

The Girl of Sea and Sky: My Dreams Came True

Interview by: Zeinab Rastegarpanah



Born on May 5, 1981, Farisa Nekoumanesh Rad is an Iranian lady and international diving instructor and pilot who has earned the following honors for herself:

civil aviation pilot and instructor, Guinness record holder in water and air sports in the country; the record holder for flying on the air border between Iran and Pakistan with full hijab and raising the Iranian flag as a sign of defense for Iranian airspace and friendship with neighbouring countries; the record holder of diving in the maritime boundaries of Iran in the Oman Sea and the Indian Ocean at a depth of 40 to 80 meters with full hijab and installing the Iranian flag sign of defense for the Iranian maritime boundaries and peace and friendship with neighbouring countries and the whole world; swimming 1000 meters in the zero degree temperature waters of Azadi Lake without using her hands as a sign of support for the disabled and veterans of 8 years of sacred defense; and holding the record of scuba diving.

Farisa Nekoumanesh Rad is a post-graduate in movement behavior from the Kharazmi University of Iran and also has a master's degree in physical education, and has categorically and honestly declared many times that she has conquered the skies and seas for the love of the people of Iran.

The aim of the following interview with Ms. Nekoumanesh Rad was to get to know more about her and her outstanding activities.



■ **Could you please tell us how you got interested in this field and what was your motive for choosing it?**

Since I was a child, when I looked at the clouds, when I saw the greatness and generosity of the sky, I always dreamed of being in the arms of the sky and next to the stars, the moon, the sun, and the planets. I wanted to travel with the winds, travel in the layers of the air. I always thought to myself that life must be very beautiful there and no one could reach me. It was my dream to be able to fly like an eagle. In other words, I have never looked at it as a job, it was my passion. In Iran, sports cannot be considered a job, because you have to have a lot of capital to be able to have a diving club or a flying school. I was a teacher who taught flying and diving with great love and difficulty and engaged in teaching the good people of my dear country, Iran.

Love and passion are more important than money and job and whatever else one may think of. My students are like my children and I have taught thousands of children with love. My motive was to be able to save the lives of people drowning in the sea and I have saved thousands of people from drowning. My motive was to teach others about the beautiful experience one can have in the depths of the sea and the sky.

■ **Has the society and cultural structure of Iran been an obstacle on your way to reaching your desired objectives and position as a successful woman?**

Never. Even if I had been in any other part of the world, I would have become a diver and a pilot. It was my love and passion for the sky, my love for the depths of the seas, and my love for God. How could

Since I was born in Iran, I love my country, its people, its sky, and the depths of the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf.



My advice is not only for Iranian girls but also for the girls of the world. Dear girls, when there is a will there is a way; with the help of God. We are humans and we should not let gender differences stand in the way of our success. We should not allow rotten thoughts stop us from achieving our lofty goals.

it be possible for it to depart from me? It had penetrated the fabric of my body. Since I was born in Iran, I love my country, its people, its sky, and the depths of the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. I think that we people can achieve whatever we wish for, the important thing is our unmovable decision and our effort. It is important to want to be able, otherwise, I would not really love flying and diving and I would not even pursue it at NASA. Facilities are important, but only for about ten percent and the remaining ninety percent is having the passion and belief that you can do it.

■ Please tell us about the obstacles and problems you have faced and how you managed to overcome them.

Well, there were many obstacles but because I was a talented girl I learned all the lessons quickly and I became an international teacher, I passed my exams in the presence of Italian and French teachers and I became first in my class. I was quite young and was considered to be a child in public opinion. But since I was an expert in my work, I managed to overcome these thoughts by showing my activities. Well, many people thought that a woman should not fly and should not engage in diving. Many people believed in gender differences. But my records that were scribed in the Guinness Book of World Records came as a strong answer to such thoughts. I even sent my work to the Honorable Leader's office and received appreciation. By observing the dress code approved by IRIB I came to be the only woman in the country whose films and photos were allowed to be broadcast on the Iranian television. Gradually, people saw Farisa and came to know that, with her strong willpower, the daughter of Iran's seas and skies had become a cause of honor for Iran and Iranians in the world.

■ Has your dress code and hijab been an obstacle in your progress?

Every country has certain laws that should be adhered to and I respect the laws of my country, Iran. Not only hijab did not hinder me, but also helped me progress. The reason was that no one paid attention to what my gender was anymore, and everyone saw my profession, piloting, diving, records, the number of lives I had saved, and, in other words, my heroism. My hijab made me into a legend of patience and endurance because I carved the names of the women of my country in the skies, the hijab became a source of safety for me against the dangers of the sea and the sky. Hijab made a sky of endurance from Farisa, it made a sea of self-sacrifice from Farisa.

■ Do you have any advice for Iranian girls and women who are looking forward to their dreams of progress and advancement?

My advice is not only for Iranian girls but also for the girls all around the world. Dear girls, when there is a will there is a way; with the help of God. We are humans and we should not let gender differences stand in the way of our success. We should not allow rotten thoughts to stop us from achieving our lofty goals. Our girls are, smart and strong and can have beautiful effects on the world we live in; effects that could last for centuries and even forever.

■ Who was the role model and character that you chose for your path to progress?

Every girl's role model is her mother. My mother was the source of inspiration for my love and passion for the skies and the seas. It was because of my mother that I am who I am today. Peace and blessing be upon my mother and all the mothers of the world who are strong support to their daughters. I want to proudly tell my mother that: "Mum you are the one who taught Farisa the power to know herself and her God, and the most difficult tasks became smooth with having you as my mother.