News

Former beauty queen says Indian nationals look down on Indian S'poreans

ST FILE PICTURE

Her anti-Indian expat remarks rile netizens

REPORT: **TEH JEN LEE**
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SHE is a former beauty queen in a pageant run by Vasantham, Singapore's only free-to-air Indian-language channel.

But her recent online comments are not a pretty sight, a number of netizens seem to feel.

Miss Shobna Sukumar, 25, a Singaporean freelance TV actress, posted a series of negative comments on her Facebook account last month about Indians from India, calling them irritating and mercenary.

Miss Shobna, who was Miss Vasantham 2004, also accused them of being inconsiderate, sexually promiscuous and prone to cheating.

Her comments drew criticism from other Facebook users, who slammed the TV personality for being disrespectful.

'Complete fool'

One user called A-leen There wrote: "You have just made a complete fool of yourself talking like that. Look at the language used, the personal attacks. I hope Vasantham or any other channel does not use you. Respect is the most basic thing."

Mrs Priya Asok Kumar, 27, contacted The New Paper about the heated exchange on Facebook, which spawned more than 60 comments.

The Singaporean, who provides foreign-student services, said that what irritated her is that Miss Shobna is a public personality and people might look up to her.

"She was just going on and on... How can she do that?

"Just because she has fame doesn't mean she can write anything. I see Indians from India every day of my life. My husband is also Indian, and he's nothing like what she says."

Mrs Asok Kumar added: "She should not look down on people coming from other countries. Singapore is a home for everyone."

In defence

But Miss Shobna defended her views, saying she expressed them because she feels Indians from India look down on Singapore.

She told The New Paper: "I used to have acquaintances who are India Indians. They behave very arrogantly towards us. They keep saying that without (expats), Singapore is nothing, and that we have no culture.

"This is not about race. We have so many races living together here. I've Malay, Chinese friends. We have close ties with them.

"But once it comes to these India people, somehow they will start comparing. I'm nationalist. I care for my nation's people because I was born here."

She added: "Many of them (Indian expats) treat Singapore as a stepping stone. They don't intend to stay here. They will either go back or go to the UK or US."

Mrs Asok Kumar said: "I'm so embarrassed... because people might think we all think like her. I bring Sri Lanka and India students to study here, I tell them that Singaporeans are helpful but this is a slap on the face by a fellow Singaporean."

Should Miss Shobna be more careful with her comments?

"I am just saying what's affecting me. Others out there might agree with me. Somebody has to speak out," she said.

She added that she does not have much contact with foreigners from other countries, so she's neutral about them.

When contacted, a spokesman for Vasantham said: "We do not share Miss Shobna's personal views and thus will not comment on them. Shobna was a former Miss Vasantham in 2004 and is a freelance artiste.

"She is not contracted to the company. She has only appeared in a few dramas on the channel."

MISS SHOBNA ON HER RANT:

"They behave very arrogantly towards us. They keep saying that without (expats), Singapore is nothing, and that we have no culture."

TNP READER MRS ASOK KUMAR:

"I'm so embarrassed... because people might think we (Singaporeans) all think like her."

When asked for comments on the relationship between local and expat Indians, Professor Kishore Mahbubani, dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, said: "I am deeply troubled by the stories of the gap between Singaporean Indians and Indians from India.

"However, I must confess that I have never encountered any personal difficulties. Indeed, I have made many new friends among Indians from India and I welcome their presence here."

As for improving relations, he said: "It may be useful to think of new initiatives that bring the two groups together.

"Perhaps, organisations like Sinda (Singapore Indian Development Association) and the Indian Association can play a small role.

"However, I also believe that over time, the gap will naturally diminish through greater interaction. Hence, I am optimistic that this is a temporary problem."

