

KNOW THE HIGH PERFORMANCE COACH

Name: PRASANTA KARMAKAR

Age: 45

Date of Birth: 8 DECEMBER 1980

Place of Birth: KOLKATA, WEST BENGAL



Educational Institutes Attended: BELUR BOYS HIGH SCHOOL, SAMPURNANANDA UNIVERSITY, THE GLOBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

Educational Qualification: MASTERS IN SPORTS SCIENCE

First Job: SWIMMING COACH IN HARYANA SPORTS DEPARTMENT

Currently Working as: SWIMMING COACH IN HARYANA SPORTS DEPARTMENT

Introduction to Swimming: IN 1985-86

First Coach: LT BADAL BANERJEE

Your favorite Indian swimmer (if any & why): SHASHRUTI VINAYAK NAKADE FOR HER DETERMINATION AND DEDICATION TOWARDS HER AIM

Your favorite international swimmer (if any & why): MICHAEL PHELPS FOR HIS HUGE ACHIEVEMENTS AND HIS LEGACY IN THE WORLD OF SWIMMING

Turning Point in Life: IN 2003 WHEN I WON THE FIRST INDIAN MEDAL AT THE WORLD PARA SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS, ARGENTINA, WHICH WAS MY FIRST INTERNATION EVENT

Most Cherished moment of life: THE BRONZE MEDAL AT THE DELHI COMMONWEALTH GAMES 2010

Major Achievements as a swimmer: FIRST INDIAN TO WIN COMMONWEALTH GAMES MEDAL IN 2010 DELHI COMMONWEALTH GAMES. 5 TIMES ASIAN PARA GAMES MEDALIST IN 2010 AND 2014. FIRST INDIAN TO WIN MEDAL AT THE WORLD PARA SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIP

Awarded Arjuna/ Major Award/ Recognition in the year: 2011

I give credit of my success to: TO THOSE WHO WERE PULLING ME BACK AND TO THOSE WHO NEVER LEFT MY BACK

What are the challenges (if any) involved in coaching elite swimmers: 1. LACK OF SPORTS SCIENCE INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANPOWER; 2. LACK OF DATA ANALYST OR EVALUATOR OR SCIENTIST ON GROUND LEVEL; 3. NEED TO HAVE A GOOD COORDINATION IN BETWEEN KEYROLES PLAYED BY COACHES AND TEACHERS; 4. FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO SWIMMERS

What is your advice to elite swimmers: FIX YOUR TARGET AND STAY FOCUSED TOWARDS IT.

What are the challenges you faced if any training the differently abled swimmers: PSYCHOLOGICAL MOULDING GETS CHALLENGING IF THEY START AT LATER AGE

How can Indian Swimming Progress: TARGETTING TALENT IDENTIFICATION AT VERY YOUNG AGE AT MASS LEVEL ACROSS INDIA; START LONG TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS MUST BE RUN WITH PERFORMER ATHLETES AS COACHES.

What all has changed for good in Indian swimming since you started coaching: IT IS SEEN THAT FUNDING HAS INCREASED, BUT IMPLEMENTATION OF SPORTS SCIENCE IS STILL NOT UP TO THE MARK.

How are you contributing currently to Indian Swimming: BY COACHING INDIA'S BUDDING 40 SWIMMERS FROM THE AGE GROUP OF 5 TO 22

How you see yourself five years from now: SETTLED IN WORK TOWARDS 2048

Message for everyone: IF YOU WANT TO DO ANYTHING EXTRAORDINARY IN YOUR LIFE, DO NOT PUT LIMITS ON YOUR DREAMS. LET DREAMS FLY AND WORK HARD TOWARDS YOUR GOAL. RESPECT EACH AND EVERYONE

MEENAKSHI PAHUJA



46th Edition, V.K. Pahuja Swimming Statistical Bulletin 2026

In Conversation With Revansh Adlakha International Para Swimmer

Name: Revansh Adlakha

Age: 16 Years

Date of Birth: 20 October 2009

Place of Birth: New Delhi, India

Educational Institutes Attended: DAV Public School, Sector 14, Gurugram

Educational Qualification: Class XI Student

First Job: Not Applicable

Currently Working as: Student, National Para Swimmer, Cybersecurity Enthusiast, Public Speaker and Advocate for Inclusion

Introduction to Swimming: I was introduced to swimming as a form of hydrotherapy to improve my physical strength and mobility. What began as therapy gradually became my passion and purpose. In 2022, I participated in my first National Para Swimming Championship and won my first National Gold Medal. Since then, I have won 9

National Gold Medals, 1 National Silver Medal, and 2 National Bronze Medals. I have also been recognized as the "Best Swimmer of India" and have represented India on international platforms, including World Para Swimming competitions in Berlin and Italy.

