

BBC Learning English
6 Minute English
Bangladesh snake bites



NB: This is not an accurate word-for-word transcript

Dima: Hi, welcome to this edition of 6 Minute English with me, Dima Kostenko

Kate: and me, Kate Colin. Hi.

Dima: And today we're talking about some animals... Kate, forgive me for asking a banal question but - do you like animals?

Kate: *Responds + brief chat*

Dima: Well, the animals we're talking about today are nothing like your average cute and fluffy pet. We'll be listening to a recent report from a BBC correspondent in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, about a different kind of animals. They are long and relatively thin, they can bite you and many of them can actually poison you. Any idea what type of creature I have in mind Kate?

Kate: *Guesses*

Dima: *Responds.* Well apparently in Bangladesh snake bites are a serious problem. Almost 700,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes there every year, and 6,000 people lose their lives. However, according to a new survey, only 3% of cases are treated in hospital. So who's dealing with the remaining 97% and how?

Kate: Well, before we find out, shall I take us through some of the vocabulary we're about to hear?

Dima: Good idea Kate.

Kate: OK. First of all, the word combination 'mystic healers'. This means people who claim to be able to treat and cure a wound or an illness using special powers that are difficult to understand or explain. Possibly some supernatural abilities. Then the expression 'to be frowned upon'. If something is frowned upon by someone, they discourage its use and generally consider it undesirable. We'll also hear the word 'poison', meaning a very harmful substance that can cause illness or, in extreme cases, even death. The adjectives with the same meaning are 'poisonous' and 'venomous'. And another word for you, 'tourniquet'. A 'tourniquet' is a strip of cloth which is tied tightly round an injured leg or arm to stop it bleeding.

Dima: So that's 'mystic healer', 'to be frowned upon', 'poison' and 'tourniquet'. Let's now listen to our Dhaka correspondent Mark Dummett and as we're listening, our task will be to try and catch those key words and phrases.

Clip 1 0'30"

The doctors who conducted this survey said that many more Bangladeshis would survive snake bites, if the country's traditional healers and snake charmers received training in modern techniques. The vast majority are treated by mystic healers known as an Ojhas. By tradition, these men are snake experts. They try to save bite victims by using techniques that are frowned upon by modern science - such as applying tourniquets, sucking out poison and massaging affected limbs.

Kate: It sounds like the survey encourages traditional healers to combine their skills with a knowledge of modern medical techniques. It says that, rather than just relying on the mystic methods of the past, for example applying tourniquets or sucking out poison, the healers should also learn modern medicine, in order to help save people's lives.

Dima: Thanks for this re-cap Kate. In a moment we'll hear from Mark Dummett again but before that, here comes the exciting part of the programme - this week's

question! And I'm afraid I need you Kate to explain the meaning of one more word: monsoon.

Kate: Monsoon? This is the name for the season of heavy tropical rainfall in hot Asian countries, including Bangladesh.

Dima: OK, in the next part our correspondent explains that there is a particular season in Bangladesh when you are more likely to get bitten by a snake than at other times. Which season do you think it is Kate? Is it

- a) the hot, humid summer from March to June
- b) the monsoon season from June to October, or
- c) the mild winter from October to March?

Kate: *Guesses*

Dima: Let's listen to Mark Dummett to check if you've guessed correctly:

Clip 2 0'12"

The most dangerous time of year is now, when during the annual monsoon, about half of Bangladesh disappears under water, and both snakes and people are forced to move to dry land.

Dima: So which season in Bangladesh is particularly dangerous for snake bites Kate?

Kate: *Monsoon. I was right/wrong*

Dima: *Responds.* Our correspondent says the most dangerous time of year is now, during the annual monsoon. And why?

Kate: Because of flooding. Snakes, in the same way as people, are forced by rising water to move to dry land, making their encounters more likely.

Dima: And of course you can find out more about the story by following the links from our website, bbclearningenglish.com. But just before you log on, stay with us another couple of seconds as Kate takes you through today's key words and phrases again.

Kate: *Responds.* OK, we heard about '**mystic healers**', meaning people who claim to be able to treat and cure wounds or illnesses using some special, possibly supernatural powers. We also talked about '**poisonous**', or '**venomous**' substances. If you're affected by '**poison**', you can become ill or, in extreme cases, even die. We mentioned the word '**tourniquet**'. A 'tourniquet' is a strip of cloth which is tied tightly round an injured arm or leg to stop it bleeding. And we discussed the expression '**to be frowned upon**'. If something is frowned upon by someone, they discourage its use and generally consider it undesirable. And finally, a weather related term, '**monsoon**'. This is the name for the season of heavy tropical rain in hot Asian countries.

Dima: Thanks for that Kate. Well, I'm afraid that's all we have time for today. Until next week.

Both: Goodbye!