

Q&A with ZQ

by Ahmed Hayat

ZQ is one of the most talented female stars of our country. She is a top model a talented actress and needs no introduction. She was crowned the 'Best Model of the year 2004' in Lux Style Awards and recently won the "Most Stylish TV Actress Award" in Indus Style Awards 2006. Read on to get to know about ZQ's point of view on career, marriage, politics and more.

Tell us about you're your background and your journey into the modeling world?

My family comes from Kohat and I was born in Karachi . I did my O levels in Karachi and then moved to Lahore to do my B.A. and M.A.

I taught at 'Grammer school' for a year before joining Libas as an assistant editor. I worked there for two years and did my masters again for another two years. I have been modeling for the past fourteen years.

Modeling has been your major career. Are you going to continue it for long?

I am very happy that the new crop of models is coming up and soon they are going to take our place. Until that transition takes place I think I have another year to go. I am concentrating more on my plays these days.

Talking about the current Pakistani modeling scene, why don't we get to see many new faces compared to India .

First of all compare the population of India and Pakistan and their provinces and states. It is a bigger country than Pakistan . Models in India are coming from everywhere from Madras and Bengal . They have got the two Miss Universe and Miss World from Bengal. India has so many regions.

In Pakistan you can forget the province of NWFP and Balochistan, these are tribal areas and have feudal families



who do not let their girls model for whatever reason. The girls that do model are from Punjab or Sindh. It is still not easy for girls to take up modeling, in these provinces, as a profession. People put you down with comments like 'no one is going to marry you, you will have no reputation and all, etc'. Things have changed considerably though.

But why is it so in our culture?

Our culture does not allow modeling. We have been able to put the Pakistani fashion scene on the world map with great difficulty and thanks to the support of General Pervez Musharraf. We are given more permission nowadys. There were many restraints earlier.

There are so many preconceived notion and stereotypical images about modeling; it is very hard to shatter these. I am referring to the general public as well as members of highly educated families. They would rather have their

daughters become rocket scientists and dentists than models.

Even I agree that modeling is not a full time profession; one has to complete their education. A fall back is necessary as in modeling the fun only lasts for five to six years. This is my fourteenth year but you cannot drag it longer than this. The essence of modeling is constant change.

Will you ever encourage your daughter to become a model?

Being a 21 st century woman, I will ingrain proper values in my daughter and make sure she does not let her education suffer. If she wants to become a pilot I will let her do it. I will let her do anything.

I think this is where parents go wrong. My mother gave me full permission knowing that she had taught me everything about right and wrong. If

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you have given your kids good training and taught them the right values, there should be no issues.

There is nothing wrong in modeling. If I had seen something wrong with modeling I would have quit before asking my daughter to quit.

Do you see Pakistan taking part in Miss Universe and Miss World competitions in the next 5-10 years?

We cannot unless they respect our values, we cannot go through the swimsuit round. Anita Ayub did try but it just doesn't work that way. It is not in our culture. It cannot happen.

We do have beautiful women. Even the Indians themselves say it. There have been so many Indian actors and directors who come here and they all say that Pakistani women are gorgeous even without makeup.

Does religion hinder?

Of course! And I don't think we should bring religion into this because there is going to be a never-ending debate.

I think if ones conscious is clear it is fine, I know my conscious is clear. I know I am not flaunting my body I am basically modeling the clothes. It depends on the audience whether they come to see my body or my clothes. It is all about intentions.

Who is your favorite Pakistani designer? Whose clothes would you like to wear for your wedding?

I have worked with everyone in this industry, the established ones as well as the newcomers. I would really like to get married in just my jeans and T-shirt. I think I have become a bride more than 3000 times.

When do you plan to marry?

'I think Abhishek, John Abraham and Brad Pitt are busy right now.'

It is not about when I want to get married. Whenever it is destined to be, it will be. Probably when I meet the

right guy. When kuch kuch hoga tou hojaye ga!

