



India Review

A PUBLICATION OF THE EMBASSY OF INDIA, KABUL

<http://meakabul.nic.in>

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 9 SEPTEMBER 2007

Focus will be on agricultural development, says PM

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh marked the 60th anniversary of Independence with a pledge to focus in the coming years on the crisis-hit agriculture sector but insisted that industrialisation was critical to progress and employment.

Delivering his fourth speech from the ramparts of Red Fort in New Delhi, the prime minister touched upon an array of subjects but his focus was on education and agriculture.

In his crisp 35-minute address, the prime minister voiced his government's determination to crush terrorism. He also urged people to keep the country clean and green and to use the Right to Information Act to check corruption.

Manmohan Singh devoted much of his time on agriculture, promising a Rs.250 billion package to boost farm output. "In the coming years, our main emphasis will be on agricultural development," he said.

"We will soon launch a special programme to invest Rs.25,000 crore in agriculture, to enhance the livelihood of our farmers and increase food production."

The prime minister also said that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act that guarantees at least 100 working days in the countryside would now be extended to the entire country. But the economist-turned-politician made it clear that there were limits to how much income agriculture alone can generate, given the large population dependent on farming and the small size of farms in the country.



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort.

"India cannot become a nation with islands of high growth and vast areas untouched by development, where the benefits of growth accrue only to a few," he said.

"Therefore, it is essential that we create new employment opportunities outside of agriculture. There is no developed country today anywhere in the world that is not an industrial economy. Industrialisation is critical for progress.

"If employment generation is the best weapon against poverty, then industrialisation is the most effective means to create new job opportunities... We will pursue policies that will help in our rapid industrialisation."

Seeking a "revolution in the field of modern education", Manmohan Singh announced

the plans for setting up colleges in 370 districts, 6,000 new high quality schools in every block of the country and 30 new central universities.

The government, he added, would also promote five new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, eight new Indian Institutes of Technology, seven new Indian Institutes of Management and 20 new Indian Institutes of Information Technology.

"It is my fervent desire that India becomes a fully educated, modern, progressive nation... We will make India a nation of educated people, of skilled people, of creative people."

Asserting that India had "emerged as a bridge between the many extremes of the world", he said New Delhi desired "good relations" with all the countries and "the best of relations" with its immediate neighbours.

"I assure all our neighbours that we... want peace and the best of relations with all of them. I sincerely believe that in the prosperity and well being of our neighbours lies the key to our own security and progress."

"We have had success on some fronts and setbacks on some others," he said. "But there is no doubt that we have been steadfast in our resolve." He said the Indian economy was growing "at historically unprecedented rates", and sought more creative processes of urbanisation to overcome the many problems urban areas face, and called for cleanliness drives in all neighbourhoods.

For the text of PM's speech click on www.pmindia.nic.in

Highlights

Key Messages

- India is on the move — poverty eradication is now a feasible goal.
- Time for a revolution in modern education. Widening access to education a key goal.
- Farmers welfare is core of all concerns. Need to bridge rural-urban divide.
- Industrialisation is the most effective means to create new employment opportunities.
- India's approach to global problems based on the idea of Vasudaiva Kutumbakam — the whole world is one family.
- India's composite culture and pluralism

make India a "bridge between global divides".

Key Initiatives

- Massive increase in public spending on education, health care, agriculture and rural development.
- To promote social security in unorganised sector — old age pension scheme for senior citizens above age of 65 and below poverty line.
- Revolution in modern education — 6000 new good quality government-funded schools. Universalisation of secondary education on the anvil. Centre to help States set

up colleges in 370 districts, to raise gross enrolment ratio. 30 new central universities.

- Mission on vocational education and skill development — 1600 new industrial training institutes and polytechnics; 10,000 new vocational schools; 50,000 new skill development centers.
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to be implemented in the entire country.
- Special programme to invest at least Rs.25,000 crore in agricultural sector.
- National policy for rehabilitation and resettlement on the anvil.
- New thrust to industrialisation and planned urbanisation.

Ensure equitable growth for all: President Patil

Even as the Indian economy is surging in strength and resilience and being watched by the world with singular interest, growth must be inclusive and touch all sections, President Pratibha Patil said in her maiden address to the nation on the eve of India's 60th Independence Day.

