

# Our invited Guests

Kolkata Press Club, March 9, 2012

Snakebite death is a major health issue in our villages and rural areas. According to an independent study, snakebite deaths in India are between 40 and 50 thousands per year. For over 25 years, our organization **Juktibadi Sanakritik Sanastha** (JSS), Canning, 24 Paraganas has been working with tremendous dedication and living up to their mantra of “*No more deaths from snakebites*”. We have been educating common people in the villages about snakes and snakebites from the grass root level. We have written many songs, limericks and dramas on different aspects of snakes and snakebite deaths. Our Puppet shows with many storylines also help villagers identify poisonous snakes and snakebites. These shows are entertaining and informative. In addition, we have conducted many workshops with the villagers, faith healers, doctors, teachers and Panchayet workers over the years.

We painstakingly interviewed thousands of villagers and collected enormous amount of data on snakes and snakebites with the help and guidance of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). It resulted in two books and a video - **24 Paraganas: Snake Map** (2002), **Snakes of Sunderban – a documentary** (2004) and **Snake Map of Bengal** (2006). NRHM helped us to start a **24-hour help line** for snakebite victims since 2010 so we can give proper guidance to the snakebite victims and send them to the hospitals for the right treatments with AVS (the one and only treatment).

Snakebites and its treatments are not just an issue in Pashchim Bangla but is also a national issue. From our experience, we have learned that on many occasions snakebite victims die from just the mental shocks even if the snakes in question are not poisonous. Information on identifying different species of snakes, their levels of venom and where those snakes are more abundant is extremely beneficial to a snakebite victim. Keeping that in mind, we published this map “**Common Snakes of India – A Guide Map**” covering 33 most common snakes of India (10 poisonous; 23 non-poisonous). This map will help thousands of people throughout India to get educated and get the proper treatments with AVS instead of going to the faith healers.

To create this map, we were fortunate enough to get the guidance from Mr. Romulus Whitaker, the eminent Herpetologist of India. Below is a quote from Mr. Whitaker that you will find in the map. *“Useful facts about the common snakes of India clearly show that only a few species are responsible for serious bites, and that by using a torch at night, or mosquito nets while sleeping, snakebites can be reduced greatly.”*

This map will help everyone from the doctors and healthcare professionals at rural health centres to the educational institutions and the news media to promote better treatments of snakebite victims. With your help, we can reach our goal “**Save the snakes – Save the people**” and very soon be able to reduce the deaths from snakebites.

Respectfully,

**Secretary**

**Juktibadi Sanakritik Sanastha**

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