetic man when a woman bemoans not being allowed to study further. He also discloses memorable instances from his personal life and anecdotes from his storied career. The show, famously, arrived at a time when Bachchan was struggling for financial security and professional relevance in a film industry that was evolving—the multiplex boom had encouraged the rise of independent cinema that deviated from formula, his old mainstay. His son, Abhishek, had made his debut with *Refugee* (2000); Shah Rukh Khan was the man of the moment, with the other Khans—Aamir and Salman—giving him a run for his money. At 59, Bachchan was very cognisant of the fact that attempting to stay the commercial Bollywood hero—as with the ill-fated *Mrityudaata*—was pointless; those



SHOWTIME
Amitabh on the sets of *Kaun Banega Crorepati*

HEMANT PITHWA/INDIA TODAY



By **SIDDHARTHA BASU**

“A rare cine actor who has mastered anchoring”

know of no other 80-year-old who goes through the grind of recording an elaborate, high-intensity show like *Kaun Banega Crorepati* with such zest. Whatever his health issues, tiredness from long hours, stresses and strains of being an uber public figure, they all get set aside once Amitabh Bachchan gears up to get into the 'zone'. He routinely clocks in 12-14 hours on the sets daily, turning around an average of two episodes of 90 minutes each day.

“He builds an exceptional rapport with both viewers and contestants, unspooling the human story through a knowledge game with finesse”

Last year, typically, he'd clock in at 9 am. Make-up done, contestants briefed through, opening pitch revised, instructions from the creative team soaked in, he'd bound out to the set, invariably greeted with roaring applause and a standing ovation from an excited studio audience overwhelmed to be in his presence. He has

often said that's what fuels his energy and drive, the adoration and responsiveness of viewers and fans. To that, I'd add the love of his art, the passion to excel at what he does each time. He's one of the very few cine actors I've worked with who has mastered the art of hosting a show in which little is scripted. And he's done that with

painstaking preparation and constant evolution. He prepped as much for the 1,000th show as he did for his first, with attention to the littlest of details.

He's always had his singular height and voice, a mastery over both Hindi and English and the charisma of mega stardom. What's grown over the years is the successful switch from cinema to mastery over an intimate medium like real-time TV, where you have to think on your feet. The empathy with the contestants is genuine, the one-on-one rapport he builds with the viewer at home as much as with the player on the hot seat is rare. This is the hallmark of the finest TV hosts—he talks to you, not at you, and he listens, unspooling the human story through a knowledge game with finesse.

Before the first season of *KBC*, he was typically withdrawn, laconic, monosyllabic and guarded. He wasn't certain about the switch from the big screen to the small, from shooting scripted takes in bits and pieces, to turning round an episode in real-time

with a natural dramatic graph, without the benefit of re-takes. In the first few seasons, he was superb, but mainly business-like. While he would be warm to overawed contestants and put them at ease, he was reluctant to get even remotely personal, leave alone talk about himself. That's where the sea change has come about, the way the show and the star have warmed up and been humanised. Mr Bachchan thawed steadily into the role of an empathetic host, till he began enjoying it thoroughly.

Twenty-two years on, he's still going strong with the show. Having had a ringside seat, I can only say it's been a privilege to work with a master of his art, whose work ethic should be an example to all.

He's embarrassed by the fuss of birthday celebrations. So I'll wind up by saying, "Pranam sir, sneh aur samman ke saath, aapko janamdin ki hardik shubhkaamnaayein!" ■

Quizmaster and TV personality Siddhartha Basu was producer-director of KBC till 2014

SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Get a power-packed Debit Card with IDFC FIRST Bank Savings Account

Enjoy complimentary domestic airport lounge access, once every quarter

Scan the QR code to unlock the #PowerOfMore

1800 10 888

IDFC FIRST Bank

ALWAYS YOU FIRST



By TAAPSEE PANNU

‘Hey, Rockstar!’

I grew up in a family that wasn't obsessed with movies. But we knew that Amitabh Bachchan is a name that's synonymous with Hindi cinema. I was only one Hindi film old when *Pink* (2016, right) came my way. More than celebrating being a part of it, I was scared, and couldn't stop thinking, "Mujhe nikaal denge picture se [I will be kicked out of the movie]."

We had a reading session at his office in Jalsa. I remember I was, strangely, very calm then. When Mr Bachchan asked what we would like to have, everyone, being so in awe of him, hardly said anything. But I asked him, "What all can you serve?" Everyone looked at me speechless. I

asked for green tea. Perhaps this was my way of breaking the ice, ensuring that I am not awkward in his presence. This is not to say I wasn't nervous.

It showed on the first day of the shoot. For one of the scenes, I just had to lie down and sleep, but that shot ended up requiring several takes. My eyelids were constantly fluttering. Thankfully, that was the only shot I gave that day. It was then I realised that it was important that I stop thinking of him as 'the' Amitabh Bachchan. I had great respect for him but I did not want to put him on a pedestal because then, I wouldn't be able to perform and interact and learn from him. I have noticed that when people

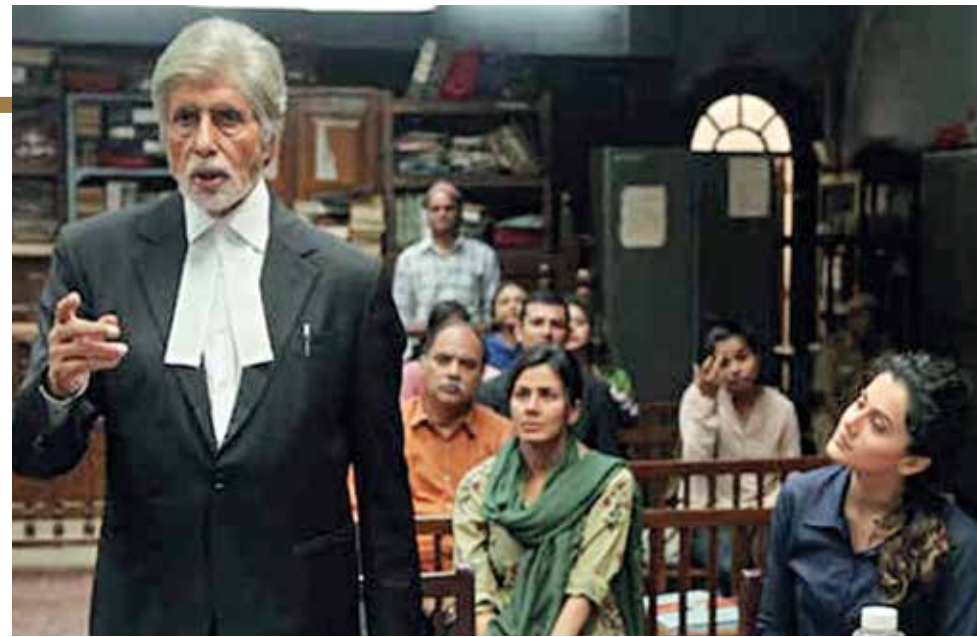
do this, Mr Bachchan becomes inaccessible, he ends up feeling that he can't have a conversation with the person.

Most of Mr Bachchan's younger co-stars will agree that he is not inflexible about his style. He is still like water, ready to take the shape of the vessel he is in. After a certain

"Mr Bachchan is forever experimenting with his craft. He is still like water, ready to take the shape of the vessel he is in"

point, when one has perfected their craft, they are seldom open to tampering with it. But Mr Bachchan is forever experimenting. When directors ask him for retakes, he agrees. He has his questions but I don't think he has ever shown reluctance in giving another take—or, for that matter, even a director having any hesitation in asking for one.

Mr Bachchan prepares extensively for his roles. He can put anyone



to shame with his rehearsal and loves rehearsing for every shot. I, on the other hand, don't like to rehearse. I am spent if I do it. However, he knows of this shortcoming and is considerate. During *Badla* (2019), he would say to me, teasingly, "Mohtarma, aap thoda sa rehearsal kar lijiye mere saath [Madam, will you please oblige me with a rehearsal?]." I would

hide in the other room just so that he doesn't ask me to rehearse.

