



**PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU**  
( Research Unit )  
**Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**  
**Government of India**



## **Padma Awards: The Journey to ‘People’s Padma’**

(Ministry of Home Affairs)

January 25, 2022

The highest civilian honours of a proud democracy ought to be more than just awards - they should be a recognition of the extraordinary feats of ordinary citizens, a celebration of the astounding diversity of cultures, skills, thoughts and actions that weave the very fabric of our nation.

With its firm commitment to transform the Padma Awards to the ‘**People’s Padma**’, the Government of India is seeking to achieve this very objective. Over the last few years, the Padma Awards have given more emphasis to the work done by the nominees, than to their identities. Further, departing from the traditional approach where selected persons recommended the nominations, the nomination process has become increasingly broad-based, with nominations being opened to the public at large. This has made it possible to recognize the real heroes at the grassroots levels, whose tireless efforts and remarkable feats have touched lives in their communities and beyond. The Padma Awards have thus become a people’s movement, marking a paradigm shift in Jan-Bhagidari for building a New India.

### **Padma Awards: A History**

In **1954**, the [Government of India instituted two civilian awards- Bharat Ratna & Padma Vibhushan](#). The latter had three classes namely *PahelaVarg*, *DusraVarg* and *TisraVarg*. These were subsequently renamed as Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri vide Presidential Notification issued on January 8, 1955.

The Padma Awards are one of the highest civilian honours of India. It is announced every year on the occasion of Republic Day except for brief interruption(s) during the years 1978 and 1979 and 1993 to 1997.

The award is given in three categories:

- **Padma Vibhushan** for exceptional and distinguished service;
- **Padma Bhushan** for distinguished service of a high order; and
- **Padma Shri** for distinguished service.



All persons without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex are eligible for these awards. However, Government servants including those working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible for these Awards. The award seeks to recognize works of distinction and is given for distinguished and exceptional achievements/service in all fields of activities/disciplines, such as Art, Literature and Education, Sports, Medicine, Social Work, Science and Engineering, Public Affairs, Civil Service, Trade and Industry, among others.

The awards are presented by the President of India every year where the awardees are presented a *Sanad* (certificate) signed by the President and a medallion. The recipients are also given a small replica of the medallion, which they may wear during any ceremonial/State functions if desired. The names of the awardees are published in the Gazette of India on the day of the presentation ceremony.

A total of [4875 awards](#) (including 48 Bharat Ratna Awards) have been given till date.

Bharat Ratna	Padma Vibhushan	Padma Bhushan	Padma Shri
48	321	1281	3225

### Heralding Change

In its year of inception in 1954, a total of [49 awards](#) were presented. Apart from three recipients of Bharat Ratna, there were six recipients of Padma Vibhushan, 23 recipients of

Padma Bhushan, and 17 of Padma Shri Award. In the following years- 1955 and 1956- the total number of awards was [31](#) and [25](#), respectively.

In 2020 and 2021, with the #People'sPadma movement becoming wider and deeper in its reach, a total of [141](#) and [119](#) individuals, respectively, have been recognized and awarded by the Government.

One of the first steps in this historic transformation [came in 2016](#) when the Government threw open the nomination process for the Padma Awards to the general public. Any Indian could nominate an achiever for these prestigious awards through a simple online procedure. The idea was to promote transparency on one hand in order to end the culture of influence in the nomination & selection process, and on the other hand, to facilitate the identification of lesser-known heroes. Today, through the official website, even self-nomination can be made.

[In 2018](#), in order to further encourage the participation of citizens in what was termed the **#People'sPadma** movement, the Government launched the Padma Quiz - an online quiz that would allow winners to attend the Padma Award ceremony in person at Rashtrapati Bhavan. It also instituted a 'Wall of Wishes', allowing people to send messages to the Awardees through personalized cards.

