

My experience with a baby elephant

Dr.S.Kulandaivel,IJS

Introduction:

The species *Elephas maximus* was originated in this subcontinent from time immemorial. They have evolved over the period of time on many features but still evolving for their survival. The mega fauna is extremely brilliant and sensitive to its own living condition. Its communicational skill is very strong and in majority it lives like a society with mutual understanding. Though they are very wild but harmless to other species unless harmed. Most of the time it behaves like gentleman animal but at times it behaves extremely violent; all depends on many factors which need much talent to understand.

The real story: When it was heard that a Dolma herd was going to enter the Bishnupur region of Bankura district from Rupnarayanpur Division on 12.08.2011 through DFO/Panchet (incharge) Sri Kumar Vimal, I requested him to stop them if possible for sometime because the paddy cultivation (planting) was in peak at Bankura North Division (BKN) jurisdiction, and there was also no much fodder available in the forest areas. I asked the DFO/Panchet that if the situation is uncontrollable allow the animals to come towards BKN area, we will take the necessary precautions. On 18.08.2011 early morning the herd (about 35 nos) have entered Patrasayer forest of Bankura North Division along with a three days old baby elephant (born on 15th August, 2011 and it was a male baby).

The great hurt. It was heard that when the group was trying to cross the over flooded Tarakeshwar River, the new born baby elephant was unable to cross the river and left was behind by the herd near Chandipur village. The baby who was experiencing deep trouble was identified by a fisherman and informed to the Joypur Range Officer of Panchet Division. By that time the herd of elephants have reached Karanjmani-Khairasole Forest of Manikbazaar Beat in Sonamukhi Range. Meantime, the baby elephant was rescued who was found floating in the tarakeshwar river ,at chandipur range in Hetia GP of P.S.- Joypur and brought to Karanjmani-Khairasole Forest and we tried to put the baby in the herd. About two hours of separation the baby and mother met and shared their pain. Suddenly after some communication from the group/herd, the mother was listening to the group and its leader and start ignoring her son (Tarakeshwar) and no positive response was gained from her mother even after repeated attempt/ humble submission. During that day, I was conducting timber auction and received the news by 5.00pm After completing the departmental timber Auction,I reached Sonamukhi Range HQ by 8.30 pm (on 18.08.2011).

The after care (care without mother): The rejected Tarakeshwar was brought back to Sonamukhi Range Office complex. I discussed with a veterinary doctor (Dr. Manoharan) Vandaloor Zoo, Chennai) through telephone discussion, received the basic diet prescription and it's after care of the baby elephant. Based on that I have purchased Lactogen 4kg and Glucon-D 2kg and I have requested the local

veterinary doctors to check the Tarakeshwar health and instructed my staff to disinfect the baby elephant living floor with KMnO₄ (0.5% solution) and asked to cover the baby body with Jute Cloth to maintain the warmth. A mixture of 100gm Lactogen + 100gm Glucose was mixed in a litre of clean water and given 200 ml mixture at the interval of 2 hrs and gave five times on that night.

A Sincere attempt and great misfortune: By early morning 4 am on 19.08.2011, we took Tarakeshwar (baby elephant name) in a 407 Mobile Van to Soulia forest of Brindabanpur Beat in Beliatore Range and put inside the group (near to mother), the baby was crying very badly and calling his mother. Once again, the mother gave her response, but the group (herd) and its leader was strongly rejecting the development and took shortcut and moved into Srikrishnapur forest of Brindabanpur Beat area in Beliatore Range. Further we have moved to the mother elephant location and we have tried once again (by 9 am, 19.08.2011) to put into the herd (nearer to her mother) but now there was no response from his mother as well. Finally, we rescued our Tarakeshwar and brought to Beliatore and start feeding as per the veterinarian (Dr. Uppal Sharma's prescription).

Management: Here, surely, Tarakeshwar and her mother were great loser for each other but in the entire process some of my staff were also felt their pain and even went to do puja for getting a chance of accepting the baby by his mother. We have maintained the animal health and its living condition in a more properly. The local public came to know the presence of Tarakeshwar at Beliatore and there was

many thousands visitors with mobile phone camera and many TV and news papers media person to take some glimpses of the baby elephant. We have posted few staffs to manage the local visitors to avoid any panic to the animal. We tried our best to keep the animal in good condition. Meanwhile, we requested a doctor who was treating a injured Dolma animal at Patrasayer Range (Dr. Uppal Sharma, a veterinarian from Jaldapara) to attend the baby elephant to check the health statue, he was kind enough to accept our request and visited Beliatore and seen the baby elephant and suggested me to transport the Tarakeshwar immediately to Jaldapara. I requested the Deputy Director, ARD-Bankura (veterinary dept.) to spare a veterinary surgeon (Dr. Dilip Haldar), who was working at Barjora Block. Thankfully, a team of six veterinary doctors including Deputy Director- veterinary department, Bankura have visited Beliatore Range Office Complex and attended the animal and checked its health condition, and said that the animal was in good health and also permitted Dr. Dilip Haldar to accompany the animal up to Jaldapara. Most importantly, with my request, they have also approached the Director, Veterinary Dept. Govt. of West Bengal to inform all the veterinary hospitals en-route to Jaldapara to attend the animal and keep a check on its health status.



Dr.Dilip Haldar, Surgeon, Barjora Block Veterinary Hospital attending Tarakeshwar

I have communicated all those developments to the higher authority then and there. By seeing the Tarakeshwar condition and its suitability for transport, finally we have received the approval from Sri.S.B.Mondal, The PCCF/Wildlife (CWLW) Govt. of West Bengal to transport Tarakeshwar to Jaldapara where a lactating mother was available and has been anticipated that it will adopt Tarakeshwar.

Journey to Jaldapara to live with a step mother: On 20.08.2011 by 4.30 pm after the day heat was reduced, the baby animal was loaded in a 407 Mobile Van in such a way that the animal was kept in the standing condition by keeping the animal face facing towards front side of the vehicle and guarded with soft supporting materials on both left and right side of the animal and was also surrounded by staff (Range Officer, Forest Guard and few Labours) in order to make

sure that the new born was not get hurted/injured. After reaching Gonpur (Md. Bazar Range in Birbhum Division) a rest was given and the animal was unloaded and allowed to walk about half an hour and was fed. When the animal shown its agility it was reloaded again as above mentioned way and travel was continued and when they reached Adina Deer Park in Malda Division the animal took some rest, given walking practice and a feed. Our staffs and veterinary Doctor also took brief rest and once again the animal was loaded in the vehicle as given above. In the en-route to Jaldapara, Once again the animal was unloaded and given rest and feeding at Bagdogra Range Office complex. Finally, on 22.08.2011 by about 7.30 am Tarakeshwar reached the **step mother Champa Koli** and a three month old sister to have a **family life**, which he had lost at South Bengal with his own mother.



Tarakeshwar and his elder sister is taking milk with his step mother.

When the Tarakeshwar reached by locating his lactating step mother, the original baby of the mother become furious, restless, shouting and creating panic to the surrounding and that scene was a great event that one could deeply sense it. For any forester that experience could be a good learning from the wildlife. All those best part of expression from a dejected baby elephant - a step mother-existing was recorded by our Forest Ranger Sri Soumen Mondal through his camera eyes and memories. The step mother was much kind enough to give milk and love to Tarakeshwar with proper attempt of our mahoot. After hearing this news, I had great relief and happiness which I couldn't express in my words. Thanks to GOD.



What a wonderful joining and happy going !!!!!!!

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Dr.S.Kulandaivel,IFS
Divisional Forest Officer,
Bankura (North) Division