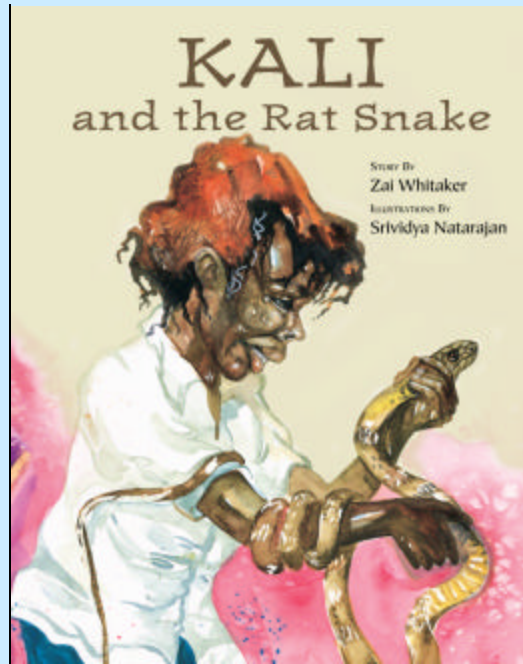


# Kane/Miller Book Publishers



## **Kali and the Rat Snake**

Written by Zai Whitaker  
Illustrated by Srividya Natarajan



**From India**

### **About the Book**

Kali's father is a snake catcher – the best in the village. Kali knows that is really something to be proud of, but at school he sometimes gets embarrassed. The other children seem to think there is something very strange about having a snake catcher for a father, and eating things like fried termites for a snack. Plus, Kali is the teacher's pet. How will he ever make friends?

### **About the Author and Illustrator**

**Zai Whitaker** grew up in Mumbai. She is now the principal of the Outreach School in Bangalore and is also involved with a project in Chennai that helps Irulas like Kali.

**Srividya Natarajan** began to illustrate children's book as an antidote to academia. She taught and performed in Chennai before moving to Canada where she teaches at the University of Ontario.

From India

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### **Before you read:**

Explain that this book is originally from India. Point out the location on a map. If you have children from India, invite them to talk about the country (similarities/differences). Describe the setting and what it means to be "forest people." Talk about starting a new school or your first day of school and the feelings children might experience that day.

### **As you read:**

Explain what a snake-catcher is. Explain what Kali means when he says his people go towards snakes not away from them. Define monsoon.

### **After reading:**

Talk about how Kali felt at different points in this story:

- as he was walking to school
- when he had to tell the class his dad's occupation
- at break-time
- at the end of the story

Ask children to talk about times when they have felt the same way as Kali did in these various situations. Brainstorm all the different words to describe how we feel.

Why did Kali want to be "an ordinary boy?" What does he mean by that?

After Kali caught the snake, what did he want to do with it? (Took it to his dad to sell to the zoo and use the money to buy his sister a new dress.) What does that tell you about his personality?

Discuss being kind to others and how it feels to be made fun of.

### **Project ideas:**

#### Flag of India:

Draw and color the flag of India on plain index cards. Tape or glue one edge to a popsicle stick.

#### Spiral Snake:

Draw a spiral shape on white construction paper. Color it like a snake. Cut along the spiral line. The center of the spiral will be the head. Add googly eyes. Tape a string to the head and hang from the ceiling.... just as the rat snake hung from the ceiling in Kali's classroom.

#### Looped Snake:

Cut colored construction paper strips. Loop them together to make a long snake. Glue or tape the rings as you go. Cut a head and tongue. Glue.

#### Watercolor painting:

Using thick white construction paper, paint a scenic picture. Use examples from the story, particularly on the first two pages. When dry, mount on colored paper and display.

Make snakes out of clay or Play-doh.

Bring in sugar cookie dough. Allow students to roll the dough into a snake. Bake and eat!

Make some Indian foods for the children to try.

**Related topics:** snakes, friendship, bravery, feelings (how your words and actions affect others), ethnic foods

## INDIAN FOODS WORD SEARCH

Kali's snacks are not foods we typically find here in the U.S. Here is a list of some traditional Indian foods that you may have heard of. You may have even eaten some of them. Can you find the names hidden in the Word Search? Watch out! This game may make you hungry!

**ACHAR:** Indian Pickles, made with fruits or vegetables.

**KHEER:** Rice pudding anointed with various aromatic spices and herbs.

**CHAPPATI:** Unleavened flat-bread made from finely ground whole wheat flour.

**KOFTAS:** Spiced meat or vegetable balls.

**CHUTNEY:** Relishes made with fruits, vegetables, and herbs.

**COCONUT:** An important ingredient in many Indian dishes.

**CURD RICE:** Also called Yoghurt Rice, it is a simple dish made with rice and yoghurt.

**CURRY:** A dish made with dried and fresh spices cooked in oil with a sauce made from pureed onions, garlic and ginger. The variety of spices used can be extensive, but the commonest are chilli, cumin, coriander and turmeric. Other common ingredients are yoghurt, cream and ground nuts.

