



EMAHO FILMS in association with OFF THE FENCE
presents

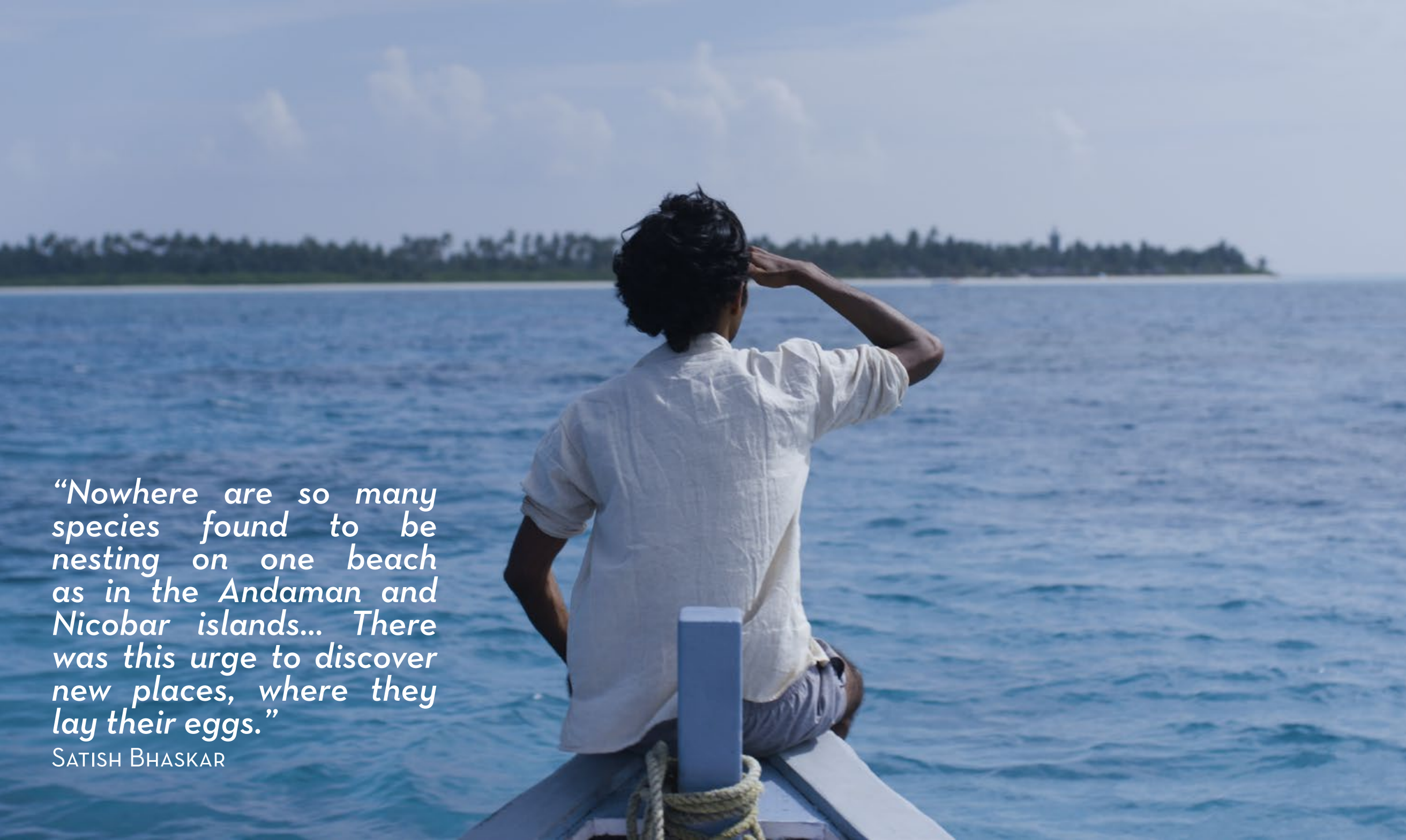


THE TURTLE WALKER

A 1 hour TV documentary film directed by
Taira Malaney & Krish Makhija



Fifty years ago, Satish Bhaskar marooned himself on India's wild and spectacular islands, living alongside colonies of nesting Sea Turtles, in order to tell their stories to the world and save these mysterious ocean dwellers from extinction. Today, he's back to continue his fight.

