

The **STEEL LADY** of Iran: “Self-sufficiency” Puts a Brake on Sanctions

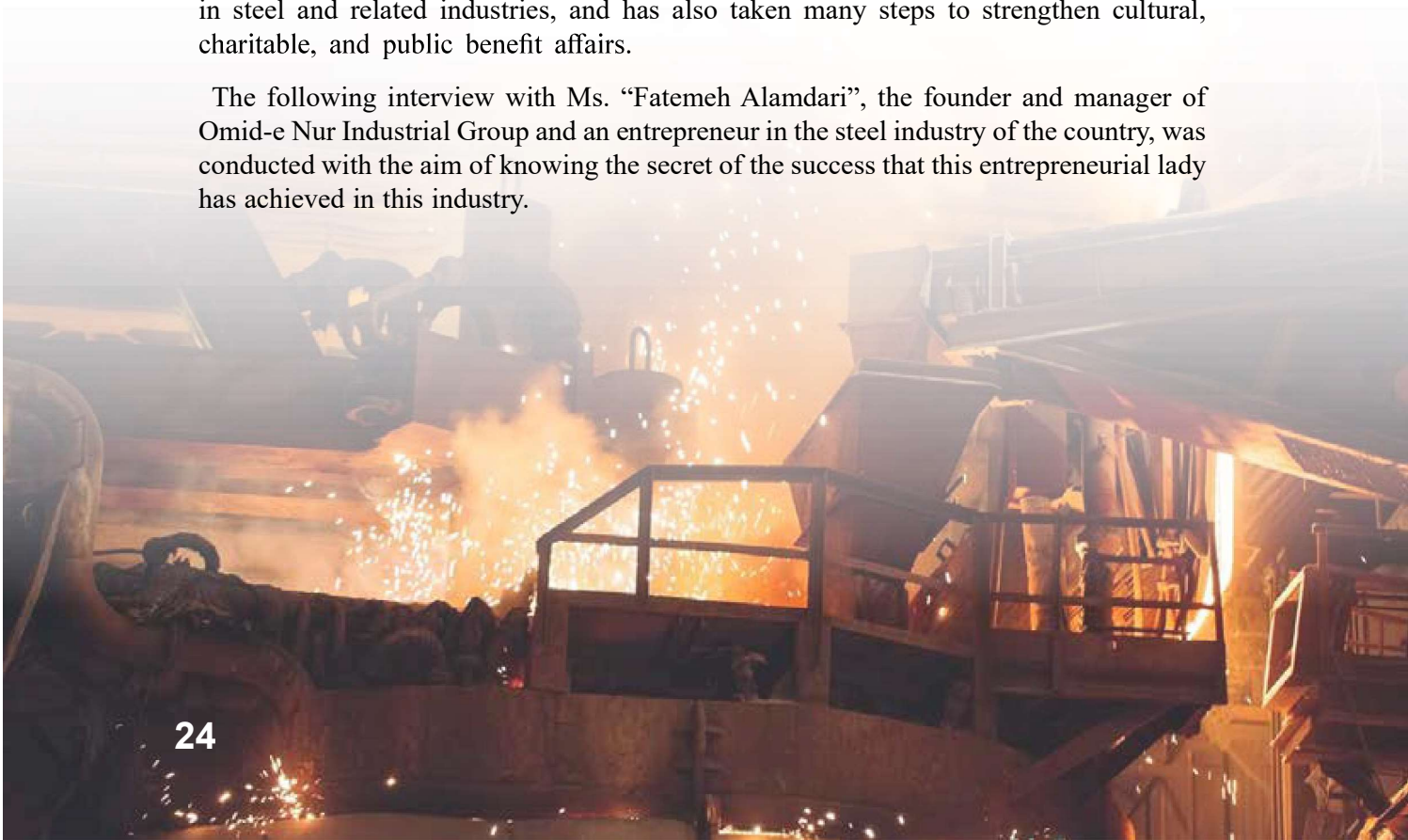
Although the general perception is that women face limitations, Ms. Fatemeh Alamdari has proved it to be a wrong perception by taking effective steps in the direction of indigenizing the steel industry by launching seven companies and earning the title of “Steel Lady of Iran”.

Omid-e Nur Industrial Group was founded in the year 2010 by Ms. Fatemeh Alamdari, an entrepreneur woman in the steel industry, with aim of making optimal and practical use of the technical power of domestic experts to indigenize the Iranian steel industry.



This industrial group has played a significant role in the development of the country’s economy, creation of job opportunities, and innovativeness in steel and related industries, and has also taken many steps to strengthen cultural, charitable, and public benefit affairs.

The following interview with Ms. “Fatemeh Alamdari”, the founder and manager of Omid-e Nur Industrial Group and an entrepreneur in the steel industry of the country, was conducted with the aim of knowing the secret of the success that this entrepreneurial lady has achieved in this industry.



■ Would you please introduce yourself?

My name is Fatemeh Alamdari. I was born in the year 1978. I have a bachelor's degree in electronics, a master's degree in ethics, and a Ph.D. in business administration.

■ What made you interested in industrial activities and when did you start working in this field?

At first, I was working in the field of business. I worked in the field of business for about ten years, and thanks to God I had good achievements in that field. But due to certain spiritual changes in my life, I decided to choose a profession that can have a more significant impact on the economic per capita of deprived areas of my country.

Business is based on individuals and I wanted to serve in a way that would continue after me. Therefore, I ventured into the industry. I checked different industries and eventually decided on the steel industry because, in the Holy Qur'an, God Almighty has spoken about iron and the many benefits it has for people. Moreover, the parameters that I was looking for such as a high rate of job opportunities, an industrial unit that can lead to a transformation in the region, and sufficient revenues with which it would be possible to support socio-cultural activities I had in mind could be made possible through industrial activities. And I knew that through this industry it would be possible to create subsidiary jobs, too, and I could start a big industrial complex with different missions in mind.

