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'You can't cheat me!'

...Iqbal Khan tells us! Read on to find more... www.miqbalkhan.com

Arrogant and inaccessible... just some of the adjectives we'd heard used to describe him. However, once we got talking to **Iqbal Khan**, we couldn't help but be impressed with his straight talk. Talking openly about his rise to fame and his unconventional choices thereafter, he proved beyond doubt that while full of conviction he might be, arrogant he certainly isn't.

Does he ever regret some of the choices he's made, we ask right at the onset. Pausing for just a split second, he reflects, "Nobody makes choices. TV, films, whatever was willed, happened. So in that sense, I have not made any wrong decisions."

However, not many deny that Iqbal has yet to recreate the magic of *Kaisa Yeh Pyaar Hai*. A Balaji show, *Kaisa...*, which saw him play rockstar Angad, also made him an overnight star and earned him the title of 'Shahrukh Khan of the small screen.' Then, post brief stints in *Kkavyanjali*, *Kahiin To Hoga*, and *Karam Apnaa Apnaa*, as well as marriage to childhood sweetheart Sneha, Iqbal returned with *Choona Hai Aasman*, which was touted to be a follow up to *Saara Akaash*. But after complaining of lack of publicity and promises not met, he quit the show midway, something he's also done in the past with Balaji. "If you promise me something and fail to deliver, I will quit. You can't cheat me," exclaims Iqbal.

Iqbal was in luck, for he soon bagged Smriti Irani's *Waaris*. Loosely based on the *Sarkar* plot, the show has fought with low TRP's ever since it launched. On his part, Iqbal is quick to point out, "The show is doing well, it is actually getting a good TRP on an otherwise weak slot of 11-11:30 pm." Then turning to TRP, he reveals, "In any case, I don't understand this whole TRP business. It's pretty weird how 5,000-6,000 sets can generalise for the entire country." Obviously, the man has not much regard for popular perception.

Which is apparent even when you ask him as to why he's steered clear of reality shows, considering his dancing skills. Obviously not for the lack of offers, as we're well

aware. "I watch reality shows sometimes and I find them very entertaining. But I don't do them for part of my life is private and I like to keep it that way. Asking for votes, listening to judges comments, I don't identify myself with these things, even if it means letting go of money," says a candid Iqbal.

However, he has turned over a new leaf now... as the host of *Sambhav Kya?* on 9X. Talking about how he came to do the show, he says, "Siddharth Kak (producer) and I knew each other because we're both Kashmiris and from the same school. He thought I would be right for *Sambhav Kya?* and even I liked the idea. In any case, all along I've tried to do different things as much as possible." The series will showcase independent stories based on supernatural and unusual happenings. So, does Iqbal believe in the same? "My motto in life is, 'I don't believe in miracles, I rely on them.' I do believe sometimes things happen which cannot be explained, and some stories in the series really further that belief."

We then ask him if he enjoys anchoring, to which he replies, "I only do the anchor links, and that doesn't require me to act. I can be myself, slightly serious and no-nonsense. I would rather say one line that matters and carries weight than be loud, on your face and have 22 teeth gleaming."

In recent times, Iqbal has also dabbled in films - *Fun2shh* and *Bullet: Ek Dhamaka*, but with an unsuccessful outcome. "Never say never," he says, adding, "But as I've been there and done that, I will now choose wisely, the script has to be good." In any case, he doesn't believe in doing too much all at once. "I prefer to do one thing at a time. Doing three shows together is not my cup of tea for it does have an adverse effect on your health. *Sambhav Kya?* is different, for it takes only three-four days."

As a parting shot, we ask him how he spends his day off. "My off day is Sneha's day," he smiles and signs off.

Surbhi Sheth