I don't address Mr. Bachchan as 'Sir' in text messages. They usually begin with, 'Hey, Rockstar'. On his 80th birthday, I'd like to say to him, "Hey, Rockstar, our hat-trick is pending." ■

Taapsee Pannu has worked along side Amitabh Bachchan in Pink and Badla



days were over and he needed substantial parts that wouldn't diminish his legend. But in showbiz, out of sight equals out of mind. So playing "the friend, philosopher and guide" on *KBC* was a gamechanger, as Sameer Nair, then executive vice-president, programming, at Star Plus and a forever Bachchan fan, puts it. "When the show came on at 8 pm, the remote was controlled by parents who were Bachchan fans while the kids were fans of the Khans," notes Nair. But soon, sporting a grey French beard, seamlessly shuttling between fluent Hindi and English and exuding charm and positivity, Bachchan expanded his fan base among the young.

It was also a period when he would increase his advertising portfolio and come into contact with a new breed of creators like Shoojit Sircar and Balki, who'd later give him a gift every actor craves for: the opportunity to reinvent himself. Sircar's first film with Bachchan, *Shoebite*, hasn't yet seen the light of day, but it led to one of the most fruitful collaborations in his second inning. "We have that kind of faith in each other that we can talk about anything," Sircar once told *INDIA TODAY* in an interview. "I have no agenda with him and he recognises that. As a personality, he is intimidating but, inside, he is an innocent child who just wants to act."

Bachchan's talent, in this latter phase, was also very much about how he moulded it. Luck played a role, too, as a new breed of filmmakers emerged, with offbeat narratives scripted with Bachchan in mind—Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's *Aks*, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Black*, Balki's *Paa*, to name a few. The actor, in turn, pounced on those scripts with the same intensity he would have had for essaying Gogol's Mayor back in Sherwood College. And, in the process, he got reintroduced to a new audience. For the millennials, he wasn't "the angry young man" they had seen on satellite TV in the 1990s but the strict principal of *Mohabbatein*, the flirt of *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna*, the imposing politician of *Sarkar*, the arrogant chef of *Cheeni Kum*, the tenacious lawyer of *Pink*.

THE FIRST WAVE

Aysha Iqbal Viswamohan, professor, film studies, IIT Madras, is one of the many cinephiles who observed the Bachchan 'first wave' up close. That decade-long golden streak beginning with *Zanjeer* that would lead his contemporary Jeetendra to remark that he was Hindi cinema's "No. 1 to 10 star". Viswamohan attributes the

Almost everyone who has worked with him credits Bachchan's long shelf-life to his discipline. And his humility. He's forever open to retakes and suggestions



THE BIG LEAGUE
Amitabh with Toby Maguire and Leonardo DiCaprio in *The Great Gatsby*, his Hollywood debut

INDIA PICTURE COLLECTION

SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Enjoy **0** Charges on a host of banking services like NEFT, IMPS, RTGS, etc. on your IDFC FIRST Bank Savings Account

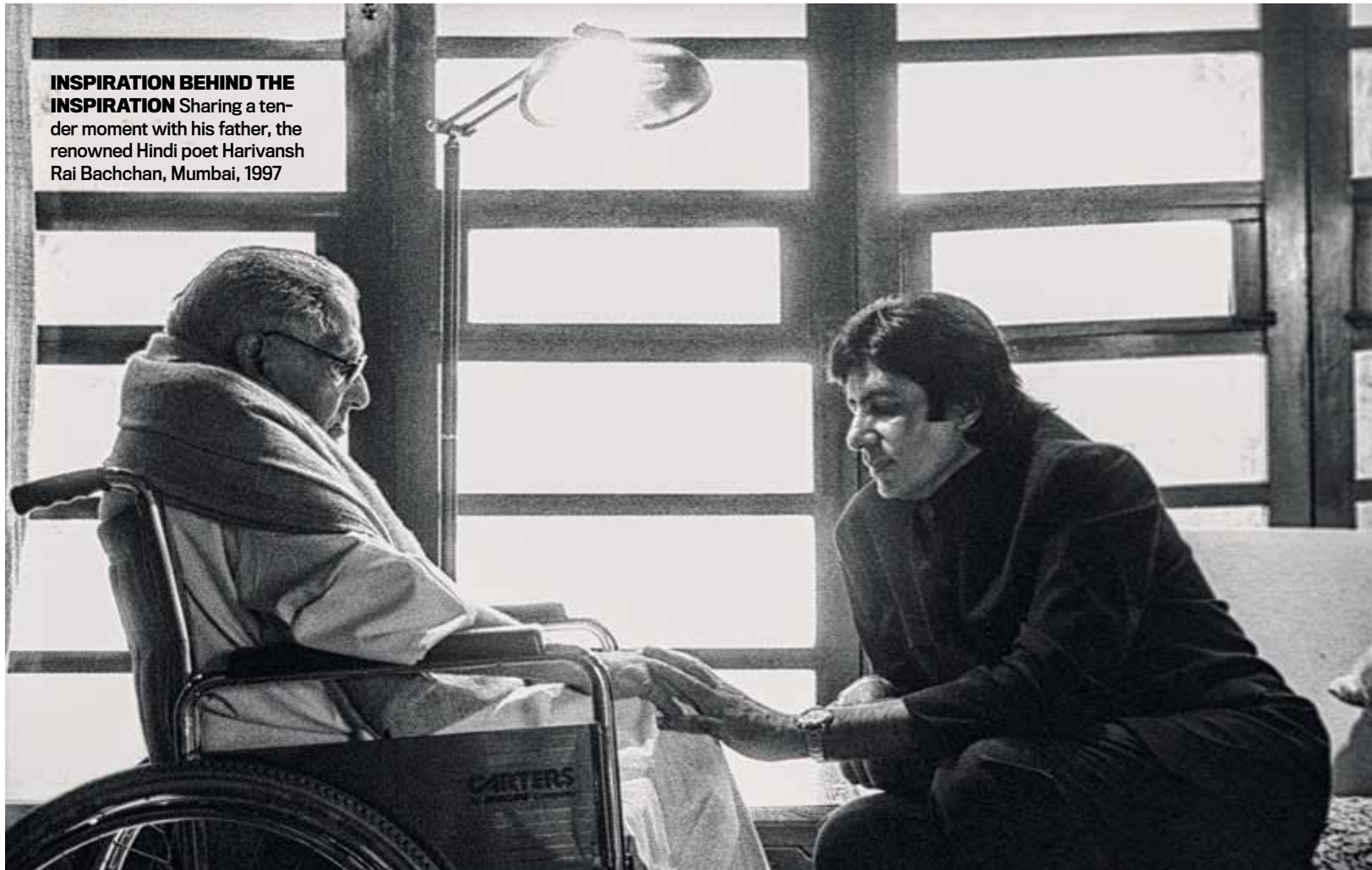
Scan the QR code to unlock the #PowerOfMore

Call 1800 10 888

IDFC FIRST Bank

T&C apply

INSPIRATION BEHIND THE INSPIRATION Sharing a tender moment with his father, the renowned Hindi poet Harivansh Rai Bachchan, Mumbai, 1997



Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

↑ In a shoot for an interview to INDIA TODAY in 2004, when our photographer Bandeep Singh asked Bachchan about the influence his father had on his life, he said, “For me, my father was a colossus. If I can read all that he has written in my lifetime, I’d have attained salvation”

actor’s mass appeal to his ability to “lend a touch of authenticity” to the innumerable working-class heroes he played. Throughout, Bachchan was changing the definition of what constituted a mainstream Hindi film hero. Says Viswamohan: “He was a perfect antidote to the heightened romanticism of Rajesh Khanna. His unique embodiment of hegemonic masculinity fitted Salim-Javed’s conception of a lone-ranger, urban cowboy, vigilante hero as popularised by Hollywood stars like Clint Eastwood and Steve McQueen. To this, he added a style of brooding intensity that harked back to Dilip Kumar. The result of this concoction was a new kind of morally ambiguous hero that suited the temper of the changing times.”

