

Awards & Honours

Bharat Ratna

The Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award awarded by the Government of India. The Government of India awards the Bharat Ratna, established in 1954, to citizens who have made extraordinary contributions in development of their fields as well as for the country. In Hindi, Bharat Ratna translates to "Jewel of India".

Initially, the Bharat Ratna was awarded to individuals who had made exceptional contributions to the fields of art, literature, science and public services. In 2011, the Indian government modified this criterion to include individuals who have made exceptional contribution to any field of "human endeavour". That enabled the award to Sachin Tendulkar for his contribution to sport, making him the youngest recipient of the Bharat Ratna. Bharat Ratna awardees are given a certificate and a medal (shaped like a Peepal leaf) by the Government of India. The Bharat Ratna can also be awarded to an individual posthumously.



Other than Indian citizens, the Bharat Ratna has been awarded to 2 non-Indian citizens: Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Nelson Mandela. Mother Teresa was not an Indian citizen by birth, but she was a naturalised Indian at the time she was honoured with a Bharat Ratna.

Padma Vibhushan

The Padma Vibhushan is the second highest civilian honour conferred by the Indian government. It was instituted in the year 1954. The Prime Minister constitutes a committee, which submits recommendations twice every year to the Prime Minister and President of India for approval. Like the Bharat Ratna, the Padma Vibhushan can also be awarded posthumously. Till date, more than 300 people have been honoured with the Padma Vibhushan.

Padma Bhushan

The Padma Bhushan is the third highest civilian award in India. It has been bestowed upon more than 1200 people, out of which more than 90 were non-Indian citizens. It is awarded once a year on Republic Day. All Padma award winners are determined by the Padma Awards Committee.



Padma Vibhushan

Padma Bhushan

Padma Shri

Padma Shri

The Padma Shri is the fourth highest civilian award given by the Indian government. Along with the Padma Bhushan, it is also awarded on 26th January every year.

Change in nomination process

In 2017, the Government of India decided to end the practice of ministers recommending names for Padma awards and replaced it with any Indian citizen recommending a person for Padma awards online. The government said that this was done with the belief that every citizen has something to contribute to the nation and that contribution should be integrated with the country's growth. Accordingly, several hitherto unknown citizens were awarded Padma awards in 2017.

Suspension of Civil Honours

The civilian awards have been suspended twice in the history of India. The first instance was when the award for suspended in 1977, when the Indian National Congress went out of power, paving the way for the new government led by Morarji Desai, who opposed these awards. The awards were reinstated after the Desai government lost power in 1980.



Morarji Desai was against civilian honours, but he himself was the recipient of Nishan-e-Pakistan – the highest civilian honour awarded by Pakistan.

The second instance came in August 1992, when due to public interest litigations filed in different high courts, which challenged the validity of these titles, the awards were suspended. They were reinstated by a Supreme Court judgement in 1995.

Military Honours

Param Vir Chakra

The Param Vir Chakra is India's highest military decoration awarded for the highest degree of valour or self-sacrifice in the presence of an enemy.

The Param Vir Chakra was established on 26 January 1950, the first Republic Day of India, by the President of India, to be presented with effect from 15 August 1947. It can be awarded to officers or enlisted personnel from all branches of the Indian military.

The medal was designed by Swiss-born Savitri Khanolkar (originally named Eva Yvonne Linda Maday-de-Maros). She was married to Vikram Khanolkar, an Indian Army officer of the Sikh Regiment. Incidentally, her daughter's brother-in-law, Major Somnath Sharma was the first recipient of the Param Vir Chakra (posthumous).

Till date the medal has been awarded 21 times, 14 of which were awarded posthumously. 16 of the awards resulted from gallantry in conflicts between India and Pakistan. Of the 21 awardees, 20 are from the Indian Army and one from the Indian Air Force. The Param Vir Chakra has not yet been awarded to anyone from the Indian Navy.

