

CONTRARY to the initial trepidation, the judges came in droves. Familiar faces, new faces, some confident, some tense, some vituperative, some gentle: this was a unique chance to see them all under the same auditorium roof in the rare near-mortal *avataar*. The judges were there to participate in the preliminary round of the 'Judge Supreme' contest, the brainchild of yours truly.

But first, a bit of a background. Until a few months ago, I will not lie to you friends, I was feeling like the most worthless creature on earth. Here we are fortunate to be born in South Asia, the most talented region of the world, where young people can sing, dance, gyrate, act, mime, imitate, expose, become DJs-VJs-RJs, ride motorbikes and trucks, undercut, even sabotage, all in the genuine belief that they have been sent on earth only to perform. But there I sat before the television, week after week, thinking I was the only one not good enough to be up there.

So I thought of a novel way to get noticed: organise a talent hunt for the best judge in the region! Now that's a tough call. The veteran judges frowned. Some said it is unethical. Critics and television industry experts said that judges are next only to God; they can make you or break you, you can't sashay them down saying one is worse than the other.

"No, no, I will just show that one is better than the other." I explained, giving the programme's stated policy.

Will not work, they retorted. The judges will go on strike. What will happen to the other programmes? And you will be finished for life.

"No, no, you don't get it. I will not judge them. The viewers alone will vote them in, or throw them out. No malice, trust me, only a faceless mass's verdict." I had to make it work, for my sake.

You are finished, the experts said. I thought about it at length. The

Judge Supreme

RICHA JHA

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judges couldn't have done anything to me personally because I don't possess any of the above talents. And as far as the other producers getting negatively impacted by my programme are concerned, well, it is their headache. Fingers crossed, the contest was announced with much fanfare in all the South Asian countries simultaneously.

And the demi-gods actually came! They queued up, they filled up, and they arrived on the assigned date. Who doesn't want to get noticed? And the already-noticed don't mind getting further noticed. Moreover, I also saw people like me, who were not already a Someone, but wanted to be one, and therefore, had come to audition.

You must appreciate the fact that it is not easy to handle so many contestants at the same time: all of them established or prospective epitomes of meanness, and all with bloated egos to match to boot. Trouble ensued when we requested them to take their seats. Used to being seated in a way that the spotlight falls on them alone, all thousand of them vied for the first row. Chaos erupted, as they resorted to grandiloquent invectives over essential matters like occupying the right seats. I suggested they stand on top of one another, but again, no one was ready to be the

