



# Leisure Land

## The Round Table (Celeb Chat) Anarkalli Aakarsha Sri Lankan women deserve a better deal



**O**ur charming guest today is the Manthirithumiya, Sri Lanka's youngest and first ever woman Manthirithumiya of the Southern Provincial council. Here she is, just watch.....

**Ayubowan.** Good evening Manthirithumiya and a very warm welcome to our program.

**Anarkalli:** Ayubowan. Good evening to you. How are you doing?

**Kumar:** Fine. How are you doing?

**Anarkalli:** I'm Fabulous, thanks.

**Kumar:** Now, this is the question which has been asked from you I think innumerable times and you're sick of answering it. But tell me one final time; Anarkalli, why did you enter politics?

**Anarkalli:** Okay. Firstly, the reason why I'm going to answer this question, yet again!.....

**Kumar:** YES..?

**Anarkalli:** .... Is I believe that the whole of Sri Lanka watches your program, so I thought, you know what? I'm going to answer this question once and for all, so no one ever asks me ever again!

**Kumar:** once and for all? OKAY! Go ahead, all yours....

**Anarkalli:** The reason I felt that I needed to actually get into politics at this stage of my life is due to the reason where I went through a lot of personal life challenges as well as my career and I felt that women in Sri Lanka needed a better platform and needed more of assistance, let's say, in getting a pathway made for them, to make their dreams come true in life. Without having to be scared, without them having to depend on someone else or without them having a feeling of being: "oh, you know what? I'm a woman, I just don't think I could be able to do that....that's for a man." So I felt that its time for me to step up, because if you wait long enough; the time as well as the moment just passes you by without you even realizing it. So I felt; "you know what? I'm going to do this, and no one is going to stop me and it was a challenge.... I mean..... For a 22 year old to go into the south, to go into Galle..

**Kumar:** To campaign. In a man's world!

**Anarkalli:** In a man's world. 2 weeks to go for the elections, everyone else knew beforehand that they're going to be contesting, but I didn't know if I was going to be given the 'go ahead,' so it was really nerve wrecking.....

**Kumar:** You had issues in the campaign trail, lots of them?

**Anarkalli:** yes, lots of them! From the outside, within the party... and my mom and myself....

**Kumar:** how did mommy and you battle this whole thing?

**Anarkalli:** it was crazy! You know the whole campaign; I did it unlike the other contestants I was new to this whole thing and I wanted to be different as well so it was just me, my mom and my car... one car! Where everyone else had like sixty/fifty convoys...

**Kumar:** what about security?

**Anarkalli:** I had this one guard during like the later stages....

**Kumar:** only one?

**Anarkalli:** yeah! And I did instruct him to please do not...

**Kumar:** pennanna epa? (Don't show)

**Anarkalli:** yes. And I said please don't mishandle people and just wanted him to keep an eye, just to make sure that I was going to be okay... because I had a lot of threats, it was during the last week of the campaign where it got really bad! So I had my car, just my mom and myself, and I didn't have posters or billboards of anything like that, and I actually had several meetings where I went to peoples' houses where I met them and didn't have these .....

**Kumar:** Big rallies with stages, no?

**Anarkalli:** No! I didn't do any of that. So I was so happy that people thought that she's just really honest, she's coming out there and really wants to work and they believed in me.

**Kumar:** this may sound like a stupid question, but did they actually believe you? That you were really genuine in what you were going to do for them. and change their lives!

**Anarkalli:** I'm so blessed! Because in my career as an

actress, from the age of eight years old I started my first tele-drama, I couldn't speak Sinhalese!

**Kumar:** why was that?

**Anarkalli:** I went to C.I.S and it's an English medium school and all my friends speak English, and a lot of my friends didn't live in Sri Lanka and were from different countries, so we never really spoke Sinhalese. Even in school, because it was English medium right? And I never really watched Sinhalese movies, never listened to Sinhalese music. it was all alien to me even if I lived in Sri Lanka. So that's why. And even though later on I picked up on words I wasn't very good at Sinhalese but people knew I wasn't being fake about it, they knew I genuinely was struggling....

**Kumar:** Making an effort to learn?

**Anarkalli:** And even my personality as an actress, people who know me know who I am and that I come from this sort of background and they're so understanding about it. So even when I went to Galle when I was contesting and I was telling them about issues that I really believed in they knew I was speaking about these issues because I've gone through it; if it was domestic violence it's because they knew she's not being all Miss. Sri Lanka and perfect and saying world peace! They knew I was speaking of things like when I said I really want, one of the



strongest things I believe

in is like everyone in the south, there are so talented. And when it comes to tourism as well its probably you know the most endorsed area in Sri Lanka as well in terms of tourism, but a lot of people can't speak English, they can't converse with the tourists, so I want to do English programs. So they knew she can speak English! She knows what she's talking about, so yes she wants to help us. I didn't speak of things I can't do for the people. I spoke of practical things.

**Kumar:** So in this space of time

what have you been able to do for the women of the south who you represent in the provincial council?

**Anarkalli:** At the moment, as I said, we are doing this English program specially for.... See in the south as well is a very conservative area we have to have separate programs for the young girls as well, so that's one of the things we're doing, as well as we're opening a grooming school for young girls because before you go into being a beautician I believe you need to learn an etiquette and grooming, so we're starting a school on that. We are also starting, apart from that a modeling school for them and as well as handicrafts, a lot of the women in the south, they don't want to go out there and actually do a job so what they do is from they do different beautiful carpets, bags and so many things like that .

**Kumar:** so where's the market for all these products?

**Anarkalli:** well we're going to be showcasing them whenever we have like tourist seasons in Galle we

are going to be having like markets for them, so they can display and sell their products but as well as we're going to have a school where we document like the names and you have like a bank of suppliers. So whenever someone comes and says "okay, we're looking out for this," we know the contact and we just direct them without having anything else to do with it. After that it's their own baby and they can actually go out there because a lot of people don't have assistance or contacts that are why they can't take their talent out.

**Kumar:** now your residing in Colombo, how accessible are you to the women of Galle whom you actually work for and work with?

**Anarkalli:** I have an office in Galle, as well as I go twice a week whenever I have projects I stay longer obviously, like about a week or a week and a half. So I'm always contactable on the phone and I have my secretaries as well as they write to me and then I'm on emails so yeah. Not only for the women, I

must correct you, I know I'm a woman but I'm there for all the people out there in Galle, not necessarily only the women I must correct you there.

**Kumar:** (laughs) give it a break, its okay. We move on to film, to cinema. You began when you were eight years old, you are 22 now, what has the journey been like?

**Anarkalli:** it's just been love. That's all I can say cause cinema is my first and will always be my permanent love in life and from the age of eight up to now....

**Kumar:** not a husband?

**Anarkalli:** no!

**Kumar:** No? You're sure of it?

**Anarkalli:** Yes! Because if it was my husband I wouldn't get into politics. That would be like separation. So in films it's amazing for me cause I love people and I get to be different characters. I get to be a doctor, a high school student....

**Kumar:** pickpocket!

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