

Coimbatore-based animal rights activist Mini Vasudevan selected for Nari Shakti Puraskar

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COIMBATORE: Coimbatore-based animal rights activist Mini Vasudevan, who is involved in sterilising and rescuing street dogs, has been selected for the Nari Shakti Puraskar by the ministry of women and child development.

The activist will receive the award from the President on March 8, marked as International Women's Day.

Vasudevan, an engineer by profession, and her husband, who were in successful jobs in the US, moved to India in 2004 to be closer to their families.

Already pet owners in the US, they were appalled by the condition of street dogs in Coimbatore. "I would see animals suffering on the streets

with severe wounds, hurt after an accident, a pregnant dog suffering with wounds and there was no organised structure to help street dogs," said Vasudevan.

"While I would take a few injured dogs I noticed to the veterinarian, I would not know where to take them after the treatment to recover and many veterinarians would refuse to treat street dogs," she added.

It was after a lot of thought and working independently helping street dogs, whenever they could and housing them after treatment, did Mini and her husband decide to establish a trust in April 2006 calling it Humane Animal Society (HAS).

"We just wanted to create a platform where like-minded people who care for animals could also join," she said. "Luckily the Coimbatore Corporation started the animal birth control programme the same year and gave us a space in Seeranaickenpalayam for us to run the centre. I also spent time in Blue Cross of India, in Chennai, to learn how to run a birth control centre, challenges and managing it," she added.

They started it with one staff, one helper and one veterinary doctor. Now there two veterinarians and more than 70 people involved in the NGO and the centre.

As of March 2018, they had positively helped at least 50,000 dogs, including sterilising 25,000 and getting the rest either adopted or rescued and rehabilitated.

"Besides birth control, we treat thousands of injured or wounded dogs or abandoned pedigree dogs," she said. "This award is a recognition of the incredible work done by HAS, which in turn is a result of the hard work put by our staff, volunteers, donors and well-wishers from all over the globe who have been supporting our work," she added.

Vasudevan said their aim now was to empower more people to do more for animal welfare, rather than their shelter getting more animals. "We want the platform to attract more animal lovers to come and do their bit to help reduce animal abuse and suffering. We also conduct classes in school about first aid, wound management for dogs, behaviour management among others," she said.