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Nawaz Modi Singhanian: Fit And Fab!

Completing 25 years in an unconventional career, while maintaining a successful and happy marriage to hubby Gautam Singhanian, raising children and having a fulfilling tryst with art — Nawaz Modi Singhanian makes it all look effortless. But behind that calm demeanour is a woman with a zeal for living life to the fullest, finds EKTA VALECHA.

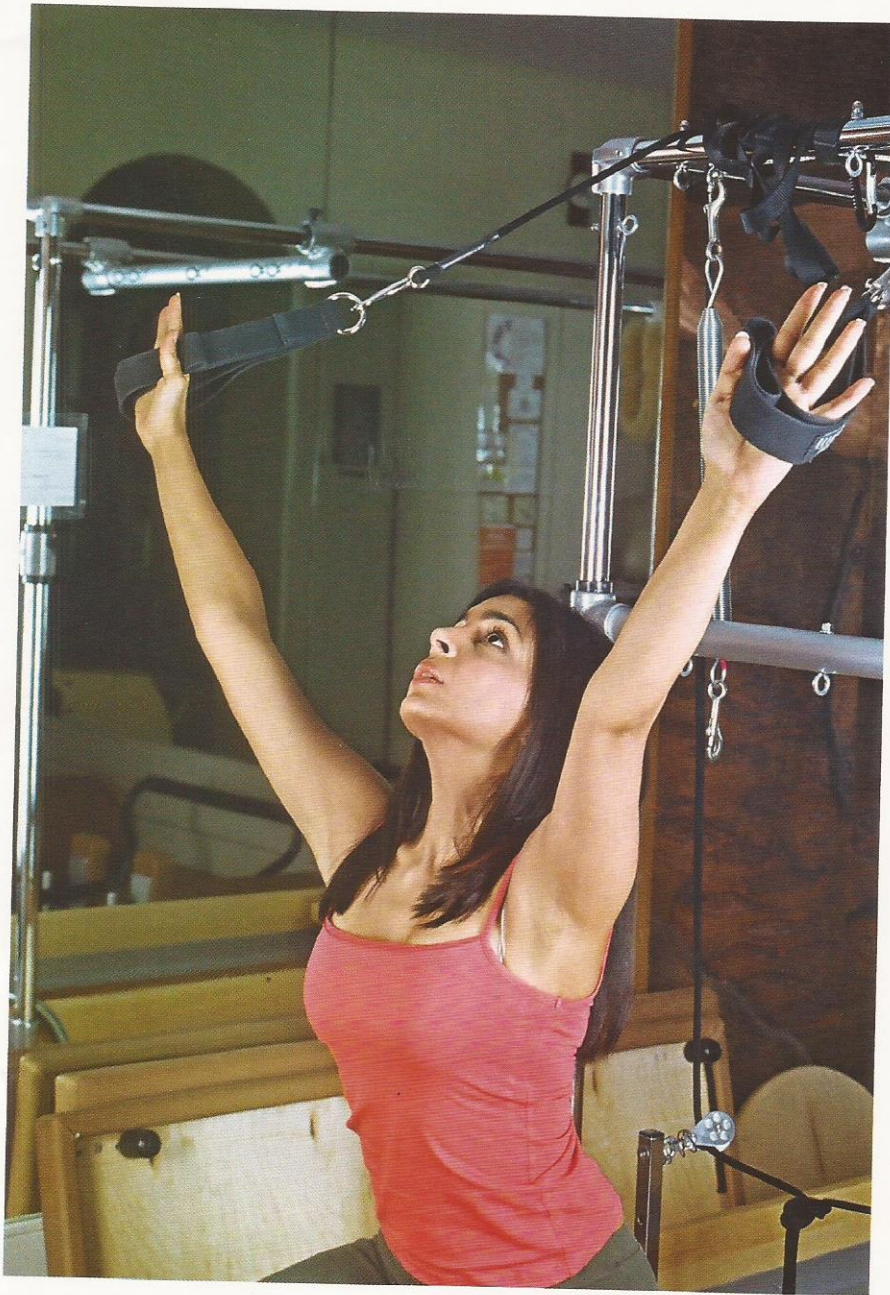


For someone with such a multifaceted and impressive personality, Nawaz Modi Singhanian strikes one as being incredibly unassuming. Curious, chatty and unpretentious, she is eager to break down your fitness routines. Are you doing enough cardio? Are you also incorporating strength training?

Every conversation quickly turns to fitness, which reveals her true passion.

Starting early, Nawaz always knew she wanted to break the norm and do something that would challenge her in every way. "I've always been into dance forms, craft, art; I loved nature and spent endless hours in its pursuit. Being a small, weak, spindly

child, I always wanted to reverse that. When I was about eight years old, my Physical Education teacher in school would make us do somersaults, but when it came to me she would simply dismiss me based on my appearance. Maybe that was the foundation to my deciding what I wanted to do with my life. I remain in gratitude!" she says.



