

# 'Sports is my outlet'

Cyclist DISHA SHRIVASTAVA in conversation with TEAM VIVA details her journey from India Gate to Wagah border

Some people have the ability to light up any conversation with their passion and wit. Disha Shrivastava is such a person. The 37-year-old mother of two boys, Disha rode from India Gate to Wagah border to create awareness about mental health. She herself has overcome depression by taking up sports as an outlet for negative energy and is aiming to reach out to most people on this.

"I run my own social enterprise where I work with under privileged children providing them life skill sessions and redoing the curriculum in terms of holistic development.

"Taking up this cause was a little personal too because I went through a lot of depression in the past and then I wrote a blog on this topic which got a tremendous response mainly from women. They generally don't talk about all this.

"Mental health and depression are a part of life because there is uncalled for competition everywhere. I wanted to be more vocal and I wanted more people to burn out that energy and put it into a positive direction. Sports and endurance activities are my outlet," she told us.

Initially, Disha wasn't sure about completing her feat. "I wanted to ride from India gate to Gateway of India initially

but then it was a long route and with my family, my children and the household work, I couldn't give that much of time. So I decided to ride from India gate to Wagah border because these two are very prominent landmarks."

Wagah Border, which is 32km from Amritsar, is the only open border crossing India and Pakistan. It is mainly famous for the Wagah border ceremony, also known as 'lowering of the flags'.

The customary tradition is conducted by the security forces of India and Pakistan and takes place every evening before sunset.

"We met a lot of cyclist at Karnal, Kurukshetra, Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Amritsar. They all appreciated the cause," she said.

She is an enthusiastic cyclist, a marathon runner, trekker, a dancer and a homemaker. About the challenges she faced, Disha quipped, "Women get trapped in the family affairs regardless of whether they are working or

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not. There is a guilt factor anyway. My main motive was to get women out of this trap.

"I had a suicidal tendency when I was depressed and that was pretty alarming. I had no support then. My husband used to work till late. He was there but we barely got the time to talk. He didn't understand this too.

"Once I was driving with my child in the car and suddenly I felt that he isn't there and went all the way back home and realised he was sitting next to me.

If I was crossing the road, I wasn't able to. I would just stand there. There was a lot of insecurity and mental blockage and people used to hold my hand and help me cross. There was no one who I could share all of this with. People used to find it funny and strange. But I wasn't fine so I started reading a lot about it and to divert my mind I decided to enroll myself in a dance class which I had left long back.

Then I joined a running

group in my housing society and then finally came to cycling. All these things together and along with my extensive workout helped me to come out of it. It took three and a half years but now things are in place," she shared.

Cycling has been a transformative experience for her. Her family once viewed the activity as an oddity, but her passion and the positive attention that it has garnered is now a source of pride.

About the hardships she faced while riding, Disha said, "The first day was pretty good, we did 170 kilometers in six hours but the second day was very rough. We were not able to ride because of the strong headwinds. But this ride was mainly mind over matter for me, so I decided that I have to do it."

For Disha, this is an introspective journey. "Being a mother and housekeeper, cycling for me is about detaching myself entirely and taking it one turn at a time."