But like in his new phase, Bachchan was bold with his choices at his peak, not allowing himself to be boxed in. The angry young man also dabbled memorably with romance (*Kabhi Kabhie, Silsila*), comedy (*Chupke Chupke, Amar*

Akbar Anthony, Mr Natwarlal, Namak Halal), and served up a more sensitive side in films like *Alaap* (1977) and *Manzil* (1979), even if they weren’t received as well as his action-heavy dramas. It’s this variegated filmography that led to diehard fans like S.M.M. Ausaja, author, film historian and archivist, who started collecting Bachchan memorabilia in 1981 when still in school. Ausaja will admit that his star wasn’t infallible. “It’s frivolous to say he hasn’t done bad films or there was no fall. But even in those, there are moments where he stood out,” says Ausaja. Today, Ausaja sits on 5,000 items—posters, film stills, lobby cards, magazines, slides, transparencies, books, postcards. The labour of his love will make its way into *The Bachchans*, a four-kg, 600-page coffee-table chronicling three generations of the family, beginning with Bachchan’s grandfather, Pratap Narain Srivastava in Pratapgarh, and ending with his daughter-in-law Aishwarya Rai Bachchan.



By R. BALKI

“We need stars like him to keep the magic of cinema alive”

People talk about his angry young man persona and his comic flair but it’s a scene in *Dostana*

(right) where he’s teasing Zeenat Aman that, for me, is the essence of Amitabh Bachchan—sarcasm delivered with a poker face.

For me, he is more special than the characters he plays. While writing, I preserve the myth of Amitabh Bachchan. How can you bring a lot of Bachchan into the characters? Otherwise, what is the point of having a phenomenon like him and losing him in the character? You have to do justice to him, even if you go overboard sometimes and keep correcting yourself on the way.

We get along because



we don’t talk much. He is a man of few words, so am I. I don’t want to be his friend, I pride myself in being his biggest fan. I like the mystique of Amitabh Bachchan and don’t want to crack it. With many actors, once you crack it, you see them as human beings. We need stars like him to keep the magic of

cinema alive. I can’t find that magic without him. Open your mouth, say the words, without expression but still convey a hundred thousand emotions, that’s Bachchan for you. ■


R. Balki has directed Big B in Cheeni Kum, Paa, Shamitabh and penned cameos for Ki & Ka and Chup

Film studies professor Aysha Iqbal Viswamohan attributes Bachchan’s mass appeal in his first wave to his ability to lend authenticity to the working-class hero

With Bachchan having already launched his two other books, Ausaja is hopeful his idol will do the honours this time too in December.

MAKING/ PRESERVING HISTORY

As his cult grew, Bachchan became distinctly aware of his own distinct place in Indian cinema. Filmmaker, archivist and restorer Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, who founded the Film Heritage Foundation of which Bachchan is a brand ambassador, notes that the actor preserved 35mm celluloid of his films like *Mili, Chupke Chupke, Zanjeer* and *Don* in an air-conditioned



PRESENTING

MONTHLY INTEREST CREDITS


ON YOUR

IDFC FIRST BANK


SAVINGS ACCOUNT

SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Earn interest on interest with the power of monthly compounding



Scan the QR code to unlock the #PowerOfMore

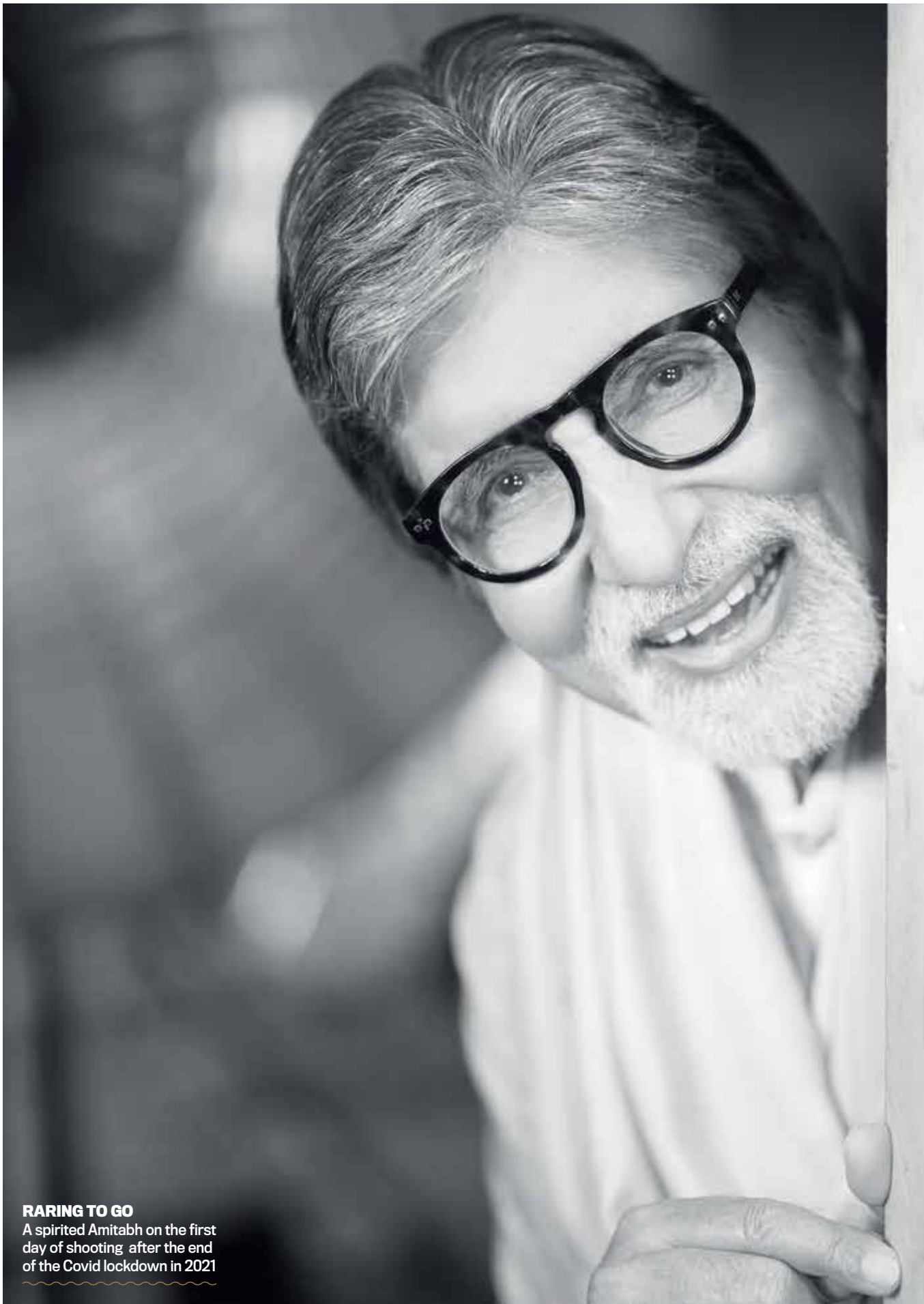


ALWAYS YOU FIRST

Call **1800 10 888**

IDFC FIRST Bank

T&C apply



RARING TO GO

A spirited Amitabh on the first day of shooting after the end of the Covid lockdown in 2021

Photograph by AVINASH GOWARIKER



BIG B @ 80
COVER STORY



By JUHI CHATURVEDI

“They lie who say they don’t want to be like him”

Mr Bachchan is a hermit...a monk. His destinations are his characters. He travels and lives those parts just the way we live in our homes...safe, with a deep sense of belonging. And yet he doesn't remain in that place. He is constantly, film after film, character after character, seeking salvation, seeking the truth...the intense (*Shoebite*), the profound (*Pink*), luminous (*Piku*, right), hilarious (*Gulabo Sitabo*) truth that dissolves his previous identity and frees him even further.

