

# Radhika Vaz says it like it is, on being over 40

Sharad.Kohli @timesgroup.com

**Gurgaon:** "I don't want it all—I'm happy with 63%!" Halfway through an unrepentantly no-holds-barred performance on Friday evening, stand-up comedienne Radhika Vaz, employing her inimitably risqué sense of humour, laid into 21st century mores that ask women to be both supermoms and high-flying professionals.

In her 40s, married but happily childless, Vaz seems pretty content with her lot in life, yet there's plenty that can get her worked up. But she's able to channel her angst and anger into skits that combine highly sexualized (and, at times, scatological) content with guffaw-inducing asides. This is what a 40-plus woman's life is really like. Vaz's 'Older, Angrier, Hairier'—staged at The Epicentre in Gurgaon, and held in association with the Times of India—ended up being true to the hype, an 'over-the-top account of being over-the-hill'.

Vaz, irrepressibly irreverent, had the audience in splits, if at times shifting embarrassingly in their seats, or squirming uncomfortably on the mention of certain parts of the anatomy (female and male). This was in-your-face stuff, every residue of political correctness and pretence vacuum-cleaned by a stream-of-consciousness and wit that had many present eating out of her hands. The 'Hairier' bit in the title is misleading ("women actually don't get any hairier as they get older!"). But she's certainly older (and makes no bones about it), and is undeniably angrier: "I want to grow old gracefully," she expressed hopefully, but society doesn't allow her, or anyone else, to age gracefully these days.

Vaz's gripes were against vain folks' desperate search for



**NO HOLDS BARRED:** Vaz's wit won over the crowd

elixirs of life, against the almost unhinged obsession with parenthood, and against traditions that let men go scot- and duty-free ("they don't have to give a s\*\*t!") and put the burden of responsibility, of child-rearing and housework, on women.

Vaz took a swipe at Angelina Jolie for her vacuous "I became a woman when I became a mother" statement—"So what was she before she was a mother?!" But she was at her funniest when tackling that ubiquitous Indian staple, the all-season favourite: getting pregnant. "If women say, 'we're trying for a baby', the response we get is, 'well, you clearly aren't trying hard enough!'" If you are childless (or, as is so memorably described in these parts, without "issue"), it could be because "your husband is 'a

gay," or, "you must be a child hater." But even if you're 'blessed' with a brat-like daughter or a son, there are less chances of them "growing up into a Marie Curie, a Shakuntala Devi or a Mahatma Gandhi." Instead, deadpanned Vaz, "they'll more likely end up being a Rahul Gandhi." With such slim odds, Vaz implied, it's hardly worth the effort.

But what seemed to get Vaz's goat the most was the modern fixation with looking young, a sad fad that has sucked the dignity out of growing old. "Old is the new fat," she said. "40 is the new 30, 50 is the new 40, 60 is the new 50..." Soon, Vaz remarked, "40 will be the new stupid!" Vaz believed men, lucky so-and-sos, have it easy because George Clooney has proved that old can mean sexy. Women? They have it much worse—thanks to the insane perfection of Jennifer Lopez. How is it possible, Vaz asked exasperatingly, for any woman to aspire to the curves of J-Lo?

Asking awkward questions of ourselves and society, Vaz never once attempted to sugar-coat the 'naked' truths of existence, or hide the hard facts of life. Her ferocious wit and frankness made for an enjoyable cold-shower of an experience.