

Juktibadi Sanskritik Sanastha

Canning Town, Canning

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Organisational Profile

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Organisational Profile

Juktibadi Sanskritik Sanstha, Canning (JSSC), a voluntary organization, was formed in the year 1986, the year coincides with the formation of the district South 24 Parganas. JSSC was registered in 1989. A board of directors consisting of 15 members and 75 general members are spread out at different parts of India and abroad. The basic objective of the organization is to propagate rationality in the mind of the people, particularly of those living in the rural areas of Bengal. JSSC has taken up various types of activities to fulfill this objective. These activities can be grouped under two heads: regular activities and occasional activities in *pari pasu* with the time and objective condition. Regular activities are again of two types: the first one is related with the awareness campaign relating to snakes, snakebites and treatment of snakebite victims, the second one is related with the development of consciousness about nature, man and environment. Similarly, the activities in consistent with the time and space range from organization of rally on important social issues to the formation of self help group and running of coaching centers for the children of the downtrodden family. A library named *Reba Sen Shishu Pathagar* had been inaugurated shortly after. For the past two and a half decades JSSC has been trying to blend these activities to meet their desired objectives. The necessary funds for organizing these activities are collected from the well wishers and people of the local areas. A brief description of these activities is presented below.

A. Regular Activities

1. WORKSHOP AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The river *Matla* is flowing on the south east direction of the town Canning. Twenty five years ago during rainy season a common sight on the river *Matla* was floating *Mandas* (raft with a snakebite victim). There is a superstition that if the dead body of a snakebite victim is floated on a raft and subsequently sighted by a traditional healers, the victim may be alive.



Our primary task is to eliminate the superstition or myth surrounding snakes, snakebites and treatment of snakebite patient from the mind-set of people across the society. About thirty years ago, we have started this particular task from Canning town and later on we propagate this idea to every corners of West Bengal.

Our slogan is *No More Deaths due to Snakebites*. We understand that successful implementation of the above slogan requires continuous awareness campaign at the grassroots level on the one hand and at the related department of Govt. and *Sundarbans Tiger Reserve* (STR) on the other. Realizing the importance of rural health practitioners in rural Bengal, we propagate our idea among the rural health practitioners along with the ordinary people. As regards, our approach towards government, we organize training programmes on snake, snakebite and treatment of snakebite patients among the staff of all tiers of state

sponsored health organization. Similar training programme are also being conducted for the staff of STR. These training programme, mostly voluntary, help JSSC to earn a reputation among Govt. and STR which is unique in West Bengal. In the following lines a brief description of the activities are presented.

- At the grassroots level, we organized series of programmes with dangles, dramas, puppet shows, talking dolls in many schools, colleges, *bazaar*, *ferry ghats* and the village fairs held in many districts/blocks. We visited particularly South 24 Parganas. The financial assistance from National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) between 2008 and 2012, helped us a lot in conducting these programme.
- We have also organized series of workshops with *Ojhas* and Rural Medical Practitioners (Quacks), teachers, *Panchayet* workers in various places of West Bengal. Apart from South 24 Parganas, in 2013 and 2014 we organized such meetings at Haldibari, Alipurduar, and Kokrajhar (Assam).
- At the Gram Panchayet level, we hold series of meetings with Anganwari Staff, ANM, ASHA workers of various blocks of South 24 Parganas. It should be noted that all such meetings were invited meetings. One such meeting was held in February 2017 and it was organized by CMOH, Diamond harbour.
- Over the decade, we have also participated in series of meetings and discussions with doctors and nurses at various sub-divisional hospitals spreading over the state. One such meeting / workshop was held on 5th to 6th October, 2013 at Canning Sub-divisional hospital. The CMOH and fourteen BMOH along with several snake bitten patients treated at this hospital participated in the workshop. In 2014, four training programmes for the doctors were organized at the Canning

SDH. The training programme was successful in the sense that about twenty to twenty-five doctors attended the programme. JSSC joined each and every programme, delivered lectures on snakes and snakebites, exchanged their first hand experience with the doctors. Dr. Samarendranath Roy of CSDH shared his immense experience who is known to the villagers for saving hundreds of snakebite victims. The primary objective of this programme was to make aware the people across the society of the relation between the man and snakes, the world of snakes, the distinction between bite marks and correct method of handling a snakebite patient and indispensability of AVS.

