

## Padma Shri to [Anil K Rajvanshi](#)

I felt very honored to receive in 2022 this prestigious award from the Government of India and thought of putting together all the material on it since there is a tendency to forget about certain events with time.

This document consists of two parts.

1. News about the award.
2. Padma investiture ceremony in Delhi and details of the award.

[Anil K Rajvanshi](#)

Phaltan, Maharashtra

July 2022

## **Padma Award News**

On 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 1 p.m. I got a call from an official of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India (GOI) that the GOI has awarded me Padma Shri. Before that call my office had received few calls from some Central Ministers indicating that they wanted to talk with me. I was wondering what wrong I have done to get calls from these people. I had gone home for lunch so received all these messages after I came back.

So when the MHA official called again at 1:45 pm informing me about the award, I asked him whether he was pulling my leg! He laughed and said that I can call him back to confirm. But suggested that I should not tell anybody about the award till 8 p.m. when the list will be announced.

Except for telling my wife Nandini and my daughters I did not inform anybody. At 8 p.m. [when the list was published](#), I went over it twice to confirm that my name was there and only after that I told others.

But before I could inform my friends infinite number of calls had started coming in from friends, well-wishers and reporters who had heard the news. So it was like a deluge of phone calls.

There were also lots of request for [press interviews](#) and from large number of organizations, whom I did not know, suddenly started inviting me to be the chief guest or give a talk etc.

It is really interesting that a small person like me working silently in a rural setting was suddenly put in limelight by this award and so I could not believe that I will get it. For this I am extremely thankful to the Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi ji and his selection committee for giving me this award. Shri Modi ji has transformed these awards from coterie-based system that existed earlier to those of performance-based grassroot unsung workers.

I also felt that this honor is not for me alone but to the hard work of all my colleagues past and present at [our Institute](#) who made it possible for us to do some meaningful work in rural development. This award also honors the idea that in a small rural [NGO one can do interesting and meaningful R&D work](#). And hopefully should provide inspiration to young engineers and scientists to be involved in doing good science and technology for rural development.

I did not think too much about this award or that it was such a great honor but later on I discovered (all the [nominees names are in MHA Padma awards site](#); and this year about 5 lakh people applied for 125 awards) that who's who in the country hanker for these awards.

I also got calls from well-known people (mostly scientists) who said that they had been nominating me for a long time. It was not true since the list in [MHA site \(from 2014 onwards\)](#) clearly showed that I was nominated only by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

One very tangible result of this award was that it spread the word of our Institute far and wide. Besides huge publicity in mass media it allowed me to engage with youngsters and spread our message.

Few examples:

1. [IITK interview about the award](#).
2. [IIML inspirational lecture](#). The [link to Zoom lecture is here](#).
3. A [keynote address to Tata Group](#).

Below are given the details of the Padma Awards investiture ceremony and Delhi trip.

## Padma Awards Diary

[Anil K. Rajvanshi](#)  
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I was awarded the [Padma Shri by the Government of India](#) on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022 in a glittering ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi.

Nowadays Government of India (GOI) treats its awardees very well. It is a very welcome departure under Modi's government as compared to the previous governments, where the investiture ceremony was the main thing.

So on 20<sup>th</sup> March when we reached Ashok Hotel from the airport, where 3-day stay was arranged for us, it was a royal treatment. I was suffering from slight cold and cough, but the warm welcome at hotel made me forget about the cold. My wife Nandini and daughter Madhura accompanied me for the awards ceremony.



The room given to us in Ashok Hotel was an executive room (with living room and a bedroom with double bed) and so was very spacious. Not only the stay but the airfare and other expenses for two of us were all borne by GOI.

There is a beautiful Nehru Park in front of the Ashok Hotel which is a walker's and jogger's paradise. The

garden was in full bloom during March month with Dahlia, Salvia, Bougainvillea, and Roses blooming; and with green grass in the lawns it was wonderful to walk in this huge garden.

### **March 21, 2022**

On 21<sup>st</sup> morning after a sumptuous breakfast in hotel coffee shop, I went to the Rashtrapati Bhawan for dress rehearsal. Whereas Nandini and Madhura went on a long walk in the Nehru Park. Each of the awardee was given a car and driver for the whole day to take us back and forth from Rashtrapati Bhawan to Hotel.

The full-dress rehearsal at Rashtrapati Bhawan was done in 45 minutes though we waited in the lobby for about an hour before the staff got organized. During this rehearsal we got an exact feel of the whole thing. Most of the awardees attended it though the snooty ones like Poonawalla did not take part.