"Growth, when unevenly spread, dwarfs overall prosperity," the President said.

"We have to ensure equitable growth for all. The fruits of economic development must necessarily touch, especially, the living and working conditions of our toiling masses and people below the poverty line," Patil added, echoing a constant refrain of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Stating that the 60-year-old democracy, the largest in the world, was today set to take off, the newly elected woman president reminded fellow citizens of their duty to ensure that this unprecedented moment did not go unutilised. "We have to take special care to bring in egalitarian reforms to ensure that the full benefit of economic liberalisation reaches people at all levels," she said.

"For our nation to rise and claim its glorious destiny, we must realise that it is our billion hands that can shape it and, in the immortal clarion call of Swami Vivekananda, I ask my fellow citizens to 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached'."

Besides delving on the economy, Patil also focused on the other challenges before the country including the status of women,



poverty, health and agriculture. Quoting Mahatma Gandhi as saying that "salvation of India lies in the elevation of her women", the new president said history bore sufficient proof that women excelled not only as able homemakers but also in the task of nation building.

"Let us resolve that they are not left marginalised in our society. Let us also resolve to expand opportunities for their wholesome participation in every field of activity and make them harbingers of sustainable development," said Patil.

"For any nation and its people to become great, there is a need to pursue the path of

collective vision. The more developed amongst us should inspire and enthuse the less developed to race ahead on the road to development," she said. Pointing out that agriculture played a critical role for balanced development, Patil said besides attaining the goal of food security, "a strong and robust growth in agriculture can help reduce rural poverty".

Alluding to India's young demographic profile, Patil maintained it was imperative to bring the needs, rights and expectations of the youth to the centre of development concerns.

For the text of President's speech click on www.presidentofindia.com ■

Inauguration of India-funded electricity project in Faryab

Against the backdrop of giant posters proclaiming "India-Afghanistan: Partners for Peace, Progress and Stability" and a 1,000-strong cheering crowd, Ismail Khan, Afghan Minister for Energy and Water, and Ambassador Rakesh Sood formally inaugurated the two 110/20 KV electricity sub-stations at Faizabad and Juma Bazar in the North-Western province of Faryab on July 29.

With the commissioning of these two sub-stations, which are part of the Indian government-assisted Faryab Electricity Transmission project, aimed at bringing electricity from Andkhoy to Maimana, the project was formally handed over by Sood to the Government of Afghanistan. Water & Power Consultancy Services Ltd (WAPCOS), a Government of India undertaking, was the main contractor for the project.

Inaugurating the sub-stations, Khan lauded the contribution of the Government of India in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.



Afghan Minister for Water and Energy Ismail Khan (left) with Ambassador Rakesh Sood (right) at the inauguration of an electricity sub-station at Faizabad.

Ambassador Sood expressed the hope that with the provision of electricity to Faryab, the province should see a spurt in economic activity and development.

As part of its assistance, the Indian Government has supplied the entire equipment worth \$7.8 million for the Faryab project

and provided manpower for supervision of construction and commissioning of the project. The project envisaged construction of three main 110/20 KV sub-stations at Maimana, Faizabad and Juma Bazar, laying of a 130 km-long 110 KV electricity transmission line from Andkhoy to Maimana, 15 km-long 20 KV transmission line from Faizabad to Dawlatabad, as well as construction of several distribution stations.

Earlier, President Hamid Karzai had inaugurated the Maimana sub-station on November 28, 2006, bringing electricity to the capital of the province.

With the completion of the Faryab project, about 10,000 households and commercial establishments will be getting electricity in the four major districts of Maimana, Juma Bazar, Faizabad and Dawlatabad in Faryab province. In the context of Afghanistan's crippled electricity sector, Faryab province at least, will be less bleak and dark this coming winter. ■

Pratibha Patil is India's first woman President

Pratibha Devisingh Patil made history as she took oath as India's first woman President on July 25, committing herself to work for the well-being of its citizens and setting an agenda for the nation on issues such as women's empowerment, modern education and inclusive growth.

Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan administered the oath of office and secrecy to the 72-year-old Patil, who barely two months ago, may not have even dreamt that she was going to occupy the top post that would make her preside over the affairs of the world's largest democracy.

