



Elephas Maximus: A Portrait of the Indian Elephant

Stephen Alter

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Revered in Indian religion and culture, coveted for its ivory tusks, the majestic Asian elephant has captured the fascination of humans for more than four thousand years. In an effort to shed light on this regal animal and its unique relationship with humankind, author Stephen Alter traveled around the world to explore its natural home and its place in history and myth.

Alter's search takes him from the depths of wildlife preserves, to a tempting elephant auction, to a dazzling festival dedicated to Ganesha the elephant-headed god. *Elephas maximus* is as important to modern India as it was centuries ago. Yet conservationists are fighting to preserve its endangered habitat as settlements expand, and ivory poaching has threatened generations of elephants until tuskless males may be all that survive. Charting the elephant in history, art, religion, and folklore, Alter draws a vivid, gorgeously written portrait of its past and its troubled present while offering hope for its future.

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