

Padma shri
lakshmikutty: granny
of the jungle



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Lakshmikutty Amma, the guardian of herbal medicines in the forest is finally honored with the highest civilian award Padma Shri on the Republic Day. The wonder woman – granny of the wild lives in the deep jungles of Ponmudi, almost fifty five kilometer north east of Thiruvananthapuram city. Over the decades, the granny of the wild has saved more than hundreds of lives with her shrewd knowledge of herbal medicines that she got from her forefathers though her mother was a midwife. Lakshmikutty Amma living alone in an isolated area in the deep forest, she can prepare over five hundred herbal medicines just out of her memory. Granny's medicines saved thousands of victims of snake and insect bites, thus making her the beloved tribal woman in the area.

“ Nature offers all remedies. Knowledge of herbal medicine was passed on to me from my mother. People come to me for treatment for snake poison and other insect bites. I treat all kinds of snake poison and insect bites”. “ I can prepare about five hundred medicinal treatments from memory. Till now I have not forgotten them,” said Lakshmikutty. She never grows any particular medicinal plants for making medicines for snake and insect bites; she collects all medicinal ingredients from the forest. Tiger spider, Black scorpion, snakes, the sting of any of these dangerous creatures can turn human being mortal, but once the victim is brought to Lakshmikutty Amma, the lives is saved for sure.

Granny's dream is to convert her hut into a small hospital. Even today, there is no proper road facility to her house, but in 1952 construction of the road was sanctioned by the government. But the work hasn't started till now. “ We have to travel many kilometers through the dense forest. There are so

many wild animals including elephants. Hence, I request the government to do something about these kinds of problems”, she added. She also gives lectures at Folklore Academy and has authored many poems and articles. Interestingly an eighth-class dropout tribal woman is a good mentor and guide of hundreds of researchers of herbal medicines and related topics. She has travelled across all the states in South India to attend seminars on herbal and tribal medicines and to give lectures.

“ My son died due to snake poison, so I obtain all the knowledge I could on it. When one is injected with any kind of poison it is important to suck it out at the earliest time, but we doesn't have basic facilities especially no roads and no hospitals nearby, it is a dangerous issue in this village”, said Lakshmikutty. Speaking to a national news agency after receiving Padma Shri, she stated that “ I feel happy that my country accepted me”. “ The outer world has given me a lot, awards, honour and etc. But I want to stay here and to live in the forest”.