Patil symbolically exchanged the presidential seat with outgoing president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam as a 21-gun salute boomed to announce the installation of the nation's 12th president.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee, Leader of Opposition L.K. Advani, United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson Sonia Gandhi and senior cabinet ministers, governors and MPs attended the function.

The ceremony, at the majestic Central Hall of Parliament House, was also attended by two former prime ministers, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and I.K. Gujral, and dozens of foreign diplomats.

Also present were Patil's family members, including her husband Devisingh Ransingh Shekhawat as well as her daughter and son with their families.

The ceremony began with both Patil and Kalam, escorted by Chatterjee, coming into the chamber in a procession after the outgoing and incoming presidents had come in a ceremonial motorcade from Rashtrapati Bhavan, the grand 340-room presidential palace that will be Patil's home for the next five years.

This was followed by Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta reading out the communication from the Election Commission about the election of the new president.

Pratibha Patil won the July 19 election against former vice president Bhairon Singh Shekhawat.

In her speech, delivered both in English and Hindi, Patil demanded "socially inclusive" economic growth and hit out at "communalism" as she made her maiden political statement.

She in some ways set an agenda for the nation, talking about the need to empower women, introduce modern education in areas that don't have them, inculcate scientific temper and stressed on the need for greater



Chief Justice of India K. G. Balakrishnan administering the oath of office to new President Pratibha Patil.

Pratibha Patil's profile

Pratibha Devisingh Patil, born on December 19, 1934, is the 12th President of India. She is the first woman and the first Maharashtrian to hold this post. Patil, a member of the Indian National Congress, was nominated by the ruling United Progressive Alliance and Indian Left. A trained lawyer, Patil represented Edlabad constituency in Jalgaon district as a member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly (1962-1985) before becoming deputy chairperson of the Rajya Sabha (1986-1988). She was a Member of Parliament for Amravati in the Lok Sabha (1991-1996).

Patil received her M.A. from Mooljee Jaitha (M.J.) College, Jalgaon, and obtained a law degree from the Government Law College, Mumbai. She began her political career in 1962 at the age of 27. She became a deputy minister for education after re-election in 1967 (in Chief Minister Vasantrao Naik's ministry).

In 1985, she was elected to the Rajya Sabha, and served as its deputy chairperson from November 1986 to November 1988.

In November 2004, Pratibha Patil was appointed the Governor of Rajasthan. She was the first woman Governor of Rajasthan. With Pratibha Patil as Governor, Rajasthan had women in three significant positions of power in the state, including Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje and Assembly Speaker Sumitra Singh.

development of science and technology and the necessity of balanced development.

"It should be our combined endeavour to sustain (economic) growth and ensure that it is socially inclusive. We must ensure that every section of our society — particularly the weak and the disadvantaged — are equal partners in, and beneficiaries of the development process."

In a tacit admission that her journey to Rashtrapati Bhavan has been sudden and unexpected, she said: "I am fully aware of the great responsibilities placed on my humble shoulders."

Calling India "an ancient civilisation but a young nation", she said: "We must all stand united in the fight against such divisive and destructive tendencies as communalism, casteism, extremism and terrorism."

The new President placed emphasis on the spread of education.

"To realise the full potential of our people, we must invest in their capabilities and empower them with modern education and comprehensive health care.

"We must banish malnutrition, social evils infant mortality and female foeticide. I wish to express my full commitment to the protection of child rights," she said.

Patil stressed the need to protect the planet and the environment.

"I am deeply committed to the cause of education and would like to see every person, man and woman... be touched by the light of modern education. Empowerment of women is particularly important to me as I believe this leads to the empowerment of the nation."

Celebration of 60th anniversary of India's Independence



Ambassador Rakesh Sood reading the President's address to nation.



A music concert on at India House in Kabul.

Marking the 60th anniversary of Independence Day of India, the traditional flag-hoisting ceremony was held on August 15 at the premises of the Indian Embassy in Kabul.

Ambassador Rakesh Sood unfurled the national flag and read out the President's speech delivered on the eve of Independence Day.

