

FROM THE EDITOR

We owe it to Gauri Lankesh to report without fear or favour always

The brutal killing of journalist and activist Gauri Lankesh was one of the most horrendous we have heard or seen – of a journalist in India. A hapless victim of hatred, she was about to enter her house after parking her car when three bullets hit her, two on the chest and one on the temple. Gauri Lankesh's fight was against injustice, she led a crusade against crime. In many ways, it was a moral crusade continuing the legacy of her father who left behind *Lankesh Patrike*, a hard-hitting tabloid.

As veteran writer Sakuntala Narasimhan rightly says in the lead article, Gauri's killing was a manifestation of something far, far larger – the maiming of a big chunk of the lives and futures of 1.2-odd billion Indians, no less, a big chunk of the fundamental rights of each citizen, and a big chunk of the Constitution that we gave to ourselves with such pride. Muzzling the press is not on, she points out. Indeed, we need pluralism and liberalism if we are to progress as a multicultural nation and dissent, whether from journalists, activists or the common man, only strengthens the polity.

In the midst of all the gloom, it's heartening to see journalists plodding along, reporting on subjects and issues that concern all of us. The Press Institute of India and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) present awards to journalists and photojournalists every year for best articles and pictures on a humanitarian subject. This year, the theme is Disability – Triumphs and Challenges. As

usual, we received several top-notch entries. Here is what the winners were able to produce (am not naming the winners as the awards are yet to be presented as we go to print):

Malayala Manorama's chief reporter in Thiruvananthapuram sent in a short series of articles. Titled They Are Also Our Pet Children (Arumakalanu Avarum), the articles throw light on the sad plight of children with neuro disabilities, the issues faced by the children and their families, ineffective implementation of government programmes, lack of treatment facilities, and scope for social support.

Manorama's chief sub-editor's (Malappuram, Kerala) entry was titled Life on Wheels. It is also a short, moving series – of Shabna who is an epitome of indomitable spirit despite being confined to a wheel chair; of Roy who, after a fall from a jack fruit tree, becomes partially paralysed but is now a sought-after carpenter; of Salma, affected by polio as a child and wheel-chair bound, who today runs a tailoring unit and wants to start a training centre; of Basheer who survived a major accident to start a business unit; and others.

Care to Care? That was the article sent by *The Week's* special correspondent in Bengaluru. It urges authorities to sit up and take notice of the harassment female health care workers faced in hospitals.

The top three winners in the photography category are all from *Hindustan Times*. *HT's* chief photographer in Jaipur had sent in an eye-catching photo-essay on the

National Triangular Wheelchair T-20 Cricket Series.

The two others, both special photojournalists with the newspaper, had taken some stunning pictures – of 52-year-old Monu, a dwarf, who transforms himself into 'Charlie Mama' at Delhi's India Gate every day at 4 pm, and of Suyash Jadhav who represented India in the men's 50m butterfly, men's 50m freestyle and men's 200m individual medley at the Rio Paralympic Games.

A three-part series on the India Spend website, examining what living with disability in India means, particularly with regard to access to education and employment, 22 years after the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act was passed, has been cited for a special award.

It's stories such as these, about the lives of ordinary people, done with loads of commitment and passion, that will help keep the Journalism flag flying high in India and motivate others to raise the bar. Like Gauri Lankesh always did – without fear or favour.

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