



Shampa Reza

Shampa Reza has long established herself as one of the premier fashion icons in the country. As one of the judges for 'Miss World Bangladesh 2017', she talks about her experience with the much talked about competition and exposes the fiasco after her personal investigation of the scandalous crowning incident.

There are so many things that we could talk to you about, but it is unfortunate that we will have to talk about the entire Miss World Bangladesh 2017 scandal that happened. It is indeed. I have to say that I previously have never believed in beauty pageants as such, as I still think 'beauty' is a subjective matter. I never even watched any miss world competitions. As time went on, I started to realize that it was a free world; some people want to be the center of attention, some people like to see the center of attention. Besides, these competitions, if done with honesty, could mean that the winners could bring some glory to Bangladesh. However, what happened in this particular competition is very unfortunate. Could you tell us how you got involved with the competition? What did you feel about the contestants?

I had avoided judging competitions for quite a while. The organizers were constantly in contact with me until I finally agreed to judge only on the Grand Finale. Once I got there, I realized that the show was in complete shambles. There weren't even any pen or paper in the judges' panel with which we could actually mark the contestants! We had to ask a minimum of 4-5 times to get a page to mark on. We still didn't get a pen, so had to share with what we had brought in our inventories. The paper that they

gave us had all their anatomical details, e.g. height, bust, etc. but no separate boxes to mark different categories such as skin or hair. The contestants themselves were honestly moderately well-groomed.

What happened after that?

The trouble started when the organizers gave us a list of three names: Jannatul Nayeem Avril, Jannatul Sumaiya and Chamok. They told us to choose from the three given names, which none of the judges agreed to. As the show progressed, we agreed that Jessica Islam had most of the qualities with which she could represent Bangladesh. Swapan Chowdhury suddenly came to us and told us that the "international committee" had told him that Jannatul Nayeem should be the winner. We (the judges) were talking about walking out at that point. Then out of nowhere, the host Sheena Chowhan announced Jannatul Sumaiya as the winner without taking our consent. The drama escalated when Swapan Chowdhury took the microphone from the host and announced Jannatul Nayeem the winner, claiming that there was a mistake because of similar names! Shortly after the competition, Jannatul Nayeem Avril was disqualified because she was revealed to be married. What is your take on that?

To be honest, I will not blame the girl for

the fiasco. She was simply doing as she was told. I saw the video that she had released on Facebook live, and the way she tried to emotionally manipulate the people could not be thought out by her. There is a whole racket that works behind these girls, taking them under their hood from a young age and changing them completely. In some instances, drugs are used to enhance their physical features. I really feel bad for these girls, who try to take a shortcut to success by skipping all the important grooming to improve their demeanor and skills.

Where do we go from here? Do you think this scandal will make people more aware of this issue?

Frankly, very few people care about such beauty contests in this day and age. With the internet at the palm of everyone's hands, no one really watches TV anymore. That being said, even if it is for the people who still watch it, the person who represents our country needs to be well-trained and capable. The journey we have in this world is a precious one, why waste it with acts as such? It is much easier to organize a contest without any kind of cheating or manipulation, and it will save a lot of effort on all fronts.

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Interviewed by Rafi Hossain

Jannatul Ferdoush Peya

Peya was crowned Miss Bangladesh in 2007. However, her ascension to the crown was organic and acclaimed, unlike the scandalous events of this year. Since then, Peya has represented Bangladesh in many international fronts, which includes being the first Bangladeshi to be on the cover of Vogue. She has also been named the brand ambassador of the international brand TRESemmé. In this exclusive interview, Peya talks about the controversy surrounding 'Miss World Bangladesh 2017', and tells us what really happens behind the curtains.

What have you been up to lately?

I am done with studying law, and I am giving my exams for the license. I would ideally want to be a Barrister, as well as continue my media work.

As a model, you have represented Bangladesh overseas regularly. How do you see this incident, both as a professional model and a woman?

When I became Miss Bangladesh in 2007, we still didn't have the official license to participate in Miss World. This year, they got the license, and that is a very positive thing. Our girls can now go and represent Bangladesh in Miss World.

However, it is unfortunate that the event organization was so poor. When the top ten contestants of the events were selected, the organizers should have thoroughly inspected them to verify their backgrounds.

Many people have shown sympathy for Jannatul Nayeem 'Avril' over social media. What is your take on that?

Yes, I've noticed that too. Many are even asking what the problem is if she is married. However, we need to realize that there are certain rules for these competitions. In an exam hall, you cannot break the rules, you will get disqualified otherwise and it's the same for this competition. The rules explicitly state that you cannot be married and public sympathy cannot change that. There are separate competitions for married people. Moreover, Jannatul Nayeem claimed that she was only 16 when she got married, and that was 'child marriage' and not legitimate. I understand her not being able to suppress the huge opportunity that was Miss World Bangladesh, but this was a flat out lie. She was 23 when she got married according to legal documents, and is 27 now. Moreover, her wedding video was leaked on social media, which show that there were no signs that she was forced into that marriage.

At this point, after all that happened, do you think beauty contests as such are necessary for us?

I would say that we definitely need beauty contests. There is a lot of demand from media outlets for good and well-trained models, but ultimately few new faces step up. There is a lot of talent in the country, and they need this exposure to fulfill their dreams of becoming actors or models.

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But the way this particular competition was

exposed, don't you think people will think twice before going to such events?

What happened this year was because of a lack of experience and transparency on behalf of the organizers, and this is unfortunate. However, this has not always been the case. When I participated back in 2007, it was organic and not a single trace of dishonesty or controversy was there. I still think that these competitions will reap benefits if properly organized.

But beauty is a really subjective matter. What is beautiful to one person might not be to another. How do you really judge beauty?

I have to clarify that in beauty pageants, physical beauty is not the only thing that is judged. We bring into factor the talent, intelligence and many other things when judging a contestant. The overall competence of a person is judged.

Don't you think these competitions help to objectify women as 'products'?

Why don't you see it this way: as a model, our job is to make whatever we are wearing/advertising look good. In that sense we often see ourselves as 'hangers'. I used that term because the products that we highlight are more important than we are, and that helps to sell the product. I don't see anything negative with this.

What do you think is the solution to this controversy, especially to ensure that it doesn't happen again?

First of all, the event organization should fall into capable hands. The people who are providing the license to host them should be more aware and competent enough to ensure fair competition. There should also be an extensive background check on the contestants, at least within the top 20. Since this was the first time that we had a licensed Miss World Bangladesh, I am hopeful that the next iterations will be fair. I urge all the future participants and organizers to lay off the dishonesty, as it not only shames the competition, but our country itself.

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Interviewed by Rafi Hossain

