

RAISING THE BARRE

Bazaar puts the celebrity favourite exercise routine to the test



ZOOEY DESCHANEL AND CHRISTY TURLINGTON ARE FANS. And it has been touted as one of New York City's trendiest fitness classes. Combine all of that with the promise of seeing visible results in just eight classes, and it's no wonder that we were excited to try out Physique 57 and its signature barre class.

For those not in the know, barre is a high-intensity, low-impact workout that combines pilates-like stretches with cardio, ballet moves, and muscle sculpting with free weights and resistance bands. Physique 57 was founded in 2006 when global CEO and founder Jennifer Vaughan Maanavi realised her favourite exercise class was shutting down. The former Wall Street professional quickly came up with her own business plan, recruited the class' best instructor, a former dancer named Tanya Becker, and together the two developed their own fitness programme. Since then, they've expanded their empire to Los Angeles, the Hamptons, Thailand, the Middle East, and now India.

Our class took place in a trial glass-walled dance studio (the permanent location will be announced soon), kitted-out with ballet barres, exercise mats, branded towels, water, and all the equipment you would need. The 57-minute session began with a cardio workout and everyone grabbed some weights—I cautiously picked a five kg dumbbell to do some arm exercises. Next, we headed to the barre and did a series of squats and leg lifts in multiple variations while two energetic instructors demonstrated the steps, checked on everyone's posture, and kept us motivated with smiles and an upbeat soundtrack that included some Rihanna. It was then time for a series of floor routines that included working the thighs by squeezing a ball between them, a range of different leg lifts to tone your butt, and, finally, a few sets of crunches for the abs.

Sounds easy, but it's not: The Physique 57 method is based on a process Maanavi describes as Interval Overload, which means you work each muscle until you can really feel the burn and then stretch it out for relief. So when you feel like your thighs are going to collapse if you do any more squats, just remember that there is a brief break waiting right around the corner. "This is about building long, lean muscle. Rather than bulking up, the goal is to lengthen and strengthen the body," says healthcare professional Mallika Tarkas Parekh, a longtime Physique 57 fan and the woman who spearheaded the movement to bring the classes to India.

Parekh's journey to Physique 57 echoes that of many of us on the hunt for the perfect fitness class: "Growing up I played a lot of sports—tennis, lacrosse, swimming—then later I tried to go to the gym but it just wasn't the same. I also missed some form of exercise that didn't strain my bones as much but still gave me an effective workout. I did some research and discovered that Indians in particular have a lower bone density than other populations which is what makes Physique 57 so perfect for Indian audiences." ■

For class queries and schedules contact Physique 57, Mumbai, through their Facebook page @Physique57Mumbai



By Butool Jamal

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