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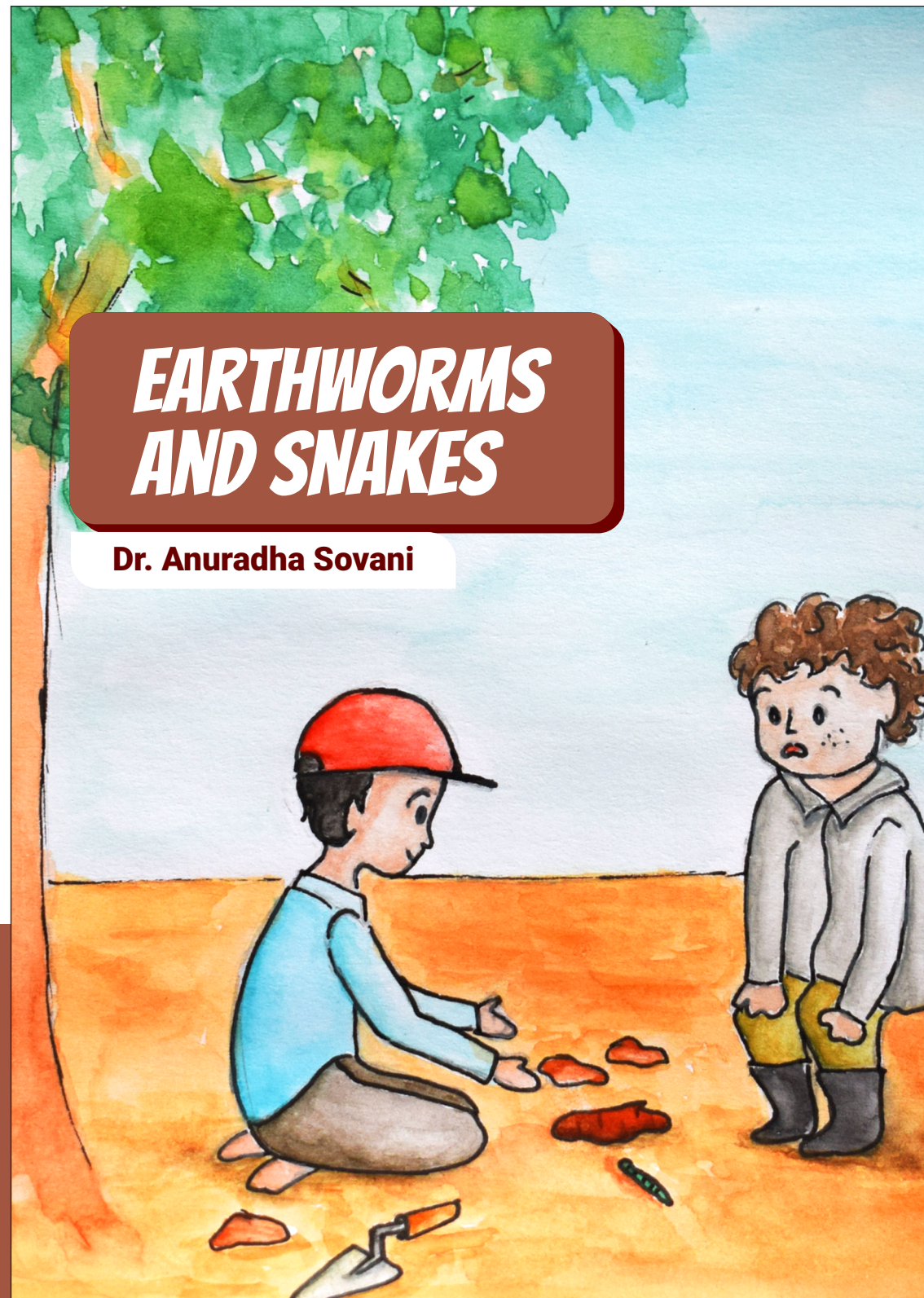
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# EARTHWORMS AND SNAKES

**Dr. Anuradha Sovani**



# Earthworms and Snakes

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Story By - Dr. Anuradha Sovani

**Vik** asked his mother if he could go and bury his tooth in the garden after lunch. It had finally fallen out, and Vik could feel the tiny point of the new one with his tongue. The tooth had danced around inside his mouth for weeks, bending this way and that. Then it had come off, and he had washed it carefully and kept it in his biscuit box of treasures. But now it was time to bury it.