You advised Zhalay to turn to modeling instead of acting. Why?

No particular reason. I met Zhalay at the set of Marina Khan's 'Dhoop' which she did for ARY. As she is tall and has got a good figure, I suggested to her that she should try modeling. I just thought that along with acting she can take up modeling.

Which one do you prefer to do acting/compereing or modeling?

When I am hosting it is very hundred percent me. I am not putting much of an effort. I love talking; I love to talk whether it is my friend or mom. Compereing doesn't work for me.

I have been modeling for such a long time the clothes change, the ramp changes, the choreography changes but basically you are just walking. It is all very natural.

Acting is very challenging and I love it. Every time it is like a different character and you have to internalize it. Kill your personality and actually transform into the person you are playing.

I am not complaining but since my life is so smooth and boring that being a part of these stormy relationships and love triangles is very exciting.

Tell us about your upcoming projects?

I have just finished 'Kabhi na kabhi' for ARY which I did with Indian superstars (ones from Star plus) there are Tina Tariq and Shubha Mudgal in it. Riyasat is on air.

I have got two projects with Avenue. One is called 'Thora thora pyar' where I am starring with Mohammad Rana and one is with Jibran. These will be aired on Hum.

What do you think about all the joint ventures happening between India and Pakistani stars these days?

As long as it is equal there are no issues.

My best wishes are with Meera to do what she wants to do. I really like people like Reema and Zeba Bakhtiar. You know Reema has not acted but Zeba Bakhtiar did. The amount of respect they got is amazing. It is all about being graceful and dignified because you are representing your country.

If an actor is going to be desperate and give me any role type then no way! And it should not be like that one country should be one up on the other. It should be equal representation from both the sides.

If you get an offer from India in the near future, would you be doing it?

I would love to do an Indian film but they have to think that I am really good enough. I would like to do it with big banners like Karan Johar, Yash Chopra and Sanjay Leela Bhansali but they have to keep in mind that I won't do any anti Pakistani movies.

I do not like to wear mini and I will not kiss- there are so many limitations. If anyone has a really fabulous and mind blowing idea and keeps my limitations in mind I might do it. At the end of the day I am representing my country being a very patriotic, I will not try to tarnish its reputation in any way.

So any plans to get into Lollywood and promote your country.

You know the current state of Lollywood. Unfortunately ... You see we are in charge of the modeling industry and for the past 14 years we have come a long way, we have struggled; we have helped develop it.

It is up to the Lollywood stars to develop their industry. Now I am working for TV, the silver screen Lollywood has to take care of Lollywood. They could make it good enough for us to join it.

Why don't you work with new directors?

New directors would like to work with old actresses because it is all about commercialism and making money. They themselves are new and on top of that if they take new actresses and actors to 'phir sab hi doobay gay' (everyone will drown). They also want an anchor for their ventures therefore they prefer the old crowd.

It is really sad that Pakistan just has five male and five female stars and sometimes the heroines look like the elder sisters of heroes. I won't take names but you go and watch a couple of movies and you will understand what I mean.

In a recent interview with Tariq Amin he said that a model should be 18 and not 36 and wrinkled. What is your comment on this?

Who said that? Tariq said that.

Well I am 31 years old and I am very proud of it. I won't say that I am fifteen. I don't think we need to hide our age. We look good and people are hiring us.

Multinationals are taking us and I am glad to be a brand ambassador for Mobilink. If Mobilink thought I was old why would they take me? It is also about popularity, right. If you are popular and look good so you will sell, otherwise masses would reject you. And no one will take you.

I am talking about premium level work. So you could be 18 and total paindoo and have no personality. What is the point? By the time they polish you are already fifty. If we are not going strong then how come it is only the oldies that are being approached?

Don't you think that Pakistan should have modeling institutes and other similar institutes?

Don't you think Pakistan should first worry about educating the masses? These are superficial little things. Educate the masses and we will see a progressive change in Pakistani life.

