



role in a Bollywood movie... That was one of the most memorable moments of my life! After this performance I started fighting my way through my career as I wasn't born into the industry, luckily I started receiving interesting projects that launched my career as an action hero.

CM: Did you always want to act?

AK: When I was a kid I could only dream of becoming an actor, I used to stand in massive crowds just to get Mr Amitabh Bachchan's autograph, now I play his son in movies, but really it was martial arts I was into majorly. When the opportunity came up to act though, I couldn't say no! I certainly have no regrets, to be able to fulfill my passion for sport and martial arts in my films was a much broader way of teaching kids and living the life I dreamed of and inspiring more people than I could ever imagine...

CM: How did you get into acting?

AK: Well, as you can guess after what I just told you, I started in this industry by pure luck! I was doing some modeling on my return from Bangkok when someone thought I was cute, apparently, and I just thought: why not? So I got the funniest and may I add the cheapest portfolio done and worked my way up from there. Luckily, I was chosen to play the lead in my debut film 'Saugandh', back in 199, something I will never forget. This was the beginning of my career as an actor and the rest is history... in the making! *(smiles)*

CM: What was the toughest part when breaking into Bollywood?

AK: Possibly the fact, that I had no mentor to guide me to make the right decisions. Not coming from an acting dynasty is tough

but very rewarding if you get it right. I had to find my own way, to an extent, but the experiences help build both my career and my character.

CM: Do you have formal training in acting?

AK: No, when I left college there weren't many academies
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CM: Please tell us a little bit about your background.

AK: Well... where should I start? Long story short, I was born in Amritsar, India. After college, I studied martial arts in Bangkok, one of my biggest passions, while working as a chef. Later on, I started teaching martial arts and strangely was considered for Modeling. After a couple of months I was offered my first
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to study acting, that's why I decided to go into martial arts. Because of this, I had to work flat out to get a place in the industry and I must say that I'm still learning - it's an ongoing process - particularly as I try to push my boundaries and challenge my abilities with every project I sign.

CM: What do you attribute your success to?

AK: My dad - I would be nothing if it wasn't for him, his priceless guidance was what helped make me. I only follow and move from what he taught me - I am the father, the husband, the actor, the martial arts expert that I am, only because of my father. Also, my wife and son are my biggest supporters and inspire me to succeed.

Furthermore, my wife's family has been very supportive and has guided me wherever needed. I consider myself very lucky to be a part of my wife's incredible film family, and I have learned a lot from them. They are a 'Family' in the truest sense, and I am proud to be a part of them.

CM: Why did you choose the screen name you have?

AK: Well my real name is Rajiv, and there were far too many famous Rajivs in the industry at that point, plus I'm sure there was a girl who must have had something to do with me changing it to Akshay Kumar somehow... (laughs)

CM: How do you balance your family life as you travel to different places while shooting?

AK: I must confess that sometimes it is difficult, especially on outdoor shoots, but as a rule, I always take my Sundays off to ensure I spend some quality time with my wife *Tina* and my son *Aarav*, I leave for work after I drop him to school and I'm back by dinner time mostly. I try to take him with me whenever possible as he really enjoys seeing his father in action, plus I

can show him the world and he's only 7!

CM: Does Twinkle have any plans to get back into acting? Would you ever star together in a movie?

AK: I would really love to be with her in a movie but it's not on her mind to go back into acting right now. She is focusing on her own career path and making a huge success of her interior designing.

CM: Who was your favorite Bollywood actor while you were growing up? Why?

AK: Sanjeev Kumar, among many others. If I could have even an iota of his charisma I would be one of the happiest people on this planet, what a legend!

CM: What inspired you to produce a movie in Hollywood? Why not Bollywood?

AK: I've also produced Bollywood movies, my own in fact, the latest one was *Khatta Meetha*, under my own production banner *Hari Om Entertainment*.

Regarding Hollywood, I think that producing for the Western cinema is a challenge for me, and I love challenges, I'm very much involved in the Hollywood-cum-Punjabi movie we're making this September in Toronto, but I'm leaking nothing as of yet!

CM: Tell us about 'Thank You'

AK: I'm currently shooting this movie in Canada. 'Thank you' is a romantic comedy directed by Anees

Bazmee and starring Sonam Kapoor, Bobby Deol, Irfan Khan and also Suniel Shetty! (*grins*) Regrettably, I can't tell you more as we are still filming it but it is slated for release next year. I'll look for you in the cinema!

CM: What advice do you have for aspiring Bollywood stars?

AK: Work extremely hard, and take your producers seriously, you have know idea how hard this industry can be, so keep your chin up and your ego down.

CM: Message for your fans?

AK: Thank you for today... Thank you for yesterday... My future is in your hands... and I know it... Thank you...

Rapid fire questions

- ◇ Favorite movie you have starred in? * **Hera Pheri...**
- ◇ All time Bollywood favorite movie? * **Sholay...**
- ◇ All time Hollywood favorite movie? * **Jaws, but Avatar did blow me away...**
- ◇ Do you cry? * **When the time is right...**
- ◇ What makes you laugh? * **My son is 7 and he tells the funniest and definitely weirdest jokes that crack me up!!**
- ◇ Happiest moment? * **When my son Aarav was born for sure...**
- ◇ Does Twinkle get jealous of the actresses you act with? * **Have you seen my wife? Of course she doesn't (winks)**
- ◇ Most romantic thing you have ever done off-screen? * **That's for my wife's eyes only, all I will say is, it's big, and very shiny, and it fits on my wife's finger perfectly...**
- ◇ Favorite food? * **Thai and traditional Punjabi saag and maki ki roti and don't forget Sushi.**
- ◇ Favorite festival? * **Holi and Diwali of course...**
- ◇ Favorite vacation spot? * **Canada**
- ◇ Favorite sport? * **Martial Arts and Cricket...**
- ◇ Favorite recreational activity? * **Playing Volley Ball with the kids from my building...**
- ◇ Most influential person in your life? * **My father**
- ◇ Whom do you aspire to be like? * **My father and my son...**
- ◇ If you were granted three wishes, what would you wish for? * **My son's happiness, a healthy life, and for all my movies to be hits of course, in amongst peace and good will to all man kind...**
- ◇ If not acting, what would you rather do? * **Be a Martial Arts instructor for sure, or a cricket player for India...**
- ◇ Best talent (besides acting)? * **Cooking and playing...**
- ◇ When you first started acting, did you ever think you will be as successful as you are today? * **Never dreamed I could ever be where I am today!!**