First Coach: My first coach was my mother, Mrs. Sapna Adlakha. When many coaches were hesitant to train me because of my condition, she stepped into the pool herself and became my first teacher. Before teaching me swimming, she taught me courage, determination, and self-belief.

Your Favorite Indian Swimmer (if any & why): My favorite Indian swimmer is Murlikant Petkar. His life journey is an inspiration far beyond sports. He faced immense challenges, yet never allowed circumstances to decide his future. His determination, patriotism, resilience, and ability to turn adversity into achievement continue to inspire me every day. His story reminds me that true champions are not defined by the obstacles they face but by the way they overcome them.

Your Favorite International Swimmer (if any & why): My favorite international swimmer is Michael Phelps. I admire his dedication, discipline, and relentless pursuit of excellence. One



statement by him deeply influenced me. When someone told him that he was lucky, he replied that if a person spends 12 to 14 hours a day in the water for years, sacrifices comfort, entertainment, and countless other things, people later call that "luck." That perspective taught me that success is not luck; it is the outcome of consistency, sacrifice, and hard work performed when nobody is watching.

Turning Point in Life: The turning point of my life was winning my first National Gold Medal at the National Para Swimming Championship. That moment transformed my mindset. It made me realize that I was capable of competing at the highest level and that my limitations did not define my potential.

Most Cherished Moment in Life: One of the most cherished moments of my life was being recognized as the "Best Swimmer of India." It represented years of physiotherapy, training, sacrifices by my family, and countless early mornings in the pool. It was not just my achievement; it was a celebration of everyone who believed in me.

Major Achievements as a Swimmer:

Winner of 9 National Gold Medals, 1 National Silver Medal, and 2 National Bronze Medals.

Recognized as the "Best Swimmer of India."

Represented India at international competitions, including World Para Swimming events in Berlin and Italy.

Secured Second Position in the 50m Breaststroke event at an International Swimming Championship in Berlin.

Multiple-time National Para Swimming Medalist.

Awarded Arjuna / Major Award / Recognition in the Year:

Best Swimmer of India.

Pradhan Award.

Multiple National Gold Medals in Para Swimming.

Recognition as one of India's youngest ethical hackers.

Speaker and mentor on national platforms including IITs and leading educational institutions.

I Give Credit of My Success To: I give credit for my success to my parents, grandparents, sister, teachers, coaches, mentors, and everyone who believed in me throughout my journey. My family has been my strongest support system. Their sacrifices, encouragement, and unwavering faith gave me the strength to pursue my dreams despite the challenges.

What are the challenges involved in training as an elite swimmer? Elite swimming demands discipline, consistency, and mental resilience. Balancing academics, training, recovery, physiotherapy, nutrition, and competitions requires continuous commitment. The greatest challenge is maintaining the same level of effort every day, regardless of whether results are immediately visible.

What is your advice to elite swimmers? Trust the process. Focus on becoming better every day rather than chasing immediate results. Medals are won during competitions, but champions are built during training. Stay disciplined, remain humble, and never stop learning.

What are the challenges you faced while training as a differently-abled swimmer? Initially, several coaches refused to train me because of my condition. There were also physical challenges such as muscle cramps, fatigue, pain, and the additional effort required to perform movements that many people take for granted. However, these challenges taught me resilience and perseverance. When opportunities were not available, my mother stepped forward and helped me begin my journey.

How can Indian Swimming Progress? India has tremendous talent. To unlock its full potential, we need stronger grassroots programs, better coaching infrastructure, increased accessibility, greater support for para athletes, and more awareness about swimming as a competitive sport. With the right ecosystem, India can emerge as a global powerhouse in swimming.

