



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
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NEERJA MISHRA

SERVICE NUMBER	
RANK	Senior Flight Purser
NAME	Neerja Mishra
DAUGHTER OF	Mr Harish Bhanot
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Chandigarh, UT Mumbai, Maharashtra
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	
SERVICE	Pan American Airways
DATE OF ENROLMENT/COMMISSION	16 January 1986
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Ashoka Chakra (Posthumous)/05 September 1986
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	Flight Safety Foundation Heroism Award, US Tamgha-e-Insaaniyat (for showing incredible human kindness) from Pakistan Justice for Crimes Award US



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Mrs Neerja Mishra was born on 07 September 1963 in Chandigarh, India into a Punjabi family. She was the daughter of Harish Bhanot, a Bombay-based journalist, and Mrs Rama Bhanot. She affectionately called her 'Lado' by her parents. She had two brothers, Akhil and Aneesh Bhanot. She received her early schooling at Sacred Heart Senior Secondary School in Chandigarh. When the family moved to Bombay, she continued her studies at Bombay Scottish School and then graduated from St. Xavier's College, Bombay. It was in Bombay where she was first spotted for a modelling assignment which began her modelling career. She had an arranged marriage in 1985 which however soon ended in a divorce. She was a huge fan of actor Rajesh Khanna and used to refer to quotes from his films throughout her life. Her father, Harish Bhanot, worked as a journalist with the Hindustan Times for more than 30 years. Mrs Neerja Mishra joined Pan American World Airways (Pan Am) on 16 January 1986 and soon stood out as a model employee. Her dedication to her job and her ability to remain calm under pressure were evident to all who worked with her



Mrs Neerja Mishra with her mother during her childhood days.

(Source: <https://www.tsemrinpoche.com/tsem-tulku-rinpoche/current-affairs/neerja-bhanot-a-selfless-heroine.html>)

On 05 September 1986 Mrs Neerja Mishra was a member of crew of the Pan American Airways flight from Bombay to New York via Karachi. She was a Senior Flight Purser on the ill-fated Pan Am Flight 73. At Karachi airport a group of four heavily armed hijackers rushed to the aircraft on the tarmac. Showing great presence of mind and quick reflexes, she shouted "Hijack". With the exit of the flight crew, she took command of the situation and helped keep the terrified passenger's calm. She deftly managed the situation and prevented the trigger-happy hijackers from going berserk. When the power in the aircraft went off suddenly, she



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helped a number of passengers to escape through the emergency door and became a marked target for the hijackers.



Neerja Mishra was the face that launched several brands in the 1980s, from Binaca to baby food.

(Source: The Indian Express)

Her loyalty to the passengers of aircraft in distress was indeed exceptional. Without caring for her own life in the seventeen hours ordeal, she hid the passports of all American passengers on the flight so that the hijackers could not differentiate between American and non-American citizens. In order to create a sense of fear and to have their demands accepted, the terrorists decided to shoot three children travelling in the plane. As the terrorists aimed their guns, Neerja Mishra stood in front of the children, shielding them. She showed tremendous courage and great presence of mind in saving the passengers but in the process sacrificed her own life. One of hijackers grabbed her from behind and shot her dead. For her bravery and exceptional courage, she was awarded Ashoka Chakra posthumously. She became the youngest and first woman recipient of the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award.



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From a newspaper report about the hijack and Neerja (left) An emotional picture of Neerja's funeral. She was such a selfless and courageous woman. (right), Pam Am Flight 73, taken after the hijacking incident (bottom)



Source: <https://www.tsemrinpoche.com/tsem-tulku-rinpoche/current-affairs/neerja-bhanot-a-selfless-heroine.html>



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the posthumous awards received by Neerja Mishra are the Ashoka Chakra from the Government of India; Flight Safety Foundation Heroism Award, U.S.A.; Tamgha-e-Insaaniyat (for showing incredible human kindness) from Pakistan; and Justice for Crimes Award from the United States Attorney's office for the District of Columbia. In addition, the Indian Postal Service has released a stamp commemorating her courage and bravery.



