

The Bollywood Fitness Revolution

by Roshni Mulchandani

Over a decade ago, the likes of *Madhuri Dixit*, *Karisma Kapoor* and *Kajol* reigned at the box office. The actresses, each unique in their acting styles, were not only talented but also relatable in many ways especially when it came to the matter of body weight. During the nineties, these actresses were of a normal healthy weight. *Madhuri Dixit* fans admired her bulky torso, need we remind you of one *Dhak-Dhak* number, versus *Kajol's* boyish frame ala *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* and finally *Karisma's* sexy but gangly slenderness. And while they weren't considered fit, they were definitely standard in size, well nourished and such weights were attainable. But that was then. Post the new millennium, a new phenomenon took over Bollywood; one that saw the introduction of a new fitter Bollywood.

While *Zeenat Aman* defined sexy and slender in the seventies, the eighties saw more voluptuous avatars with the likes of *Sridevi* ruling in terms of popularity. It was *Karisma Kapoor* who bared her toned mid-ribs in the nineties raising a few eyebrows and the bar for her contemporaries. No more would the flab or tires work. It was ace stylist, fashion designer and friend *Manish Malhotra* who gave the actress a serious make-over body and all. Soon after, it was *Urmila Matondkar* who joined the bandwagon and kicked it up a notch with her ultra fit form in *Rangeela*. The actress donned a number of minis baring her toned legs and additionally sported many a swimwear which crowned her as "the" fittest actress in her time.

From then on, it was nothing but fitness mania for the Bollywood women. Every actress already belonged to the industry and those knocking on the industry's door, knew that a fit body was one of the prerequisites. Whether it was Bong beauty *Bipasha Basu* or sultry *Shilpa Shetty*, both of whom are now Indian idols in women fitness, mutually the actresses know only better that staying in shape has helped their respective careers and how. There was a time when *Basu* was credited with the "thunder thighs" label

only to quickly shed the blubber only to gain a new title: "Hubba-Hubba." *Shilpa Shetty* on the other hand was one actress who has remained lean since the beginning of her career. More recently, both actresses have launched their own individual Fitness DVD's; *Basu's* talks about a correct gym regime while *Shetty* demonstrates how Yoga has helped her go from slim to slimmer.

From sexily fit to grimly undernourished; size zero mania took over Bollywood creating waves amongst the actresses.

It was *Kareena Kapoor* who took her weight to the extreme by losing weight and how, only to be deemed with unappealing names including anorexic and pallid. Her sexy act in *Tashan* was meant to create waves but only landed up making fans want to send her buckets of food. Soon to follow was ex-buddy *Priyanka Chopra*. The actress may have ruled at the box-office last year but her successes and immense amount of work caused *Piggy-Chops'* weight to fall by many pounds adding her to the size zero crew. After much flak, the actresses have gone back to better weights and even better fitness regimes.

Amongst the newbies that have recently joined films, *Sonam Kapoor*; *Deepika Padukone*, *Katrina Kaif*, *Mugdha Godse* and more recently *Shruti Hassan* are some that are considered to the fittest actresses to have joined the revolution.

Interestingly, *Sonam Kapoor* was overweight when she signed her debut debacle *Saawariya*. The Kapoor babe had to follow a serious diet before attaining the polished look she proudly flaunts now. *Padukone* has constantly maintained her slick look after playing Badminton with her father – a national level player.

If Bollywood had to prepare a set of rule for entrance into the world of films, then a healthy fit frame would certainly rank high in the criteria list. Gone are the days where actresses were mere personified objects who stood around providing support. Along with bigger roles, female artists in Bollywood are now also required to look sexy and fit. They may still dance around trees and shed perhaps too many tears, but Bollywood actresses have redefined fitness and this is nothing less of a revolution.

