

Sucheta Pal is a go-getter. From an engineering degree and her diploma in fine arts, to being the first Indian to be selected as a Zumba Education Specialist (ZES), she's got a lot going for her. While she's also a piloxing instructor, AFAA certified group fitness instructor and masala bhangra instructor, zumba is what drives her passion. She talks to us about that and much more.

Why did you pick zumba?

Always being interested in dance, I initially thought zumba was a dance form. After attending a few classes in the U.S., I realised that it was a hardcore workout made into a fitness party by adding the flavours of global dance forms and music. Fitness and dance are the two things closest to my heart; both combined in a world class brand is what made me want to specialise in it. There is a whole lot of science behind zumba fitness and that is what is getting people hooked on to the classes of trained and licensed instructors across the world.

Where did you train and what got you hooked?

My training was in the U.S. and the fact that zumba is for everybody pulled me into it. The key to the success of zumba is the music, produced by music legends such as Pitbull, Wyclef, Daddy Yankee and Li'l Joh. It got me hooked and is addictive to date.

You were recently selected as a Zumba Education Specialist. What does that mean for you?

There are less than 200 Zumba Education Specialists across 150 countries in the world and I am proud to be the first Indian to be selected as one. This included rigorous auditions, trainings and tests. It means that I have a great responsibility to educate right. There is no trend of fitness in India, nor are we used to the Latin rhythms of zumba, so it requires immense dedication and patience to train new instructors. With over 600 instructors already trained in the past one year, it gives me immense pleasure to say that Zumba Fitness has provided several job opportunities. Zumba has different specialties and every one of them requires licensed training. I have a license in all.

How important do you think it is to stay fit in this day and age?

Obesity has become a growing concern in India. Getting into a fitness regime is no longer a choice, but has become a necessity and needs to be a lifestyle. The

QUICK QUESTIONS FOR THE ZUMBABE:

- **My one guilty indulgence:** Desserts, which I happily indulge in once a week.
- **My favourite activity:** Learning new forms of dance. I'm currently into salsa.
- **My hobbies:** Painting; it relaxes me.
- **The fittest celebrities right now are:** Bipasha Basu and Madonna.
- **One person I really admire:** A 61-year-old lady who never misses a class, stands in the first line, has no sense of rhythm or beat but is totally uninhibited. I have never met such a free soul.
- **One thing no one would have guessed:** I hold a degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering and worked in the IT world for five years.

Zumbabe!

Sucheta Pal believes everyone has the time to stay fit and that doing what you love is your best option. **Rhea Dhanhoora** talks to the zumba instructor about her passion for the fun workout



>> Who would have thought that an IT professional could become a world class certified Zumba Education Specialist? Meet Sucheta Pal, a woman with many feathers in her hat

best suggestion I could give anyone is to embrace a fitness form which you enjoy. Don't try to follow the crowd. Only if you enjoy a workout, will you stick to it and only regularity will make it effective.

You've been featured in a fitness game as well! Do you think fitness games are an effective trend?

I think it's an awesome concept. The gaming trend is here to stay. The best way to drive people to a gym or a group fitness class is to bring fitness into their homes. Once they get addicted to it through a video game, they crave more. This drives them to fitness studios.

Tell us about your Breast Cancer Awareness drive classes?

The first one I ever did was in the U.S. It was an open event and everyone came dressed in pink. Zumba fitness, because of its easy, fun nature, is a great crowd puller and we were able to spread our message to a larger audience. Since then I have held similar events both in the U.S. and India. Zumba Fitness also has its official Party in Pink concept with the sole purpose to raise awareness about breast cancer.

You say that a work-life balance is important. How did you manage one?

I cannot emphasise enough on this aspect. There was a time when I didn't know how to do this, but with consistent efforts it's possible. My work doesn't have fixed timings, so I need to keep aside time for my family and myself. I make sure I have at least one family dinner every week and time for a movie once a week for myself. TV time is also spent together with the family.

What tips would you give people aspiring for a ZES career?

A ZES life seems glamorous with all the travelling that's involved, but first you need to train hard and understand all aspects of fitness to qualify to become one. The only thing that will drive you is raw passion. It's a tough job, but highly rewarding if you love teaching.

What's in the future?

The goal is to spread the message that fitness can be fun and should be a lifestyle. It can completely change your world. My future goal is to apply the same on me and through my example inspire others. Zumba will change the rules of the fitness world in India and I'd like to lead that change.

BENEFITS OF ZUMBA

Zumba gives you a host of health benefits and is a really good option to try if you want a fun, but effective workout. Here are a few of its benefits:

- It improves your cardiovascular health. Perform a zumba dance for at least 30 minutes every other day to get the benefits. It stresses your heart (in a good way!) and keeps your muscles working well.
- If you need to lose weight, this is the best way to do it. You can burn up to 400 calories for every hour of zumba that you do.
- Lack a little co-ordination? Zumba can help there too by improving your co-ordination and balance.
- It releases happy hormones, like any other form of dance. This will help keep you calm and works as a really good stress buster and mood enhancer.