

UNCUT WITH Mithila Farzana

She started out as a News Presenter at Ekushey Television. She is among the most known faces in television, establishing her prominence with her outstanding work as a presenter. She is also a lecturer at the Institute of Disaster Management in the University of Dhaka. Showbiz brings to you this exclusive interview.

Did you have a grooming session before coming to news presentation?

Mithila Farzana: Those of us who have come a long way and are being well appreciated are all doing well and have come from a very good background. Whether it is for poem recitation or performing arts, they have worked for it. But now a days people talk a lot about training sessions and I really doubt the sort of grooming sessions they are being given. It's true that many newcomers are being introduced today but they should have a versatile knowledge of every subject whether it's journalism or performing arts. They ought to have a combination of everything. *It's been a while since you are in this field, so do you groom newcomers after recruitment?*

MF: Every televisions' news channel has their own grooming session. Initially Ekattor Television held a grooming session which was done by Mahfuz Alam, Motiur Rahman along with all the other prominent senior journalists. After that, all the newcomers are given an in-house training sessions where they are being taught how to dress and what to say according to a given context. Ekattor Television and other news channels came up with a strict policy

that only a full timer can apply for new presentation. It's not obligatory for them to study journalism; however, they have to devote themselves into full time position. One can't just be a new presenter without any knowledge about it. Spending time in the news room and getting the essence of how it works is a sort of grooming itself. But still there seems to have flaws too.

Does the new channel have anything to say regarding the protests by the artists?

MF: The television channels' protest stands is a logical one. If one wishes to telecast their TVC in a foreign channel they are welcome to do so. But there has to be a certain policy for this. According to the Bangladeshi channel producers, they have to pay 5.5 crore taka to telecast their TVCs in India whereas, India only pays 1.5 lac to Bangladesh. This isn't fair. A channel cannot survive alone without TVC, same way as we cannot survive without oxygen. We cannot say the content isn't good, because it's like a cycle and we can never get out of it if the TVC market doesn't fix this matter soon.

Is this affecting the news channel in a negative way?

MF: Obviously it is affecting them; I think Channel Producers should fix a policy for

this matter. Otherwise this cannot be solved and soon many TV channels will have to telecast TVCs for free. When a discussion gets heated up during a talk show, producers demand for an ad break. In this manner people lose interest in the flow of the discussion and it becomes very difficult to follow. It is a very big problem as one has to stop a discussion in the midway.

Do you think the government is paying any heed regarding this issue?

MF: It's a good decision that we are not allowed to sponsor ads for foreign channels. Prime Minister said it herself which is why it's being done and it's in fact a good decision. If she looks after the TVC policy matter then a lot of things can be solved, as the public always look forward to what our honorable Prime Minister has to say. I think, there should be a limited rate for TVC, otherwise this issue cannot be solved. *I personally feel that people are not watching television like they used to. You are the last generation of recognized presenters that this generation knows, so how do you feel about it?*

MF: This is the problem due to branding. How many new presenters have impressed you recently? I was the first one to start a



discussion over television. After Ekhushay Television got shut off people were already familiar about our profession. There's creativity in news presentation and now a days it's not that vivid. We started our journey from scratch and didn't have had any access for exploration compared to what newcomers have now. During our time we only had BTV and now they have so many opportunities to explore. Still there are some elements missing. I don't know the exact reason behind this, but I think there should be a combination between news presentation and knowledge. One might be good at art, literature, politics, economics and sports but cannot perform well, and on the other hand, one might lack in knowledge but can perform well. This is due to lack in presentation skills and knowledge. They should have knowledge about Bangladesh and its history. They ought to give their full effort and dedication. In this manner they will certainly improve. As many people know that it's been 18 years since we are in this profession and to quite an extent we have become an expert on this. Many newcomers are doing well and I am very hopeful that they will continue doing so.