

■ Derana Veet Miss Sri Lanka for Miss World 2011

Miss Sunday Observer

Shimalka basking in the limelight

She has quiet charm but she can also light up a dark room with her flamboyant presence. She has the rare gift of looking like a damsel in western outfits and to look like a homely princess in the Osariya. Being announced as the first runner up of Miss Sri Lanka for Miss World may have increased her fame factor, but she is not ready to rest just yet. Shimalka Bodaragama, old girl of Sirimavo Bandaranaike Vidyalaya, gets candid with the Sunday Observer on being crowned first runner-up, bagging most of the mini titles this year making beauty pageant history and winning the prestigious Miss Sunday Observer title.

BY OMAR RAJARATHNAM



Excerpts of the interview:

Q: You received the highest number of votes from Sunday Observer readers, how do you feel about being the readers' favourite?

A: I couldn't be happier. I want to thank each and every reader who voted for me. I still cannot believe the scale of support I have received from them. It feels great to know that I already have a place in their hearts, I accept that status with humility and will do my best to do justice to the trust they have endorsed in me.

Q: You won seven mini-titles, how did you handle this?

A: I was not willing to compromise on any aspect of my performance throughout the mini-pageants. I had first hand experience of how the other girls worked, going by that I think everyone is a mini-title winner. When my name was announced for the first mini-title, I was happy, but when it got to about the third title, I became nervous too. Although I was smiling I felt the pressure of wanting to do better with every passing minute of the pageant. I admit being confident about 'Most Beautiful Hair', 'Miss National Costume' and 'Miss Talent' but all the other titles were the icing on the cake.

Q: How hard is it to cope with the overwhelming fame you have achieved after the pageant?

A: I think it is too early for me to judge the situation now. I am enjoying the experience and I am very careful about using fame responsibly. I do not want to go on a signing spree and

just bag anything that comes my way. I am selective and I believe I need to be so. This will not only help my identity professionally, it can also work wonders in my personal life. I want to work towards the betterment of society. I want to ensure that I promote causes which are worthwhile and need my support the most. I was a girl guide in school, so empowering is one of my priorities too. It is important that the younger generation especially the women, learn from every opportunity and I want to be available to facilitate their continuous learning process.

Q: What was the biggest lesson you learnt from the pageant?

A: To respect the judgement. From the first mini-pageant until the grand finale, I wanted to make sure that I had a good rapport with all the other and I did. I am aware that all of them worked extremely hard, they were committed to winning the crown, but only one is crowned in the end and it is important that we accept that with optimism.

Q: Where do you think that such a logical and grounded approach stems from?

A: Without a doubt my parents and my family. My support structure is very strong. My father is extremely excited about what I have achieved. My mother still remains very calm through all this mayhem. My sisters have been nothing but a great source of support, so I guess I have all the right reasons to maintain this attitude. Planning out your life always helps. I aspire to complete my degree and develop my business. I will not bank only on fame, but I will surely bank on my attitude and skills, I believe this helps me be happy and productive even after the fame factor dies out. I

would like to take this opportunity to thank the Derana crew for all their hard work, Indika from Wanamal Salon, Dimaal from Stone 'n String, Jerome Corea for designing my national costume and the evening dress for the final, Dimaal for providing me with all the jewellery, Dharshi Keerthisena and my uncles Eric Sooriyasena and Janaka Bodaragama, I really couldn't have achieved all of this without them.

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PIX BY KAVINDRA PERERA