He seems like a man who has renounced all that he owns, left only with his art. Bhashkor Banerjee is not a project he has signed on for motivation or work; he doesn't need that after a glorious cinema-defining journey. What he is doing perhaps is to find an entirely new understanding of himself, of the world he is a part of and so intensely that he can give up, leave behind, detach from that Bachchan forever.

When he plays Chunnan Mirza (*Gulabo Sitabo*), he is perhaps letting out his inner offender that we all have but keep hidden...he is letting it out because he does not want it to come in the way of his journey. His method, his rehearsing lines, his discipline...we



all know it. What we don't realise is that every time he does that, he leaves behind a lesson for all of us. They are all lying who say they don't want to be like him.

The Bachchan universe has no pretensions, no worry or hurry to acquire more. It is instead a reference for the generations to come, a ready reckoner on how to be an artist. It is a colourful LEGO set you can build your careers with. All directors, writers, technicians have used it.

He built whatever he had to... name, fame, wealth, whatever we understand as a successful career, long back. Now, he's making sense of his birth, a blessed one. ■

Juhi Chaturvedi is the writer of Piku and Gulabo Sitabo

room at his Juhu house. Audiences in 18 cities can watch 11 of his 1970s and '80s classics from October 8-11 at PVR cinemas in an FHF retrospective called *Bachchan: Back to the Beginning*. If there's one living actor who merits a retrospective, it is of course Bachchan. With tickets priced at Rs 80, Dungarpur says most shows are sold out—and even actors are calling seeking tickets for *Amar Akbar Anthony*. “There's nobody who bridges the past, present and future of Indian cinema better than Mr Bachchan,” says Dungarpur, whose foundation is entrusted with the Bachchan archive. “He has preserved the past and continues to preserve the present, as evident by his numbered tweets. Most people exist and allow things to happen [to them], but he is aware of the world he lives in.” He writes his own tweets and blog entries. Beyond technology, Bachchan has kept up with the times sartorially too, carrying off hoodies and sweatpants or blingy brooches with elan. He recently even introduced a new line of perfumes.

But since 1999, his focus has been acting. Having learned from the ABCL debacle, AB Corp has stuck to co-producing a few films. Next year, audiences will see three generations of Bachchans. His grandson, Agastya Nanda, makes his debut in Zoya Akhtar's Netflix film *The Archies*; son Abhishek will feature in Bal-ki's *Ghoomer* and Amitabh, at the grand age of 80, has the multilingual *Project K* alongside Deepika Padukone and Prabhas.

In 1997, after his maiden home production *Mrityudaata* flopped, INDIA TODAY wrote, “The question is: where does Bachchan go from here?” Little did we, or anyone, know that 25 years later, we'd “still” be talking about him. His name means ‘the light that won't fade’. Fittingly, thus, it illuminates darkened cinema halls, living room televisions and now our mobile screens. That's how long his reign has been. The answer to that question, though? Here it goes: Amitabh Bachchan is here to perform until his last breath. And the world is a better place for it. ■

CREDIT CARDS



₹ 0 joining fees!
renewal fees!

On IDFC FIRST Bank Credit Cards:
no minimum spend conditions with us!



ALWAYS YOU FIRST

Apply Now



SMS 'CC' to
5676732

T&C Apply



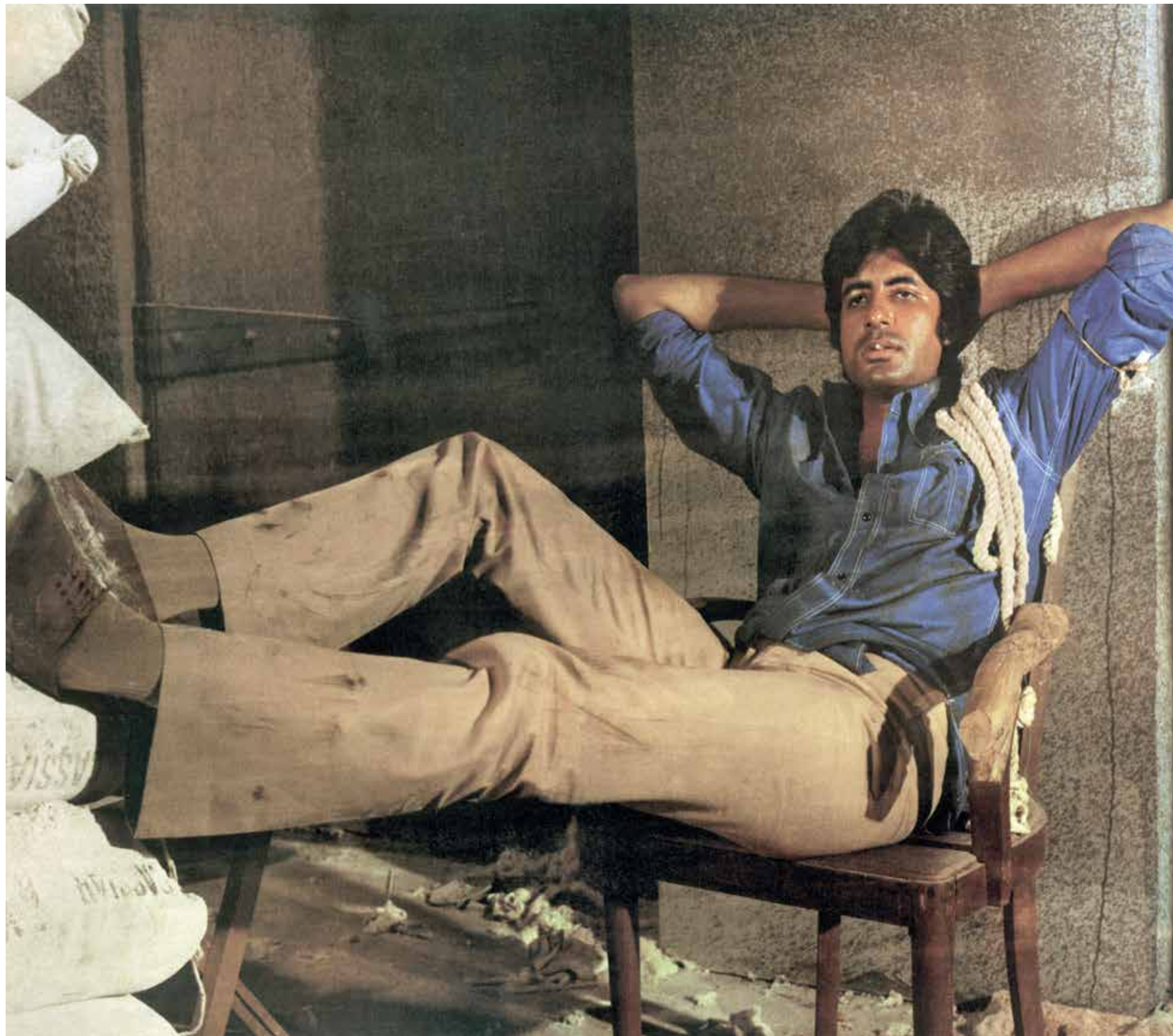
THE SULTAN OF FATE

Amitabh Bachchan embodies stardom, but also so much more—speaking even to social and cinema history. As he turns 80, we trace the arc of his life and times in a scene-by-scene biography

It's

difficult to find a precise word to describe his slow, loping walk. Not a strut, not a swagger...nothing defiled by conceit. And yet that gait, set moving as if by some inner lode of burning coal, has traversed over half-century of Indian cinema. And, at age 80, he's still walking. Amitabh Bachchan, the

man, may be different from Amitabh Bachchan, the actor... but a ceaseless quest defines them both. Here we chart that journey in a scene-by-scene biography. From his birth during the Quit India days, his early life, a couple of mundane desk jobs, and his struggling years when auteurs willing to bet on him were rare. Then the Seventies, when he lit up Hindi cinema like dynamite from a burning *beedi*. His misadventures in politics and business. Then that rebirth in 2000. To now, in late 2022, in a changed world, when we look around and still see Amitabh Bachchan walking with us.



