

Meet the Coimbatore woman to be awarded by govt for service to stray animals

Mini and her husband Madhu Ganesh's Humane Animal Society has helped about 50,000 animals in Coimbatore so far.



NEWS ANIMAL WELFARE | TUESDAY, MARCH 05, 2019 - 17:40

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Leaving a plum job in the US to come back to India is not an easy decision. But Mini Vasudevan made the transition in 2004 to help stray animals in Coimbatore. Her efforts have now been recognised by the government of India which will be awarding her the Nari Shakti Puraskar, an award instituted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, on International Women's Day March 8.

In 2006, Mini Vasudevan and her husband Madhu Ganesh founded the Humane Animal Society (HAS), a non-governmental organisation which works for the welfare of animals in Coimbatore.

"I have always been someone who couldn't bear to see animals suffer, even when I was a child. I have encountered veterinary doctors who were either uninterested in treating stray animals or chose not to do so to retain their regular clients. Due to these things, we decided to launch Humane Animal Society here," she begins.

Partnership with Coimbatore Corporation

HAS was established two years after the couple started an eponymous animal welfare trust with like-minded people. Soon, a good opportunity came their way.

"Coimbatore Corporation had recently launched its Animal Birth Control (ABC) program to neuter stray dogs. We realised that though the intention of launching the program was good, the Corporation did not have the requisite expertise," Mini narrates.

HAS approached the Corporation with a proposal to handle the program. Ultimately, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between HAS and the Corporation in November 2006.

After handling the ABC program, HAS eventually ventured into vaccination, rescue and rehabilitation of abandoned animals too. Along with it rose the task of creating awareness among people on what to do with hurt or distressed animals.

Mini says that HAS started working a lot with communities in the past three years and has been them on laws concerning animals as well.

"People, including many law enforcement officials, were unaware of the animal welfare laws in the country; they didn't even know these laws existed! Animal welfare laws in India are one of the best in the whole world, but enforcement is very poor," she says.

In 2015, HAS also played a dominant role in Coimbatore in implementing 'Mission Rabies', which was aimed to prevent spreading of rabies through mass vaccination of dogs.

Impact

What started off with Mini, her husband and two other trustees is now a big family. With 17 full-time staff including two veterinary doctors, two veterinary assistants, an ambulance driver, shelter and sanctuary staff, HAS's work has, till date, helped at least 50,000 animals. HAS also has an outpatient facility for people who cannot afford treatment for their pets.

"This is a tremendous achievement by those working with us -- staff, volunteers and all our donors who put their hard-earned money into HAS. We are very proud that we have been able to change the attitude of the people towards animals," Mini gushes.

"The kind of responses we get when people call when they spot an animal in distress has itself changed a lot. Previously when we got calls, we would request them to stay near the animal till we reach there. But now, people either bring the animals here or at least wait with the animal till our team reaches the location," she shares.

'Long way to go'

Mini is hopeful of more positive things will come HAS's way. "We still have a long way to go. We are not at a point where we can sit back and feel comfortable - far from it. But I do think we have come a long way from where we began," Mini says. She attributes a huge share of her success to being in the right place and the right time.

She also wishes that people were more forthcoming helping animals in their capacity. "HAS also owns a sanctuary, 25 kms from Coimbatore city, in Vazhukkupparai on the way to Pollachi. We have around 70 animals -- dogs, cats, ponies and cows - in that sanctuary up for adoption. If one cannot adopt, they can also sponsor the upkeep of an animal," she says.

"I think this mode of virtual adoption might be something that people would like to do in case they love animals but have space and other constraints at their houses," Mini adds.