I was therefore very pleasantly surprised to see Mr. [N. Chandrasekaran](#) the Chairman of Tata Group and [Rashid Khan](#) the musician come for the dress rehearsal. Other Padma Bhushan awardees like Poonawalla and Gulam Nabi Azad did not come. After the dress rehearsal (it was quite hot that day in Delhi) I came to the hotel and after freshening up we all had lunch.

After the sumptuous lunch in Oudh Restaurant of Ashok Hotel there were interviews for Door Darshan (DD), Sansad TV and ITN TV channels. After brief rest we left the hotel in our car at 3:30 p.m. for the Rashtrapati Bhawan for the investiture ceremony.

The ceremony started at 5 p.m. sharp. The Prime Minister, Home Minister Shri Amit Shah and the Vice President Shri V. Naidu came earlier on. Prime Minister came 2 minutes before the ceremony. The first to arrive was Foreign

Minister Shri. Jai Shankar who, without pomp and show, came and sat in the front row.

Some interesting observations during the awards ceremony.

1. Modi ji kept on reading the awards brochure and clapped for all the awardees. He was occasionally laughing at Vice President V. Naidu's jokes!
2. One Yoga teacher prostrated in front of Shri Modi, Shah and President and got the maximum applause.
3. Ratan Tata came in the wheel chair (completely horizontally bent because of his health condition) and sat in the second row.
4. During my award ceremony I told the President Kovind that I am from IIT Kanpur, so he immediately said, "congratulations and great", since he is from Kanpur.

The temperature of the Darbar Hall was very pleasant and during my award both Nandini and Madhura stood up and clapped. [This footage was beamed by DD far and wide!](#)



AKR is standing in second row; 5<sup>th</sup> from left



After the award ceremony the awardees were taken to another hall for photo session with the President, Vice President, and Prime Minister. The hall is huge with ornate Mughal era paintings on the ceiling.



Once the photo session was over, we were lined up in another room to Meet the President and the Prime Minister. The President hardly spent any time with awardees, but the Prime Minister did.

He spent some time chatting with few of us. When he came to me, he said “Anil-Kasa Kai” (Anil, how are you). I was very impressed with the fact that he knew my first name and that he tried to speak in Marathi! I told him that because of him a small person like me has been brought in the limelight, he laughed loudly! His networking, memory and thorough work is amazing.

After the meeting we all had refreshments. During the refreshments I could interact with Gulam Nabi Azad another Padma awardee – once an important member of Sonia Gandhi Coterie but now in the BJP Camp.

After the refreshments and some more photos in the Darbar Hall we left the Rashtrapati Bhawan for hotel. The weather at 7 p.m. was pleasant but still hot for jacket and kurta.



Nandini, AKR and Madhura in front of President's seat in Durbar Hall.

Once we reached Ashok hotel, and after freshening up, we went at 7:30 p.m. to 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor for a dinner with Shri. Amit Shah. This is the first time where such a grand dinner has been hosted for Padma Awardees. In the past after the Padma function the awardees left for their homes.



When we entered the Banquet Hall, each awardee was photographed by many photographers with Padma Awards logo in the background. Such a thing happens in Academy and other awards function, and then I had to sign my photo which was a part of the photo montage on the wall of Fame.

All the awardees were seated on different tables with an important Government of India Minister. On my table I had the honor of interacting with [Shri. Nityananda](#)

[Rai](#) the Minister of State for Home Affairs.

He is an agriculturist and seems like a nice person. I had a long talk with him, and I get a feeling that he might one day become the Chief Minister of Bihar.

Shri Amit Shah came to each table to greet and wish the awardees. After the banquet I went to thank Shri Amit Shah for the dinner. He said that he is happy to do it and is the first Covid free Padma Award function! After dinner which ended at 9:45 p.m. we all went to our rooms.

I was very impressed that this present government really treats its awardees with respect and graciousness. After the award ceremony I got very nice personal letters from Shri Amit Shah, Shri Om Birla (Speaker of Lok Sabha)



and other senior GOI ministers congratulating me for the award. The letters were written in a personal style and obviously their offices had done their homework quite well.

### **March 22, 2022**

We went for morning walk in the Nehru Park for an hour. After heavy breakfast and rest we went to India International Center (IIC) for the lunch party that I had arranged for our close friends. Around 19 people (including us) came. It was a nice vegetarian lunch with good talk and a great get together.

