

Balachaur couple on forest clean-up mission

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In a bid to protect the forests of Nawanshahr from waste dumping and littering, Aman Verma and Dr Sunita have been carrying out drives to rid the forests of garbage for the past eight years. The Nawanshahr-based couple runs a hospital at Balachaur and is known for its philanthropy.

Regularly visiting the jungles and also feeding animals there, Aman's concern about the forests grew about eight years ago when he noticed that people were dumping tons of waste there.

Speaking to The Tribune Aman Verma (43) says: "The forest is 17 km from the place where I live. I had been visiting it daily since I was a kid and feed animals. I had been an avid observer of the problems being faced in the jungle since then and what bothered me was the increasing plastic wastes in the jungle for years. So, about eight years ago we started the work of personally picking up trash from the jungles."

Verma says: "Plastic doesn't decompose and the increasing presence of huge stashes of plastic in the forests is a big biodiversity issue, which cause imbalance in forests, upsets flora and fauna and threatens delicate eco sensitive zones. Our work has gained momentum, many people have joined us and under the umbrella of Bheer Society many of us have pitched in to save Nawanshahr forests." In his pursuit to free forests of garbage, Verma has picked up wastes from vast stretches of forests, including those in Kalar, Bhaddi, Rail Majra (near site of the Banda Bahadur caves) among other areas.

He is currently working on a project to rid a site which saw a dharna few days ago, which he and his workers found riddled with used plastic cups and plates.

He says, "A recent dharna site was heavily littered with cups. We have been picking up wastes for two days and still there is more left. Some people deliberately dump their refuse in forests. I saw a dump of used clothes which someone had intentionally thrown in the middle of the forest. Besides this, people visiting the forest or feeding animals for religious purposes also leave behind plastic wrappers, polythene and packaging in the jungles creating huge piles of waste."

The couple hires a pick-up truck for Rs2,500 to Rs3,000 which they take to the jungle every Sunday and employ four to five labourers to pick up the trash as well.

The couple has also been extending medical care to the needy. Many people in medical emergencies who are unable to pay for treatment have been helped by the couple.

Source:<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jalandhar/balachaur-couple-on-forest-clean-up-mission-318663>