A man with dark, curly hair, wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and blue shorts, is sitting on the edge of a boat. He is seen from behind, looking out over a vast expanse of blue water towards a distant, low-lying island with a line of trees. His right hand is raised to his forehead, shielding his eyes from the sun. The sky is a pale blue with a few wispy clouds. The boat's edge and a blue post with a rope are visible in the foreground.

“Nowhere are so many species found to be nesting on one beach as in the Andaman and Nicobar islands... There was this urge to discover new places, where they lay their eggs.”

SATISH BHASKAR



THE BEGINNING...

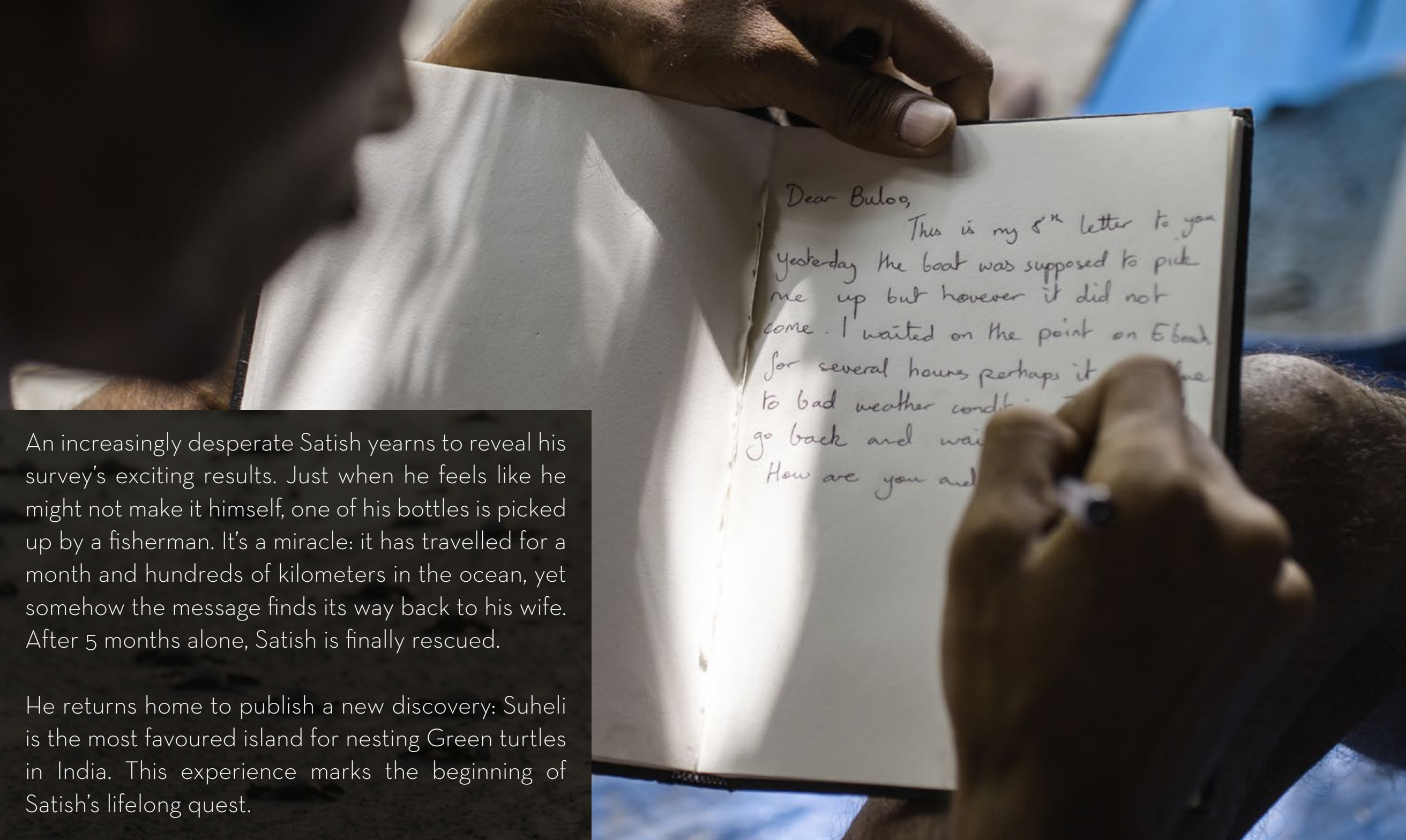
In 1979, Satish Bhaskar is marooned on an uninhabited island, hundreds of kilometers off the coast of India. This young man, a fledgling conservationist, came here to survey sea turtles during the monsoon season. But four months later, his return boat doesn't show up. Panicked, he has no means of communication with the world, and eventually resorts to throwing messages in bottles out into the sea, desperately hoping they will reach his wife back home.

