

### **3 Indians win Queen's Young Leaders Award**

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**London:** Three Indians, including two women, have won an inaugural award set up by Queen Elizabeth II to recognise exceptional youths who are transforming the lives of others and making a difference in their communities from across the Commonwealth nations.

The British monarch will present the awards to Ashwini Angadi, Akshay Jadhao and Devika Malik from India among 60 others at a gala ceremony in Buckingham Palace on June 22.

Angadi is a visually impaired student, Jadhao is a para-athlete and Malik is a educationist in rural areas. The Queen's Young Leaders Award, launched by Prince William and Harry last year, has been organised by the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust to recognise young people from across the 53 countries of the Commonwealth who are taking the lead in transforming the lives of others and making a lasting difference in their communities.

This is a very special award in that it is the first of its kind to be named after the Queen. Her Majesty is extremely passionate about the Commonwealth and this award was set up to encourage and inspire the next generation of leaders in those countries, Samantha Cohen, assistant private secretary to the Queen, said at a royal briefing in the South Drawing Room of Buckingham Palace.

A rigorous selection criteria was put in place by the Diamond Jubilee Trust and its partners - Comic Relief and the Royal Commonwealth Society - to pick out from hundreds of entries by 18-29 year olds from across the world.

We wanted to reach far and wide and not just be limited to the urban areas. Social media played a very important role in getting the word out, said Dr Astrid Bonfield, Chief Executive of the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust.

We are looking for the unsung heroes who are already doing incredible things and can make some valuable connections to carry on doing amazing things, said Bonfield. Angadi has been awarded for using her own experiences as a visually impaired student to lobby for more braille and audio books.

The 26-year-old now runs Belaku Academy in Bengaluru, offering education to disabled students from rural areas. Jadhao, 27, won for his efforts in launching education and skills courses in the rural farming region of Vidarbha.

The third winner from India is international para-athlete, 24-year-old Devika Malik, who has been recognised for her Wheeling Happiness Foundation, which promoting inclusion, raising funds for disabled people and promoting better accessibility and equality for those with disabilities.

They will be among 60 winners, including one each from Pakistan and Bangladesh and two from Sri Lanka, to represent the Indian Sub-continent on the palace grounds later this month.