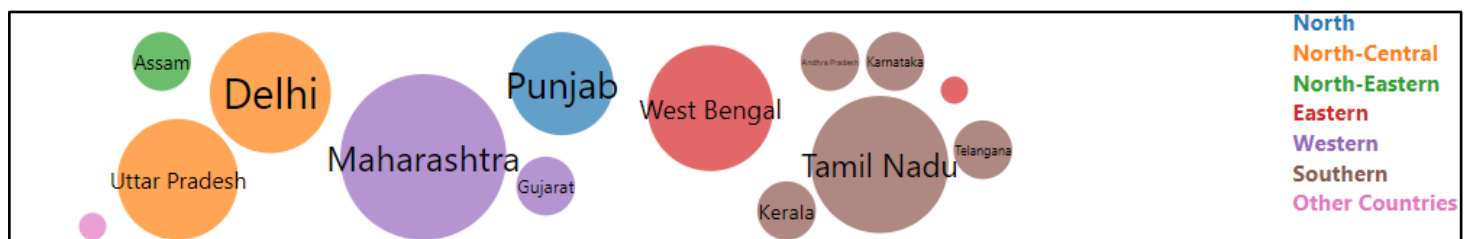


In 2020, while declaring the nominations for Padma Awards 2021 open, the [Ministry of Home Affairs also announced](#) that all Central Ministries/Departments, States/UT Governments, Bharat Ratna and Padma Vibhushan awardees, Institutes of Excellence have been requested to make concerted efforts to identify talented persons whose excellence and achievements really deserve to be recognized. Stress was to be laid on identifying those amongst women, weaker sections of the society, SCs & STs, *divyang* persons and persons doing selfless service to the society.

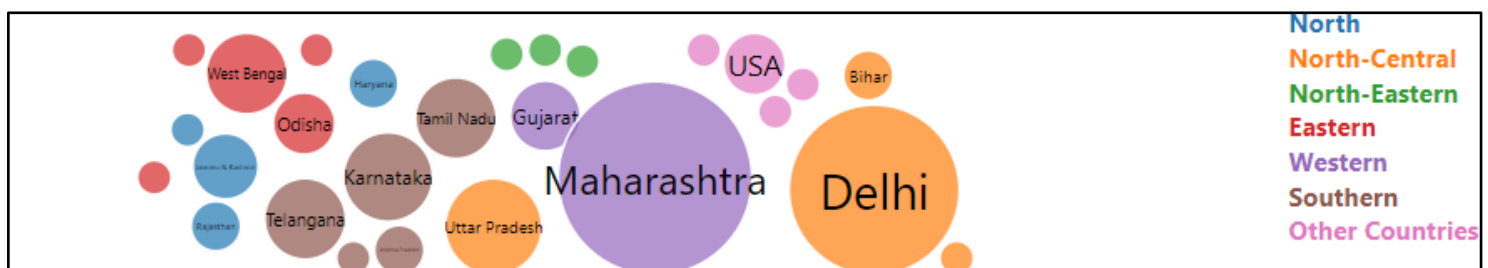
In his first 'Mann Ki Baat' address of the year in January 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had urged the people of the country to learn about "unsung heroes" who work selflessly. Later, in July, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to social media asking the people of the country to nominate inspiring individuals for the Padma Awards, which he called **People's Padma**.



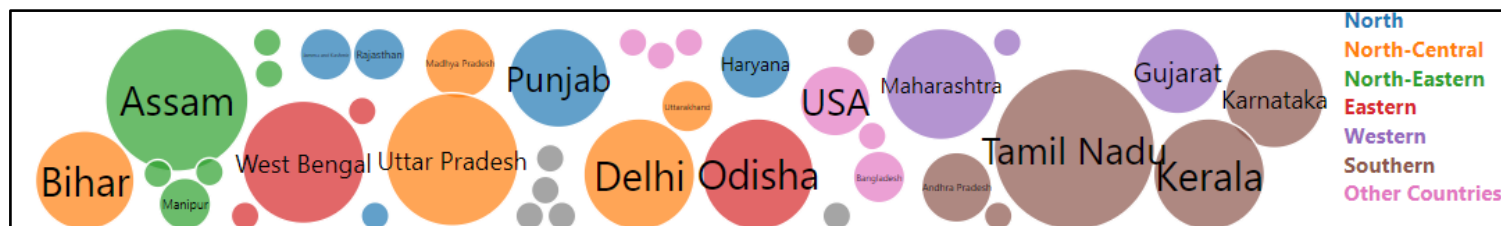
In 2016, the figures released by the Government on Padma Awards portal revealed a disproportionate skew in favour of a few states which appeared to have been better represented than others for a majority of the country's topmost awards in the past. The current Government's efforts at broad-basing the nomination process has helped to remove this geographical skew, with individuals from across the length and breadth of the country getting their due share of laurels.



Geographical Representation at Padma Awards: 1954



Geographical Representation at Padma Awards: 2013



Geographical Representation at Padma Awards: 2021

### Padma Awards 2020, 2021

The ceremony to honour the [Padma Awardees of 2020](#), which had been deferred owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, was held on 08 November, 2021, in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The Padma Vibhushan was conferred on seven individuals, the Padma Bhushan on 16 individuals, and the Padma Shri on 118 individuals at the event. The [Padma Awardees of 2021](#) were honoured at the ceremony [held on 09 November 2021](#) at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, where the list comprised seven Padma Vibhushan, 10 Padma Bhushan and 102 Padma Shri Awards.