What all has changed for good in Indian Swimming since you started competing? There is increasing awareness about swimming, improved infrastructure, better exposure for athletes, and growing recognition for para sports. More young athletes are now seeing swimming as a serious career pathway, which is a positive sign for the future.

How are you contributing currently to Indian Swimming? I contribute by competing at national and international levels, representing the para swimming community, inspiring young athletes, and promoting inclusion in sports. Through my journey, I hope to encourage others to believe that ability should always be valued above limitations.

How do you see yourself five years from now? Five years from now, I see myself representing India at the highest international stages in para swimming while continuing to grow in the fields of cybersecurity and technology. I also hope to build innovative solutions that improve accessibility and create opportunities for people with disabilities. My goal is not only to achieve success personally but also to create meaningful impact for society.

Message for Everyone: Life does not begin equally for everyone, but everyone has the power to create an extraordinary journey. Challenges may shape your path, but they should never define your destination. Believe in yourself, trust the process, work hard even when results are not visible, and never allow circumstances to limit your dreams. Sometimes the very struggles that seem unfair today become the reason others are inspired by your story tomorrow.

MEENAKSHI PAHUJA

In Conversation With Himanshu Nandal International Para Swimmer

Name: Himanshu Nandal

Age: 22

Date of Birth: 16-06-2004

Place of Birth: Rohtak, Haryana

Educational Institutes Attended:

National Association for the Blind, Tagore International School
Vasant Vihar

Educational Qualification:

Graduate, BA Pol. SC Hons

Aatma Sanatan Dharma College (Delhi University)

Currently Working as: Student, athlete

Introduction to Swimming: Started training in year 2021

First Coach: Mr. Ranbir Sharma [SAI]

Your current coach: Mr. Ranbir Sharma [SAI]

Your favorite Indian swimmer (if any & why): My favorite Indian swimmer is Sajjan Prakash because of his dedication, hard work, and achievements at the international level. He is an inspiration for many young swimmers in India due to his discipline, consistency, and commitment towards the sport.

Your favorite International swimmer (if any & why): My favorite international swimmers are Caeleb Dressel, Michael Phelps, and Léon Marchand.

Michael Phelps is considered the greatest swimmer of all time because he holds the record for the highest number of Olympic medals in history. His physical structure and natural ability were perfectly suited for swimming, which made him exceptionally dominant in the sport.

Caeleb Dressel inspires me because of his power, speed, and consistency in sprint events.

Léon Marchand motivates me because of his dedication to the sport, disciplined training, and champion mindset.

Your main swimming event : 100M backstroke, 100M Breaststroke and 200 IM

Turning Point in Life: Winning 3 golds in Para National Swimming Championship Held in Guwahati, Assam (9-13 Nov, 2022)

Most Cherished moment is life: Winning my first gold and setting national record in my first Para National Swimming Championship in Udaipur, Rajasthan (March 24-27, 2022)

Major Achievements:

Owens all national records in Paralympic swimming events under the S11 category.

First Indian blind swimmer to achieve the Minimum Qualification Standard (MQS) in one event and the Minimum Entry Time (MET) in two events for the 2024 Summer Paralympics.

Achieved 7th rank at the World Para Swimming Championships in 2025.



Became a finalist in 4 events at the Para Asian Games 2023, delivering a strong performance at the continental level and marking a significant achievement in my coaching and competitive journey.

Awarded Arjuna Award/ Major Award/ Recognition in the year

Awarded Outstanding Player – Swimming (2022–23) by University of Delhi.

Honoured with the Best Sportsman of the Year (2022–23) award by Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College.

Invited as Guest of Honour at the School State Meet held at Step by Step School in 2024, attended along with my coach Ranbir Sharma and my father Balwan Singh.

I give credit of my success to:

My entire team of family, My Coaches and My Strength Coach, Nutritionist, Physio.

What are the challenges (if any) involved in coaching elite swimmers: Coaching elite swimmers, especially S11 visually impaired swimmers, comes with several unique challenges. Maintaining peak performance consistently, preventing injuries, managing competition pressure, and designing individualized training programs according to each athlete's specific needs are some of the biggest responsibilities of a coach.