INDIA PICTURE COLLECTION



SLOW BURN

Amitabh as Vijay in the film that cemented his angry young man image, *Deewaar* (1975)

CREDIT CARDS



Evergreen Rewards that never expire

On all lifetime free IDFC FIRST Credit Cards

Apply Now



SMS 'CC' to 5676732

T&C Apply



ALWAYS YOU FIRST

The Young 'Un



1
October 11, 1942: Inspired by the agitations launched by Gandhi during the Quit India movement, poet-author Harivansh Rai Bachchan (1907-2003) and wife Teji initially name their first-born 'Inquilab' but then opt for 'Amitabh' (or 'Enduring light'). A prescient name.



INDIA TODAY ARCHIVES



INDIA TODAY ARCHIVES

1
GUESS WHO
A young Amitabh with his father Harivansh Rai Bachchan

2
OFF TO NAINITAL
Amitabh with mother Teji Bachchan before leaving for Sherwood



4

3
ER...
The time Amitabh (extreme right) forgot his lines, playing Zeus in *The Rape of the Belt*

4
PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN
An undated image of Amitabh

1950s-60s

After studying at St Mary's and Boys' High School in Allahabad, at his boarding school in Nainital, Sherwood College, his thespian skills are honed as he plays the Mayor in Gogol's play *The Government Inspector*, winning the Kendall Cup for best actor in 1957, at age 15. Alongside his BSc from Kirori Mal College in New Delhi, the acting bug stays constant. Joins its theatre society, The Players.

1968-69

After six dull years with a couple of desk jobs in Calcutta, begins his attempt to find his metier in cinema. Brother Ajitabh responds to an ad seeking new talent by taking a box camera picture of his brother outside Victoria Memorial and sends it to the Filmfare Madhuri Talent Contest. Amitabh doesn't get the call.

Ajitabh's friend tells them director K.A. Abbas was looking for a new face. Bachchan, then 27, makes his debut in Abbas's *Saat Hindustani*, playing a Muslim poet who joins the nationalists to liberate Goa from Portuguese rule. It wins him his first National Award, as best newcomer.

1971-72

In *Anand*, Amitabh makes his presence felt as a brooding doctor-friend despite all the focus being on the biggest superstar of the day, Rajesh Khanna. Director Hrishikesh Mukherjee, by now aware of Amitabh's talent, reputedly trims his role in *Guddi* because he doesn't want to waste

Newbie Blues

The struggling years common to every fresh face are unusually tough for the tall, lanky baritone with a passion for acting. Finally, it's his talent that speaks



INDIA PICTURE COLLECTION



INDIA PICTURE COLLECTION



him in a minor role. Film lore also often dwelt on another 1971 film—Sunil Dutt's *Reshma Aur Shera* where Amitabh,

notably, plays... a mute man. In 1972, bags his first noteworthy lead role in *Bombay to Goa* (1972). Later that year, appears

with Jaya Bhaduri in their first feature, *Ek Nazar*. Love blossoms. And a rich cinema partnership begins.

1
BIG BREAK
Amitabh in his first Hindi movie *Saat Hindustani* (1969)

2
A JOURNEY BEGINS
A still from *Bombay to Goa* (1972)

3
FULL OF LIFE
Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bachchan in *Anand* (1971)

CREDIT CARDS



0 interest on ATM cash withdrawal

On all IDFC FIRST Bank Credit Cards, till next due date.

Apply Now



SMS 'CC' to 5676732

IDFC FIRST Bank
ALWAYS YOU FIRST

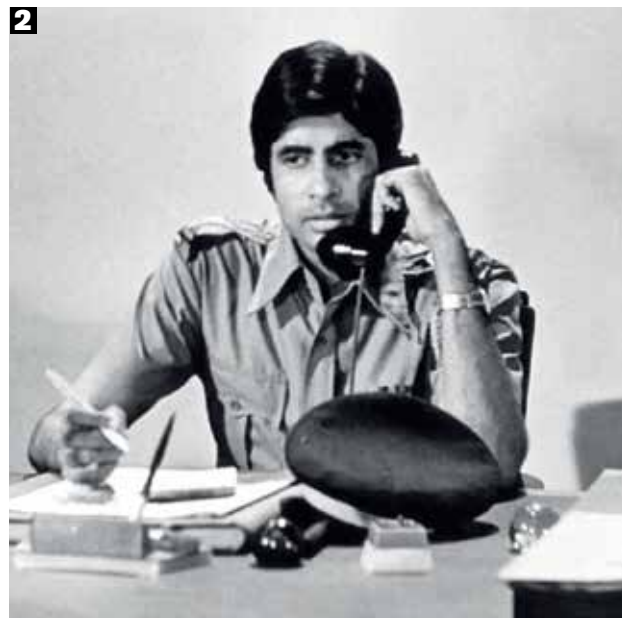
T&C Apply

A Star Explodes

Beginning with *Zanjeer* in 1973, the next few years see Amitabh as the towering inferno at the centre of some of Hindi cinema's best moments



1



2

1

MEN & MEMORIES

Ramesh Sippy directs Amitabh and Dharmendra during the outdoor shoot of the 'Ye Dosti' song for *Sholay* (1975)

2

ROAD TO FAME

Amitabh Bachchan in Prakash Mehra's *Zanjeer* (1973)

4

POWER-PACKED

With Yash Chopra and Parveen Babi, with whom he teamed up in *Deewaar* and *Kaala Patthar*

3

TYING THE KNOT

Amitabh and Jaya at their marriage ceremony on June 3, 1973

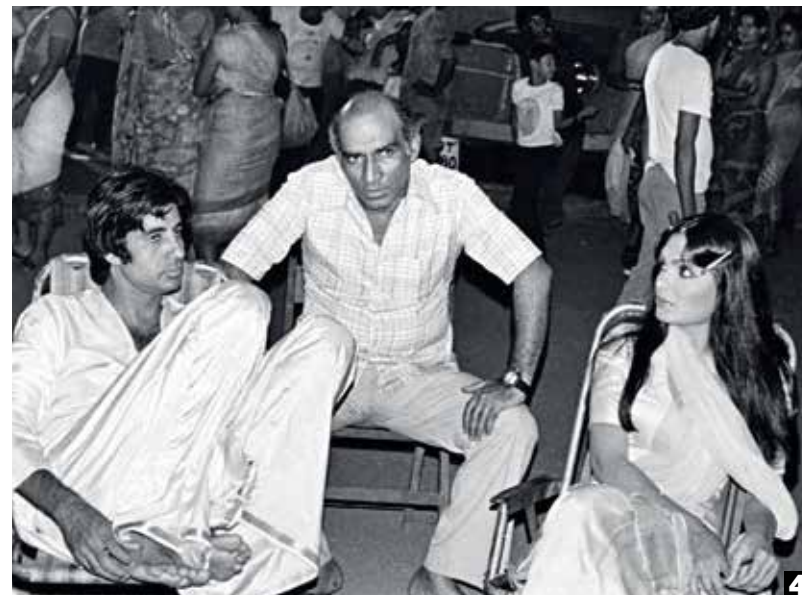
5

CHARMING TRIO

Amitabh, Dharmendra and Asrani in a still from *Chupke Chupke* (1975)



3



4

INDIA PICTURE COLLECTION



5

1973

Zanjeer, directed by Prakash Mehra and written by Salim-Javed, ends Amitabh's misery after registering 13 consecutive flops. The action drama marks the advent of the 'Angry Young Man' who manages to voice the angst of the age—the pre-Emergency era—and presages the rebellious spirit of its youth. The Bachchan reign is inaugurated.

