

# THE CELEBRITY ACT'IVIST

WITH CELEBRITIES SHIFTING BASE FROM ENTERTAINING PEOPLE TO HELPING THEM IN GRIEF STRICKEN SITUATIONS THEY ARE MAKING THEMSELVES SEEN WHEREVER AND HOWEVER POSSIBLE. PUN UNINTENDED, ALL IN GOOD INTENSION!

A celebrity's life is everyone's life, though; a celebrity's business is nobody's business. Apart from setting the silver screen ablaze with their dramatist roles and filmy *jhatka's*, they constantly remain under the pressure of always being in sight. Having taken the out of sight out of mind theory a bit too seriously, the actors and actresses keep sprouting out of controversial issues if not general issues. The ever-ongoing debate shall remain, are their efforts genuine or are they another set of publicity stunts? After having acquired 'celebrity' status these individuals through their contribution to media and society aspire to achieve social iconic status.

Participation of various members of the international and national film fraternity in general issues of concern bring them to the public off the screen and present them in a layperson's light. For instance, Aamir Khan's hand in the Narmada Bachao Andolan, King Khan's cleanliness drive along with the dimple damsel Priety Zinta and Sanjay Dutt's donation to a cancer patient were some of the popular celebrity initiatives.



"It all depends on the PR, we all know SRK has one of the best PR people backing him up in all his work, whether business or social, hence events where the star wants to contribute genuinely will also lead to obvious speculation. At this point, either ways they get their publicity, as they still make it to our dining table conversation," comments Sagar, a PR student.

The recent hullabaloo about the Olympics also seems to have given the celebrities a chance to make yet another guest appearance. Bhaichung Bhutia's decision to not carry the torch is one side of the story, while on the other end Richard Gere, flew down to Tibet to spread awareness and add international perspective. Aamir Khan, known for his low profile and media shy nature, will be seen running with the Olympic torch on its arrival in New Delhi to support Tibet.



"They should continue to do what they have to; the media or the paparazzi will do their job and in all probability will make it a big deal. If they are genuine in their efforts they should remain focussed and do what is needed without smiling at cameras and posing for photographs," adds the student. Many sides to this coin, celebrities hold not just an elite status but an iconic place in society. While many are looked up to as role models, some seem to have got more credibility than experts in their fields. The common question that arises at this point is whether the celebrities use this power for their publicity or for the cause.

Amitabh Bachchan, John Abraham and Priety Zinta had voiced their opinion to stop human trafficking some time back, while Sanjay Dutt was seen endorsing products that contribute to special children in India.



"Sometimes, the celebrity publicity ends up

helping the cause as well. The cause gets coverage on a larger scale than possible because of them. John Abraham covered the charges for a cancer stricken child, whether or not he gets publicity for it, he gave someone a great deal of help, that too should not go unnoticed" points out Khushbu Kaushal, a Brand Executive, Law and Kenneth Advertising Agency.



With the Indian Premier League a brand new facet has been added to this picture.

Shah Rukh Khan was pointed fingers for his presence at the cricket matches sporting a Tee shirt with the name of his upcoming movie Om Shanti Om. SRK today owns a team - The Knight Riders from Kolkata in the IPL, an honest step forward for the religion called cricket in India. Contrary to it, Rahul Bose, a superb actor by profession is the ambassador for the Spastic Society of India and is known to do a great deal for the same without a lot of people knowing about it. The indelible question that comes up at this point is, whether, the fact that everyone knows about the popular actor's contribution in the field is considered wrong.



Cricketers not far away from the celebrity meter also have been seen creating an image of their own, not that the endorsements don't bring enough face value to the players but Rahul Dravid's concern towards the AIDS campaign along with SRK, Amitabh Bachan and Shabana Azmi proves otherwise.

Vivek Oberoi's contribution to the Tsunami struck victims made the front page for a while, all surprisingly during the slag period that he was going through in the industry. Respected actors like Boman Irani supported civic issues like redevelopment and rehabilitation of the slum dwellers. As much as the actors might get into character of the role they portray in movies, their off-the-camera life makes them a household name and builds a personal relationship with the audience. This relationship in some way or the other decides whether the public

would hate Kareena Kapoor for breaking up with her boy friend or would they judge her for her role as Poooh! in Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham.

No matter how social a celebrity might get, his status never leaves his sight neither does the media. At the end of the day, either sides deliver for a good cause, while one for society and the other for the social role the actors are playing in real life.



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