

Iqbal Khan shuns Balaji blues

The actor talks about his latest stint in Chhoona Hai Aasman and beyond

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Last updated: Oct 24, 2007

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It takes years of hard work to reach the top, and a second to come down. But Iqbal Khan couldn't care less. The actor left the popular Balaji show, *Karam Apna Apna*, at a point when he had touched the pinnacle of success. Before that he had also done a couple of other Balaji shows like *Kavyanjali* and *Kaisa Yeh Pyaar Hai*.

Apparently the actor wanted a long break to get married and he left the show because he was not given leave after repeated appeals. Says Iqbal, "I believe in God and follow my heart." Now, that may be quite a sweeping statement but Iqbal proved his point by staying away from the arclights for more than four months. Now, the actor is back on the small screen in Star One's *Chhoona Hai Aasman*.

According to the various media reports, the show was touted as a sequel to *Saara Aakash*. But Iqbal begs to differ. He says, "Although *Chhoona Hai Aasman* too is a show with an air force backdrop, it

has nothing to do with *Saara Aakash*."

Talking about his shooting experience for the show, Iqbal says, "I was getting a lot of TV and film offers before, but I just wanted to enjoy my break. But this seemed different and a lot more exciting so I decided to go ahead with it."

And did he need to do any homework before taking up the role? "Not really," he shrugs, "It was an on-the-set learning process. We went to Jodhpur airbase to shoot for some time. The Air Force officers would often come on the sets and teach us the technical nuances. Just sitting inside a Sukhoi aircraft is a different experience altogether. It's out of the world. We also had a martial arts course for two months just to get the body positions right. It did a lot of good in facing the camera later. I play Abhimanyu, an Air Force officer who is a strict disciplinarian and a man of few words."

The actor has no qualms in admitting that he has not got another offer from Balaji ever since his exit from *Karam Apna Apna*. But a seasoned pro that he is, Iqbal tries to be diplomatic. He says, "I'm here to work. I am quite content about what I am doing right now. If I ever get an offer from Balaji and I like the role and the subject, I will do it."