JUNE 3, 1973

Marries his *Zanjeer* co-star Jaya Bhaduri in Bombay. They have two kids, Shweta (1974-) and Abhishek (1976-). The year also sees a memorable pairing in *Abhimaan*, where he plays the jealous husband of a successful wife, besides another award-winning support role in *Namak Haraam*.

1974

Displeased with gossip around his personal life, Bachchan stops

giving interviews to the film press. The magazines retaliate with a boycott of their own.

1975

The year sees two of Amitabh's biggest blockbusters, *Deewaar* and *Sholay*. The latter opens to negative reviews (INDIA TODAY says: 'Sholay's dubious message is, in fact, more disturbing than entertaining') and is prematurely labelled a flop, before going on to rewrite film history. On the side, there's *Mili* with Jaya.

1976

Amitabh and Rekha do their first film as romantic leads, *Do Anjaane*. So popular is the pairing that the two go on to do 12 films in five years, the last being extra-marital drama *Silsila* (1981), which also features Jaya as his wife. But 1976 also sees an intense romantic drama in *Kabhi Kabhie*, and an offbeat take in *Alaap*.

CREDIT CARDS



Redeem Reward Points instantly!

Rewards as good as cash, redeemable directly on transactions anywhere online and at select offline stores.

Apply Now



SMS 'CC' to 5676732

IDFC FIRST Bank
ALWAYS YOU FIRST

T&C Apply

One-Man Industry

This is the time when Amitabh Bachchan looms over Hindi cinema like no one before him. They say he occupies all the space from No. 1 to No. 10



1



2



3



4



6

4

A LOVE SAGA
A still from *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar* (1978)

5

GOOD VS BAD
Vinod Khanna and Amitabh in the film *Parvarish* (1977)

6

THE BACHCHANS
Amitabh flanked by mother Teji and father Harivansh Rai, Jaya (standing) and other family members



5

INDIA TODAY ARCHIVES

1977
Chupke Chupke, two years before, had already showcased his comic skills. Now, **Amar Akbar Anthony** takes that right to the mainstream, reminding audiences again that the angry young man can be funny too—very funny.

1978
Delivers two blockbusters in less than a month, then one more.

Trishul transports the anger into the family realm, with proletarian touches. **Don** is another kind of rage; the lines '*Don ko pakadna mushkil hi nahin...*' are to endure through the ages.

Soon, fans are walking out crying after watching him in *Muqaddar ka Sikandar*.

1980
INDIA TODAY calls him 'The One-Man Industry'. By 1984, he has been in 40 per cent of Hindi cinema's 15 biggest hits.

INDIA PICTURE COLLECTION

1

IN STYLE
A still from *Trishul* (1978)

2

CULT TRIP
Vinod Khanna, Rishi Kapoor and Amitabh in and as *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977)

3

WILD & DANGEROUS Zeenat Aman and Amitabh in *Don* (1978)

CREDIT CARDS



25% off
on movie tickets

Only on the lifetime free FIRST Millennia & FIRST Classic Credit Cards

Apply Now



SMS 'CC' to 5676732

T&C Apply

IDFC FIRST Bank
ALWAYS YOU FIRST

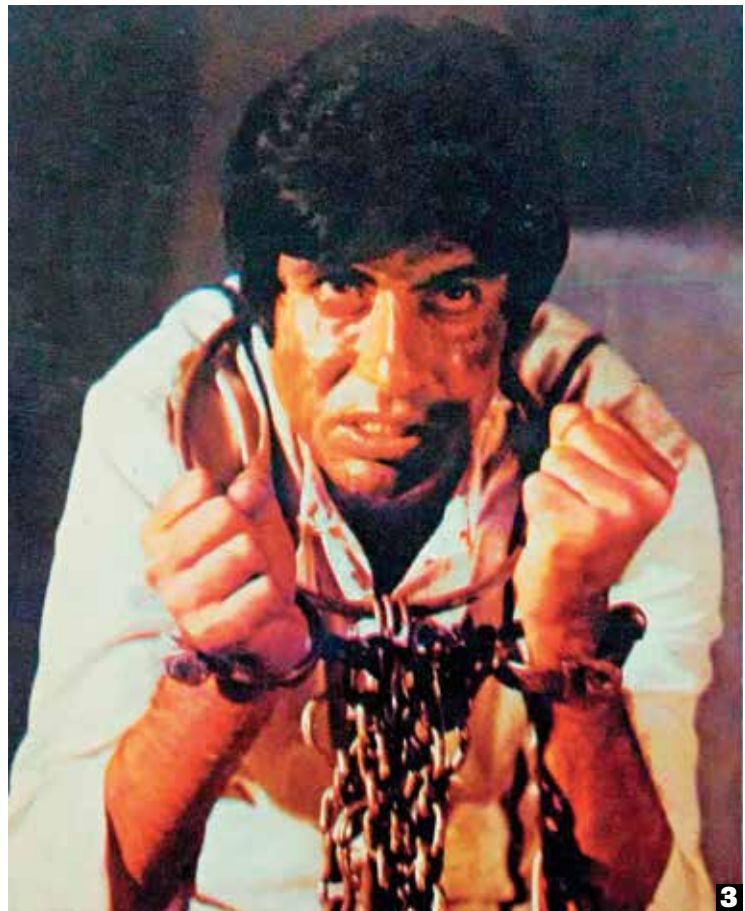
Cheers and Tears



1



2



3



4



5

SMM AUSAJA ARCHIVES

1

RAZZLE DAZZLE

A still from *Yaarana* (1981)

2

ALL THE RAGE

Amitabh with Rekha in *Silsila* (1981), the last of their 12 movies together

3

A REVENGE STORY

A still from *Kaalia* (1981)

4

LAUGH RIOT

A still from *Satte Pe Satta* (1982)

5

LEGEND REBORN

Amitabh leaves Breach Candy Hospital with brother Ajitabh, after recovering from a near-fatal injury while shooting *Coolie*, Sept. 1982

6

BACK WITH A BANG

A still from *Coolie* (1983)



6

SMM AUSAJA ARCHIVES

July 24, 1982

While shooting a fight sequence for Manmohan Desai's *Coolie* in Bangalore, Bachchan meets with a near-fatal accident after his lower abdomen hits the edge of a table. Three days of untreated intestinal leakage result in severe infection; an emergency operation follows.

Airlifted to Mumbai's Breach Candy Hospital, his condition remains critical. He later says he was declared clinically dead on August 2 before being miraculously revived. Among the deluge of visitors are the Gandhis—friend Rajiv and Prime Minister Indira. Two months later, he steps out to be greeted by a mob of screaming fans, many of whom had kept a constant vigil outside the hospital.

1983

Returns to the set of *Coolie* in January. The film releases on November 14, with a freeze-frame of the decisive moment. Reportedly, Desai changed the original ending to ensure his character, Vijay (one of the many times he had had been named thus), lives.

1984

Amitabh's health woes continue; he is diagnosed with myasthenia gravis, an illness characterised by muscular weakness due to a breakdown in the linkage between the nervous system and muscles.