**DAAL:** Daal is the word used in India for all dried beans and split peas.

**DOSA:** A thin, pancake-like bread made from rice and lentil flour.

**GULAB JAMUN:** Deep-fried balls of dough made with flour and milk curds which are then steeped in sugar syrup.

**IDLI :** Steamed rice cakes. A South Indian specialty.

**KABABS:** Small pieces of any meat, poultry, fish or vegetables, skewered and grilled in a tandoor oven or over a grill.

X	K	U	L	F	I	D	E	R	G	H	I	R
R	A	S	A	M	D	Y	A	O	C	D	E	A
G	B	O	S	Q	A	R	L	T	L	W	X	S
U	A	H	S	J	A	N	M	I	D	O	S	S
L	B	A	I	A	L	T	I	G	H	I	A	G
A	S	A	M	O	S	A	S	C	A	C	N	U
B	W	L	G	P	I	W	Y	B	D	S	D	L
J	N	V	C	C	U	R	D	R	I	C	E	L
A	K	H	E	E	R	O	H	E	D	O	S	A
M	O	C	H	U	T	N	E	Y	M	Z	H	F
U	F	D	C	A	C	H	A	R	G	N	O	A
N	T	U	Y	C	H	A	P	P	A	T	I	H
S	A	M	O	A	L	G	P	A	N	E	E	R
K	S	D	C	O	C	O	N	U	T	R	Z	A

**KULFI:** Ice cream, made much richer and heavier than western ice creams. It comes in many flavors - mango, cardamom, saffron, etc.

**LASSI :** A frothy yogurt drink, sweet or salty, flavored with pistachios, cardamom, cumin or rose water.

**NAAN:** Indian flat bread made from wheat and baked in a tandoor oven.

**PANEER:** A fresh, ricotta-like cheese.

**RASAM:** A soup usually made with tamarind and tomato. A South Indian specialty.

**RASSGULLA:** A dessert made from sweetened cottage cheese with a small amount of semolina, cooked in a light sugar syrup. This is a Bengali specialty, like almost all milk-based sweets found in the Indian sub-continent.

**ROTI:** is Bread in many North Indian languages. "Rumali Roti" is a kind of thin and flaky flat bread made up of many layers.

**SAMOSAS:** Deep-fried savory pastries, usually filled with vegetables or meat.

**SANDESH:** A steamed-milk dessert made with paneer.

*With thanks to Dr. Zunaid Kazi*

## Snake Name Game

Kali isn't afraid of the rat snake when it drops into the classroom because he's worked along with his father, a snake catcher, and knows how valuable the snake is to his family.

Do you like snakes? Do you know how many different types of snakes there are? Here are just a few snakes for you to discover. See if you can match these snakes found in the U.S. by using the following clues. Some of these snakes are friendly, while others are very dangerous. You might want to look them up later on to find out where they can be found, and which ones might make a good pet!

### List of Clues

- 1) Don't try using this fellow to hold up your socks!
- 2) He's a royal ruler.
- 3) POP it for a tasty snack.
- 4) Colorful costume that might make a nice gift for MOM!
- 5) Like an old alarm clock or moving toy.
- 6) Shoes for the beach.
- 7) Dark and fast.
- 8) A baby shaking his toy.
- 9) Oink, oink.
- 10) A shiny penny.
- 11) Wearable jewelry?
- 12) He doesn't really live in an ocean reef.
- 13) If your tongue is dry, it feels like you have a...
- 14) Sounds like a tasty dairy treat!
- 15) Abracadabra,  $1 + 1 = 2!$

### Snakes

- (a) GARTER SNAKE
- (b) WATER MOCCASIN
- (c) COTTONMOUTH
- (d) COPPERHEAD
- (e) CORN SNAKE
- (f) SIDEWINDER
- (g) RATTLER
- (h) KINGSSNAKE
- (i) DIAMONDBACK
- (j) CORAL SNAKE
- (k) PUFF ADDER
- (l) MILK SNAKE
- (m) BLACK RACER
- (n) HOGNOSE SNAKE
- (o) ROSY BOA



WORD SEARCH ANSWER KEY

X	K	U	L	F	I	D	E	R	G	H	I	R
R	A	S	A	M	D	Y	A	O	C	D	E	A
G	B	O	S	Q	A	R	L	T	L	W	X	S
U	A	H	S	J	A	N	M	I	D	O	S	S
L	B	A	I	A	L	T	I	G	H	I	A	G
A	S	A	M	O	S	A	S	C	A	C	N	U
B	W	L	G	P	I	W	Y	B	D	S	D	L
J	N	V	C	C	U	R	D	R	I	C	E	L
A	K	H	E	E	R	O	H	E	D	O	S	A
M	O	C	H	U	T	N	E	Y	M	Z	H	F
U	F	D	C	A	C	H	A	R	G	N	O	A
N	T	U	Y	C	H	A	P	P	A	T	I	H
S	A	M	O	A	L	G	P	A	N	E	E	R
K	S	D	C	O	C	O	N	U	T	R	Z	A

Snake Name Game Answer Key:

- 1: a
- 2: h
- 3: e
- 4: o
- 5: f
- 6: b
- 7: m



- 8: g
- 9: n
- 10: d
- 11: l
- 12: j
- 13: c
- 14: l
- 15: k

With thanks to Dr. Zunaid Kazi

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