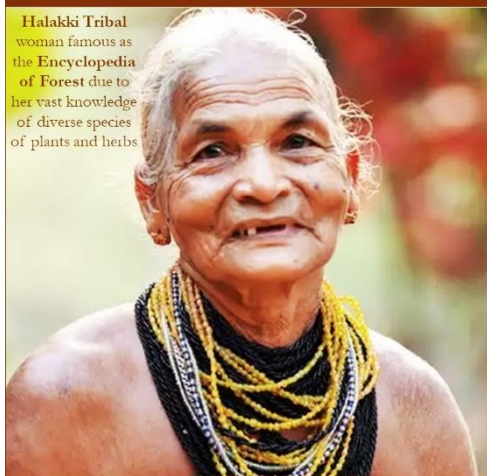
The Award Ceremony of 2021 has been extensively talked and written about, for the list of winners is a clear indication that the prestigious civilian awards are no longer reserved for the elite. The sheer diversity of the winners, representing **all sections of society** and **all regions** of the vast country that is India, has warmed hearts and struck a chord with millions. In a departure from the trend of the past, where the vast majority of awardees were illustrious personalities from the relatively privileged sections of society, most awardees on the 2020 list come from an extremely humble background.

**Tulsi Gowda**, an environmentalist hailing from the Hakkali tribe of Karnataka has planted more than 30,000 saplings. Often called the ‘encyclopedia of the forest’, she was one of the recipients of the Padma Shri for the year 2020. She was conferred the honour alongside the likes of **Harekala Hajabba**, an orange vendor from Mangaluru, who saved money from his earnings and built a school in his village; **Acharya MK Kunjol** from Kerala, who has fought to ensure justice for Dalits and **Trinity Saioo** from Meghalaya, also known as [‘Turmeric Trinity’](#), who has worked to develop rural women-owned sustainable organic farming in her native state.



## Tulasi Gowda

Halakki Tribal woman famous as the Encyclopedia of Forest due to her vast knowledge of diverse species of plants and herbs

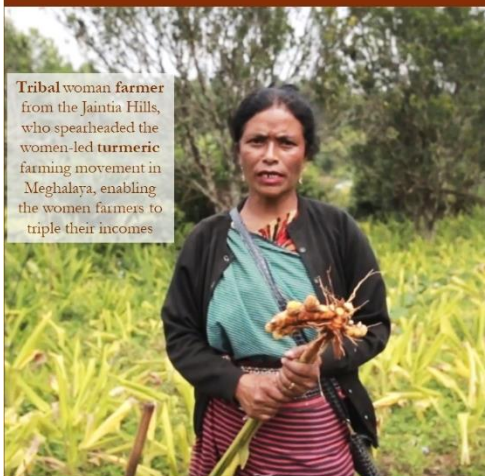


Social Work | Karnataka

Padma Shri 2020

## Trinity Saioo

Tribal woman farmer from the Jaintia Hills, who spearheaded the women-led turmeric farming movement in Meghalaya, enabling the women farmers to triple their incomes

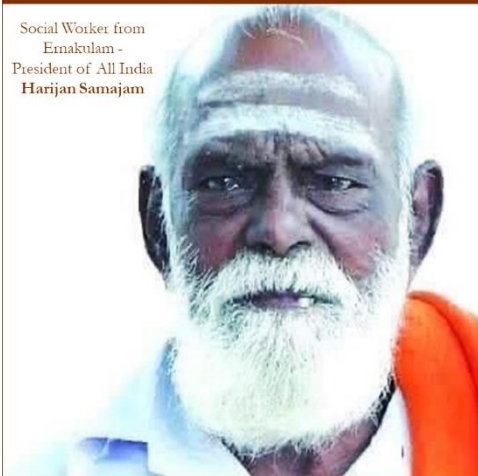


Others | Meghalaya

Padma Shri 2020

## M K Kunjol

Social Worker from Ennakulam - President of All India Harijan Samajam



Social Work | Kerala

Padma Shri 2020

Among those conferred with the Padma Awards for the year 2021 is **Dulari Devi**, a self-made Maithili painter from Madhubani who rose from being a *Dai* to an acclaimed painter against all adversity and was awarded the Padma Shri. **Nanda Prusty**, another Padma Shri awardee, is popular as 'Nanda Sir' in his native state of Odisha. A centenarian village school teacher from Jajpur, he has been instrumental in providing free education to generations of children since independence. **Birubala Rabha** from Goalpara, Assam, is a decades-old crusader against witch-hunting. She has worked across the North-East, at risk to her own life, and her contributions were recognised with a Padma Shri for the year 2021. Transgender folk dancer **Manjamma Jogati**, whose unique gesture of wishing the President of India luck before receiving her Padma Shri touched hearts, rose from a life of abject poverty and hardship. She went on to become the first transwoman president of Karnataka Jaanapada Academy, a government body for performing arts in Karnataka.