CREDIT CARDS



0% Forex Mark-up

Only on the lifetime free First WOW Credit Card

Apply Now



SMS 'CC' to 5676732



ALWAYS YOU FIRST

T&C Apply

Fame and Follies

A decade and a half of faltering. Amitabh tries to essay other roles: politics, then business. It's mostly bankruptcy that stalks him, even in cinema

BHAWAN SINGH/INDIA TODAY



1

1

POLITICAL PLUNGE

Amitabh Bachchan campaigning for the Lok Sabha polls in Allahabad, 1984

2

FAMILY TIES

Amitabh with Rajiv Gandhi, his wife Sonia and children Rahul and Priyanka, Aug. 1981

2



GETTY IMAGES

3

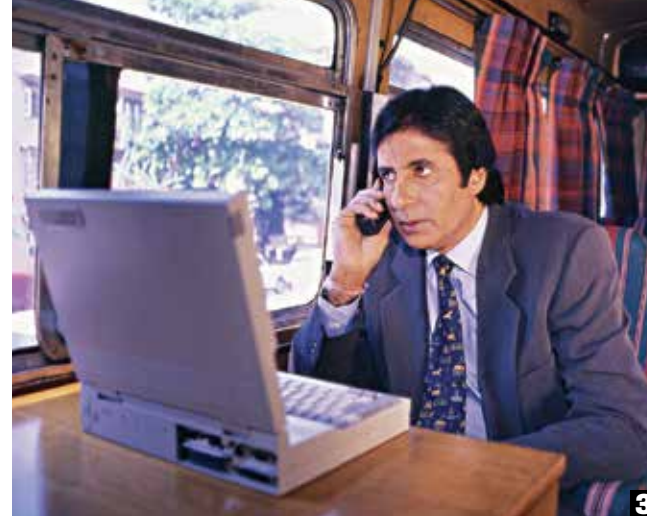
BUSY B

Amitabh sets up ABCL to give a corporate touch to the disorganised Hindi film industry, 1995

4

GRAND OLD BRAND

The superstar-turned-tycoon cashing in on his larger-than-life image, 1995



FAWZAN HUSAIN/INDIA TODAY

3

1984

Rajiv Gandhi asks him to contest the Lok Sabha polls from his hometown, Allahabad. Mrs Gandhi's assassination reportedly goads him into saying yes.

Nov. 1984

Defeats Hemwati Nandan Bahugana, the stalwart of UP politics, by a whopping margin of 187,895 votes—68 per cent of the votes cast. After a May 1984 release in *Sharaabi*, stays absent from the screen till flaky hits like *Gerastaar*, *Mard* (1985) and *Akhree Raasta* (1986). Quality-wise, the films begin to go downhill.

1987

Embroided along with Rajiv in the Bofors scam, Amitabh quits as MP. A year later, returns to focus on films. "No more politics," he tells INDIA TODAY.

1988

Friend Tinnu Anand casts him as an avenging superhero in *Shahenshah*, his first release since he bid adieu to politics. It is greeted with political demonstrations but is a hit nevertheless.

1989

His biggest hitmakers deliver a trio of painful duds—Manmohan Desai with *Gangaa Jamunaa Saraswathi* and *Toofan*, Prakash Mehra with *Jaadugar*. The *Illustrated Weekly* puts Bachchan on the cover with the headline 'FINISHED!'

1990

After 21 years, wins his first National Award for best actor—for his turn as Vijay Dinanath Chauhan in *Agneepath*. The title is borrowed from his father's poetry; its lines serve as a leitmotif.

Dec. 1990

A Swiss court clears the Bachchans in the Bofors case, Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* apologises in a libel case.

1991

January lights up as he dances with a beer mug to woo Kimi Katkar in chartbuster '*Jumma Chumma De De*'; the film, *Hum*, is a blockbuster.

May 21, 1991

Scrambles back from a defamation hearing in a

London court after hearing of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination.

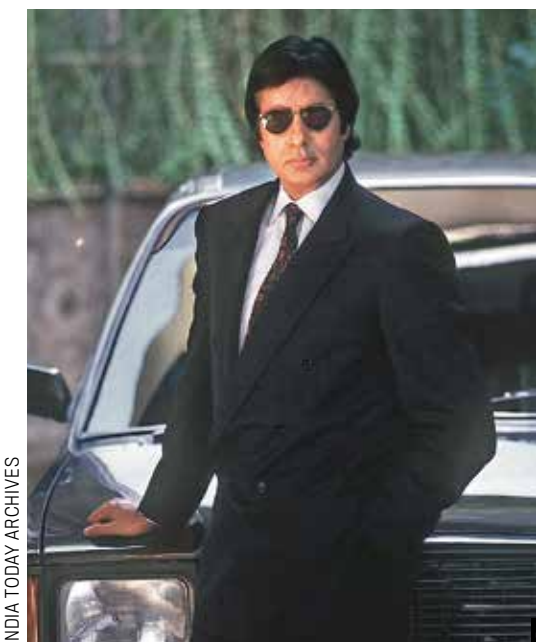
1992

Khuda Gawah, the year's second biggest hit, brings on a five-year sabbatical. "I felt I was stagnating," he says. Also, makes first foray into entertainment media with TV Asia, launched in the UK with Pakistani film

first time. Contestants from 90 countries converge on Bangalore but the swimsuit contest has to be shifted to Seychelles as protests drive away sponsors, guests. ABCL deep in the red.

1997

Ends film hiatus with *Mrityudaata*, a flop. INDIA TODAY writes:



INDIA TODAY ARCHIVES

4

producer Faisal Sha-jan and family lawyer Sarosh Zaiwala.

'Bollywood's last icon has tumbled.... Where does Bachchan go from here?'

1995

Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Ltd is born. The vision: a Rs 1,000 crore company that brings corporate efficiency to a disorganised film industry.

1999

To the graveyard of good intentions, it appears—with Rs 70.82 crore losses, the Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) beckons. Bachchan is reportedly in danger of losing old home, Prateeksha.

Nov. 11, 1996

ABCL brings Miss World to India for the

CREDIT CARDS



Buy 1 Get 1
offer on movie tickets

Only on the lifetime free First Wealth & First Select Credit Cards

Apply Now



SMS 'CC' to
5676732



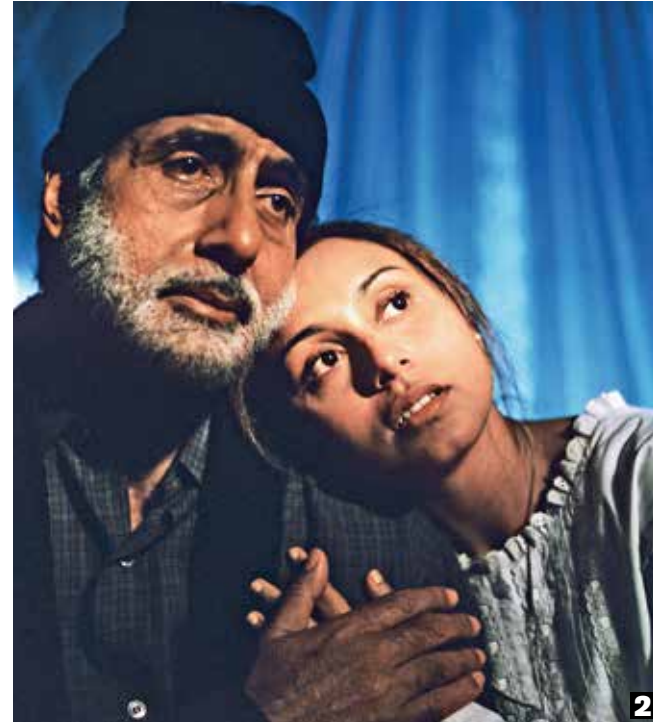
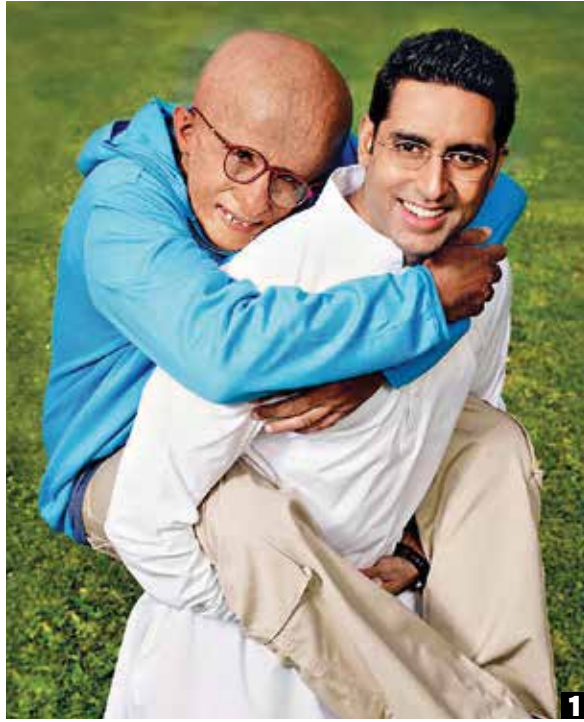
ALWAYS YOU FIRST

T&C Apply

The Big Comeback

From the depths of gloom, a rebirth is scripted that can rival any fantasy. As a quiz host's smile lights up the small screen, the films see a full renaissance

INDIA PICTURE COLLECTION



INDIA PICTURE COLLECTION

1 OFFBEAT
Amitabh with son Abhishek in a still from *Paa* (2009)

2 CLASS ACT
Amitabh and Rani Mukerji in a still from *Black* (2005)

3 SECOND COMING
On the sets of *Kaun Banega Crorepati* in 2000

4 FAMILY PORTRAIT
The Bachchans with Amar Singh at the India Today Conclave 2007



HEMANT PITHWA/INDIA TODAY

2000
Debt-ridden and with his acting career flagging, Bachchan approaches Juhu neighbour Yash Chopra for work. A part in his son Aditya Chopra's *Mohabbatein* ensues. There's no looking back.

