



From Soup to Superstar: The Story of Sea Turtle Conservation along the Indian Coast

Kartik Shanker

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Tigers, elephants, lions and other large mammals have so far been central to India's conservation story. In spite of the country's vast coastline and millions being dependent on marine resources for their livelihoods, such species and habitats have been largely neglected in writings on wildlife. From Soup to Superstar provides the first comprehensive account of marine conservation in India, focusing on sea turtles, which are at once a fishery resource, a religious symbol and a conservation icon. Worshipped as Kurma, the incarnation of Vishnu, by several communities, these creatures have been part of folklore and mythology for over 2,000 years. Until the 1970s, there were large- and small-scale turtle fisheries in Odisha and the Gulf of Mannar, while eggs and meat were consumed along the rest of the coast. Since then, several conservation programmes have been led in these regions by naturalists, scientists, activists and concerned citizens with diverse, often conflicting, approaches. Globally, attention has centred on the mass-nesting beaches in Odisha, where over 1,00,000 turtles may nest simultaneously. New threats have emerged and elicited responses at local, national and international levels. Bringing together a range of issues and actors that have affected the world of sea turtles, filled with fascinating insights into scientific research and human-animal ecologies, this is a definitive chronicle of the efforts that have been made to protect these mysterious creatures in the last fifty years.



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