

Sky is not the Limit



Suman Sharma is first women to fly the mighty Russian MiG-35 fighter jet and first civilian woman to co-pilot the American-strike fighter F-16I N of Lockheed Martin. She thinks that fitness is the only mantra to be successful. She values the importance of physical fitness which helped her during her flights that gave her confidence and stamina. BEENUM YADAV figures to find out more about this jet woman for whom sky is not the limit.

HI: You are not only India's but world's first woman to fly the mighty Russian MiG-35 fighter jet, how do you feel about your achievement?

SS: I have co-piloted the fighter aircraft, MiG-35, sitting at the rear, and MiG from Moscow gave me a certificate to the effect that I was the first woman to

enter the MiG cockpit in the world, which is indeed a great feeling, but this is a small beginning, and there is lot more to do. But being first in any field is indeed very encouraging. I feel humbled as this was a dream, but I had not imagined that it would fall in my lap so effortlessly during Aero India-2009 in February.

HI: As a pilot what is the importance of physical fitness for you?

SS: I am not a qualified professional pilot, but since I've done fighter sorties as a co-pilot, therefore I realize the importance of physical fitness. With my brother introducing me to jogging during my childhood, and my mother training me in yoga and deep breathing, plus I am jazz dancer, all of which helped me during my flights, giving me confidence, stamina and black-outs. Fitness for me is also eating correctly. I follow a strict diet regimen before my flights.

HI: How important is self control and positive attitude to be successful in life?

SS: I think they both play a very important role in everyone's life, not just to be successful but also to lead a happy and a peaceful life. It begins early in life, with taking success and failures in your stride, from where the attitude builds up positively and self control automatically comes from discipline.

HI: What's your schedule to keep yourself in shape?

SS: I practice yoga, and jog whenever possible. During In summers I try to swim and play squash when time permits. I do deep breathing and meditation and check my diet. I avoid junk. I don't take liquor, tea, coffee and non-vegetarian. I don't smoke and try to avoid stress and sleep well, besides my four liters of water everyday.

HI: Can you suggest some healthy eating habits with respect to breakfast, lunch, dinner or smart snacking?

SS: Fruits, non-oily light snacks and salads are a good way to snack in between and nuts during winters. Breakfast can be heavy, but one should avoid oily fried stuff in the morning on an empty stomach. Rice and curd are good during lunch but should be avoided at night. Early dinner is a must and should be very light. Milk can be the last meal before bed. Lot's of water. Avoid salads with meals. Try to substitute fruit juices with vegetable juices.

HI: How do you de-stress yourself? How easy or difficult it is to handle pressure?

SS: I de-stress by practicing deep breathing,

meditation, having friends outside my profession and spending time with them, listening to light music, thinking positive and being happy with whatever is available.

HI: When you travel, how do you make sure that you eating the right thing?

SS: This becomes tough, because I am a strict vegetarian, and my profession demands a lot of national and international travel. I try and stick to fruits, juices, salads and vegetables. Sometimes I carry some home made stuff also, which is healthy.

HI: What's your suggestion to the girls who want to join Air force? And do you think that women are good professionals as men?

SS: Women are already there in the I.A.F and are doing very well, and are at par with men. There are around 800 of them currently. They are not in combat arms, sadly, and the Indian government has no plans to induct them either in combat arms. They have been given permanent commission in certain non-combat arms and they are performing very well.

HI: Would you like to convey any message to health conscious readers?

SS: No matter which profession or age group one belongs to, health is of prime importance to one and all, and if we take care of our body today, it will take care of us tomorrow. Eating right, coupled with moderate exercise and positive thinking will stand us in good stead. Happiness from within stems from good health. 🇮🇳

