

Be it fighting for the rights of people with leprosy, helping physically disabled students at Kashmir University form a union or ensuring that ramps were built at entrances of all buildings in the state, Javed has reached out to different groups. It was his PIL that led to the implementation of the **Disability Act** in Jammu and Kashmir.

“ *Javed works in such a difficult environment and in such hard circumstances. It is admirable how much he has done and the Padma Shri is well deserved. J&K is in the news for all the wrong reasons and when something like disability is recognised, it is quite special. This shows that people with disabilities are leading from the front.*
– Arman Ali, Executive Director, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People

Since 1999 Javed has been running the **Humanity Welfare Organisation Helpline** and a school for children with disabilities. “I decided to see my life as a challenge. I tried to forget my accident and make the most of my present situation”, said Javed in an earlier interview to the magazine **Civil Society Online**. “I realised that society, especially my community was accepting me and needed me despite my physical inability”.



Javed is well known across India for its efforts to empower the disabled community. “Though many disabled people get the Padma awards as sportsperson or artists, they are usually not social activists”, says disability rights advocate **Dr Satendra Singh**. “To bring change we need to acknowledge the work of activists bringing social justice. I applaud his work in behalf of disability sector”.

Ramakrishnan was paralysed neck down after injury

In social activist **S Ramakrishnan**’s case too, it was personal experience coping with a disability that him to start working for disabled people. He was 20 years old and studying engineering when he was disabled. He was asked to leap 15 feet from a tree as part of a series of obstacle tests to join the **Indian Navy**. The jump fractured his spine.

Ramakrishnan started the **Amar Seva Sangam (ASSA)** in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu with the goal of reaching out to disabled people in rural areas. Ramakrishnan is paralysed from neck down and uses a wheelchair.

“Once I realised there was no denying my condition, I was keen to know what was in store for me. I wanted to continue living life to the fullest,” he told **The Hindu** in an interview some years ago. ASSA is well known for its social outreach work. This includes conducting polio camps in villages, and integrated schools where disabled and non-disabled kids study together.

Well deserved honour says community

Describing them as a determined change maker, Chennai-based disability rights activist **Smitha Sadashivan** said Ramakrishnan is a “very quiet yet scintillating personality, spreading love for everyone around”. The honours will bring disability into mainstream discourse, believes Arman. “This shows that disability cuts across everything else and that disabled people can be a part of nation-building. This will open the discourse on political participation of people with disabilities and non-discrimination”.

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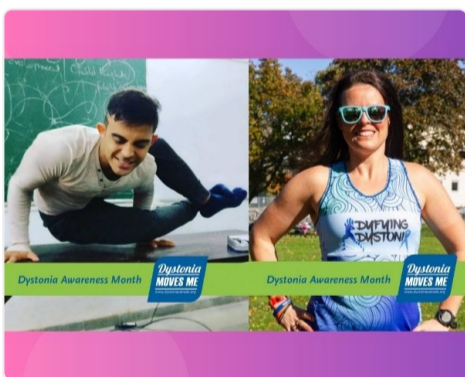
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