

## ON THE CAPTURE OF A BALEEN WHALE AT KAKINADA ON THE EAST COAST OF INDIA

On 19th July 1959 at about 19.00 hours, in the wake of a large wave fishermen from a boat sighted a whale in the shallow waters of Chollangi Bay near Eturnoga Village, Kakinada. It was seen drifting as a long black mass with the dorsal fluke protruding conspicuously above the water. The men approached it in the boat and threw a rope on to the dorsal fluke, but the whale moved away too fast carrying the rope along with it. Realising the futility of tackling such a monstrous creature from one boat, the fishermen returned to the shore and immediately proceeded to the spot with two other boats and a total complement of 25 crew. The boats were plyed in such a way that the animal had to swim shore-wards. The boats were also kept reasonably close together to prevent its escape. In the last stages of the chase the animal actually ran aground frightened by the sound produced by beating the sides of the boats. Thus stranded, it was roped around the caudal region and hauled ashore by about 150 fishermen who formed part of the crowd watching the chase. After its capture the whale lived for about five hours and for sometime, soon after it was beached it roared repeatedly thereby attracting all the people from the village to the spot.

A temporary gunny enclosure was raised and the whale was kept on show from 20-7-1959 to 24-7-1959, during which time it was perfumed and disinfected with agarbathis, frankincense, naphthalene powder, and ice in husk was also applied as a preservative. Fifteen to twenty thousand people from Kakinada and nearby villages visited the spot paying 12 nP. for viewing the animal, the fishermen thus realising about Rs. 2,000 as gate money.

The whale had the following measurements :

Total length	..	26' 1"
Height of body	..	3' 6"
Length of pectoral flipper	..	3' 3"
Length of snout	..	5' 6"
Width of snout	..	2' 6"
Length of each caudal fluke from notch	..	3' 4"
Approximate weight	..	8 tons.

The entrails of the animal were removed on 24-7-1959. On the following morning the carcass was handed over to the local authorities of the Fisheries Department who removed the eyes, the baleen plates, the pectoral flippers with the bones, and the dorsal fluke for preservation, while the blubber was also taken by them for the extraction of oil. The oil extracted by treating the blubber in boiling water was not of rich quality as the blubber was poor and thin, and the animal itself young and dead for some days. At about 18 hours on the same day, the remaining carcass was buried there itself so that the skeleton could be exhumed at a later date.

The presence of a pair of blow holes, baleen plates with edges of a light colour, prominent dorsal fluke, pectoral flippers, moderate and numerous ventral furrows ending well in front of the umbilicus indicate it to be a baleen whale of the genus *Balaenoptera*.

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