

Mr. Sharath Gayakwad



India's first Paralympic swimmer, coach and Arjuna Award winner Sharath Gayakwad is an exemplary example of those who overcome biggest of obstacles to achieve their goals. Born on 10th May 1991 in a family with a humble background, a career in swimming perhaps was not even an option for a young Gayakwad, who suffered from congenital deformity in his left hand by birth.

Swimming happened just by chance when nine year old Gayakwad's school in Bengaluru made swimming compulsory for all students. It took many counselling sessions by the school and a lot of cajoling from Gayakwad's sports teacher that he agreed to enter the pool. Days of aimless paddling in the pool, gradually brought out his talent, which his coach was quick to spot. Thus began his journey into professional swimming.

It was his selection for the National Championship that made Gayakwad realize that the sport was more than a hobby. He won four Gold medals in the championship. His prolific performance caught the attention of national coaches, and he was subsequently selected for the Youth Pacific Games. He became the youngest Indian representative at the event, aged just 12.

This was just the beginning of Gayakwad's productive career. Following his success at the Youth Pacific Games Gayakwad got selected to represent India in several youth competitions, before making his senior debut in 2006.

Gayakwad made another major leap forward when he got the national call for the 2010 Asian Para Games. Defying the 100m breaststroke ranking narrative, he clocked a bronze medal winning time of 20.90 seconds. His award winning performance secured him a place in the London Paralympics.

In 2011, Gayakwad went on to win two medals at the International Deutsche Swimming Championships in Berlin. He also held the 50m and 100m Asian breaststroke record, during the time. He continued on his golden streak and reached his career best ranking of 13th in the world. In the 2014 Para Asian Games, Gayakwad earned the rare distinction of winning six medals surpassing legendary athlete PT Usha's record of most number of medals by any Indian in a multiple-sport event.

Gayakwad's career boasts of many meritorious performances. He has won many prestigious awards, including the Karnataka Rajyotsava Award, the IBN 7 Super Idol Award, the Kempegowda Award, the Ekalavya Award, the National Child Award Exceptional Achievement, the State Child Award and many more.

Today, apart from coaching aspiring swimmers, Gayakwad also runs his company Gamatics, through which he aims to change the infrastructural and financial issues that plague para-sports in India. He dedicating his life to swimming, now teaches techniques and skills to future athletes of India.