He is completely alone...except for the turtles.



THE TURTLES

As Satish prays for rescue, studying the beautiful creatures around him gives him purpose. There are so many aspects of Green sea turtles' lives that fascinate him: that they migrate such huge distances between feeding grounds and the beaches from where they hatched, somehow navigating their way through long stretches of featureless ocean. When they emerge, ready to lay their eggs, each turtle carries an entire ecosystem with her - goose barnacles, crabs, brittle star and remora. Females dig holes in the sand, out of reach of the tide to lay dozens of eggs, then leave their offspring to fend for themselves. The newly hatched turtles must struggle towards the water and are extremely vulnerable to predators. Most don't make it.



An increasingly desperate Satish yearns to reveal his survey's exciting results. Just when he feels like he might not make it himself, one of his bottles is picked up by a fisherman. It's a miracle: it has travelled for a month and hundreds of kilometers in the ocean, yet somehow the message finds its way back to his wife. After 5 months alone, Satish is finally rescued.

He returns home to publish a new discovery: Suheli is the most favoured island for nesting Green turtles in India. This experience marks the beginning of Satish's lifelong quest.

Dear Buloo,

This is my 5th letter to you
yesterday the boat was supposed to pick
me up but however it did not
come. I waited on the point on E beach
for several hours perhaps it was due
to bad weather conditions. I will
go back and wait.
How are you and

A close-up portrait of an elderly man with grey hair and a mustache, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark patterned shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting with warm lighting.

“You can’t keep a turtle man down”

