

5. Mohammed Iqbal Khan has been added to the cast of Star Plus' new time show, *KatyAnjali*. Iqbal is ecstatic. "I am totally excited about playing Shaurya in *Anjali*," he enthuses and describes his character with a sportsman's flair. "He is a cool guy, as classy and as earthy as rugby. A smart man with a peculiar sense of humour and an attitude to match. He may even fall in love with a girl," he confides.

The TV grapevine is buzzing over how Ejaz Khan, the hero of *Yeh Hai Mohabbata*, is on the verge of being killed off, which reportedly tied up an insecure knot over Iqbal's entry.

How does Iqbal think of this rivalry?

"I won't admit there's any. I don't think there is anything like that on television. Yes, actors do get replaced for various reasons but it is not anyone's particular rival. I don't even know if Ejaz is insecure. I have only heard and read about it in the media. If it is true, I want to assure him that it shouldn't be. It is childish to be insecure. Serials move ahead and focus on TRPs and narrative. One day one person is the star, after a few weeks it's someone else. No matter how hard you try or how much you fight it – if you are not meant to be popular or in demand, nothing can stop you. It's not my time, I am convinced of it."

Iqbal isn't a novice to acting. He has done films – both flops – before coming to television. "I appeared in movies – *Fun2toosh* which was a flop and *Bullet* which was a disaster. *Murder* became a hit, quite a number of similar films were made, but I didn't want to do any more of them. I don't see any difference between films and television. In movies, you have a huge fan base and the same is the case in television."

Iqbal is wary at the thought of going back to Bollywood. "I can only do 10 days a month to films. But why should I let go of what I have, for something so uncertain? If I get a substantial offer for a great banner I might opt for it. Otherwise, television is my focus for the next few years. I would rather act in serials like *Kaisa Yeh Pyaar Hai*, which are popular and watched, than do movies like *Fun2toosh* and *Bullet* which flop."

The year-old *Kaisa Yeh Pyaar Hai* is still rocking. Last year Iqbal was very lucky for this Khan who won six whopping six Best Actor awards (from different sources) for his role as Angad! As

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long as Angad's popularity continues undiminished, Iqbal Khan rules.

Iqbal credits his unprecedented rise to the goodness of his parents. He smiles, "I attribute my success to my hard work and the blessings of my parents. As for awards, on the one hand they give me confidence and on the other they make me nervous because I have to live up to higher expectations now."

After his big-screen flops, "I was advised by well-wishers to move to television, when *Kaisa Yeh Pyaar Hai* happened.

"What excited me most about *Kaisa Yeh Pyaar Hai*, was the banner. It got me really pumped up. I think Balaji rules the small screen and to get an opportunity to act for them was like a dream come true. When it comes to television, I don't think there is anything bigger than Balaji. The script was novel, but that was a secondary consideration. Actually I was offered *Kabaani Ghar Ghar Kii* as well, but I opted to do this role. I told them I was not too keen on the *KGGK* one. Finally, Ekta called to say she wanted to meet me. When I entered the Balaji office, I immediately understood what makes this production house such a fantastic place. Their spirit and their style of working is amazing. It's a strong family out there. I couldn't wait to begin. Another auspicious note – I was finalized for Angad's role on February 10, which was my birthday!"

This year Iqbal turned 26 and he couldn't have hoped for a better birthday. His parents came down from Kashmir, and his girlfriend Sneha organised a small celebration. Iqbal was riding the crest of his show's success and his own popularity. "Workwise it was the happiest birthday I have ever had, but besides that I hardly had any time to spend with my parents and Sneha. Hopefully, my career will be more streamlined this year," he says with a wide grin.

Popularity, success, fans and money are fine. But how does he relate to his character?

His reply shows that he knows his screen character inside-out. "In a nutshell, Angad is a go-getter. I am not like him even one bit. I am always clean shaven, which he is not and I am not brash. Unlike him, I don't know how to play the guitar but I can sing quite well. Most importantly, I strongly believe in love, which he doesn't. He goes overboard and even leaves his parents for love. I am balanced, very normal. I suppose that makes me very boring."



"Sneha is a complete woman. She is very special to me!"