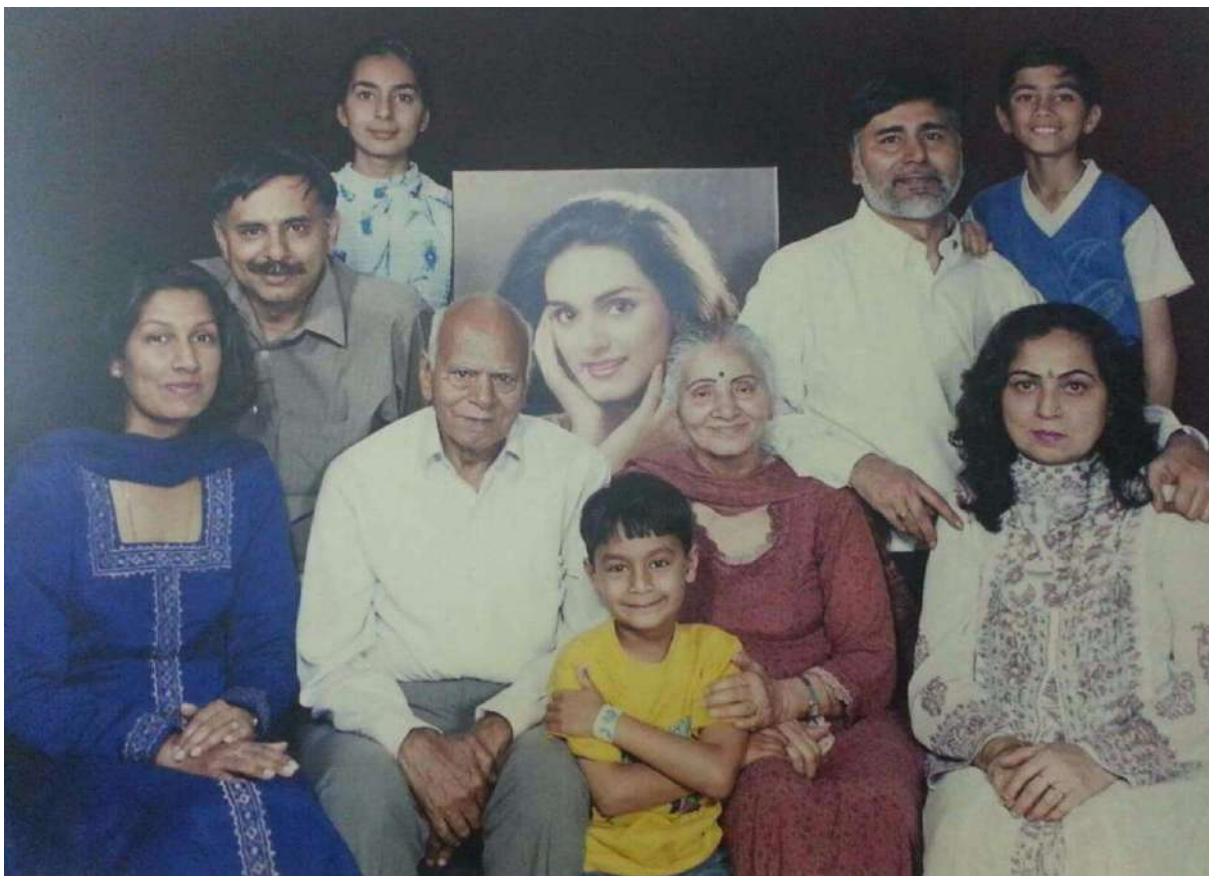
Mrs Rama Bhanot accepts the Ashoka Chakra awarded to her daughter in 1987 from then President Zail Singh

(Source: Indian Express)

She was survived by her father, mother and two brothers. Her father died on 01 January 2008 in Chandigarh at the age of 86 and her mother died on 05 December 2015 at the age of 86.



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The Bhanot family with a portrait of Neerja.

(Source: <https://www.tsemrinpoche.com/tsem-tulku-rinpoche/current-affairs/neerja-bhanot-a-selfless-heroine.html>)



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CITATION

MRS NEERJA MISHRA

(Effective date of the award-05 September 1986)

On September 5, 1986, Smt Neerja Mishra was a member of crew of the Pan American Airways flight from Bombay to New York via Karachi, as Senior Flight Purser. At Karachi airport a group of four heavily armed hijackers rushed to the aircraft on the tarmac. Showing great presence of mind and quick reflexes, she shouted "Hijack". This alerted the flight crew who immediately escaped, thereby immobilising the aircraft.