In S11 swimming, coaches must also pay special attention to communication, spatial awareness, stroke technique, turns, and race timing. Building trust and confidence between the athlete and coach is extremely important. Along with physical preparation, coaches must focus on the swimmer's mental strength, recovery, motivation, and long-term development to ensure consistent progress and success at the highest level of competition.

What is your advice to elite swimmers: My advice to elite swimmers is to stay disciplined, trust the training process, and remain patient during difficult times. Success in swimming does not come overnight; it is achieved through hard work, consistency, determination, and self-belief.

Athletes should never stop learning, improving, and pushing their limits. Every challenge and setback is an opportunity to grow stronger. Staying focused, maintaining a positive mindset, and believing in your abilities are essential for achieving success at the highest level of competition.

What are the challenges you faced, if any, in training the differently abled swimmers?

One of the biggest challenges in training differently-abled swimmers, especially S11 visually impaired swimmers, has been overcoming communication barriers and ensuring effective interaction during training sessions and competitions. Coaches must understand the specific needs of each athlete and adapt training methods, technical instructions, and race strategies accordingly.

In S11 swimming, additional attention is required for orientation, turns, tapping techniques, safety, and building confidence in the water. It is important to create an environment where athletes feel supported, motivated, and understood.

However, with determination, proper coaching, family support, patience, and mutual understanding between the athlete and coach, these challenges can be successfully overcome, allowing swimmers to perform at their highest potential.

How can Indian Swimming Progress: Improvement in para swimming and sports

development can be achieved by creating accessible infrastructure for all athletes, providing quality training, and offering support schemes for swimmers who cannot afford swim gear or tournament expenses. It is also important to educate and professionally train coaches so they can better understand the needs of athletes with disabilities. Upgrading sports infrastructure, improving awareness, and developing a positive and inclusive mindset among coaches will help create equal opportunities for every athlete to succeed.

What all has changed for good in Indian swimming since you started swimming:

People are more aware. Specially in para-swimming, people with disability from different corners of India are encouraged to swim. The streams covering major nationals in India are getting more views, which means people have started taking interest in swimming. National records are being broken more frequently now.

How are you contributing currently to Indian Swimming: I try to give as much as I can. By winning gold medals, I am able and encourage people having disability to swim.

How you see yourself five years from now: If I receive quality training and proper support, I see myself performing well in major competitions and proudly representing India at the international level. I do not have any specific expectations, but my goal is to always give my best, continue improving, and reach the highest level possible in my sport.

Message: Life is full of struggles and challenges, but those who have the courage to face failures and learn from them can become champions and achieve success. Ups and downs are a part of every journey, especially in sports. One should never give up on their goals, no matter how difficult the situation may be. Determination, hard work, and self-belief are the true keys to success.

MEENAKSHI PAHUJA



In Conversation With Sanvi Rai Budding Para Swimmer

Name:- Sanvi Rai

Age:- 13

Date of Birth:- 02 February 2013

Place of Birth:- New Delhi

Educational Institutes Attended:

Navy Children School, Chanakyapuri New Delhi

Educational Qualification: IX

Currently Working as: Athlete [Para-Swimmer]



Introduction to Swimming: I started my swimming journey in 2024. What began as an opportunity to learn and enjoy the water gradually turned into a true passion. Through swimming, I have learned the values of discipline, perseverance, confidence, and consistent hard work. The sport has helped me grow not only as an athlete but also as an individual, teaching me the importance of dedication and self-belief in achieving goals.

First Coach: Ranbir Sharma [SAI]

Your current coach: Ranbir Sharma [SAI]

Your favorite Indian swimmer (if any & why): Devanshi Satija is my favorite Indian swimmer because of her dedication, determination, and achievements in para swimming. Her journey inspires young swimmers like me to believe in ourselves, stay confident during challenges, and work hard toward achieving our goals.

Your favorite International swimmer (if any & why): Katie Ledecky is my favorite international swimmer because of her incredible consistency, strong work ethic, and remarkable achievements at the highest level of the sport. Her commitment to excellence and disciplined approach to training motivate me to keep improving every day and strive for success in swimming.

Your main swimming event: Swimming Events

100m Freestyle

100m Backstroke

200m Individual Medley

Turing Point in Life: Representing myself in major swimming competitions and winning medals at the national level gave me confidence and motivated me to pursue swimming more seriously. These experiences strengthened my determination, improved my competitive mindset, and inspired me to continue working hard toward higher achievements in the sport.

