

OCFC International Student Program Helps Indian Teen Become One of India's Youngest Female Pilots at 18

As India's aviation industry expands, one OCFC international student is helping lead the next generation of women into the cockpit.

SANTA ANA, CA, UNITED STATES, July 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- At an age when many teenagers are preparing for university entrance exams and exploring career options, 18-year-old Sharvari Raikar made a bold decision that would change the course of her life. Leaving her family and home in India behind, she traveled to the United States to pursue a dream she had carried since childhood: becoming a pilot.



Orange County Flight Center – Training the Next Generation of Professional Pilots Since 1981.

Today, after completing flight training through the [international student program](#) at Orange County Flight Center (OCFC) in California, Sharvari has earned both her FAA Private Pilot Certificate and Instrument Rating, placing her among India's youngest female pilots.

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As a flight instructor, there is no greater reward than watching a student achieve what once seemed beyond reach. Every certificate represents dedication, perseverance, discipline, and personal growth”

Ho Jin Jung, Certified Flight Instructor, Orange County Flight Center

Her aviation journey began when she was just 11 years old. "I was on my first international flight and I remember watching the pilots and wondering how everything worked," said Sharvari. "That experience inspired me. From that moment on, I knew I wanted to become a pilot."

Years later, that dream brought her more than 8,000 miles from India to Southern California, where she enrolled in OCFC's FAA-approved flight training program at John

Wayne Airport. Unlike many training airports around the world, John Wayne Airport operates

within busy Class C airspace, exposing students to real-world airline, corporate, and general aviation traffic from the beginning of their training.

"At first, I didn't fully understand the value of training at a busy airport," Sharvari explained. "But being able to listen to real airline radio communications and see how professional aviation operates every day gave me experience that you cannot learn from a textbook. It taught me situational awareness, discipline, and how to think ahead as a pilot."

Sharvari says that while learning to fly required technical skill, her greatest lesson was learning the importance of discipline.

"There were times when motivation wasn't enough," she said. "As an 18-year-old, you naturally experience ups and downs. What helped me succeed was consistency and dedication. A pilot's determination and discipline are more important than talent."

One of the defining moments of Sharvari's training came during her first solo flight at John Wayne Airport.

"The first time I announced 'student solo' over the radio was unforgettable," she said. "My instructor stepped out of the aircraft, the tower cleared me for departure, and suddenly it was just me flying the airplane."

One of the most memorable moments of Sharvari's training came immediately after her first solo flight. Following a successful landing, an Alaska Airlines pilot operating at John Wayne Airport congratulated her over the radio on completing her solo.

"An Alaska Airlines pilot congratulated me on my solo flight," she recalled. "That absolutely made my day. It's a moment I'll never forget."

Sharvari credits much of her success to her instructor, Ho Jin Jung, whose mentorship helped shape her both as a pilot and as a young adult. "He helped me become more responsible, more mature, and more confident in my decisions," she said. "Aviation teaches you much more than flying. It teaches discipline, accountability, and how to make good decisions under pressure."



Orange County Flight Center proudly supports the next generation of aviators, including aspiring women pilots from around the globe.

She also praised the support she received throughout her training at Orange County Flight Center. "Every person at OCFC genuinely cares about student success," said Sharvari. "The instructors, admissions team, ground school staff, were always willing to help. As an international student, that support meant everything."

As India's aviation industry continues to expand, Sharvari hopes her achievement encourages more young women to consider aviation careers.

"Not many girls get opportunities like this, and I feel fortunate that I was able to make the most of mine," she said. "I want more young women in India to know that they belong in aviation and that they can achieve their goals."

At just 18 years old, Sharvari Raikar has earned both her FAA Private Pilot Certificate and Instrument Rating in the United States, becoming one of India's youngest female pilots and an inspiration for the next generation of women aviators.

About Orange County Flight Center

Orange County Flight Center (OCFC) is an FAA-approved Part 141 and Part 61 flight training institution located at John Wayne Airport in Santa Ana, California. For more than 45 years, OCFC has trained pilots from around the world through structured [FAA flight training](#) programs focused on safety, professionalism, and aviation excellence. Through its international student program, OCFC helps aspiring aviators from across the globe pursue professional aviation careers in the United States.

Orange County Flight Center

OCFC

+1 949-756-1300

[email us here](#)

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