The guests included Bhararas (my school friend); Sangeeta Verma (Lov Verma's wife and Secretary to the Government of India); Tarun Basu (President of [South Asia Monitor](#)) and his wife; Mausi and her family; Narayani Ganesh and Mona Mehta (former and present editors of [Speaking Tree](#)), IITK incubation center director Nikhil Agrawal; Deepa and Rajesh Malhotra (Amarjeet Sahay's friends); Manoj and Neeru Chaturvedi. The lunch finished at nearly 3 p.m. and then we took an Uber to the hotel.



IIC meet

**L-R (sitting);** Neeru Chaturvedi, Nandini, Sudha mausi, Madhura, Narayani's friend.  
**Standing (L-R);** Nikhil, Tarun Basu, Manoj, AKR, Bharara, Kavita Gupta, Mrs Bharara, Rajesh, Deepa, Narayani (peeking), Mrs Basu, Mona Mehta, Sangeeta Verma



At IIC; Good looking happy family!



At 7:30 p.m. we went to the Airforce Club where my IITK classmates Ramesh Gupta and others had arranged a dinner in my honor. Twelve of us from the 1972 batch were there with our respective wife's. Singing and telling jokes were part of the party scene. Madhura beautifully sang two songs. Everybody wanted her to come to our 50<sup>th</sup> year reunion in IITK in November!

We were left at the hotel by P. Sheoran and his lovely wife Indira. I was meeting Sheoran for the first time after 1972 graduation.

### **IITK 72 batchmates**



**Sitting (L-R);** Yash Jain, Shanta Gupta, Mrs. Pravin, Indira Sheoran, Mrs. Puthu, Mrs. Bhargava, Mrs Manwani, Amrit Manwani, Mrs. Mathur, Puthu, Ramesh Gupta.

**Standing (L-R);** Mrs Jain, Madhura Rajvanshi, Bhaskar Pramanik, Ranjit Bhargava, AKR, Raghuwansh Mathur, Nandini Nimbkar, Anil Ahuja, Pushpendra Sheoran, Rajiv Mittal, Pravin Kumar.



Next day Nandini was not feeling well so we did not go for our morning walk in Nehru Park. We left for the airport at 11 a.m. to catch our flight to Pune.

All in all it was a wonderful, memorable, and enjoyable trip to Delhi.

[HOME](#)

March 2022

## Padma Shri



### **DR. ANIL KUMAR RAJVANSHI**

Dr. Anil Kumar Rajvanshi is the Director of Nimbkar Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), Phaltan, Maharashtra. Dr. Rajvanshi's rural development work for the last three decades has spanned a whole spectrum of areas affecting the lives of rural population viz. renewable energy-based cooking and lighting; power generation from agricultural residues; renewable fuel production from agriculture; electric cycle rickshaws; water purification and effluent treatment through the use of renewable energy.

2. Born on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1950 and raised in Lucknow, Dr. Rajvanshi went to the United States in 1975 to pursue higher studies at the University of Florida following his bachelor and master's degrees in Mechanical Engineering from I.I.T. Kanpur. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1979, he taught at the University of Florida for two and half years and then he came back to India in 1981 to apply his training for developing rural India.

3. Dr. Rajvanshi is a grassroot scientist and under his leadership NARI has many first to its credit. NARI is the principal author (1996) of national policy on energy self-sufficient Taluka which was managed by Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE). He developed a unique program of improving cooking and lighting technology for rural areas which led him to pioneer the concept of rural restaurants in 2012. This probably led to the setting up of Amma's kitchen in Tamil Nadu and Shiva Bhojan in Maharashtra. In early 1990s, his group at NARI set up the world's largest program on production of ethanol from sweet sorghum. This led to NARI being the only Institute in India to be made a member of European Economic Community (EEC) sweet sorghum consortium. NARI developed the first non-spiny hybrid safflower and various varieties. In late 1990s he pioneered the concept of using ethanol as cooking and lighting fuel for rural areas and his group pioneered the development of loose biomass gasification system in late 1990s. His group also pioneered the production of potable water via rainwater harvesting using low cost unelectrified solar-based water purifier. And his efforts have shown how a small rural S&T Institute working on shoestring budget can pioneer technologies for rural India.

4. Dr. Rajvanshi is the recipient of numerous national and international awards. In 1998, he became the second Indian to be inducted in the U.S. based Solar Hall of Fame. In 2001, he received the Jamnalal Bajaj Award for the use of science and technology for rural areas. His efforts led to NARI getting FICCI Platinum Jubilee Award in 2002. His work on ethanol lanstove was given the 2009 Globe Forum Award for sustainability research in Stockholm. In 2014, he became the first Indian to receive the Distinguished Alumnus Award of the University of Florida, USA. He has delivered prestigious endowed lectures both in India and abroad and has more than 250 publications in national and international journals, seven patents, five books, and various chapters in books.