



PHOTO: HEMANT PADALKAR

Singhania's other balance sheet

Fitness instructor Nawaz Modi Singhania believes in moderation above all

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FOR SOMEONE who regularly tucks into a bar of chocolate, Nawaz Modi Singhania is unfairly svelte. Sitting before me at her Hughes Road office, Singhania looks fetching in a fitted white skirt and a scarlet blouse with Juliet sleeves. It's hard to imagine that this slim, serene woman has had a baby earlier this year, and is currently juggling bottle feeds, diapers, social commitments and the opening of the Marine Drive branch of her fitness center, Body Art. She actually looks fitter than ever, a fact that she doesn't disagree with. "I took good care of myself during and after my pregnancy and actually feel and look better now than I did even prior to my pregnancy," she smiles.

She attributes this deft wearing of many hats to an immense will to make things happen. "There's a lot of careful juggling going on there," she says. "If you want things badly enough, you find ways of making it all happen." She's also quick to point out that it's the clockwork precision of her support team that enables her to do it all. "They make me look like I am doing all the work while they actually are," she laughs.

Despite being married to business tycoon Gautam Singhania, she has always shunned the idea of being a tro-

phy wife. Instead, she has preferred to find her own place in the sun. A fitness expert for the past 15 years, Singhania, trained at the American Council of Exercise (ACE) and the International Dance Exercise Association. But making the world a fitter place was hardly what her family expected from this law graduate. "When I started 15 yrs ago with just an empty room in my father's building, he was completely taken aback by my decision. Even when the business started growing and I began reinvesting my earnings into the business, he wondered if I was just gripped by a passing fancy. Finally, unable to help himself, he asked me how long I intended to continue being a fitness teacher. In response, I asked him how long he intended to be a lawyer. I think that squelched him and he seemed satisfied with my answer," she recalls.

Fitness is obviously a subject rather close to the quiet Scorpio's heart but she's thankfully not a card-bearing fitness fiend. More and more people, she's aware, want to be slim at

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any cost. But as she points out, "Every single area of one's life is greatly improved when one is slim. When it's achieved at the cost of health, the whole purpose is lost."

In fact, Singhania discloses that as a youngster, she was far from athletic. "I was tiny, weak and not at all inclined towards sports or fitness in any way," she says and adds that she also refrains from shoving fitness down people's throats. Not even her husband's. "Gautam usually follows a very healthy routine. I hand out advice

only when he asks me for it—which is occasionally." Though she does add, "After over seven years of marriage, we're increasingly becoming like each other," she says with a laugh.

Which should bode well for Gautam Singhania. His wife's friends certainly swear by her warmth and call her unbelievably grounded. Vanita Gehani, a close friend who has known her for over 20 years, says, "Nawaz can be really be depended upon for sterling, sensible advice. She's not very fond of socialising, and would much rather just hang out with friends. What's re-

ally nice about her is that she won't judge you by a materialistic yardstick." Singhania actually bristles if you bracket her with those 'ladies-who-lunch'.

Though her husband is one of Mumbai's better known party animals and his New Year party is the do to be invited to, Nawaz makes but the rare appearance on the party circuit. Call her reclusive, and she will retort, "You get that impression because I am not at the places you expect to see me."

Media-shy she certainly is, though. Posing for the paparazzi is not something you'd catch her doing. Nor is she your regular fashion victim. Which is why it was surprising to see her stretched out languorously in a recent ad for designers Shane and Falguni Peacock. "It was a one-off thing," she says hastily, but is sporting enough to add, "It was fun. I loved the whole experience."

Grooming consultant Chaya Momya, who's often invited to Singha-



nia's December bash, remarks, "With Nawaz, what you see is what you get. There is no pretence."

Or excess, it would seem. Sensible and balanced are the adjectives she approves of. Moderation is another of her catchwords. Yes, even in those darned chocolate bars.