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the A-list mantra – Pilates, Pilates, Pilates – got me wondering about this magic exercise that’s meant to zip up all the bulges inside out. Only, the thought of lying on a mat, focusing on breathing, holding and squeezing sounded like a snore. But when I learned that Gold’s Gym at Mumbai’s Napean Sea Road, was offering classes in the world-renowned Stott Pilates, I thought I’d take a stab.

Developed in Canada, it is based on movements that use a machine called the reformer. Four of these magic devices – which cost between Rs 2 and 5 lakh each – lined the basement level studio that’s open to both gym members and non-members. At first sight, it resembled a medieval torture device-meets-rowing machine fitted with five coiled springs for resistance, complete with a sliding carriage and moveable harnesses used on your hands or feet.

The instructor, trained by Stott Pilates in Canada, eased me in with a teaser workout. After an hour of working all my major muscle groups, mostly by varying the positioning of my feet on the foot bar, the number of springs used and sliding on the carriage, I felt like I had exercised but didn’t break a sweat. Apart from the two minutes that my toes had cramped, there was no pain. This horizontal, full-resistance workout meant no time was wasted waiting to complete sets, adjust weights, have machines wiped down, stretching or cooling down. It was all done in an hour and mostly while lying on my back. Was this workout nirvana? No post-workout shower required?

Apart from my jelly belly, I pride myself on being fit. Aerobics, kick boxing, power yoga, weight training are all a part of my fitness repertoire. So when the successive sessions had me wobbling for control and wincing as I felt the burn from resistance sometimes as low as six pounds, I realised that my fitness levels left plenty to desire. I took solace however when I watched a six-foot-tall, muscle-laden man also wobble next to me.

As the course progressed, the exercises morphed into advanced variations using a kick board to spring off, a box to sit atop, a foam board to squeeze between my knees and a stick to hold while twisting and balancing, all the while with resistance from the springs. They looked so simple when demonstrated but had me stretching in a slow and controlled fashion while developing balance

and core strength. Definitely not a leave-your-brains-at-home opportunity to switch off, sometimes, there was so much to concentrate on simultaneously, I had to be reminded to breathe!

The obvious advantage on the reformer was no jarring motions and no body-weight pressure on the knees and back. By the end of the second week, a simple task like walking up the stairs had me feeling muscles in my hips and butt

which surprisingly, I didn’t know even existed before. While six sessions weren’t enough to get me the six-pack abs I’d wanted, I did get a Mona Lisa smile as I enjoyed my newly taut derriere. □

Gold’s Gym, Napean Sea Road, Mumbai.
Inquiries, (022) 23694654

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IN A BID TO LOSE HER BULGE,
NISHA KHIANI FINDS THAT STOTT PILATES,
A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO THE
TRADITIONAL EXERCISES, IS MORE THAN
JUST A WORKOUT FOR YOUR BODY