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And with roots that go so deep, perhaps it's inevitable that she would excel at her first endeavour. “When I graduated from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, back in 1990, I was wondering what I wanted to do with my life. Law was the obvious choice, as it ran in the family. I went to K.C. Law College and Government Law College in Mumbai and finished my L.L.B. But law never excited me. Back in the day there were hardly any fitness centres to speak of. I wanted to put my creative juices to work. I

wanted to do things that were not done in India. I wanted to be my own boss, to work on my own time and space and by my own rules. I wanted to remain fit, healthy and maintain myself a certain way, physically. Having the free space in my father's building, all things came together for me and I started my first Aerobic Studio in 1991”, she explains.

And not much has changed today. We talk about what has driven her through all this – and given her this dedication to the studio: “When I first discovered fitness, it changed my life for the better, in virtually every aspect. It has improved my health and had anti-ageing results. It has allowed me to be a channel in helping countless others in achieving their fitness and health goals. Exercising increases self-esteem and self-confidence, improves sleep, increases focus, concentration and mental alertness, exuding a ‘feel-good’ factor due to the release of endorphins during each workout. Personally, it's brought out the creative side in me and invigorated me. For me it's really about the soul. A healthy mind in a healthy body enables a wholesome, happy, purposeful soul”.

We talk about her studio, Body Art, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this month, and her face lights up. “I trained, got certified and taught in the US for a while before I founded Body Art in Mumbai. Initially, it was just an Aerobic Studio with routines such as Step Aerobics, Hi-Lo Fusions, New Body Format, Box-Aerobics, etc. I kept introducing routines that were not available in India. Over the years, I incorporated gyms and we brought down equipment-based Pilates studios with the world class Balanced Body equipment for the first time in India” she emphasises. Then came Gyrotonics and Aqua Aerobics. Body Art's Aerobic Workshop now also offers choreographed Spinning classes, Trampoline classes, Slide Training, Chair Workouts, Partner Workouts, Mat Pilates, Yoga, Stress Management Workshops, Anti-Ageing

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Facial Fitness Workouts, NYC Muscle Ballet, Swiss Ball classes, and much more. “I am so proud of what we’ve managed to achieve with Body Art!” she gushes.

Nawaz’s enthusiasm for fitness is palpable, but she doesn’t restrict herself to a one-dimensional life. A part of her zest for life comes from her love of food – “I love yummy things and eat them very regularly! That includes *biryani*, *dosas*, *dhansak* (I’m a Parsi!), *pav bhaji*, etc. I have a huge sweet tooth and need chocolate after every meal. However, I ensure that all that I eat is made out of very healthy ingredients. That’s actually the trick!” she confesses. But there must be a hack – a trick to manage the multiple roles she juggles. What’s a day in her life like? “For me, each day is very different from the next. Most times I workout when I’m teaching

my class. On the days that I may not be teaching, I do Pilates on my home Trapeze Cadillac & Wunda Chair or use the treadmill. For when I travel, I carry along my trainers and tracks and walk around the city, or hit the hotel gym. There are times when my day has been so crazy that I just could not manage to fit my workout in and have ended up working out in my home gym even at 2 or 3 am!” says the fitness addict.

And as satisfying as it has been to pursue her life-long passion, she found a unique channel for self-expression in art. An admirer and collector, her own work was first featured in her solo exhibition in 2008. And even though she’s had a few exhibitions since, her initial enthusiasm refuses to wear off. “My medium is largely oils, acrylic and charcoals on canvas. It’s a wonderful

journey of discovery, experimentation and self-expression and I just love letting the creative juices flow. It's so freeing and it's easy to get lost in this enchanting space" she swears.

Her marriage to one of the biggest industrialists of India, Gautam Singhania is one of the most successful unions of B-town. Having met early, it almost seems like a fairy tale story, but one that has come with its own set of challenges. "I've been very clear that I was Parsi and with all due respect, would remain so. Although, I partake in all of Gautam's *poojas* and family festivities, in keeping with the Singhania family tradition. In fact I really enjoy it! My children have been brought up as Hindu, which works well for all concerned" she says. "I met Gautam at a nightclub 25 years ago through a common friend. We've known each other since we were both just two college kids, unfettered by the shadows of who each of us was slated to grow up to be. We have a very strong bond, a lovely relationship, and we know each other really well. We've grown, changed and integrated over the years, both as individuals and as a couple," she admits, content enunciated in each syllable.

Having managed to achieve so much, it has to have left her a little weary, of dealing with innumerable challenges that are sure to have come her way. "I prefer to call them milestones rather than challenges. Like setting up Body Art, getting into art, having my kids, some personal and family related situations, and so on have been special and precious times that I'll forever value and cherish. I learnt so much from each of them, grew, changed and evolved for the better, I live mostly without regrets today!" she sums up.

As she puts it, it has been a full life of milestones, what comes next? "Time will tell. It's a long life, and a very exciting one!" she surmises with a hint of mystery. □



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