

Heavyweight! This girl from Japan can mount an elephant all by herself

- By Boski Gupta | Jul 09, 2017 05:17am



Ms World Japan Priyanka Yoshikawa not only wears a diamond tiara but also the hat of a mahout, writes Boski Gupta

It's hard to believe that this slim, tall and elegant girl from Japan can mount an elephant all by herself, and also steer him. Priyanka Yoshikawa though is known mostly for being crowned Ms World Japan 2016, one of her certificates created a lot of flutter: That of licence to train elephants! This great granddaughter of Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, the first Chief Minister of West Bengal, also wants to try her luck in Hindi cinema. Here the Japanese beauty talks about her lineage, life in her native country and more...

You were trolled and faced a lot of criticism for being hafu (mixed race in Japanese) to win Ms World Japan pageant. Are you over it? How did you face that criticism?

I was so very grateful for having been named Miss Japan World. I didn't expect everyone in the world to approve of me as everyone has their own opinions and one cannot make everyone happy, but no matter, I have learned to respect all of these opinions. Nothing and no one's opinion could stop me from day one. I was and am still doing my best to make Japan proud.

Tell us about yourself... Your growing up years and journey to the Ms World pageant.

My mother is Japanese and my father is Indian. I had the opportunity to be partially raised and educated in my primary years in California, and my classmates were very international and diverse. I also attended school in India. Since I was exposed to so many cultures and people, I never felt being bi-racial was a negative thing. It made me more global and was a gateway to helping me understand cultural differences. I think growing up in three different countries made it easier for me to adjust within and accept different cultures with more flexibility. I learned to embrace diversity and change. Miss World was a childhood dream, but I never really thought I would become a contestant. It was my first pageant, and I put all I had into it. I refused to believe that there were obstacles I could not overcome.

We have heard that it's really hard for non-Japanese to get accepted in the country and culture.

What do you think?

Well, I did not experience that much, so I have not found it to be true for me, personally. But it ultimately depends on how you define 'getting accepted', because all cultures and countries have their own unique perspectives and beliefs. So in my humble opinion it is impossible to blend in 100%. But if you define 'getting accepted' as being able to live without conflict, and rather choosing to help and accept each other, then I think it's extremely possible here, and elsewhere.

How connected are you to India?

My father is Bengali. I lived in Kolkata for a year and I've always been intertwined with my Indian roots. I'm Japanese and Indian at the same time so of course I can relate. I would like to settle where ever life takes me.

Your paternal family was active in politics... Are you interested in Indian politics?

(Laughs) I would like to stay away from 'politics' of any kind at the moment...

...And what about Hindi movies?

I grew up watching Hindi movies. Recently I saw Dear Zindagi and just loved Shah Rukh Khan and Alia Bhatt in it. I also like Varun Dhawan, Priyanka Chopra, Deepika Padukone, Arjun Rampal and it goes on... I've been modelling in Japan and for my next chapter of life I want to start acting in Bollywood. I would love to act in Hindi cinema.

You have worked as a translator...

In my early years when I started modelling it wasn't easy and I needed a part time job. I spoke English so I started to freelance as a translator.

You are an avid kickboxer...

I'm actually not a kick boxer. My hobby is kick boxing and it's also a great workout. I have been doing it for about two years at Kohiruimaki dojo in Tokyo. But I also love to paint.

You have a licence to train elephants! How did this happen?

I've been an Elephant lover since childhood and eventually I got a licence in elephant training. After becoming Miss Japan World I thought I could spread the message more about the wild animal rights and protect them from getting harmed.

So what are your plans regarding being a mahaout (elephant trainer)?

I'll be visiting Assam in November and attending the Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics™ forum. Recently I have become the ambassador for Elephant country/ Eastern Himalayan Elephant Princess as well. I was honoured to be given the opportunity by Balipara Foundation to represent Elephant Country and through my association, I hope to foster Community Development and Asian Elephant Conservation. I will be visiting Assam in November to interact with role models of Elephant Country and to encourage the concept of living harmoniously with nature. I think that Elephants in India are revered as religious symbols but conflicting situations arise due to loss of biodiversity and a major gap in understanding Elephant needs. I look forward to spreading awareness about the cause through community welfare and elephant care as well as supporting all related initiatives I'm given the opportunity to be a part of.

What's your message to the young women of the world?

Just be yourself, be positive, live with love and don't be afraid to speak up for yourself. Keep fighting for your dreams.

The Free Press Journal Article:

<http://www.freepressjournal.in/interviews/heavyweight-this-girl-from-japan-can-mount-an-elephant-all-by-herself>