

GENTLENESS OF *APIS DORSATA*

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The extraordinary defensiveness of the giant honeybee *Apis dorsata* is well known. Therefore the honey is harvested at night. We tried different methods to approach *A. dorsata* colonies at daytime and to cut pieces of combs from the nests. We used various amount of smoke or did not use any smoke. We approached the nests in bee veil or without any head protection and without the shirt. A video film is presented, which shows, that it is possible to work with that bee at daytime without any protection.

In Poona, India, 1974, J. Woyke approached, the five *A. dorsata* nests in the three walled hives without smoke and without any protection. It was essential to approach the colonies very slowly, and refrained breathing in the direction of the nests. In Nepal (1999, 2000), when the ambient temperature was below 15°C *A. dorsata* workers did not fly and when the temperature was below 12°C they were chilled. It was possible to work the nests without any protection. When the temperature in Nepal and India (2002) was above 17°C the bees were flying. However, we were able to approach the nest without any smoke and any protection to a distance of 0.25 - 0.50 m. Essential was to approach the nests very slowly and perform any movements very slowly. Any violent movement provoked the workers to fly and to sting.

The reaction of *A. dorsata* on smoke varied. Much smoke pointed in the direction of the nest, provoked the bees to fly in cloud, and attack around. Less smoke caused fewer bees to fly. Gentle smoke of 2 to 3 puffs, provoked only few bees to fly, which returned to the nest after a while and became calm. We were able to work without any head protection and without the shirt. We cut pieces of combs from the nests and introduced pieces of brood from other bee species, to investigate the effect of brood cross fostering. We introduced also frozen brood to examine hygienic behaviour of *A. dorsata*. Using this method, we were also able to collect worker bees from the curtain of the most defensive *A. d. breviligula* in the Philippines (2004), without smoke, bee veil and shirt.