



## Book Review

# From sarees to stripes: True stories of commercial women pilots of India

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<b>ASIN</b>	:	B09NNNX37W
<b>Type of the Book</b>	:	Biography and Autobiography

**Review:** This book is a compilation of true stories of Indian women aviators who broke the glass ceiling and paved the way for future generations. It is a compelling read which establishes that it is no more a man's world up there in the sky. The only mantra they knew was "No Machine knows Gender". It is the situational awareness which makes an outcome successful or a failure. Challenges for these women started right from their nest. Nevertheless, nothing could stop them to dream big and succeed.

The author speaks about her experiences, right from the time she got a free scholarship of 60 h of flying to a full-fledged Commander of Big bird. In all her struggles, men and women in her life who tried to pull her down but got the taste of her efficiency as response to shut them all. Women need to perform "extra" than her male counterparts to prove that she is an asset and not a liability. She also speaks about the men who were a great support to her and believed in her. The family uncertainties where one loses head of the family in early days and had to jump in to take the responsibilities along with the rest of the family members did not stop her to entertain the thought of flying. The senior woman pilot's motivation and support not only gave hope to Capt Manisha but also to her family.

The writer speaks about other legendary women in aviation in her later chapters. Mrs Sarla Thukra is the first Indian woman to fly an aircraft, as a businesswoman and wife of the first Indian to get Airmail pilot License, Capt P. D. Sharma. Capt Prem Mathur, the first Indian woman commercial pilot, her struggles and challenges. Capt Durba Banerjee is the first-generation (female) pilot in her house and was first in many streams as the first female pilot of Okinawa Airlines in Japan in 1959.

Capt Saudamini Deshmukh was the Commander of all women flight crew who flew a Fokker Friendship F-27 from Kolkata to Silchar in January 1986. She was also the biggest motivator for Capt Manisha M. Puri and her mother as she personally met the two to stand as a live example for "Sky's the limit". Not to skip the youngest achiever, Nivedita Jain Bhasin the co-pilot of all women flight crew. Commander at 26, of Boeing 737.

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The story of self motivation to success-Capt Anila Bhatia, sister of a Fighter pilot, making a mark of self and soaring high. And her daughter Miriya Cheema, in the footsteps of her mother, what could be a more secure way of achieving one's dreams. Capt Indraani Singh, Asia's first woman pilot to fly an Airbus 320, fondly called "The Airbus Woman." Capt Indira Sharma Mitra, flying to make the world one, daughter of an Indian father and a German mother, felt that the whole world is one and has no boundaries.

It was not only the women from a pilot background or a first one of a kind but also the Cabin crew also made their mark onto becoming pilots; one such example is Capt Lakshmi Malhotra Nagrath. Then comes the super combo of cabin crew and pilot, Capt Niquita Reynolds Gupta and her sister, who maintained the professional etiquette onboard and sisterhood at home. Capt Avantika Rastogi made her hobby as a profession. In spite of coming from the Den of Doctors, she chose to soar into the skies. She explains the day-to-day challenges faced in the cockpit as commander, like dealing with a male senior co-pilot or differences between the cockpit and cabin, and how every day feels like being in a warzone.

Then comes a woman pilot who got rejected from her job just because of her gender, Capt Sonica Verma. This Mumbaiker did not lose heart but, in fact, was glad that she escaped from the claws of such low-maturity people. Fortunately, luck favored her and she bagged a job in Jet Airways, where could work amid dignified professionals. Capt Sunita Nirula, another wonder in the aviation industry, hails from Karnal, a small town on the outskirts of Delhi. She is a National Yoga champion who ended up being the second woman to join Air India as a pilot in 1994. Yoga was an integral part of this flyer and helped to overcome her day-to-day challenges during flying.

Queen who commanded Queen of skies, Capt Trisha Mohan, Commanding Officer of Massive Boeing 747-400, the jumbo jet. She was born and brought up under the wings of the Indian Air force as her father Satish Chander Mohan was a Indian Air Force pilot and later joined Air India as Capt. While travelling with her dad, her eyes always lit up with hope of following her dad's footsteps some day in the future. The biggest challenge comes with flying a beast in the sky as the area occupied by the aircraft is enormous and the controls need to be excelled at every point.

The fearless sisters, Capt Deeksha and Aashna, were called fearless because they were 11 and 7 years, respectively, when the aircraft IC-814 commanded by their father got hijacked and was released after 10 days. Such a traumatic experience could not stop these sisters to pursue the same profession which had put their family under darkness. Courage is Contagious.

**Opinion about the Book:** A well-collated true stories of women pilots and their struggles and triumphs, right from the era of freedom fighting to exploring space along with their male counterparts. The language used was simple and captivating. It is not only an inspiring book for budding female achievers but also for men who are surrounded by such dreamers as aviators, colleagues, instructors, or students. One should not overlook the struggles a woman has put, to reach her goals while trying her best to be the best in her profession.

**Recommendation:** This book is a compilation of the experience and struggles of the author as well as the other women pilots who had similar or more challenging experiences in achieving their dreams. The emerging newer problems, their probable solutions, and the journey into an independent bird are astonishing. It is easy to read and very well edited. "From Sarees to Stripes" is a must read to dream big and to realize that nothing can stop us and sky is the limit. It is a high recommended book that helps women to break the barriers and achieve their goals.

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