

(III)

THE BOND OF LOVE

Mother-child relationship in all living beings on earth has a special place, which is very sensitive, sentimental, dedicated and holy in nature. A mother's affection towards her offspring is difficult to express in words. It is a natural bond of love, which is the gift of the Almighty. It makes some moments very sentimental when one comes across incidents during the journey of life. Here I narrate an incidence of this kind of love bond between a female elephant towards her calf and vice-versa. It was the month of August 2000. I was posted as District Forest Officer, Dharmapuri. I got

a message from the Range Officer, Pennagaram that one female elephant was struggling for her life in deep forest near Hogenekkal. I, along with a team of forest officials, veterinarian and few villagers rushed to the spot. After a tough trek on undulating terrain of about 10 km we reached the spot, known as Toppakimedu, surrounded by lofty hills, a dangerous place and once a hideout of dreaded poacher Veerappan. Although a slight fear was there, but the company of fully equipped forest officials and villagers was sufficient to raise my confidence. I had a quick look



Female elephant struggling with death. The baby elephant is seen standing by.

at the struggling female elephant. During the course of investigation, I noticed a male calf of 2-3 years old constantly standing by the side of its mother. The marks of tears were quite visible in the eyes of both. As we tried to approach to investigate the cause, the scared male baby elephant started charging the mob, apprehending danger to the life of his mother. I asked everybody to stand back and not to disturb them. I observed the two for quite long. I found that the baby elephant was now and then trying to lift his mother while she was pushing him aside as if she wanted him to get away from the scene. She even tried to console the baby elephant by keeping her trunk on the calf's eyes to wipe away his tears. Not only this, I also witnessed some touching activities of the

baby elephant –spraying water into the mouth of his mother frequently and also keeping his tiny trunk on the body of the mother. After an hour or so, feeling something amiss, the baby elephant ran into the deep forest, as if he had gone to bring his kith and kin to help his suffering mother. In the meantime, we started giving some treatment to the ill mother, but all our efforts and trials to revive the mammoth animal came to an end abruptly; but the efforts of the baby elephant to lift the body of his mother never failed. It seemed that he was not ready to accept the reality. My heartfelt condolences. I paid my homage to one of the family members of my forest with heavy heart. But for the baby elephant it was a great loss as his bond of love was broken.

- Rajiv K. Srivastava*

* ADG (M&E), ICFRE, Dehra Dun (Uttaranchal).