- The southeastern portion of the district South 24 Parganas is covered by the part of Sundarbans which belongs to India, the largest mangrove forest in the world. The forest is a bio-diversity of hotspot and its conservation is a global concern. Its conservation is closely monitored by government of India and that of state West Bengal. In 1973, *Sundarbans Tiger Reserve* was constituted by GOI under Tiger Projects Scheme. Due to the presence of snake and other reptiles at the Sundarbans, the staff of STR have to work under constant fear. Realising their need we regularly impart of our knowledge about snakes in Sundarbans through training programme. All our programmes are based on team work and our team consists of experts ranging from physicians of Govt. hospitals to traditional healers. In order to disseminate our knowledge about snake we participated at various

seminars and congresses both at the national and international levels. At the state level, we participated at the West Bengal Science Congress in 2004 and 2016. One such international seminar was attended by Dr. Samarendranath Roy at 4th Annual Conference of Society of Toxicology India at the Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine in November 2014. Dr. Nirmalendu Nath on behalf of JSSC also delivered a paper on snakebites at this conference.

As a result of these sustained efforts from all quarters, especially those of Late Dr. Subrata Maitra, Canning SDH was declared a model hospital for treatment of snake bitten patients. Due to our protracted effort in reducing death from snakebites, it is observed that in 2017 there was no reported death of either men or snakes within the 30 Km of Canning town - specifically Block I.

2. FREE TELE-HELP LINE SERVICE FOR SNAKEBITE PATIENTS



It is observed that in many cases immediately after venomous snakebite, the patient is either traumatized or confused and patient party is also confused, resulting an inordinate delay in the treatment of patient. This situation become acute in remote villages.

In order to overcome the situation, free Tele-Help Line service for snakebite patients was installed at Canning in January 2010. Initial financial assistance was received from NRHM. But, from 2011 the entire financial responsibility of providing this service to the people has been being borne by JSSC. Every day, excluding the period from December – March, we received 3 – 4 telephone calls. Regarding snake-bite from different districts of West Bengal, we have maintained a register book to record all these telephonic conversations. With this help line service we guide the relatives of snakebite patients for proper treatment at hospitals. It is observed that in 80 per cent venomous snakebite

cases we have been able to save the life of the patients. The Help line numbers are 9830479696, 9635995476 and 9733822825.

3. RESCUE OF TRAPPED SNAKES



Rescue of the trapped snake is one of our mottos. Every year we have rescued about 50 - 60 venomous snakes from the premises of people living in and around Canning and submitted them to the Deputy Field Director of *Sundarbans Tiger Reserve*. Our Help-Line provides a useful service in this context.

On 12th December 2013 we have rescued a King Cobra (*Ophiophagus Hannah*), 8 feet in length from Sojnakhali guest house and released the snake at the Sudhyankhali forest as directed by Deputy Field Director, Sundarbans. This incident was reported in the daily news papers. In order to avoid unwanted death following the rescue of venomous snakes we are planning to hold a convention inviting all snake lovers associations.

4. ORGANIZATION OF RALLIES

Rallies are useful in drawing attention of the people to a particular idea / events. In 2007 and 2010, we organized two cycle rallies from the North Bengal to South Bengal covering a distance of about 1000 Km., with the slogan *Save Snakes and Save Man*. The rally was highly successful in drawing attention of the people about the relation between man and nature. In 2013, we organized a rally in memory of Dr. Narendra Davalkar.

5. CELEBRATION OF INAUSPICIOUS DAYS

On a regular basis, we celebrate Independence Day with a different note. Every year on 15th



August, we organize special awareness campaign with the slogan *Save Man Save Snakes* by organizing decorated processions around Canning town.

In the same vein we celebrate the 26th November as Constitution Day (Birth day of Ambedkar). We also celebrate World Environment Day in the same manner.

6. MEDICAL CAMPS

Since 1995 we have been holding medical camps with Eco-Development Committee (EDC) and Forest Protection

Committee (FPC) of *Sundarbans Tiger Reserve* (STR). Recently a new committee Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) has been formed which includes both EDC and STR. This type of camps are being organized 10-12 times every year. Apart from this we have been holding State Medical Camp of STR at various places of Sundarbans.



In February, 2014 a medical camp for the staff of STR was also organized at different core areas of STR such as *Chamta*. Medical camps are also held at various places of Canning block-II and also for the poor children at Dighirpar, Canning-I. We also provide Neostigmine – an important injection for snakebite patients – to patient parties as and when required.

7. ORGANIZING CAMP FOR EYE CHECKUP

It is fact that a significant percentage of people have crossed the age of sixty. It is also true that a good number of these people suffers from cataract. In order to give relief to these people JSSC organized medical camp for eye checkup at various places of STR. In 2017 only, 200 people have been operated cataract in these camps.

8. ORGANIZATION AND PARTICIPATION OF SCIENCE

EXHIBITION

We believe that science exhibition is a powerful medium for highlighting basic laws of nature. Considering this we are organize anti - superstition and black magic programmes such as *Aloukik Noy – Loukik* and *Lok Bigyan Mela* (Science Exhibition) at various corners of the districts. On February 2013, the 25th year of Mela was organized at Basanti. We also participate regularly at various science exhibitions held in adjacent districts of West Bengal.

