

Snake Charmers

Snake charming has existed in India for centuries. Snake charmers catch snakes, such as cobras, and teach them to dance. In India, snakes are sometimes worshiped, like images of the Naga serpent-people or the supreme deity Shiva, who is depicted with blue skin and often has a cobra wrapped around his neck.

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Those who become snake charmers frequently learn to handle snakes at an early age, as in Jogi Dera village, where many children first encounter snakes at the age of two. They follow their fathers to catch snakes and are taught to love them like a family member.

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Before performing, the snake's venom is removed to avoid the snake poisoning the performer if it becomes angry or annoyed. The snake hypnotist plays a pipe or recorder in front of the cobra, and the aggressive animal will appear to be under a spell, swaying its body to the music, but it is actually following the side-to-side movement of the pipe, not its sound.

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Today, the practice of snake charming is gradually declining due to wildlife protection laws enacted in India in 1991 and the rapid pace of modernisation. Very few people now pursue this work.

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Where did snake charming develop?

What do snake charmers do before performing with a snake?

Why is snake charming declining?