You seem to be a very patriotic person, any plans to join any NGOs.

I am a member of several NGOs.

The only difference is that I am not going to flaunt about it in the press because it is my thing. It is my conscious, if I can give back to my society which is giving me so much. I am lucky enough to have a name in this country but I think everyone should payback to society.

In fact my biggest dream is to do something really amazing for Pakistan and to have the highest civilian award that is 'Sitare Imtiaz'. I have got the Lux Style Award for best model and I have got the Indus most stylish actress award. The 'Sitare Imtiaz' would be the ultimate award I would ever get.

We have seen you in couple of music videos but mainly Jawad Bashir's videos. Why is that so?

I think it was a long time ago. Yes I did around eleven or twelve videos. Jawad Bashir is a very good friend.

How come you haven't asked that I have done over 4500 shoots with Ather Shahzad. It's the same thing, that you do 25 videos with one directors or whether you do maximum shoots with one photographer.

We are very professional, we work with males and the sad thing is that there is a big controversy that Jawad and I were having an affair. This was very funny. In the beginning it was funny and later it became irritating.

People expect that in the fashion and music industry every pop star, actor and director is vulgar. The models are desperate and have no reputation. When within the industry the such rumors come up it is pathetic.

There was a scene with Ali Haider and some model and so there are these controversies.

That is something totally different and it happened later. I worked with Jawad Bashir because I was going to do a serial

and was free for two months. Jawad said he has these videos and wanted me to shoot for them. I agreed. I can do 59 videos with the same director if I want to. How come no one asked strings that why they are only hiring Jami as a director?

I was coming to the photographer part of the question ...

The reason to my success and the reason that Vinnie, Iraj, Tanya Shafi (we are dinosaurs na) have made it for such a long time is because we have worked with everyone; freelanced with everyone so no one can complain 'why she doesn't work with me?'

It just happened the Ather Shahzad are in Lahore . I have also worked with Pappu, Rizwan Beyg and Rizwan Ul Haq.

Your ambition as a model?

It is over. I have done it. I have got the highest award that is Lux. I have moved on.

I have ventured into acting and if you ask me of my future plans it is acting. In modeling you just get your project and do them. I have been doing it for 15 years now.

So you have no plans of entering into the International Model Scene?

We have been to KL fashion week. Vinnie and I were selected from Pakistan . The oldest model there was seventeen. They have no set rules. There are many short models. In fact when Indian models come here, the only reason we survive is because of our heights.

Kate Moss is short.

Kate Moss is a different class of model and then there is Giselle. Giselle is gorgeous and if you go to her country there are a thousand Giselle's like her. Just because she is in America and exotic she is very popular. But every Brazilian maasi (old lady) looks just as good; I am being very serious here.

On the other hand when you see Indian movies and Indian models you say 'wow'.

Go to Bombay and you will see there is so much poverty there that I did not want to step out of JW Marriot.

We were thinking Sharukh Khan, palace and falana khan but when you are looking up these flats. Oh my god I would die if I lived there. Our quality of life over here is way better. MashaAllah. We have been told the same by the Indian models.

Talking about the political scene in Pakistan what are your views about it.

I think General Pervez Musharraf is doing a great job. I really hope InshaAllah; he should last for another 45 years at least. I feel safe in this country when he is the head. I think this is important for a ruler to make you feel like this. I just feel good. He is a brilliant politician, a great general and a great leader. I wouldn't want anyone else.

On the closing note what would you like to advice the upcoming models and actresses of Pakistan.

Don't loose your head if you have to the opportunity and if you are lucky to get some importance.

Work hard, there are no short cuts to get to the peak of success. Just work very hard and whatever you are meant to get you will but do not forget who you are. Don't loose yourself.

At the end of the day, the lights go off, everyone goes home, the makeup is taken off your face and that's the real you. Don't ever loose that person!