The Most Cherished moment in life is: The most cherished moment of my life was floating independently in the water for the very first time. Although it may have seemed like a small achievement, for me it marked the beginning of a beautiful journey in swimming. That moment gave me confidence, happiness, and the motivation to keep learning and improving, eventually opening the door to many new opportunities and experiences in life.

Major Achievements

Won 3 Gold Medals at the 3rd Delhi State Para Swimming Championship 2025–26
Secured 2 Gold Medals and 1 Silver Medal at the 25th National Para Swimming Championship 2025–26
Successfully achieved the qualifying standard for the Asian Para Swimming Championships
Won a Silver Medal at the Delhi International Swimathon
Secured 2 Bronze Medals at the South Delhi Swimming Competition
Won 1 Silver Medal and 1 Bronze Medal at the West Zone Delhi Swimming Association Competition
Secured 3 Gold Medals at the Apeejay Swimming Talent Hunt Competition
Earned numerous medals and recognitions in various swimming competitions, reflecting dedication, consistency, and passion for the sport.

Awarded Arjuna Award/ Major Award/ Recognition in the year:

Consistently recognized for outstanding performances in state, national, inter-school swimming competitions, and para swimming events, demonstrating dedication, discipline, and continuous improvement in the sport.

I give credit of my success to: I am grateful to my parents, my coach Mr. Ranbir Sharma, my teachers, teammates, and everyone who has supported, guided, and encouraged me throughout my swimming journey. Their constant motivation and belief in me have played a significant role in my growth and achievements as a swimmer.

How can Indian Swimming Progress?

I believe Indian swimming can progress through stronger grassroots development, improved infrastructure, and better access to qualified coaches across the country. It is important to provide quality training facilities and create more opportunities for young swimmers to grow at both national and international levels.

Key Areas for Improvement:

Enhancing swimming infrastructure and year-round training facilities
Supporting athletes from diverse and underprivileged backgrounds
Providing greater international exposure and competition opportunities
Offering financial, nutritional, sports science, and technical support to athletes
Giving special focus to para and deaf athletes with equal opportunities and specialized coaching
Educating and developing coaches with modern scientific training methods
Conducting grassroots talent identification programs in schools and rural areas
Increasing awareness and promotion of swimming across villages, towns, and cities
Organizing more national camps and competitive events throughout the year
Improving access to physiotherapy, recovery, rehabilitation, and injury management support
Encouraging parental, institutional, and corporate support for athletes
Focusing on quality training rather than only quantity-based training methods
Creating long-term athlete development programs for sustained international success

Developing more all-season swimming pools, especially in North India, to ensure uninterrupted training throughout the year

Strengthening coordination between coaches, federations, academies, and sports authorities for athlete development

Promoting inclusive sports culture where para and deaf swimmers receive equal recognition and opportunities

With proper planning, strong support systems, scientific coaching, and equal opportunities for all athletes, India can achieve much greater success in international swimming competitions, including the Olympics, Paralympics, and Deaflympics.

What are the challenges (if any) involved in coaching elite swimmers: Maintaining peak performance consistently, preventing injuries, managing competition pressure, and designing training programs according to each athlete's individual needs are some of the biggest challenges in coaching elite swimmers. Coaches must also focus on the athlete's physical fitness, mental strength, recovery, and long-term development to ensure consistent progress at the highest level.

What is your advice to elite swimmers: Stay disciplined, trust the training process, remain patient during difficult times, and never stop learning and improving. Success in swimming comes through hard work, consistency, determination, and self-belief. Athletes should focus on continuous improvement and maintain a positive mindset throughout their journey.

What are the challenges you faced, if any, in training the differently abled swimmers? One of the biggest challenges in training differently-abled swimmers has been overcoming communication barriers and ensuring effective interaction during training sessions and competitions. Understanding the specific needs of each athlete and adapting training methods accordingly is very important. However, with determination, family support, proper coaching, and mutual understanding, these challenges can be successfully overcome.

What all has changed for good in Indian swimming since you started swimming?