Around 250 persons, including officials of the Indian Embassy, a number of Indians working on various public and private sector projects in Afghanistan enthusiastically took part in the programme.

Later in the evening, Ambassador Sood hosted a reception at India House. Several dignitaries including the Chairman of the

Mesharano Jirga (Upper House) and of the Commission for Peace and National Reconciliation Pir Hazrat Sebghatullah Mojadeddi; former president Prof. Burhanudin Rabani; Commerce Minister Dr. Mohammad Amin Farhang; Agriculture Minister Obaidullah Ramin; Defence Minister Gen Abdur Rahim Wardak; Finance Minister Dr. Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady; Higher Education Minister Dr. Azam Dadfar; Information and Culture Minister Abdul Karim Khurram; Mines and Industries Minister Eng. Ibrahim Adel; Public Works Minister Dr. Sohrab Ali Saffary; Women's Affairs Minister Dr. Hassan Banu Ghazanfar; Urban Development Minister Eng. Yusuf Pashtun; Martyrs, Disabled,

Labour and Social Affairs Minister Noor Mohammad Qarqeen; number of Deputy Ministers, Members of Afghan Parliament, Afghan businessmen and members of Diplomatic Corps numbering around 400 attended the reception at India House.

A musical concert to the accompaniment of the tabla, dilruba and rabab was held in the evening.

The local Afghan musicians singing Sufi songs and ghazals, enthralled the gathering, as the audience lapped up each rendition.

The Indian Consulates General in Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif held similar functions, which were attended by a number of local dignitaries and Indian citizens. ■

Hamid Ansari: Exemplary diplomat, scholar, gentleman

Diplomat, scholar extraordinaire and the quintessential gentleman, Hamid Ansari is the new Vice President of India. He is all of these but, above everything else, is a warm and engaging humanist who brings to his new position a rare blend of intellectual gravitas, sincerity and tact.

The nomination of the 70-year-old seasoned diplomat, who had earlier served as India's envoy in Afghanistan, as the unanimous choice of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and Left parties for the vice presidential post was hailed across the country and came as proof to many that ability, and not mere patronage, does get its rightful reward.

This approval of Ansari's choice brought to the fore something essential about this person — his ability to inspire respect cutting across the political spectrum that enabled him to notch up key jobs even after retirement from the Indian Foreign Service (IFS).

If he became vice chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) during the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) regime, he was chosen to become chairperson of the National Commission for Minorities in the UPA dispensation.

Ansari, known as India's voice in the Middle East, was appointed as ambassador to Saudi Arabia by the P.V. Narasimha government and got repeated extensions from the governments of I.K. Gujral and H.D. Deve Gowda.

Although the news of his nomination for the vice presidential post came as a surprise to many who had a chance to rub shoulders with this low-profile, suave and soft-spoken diplomat and scholar, not many know that he is no stranger to the world of politics.

Ansari comes from a prominent political family with socialist leanings.

"I come from a family of freedom fighters. My father was in the forefront of the independence struggle. My uncle, Farid-ul-Haq, was secretary general of the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and was elected to the second Lok Sabha," Ansari said after he was nominated for the vice president's post.

The PSP, which was in existence from 1952 to 1972, was founded when the Socialist Party merged with the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party.

Ansari also happens to be the grand-nephew of Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari, who was president of the Indian National Congress in the 1927 Madras session.

Born in Kolkata on April 1, 1937 — though



President Pratibha Patil administering the oath of office of Vice President to Hamid Ansari at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on August 11.

Ansari is 13th VP

Mohammad Hamid Ansari, a former diplomat and accomplished intellectual, was on August 11 sworn in as India's 13th Vice President in a simple but well-attended ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.

Ansari, who had stepped down as chairperson of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM), succeeded Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, who had lost the presidential election to Pratibha Patil.

Ansari, 70, was administered the oath of office by President Pratibha Patil in the function held at the Ashoka Hall of the presidential palace.

Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Leader of Opposition Lal Krishna Advani and a host of other political leaders attended the function.

Shekhawat too attended the ceremony that lasted barely three minutes.

A candidate of the ruling UPA and the Left parties, Ansari bagged 455 of the 762 votes polled in a triangular contest for the post of vice president on August 10.