Hong Kong (Tax $80)
By Cathay Pacific
3D Hong Kong F & E s$328
4D Hong Kong Disneyland s$458
5D Hong Kong/ Shenzhen s$398
4D Hong Kong + Macau s$498
4D Hong Kong Family Pak s$468
City tour + Ocean Park + Disneyland
Bali (Tax $44)
By Garuda Indonesia
3D Bali Dynasty 4★ s$408
3D Hard Rock Hotel 5★ s$428
3D Melia Bali 5★ s$488
4D Bali Tour (2 Full Day) s$438
Bangkok (Tax $146)
3D2N + 1N Free By Thai Airways
Grand Sukumvit 5★ s$318
Courtyard by Marriot 5★ s$328
Pathumwan Princess 4★ s$338
Amari Watergate 5★ s$368
Taiwan (Tax $143-$20)
Fly By Singapore Airlines
3D Taipei F&E s$358
4D Taipei Shopping s$438
6D All Taiwan Tour s$568
7D Alishan - High Speed Train s$658
Vietnam (Tax $131)
3D Ho Chi Minh F&E s$188
3D Hanoi F&E s$298
4/5D Saigon - Mekong Delta s$318
4/5D Hanoi - Halong Bay s$458
7D Vietnam North & South s$758
3/4D Danang Tour s$408
Cambodia (Tax $100)
3D Siem Reap F&E s$178
3D Phnom Penh F&E s$178
3/4D Angkor Wat Tour s$288
5D Cambodia Encounter Tour s$458
Siem Reap + Phnom Penh
Samui (Tax $136)
By Bangkok Airways
Buy 1N Get 1N Free
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Bandara Resort & Spa 4★ s$408
Chaweng Regent 4★ s$538
Melati Beach Resort 5★ s$588
Chiangmai (Tax $136)
3D2N + 1N Free By SilkAir
Central Duang Tawan 4★ s$198
Imperial Mae Ping 4★ s$198
Royal Princess 4★ s$208
Shangri-La Chiangmai 5★ s$328
Phuket (Tax $136)
3D Courtyard Marriott 5★ s$248
3D Laguna Resort 5★ s$268
3D Movenpick Resort 5★ s$288
5D Phuket + Krabi s$338
5D Krabi Pimalai 5★ (3N3D) s$478
Australia (Tax $388-$473)
3D2N Perth F&E s$418
3D2N Sydney/ Melbourne s$378
3D2N GoldCoast F&E s$388
4D3N Melbourne Tour s$568
Philip Island Penguins & Koala
4D3N Sydney Tour s$568
Port Stephens & Nelson Bay Adventure
4D3N Gold Coast Tour s$618
Movieworld, Seaworld, Farm tour
5D4N Perth Discovery Tour s$748
4WD Pinnacles, Beaches, Koala & Sand Boarding Tour
5D4N Perth Swan Valley Farm Stay s$928
Maldives (Tax $49)
4D3N+1N Free
Sheraton Full Moon 5★ s$1288
Kurumba Resort 5★ s$1288
Velassaru Resort 5★ s$1378
Anantara Veli Resort 5★ s$1738
SilkAir Sipaway (Tax $132)
Return Airfare on SilkAir
3D2N Penang Explorer
Round Island Tour / Butterfly Farm
Tropical Spice Garden s$218
4D3N Kuching Explore
Sarawak Cultural Village Tour with Show
Semenggoh Orang Utan Centre
Deluxe Seafood Dinner s$278
4D3N Kota Kinabalu
Sapi Island Hopping / Night Tour
Seafood Dinner s$278
4D3N Langkawi
Island Hopping Tour
Cable Car Ride / Underwater World s$288
Malaysia (Tax $132)
3D2N Penang s$138
3D2N K.Kinabalu s$148
3D2N Kuching s$128
3D2N Langkawi s$158
3D2N K.Lumpur s$178
India (Single Tax $325)
5D3N Heritage of South s$ 668
6D5N Road To Taj Mahal s$ 888
9D7N Northern Road s$1268
Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Kashmir House Boat
7D6N Natural Kerala s$1238
8D6N Sikkim Jeep Safari s$1738
Nepal/Bhutan (Single Tax $280)
8D Beauty of Nepal s$868
10D Wonders of Nepal s$1198
10D Ghorepani Trekking s$1228
10D Sikkim + Bhutan s$2738
Sri Lanka (Single Tax $72)
3D2N Colombo F&E s$388
5D3N Colombo Adventure s$578
6D5N Sri Lankan Romance s$728
6D5N Sri Lankan Nature s$868
Indonesia (Tax $44-$110)
4/5D Medan Lake Toba
Parapat, Samosir Island, Berastagi s$338
4/5D Jakarta Bandung
Puncak - Safari, Volcano & Hot Spring s$328
4/5D West Sumatra
Padang, Bukittinggi, Harau Valley, Lake Maninjau s$368
3/4D Solo Jogjakarta
Borobudur Temple, Sultan Palace s$378
3/4D Surabaya Mt.Bromo
Mt Bromo Safari Adventure, Apple Garden s$308
4D Wow! Bali My Leisure
Tanah Lot + Grill Seafood Dinner s$408
3D2N Free & Easy
Medan s$208 Padang s$208
Bandung s$208 Lombok s$248
Solo s$218 Semarang s$328
Jakarta s$198 Jogjakarta s$338
Surabaya s$228 Manado s$328
USA/Canada (Tax $28)
11D West Coast Wonders s$2018
Disneyland, Grand Canyon, Las Vegas
10D Eastern USA & Canada s$2058
8D Canadian Rockies s$2038
8D Hawaii Deluxe Tour s$1678
Europe/Mediterranean (Tax $300-$500)
5D4N London-Paris Eurostar s$1188
with 2N London + 2N Paris Hotel
5D3N Dubai Wonders s$838
• Dhow Cruise Dinner, Desert Safari
10D Egypt Cairo Nile Cruise s$1738
• 3 way Sleeper Train, 5★ Deluxe Tour
9D Greece Island in the Sun s$1998
• Athens, Mykonos, Santorini
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