Since I started swimming, many positive changes have taken place in Indian swimming. There is now greater awareness about the sport, and opportunities for swimmers are gradually improving. The swimming community has become more supportive, and athletes of all abilities, including para and deaf swimmers, are receiving more recognition and encouragement.

There are also better training facilities, increased participation at different levels, and more opportunities for swimmers to compete in national and international competitions. Overall, Indian swimming is progressing in a positive direction, creating a stronger platform for future athletes.

How are you contributing currently to Indian Swimming?

I am currently contributing to Indian swimming by competing at a high level, winning medals at the national level, and continuously striving to improve my performance as an athlete. Through my dedication and achievements in swimming, I aim to proudly represent my country and inspire other young swimmers to pursue excellence in the sport.

I have also achieved the unofficial qualifying time for the Asian Games, which has further

motivated me to work harder toward representing India at major international competitions in the future.

As a para swimmer, I want to encourage more para and differently-abled athletes to take up swimming and believe in their abilities. I strongly believe that with determination, discipline, and hard work, no challenge is too big to overcome. Through my journey, performances, and experiences, I hope to inspire the next generation of swimmers to dream big, stay confident, and continue working toward their goals with dedication and self-belief.

How you see yourself five years from now: I see myself continuing to compete at the highest level and proudly representing India in major international competitions. My dream is to win a gold medal for India at the Paralympics and continue achieving success in swimming.

At the same time, I also hope to inspire and guide the next generation of swimmers through my journey and experience. In the future, I would like to support and coach young swimmers, especially deaf athletes, and help make training and opportunities more accessible for them.

Message:

Dream big, work hard, and never give up. Every champion once started as a beginner with a dream and the courage to keep moving forward. No dream is too big when you believe in yourself and stay committed to your goals.

Success comes through dedication, discipline, perseverance, and consistent hard work. Never let challenges define your limits. Stay focused, trust the process, and let your actions speak louder than words. Always focus on quality over quantity, because true growth comes from purposeful effort and continuous improvement.

Keep believing in yourself, stay determined during difficult times, and continue swimming forward with confidence, passion, and a positive mindset. One day, your hard work will speak for itself.



MEENAKSHI PAHUJA



In Conversation Lakshay Rawat Budding Para Swimmer

Name: Lakshay Rawat

Age: 14 years

Date of Birth: 20.08.2011

Place of Birth: New Delhi

Educational Institutes Attended:

Mahashay Chuni Lal Saraswati Bal Mandir, Hari Nagar

Educational Qualification:

Pursuing Class 10th

From Mahashay Chuni Lal Saraswati Bal Mandir, Hari Nagar

Currently Working as: Student,

Athlete [Para – Swimmer]

Introduction to Swimming:

Started training in year 2022

First Coach:

Mr. Ramesh and Mr. Swatantra [SAI GAF]

Your current coach:

Mr. Ranbir Sharma [SAI]

Your favorite Indian swimmer (if any & why):

My favorite Indian swimmer is Murlikant Petkar. He is a true inspiration because of his extraordinary determination, resilience, and courage in overcoming adversity. Despite sustaining severe injuries while serving the nation, he went on to create history by becoming India's first Paralympic gold medalist.

His journey reflects the power of perseverance, dedication, mental strength, and self-belief. He proved that no obstacle is too great when a person remains focused on their goals. His achievements continue to inspire athletes across generations, especially para athletes, to believe in themselves and strive for excellence.

Your favorite International swimmer (if any & why):

My favorite international swimmer is Michael Phelps. I admire him for his versatility, consistency, and dedication across multiple swimming events. He is a major source of inspiration for me because of his extraordinary achievements, unmatched work ethic, mental toughness, and record-breaking success at the Olympic Games, especially during the 2008 Olympics.

His commitment to excellence and his ability to perform under pressure at the highest level motivate me to continuously improve myself and pursue my own goals in swimming with discipline, focus, and determination.

Your main swimming event :-

50m Freestyle

100m Freestyle

100m Breast Stroke

200m Individual Medley



Turning Point in Life:

In 2021, I suffered a major accident that resulted in two hip-joint surgeries within a span of six months. During my recovery process, my doctor recommended swimming therapy as part of rehabilitation, and my father introduced me to swimming by teaching me the basics in the water. Within just three days, I discovered a deep passion for the sport and decided to pursue swimming professionally.

