

AN ANTHONIAN'S COURAGEOUS ASCENT



'Vyom ko chhoone ke liye bani ho': Teacher's note became reality for IAF officer

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YEARS AGO, on her last day of school, a young Vyomika Singh quipped outside the staff room of St Anthony's Senior Secondary School in Delhi, chancing her autograph book. It was a parting ritual — one last message from teachers who had seen her grow. When it was her turn, Hindi teacher Neelam Wasan wrote a line she thought captured Vyomika's spirit: "Vyom ko chhoone ke liye bani ho" (You were

born to touch the skies). Wasan never imagined how literally that would come true. This week, Wing Commander Vyomika Singh of the Indian Air Force stood before the nation as one of the two women chosen by the Government to narrate Operation Sindoor — India's response to the Pakistan attack in which terrorists killed 26 civilians. Hours after nine terror hits in Pakistan were destroyed in targeted strikes, the government sent a second message by presenting Colonel Sofiya Qureshi of the Army and Wing Commander

Singh as the faces of that resolve. Singh, who graduated from St. Anthony's in 1998 and later studied environmental engineering at Delhi College of Engineering, had always shown signs of quiet purpose. "Vyomika was equally good in English and Hindi. She was very talented and very humble to talk to," said Jyoti Bhat, 70, who taught her English in Class 11 and 12. "Not only in studies, she was also very good at playing basketball. Recently, we met at the school reunion and she was still the same humble girl. But when we saw her on TV this



Wing Commander Vyomika Singh (left) with her teachers at a school reunion in Dec. 2024.

week, she was strong, doing her job for the nation."

"She used to take part in a lot of debates. Even though she was excellent in English, she performed extremely well in Hindi

debates too," Bhat said.

"Our Vyomika, who is Wing Commander Vyomika Singh now, has really made the school proud," said Manoj Sahni, 67, her social science teacher in Class 8.

"When I see Vyomika's discipline and kindness today, I really cherish these memories. She was always attentive and grounded." Her childhood friend Shalini Raman Parakkat, 45, now an artist in Bangalore, recalled how early the signs appeared. "She used to say that vyom means sky and that she was meant to be in the skies. So we all thought she would be a pilot or an aeronautical engineer," Parakkat said. "Even when we connected later on a video call, Vyomika was still the same person we had known in school." Singh spent her entire school life at St. Anthony's. Her mother

worked with the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). "Vyomika and I used to go to school in the same bus," said Suruchi Jain, 45, another childhood friend. "We always stood at the back, chatting about anything under the sun. Never in the front. Always standing, always talking." "I always had fond memories of her from Class 8 — we shared the same bench. Today, people may assume she was a nerd or uptight because she's in the forces. But she was fun-loving and balanced — an all-rounder in everything: stage, sports, studies.

And above all, a good friend," Jain said. "For that age and time, she was focused. We weren't." "One of the teachers once asked her name and said, 'Vyomika means someone who rules the skies.' And it turned out to be true," Jain said. Wasan, her Hindi teacher, still remembers the day Vyomika came for that autograph. "When I wrote 'Vyom ko chhoone ke liye bani ho' in her book, I didn't know she would actually do it. At our alumni meet in December, she reminded me of that." The sky, once imagined, is now hers.

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St. Anthony's Sr. Sec. School is honoured to recognise Wing Commander Vyomika Singh, a distinguished officer in the Indian Air Force, who has brought pride to our nation and the Anthonian fraternity with her exceptional leadership and bravery. Recently, she played a pivotal role in Operation Sindoor, showcasing her expertise as a helicopter pilot.

Vyomika Singh has two sisters, her older sister, Bhumika Singh, a well known scientist in United Kingdom and Nirmika Singh, a poetess who has collaborated with renowned AR Rahman and an entrepreneur and founder of @mox.asia. The Anthonian family recognized the dedicated work of Nirmika Singh by inviting her to grace the 2023 Annual Function with her presence as The Chief Guest.

We are proud to mention that all three sisters are the alumni of St. Anthony's, Hauz Khas.

Our school's pride, Vyomika Singh, Wing Commander of the Indian Air Force who stood before the nation as one of two women chosen by the Indian government to narrate Operation Sindoor.

Operation Sindoor was carried out on the early morning of May 7, 2025, it was India's response to the Pahalgam massacre in which terrorists killed atleast 26 civilians.

Wing Commander Vyomika Singh's flight into the skies started with a childhood ambition. Influenced by her name-Vyomika, which means, "the one who lives in the sky".

She had mentioned to her Hindi teacher, Ms. Neelam Wasan, here at St. Anthony's that she wanted to be a pilot from as young as class six. She enrolled with the National Cadet Corps (NCC) to pursue her interest and thereafter completed an engineering degree, becoming the first in her family to become part of the armed forces. Her engineering academic background was a good basis for her aviation career.

With over 2,500 flying hours and a record of high-altitude rescues, she is a trailblazer, inspiring women to join India's defence forces with courage and excellence.

Wing Commander Singh's journey teaches the students of St. Anthony that nothing is impossible if one stays focused and works hard towards one's goals. Despite her accomplishments, she remains humble and grounded, inspiring others with her leadership and we are very sure that it's the Almighty's blessings upon her, coupled with her upbringing from her family and the 14 long years she spent at St. Anthony's, Hauz Khas, that has taught her to follow her dreams with prayerful conviction.