He won by a margin of 233 votes against National Democratic Alliance's Najma Heptulla, pushing Rasheed Masood of the United National Progressive Alliance to a distant third spot.

his family belongs to Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh — Ansari studied at the St. Xavier's in Kolkata and AMU. He later became the AMU vice chancellor.

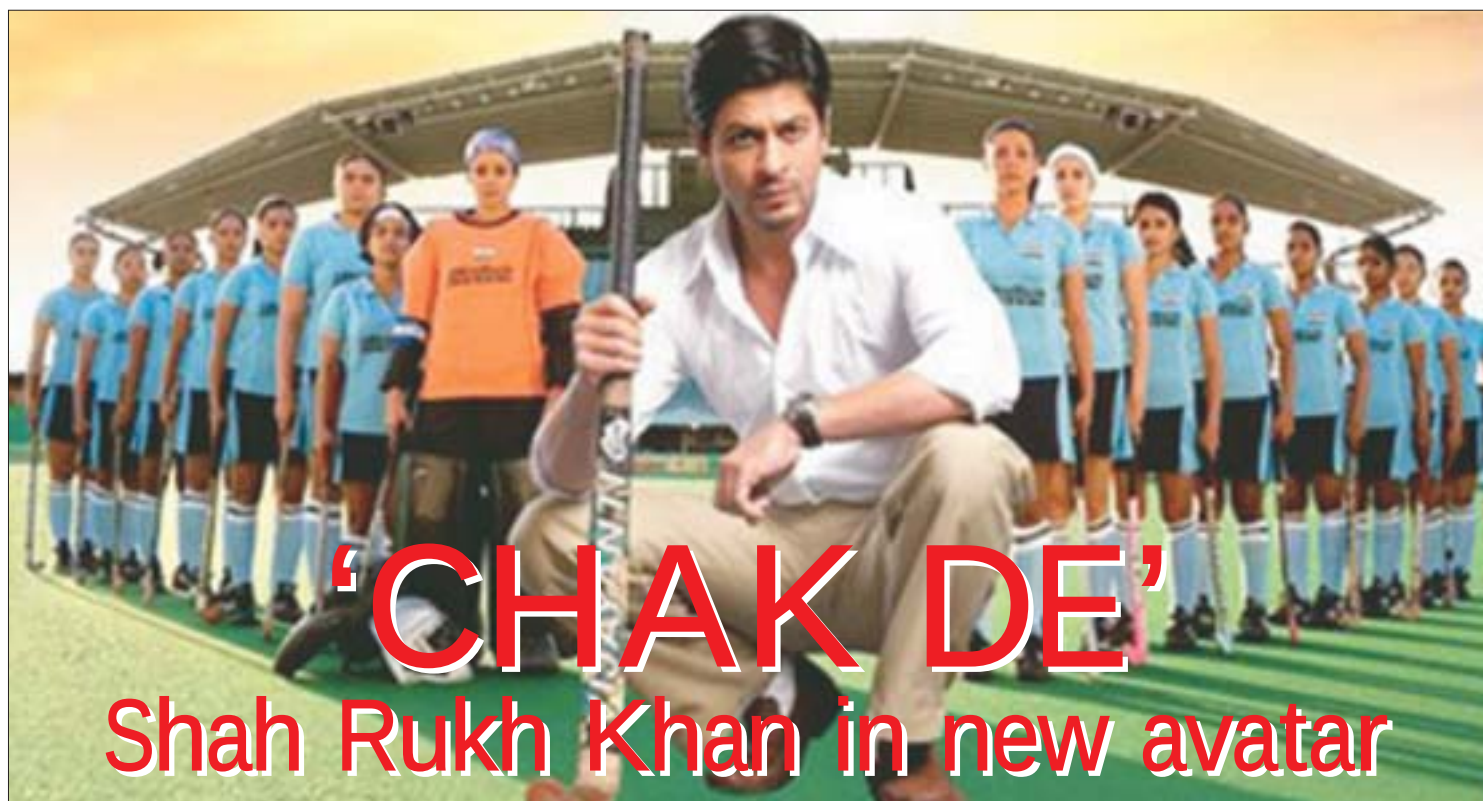
Having joined the IFS in 1961, Ansari was India's envoy to the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Australia, apart from Afghanistan. He won the admiration of many with his charm, grace and sophistication when he was the Chief of Protocol during the Non-Aligned Summit in New Delhi in 1983.