The prestigious Gorkha Rifle regiments of the Indian Army have received 3 such awards, with the 1st, 8th and 11th Gorkha Rifles each having a Param Vir Chakra recipient.

Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, who was awarded the Param Vir Chakra posthumously in 1971 is the only Indian Air Force officer to date have been honoured thus. Naib Subedar, Sanjay Kumar and Subedar Yogendra Singh Yadav are the only active duty Param Vir Chakra recipients in the Indian Army.



The Indian gallantry awards – for those who chose the nation above themselves.

Maha Vir Chakra

The Maha Vir Chakra is the second highest military decoration in India and is awarded for acts of conspicuous gallantry in the presence of the enemy, whether on land, at sea or in the air.

Vir Chakra

The Vir Chakra is an Indian gallantry award presented for acts of bravery in the battlefield. It is third in precedence in the war time gallantry awards and comes after the Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra.

Ashoka Chakra

The Ashoka Chakra is considered equivalent to the Param Vir Chakra and is awarded for the "most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent valour or self-sacrifice" other than in the face of the enemy. Unlike Param Vir Chakra, which is awarded to only military personnel, Ashoka Chakra decoration may be awarded either to military or civilian personnel. It may also be awarded posthumously.

Kirti Chakra

The Kirti Chakra is an Indian military decoration awarded for valour, courageous action or self-sacrifice away from the field of battle. It may be awarded to civilians as well as military personnel, including posthumous awards.

Shaurya Chakra

The Shaurya Chakra is an Indian military decoration awarded for valour, courageous action or self-sacrifice while not engaged in direct action with the enemy. It is third in order of precedence of peacetime gallantry awards and comes after the Ashoka Chakra and the Kirti Chakra.

National Bravery Award

Ahead of Republic Day every year, children from different parts of the country are awarded for “meritorious acts of bravery against all odds”. Instituted in 1957, the National Bravery Awards have so far been given to 963 children (680 boys and 283 girls).

Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna

The Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna is the most prestigious sporting honour awarded by the Government of India. The award is named after Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports evaluates potential candidates for the award, judging sportspersons on several criteria, such as their contribution to the sport as well as to India’s position in the world. The period of judgement in such cases is restricted to four years.

The first recipient of the award was Chess Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand, who was honoured for his performance in the year 1991–92. Abhinav Bindra is the youngest Indian to have won this award, at the age of 18.

Arjuna Awards

The Arjuna Awards are given by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, in order to felicitate athletes who have made outstanding progress in national sports. The Arjuna awards were initiated in 1960 and were India's highest award in the field of sports for almost 30 years, after which the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna took its place. A large number of sports persons, who belonged to the pre-Arjuna Award era, have also been awarded the Arjuna Award.

As per recent government guidelines, a sportsperson should not only have had good performance consistently for the previous four years at the international level, but should also have shown qualities of leadership, sportsmanship and a sense of discipline. Thus, individual performances are overlooked if the individual, despite performing brilliantly, cannot guide the national team to victory.



The Arjuna awards usually have an archer aiming at a target – a tribute to the Pandava Arjuna, who is believed to be one of the most brilliant archers to have lived.

In the year 2017, 17 sports-persons, including para-athletes were honoured with Arjuna Award by the Indian government. The sport with the most Arjuna Award winners is unsurprisingly cricket, owing to its large fan base in the country as well as consistent performances by Indian national team and its players on a global scale.

Jnanpith Awards

Jnanpith Award is the highest literary award in India, given annually for the best creative literary writing to writers in any of the 22 “scheduled languages” recognized in the Indian Constitution. The prize carries a cash award, a citation, and a bronze replica of Vagdevi (Saraswati), the goddess of learning. It is sponsored by the cultural organisation Bharatiya Jnanpith.

The Jnanpith Award was instituted in 1961, and the first award was given in 1965 to G.Sankara Kurup for Odakkuzhal (Malayalam).

Until 1982 it was presented for a specific work; thereafter, it was given for a writer’s overall contribution to literature. Since then, the award has typically been given every year to a single author, although in some years it has been jointly offered to two.