SATISH BHASKAR

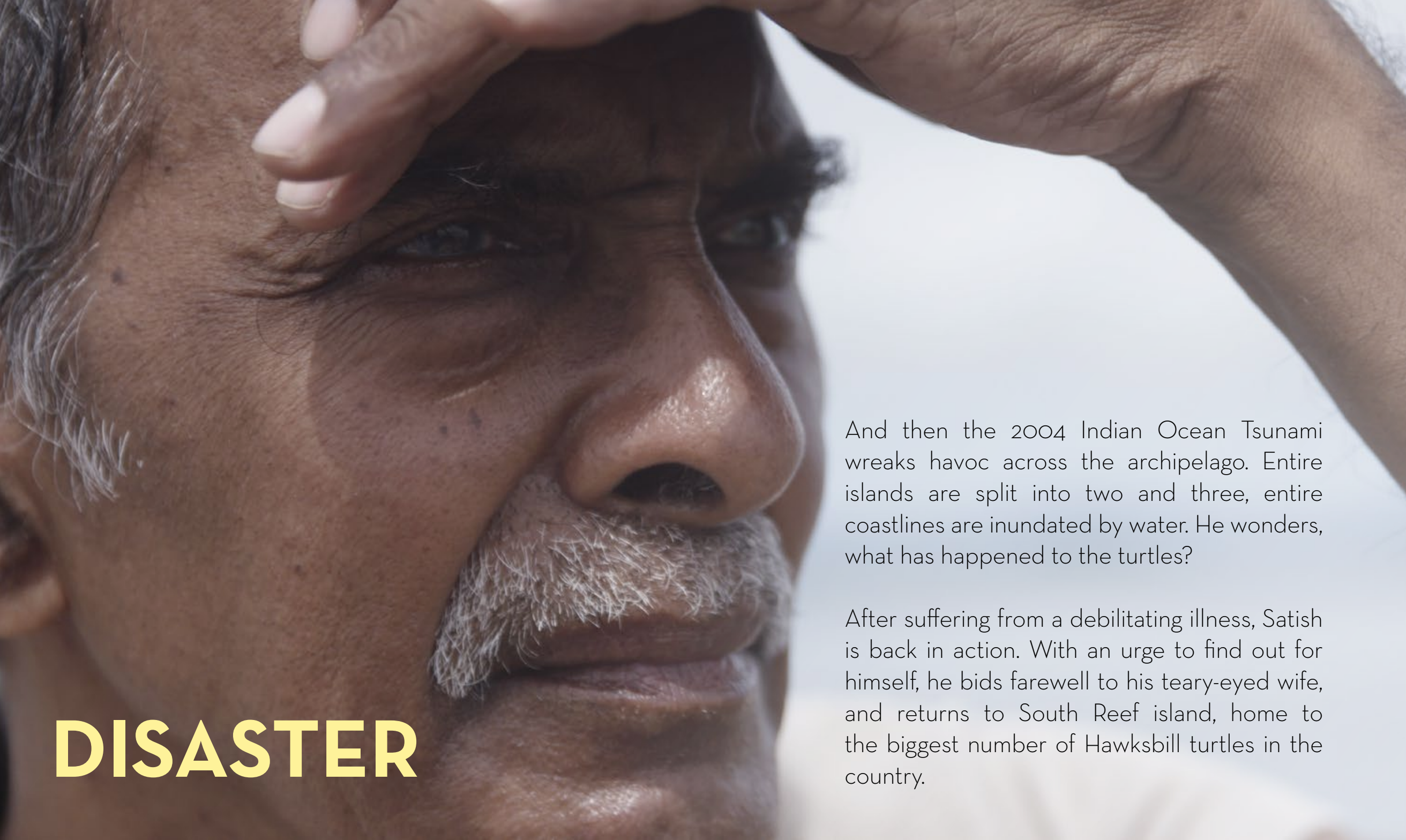
Over the next twenty five years, he walks every inch of coastline, in search of the elusive species that nest on Indian shores. The remote Andaman and Nicobar islands quickly become the focus of his attention, with all four species nesting there in massive numbers.

In addition to Green turtles, he discovers the main nesting sites for Hawksbills, Olive Ridleys and Leatherbacks. Hawksbills are a solitary species named for their narrow pointed beaks that they use to extract sponges and soft coral from crevices in the reef. Olive Ridleys nest in the world's largest mass layings, called arribadas, on the shores of India. Leatherbacks are the largest of all turtles, and the only species left of their family. Their distinctly leathery skin, powerful flippers and soft shell make it possible to dive upto 1000 meters, withstanding immense pressure to feed exclusively on jellyfish. The very fact that they eat something which is almost 100% water, and still produce enough energy to swim vast distances truly amazes Satish.



THE LONGEST WALK





DISASTER

And then the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami wreaks havoc across the archipelago. Entire islands are split into two and three, entire coastlines are inundated by water. He wonders, what has happened to the turtles?

