

Sacred Chank, *Turbinella (Xancus) pyrum* trading at Karaikal Fishing Harbour, Tamil Nadu

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The Sacred Chank or 'Indian conch', *Turbinella pyrum* Linnaeus, is a large, thick-shelled gastropod abundant in the shallow waters of Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar, between India and Sri Lanka. *T. pyrum* is commercially exploited from the Gulf of

Mannar, Palk Bay and Chennai (Fig.1 & 2). The chank are also caught entangled in small numbers in the indigenous boat seines locally called Naku Valai/*vella valai*, operated from Gill-netter/Catamaran boats in shallow coastal areas of Tranquebar,



Fig. 1. Live Sacred Chank, *T. pyrum* from Karaikal Fishing Harbour, Tamil Nadu

Pudupattinam, Sinnangudi, Kaveripatinam, Melamookkarai and TirumuUaivasal, of Tamil Nadu.

The shell is considered sacred in both the Hindu and Buddhist religions, where it is used as a ceremonial trumpet and as a libation vessel (*jhal shankha*). The rare 'valampuri' chanks are especially venerated; in these the shells are abnormally coiled anticlockwise. They are usually donated to temples by wealthy patrons, often richly ornamented with gold or silver.



Fig. 2. Sacred Chank, *T. pyrum* with operculum collected from Karaikal Fishing Harbour, Tamil Nadu

Fishery

The Sacred Chank, *T. pyrum* from Karaikal Fishing Harbour, was fished by trawl net from a depth of 10-20 m. The price for single healthy chank varies from ₹ 500- ₹ 1000/-. Thirty numbers of live sacred chank was auctioned for ₹ 12,050/- and Forty five numbers for ₹ 16, 500/- at the landing centre.