

# The Indian woman defying body stereotypes through yoga

July 16 2017

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A plus-sized Indian woman is challenging body stereotypes and defying internet trolls with a series of yoga videos that are proving a hit on social media.

Dolly Singh, 34, has gained something of a fan following online for promoting body positivity by showing that size is no barrier to mastering complex yoga moves.

"To say 'You can't do this because you have so much weight,' I don't believe that," Singh tells AFP after completing her morning stretch in a Mumbai park.

Four years ago a doctor advised her to lose weight following an ankle sprain. Singh, who is 4 feet 11 inches (150 cm), weighed almost 90 kilograms (198 pounds) at the time.

She got a trainer and embraced the "whole frenzy of losing weight" but grew bored of running so she signed up for something she'd never done before—yoga.

"The first class I was thinking 'Can I really do this because I have a big body?' After two or three class I realised people were looking at me and thinking 'Oh my god she can do this'. My body had a certain kind of stamina, of flexibility."

Singh, who works for a TV channel in India's financial capital, soon

realised there were limitations to group classes and sought the instruction she needed from videos online.

"We all have different bodies and if my teacher doesn't have a belly, how will they know what the problems are of having a big belly," she explains, laughing.

"I'm a big busted person and if the teacher isn't how are they going to understand that when I'm doing a Halasana (plough pose) I'm almost choking to death!"

Singh started filming herself to monitor her progress and then began posting clips of her yoga poses on Instagram.

## **'Online trolls'**

Soon she was inundated with messages, mainly from foreigners at first but then from Indian women saying that Singh was an inspiration to them.

"I've been overwhelmed by some people saying they would feel alienated in a room full of perfect yoga bodies, how they would feel that everyone is watching them.

"There's an idea of not showing your body if you're big bodied. You're supposed to hide everything because its not appealing or it's not something people like to see but that's just something that's been sold to us," she insists.

The response hasn't all been positive however. Singh says she has been the victim of body shaming online.

"Indian men have not been encouraging at all. There are a lot of people

who write very nasty comments. They would say something like 'You're just a fat blob, you look just like an elephant or bear, or you're unfit or it's because you're eating so much food.

"I completely ignore these things. You can't fight [internet trolls](#). I don't know these people so why should it bother me?"

Singh, who currently weighs 73 kg, says she will continue trying to sell "a more positive body image" and "challenge notions of fitness and beauty".

"I'm not aiming to have this thin figure but I am aiming to have a beautiful flow and make my [body](#) strong through [yoga](#)," she says, smiling.

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Citation: The Indian woman defying body stereotypes through yoga (2017, July 16) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-07-indian-woman-defying-body-stereotypes.html>

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