

FLYING SOLO OR FLYING HIGH

Fighting the dreaded cancer to build a path-breaking career makes 27-year-old Kanika Tekriwal the poster girl for those who dare to dream. **Fareeda Kanga** comes away inspired by the girl who set up a private aviation company.



Kanika Tekriwal defies all stereotypes. Dressed in a smart pantsuit and pumps, it's the twinkle in her eye and her infectious nature that makes her stand out in a crowd. Not to mention the fact that this daredevil 27-year-old from a traditional Marwari family has shattered the proverbial glass ceiling by making inroads into the male-dominated arena of aviation.

"As a child I wanted to be a pilot but coming from a conservative background realized I couldn't be in the captain's seat. Yet my love for aviation remained undiminished," she explains. Working with one of India's largest real estate organizations, she managed to convince her boss to give her an opportunity to manage their private jets and chartering division. "This gave me a bird's eye view of the Indian aviation industry and the many pitfalls we faced."

Two years later, a chance job opportunity in London with one of the largest aerospace consultancies was like a dream come true, and Kanika was flying high as she was at the cutting edge of technology and privy to the latest developments in this sector.

Then life dealt her a tough blow. At 22, when she should have been enjoying her stint in London she was detected with the big C. "The first doctor I consulted said, 'Kanika, you have very little time.' I was 22 at that time and I said, 'Really doc, I am going to come and see you here after 40 years, not for treatment, but to prove that I am alive and kicking.' I then said goodbye to this doctor and found one who believed in hope, in his practice, and, most importantly, in me."

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that mattered. And of course that was just one thing on her mind—aviation. And thus JetSetGo was born in 2014—India's first online marketplace for private aircraft charter.

JetSetGo was set up in 2014 to give a complete makeover to the private jet charter experience in the country. "Unlike a fragmented or broker driven market that hitherto prevailed in the country, JetSetGo's online platform for the first time provides choice, transparency and flexibility to book a private jet online on both web and mobile platforms. For single leg trips, through a demand aggregation model, JetSetGo maximizes the chance for sale of empty travel legs to other customers enabling a Pay-As-You-Fly business model instead of travellers having to pay for a return fare even when flying just one-way," explains Kanika.

Kanika works tirelessly to extend a far superior level of service on-ground at departure and landing airports, on-

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board delivering bespoke gourmet dining options or additional value added services. For weddings or leisure travel, the range of services is far more elaborate. "You may find a helicopter decorated in line with the wedding theme to take guests on a joy ride, or even dropping flowers from the sky. We are constantly trying to roll out unique offerings based on a client's preferences or wedding theme."

Love isn't on the horizon for Kanika herself though. As she says, "I'm single with absolutely no time to mingle—it's a 24/7 business." So how does this busy lady relax? "As clichéd as it may sound—I absolutely love to travel. South America is my favourite destination and I would give an arm and a leg to go back there every 6 months. I'm also an absolute bookworm and I have a major shoe fetish. I probably own over 200 pairs! Also, I'm a big fan of Japanese food and next time I take a break, I want to embark on a three-day culinary tour which takes you across the best restaurants Japan has to offer."

Her next goal? "I am going to be on the list of 100 most powerful women in the world," she proclaims.



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