

Man-animal camaraderie: Bhajans bring wild bears closer to hermit in MP-Chhattisgarh border forest

The camaraderie between a pair of the wild bear and a saffron-clad hermit singing Ram Bhajans inside his hut in the dense forests in Shahdol district of MP, is attracting forest dwellers.



Ram Bhajan has brought a pair of wild bears and a hermit closer. (Photo| EPS)

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Updated on: 17 Feb 2020, 12:03 am · 2 min read



BHOPAL: Devotional songs have brought animals and humans closer to each other in the dense forests on the Madhya Pradesh-Chhattisgarh border.

The camaraderie between a pair of the wild bear and a saffron-clad hermit singing Ram Bhajans inside his hut in the dense forests in Shahdol district of MP, is attracting forest dwellers in both neighbouring states to the catch the sight of the rare wild-human coexistence.

According to forest dwellers as well as forest department staff, every morning and evening, when the hermit with flowing locks sings Ram Bhajans with the music of Ektara, the pair of wild bears come out of their nearby caves and sit patiently near the hermit -- as if to find solace in the devotional songs.

"I've been here since 2013 and since then the wild bears have been coming to me whenever I sing the Ram Bhajans with the Ektara and dumroo. They never attacked me nor have they even scared anyone while patiently sitting outside the ashram (hut) when Bhajans are sung. Every morning and evening, they only leave the place after having the Prasad (offering to God) from my hands. The bear pair and their two offsprings have become an inseparable part of my life. I've even named the pair as Lali and Lalli and their offsprings as Chunnu-Munnu, who always respond to my calls," said the 65-year hermit Sitaram Baba.



Hailing from nearby Khohra Bairak village, the hermit made the Khadakhoh-Rajmara jungles his home in 2013 and since then has devoted self to singing Ram Bhajans inside the hut named as Rajmara Ramvan Ashram, which has a river flowing close by.

"Initially when the pair of bear came near my Ashram, I got scared, but as they didn't harm anyone and sat near the hut without even entering inside even once,

their fear was never felt later," claimed Sitaram Baba while sitting near the dhuni (sacred place replete with burning wood) in his hut-cum-ashram.

Vijay Kumar, a tribal dwelling in the same forest, says it's not only the carnivorous wild bear pair and their offsprings but other animals in the forest, including herbivorous monkeys and squirrels who make it sure to be near Sitaram Baba's hut and Ashram, whenever he sings Ram Bhajans and then serves them, Prasad.

Even the forest department officials confirm the unique bonding between the hermit and the wild animals, particularly the wild bear family living in caves in the vicinity of his hut.

According to the Jaitpur Forest Range Officer Saleem Khan, he too has witnessed the bonhomie between the hermit and the seemingly spiritually inclined bears and some other animals.