

# Adivasi artist R. Krishnan posthumously awarded Padma Shri

Published - January 25, 2026 10:10 pm IST - UDHAGAMANDALAM

THE HINDU BUREAU



R. Krishnan, an artist from the Alu Kurumba Adivasi community in the Nilgiris | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

R. Krishnan, who went by the nom-de-plume 'Kitna', has been awarded Padma Shri posthumously for his contribution to the art and culture of the Alu Kurumba community in the Nilgiris.

Known for his vivid cloth paintings inspired by rock art sites, his style has become highly popular and even mimicked by other artists over the last 30 years, said an activist who has been documenting rock art sites using indigenous knowledge of the Nilgiris hills.

Krishnan, who passed away last March, had drawn inspiration from the rock art site at Vellaricombai in the Nilgiris, which was used by the Alu Kurumba community as inspiration for painting murals on the walls of their homes. He would also use only organic paints made from natural dyes and fibres.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, members of his family said that the recognition was a bittersweet moment for the family as they had hoped that he was still alive to receive the prestigious recognition from the government. Mr. Krishnan had also wanted a Geographical Indicator (GI) tag bestowed on art produced by the Kurumbas, many of whom he had trained to become artists.

His enduring legacy in creating new artists from the community persisted right until his passing, as just a day before he died, he had conducted a workshop for school students on Kurumba paintings.

His wife, Susheela, who lives in Mettupalayam in Coimbatore, said that Krishnan's passing was extremely difficult for her and their four children. She said that while they were thrilled at being told of the honour bestowed on Krishnan, that they hoped it could have come when he was alive, as he had felt that he had been largely forgotten in his latter years.

**Published** - January 25, 2026 10:10 pm IST