

Iqbal wants to make a film on Kashmir

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Iqbal Khan

Iqbal wants to make a film on Kashmir, says Iqbal Khan, the Kashmir-born actor.

As a Kashmiri, are you satisfied with the depiction of the Valley in Bollywood?

I want to see "Lamhaa". Honestly, there is angst in the people of the Valley. Since I didn't live there for very long, it would be wrong for me to comment. But my parents and friends haven't left Kashmir. Happiness doesn't exist there because of the political reasons. Kids suffer and they don't get to go to school, and there are no employment

opportunities either. I really don't know who is gaining out of all this.

I remember, the situation got tricky in 1989 and I left the Valley in '93. I have been a witness to what happened from '91 to '93, which was the worst phase. We would be watching TV at home and would suddenly hear bullets being fired. Within a few seconds, lights would be switched off and we all would lie down. So I know why my parents sent me to a boarding school. Nobody had to convince me. It was scary.

I have seen a lot of movies that were shot in the 80s. In fact, that was when nobody knew what Switzerland was. The Kapoor family would be in the Valley for shoots. Rajesh Khanna also shot a lot of his projects in Gulmarg, Chashma Shahi and Pahalgam.

Kashmir, I believe, is the ideal setting for a love story. It is a place where a boy still follows the girl he has fallen for, for months to speak to her.

What is it that you want people to know about the Valley?

I want people to know the root cause for unrest in Kashmir. The saddest part is that we really can't show the truth. There will be people to force you to make compromises. However, I think politicians like Omar Abdullah can change the situation. He can bring positive changes if he wants to.

I'm not saying this because he was my senior at school, but because he has always come across as a promising political leader. He may call himself a lousy politician but he has the ability to take radical decisions.

It is the normal life – going to work, spending quality time with family, planning vacations, meeting relatives, enjoying social functions – that people in Kashmir also want. I have been thinking of making a short film on Kashmir, and want it to do what "Munnabhai" did – change the way people perceive things.

What was the experience like working with Aruna Irani?

Arunaji is so much fun. She is simply amazing. Since she plays my mother in the show, I call her 'muma' in a baby voice all the time on the sets. But I really respect her for the contribution she has made to Indian cinema. I believe, every role that she has essayed has left a permanent impact on our minds.

Besides TV shows, you have also done Bollywood projects like "Funzshh" and 'Bullet - Ek Dhamaka".

What has the experience been like?

It was a learning experience. However, I do feel I was young when I entered the film industry. I was just a year old in Mumbai when I got "Funzshh", my first Bollywood offer. I was, what, just 22! Now, when I reflect on what had happened years ago, I feel I lacked script sense. More than that, the right person who could guide me to make smart moves and intelligent choices. It is crucial to have someone experienced by your side to help you weigh the pros and cons of every decision you take.

Do you think turning a deaf ear to critics is a mantra to success?

What other people think of me has never been a concern. I'm extremely objective of my work and most importantly, honest about my objectivity. If I'm criticised for my work and I know I haven't done justice to it, I accept it. And promise myself to work harder. However, when I know I have given my hundred per cent and others get sarcastic, it doesn't bother me. I don't think of work as a burden, I never get into that mode. Instead, I believe in toiling and leaving the rest to God.

What has been the harshest comment you have got till now?

I remember, when "Funzshh", my first film, got released, one of the critics said, 'There is no use mentioning the actors who worked with Paresh Rawal in the flick. For you will never see them again.' That comment was ruthless. Of course, you feel terrible when something like that is said. However, the maximum you can do is, give your best in forthcoming projects. In life, if you follow the correct path you can never go wrong.

Are you the kind of person who makes decisions from mind and not heart?

I'm not at all like this. I don't know why I'm thought of in this way. I'm just a regular guy. I don't like making strategies. I do give suggestions as an actor, but I don't interfere in other people's matter.

But is it not hard to enjoy life being like this?

I take time to interact with people. I guess that's a disorder. But it is okay. I don't make an effort to be serious. I'm just shy. So even if someone gives me a compliment, I make sure it doesn't stay in my mind for more than 30 seconds. I'm happy being like this.

So you are a no nonsense person?

Yes.

And also a one woman man?

Absolutely. I adhere to what is mentioned in the Quran. It says, 'If you are married, you love your partner, then you should not cheat on your partner. For, if you commit infidelity, you will never do great in life.' Insha Allah, if I stick to these values, I'll only be doing good.

Does your wife ever feel insecure?

Initially, she used to. But I make her feel sure about the fact that I'm always there for her. And I make this obvious in every way possible.