

Exclusive interaction with Cfn Murlikant Rajaram Petkar Life Time Arjuna Awardee

Name: Cfn Murlikant Rajaram Petkar

Age: 81

Date of Birth: 01-11-1944

Place of Birth: Peth Islampur , Dist Sangli , Maharashtra

Educational Institutes Attended: Core of EME Indian Army

Educational Qualification: Craftsman

First Job: Indian Army – Core of EME

Currently Working as: Ex Servicemen

Introduction to Swimming:

I began swimming after sustaining a disability as a result of injuries sustained during the 1965 Indo-Pak war.

First Coach:

My first swimming coach was Mr. Jawale.

Favorite Indian Swimmer:

Veer Dhawal Khade is my favorite Indian swimmer for his dedication and achievements in the sport.

Favorite International Swimmer:

I admire Michael Phelps for his extraordinary success and relentless pursuit of excellence.

Turning Point in Life:

The defining moment in my life was the transition from being a sportsperson and a brave soldier to living with a disability following my war injury.

Most Cherished Moment:

Winning India's first Paralympic gold medal remains my most treasured memory.

Major Achievements as a Swimmer:

I set a new world record in the 50m freestyle (37.33 seconds) at Heidelberg, Germany, a record that still stands.

Awards and Recognition:

1975: First recipient of the Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Award for the disabled from the Government of Maharashtra

2018: Conferred the Padma Shri by the President of India

2024: Received India's first Arjuna Lifetime Achievement Award by the hands of Honourable President of India



Acknowledgments:

I credit my success to the Indian Army, the doctors who have treated me throughout my life, my coaches, and my family.

Challenges in Coaching Elite Swimmers:

Key challenges include inadequate infrastructure and the difficulty in identifying hidden talent in rural India.

Advice to Elite Swimmers:

I encourage maximum participation in rural competitions, and urge parents and schools to actively promote sports among children. Every child should play at least one sport with professional coaching, and athletes deserve greater social recognition.

Challenges in Training Differently-Abled Swimmers:

Coaching para-athletes requires understanding their unique mindsets, improving infrastructure, and addressing the attitudes of their parents.

Progress of Indian Swimming:

Indian swimming can advance through better utilization of government facilities and schemes such as Khelo India. Swimming should be recognized as a competitive sport, not just a hobby.

Positive Changes in Indian Swimming:

Since I began coaching, there has been significant improvement in infrastructure, increased SAI initiatives and government schemes like Khelo India and Para Khelo India, greater recognition through civilian awards, and more government job opportunities for athletes.

Current Contributions:

At 81, despite ongoing physical challenges—including a bullet lodged in my spinal cord since 1965—I continue to visit sports events and institutes across the country, presenting replicas of India's first Paralympic gold medal to inspire and motivate young athletes.

Vision for the Next Five Years:

Having received more than I ever expected in my life, my hope for the future is not personal. I aspire to see India achieve third place in the Olympic medal tally.

Message for everyone:

Every citizen of our country should follow 1 rule i.e. INDIA 1st. Always dream big and take bold steps to achieve your goals. Don't focus on what you lose during the journey; instead, think about how victory will look like.

MEENAKSHI PAHUJA