

BORN TO FLY- AYESHA AZIZ

By Humera Ahmed



Ayesha Aziz , India's youngest pilot who obtained a pilot's learning license at age 16 in 2011 is among the 10 women who were given the Women Achiever awards by the Inquilab Midday publication at a glittering function at Hotel Hyatt in Mumbai on 20th September .The chief guest of the function was the renowned actress Shabana Azmi

In her acceptance speech, Ayesha recited a couplet from Rumi's poem.

You were born with wings

You are not meant for crawling, so don't.

You have wings,

Learn to use them and fly.

These words inspire every human being. But Ayesha was able not just to dream but to translate her dream into reality. As a child she was fascinated by planes and was alert to the takeoff and landing of the plane when she flew from Mumbai to her mother's state of Kashmir .Born and brought up in Mumbai where her father is a business men, she first expressed her desire to fly, to become a Pilot when she was in 5th standard. Her father encouraged her and she started training, soon after 10th standard.

Ayesha clocked 200 hours of flying time , a requirement for obtaining a Commercial Pilot License .During her training she flew a single engine aircraft She has also flown Cessna152

and 172 and a PA34 aircraft for 20 hours in Johannesburg. A graduate in Aviation from Mumbai University she is in the process of being inducted as a Commercial Pilot. **Her dream is to fly a MIG 29.**

Ayesha has had an extraordinary career graph .She was selected with two other girls to visit NASA in 2012 where she underwent a two month advanced training programme at NASA's Space Center Huntsville . The next year she was able to interact with her idol Sunita Williams in Mumbai during her visit to India in 2013.

Ayesha is also the first girl from Kashmir to become a pilot .Her achievement was recognized by the Nation when on 20th January 2018 she was felicitated by the President of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan with 112 other women achievers who had been first in their respective fields .

About her mixed parentage- a Kashmiri mother, hailing from Bara mullah and her father from Mumbai, she feels she has the best of both the worlds. She loves the tradition and culture of Kashmir, and its picturesque and idyllic landscape which makes her dream and Mumbai's cosmopolitan and professionalism which enabled her to fulfil her life goal of becoming an aviator. She has travelled across the globe : to USA ,Europe , Russia and South Africa and the message she has for Muslim girls is dream and work to realize your dreams and most importantly **Educate Yourself** .