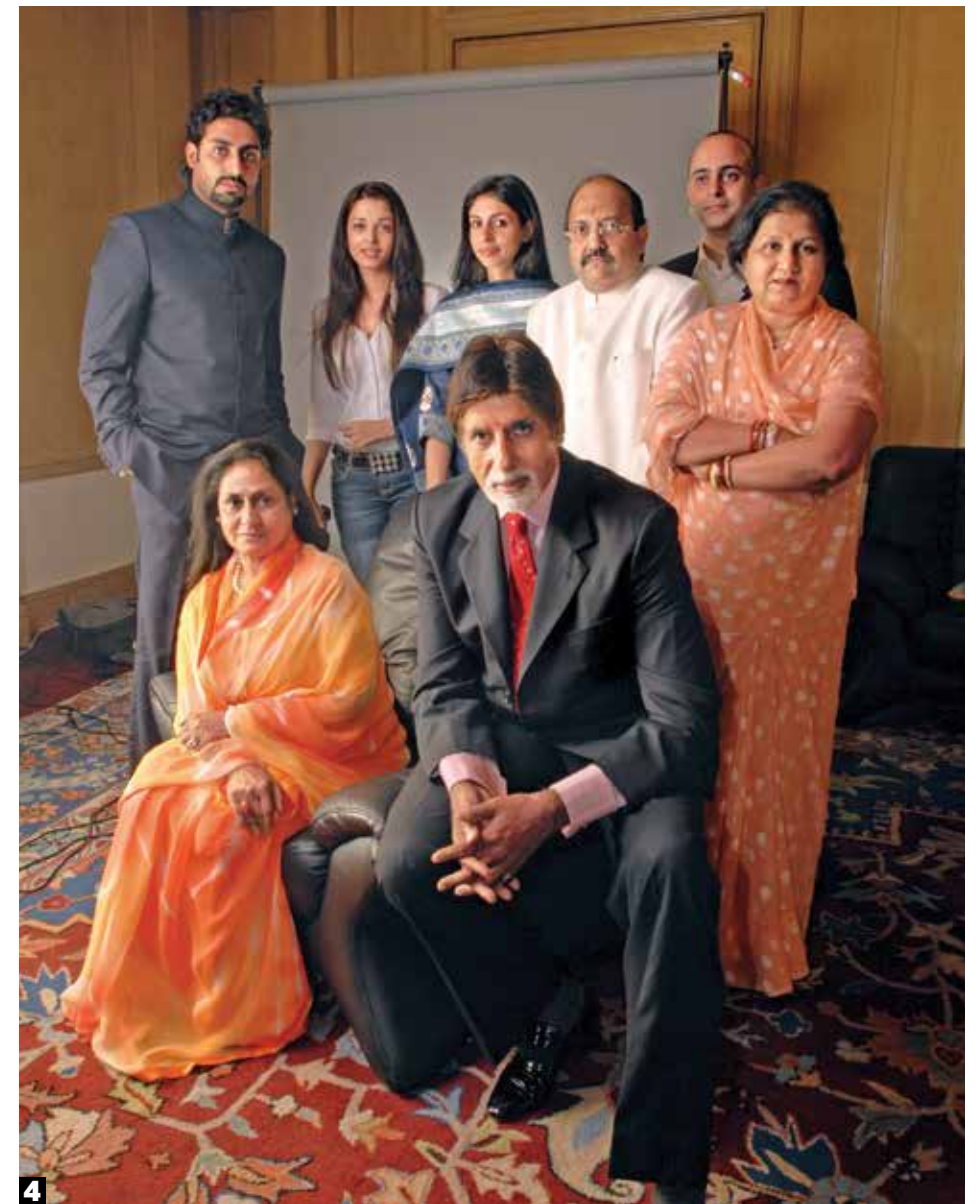
July 2, 2000
The first episode of Star TV's quiz show *Kaun Banega Crorepati* airs. Viewership breaks the circuit barrier. Besides a brief run by SRK in season three, Bachchan as KBC host is still going strong in 2022.

2001
ABCL reinvents itself as AB Corp.

2003
Pairs with old co-star Hema Malini for family tearjerker *Baghban*. As his career looks up, in 2004, Jaya Bachchan takes a dig at the Gandhis, saying those who brought her husband into politics deserted him in times of crisis. Rahul Gandhi defends his family. Amitabh responds with "Woh raja hai, hum runk hain".

2005
The films begin to flower again. Earns praise for *Sarkar*, wins his second National Award for best actor for *Black*, his only collaboration with Sanjay Leela Bhansali. Also, shakes a leg with son Abhishek and daughter-in-law-to-be Aishwarya Rai in the hit '*Kajra Re'* (*Bunty aur Babli*).

2007
A long-standing collaboration begins with filmmaker R. Balki with the release of *Cheeni Kum*. *Nishabd* sees him in a quaint, affecting pairing with Jiah Khan.



Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

April 17, 2008
Starts a blog sharing anecdotes from his personal and professional life. Has rarely missed an entry since then.

2009
Wins his third National Award for Balki's *Paa*, co-starring Abhishek.

2010
Becomes brand ambassador for Gujarat, a move that angers his former party Congress, who see it as him endorsing then CM Narendra Modi.

2013
Makes his Hollywood debut in Baz Luhrmann's

adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*.

2015
Yet another National Award, this time for essaying an eccentric septuagenarian battling constipation in Shoojit Sircar's *Piku*. Fully re-established as a viable, if old, protagonist.

EDUCATION LOAN



EDUCATION LOANS
for Higher Studies in
India & Abroad.

CHAMPIONING YOUR FUTURE.

25+ COUNTRIES | 3200+ UNIVERSITIES | 23000+ COURSES FUNDED



Scan the QR code to apply now.



ALWAYS YOU FIRST

Call 1800 10 888



CREDIT CARDS



ALWAYS YOU FIRST



For moments like no other.

Lifetime free Credit Cards like no other!



Up to 10X Rewards that never expire



Evergreen Rewards



Rewards redeemable anytime anywhere, online

Apply Now



SMS 'CC' to 5676732

SAVINGS ACCOUNT



IDFC FIRST
Bank

ALWAYS YOU FIRST



PRESENTING

MONTHLY
INTEREST CREDITS

ON YOUR

IDFC FIRST BANK

SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Earn interest on interest
with the power of
monthly compounding



Scan the QR code
to unlock the #PowerOfMore

Call 1800 10 888

IDFC FIRST Bank

T&C apply



IDFC FIRST
Bank

ALWAYS YOU FIRST



**We are redefining
banking in India.**

**Presenting IDFC FIRST Bank -
Customer First banking at its finest.**

Built on the pillars of ethical, digital and social-good, IDFC FIRST Bank is proud of its unique Customer First banking service. Welcome to the bank that always puts you first.

 Call **1800 10 888**

IDFC FIRST Bank 