

In an exclusive interview with AT, TV star Iqbal Khan talks about his struggle to fame, his upcoming show and much more...

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Small screen heartthrob Iqbal Khan returns on prime time television after a year long hiatus. This time around he's flying high, literally. In his new show, *Choona Hai Aasmaan*, Iqbal essays the role of an airforce officer. From playing the romantic lead in tearjerking soap sagas to performing death-defying stunts, Iqbal confesses that he's glad about his new outing on television, "The show is different, even if I may use the cliché. I am playing a character who portrays real emotions. Abhimanyu is very human, like most of us and not some superhero." A Kashmiri by birth, Iqbal spent his formative years in Himachal Pradesh (he's an alumni of Pinegrove School, Kasauli) and graduated from Delhi University. After modelling for three years, Iqbal, like other starry-eyed youngsters, moved to the Maximum City, Mumbai. "I had Rs 3,000 in my pocket and I wanted to conquer Bollywood. I did my share of struggle to land a role in a mainstream film," remembers Iqbal. Unfortunately, his early movies *Fun2shh* and *Bullet: Ek Dhamaka* failed at the box-office and made him shift gears to television. "I don't blame anyone, nor do I have any regrets. I think whatever has to happen, will happen. But there could be bigger and better things ahead," believes an optimistic Iqbal.

Eventually a slew of roles in Balaji soaps — *Kaisa Ye Pyar Hai*, *Kkavyanjali*, *Kahiin To Hoga* and *Karam Apna Apna* — gave him the kind of fame he had dreamt of. Iqbal walked out of *Karam...* last year, but claims there's no bad blood between him and Ekta Kapoor. "I might even work with Balaji in the future," he says.

Though Iqbal is a television actor, he can't bear to watch family soaps on TV anymore. "There's nothing different — it's the same made-up women, same melodramatic situations, lots of tears. I can't relate to these shows anymore. I select a show only if the script appeals to me. I listen to my gut feelings when it comes to work," he says. For Iqbal, work is important, but there

are times when he also likes to take a break. "When I am not working I like to spend time with my wife and my family. Working on a daily soap can be very taxing and stressful. You don't get time for anything else. I was hospitalised once due to stress and work overload," he adds.

And Iqbal is cool with giving films another shot. "If something good comes my way then why not? Films are larger than life, while TV has a huge reach. Both have their share of advantages," says Iqbal.

Would Iqbal ever work with his wife (former music video star Sneha Chabbria)? "No. I don't think so. She is happy being a kindergarten teacher and has no plans of doing TV or films. We agree on this." Point noted Iqbal.