He was also New Delhi's Permanent Representative to the U.N. at a time when Pakistan launched a diplomatic offensive at the end of the Cold War in the U.N. on Kashmir.

"Pakistan did not succeed in getting any resolution in any forum at the end of two years of desperate struggle. India had won the battle under Ansari's leadership," recalled T.P. Sreenivasan, who was his deputy in New York at that time.

A Padma Shri winner, Ansari has been a visiting professor at the Centre for West Asian and African Studies in New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and at the Academy for Third World Studies in Jamia Millia Islamia.

Before he was appointed chairman of the Minorities Commission in March last year, Ansari was co-chairman of the India-U.K. Round Table, a member of the National Security Advisory Board and convener (and later chairperson) of the Petroleum Ministry's advisory committee on Oil Diplomacy for Energy Security. ■



After playing the role of a young lover in several romantic films, he got tagged as the best entertainer in the country. But Shah Rukh Khan has surprised everyone with his latest 'Chak De! India' where his performance as a hockey coach establishes him as a mature actor in Bollywood.

If writer Jaideep Sahni and director Shimit Amin are getting accolades for making such an unconventional film, Shah Rukh too is winning praise for his natural performance as Kabir Khan, the disgraced hockey player who tries to redeem his prestige by coaching the women's hockey team and making them winners.

Those who thought 'Swades' was Shah Rukh's best performance, as an Indian American NASA scientist who comes home on a visit only to get involved in development projects in a village, will be surprised with his emoting in 'Chak De! India'.

While fans say they are proud of him for choosing an unusual film like this, critics are raving about how effortlessly he plays a coach who travels to glory from gloom.

Critic Andy Webster in his review in *New York Times* writes: "For his part, Mr. Khan, to his credit, lets his co-stars' youthful charisma carry the movie. He also laudably portrays a man who vigorously and unabashedly advocates the advancement of women."

The film is based on former India goalkeeper Mir Ranjan Negi who lost his glory after conceding several goals in a match against Pakistan in the 1982 Asian Games

final. He was dropped from the team. Negi returned to the hockey field, most grudgingly, 16 years later as a goalkeeping coach and helped India in winning the 1998 Asian Games men's gold at Bangkok and the women's gold at the Manchester Commonwealth Games in 2002.

Shah Rukh convincingly portrays the shame, disillusionment of the disgraced hockey player and determination to win back his prestige. Negi, who was roped in as a technical director of the film, said he was impressed by Shah Rukh's performance. He is a fine actor and evoked the right emotions in the movie. He has done justice to the role, Negi said.

Aditya Chopra's mega hit 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge' gave the actor the yuppie romantic hero image, and other hits like



'Dil To Paagal Hai', 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai' and 'Kal Ho Naa Ho' built on that persona. Soon Shah Rukh became a superhero and directors began to concentrate on his image, mannerisms and style. As a result, he never got enough chance to prove his versatility as one who could ably play non-conventional roles.

Film critic Anumpama Chopra's recently released book *King of Bollywood: Shah Rukh Khan and the Seductive World of Indian Cinema* reveals that diverse roles give Shah Rukh creative satisfaction.

The actor, who is often accused of playing safe and not working with untried directors, played negative roles in 'Baazigar' and 'Darr'. He has tried to play unconventional roles — in 'Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani', as a journalist, in 'Asoka', a historical, and 'Devdas', as an alcoholic lover. But the films, though appreciated, didn't benefit him much.

But it was Ashotosh Gowariker's 'Swades' which was the turning point in his career, which critics described as his coming of age. His performance as NASA scientist Mohan Bhargava didn't show a single trace of his iconic attitude. He immersed himself in his character and wowed both critics and fans.

People can go on arguing whether Aamir Khan or Irrfan Khan or Amitabh Bachchan is a better actor than Shah Rukh, but the fact remains that the superstar is being accepted as the best and one shouldn't underestimate his potential.

Such is the performance of Shah Rukh as Kabir Khan that it will live with the audience for a long time. ■