




The Snake Trying



*Most of us think of snakes as fearsome symbols of death.
But the snake in this poem is itself a victim.*

The snake trying
to escape the pursuing stick,
with sudden curvings of thin
long body. How beautiful
and graceful are his shapes!
He glides through the water away
from the stroke. O let him go
over the water
into the reeds to hide
without hurt. Small and green
he is harmless even to children.
Along the sand
he lay until observed
and chased away, and now
he vanishes in the ripples
among the green slim reeds.

W.W.E. Ross


GLOSSARY

reeds: water or marsh plants with thick stems



Thinking about the Poem

1. What is the snake trying to escape from?
2. Is it a harmful snake? What is its colour?
3. The poet finds the snake beautiful. Find the words he uses to convey its beauty.
4. What does the poet wish for the snake?
5. Where was the snake before anyone saw it and chased it away? Where does the snake disappear?

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- II. 1. Find out as much as you can about different kinds of snakes (from books in the library, or from the Internet). Are they all poisonous? Find out the names of some poisonous snakes.
 2. Look for information on how to find out whether a snake is harmful.
 3. As you know, from the previous lesson you have just read, there are people in our country who have traditional knowledge about snakes, who even catch poisonous snakes with practically bare hands. Can you find out something more about them?

 **Read and Enjoy**

Green Snake

Early morning, the day before yesterday,
under a slab of stone,
in a crack,
eyes glittering,
forked tongue licking and flashing,
a frog swelling his belly,
he lay there quietly:
a baby snake, two hands long,
a green snake.

“Poor thing. It’s a green snake. Still a baby.
What harm can it do?” I said.
My father replied,
“A snake’s a snake.”
And mother,
“That’s where everyone walks.
We don’t need trouble. Kill it.”
“I can’t,” I said.

Father struck him with a piece of firewood,
chased him outside,
and killed him flat.

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[translated by A.K. Ramanujan]