

# For all creatures great and small



Mini Vasudevan, co-founder of Coimbatore's Humane Animal Society, received the Nari Shakti Award 2019 yesterday. Here she talks about her journey as an animal activist

•• SUSAN JOE PHILIP

Chikoo, Mini Vasudevan's six-year-old German Shepard, welcomes me to her house on Trichy Road. When he barks and wags his tail, she pats him gently. "He is a victim of inbreeding. His owner abandoned him when he was one month old; one of his hind leg was non-functional and had to be amputated. I could not find anyone to adopt him, so I brought him home."

Mini, the co-founder of city-based NGO Humane Animal Society (HAS), recently received the Nari Shakti Puraskar, the highest civilian honour for women in India given by the Ministry of Women and Child Development at Delhi to recognise her work in animal welfare. Was she expecting this? "Of course not. I got a call from the ministry in February, and knew I was being considered. I am happy and feel honoured."

Interestingly, Mini grew up in a family without pets. "But I have always loved animals. Their sufferings move me." She turned vegetarian when she was 11. "I was on a farm, playing with my cousins when I saw a chicken being killed. The image of the headless hen flapping its wings affected me so much that I gave up eating meat."

An engineer by profession, Mi-



ni and her husband Madhu Ganesh worked in the US for 13 years before they returned to Coimbatore in 2004. "I was shocked to see the number of street dogs in

## INFO YOU CAN USE

WEBSITE: [www.hasindia.org/](http://www.hasindia.org/)

FACEBOOK: [www.facebook.com/has.cbe/](https://www.facebook.com/has.cbe/)

At Street Dog Sterilization Center, Opp. No: 22 Bus-stand, Sugarcane Breeding Institute Road, Seeranaickenpalayam.

CALL: 9366127215 or 9791532266 to volunteer

the city and there were no organisations to take care of them. This led us form the Humane Animal Society in 2006. We aim to bring like-minded people together to care for these animals." HAS works along with the Coimbatore Corporation. "We have signed a MoU with the corporation and perform birth control surgeries and care for the sick, injured and abandoned dogs in 20 wards in the city. Our shelter home at See-

For the love of animals Mini Vasudevan and scenes from the Humane Animal Society shelters • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ranaickenpalayam is also located in a government property. There are separate sections for animals with different needs at the shelter."

Things were not easy in the beginning. "Though I had volunteered in similar organisations, I did not have any experience of running one. I did a lot of research and got in touch with others for help in handling different situations. Now, I have come a long way." HAS has helped more than 50,000 animals and has about 100 in their shelter at Seeranaickenpalayam and 70 at the Sanctuary at Valukkuppura. "The animals in the Sanctuary are

Animals (SPCA) is not functional in Coimbatore. "According to law, it is mandatory for every district to have an SPCA. There is a patch of land allotted to that organisation by the government near Seeranaickenpalayam. If it can be put to proper use, even the large animals that wander in the streets can be provided shelter. I hope the corporation will look into it soon."

The 54 year old says that the approach of people towards Indian breed dogs has changed over the years. "Earlier people would only adopt male pure-breed dogs. Now, native and female dogs also have takers."



those that will not survive in the street." HAS now has 17 employees including two veterinary doctors. There are also around 60 volunteers who take the dogs for walks and clean the premises.

Mini mentions that the Society for Prevention of Cruelty towards

As we finish talking and I prepare to leave, Mini opens a door. Her other dogs, Malu and Manju, charge out. While one sniffs at me, the other jumps up. Mini sees my scared face and instructs them to leave. They walk away silently, still wagging their tails.