

**The Great Indian Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera Indica*)  
stranded at Bombay.**

ON 7th May a large specimen of the Great Indian Fin Whale was washed ashore at the Colaba Reclamation, Bombay. The specimen had evidently been long dead as it was thrown up in a highly decomposed condition. Being an unusual sight and considered a sacred animal, news of the monster spread far and wide. Hundreds of people continued to visit the spot for several days till the carcass was removed. In spite of the condition of the carcass people flocked to collect the oozing blubber and portions of the meat. The condition of the animal was such that it was quite impossible to make detailed notes to amplify the meagre description of Blandford in the *Fauna British India (Mammalia)*, p. 567. This description was based on the mandibular rami, a rib, the right radius and 5 vertebrae preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Nothing is known of the external characters of this whale.

Though the *Times of India* reported this specimen to be 52 ft. in length, the figure is much under-estimated,

considering the actual length of the mandibular rami. Each mandible taped approximately 20 ft. 4 in. over the outer curve and 16 ft. in straight measurement. Working on this data it is estimated that this whale could not have been much under 70 ft. when in the flesh, perhaps even a little longer.

There are several records of the stranding of this species along the west coast of India. A specimen measuring 63 ft. was washed ashore at Bassein, north of Bombay, in 1906.<sup>1</sup> Another, 70 ft. in length, was reported from Vizadrag, near Ratnagiri. In 1912 a specimen 61 ft. was stranded at Ratnagiri. Prater<sup>2</sup> gave some measurements and a photograph of the small Great Indian Fin Whale 41 ft. in length, which was washed up at Ratnagiri in 1914. There are a few records of the stranding of this species along our coast. In all cases the carcasses were too decomposed to add much to the existing description.

MCCANN.

<sup>1</sup> *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, 1906, 17, 533.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1914, 23, 576.

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## NEWS

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### MYTHS AND REALITIES OF WOMEN SCIENTISTS

... "The unfavourable position of women in science is usually explained either by the 'biological myth' that women innately lack the capacities for scientific work, or by the 'motherhood myth', according to which the demands of a scientific career are incompatible with marriage and children. The former 'explanation' doesn't even merit refutation, the latter, however, deserves some consideration. ... Comparison of married and single men and women scientists suggests that there is no incompatibility between a scientific career and a family as such. On the contrary, marriage seems to have a positive effect on the

professional life of women scientists. As one scientist put it, 'The biggest effect of marriage is to eliminate the disturbing influences of external factors. Dating would take up too much time and energy. ... 'Marriage thus creates stability and 'routinization of work patterns' — an aspect pointed out ... as an explanation for the differential publishing rates of married and single scientists". (Reproduced with permission from *Press Digest, Current Contents*® No. 25, June 18, 1984, Copy right by the Institute for Scientific Information® Philadelphia, PA USA.)