9. PROGRAMME WITH ALL INDIA RADIO AND CALCUTTA

DOORODARSHAN

We are regularly invited at the All India Radio Station, Calcutta for dissemination of our specialized knowledge on snake. We are also invited by Calcutta Doorodarshan for similar programmes.

B. Occasional Activities

1. EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEY ON SNAKEBITES



Occasional activities are organized on the basis of necessity. One of the important occasional activity of JSSC is the successful completion of an epidemiological survey on snakebites with respect to all 312 GPs of district of South 24 Parganas. The survey was organized between 2008 and 2012 and it was done along with awareness campaign financed by NRHM. The survey reveals the mysterious behavior of Common Kraits causing high mortality rate to the tune of 43.83 per thousand snake-bite persons. The survey also noticed the gradual extinction of Banded Krait, a predator of Common Krait. We have also collected information on snake-bite victims with respect to Burdwan, Hooghly, Bankura, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar for the period 2006 – 2015 from the office of Disaster Management of the respective district. The final result was incorporated in the book *Snakes, Snakebites and treatment* published in 2015. Subsequently the book was presented to Romulus Whittaker, the famous herpetologist of India.

2. ACTIVITIES WITH RESPECT TO EXTRA-ORDINARY EVENTS

We all know that the total solar eclipse happened in 1995. In order to remove the superstition involving this rare celestial event we organized a three-day workshop at Canning. We also prepared about 5000 special spectacles for watching this phenomena and distributed this among the school children of South 24 Parganas. We encouraged the students to closely follow the entire event, particularly the formation of Diamond Ring in the heavenly sky.

In 2002, a proposal was circulated about the erection of a nuclear power plant at Gosaba – an important location under World Heritage Site. For the protection of this heritage site we have organized one convention at Canning town and several protest rallies at different places of South 24 Parganas.

3. PUBLICATION OF SNAKE MAPS

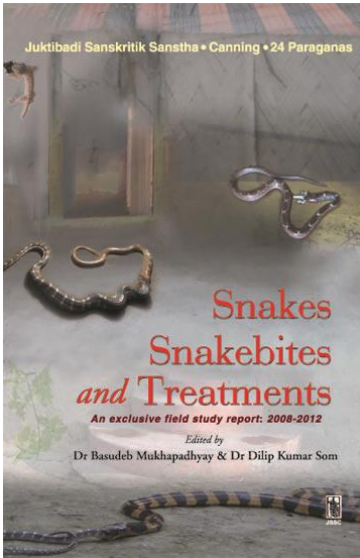


Maps are important device in the field of education. So far we have published three maps.

- i) South 24 Parganas – a snake map
- ii) Snakes in Bengal
- iii) Common Snakes of India - a guide map.

With these maps one can easily identify the venomous, non-venomous snake and aquatic snake, and non-aquatic snakes. All these maps were released at the Calcutta Press Club and various dignitaries were present at the time of release. The map about Snakes in Bengal earned a good reception from *Sarba Shiksha Abhijan*, West Bengal and was displayed at various GP offices in the Sundarbans area. Recently we are planning to publish an instructional guide map for the treatment of snakebite patients.

4. PUBLICATION OF BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS



We published a good number of pamphlets and books on various issues such as Kalazar, Gastroenteritis, Thunderbolt and Ghost. Among the booklets *Banglar Saap* (Bengali Version) has earned a good reputation across the West Bengal. The *Snakebites in Bengal* (English Version) also is appreciated by academicians and general readers.

5. A DOCUMENTARY VIDEO



In 2002 we have developed a documentary on *Snake of Sundarbans*, superstitions around snake etc. So far we have distributed/sold 5000 copies of this documentary. In the near future we have a plan to develop another document *Snakes of Bengal*. This documentary will be prepared in collaboration with STR.

6. PROTECTION OF ENDANGERED SPECIES

Sundarbans is bio-diversity hotspot and conservation is a global concern. In July 2001, for the protection of Royal Bengal Tigers, we organized a mass rally in South 24 Parganas. It is well known that *Batagor Baska* is a rare species of turtle in the world. It is found in Sajnakhali Range of STR. In 2013, it was observed that a large number of very young *Batagor Baskas* were dangerously floating indiscriminately in Sajnakhali, STR. It was also observed that their life was in danger. Seeing this Sanjit Pal, one of our activists, rescued these rare species of turtle. The authority of the concerned area conveyed thanks to JSSC for this activity. In 2013, we have received an award from West Bengal Wild Life Wing, Govt. of West Bengal for our activity in this field.