Vik wore his cap, because his mother told him to, and because he liked to wear it anyway. He took the tooth, and a spade to dig the soil with. He called his friend on the way to the garden, and both of them stepped out into the blinding sunshine. . It was boiling hot outside, even the breeze warmed them. They tried to step on each

others' shadows, but it was hard to do that, with each of their shadows just a black pool below their feet. It was fun to chase shadows. Vik tried to stomp on his friend's shadow and the friend tried to stomp on Vik's. If you stamp on your friend's shadow more often than he can stamp on yours, you win, and he loses.

They went into the shade under the tree because the soil would be less hard there, and easier to dig. After digging a hole, they lay the tooth gently inside and patted the earth back into place. And found an earthworm. Vik and his friend stared wide eyed as it wriggled out of the newly patted soil and made its way across the mound of earth. If it grows bigger, will it turn into a snake? Vik's friend wanted to know.

Vik laughed. Of course not, snakes had backbones, and when they got tired of their skin, they just crawled out of it. Vik had watched this moulting on youtube, and it looked like a pillow case when you pull the fat pillow out. Snakes had eyes, and teeth! This poor little earthworm had none of these. No eyes, no teeth, no backbone. Vik felt sorry for the little earthworm and put a little cool mud on top of its shiny body.

Snakes have teeth and can protect themselves, Vik thought. Earthworms have nothing. But they still survive. People are the same, Vik realized. Some people have whatever they need to survive. Money, a home, a good education. Some other people don't have much. But they still work hard, do good stuff and do not trouble others. They live where they are

comfortable; and as long as others don't bother them, they don't bother others.

Vik's dad had told him that earthworms were good for the garden, because they were soil scientists. Just imagine, a tiny fellow like that could add air into the soil, and mix up the different layers of the soil. They would fertilize the soil and make other stuff grow better. Snakes eat rats and mice and help the garden too. But they kill other animals only if they are hungry; they are not cruel and mean.

Vik wondered why people were cruel. They hacked into other people's email, and put out bad pictures of those who they were friends with earlier, but hated now. They stole money online from old people, and played video games where you could only



win by killing lots of other people. The ones who are defeated in an online game don't really die of course. But still, Vik felt sure that once you get used to killing people in a game, it would not be long before you felt it was okay to kill them in real life too. And then you would be in jail.

Vik and his friend finished their tooth burial, and sat with their back against the tree, thinking. Grown ups were odd. They earned money but always wanted more. But then they spent that money on weird stuff like drugs and alcohol, and guns. Snakes and earthworms did not even know such stuff existed and would not want any of it anyway. And still the earthworm looked pretty happy to Vik and his friend.

Vik told his friend all about stuff he knew

as they sat leaning against that tree, in the shade and the breeze. He said snakes were reptiles, and earthworms were annalids.....well, just worms. He told his friend everything his dad had told him about earthworms, so that his friend would never kill one by stamping on it.

His friend said he knew grown ups who smoked and drank alcohol and wanted to give both up but could not. And people, even some seniors in his school, who were addicted to online games and the internet, and could not give that up either.

Vik said he wished they would just wriggle out of that ugly habit as soon as possible. Just moult if off like a snakeskin and squeeze right out it, leaving the empty husk behind as they moved off to being

healthier. He was sure they could do it if they tried. If a snake could do it, they could do it too.....

Vik and his friend agreed that those without such horrible habits were happy, and both decided to just stay that way. That would make their parents happy too, and Vik liked to see his parents happy.

