

## A Day with a very young wild Elephant calf

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Elephants abandon their calf when they feel that the calf cannot cope with the rest of the herd, or that calf may endanger the rest.

On 11th of November a herd of elephants consisting of 8 female, 2 male tuskers and 2 calf were resting in the forests of Machadiha near Chakulia of Dhalbhum Forest Division, Jamshedpur.

In the early morning, the herd after raiding a paddy field and returning, a small calf of about 1 to 2 weeks old was trapped by the swampy mud. The herd tried but could not rescue the calf. After some time the herd left the calf and travelled few kilometers from that calf.

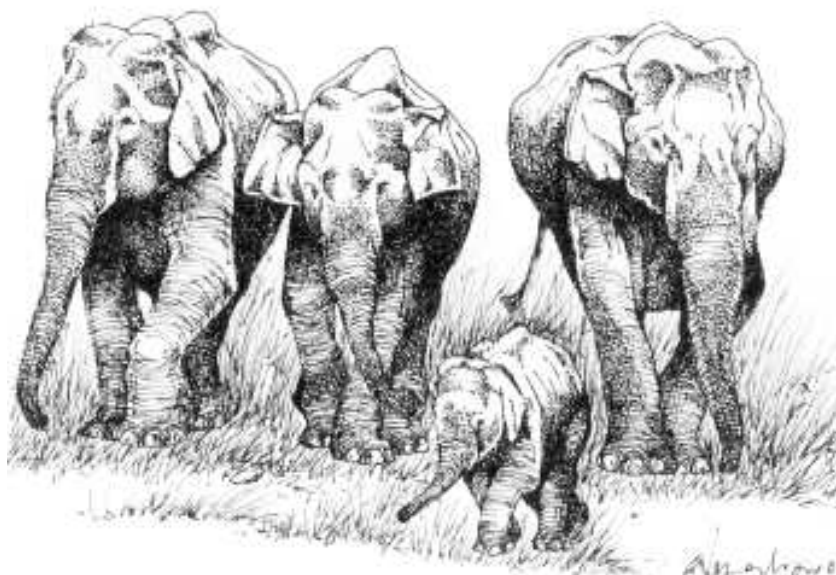
When the elephant herd was sufficiently away from the calf, villagers rescued the calf from the mud. As the elephant calf was trying to come out of the mud, it was totally tied and unable to stand. The villagers along with the forest staff then contacted me.

I directed the villagers and staff to provide sufficient water and glucose and try to release the calf before the herd, which they did as requested. When the baby elephant was alone, however, a tusker passed close by the calf but left without any response to the baby elephant.

Then the villagers along with the staff brought the calf to my residence where I provided glucose and mineral water, and requested the Tata Zoo Director and Doctor to check about the health of the calf. The Doctor deemed the calf in a fit condition so we decided to keep the animal in the Tata Zoo until morning and arranged transport there. One villager stayed along with the calf in the Zoo. In the early morning a forester related by telephone that the calf was not in good condition. Then I immediately rushed to the Tata Zoo where calf was sleeping silently.

I was surprised and felt very sad as the condition of the calf in the night had been good. After some efforts the calf started walking and then was given glucose water and plain water. After that the calf was cleaned and soon after become agile. Then I thought that this is the right time to send the calf to its rightful owners, the herd. As the herd had rejected the elephant in the first instant, I directed the villagers and the forester to put enough elephant dung slurry on the body of the calf. Elephant dung slurry was given to suppress any human smell from its body.

The calf was then taken to Chakulia, the Range Head Quarter where to local officials identified the herd and its location. The villagers confirmed that the herd is found in the forests of Rajabasa. Then the Forester Sri Jagannath Kumar and villagers from Sanghati, Mahuldiha, Rajabasa and Sunsunia took the challenge and delivered the elephant calf to the Rajabasa forests. As soon as the calf was released from the van and started walking on the road, it gave a loud call. His cry was equally reciprocated by a member from the herd which was about half kilometer from the calf. Immediately a tusker started chasing the villagers and 6 female elephants surrounded the calf. After the tusker chased the villagers some distance the 6 female elephants took the calf to the jungle. It was a great satisfaction to hear the trumpeting of the elephants as well as the calf during the true home coming.



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