

Animal instinct

- [Parshathy J. Nath](#)



The Hindu
Humane Animal Society. Photo: K. Ananthan



The Hindu
Humane Animal Society. Photo: K. Ananthan

“God, please help me be the person my dog thinks I am”. Husband and wife Mini Vasudevan and Madhu Ganesh wear this prayer on their t-shirts. They are engineers, but it is really their love for animals that binds them. “When we quit our engineering jobs in the U.S.A and settled in Coimbatore in 2004, we noticed that there was no organised initiative for animal welfare. We decided to begin a trust for Humane Animal Society (HAS) in 2006,” says Mini. They took charge of the Corporation’s dog shelter at Seeranaickenpalayam, the same year. “When we visited the area, it was a jungle. With long grass, overgrown weeds and a smelly gutter, it was a den of anti-social activities,” says Madhu. However, that did not deter the couple. With shovels, spades and friends and volunteers, they made the shelter liveable for the animals.

Seven years down, the grass is neatly trimmed and there are cobbled pathways leading up to the shelter. There is even a garden next to the vet’s clinic, with pretty bougainvillea and jasmine dancing in the afternoon breeze. The dogs in the kennels yawn as they get ready for a nap.

“Luckily, the year we started the trust, Tamil Nadu government took up the ABC (Animal Birth Control) programme on a large scale. The Corporation took a positive approach to the sterilization programmes. We, along with People for Animals Unit I (PFA I), signed an MOU with the Corporation to work with them for the ABC programme,” says Mini. Once they took charge of the shelter, they set up a team of vets and began to work like a full-fledged organisation.

Passion and profession

Madhu is an adjunct faculty at PSG College of Technology, while Mini works for Ericsson, Wireless Standards Organisation. “PFA I, who had shared our expenses in maintaining the shelter, withdrew from the MOU last April. It has added to our financial crunch. We have no other option but to continue with our jobs to keep alive our passion,” smiles Madhu.

Mini remembers how she loved animals since she was a child. When she was only 11-years-old, she turned into a vegetarian. She recollects, “I was playing outdoors in my hometown in Kerala, when I saw a man slash the throat of a hen. I still cannot forget that image of its body, writhing on the ground!” While our country has strict slaughter laws, they are hardly practised here, points out Madhu. These laws govern the manner of slaughter, transportation of animals and hygiene in the slaughter house, he adds.

Madhu and Mini have also urged people to keep water bowls in front of their house. Their own home has been a popular halt for the cows and stray dogs in the neighbourhood who come to quench their thirst. “The cows, especially, are so desperate. Even their owners do not provide them with enough water. We end up refilling twice or thrice as they will not stop with one bowl,” says Mini.

When guests visit them, they are immediately introduced to the other members of their family - Manjula, Malavika, two mongrels and Chikoo, a three-legged German shepherd. “If our guests find it difficult to put up with them roaming in the house we remind them, ‘You have actually intruded into their space. So you should behave!’,” says Madhu. “The animals were brought in from the street. Chikoo was rescued and put in our shelter. We got Malavika when she was a pup and Manjula, when she littered in front of our house.”

Mini rues the fact that very few people are ready to adopt country dogs as pets. “There is an obsession for pure breeds in the city. Owning a Labrador or a German shepherd is a matter of status. But, who will take care of these abandoned country pups,” asks Mini.

Mini and Madhu say how prejudice rears its ugly head even in the adoption of pets. “Many people will not adopt a female pup, because she will get pregnant and create problems!” A humane approach is sadly lacking, says Madhu. “During vaccination and sterilization drives, there are many who request us to just kill the dogs, as if that is the most normal thing to do!” Children are taught to pelt stones at dogs, says Mini.

“I have had so many showdowns with school children of my locality. They instinctively pick up a stone when they see a dog. And we blame the animal for being aggressive! It is hard to break this social conditioning. We need more youngsters, who think originally and are compassionate.”

Humane Animal Society

Apart from the founders, the organisation consists of two vets and an administrative staff of six people. Presently, the shelter has seven kennels, a puppy park and two operation theatres.

Functions

Animal birth control programme: HAS works with the corporation to sterilize the country dogs in the city.

Vaccination: They conduct large scale anti-rabies vaccination drives

Adoption Camps: They also conduct monthly adoption camps of puppies and kittens.

Medical treatment: There is a 24-hours emergency vet service. They can be contacted at 93661-27215.

Future programmes

Ambulance service for stray dogs