President of India  
@rashtrapati bhvn

President Kovind presents Padma Shri to Matha B. Manjamma Jogati for Art. She is the Chairman of Karnataka Janapada (Folklore) Academy. She has been instrumental in popularizing the folk art forms practised in rural Karnataka, Maharashtra and parts of Andhra Pradesh.



Nanda Prusty blesses President Ramnath Kovind



Narendra Modi  
@narendramodi

Dulari Devi Ji is among those who has been conferred the [#PeoplesPadma](#). She is a talented artist who hails from Madhubani in Bihar.

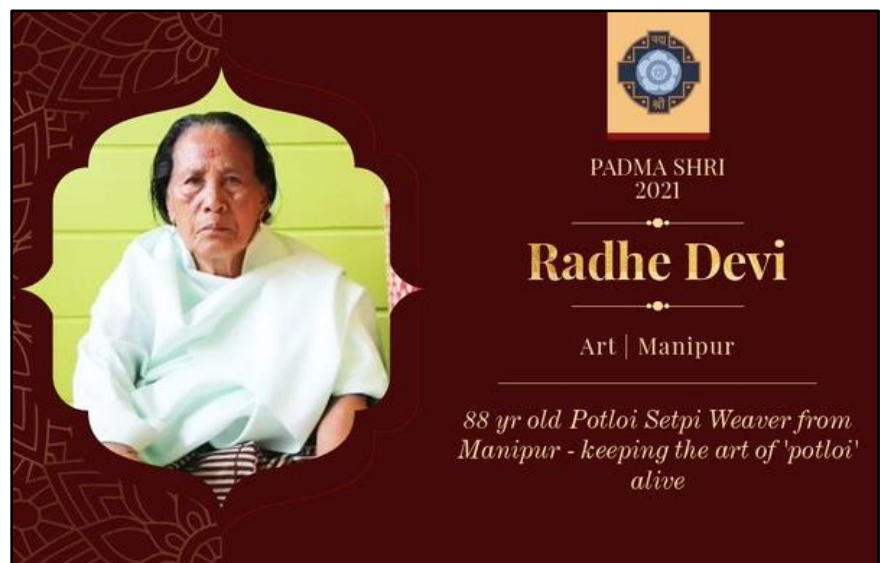
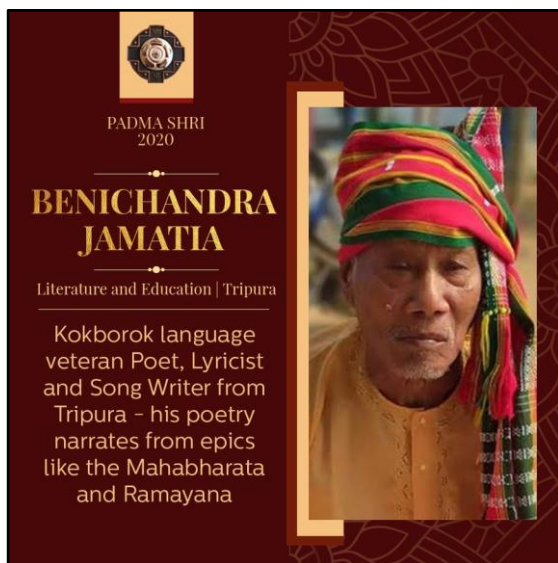
During the informal interaction with the awardees after the ceremony, she presented to me her artwork. Humbled by her gesture. My gratitude to her.



The Padma Awards has become discernibly gender inclusive over the years. **33** of the Awardees for the year 2020 were women. In 2021, the list had **29 women awardees** and **one transgender awardee**. Notably, **Narthaki Nataraj**, a renowned Bharatnatyam dancer from Tamil Nadu, was the first transgender to be conferred with the prestigious Padma Shri Award in the year 2019.



Padma Awards have become increasingly representative not only of all sections of society, of diverse communities and of all geographical regions, but they have also been increasingly instrumental in bringing **lesser-known cultural elements into the spotlight**. Individuals who have been striving to revive dying art forms or those who have dedicated their lives to preserving the heritage of their native languages, have been recognised by the Government, thereby taking their contributions to the world. **VilluPaatu**- the dying ancient form of storytelling from Tamil Nadu, the **Potloi** weaving style from Manipur, **Gussadi**-the tribal dance form of Telangana and languages like **Kokrobok**, **Kamtapuri** and **Awadhi**, are among the many cultural treasures of our rich heritage that have thus been brought to the fore.



The Padma Awards today are indeed far more democratic than they have ever been. As one of the topmost civilian awards, it has broadened its ambit to include every Indian within its fold at various stages. Today, the Awards reflect the true spirit of being Indian- not only by reflecting the sheer diversity of the nation, but by making it truly possible for every citizen who so aspires, to have his or her contribution to society recognised at the highest possible national platform.



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