

Skin sizzles in Bollywood - and it's not a problem

There was no hullabaloo when Bipasha Basu flaunted her curves in 'Race' or Priyanka Chopra slipped into bikinis in 'Dostana'. And Aamir Khan and John Abraham didn't shy away from the dare-bare act either.

In Bollywood, skin show is in - and it's not causing a scandal.

Actress Minissha Lamba, who abandoned her plain Jane act with a white bikini in 'Kidnap', says skin show in Bollywood has now assumed a larger meaning than just its literal sense.

'I wouldn't call it skin show. For me, it means women exercising their right to be beautiful. We have fashion designers all over the world and now in India, who are catering to women mainly to make them look beautiful and feel beautiful. And now, clothes are a very important extension to that,' Minissha told IANS.

Agreed Neha Dhupia: 'I think it's about the change in society. When I was 16 years old, I never dared to venture out wearing hot pants or any such clothes. But look at women today. Girls are dressing up in revealing clothes in clubs, while dining at a restaurant, while strolling on the streets.

'Even 40-year-old women are dressing the way they never did. I mean when my mother was 40, she could never think of wearing those clothes. Same goes for Bollywood.'

Earlier female leads reflected the image of an ideal Indian woman and whenever actors like Nargis, Nutan, Vyjayanthimala and Sharmila Tagore tried to break the norm by wearing revealing clothes, they had to face flak.

But the screen image of actresses has undergone a tremendous change in the past decade - from top league actresses like Aishwarya Rai, Priyanka, Preity Zinta to sex icons Mallika Sherawat, Kangana Ranaut and Neha - all have flaunted skin with panache, without being reprimanded.

The change was more predominant in 2008.

The year started with Abaas Mustan's 'Race' when Bipasha oozed oomph by dressing up in shorts and mini skirts teamed with tube tops and halters. She returned with a similar but sporty look in Ranbir Kapoor-starrer 'Bachna Ae Haseeno'.

After Bipasha, the men in Apoorva Lakhia's 'Mission Istanbul', including actors Zayed Khan and Vivek Oberoi, dared to bare their chiselled torsos.

Aamir Khan and John Abraham too flaunted their bodies respectively in 'Ghajini' and 'Dostana'.

'We no longer live in a closed society where people are unreceptive to seeing women wear some different garments of sensuality other than a sari. We do accept them in sensuous Western wear, including a bikini, and a bare back is very much acceptable now,' said Minissha.

Priyanka, who flaunted her body in skimpy outfits in 'Fashion' and cleavage-baring 'Dostana', says films with skin show are doing well.

'Where there's a demand, there's a supply. If people didn't watch such films, we would have stopped making them. Besides, I do it only if my character in a film justifies it,' Priyanka said.

Just skin show is not the key to success.

Despite Kareena Kapoor's toned midriff in 'Tashan', it failed to run to packed houses. Even 'Kidnap' saw a similar fate and so did Ameesha Patel's item song in a yellow bikini in Kunal Kohli's box office dud 'Thoda Pyaar Thoda Magic'.

Kohli agrees that not every film with skin show is a big hit.

Isha Koppikar, known for sensual item numbers like 'Khallas' and 'Ishq samundar...', also echoes his stance.

'A film's success is not guaranteed just by showing skin. It depends on what the film is about. If a film is about a female swimmer, she ought to wear a swimsuit and show skin instead of wearing a pair of jeans and jumping in,' she said.

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