

In the United States snakes bite more than 45,000 people yearly (Muenes 25). However, most of these bites are non-poisonous and fewer than fifteen people die (25). In fact, most snakes are beneficial. “Snakes are of major importance as pest controllers because of their extensive predation on destructive mammals such as rats and mice” (Columbia 46). Snakes also kill wild pigs, jungle game, and harmful insects.

In India the poisonous cobra snake is sacred and leads a semi-domesticated life. If a cobra settles in a residence, it is considered a sign of prosperity (“Good Omens...28). According to Hegner, the fact that a pair of cobras has come to live under the floor of a village temple is a good omen rather than an evil one (125). A disk of water is put near the cobra’s lair each day and no one disturbs them. The cobras kill rats that plague the quaint Indian village.