With the exit of the flight crew, she took command of the situation and helped keep the terrified passengers calm. She deftly managed the situation and prevented the trigger-happy hijackers from going berserk. When the power in the aircraft went off suddenly, she helped a number of passengers to escape through the emergency door. Now she became a marked target for the hijackers. One of these criminals grabbed her from behind and shot her dead. Her loyalty to the passengers of aircraft in distress was of an exceptional order indeed.

Smt Neerja Mishra displayed exceptional courage in the face of the grave adversity and saved many lives, unmindful of the safety of her own life. In recognition of this act of most conspicuous bravery she was awarded Ashoka Chakra Posthumously.

Reference: Gazette of India, Notification No dated



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2. Portraits of Valour II : The Winners of Ashoka Chakra. S S Gandhi.(2006). The Defence Review Publication
3. Who Was Neerja Bhanot? Remembering Icon of Courage 37 Years After Plane Hijack (Accessed on 12 September 2024)
<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/who-was-neerja-bhanot-remembering-icon-of-courage-37-years-after-plane-hijack-4361181>
4. Neerja Bhanot-Flight 73 (Accessed on 12 September 2024)
<https://www.panam.org/people-places/573-neerja-bhanot#:~:text=In%201987%2C%20she%20became%20the,highest%20civilian%20decoration%20for%20bravery.&text=In%202006%20she%20was%20awarded,the%20US%20Department%20of%20Justice.>
5. Neerja Bhanot's Ashoka Chakra Citation is an epitome of inspiration(Accessed on 12 September 2024)
http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/51137448.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst



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MEMORIAL

- Ghal Kalan Village (Moga Tehsil, Punjab), has immortalized the gallantry of Mrs. Neerja Mishra by building a memorial in her memory.



(Source: India Times)



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VIDEOS

Meet Neerja Bhanot (Source: Brut YouTube)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bc-7rwSIrok>

Neerja Bhanot: Watch True Story of A Brave Girl Who Saved Hundreds During Plane Hijack
(Source: India TV YouTube)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bg2Td6tH4FQ>

Old Doordarshan Television commercial of Zandu Chyavanprash Featuring Neerja Mishra
(Source: Youtube Meta Thinker)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hT70B6wRFA>

ABC News Clip: Flight 73 Hijacking (September 5, 1986) (Source: Pan Am Foundation)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V03J6KYNQB0>

Neerja Bhanot's Last Flight Announcement: LISTEN | Sonam Kapoor, Ram Madhwani | Full
Movie (Source: India Glitz Bollywood)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffZYrL6aRII&t=16s>

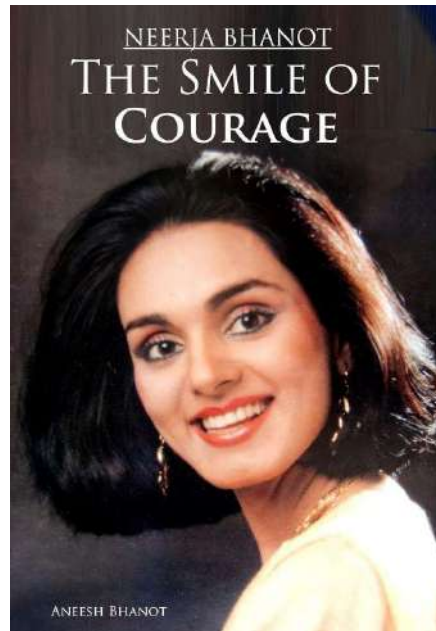
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OTHER INTERESTING RESOURCES



(Photo Source: Amazon)

- A book on Mrs Neerja Mishra's life has been written by her brother Mr Aneesh Bhanot and is published by United Newspapers Chandigarh, India in 2018.



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(Source: India Today)

- A popular Indian Motion Picture has been made to commemorate her bravery. The movie narrates the events of the fateful night when Neerja Mishra died fighting the Hijackers of Pan-Am 73. Renowned actress Mrs Sonam Kapoor Ahuja has portrayed her in the movie.



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(Source: <https://www.istampgallery.com/neerja-bhanot/>)

- To commemorate the memory Mrs. Neerja Mishra Indian Postal Services released a commemorative stamp