

Face off

WITH DWAYNE GRANT grantdi@goldcoast.com.au

Mayor Tom Tate has chosen a woman who appears topless on her website to promote the Gold Coast to Indians. Is that a wise move



SHANTI GOWANS, BOLLYWOOD AUSTRALIA DANCE COMPANY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

IF those pictures got out it would have a negative effect. Tom Tate has said his aspiration is to build up the Gold Coast as an educational destination like Oxford and Cambridge. As the chief executive of Health Institute Australia, I think that's commendable but if he's choosing an ambassador to appeal to a student population, let's do it with more elegance, culture and sensitivity.

If it's general Indians he wants to attract, he needs to remember they are very family-minded and travel as a group. They come with big families and such tasteless pictures would not appeal to their family sensibilities. India has changed but I don't think we should assume it's changed to that extent.

The girl is beautiful but she needs to be presented with more decorum and presence. She may have posed for these photos in the past but it's not the current image we want to portray. We need to present her and the Gold Coast in the best light. Let's not mistake the glamour and fantasy on Bollywood screens for real life.

India is the author of the *Kama Sutra*. The people are not prudish but there are boundaries. There's a group culture and there's a bedroom culture. I don't think family values and the wholesomeness of ordinary Indians has changed.

I moved to Australia in 1972 and proudly tell my Indian friends and family I live on the Gold Coast. I believe God has made home here. My husband is from Melbourne and they're a little bit snobby about the Gold Coast but I don't have a cultural cringe.



Introducing Aiysha Saagar, a woman on a mission to entice Indians to the Gold Coast.



DR YADU SINGH, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF INDIAN AUSTRALIANS CO-CHAIRMAN

I DOUBT such pictures will have any significant positive or negative impact on the success of the Gold Coast to attract tourists from India. Seeing or knowing about the pictures, Indians will have a chuckle. Nothing else.

Recent Bollywood movies and access to worldwide media in India have changed Indian society quite a bit. India today is not what it was a decade or two ago.

India, generally, is a socially conservative society but things are changing at a rapid pace. Increasing numbers are open-minded and aware of the customs and mores of other countries. Pictures like these are not a big deal any more, at least for those who are educated and upwardly mobile. Indeed, they are arguably the very segment of the Indian population that travels overseas for holidays and business opportunities, hence the perfect target for Gold Coast tourism.

These photos may generate a little more media interest and publicity for the woman and the Gold Coast, but I do feel it would have been better if the Gold Coast's goodwill ambassador projected a more typical – and indeed more beautiful – appearance of an 'Indian' with a well-clothed body.

Having said that, Australia has varieties in everything and she is an Australian, after all.

If the Gold Coast is really serious about attracting more tourists from India, it should rope in a well-established Bollywood actor or actress as a goodwill ambassador, just like Victoria has done.

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