

Padma Shri not for me, but for team: Deep Joshi

BD Kasniyal

Pitthoragarh, January 27

"It is a recognition of the efforts for poverty alleviation, the initiative which is the least recognised in India," said Deep Joshi, a Magsaysay awardee hailing from Pitthoragarh who was awarded Padma Shri on Republic Day yesterday.

He was born in 1947 at Puriyag estate in Berinag sub-division of Pitthoragarh district and was a former chief of Pradan, an NGO providing professional assistance to those working in rural areas in the sphere of poverty alleviation.

He feels that the recognition of social service in India is understood late as its meaning gets confused.

The persons who work for poverty alleviation in rural areas in India are equated with someone who has opened an orphanage or old-age home. This is not the case. On the contrary, it requires dedicated work by qualified professionals, said Joshi.

Pradan, the NGO run by Deep Joshi, works among small farmers in the area of agriculture, poultry, tussar silk and horticulture.

Joshi feels that Indian society is facing big problems in the sphere of poverty and climate change.

"Professional approach through NGOs is needed to tackle this challenge," he added.

He said the Padma Shri was not a personal award "but for the group working with me and the recognition of an idea which brought about this change".

The NGO has been working in various states and Joshi also wants to work in Uttarakhand, where he was born, but nothing much has been achieved.

"The nature of laws in forest and land use are different in the state, but still we want to work despite these conditions. We have not been able to get the right response from the NGOs working in the state in this sphere," he said.

An alumnus of Motilal Nehru Engineering College, Allahabad (MNR), and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA, Joshi opted for community work when he returned from the USA 30 years ago. He did all this despite having a close relationship with Narayan Murthy of Infosys rejecting a slew of attractive job offers.

"I was inspired by a doctor couple working in remote areas of Maharashtra and felt that if every qualified person opts to work in rural India, it could change for the better in a short while," said Joshi over telephone from his home at Gurgaon.