Jnanpith Award

Sahitya Academy Awards

The Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters, annually gives the Sahitya Akademi award to those who they deem have done outstanding work in any of the 24 major Indian languages- 22 mentioned in the 8th Schedule, plus English and Rajasthani.

The award was established in 1954, and along with the Bharat Ratna and the Padma Awards, is one of India's first awards to be officially given by the government.

The aim of the award is to recognize authors who have made a brilliant effort in creating literary masterpieces that reflect the culture of India, or those who have brought along new trends. The plaque awarded by the Sahitya Akademi was designed by the Indian film-maker Satyajit Ray.

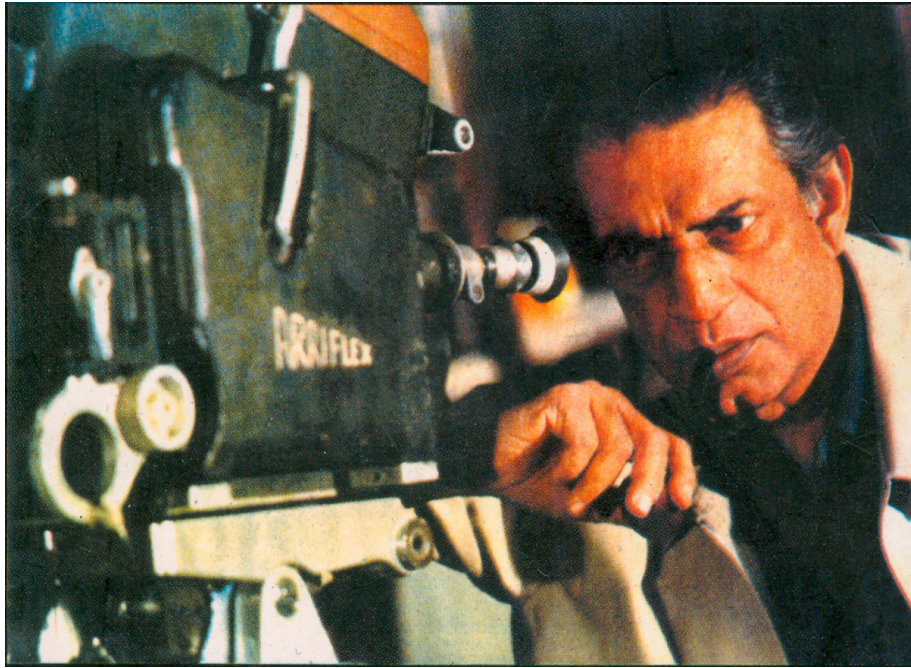
National Film Awards

The National Film Award is the most prominent film award ceremony in India. The awards come directly under the Indian Government and are determined by an elite group of film critics and former actors and directors, and such, have much more prestige than other film awards ceremonies, or any other of their kind. The National Film Awards were first given in 1954, and their aim is to felicitate people who have given extraordinary performances in movies, whether in front of the camera, or behind it.

Every year, a national panel appointed by the government selects the winning entry, and the award ceremony is held in New Delhi, where the President of India presents the awards. They are different from other film awards in that they do not cater to any particular film industry. The National Awards are given to the best of Indian cinema overall, as well as for the best films in each region and language of the country.

There are many categories in which National awards are given, such as best actor, best actress, best director, and so on, which are separately given for each film industry.

Also, the committee gives the Dadasaheb Phalke award as a lifetime achievement award every year to one individual. Named after the pioneer of Indian cinema, the award is for a person who has made immense contribution to the landscape of Indian cinema throughout his or her lifetime.



Ekla cholo re – With over 32 national awards for his movies, Satyajit Ray stands tall at the top, including 6 personal awards.

Nargis Dutt Award

The award for Best Feature Film on National Integration in the annual National Film Awards ceremony is called the Nargis Dutt Award in her honour.