■ What products do your production units produce?

We have set up many units in the field of production, and the design and engineering unit is one of our areas of activity in this industry. By benefiting from experienced and well-known engineers in the country's industries, and also by using updated engineering software, this unit is a leading one in the indigenization of design, analysis, simulation, and validation of the country's steel chain and



related industries. Simultaneous designing, analyzing, and simulating of different kinds of industrial machinery as well as the equipment used in the oil and petrochemical, gas, and steel industries, etc., that had not been available in the country have been built and operated by this growing unit.

■ Have you made any new achievements at the world level?

This unit has made certain innovations that have been inscribed in the national and international arenas, and young and elite forces are quite skilled in advancing the lofty goals of the complex. Among other achievements of this unit, we can mention the vertical method in designing and producing sponge steel line that has been inscribed in the UNESCO list of tangible achievements.

■ Your company is, apparently, also active in manufacturing auto parts.

Yes, the brake pad-making unit named Behin



Omid Nur, located in Chenaran city, has been operating for about two years. Due to the fact that I was working in the steel industry, I entered this field because the life of the brake pads we obtained for the company's cars was quite short - two to three days at times - and lacked quality. I entered the field with the motive to produce a high-quality Iranian product and made it a condition to take back poor-quality products.

■ **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?**

You see, any activity that a person wants to do faces certain obstacles, limitations, and issues. I had entered an industry that even the Holy Qur'an mentions the difficulties involved in it. Therefore, such difficulties and problems were predictable. However, I cannot say that the cultural structure of Iran was an obstacle. Contrarily, perhaps since I am a woman, I received more support at certain stages. Many times, my presence as a woman in this job came as a surprise to men, and due to the essence of work and the difficulty of this industry, I was sometimes given extra support.

■ **Please tell us about the obstacles and**

problems you have faced and how you managed to overcome them.

There were many obstacles and problems in my path. Many of these problems were related to the laws and regulations that exist in our country. For example, it takes a lot of time to get permits and the multiplicity of organizations that have a role with regard to issuing a license as well as the complicated rules made traversing the path rather difficult. The main factor that enabled me to overcome many obstacles was my faith in God and my heartfelt belief in God's support and making appeal to Ahl al-Bayt (AS). Being persistent and exercising perseverance helped me reach my goals.

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

My answer to this question is quite sincere and devoid of any pretentiousness. My hijab is not hereditary. As I mentioned earlier I adopted hijab after undergoing a spiritual transformation, which happened to be at the same time as beginning my social activities. I chose this type of dress code voluntarily. I even designed the shape and appearance of my hijab in such a way that it does not interfere with my job. My hijab, I emphasize, has not

created any restrictions for me, and has rather removed many worries from me because due to the nature of my job, I work with many men of different cultures and this has made our interactions absolutely respectful. And I owe this to the protection that this dress code has granted me. Therefore, the point of contact between me and the men has only been my talent, intellectual ability, and management, and I have never experienced any violent or insulting behavior on the part of men during these twelve years.

It is interesting to know that this dress code and my belief in my religious teachings has caused some foreign contractors to say that your sobriety, belief, and dress code make you trustworthy for us, and they have even given me discounts, and this has at times been from people who have no religious beliefs. Hijab has really been a great achievement for me and my peace of mind, and it has caused me not to be exposed to bad social interactions.

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

I would like to tell all Iranian girls that they can achieve any legitimate and lawful desire they have. They should only be determined about their goals. I have experienced it. I started from nothing and only by relying on my own abilities. I was not in possession of any knowledge or financial inheritance from my ancestors. Of course, I had kind and compassionate parents and that was enough for me. I had grown in a very traditional way but I managed to enter social activities and I overcame all the hardships and reached this point. Therefore, neither gender, nor traditional family structure, or economic conditions, for that matter, can prevent you from reaching your goals. If a person knows himself/herself and removes his/her own internal obstacles, he/she will definitely reach his/her goals.

■ Your work environment is mostly masculine. How did you overcome this space and prove yourself?

I have somewhat answered a part of this question earlier. What we need to know is that when a person transcends the issue of the concept of gender then there are no men and women involved and what remains is only professional interactions and gender is no longer an issue. So I have never felt that it is a male job. When a person believes in himself/herself, he/she does not need to prove anything to others, others will accept him/her over time. As a result of one's persistence and stability, mental gender structures will be broken over time.

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

I have had role models in my career path. Studying the lives of successful people has given me ideas and I have always believed in these studies. But what changed my career path was following the example of Hazrat Khadija (SA) and Hazrat Zahra (SA). I learned from the lives of these noble ladies who have perpetuated their heritage by sacrificing their wealth and life. I have learned from them that the secret of perpetuity is to create opportunities for others to grow. It requires self-transcendence, and this is what I learned from these two noble ladies to change my lifestyle. The closer I got to the exemplary noble ladies, the more successes I have had. I also want to introduce you to a book that helped me a lot and that book is the Holy Qur'an. Let's hope that God willing, everyone will get close to the teachings of the Qur'an because there is a very unique inspiring engineering in the Qur'an that can be a lifesaver and a source of transformation for all human beings.

■ As for the last question, what are your plans for the future of your work?

We are currently setting up the Ferrosilice factory in Omid-e Nur Mi'ad, located in Neishabur city. This factory has made more than 50% physical progress so far.

■ Thank you for your time and we wish you increasing success.