7. RELIEF OPERATIONS

It is well known that breaches on the embankment along the rivers in Sunderbans are very common. As a result of breaches, thousand of acres of paddy field are inundated with saline water and people living in the island became homeless. In 2002, one such devastating breaches in embankment was occurred in Dayapur. The entire village was submerged for a week. With the assistance of STR the volunteers of JSSC conducted extensive relief operations in Dayapur area for one week. In 2008, a cyclonic storm (Aila) inflicted severe damages on the villages such as Satjelia, Choto Mullahkhali, Kumir mari etc. JSSC conducted relief operations in all these areas. JSSC served the people of Satjelia 24 hours a day for 10 continuous days. It would not have been possible without the cooperation of South 24

Parganas Health Department and Gosaba Block Hospital. It is a great memory of serving so many people in distress. Similar relief operations have been done in other districts of West Bengal namely Nadia, Murshidabad etc.

C. Present Activities

Along with regular and occasional activities, Free coaching centre: In 2011 we established a *free coaching centre* for the poor children of our locality.



The centre was formed from the donation of the well-wishers. A library was also setup along with this coaching centre.

In spite of all these achievements, “We still have miles to go”.

We lost one of our leading workers, Joydev Mondal on 18/4/2014

Joydev caught two venomous Monocled Cobras (Keute) after receiving a call at JSSC *Snakebite Helpline* as part of snake rescue operation. He was on his way to drop them off at Sajnekhali Forest Department, GOWB.

During the time of releasing the snakes, one of them was released safely but while releasing the other, it turned back and bit Joydev.

He was then brought to Gosaba Rural Hospital for treatment. But because of the delay in reaching the hospital and unavailability of proper medicines, he was not saved.

We pay our homage to Joydev and express our grief and solidarity to his bereaved family.

A Collection of Memories - Past Few Years



JSSC received Conservation Awareness Award from the Directorate of Forests, WB Govt. - November 26, 2012



JSSC member, Narayan Raha, delivering 8 rescued Monocled Cobras to Nilanjan Mallick, Chief Conservator of Forest & Field Director, July 2018



10 Kilometer road show on 15th August, campaigning on snakebite awareness, 2013



Going around West Bengal on bicycles, campaigning on snakebite awareness, 2007



A road show demanding proper supply of AVS to the hospitals & submitting a petition in that regards, 2015



Sanjay Banerjee delivering a lecture on a snakebite program in Asam, 2014



*World famous Herpetologist Romulus Earl Whitaker
with JSSC members, 2012*



*Dr. Samarendranath Roy speaking at the 4th Annual Conference of
Society of Toxicology at the Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine in
November 2014*



*Dr. Pushpendu Sil and others on the boat
going to a Medical Camp, 2015*



*Ashish Majumder, famous ventriloquist, with a
talking doll at an awareness and medical camp, 2015
Also present Dr. Jayanta Das and Dr. Dilip Adhikary.*



Dr. Basudev Mukherjee speaking at the death anniversary of Joydev Mondal on April 18, 2015



Dr. Nirmalendu Nath presenting his paper at the Science Congress held at Shiliguri in 2015



Dr. Gaurab Roy speaking to the invitees at the inauguration of Reba Sen Children Library. Mr. Pradip Mitra, Director, Akashvani Kolkata was also present, 2013



Dr. Samarendranath Roy speaking at a Training program on Snakebites, 2014



*Dr. Subrata Moitra, Chairman, HCPH, WB
at the book inauguration at the Kolkata Press Club, 2015*



*Dr. Kishor Mankar (IFS), Deputy. Director, STR), Niranjan Sardar
and Joydev Mondal are holding a 9 ft King Cobra which was just
rescued at Sajnekhali, 2013*



Sajahan Siraj presenting a plaque to Dr. Somnath Mukherjee, CMOH, S 24-Parganas, to celebrate “No deaths due to snakebites” at CSD Hospital in 2017, 2018



Bimal Mondal and Sanat Safui submitting a deputatation on AVS to Dr. Indranil Sarkar,Superintendant, CSD Hospital, 2010



Dr. Chandranath Dasgupta doing a checkup on a STR staff as a part of regular medical camps, 2008



Ajay Das, IFS, Deputy Field director STR, participated in a First Aid Training Program for STR staff, 2017



*Dr. Jayanta Das at a medical camp for the STR staff.
Dr. Asok Bandopadhyay was also present there, 2003*

**For more information,
please contact**

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Advisory board

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Dr. Basudeb Mukhopadhyaya
Dr. Chandranath Dasgupta
Dr. Nirmalendu Nath
Dr. Samarendranath Roy
Mr. Pradip Mitra
Dr. Dilip K. Som
Dr. Indranil Sarkar
Dr. Dayalbandhu Majumdar
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Dr. Premchand Dey
Mr. Shyamal Mitra
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Mr. Amalendu Mandal

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