

## Recovery of Lost Tusk

A.T. Mishra, I.F.S.\*

The forests of Hermadih, Basadera and Lukai canal villages are in the edge of Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary and Dhalbhum Forest Division, Jamshedpur. Two tuskers fought a fatal battle for supremacy in the forests of Hermadih, Basadera and Lukai canal forests under Ghatsila Forest Range. The battle ended with the death of one tusker. The dead tusker was having two gigantic tusks. After getting the information when the local staff went to the site, they found one tusk missing. The local staff communicated to me about the matter in the evening of 26.02.2010. The next day morning I went to the site along with the staff. Some of the members of the village forest protection committees were also with us. We discussed about the incidence at large and chalked out plan how to get the lost tusks.

The areas in and around village Basadera, Hermadih and Lukai canal are highly infested with naxalite activities. It was very difficult to organize raids in these villages to recover the tusk. It came to my mind that this could only be possible with the help of the villagers.

I was apprehensive about one thing, that once the innocent villagers had come across the smugglers involved in the trade of elephant tusk, they may be attracted to such business. Once such easy money comes to them, it may instigate even to kill the elephant to fetch the tusk. So I thought the tusk, by hook or by crook, must be recovered. I related to the villagers that I didn't know, whether that tusk has been taken by somebody or it had become lost in the forest during the fight. I announced them that from now they should go in groups of 5 in the forest and try to search the tusk in the bushes of the forest. One who finds the tusk will be rewarded and no case will be booked against them. However, if the tusk will not be recovered then we will book a case and with the help of police we will organize a search to every household and wherever traces of such tusk will be found, the inhabitant will be punished heavily. The villagers promised to start searching operation from the next day morning.

One fine morning ie on 3 June 2010 I got a telephonic message from a villager that the tusk had been found in the jungle. I immediately directed the local Forester to recover the tusk. The villagers told to the forester that they would only hand over the tusk to the Divisional Forest Officer. I arranged one vehicle. The 5 villagers along with the local Forester came to my residence and handed over the tusk to me. I promised the reward. The dead tusker was a huge full grown elephant from whose body a total of 22 kg of tusks numbering recovered. In this way the lost tusk was recovered. It is a good example of how a valuable animal

product was recovered only through goodwill and bringing the local villagers into confidence. The most important thing was that the villagers were saved from joining the illegal trade and at the same time a sense of love towards wildlife was imbibed in the mind of the villagers.



Villagers and staff with the tusk



Newspaper cutting (Telegraph, 7.3.2010)

\*Divisional Forest Officer, Dhalbhum Forest Division, Jamshedpur. E-mail:arta\_ifs@yahoo.com