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**"I STARTED SKATING AT THE AGE OF SEVEN. I HAVE BEEN WINNING GOLD AT THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP FOR THE LAST SIX YEARS. I GOT MY FIRST SET OF ASIAN MEDALS IN 2012"**  
— Pranamya Rao

## SPEEDING ON SKATES TO INTERNATIONAL ACCOLADES



**PRANAMYA RAO**



**SUBI SUVETHA**

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**T**here's a swarm of roller skaters across different age categories thronging the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium compound on a Saturday morning. And there are more of them trooping into the indoor stadium, carrying their skates and helmets as the Tamil Nadu Roller Skating State Meet is about to start soon. While there are many first-timers at the state meet, there are also a good number of skaters like 20-year-old Subi Suvetha, who are absolute pros and have even represented the country abroad. We catch up with a few of them on the growing interest for roller skating, support from the government and the future of the sport...

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VARIETY

## Promote the sport, say these skaters



**IT'S ONLY A PASSION FOR ME RIGHT NOW. I MAY OR MAY NOT CONSIDER IT AS A CAREER LATER, DEPENDING ON ITS POPULARITY THEN**  
— Arun

Arun Sathianarayanan

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**CITY SKATERS DO WELL**  
The number of skaters in the city is fairly good and it's a developing sport in Chennai. Several of them like Subi have even gone on to compete in the Asian Championship and World Championship. "In September, I took part in the 18th Asian Roller Skating Championships in Namwon, Korea. This was the second international event I've taken part in. There, I finished sixth in both the 100m, and 500m," says Subi, who, along with Pranamya Rao, another skater from Chennai, was recently felicitated by Stella Maris College, where they both study. Pranamya is an artistic skater. "I started skating at the age of seven. I have been winning gold at the national championship for the last six years. I got my first set of Asian medals in 2012. Then again in 2014 I won a medal and this year, I won a silver in solo dance and bronze in quartet dance," she says. There are a few more from the city who've won medals at the Asian Championship this year — Vacasya Nagula Lakshmi Narayanan won bronze medals in solo dance and quartet group dance, and Arun Sathianarayanan won a silver in solo dance among the boys.

**BUT CHALLENGES HAMPER THEM...**  
So, what is it that is stopping them from taking their talent to the next level? A medal at the World Championship, which happens every year, still remains a dream. "There's only one skating rink in Chennai to practise artistic

skating. That's in Shenoy Nagar. To be honest, we actually don't have proper infrastructure. When we go for competitions abroad, we have to perform in a rink with wooden flooring. Here, it is an outdoor rink with cement flooring. Nowhere in India do we have an international-standard stadium with the dimension of 25m x 50m," says Pranamya. Vacasya says that there's too much pressure on them for getting used to the rink in a short time. "We hardly get an hour or so to practise on the wooden-floor rink before the championship."

Pranamya adds that the number of local skating events are also too less. "Every year, there are only three events — district, state

and national meets. Nothing else. We need to have more open championships to promote the sport more."

**IT'S AN EXPENSIVE SPORT**  
While the skate itself is expensive, many of them, who represent the country, have to shell out money from their own pockets for coaching and expenses towards participating in international championships. Some of them like Vacasya train abroad with international coaches and have to spend huge sums for that. "I have a personal trainer who is from Italy since 2017. She's a two-time world champion. I also train under another coach, Pavan Kumar Akula, in India. The Roller Skating Federation of India is taking efforts to keep ourselves updated and even inviting international coaches here. But it's important that we get longer period of personal training under European coaches, for the best skaters in the world are still from there," says Vacasya, who's a Class XII student.

Arun says that unlike other sports, it's still not a career option yet. "It's only a passion for me right now. I may or may not consider it as a career later, depending on its popularity then. At the moment, we don't have sponsors. Though we are winning medals, there's not much support from the government. We are getting some help from the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu under the champion development scheme. I get a sum of ₹2 lakh every year. But we spend five times more than that for training abroad. I have a coach from Portugal apart from Pavan here." However, the good news is that there are good chances that roller skating will be included in Asian Games and Olympics soon, says Pavan. "It's definitely quite expensive. As skaters go for tougher championships, we need to invest an adequate amount of money, too. Despite lack of infrastructure, our students are winning medals."

**WE HARDLY GET AN HOUR OR SO TO PRACTISE ON THE WOODEN-FLOOR RINK BEFORE THE CHAMPIONSHIP**  
— Vacasya

Vacasya Nagula Lakshmi Narayanan



Subi

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