After suffering from a debilitating illness, Satish is back in action. With an urge to find out for himself, he bids farewell to his teary-eyed wife, and returns to South Reef island, home to the biggest number of Hawksbill turtles in the country.



Yet, landing proves to be all but impossible. What was once a smooth sandy beach is now surrounded by exposed coral reefs, uprooted trees and debris all around. Nonetheless, 73-year-old Mr. Sea Turtle slips on his fins, jumps into the ocean and swims across to the island. A frantic search reveals nothing - no turtle tracks, no nests. It is not the same island he left. Exhausted and hogtied, he returns home.

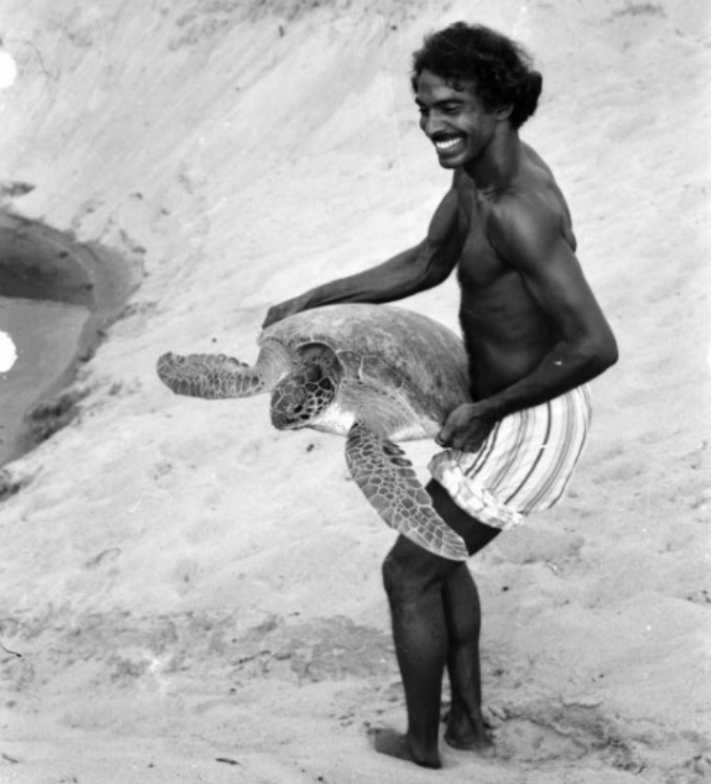


But then he meets a young researcher named Adhith, who shows him that beaches on many islands are reforming. In a pioneering study, he has found that the leatherback turtles are coming back to nest in the same numbers that Satish recorded nearly two decades ago. What's more, they are migrating 13,000 kilometers across the vast Indian Ocean to forage in the shallow waters of Madagascar and Australia before returning to nest on the very same beaches where they were born. Satish realizes that these millennia-old creatures are in fact resilient.

Is there hope for them after all?







THE FILM

Throughout the film, we journey back and forth between the past and present. Cinematic, dramatic reconstruction of Satish's surveys from nearly fifty years ago help visualise his early adventures in the field. Narrated by Satish himself, these stylised, dream-like accounts are juxtaposed with his and Adhith's most recent surveys of the islands today. The narrative unfolds through in-depth interviews, observational live scenes and montages, and beautifully shot 4k wildlife footage. Archival material from Satish's extensive collection of photographs, field diaries and video footage are used to illustrate key events from his past. Present day events are filmed with a raw, handheld sense of urgency, with Satish occasionally interacting with the film crew as he navigates his way.

Vibrant 4K wildlife imagery of the sea turtles in their natural habitat are woven into the narrative. This gives us a unique glimpse into the behavior and characteristics of the ancient seafaring creatures, and helps us understand the bond that our character shares with these animals. Since key turtle behavior and research activities such as nesting and hatching often takes place at night, the film uses infrared cameras to “see” into the night without disturbing the animal. These cameras are vital to capture detail of the work being carried out and help us focus on the character, as he interacts with the animals. The non intrusive nature of this photography also helps us highlight the adventurous and sometimes dangerous situations that go hand-in-hand with this kind of work.

