

A photograph of actor Iqbal Khan running across a green lawn in a garden. He is wearing a brown jacket over a white shirt and dark trousers. He is holding a large, colorful umbrella (white, yellow, red, and blue) over his head. The background features lush greenery, including trees and bushes. The overall scene is bright and outdoors.

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The good bad DON

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SUDIPTO SHOME

FANS still love this Khan as Angad from the hit TV serial *Kaisa Ye Pyar Hai*. Ekta Kapoor once referred to him as Shah Rukh Khan of small screen. But Iqbal Khan himself is modesty personified. He plays a lead role of a junior don, Shankar, in Zee TV's latest serial *Waaris*. We meet him recently at his Madh Island sets on a stormy evening.

Khan enters his vanity van dressed as Shankar, a ruthless hothead, quite in line with Santino Corleone of *Godfather*. He disagrees in his baritone. "Santino is slightly over the top with anger; Shankar isn't. Santino's character runs similar throughout; Shankar has shades. Santino speaks a lot,

Shankar's a man of few words," Khan lets on; the last attribute, I find, suits him well. "*Waaris* is not about guns and action; they build the backdrop. It's a family show, which I feel, men would also watch," he believes.

The 28-year-old actor, hailing from Srinagar, schooled from Pinegrove and Lawrence School, Sanawar. A third-year drop-out from Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, Khan moved to Mumbai in January 2002, as he "wanted to do something with his life". After dabbling in music videos he turned production assistant with the film *Agneepankh*, during which the producers offered him the lead in their next, *Fun2ssh*. "I also signed *Bullet-Ek Dhamaka*," he recounts. But it wasn't a fairy tale, none of the flicks worked and the entire year, after *Fun2ssh* re-

leased, Khan was jobless. "Not even Rs 5,000 worth of photo shoot. It was scary," he remembers.

"In 2004, Sony offered *Kaisa Ye Pyar Hai*. The show picked up like anything and my character, Angad, was a hit," says Khan. Successful K-serials—*Kavyanjali*, *Kahiin Toh Hoga* and *Karam Apna Apna*—followed. He was then considered a blue-eyed boy of Balaji Telefilms. But the warm relationship with Balaji didn't last more than three winters. He doesn't want to tell the story, but we insist. "I never had a problem with Ekta; but I had some with the production people and I'm sure nobody could have sorted those. So I left Balaji in December 2006, and in January, I got married," says Khan. Wife Sneha was his co-actor in a Phalguni Pathak-music

video years ago. Love bloomed later, in 2003, when they met again in Mumbai.

After *Karam*, he joined *Chhoona Hai Asman*, only to leave it this year as he felt the channel wasn't promoting it. Currently he's only doing *Waaris* as he prefers one show at a time. "Earlier when I was with Balaji, I used to do two shows simultaneously. But it's stressful. I'm 28 and I have grey hair in my stubble, which is not a good sign. So I stopped."

Khan isn't interested in joining reality shows. Similarly, he doesn't like playing negative characters on TV. "I like playing a grey character but not a completely dark one on TV. It's a choice," he says. For the same reason he plays "the good bad guy in *Waaris*". We understand.