

## Bollywood's Royal, The Nawab of Pataudi, Saif Ali Khan

•Written by Amit Bachchan•

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If Saif Ali Khan is to be believed, the whole inverted U-shaped pattern between age and contentment is a load of rubbish. At 42, he's never been happier, he says, or more self-possessed.

GQ met the actor in London, his old stomping grounds, to do a bit of reminiscing, even as he looks forward.

### **His London was very different then?**

My father was more about Winchester, Sussex and Oxford. There's a pub called The King Albert, off Hyde Park Square. The owner has my father's pictures on the wall – his favourite celebrity, he says. I suppose the difference between him and me is the difference between a movie star and an elegant cricketer.

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### **Just one of the many differences between father and son...**

My father came from a different time. He experienced having his privileges taken away from him. But fortunately he had other things to live for, like his talent. Going from being landed to not so landed must have been hard.

### **But you carry on a legacy –you’re the son of the last titular Nawab of Pataudi.**

Yes, it’s my identity. My mother says I should take it more seriously.

### **What would you need to do?**

I believe the first thing is to have a house there. The Pataudi palace is with the Neemrana group of hotels, but we’ve told them we’d like it back next year. I have all these plans for restoring it to its original avatar. This is the only house, of the four I grew up in, that’s survived. The world moves so quickly and it’s nice to keep some things from the past – and lose some.

### **There’ve been distinct phases through your career, determined by your choices of movies and roles. When you look back, do you see stages?**

Yes! Not just in my career, but my life as well. My father was a man of very few

words, so when I turned 40, he sent me a card. It read: “The Secret of Islam...”– he wasn’t usually religious – “...was revealed to the Prophet on his fortieth birthday”. He always maintained that it was all going to come together at 40, and he was right. I wasted a

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phenomenal amount of time, money and energy on the wrong things and I've come out of it OK.

### **The way we define □ success for a film has completely changed.**

Yes, you now read 4-star reviews for movies that made no money and 2-star reviews for films that killed it at the box office. For a while I think I might just be happy with 2 stars. You can't live off a good review. You need the money as well.

### **Did your dad, a man of few words, ever concede that you were successful?**

Yes, in his own way. He'd say "good film" or "I did not understand a word in Omkara". But a professional assessment was not what I looked to him for. I looked for his endorsement on the way I behaved or the person I am.