Together, these elements take us through the story of change in the lives of sea turtles that Satish experiences across all the nesting sites of India.



CREW



TAIRA MALANEY

Writer & Director

Taira is a director and editor from India. She founded Emaho Films in 2016 to tell strong character driven stories that explore the relationship between human beings and the natural world. Taira has written, directed and edited several award winning short format documentaries, including A Living Legacy (2017) and The Call Of Pashmina (2018).



KRISH MAKHIJA

Co-director & DOP

Krish is a cinematographer and producer, whose work include director of photography on the Amazon Prime series Afsos (2020) and independent feature film, Nirmal Anand Ki Puppy (2019), directed by Sandeep Mohan. Outside of long format fiction, Krish has worked on several award winning music videos and short films, including Mountain Cat (2020) which won Best Short film at the Busan International Film Festival.



MOHIT ARORA

Assistant Director & Editor

Mohit is a budding director and editor from India. His first short documentary, Made in Madras, won the people's choice award at the My Hero Film Festival in LA and was screened across other festivals. He has since then directed, shot and edited multiple socio-environmental impact short documentaries for rural NGOs across India. He is currently working with Emaho films as an in-house editor and assistant director on a range of non-fiction productions.



NIKITA MAMIK

Creative Producer

Nikita has worked as a producer for 10 years on several feature films, short films, campaign films and television. Amongst these are the award winning short film musical - Kya Subah Hai (2015) for MTV Exit Asia - Human Trafficking Unit and Tiger Woods of Bengal (2017). She joined Emaho Films in 2019 as a creative producer.

CREW



ISABELLE COUTURE

Executive Producer

For 15 years, Isabelle has produced several award-winning documentaries for TV and the big screen, as well as one feature, *Antigone* from Sophie Deraspe, which toured the international festival circuit and was Canada's 2020 Oscar contender for the Best International Film category. Isabelle also produced *The Amina Profile*, a critically acclaimed feature documentary that was selected in over 40 festivals around the world.



JAMES REED

Executive Producer

James was the co-director of the recent Oscar and BAFTA-winning feature documentary *My Octopus Teacher*. He has produced, written and directed numerous other natural history programmes including *Jago: A Life Underwater* which won a Grand Teton Award and *Rise of the Warrior Apes* which was awarded a Golden Panda Award.



ANDREW ZICKING

Executive Producer

Co-Executive Producer of Oscar-winner *My Octopus Teacher*, Andrew's long-list of credits also include more than 200 hours of award-winning, factual programming at Off The Fence, in multiple genres including Natural History, Specialist Factual, and Drama-Doc.





Emaho Films is an Indian media and production company with bases in Goa and Pune.

It was founded in 2016 by writer/director Taira Malaney with the vision to create high-quality films that share stories of people, places, and brands in a fascinating way.

'Emaho' is a Sanskrit expression of wonder and amazement. Their films tap into the human's natural sense of curiosity. They want their audiences to experience that moment of awe when discovering something new. At the heart of their films is strong character driven storytelling.

They have produced several award winning short films, including A Living Legacy (2017) and The Call Of Pashmina (2018).

Off the Fence Productions is an award-winning producer of factual television and theatrical documentaries.

They have created more than 500 hours of television content for a wide range of international broadcasters including History Channel, MTV, BBC, Channel 4, Discovery, MSNBC, PBS, Netflix, National Geographic, A&E, Smithsonian Channel, The Weather Channel, ZDF, Arte, and France Televisions.

The creative team have been recognised by more than 80 awards, including Royal Television Society, Emmy, Golden Panda and Grand Teton.

Their Netflix film 'My Octopus Teacher' recently won an Academy Award and a BAFTA for Best Documentary.