I participated in my first swimming competition within 27 days of starting training and delivered a strong performance, which gave me the confidence and motivation to continue my journey in competitive swimming. Through dedication, discipline, and perseverance, I later earned the opportunity to train at Talkatora Stadium and was selected for coaching support under the Glenmark Aquatic Foundation.

A major turning point in my para swimming journey was receiving guidance and support from Mr. Ranbir Sharma, who introduced me to para swimming and continuously motivated me to believe in my abilities. His mentorship, technical guidance, and strong support played a vital role in my development as a para swimmer and helped me reach the national podium at the Para National Championships.

Most Cherished moment is life:

One of the most memorable moments of my swimming journey was winning 2 Gold Medals and 1 Silver Medal, along with setting a National Record, at my first Para National Swimming Championship held in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, in March 2023.

This achievement was possible under the guidance of Mr. Ranbir Sharma, whose support, training, and motivation played a major role in my success. That competition became a turning point in my career, giving me confidence, recognition, and the motivation to aim for higher achievements in para swimming.

Major Swimming Achievements :-

Holds multiple National Records in Para Swimming events under the S10 Sub-Junior category.

Achieved 3rd All India Ranking in the S10 category after competing at the sub-junior level.

Won 2 Gold Medals and 1 Silver Medal at the first Para National Swimming Championship (2023–24).

Secured 3 Gold Medals at the Para National Swimming Championship (2024–25).

Won 3 Gold Medals at the Para National Swimming Championship (2025–26).

These achievements reflect consistent dedication, discipline, and continuous progress in competitive para swimming at the national level.

Awarded / Major Award/ Recognition in the year: N/A

I give credit of my success to: -

I give credit for my success to my entire family and my coaches, whose constant support, guidance, motivation, and belief in me have played a major role throughout my journey. Their encouragement during both difficult and successful moments has helped me stay focused, confident, and dedicated toward achieving my goals in swimming.

What are the challenges involved in coaching elite swimmers?

Coaching elite swimmers involves several challenges, as it requires maintaining a balance between high-performance training, injury prevention, and proper recovery. At the elite level, athletes train with intense physical and mental demands, so coaches must carefully monitor workload, technique, recovery, and overall performance.

Another major challenge is managing mental pressure, motivation, and competition stress, especially before important national and international events. Every swimmer responds differently to training and pressure, which makes personalized training plans and effective communication extremely important.

Coaches also need to focus on technical development, race strategy, nutrition, recovery, and long-term athlete development while ensuring that swimmers remain motivated and mentally strong throughout the season. In para and deaf swimming, additional patience, adaptability, and specialized coaching approaches are often required to meet the individual needs of each athlete and help them perform at their highest potential.

What is your advice to elite swimmers:-

My advice to elite swimmers is to remain disciplined, trust the training process, and stay resilient through every challenge. Success in swimming, as in any sport, is not achieved overnight; it is built through consistent effort, dedication, perseverance, and an unwavering belief in oneself.

Athletes should embrace a mindset of continuous learning, strive for constant improvement, and never be afraid to push beyond their perceived limits. Every challenge, setback, and disappointment offers a valuable opportunity for growth and self-development. The journey to excellence is rarely easy, but those who remain focused, maintain a positive attitude, and stay committed to their goals are the ones who ultimately succeed.

Most importantly, remember that true champions are not defined solely by their victories, but by their ability to overcome adversity, rise stronger after setbacks, and continue pursuing greatness with passion and determination. Believe in your abilities, trust your journey, and never stop striving to become the best version of yourself.

What are the challenges you faced, if any, in training the differently abled swimmers?

Training differently abled swimmers requires adapting coaching methods to meet each athlete's unique physical abilities and needs. One of the key challenges is developing individualized training programs while ensuring safety, confidence, and effective skill development. However, with patience, proper communication, and a supportive environment, these challenges can be transformed into opportunities to help athletes achieve their full potential.

However, with determination, proper coaching, family support, patience, and mutual understanding between the athlete and coach, these challenges can be successfully overcome, allowing swimmers to perform at their highest potential.

How can Indian Swimming Progress:

Indian swimmers are highly motivated and possess immense potential; however, their progress is often hindered by inadequate infrastructure and insufficient institutional support.

