

WOMAN POWER IN WELDING SKILL COMPETITIONS

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It was a proud moment for India, when Indian team got the **Bronze Cup in the Arc Cup International Welding Competition** (2nd year in a row) at **Zhuzhou City, China**, in June 2018. It was more remarkable since there was a woman competitor in the Indian team, a 19 year old girl **Miss Arati Prakash Patole**. She also got '**Outstanding Female Welder**' prize in the competition. But the ball started rolling way back in 2017.

The Indian Institute of Welding (IIW-India) conducts 'National Skill Competition for Best of the Best Welders' every year, which is not gender specific. There is Branch level competitions and National Final with the winners from different branches in different categories, held during the National Welding Seminar (or during International Congress). Again, National champions in different categories get the chance to compete in the Arc Cup International Welding Competition in China. In 2017, Miss Arati won the Mumbai Branch Competition in one of the six categories and continued her winning streak in National final also, defeating her male contenders. That was really a memorable performance and a proud moment for all of us!

It is widely believed that if gender congruence is accomplished in workforce, we could raise our GDP by 16% which in turn would be beneficial for our developing economy. But the bitter truth is, India is ranked 163 out of 181 countries in female workforce participation percentage, which is only 26.97% in 2018, as per TheGlobalEconomy.com (source: The World Bank). Hope the situation will improve soon with the efforts in place by the government and CSR by the corporates. Women of today's world are endeavoring to their best to be an active part and further excel in every sphere of industrial activities and thereby stepping out of the four walls of their confineries so as to raise the standard of themselves and thereby the society. With welding as no exception to their work-power and with a thought to encourage more active women participation, inspiring from the achievement of Miss Arati, The Indian Institute of Welding has organised the first ever National Best Welder Competition for Women, in association with its Industrial Partners M/s Kemppi India Pvt. Ltd. & Nextgen Plasma Pvt. Ltd. on 12th October 2018, at Chennai. This was

really a milestone in the history of welding in India! During the inauguration, Dr. Arun Kumar Bhaduri (Director, IGCAR & the then President of IIW-India) informed that, "Though industrial automation has reduced the need for skilled welders in western countries, manual welding is still in vogue in the country and skilled welders from India are in demand in big industries because of the good wrist movement."

Again we have seen the replica of 2017 in the National final of 2018, when Miss Rasika Prakash Lokhande won in her category after defeating her male contenders. She is also the winner of National Best Welder Competition for Women and both Miss Arati and Miss Rasika are from M/s Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. Like 2018, Miss Rasika joined the Indian delegation to take part in the Arc Cup International Welding Competition in Langfang City, China, held in September 2019; and she also got the '**Excellent Welder**' prize in the competition. They made us proud again and again and Indian Team got the Silver Cup this time! This will not be out of place to mention that Miss Arati also done a very good performance and rode up to Regional Competitions of Worldskills. Mr. Anand Mahindra appreciated her through the twitter stating "*GO Arati! And you will soon win the Best Welder in the World title. Not just Best Female Welder. Keep breaking stereotypes. And keep Welding the World together.*" What a motivational tweet from the Chairman!

On the occasion of International Women's Day, during 7th & 8th of March 2019, first National Welding League of Women Students (NWL-2019) was organised by C. V. Raman College of Engineering (CVRCE), Bhubaneswar, in association with The Indian Institute of Welding; also with AICTE and Fronius India Pvt. Ltd. Around 100 girls from different ITIs, Engineering Colleges, IITs and Skill Institutes pan India, participated in the competition. The programme was inaugurated by Shri Manish Kumar, MD & CEO, NSDC. The Chief Guest of the Valedictory Session on 8th March was Col. I.S. Gahlaut, CEO, CGSC. Ms. Renu N. Gupta of L&T Ltd., also a member of IIW-India, was the Guest of Honour along with Mr. Parimal Biswas, the then Hony. Secretary General of IIW-India. Thanks to CVRCE Management for staging such a huge and successful event!

In 2019, the National Best Welder competition for Women was

held preliminarily in four cities –Pune, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai and won nationwide attention. Women welders came to the lime light of welding industry by proving their technical excellence. 53 women welders took part in the event and 13 contestants made it to the finals. The final was held on 6th of December 2019 at the premises of M/s KEMPPI India Pvt Ltd, Chennai. To encourage the young girls towards welding, specific Students' categories were introduced this time in the competition. The winners of 2019 (Season 2) competition are:

1. **Best Structural Welder in SMAW Process: Ms. Sunita Rani** of M/s Alliance Integrated Metaliks Ltd., Delhi
2. **Best Structural Welder in GMAW Process: Ms. Aruna Bai** of M/s Integral Coach Factory, Chennai

3. **Best Pipe Welder in GTAW Process: Ms. Snehal Aher** of M/s GE India Pvt. Ltd., Pune
4. **Best Student Welder in SMAW Process: Ms. Ladli** of Shri Vishwakarma Skill University, Palwal
5. **Best Student Welder in GMAW Process: Ms. A. Hari Durga** of M/s Integral Coach Factory, Chennai

'The Hindu' rightly said that (21st October 2018), *"There are women, just as there are men, welded to their jobs. These women don their overalls and, holding a protective shield wield the blowtorch, making the toughest malleable, teasing it into shapes."* We are also confident that the woman welders will definitely come forward and will take part in the growth of our nation, of course with the active support from the industries as well as from the welding fraternity.

