

# Insider Perspective on Zoo Outreach Organisation

## Working with Zoo Outreach Organisation

Latha Ravikumar\*

After completing my graduation in mathematics and a computer course in 1990, I joined in a commercial shopping complex as a computer operator. Now, a lady working after marriage is very common, but it was a custom in our family that females don't go for work after marriage. I have to thank my parents who accepted my wishes and allowed me to do whatever I liked to do, despite what family thought. When I took my first job I thought I would work for 1 or 2 years and then get married to a businessman and never go for a job. Even after I joined ZOO I used to tell Sarojamma, our office "Mom" and Marimuthu, my colleague at ZOO, that I will work only until my marriage. But after a year of service at ZOO I changed my marriage plans. I asked my parents to find a person near our area so that I could continue to work.

My mother didn't like my working in a shopping complex very much. Once I related this to Mr. Raveendran, a family friend, who worked for Pricol, one of ZOO's major sponsors in the city. Raveendran is our family friend and also knew Sally from her frequent visits to Pricol where Mr. Venkatesh was giving her lessons in the use of PageMaker for getting ZOOS' PRINT published in offset. Ravi told me that if I was interested he would arrange to meet Sally Walker to see if there was a job for me in her office. He also warned me saying that her English is very tough to understand. However, I decided to meet her because of my mother's wish. My mother took me to her and I was fighting with her for doing so. Actually I had no intention of giving up my present job and also I was insecure about Sally Madam's language requirements. As soon as Sally started talking about the organization and herself I was intrigued and wanted to be part of it. Even now my mother teases me about that complete about-face! Since then Sally Madam has been a mentor to me and I am grateful beyond words for her perspective, advice and most of all, her hard work. We see her working round the clock and we have all learnt hard work and dedication from her. She is very encouraging and motivating and at the same time she does not forget to point out our mistakes. I admire the manner in which she points out our mistakes, which make us amenable to taking her suggestions. I always use to tell her that her criticism helps me to learn more things in a correct way.

Sally has been doing many meaningful things for conservation and wild animal welfare in India, South Asia and even around the world. She has an incredible amount of energy to work. If she agrees for something she will do at any cost. The education materials she develops using simple

drawings to convey conservation messages and complex issues is simply superb. Sometimes we take a long time to design a small item but in a few minutes she changes the entire design, which looks really attractive. I always admire her creativity. She is highly disciplined in following up things and doing the projects right.

I specially need to mention Sanjay here. Next to Sally Madam he is the most supportive and encouraging. Also he is the worst one to tease us, keeping the atmosphere relaxed and happy. He is equally un-shy about pointing out mistakes and telling us how to correct them and improve and we all learn from this. Sanjay is a great support to Sally, which she never hesitates to acknowledge to us, although rarely to Sanjay! Sally and Sanjay entertain (and occasional frighten) us all by their insults and teasing one another, fighting like a brother and sister.

I am taking this opportunity to give my biggest thanks to all my other colleagues and friends at ZOO (Daniel, Marimuthu, Manju, Ravichandran, Pravin Kumar, Arul and Raveendran) for their continued support and cooperation. A special thanks to Geetha and Radhika who always bear my impatience somehow (they are still with me!) and last but not least our office "Mom" Sarojamma who is a loving friend to all. Here I would like to thank my lovable husband and all other family members for their concern and constant encouragement which helps me continue my work happily without any difficulty.

We have always had a wonderful team at Zoo Outreach Organisation. Everyone would be molded according to our "ZOO" standard, whether they were a natural hard worker or not. We work six days a week and many days I work up to 7 or 9 pm, not because it is expected of me, but so I will feel satisfied about the work of the organisation.

We don't observe all government holidays and whatever our religion is, we get those religious holidays off only, but we all work very happily without any complaint. At times we all have some difference of opinion but we have a real freedom to talk it over. Our team is like a family. The other great thing about working for ZOO is that we don't have monotonous work. We all share all the different types of work and if we are interested and can take responsibility we can help with any kind of work that is going on in the office.

Many of us working here are attached with ZOO for many years and we all would like to continue for many years — at least 25 more years! I am really proud of what ZOO has achieved and really very happy to be with the organization, particularly with Sally Madam.

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\*Finance Director/ Manager, ZOO