To elevate Indian swimming, there must be transparent governance, strict monitoring, and effective enforcement of sports policies. Greater investment is needed in world-class facilities, specialized coaching, and dedicated training programs for para swimmers. Motivation and athlete-development programs should also be strengthened to encourage long-term participation and excellence. Additionally, financial assistance for equipment, training, and competition expenses must be provided with strict oversight to ensure that benefits and award money reach athletes directly and fairly.

It is also important to educate and professionally train coaches so they can better understand the needs of athletes with disabilities. Upgrading sports infrastructure, improving awareness, and developing a positive and inclusive mindset among coaches will help create equal opportunities for every athlete to succeed.

What all has changed for good in Indian swimming since you started swimming?

Since I started swimming, Indian swimming especially para swimming has seen many positive changes and encouraging growth. Today, there is greater awareness, recognition, and respect for para athletes, along with increased opportunities to compete at national and international levels.

Access to specialized coaching, classification systems, scientific training methods, and athlete support programs has also improved over the years. More swimmers are now receiving professional guidance, better exposure, and opportunities to participate in high-level competitions.

Most importantly, para swimmers today receive greater visibility, encouragement, and support from coaches, organizations, and society, which helps athletes pursue the sport with more confidence, motivation, and ambition. Although there is still room for improvement, these positive developments are helping Indian swimming move steadily toward higher international standards.

How are you contributing currently to Indian Swimming?

I try to contribute to Indian swimming in every possible way through my performances, dedication, discipline, and achievements in the sport. By winning gold medals and competing at a high level, I hope to inspire and encourage people with disabilities to take up swimming and believe in their abilities.

Through my journey, I want to prove that physical challenges should never stop anyone from pursuing their dreams. I aim to motivate para athletes and differently-abled youth to work hard, stay confident, and proudly represent India at national and international competitions.

I also believe that every achievement by a para athlete helps increase awareness and recognition for para sports in India. By continuously improving myself and striving for excellence, I hope to contribute to the growth of Indian para swimming and inspire the next generation of athletes to dream big and never give up.

How do you see yourself five years from now?

If I continue to receive quality training, proper support, and guidance, I see myself representing India at the highest levels of international para swimming within the next five years. My goal is to consistently improve my performance, achieve major international success, and proudly contribute toward India's growth in para sports.

I strongly believe that with the right environment, scientific training, and experienced coaching, I can achieve even greater milestones and work toward winning a Paralympic medal for India. It is my dream to contribute to the vision of our Hon'ble Prime Minister and Sports Minister, who continue to encourage Indian athletes to achieve excellence at the global level.

A major source of inspiration and support in my journey has been my coach, Mr. Ranbir Sharma, who guided and motivated me throughout my para swimming career. He is recognized for coaching visually impaired swimmer Himanshu Nandal, who achieved Paralympic qualification under his guidance. Training under such experienced and dedicated coaches gives athletes like me the confidence to dream bigger and perform at a much higher level.

Beyond my personal achievements, I also hope to inspire other para athletes and contribute to the development and recognition of para swimming in India.

Message:

My message to every athlete is to dream big, work hard, and never allow circumstances to define your limits. Push yourself beyond what you think is possible, stay mentally strong during difficult times, and fuel your journey with discipline, proper nutrition, and consistent effort.

Life will always bring challenges, failures, and moments of doubt, but every setback carries a lesson that helps you grow stronger and wiser. Champions are not the ones who never fail; they are the ones who rise every time they fall and continue moving forward with courage and determination.

Believe in yourself even when the path seems difficult. Stay focused on your goals, trust the process, and always work on quality rather than quantity. Success does not come overnight it is built through patience, perseverance, discipline, and self-belief.

With dedication, resilience, and an unwavering spirit, no obstacle is too great and no dream is beyond reach. Keep moving forward, because your greatest achievement may be just one more effort away.

MEENAKSHI PAHUJA



Dronacharya Awardees



Mr. Nihar Ameen
Swimming
Dronacharya Award, 2015

Mr. S Pradeep Kumar
Swimming
Dronacharya Award, 2016



Mr. Tapan Panigrahi
Swimming
Dronacharya Award, 2021