

CIRCUS TRADITION OF BANGLADESH AND FATE IN ITS ANIMALS

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Abstract

The circus tradition in Bangladesh is very ancient. There are more than eight circus teams in Bangladesh at present. Out of these two circuses named Rowshan and Lion circus is the most active. Both of them have been performing for about 48-50 years. The great Rowshan circus was established in the country in the year 1965. Here a renounced animal trainer is serving for 33 years. 8 type of animals with 1 reptilian, 1 avian and 6 mammalian species are here. From the very beginning they have been performing for 33 years. During this time 7 horses, 3 asses, 4 bears and huge dogs died due to dysentery and colic pain. Result suggested that the highest mortality was recorded in dog and the lowest in donkey. Illegal trapped were used by the hunters or poachers to catch wild animals and snake charmers were used to collect snakes. Most of the animals were male in circus. The feed items were less and the hygienic condition was the worst. Animals were kept in small cages which were nonscientific for its rearing or breeding and it does not cover the wildlife acts.

Keywords: Circus, cultural tradition, Rowshan, Lion circus, wildlife act

Introduction

A Greek word 'krikos' meaning circle or ring is the word for circus. A circus is commonly a travelling company of performers that may include clowns, acrobats, trained animals, acts, musicians, hoopers, tightrope walkers, jugglers, unicyclists and other artists. This dimension was adopted by Philip Astley to enable a horse rider to stand upright on a cantering horse to perform a series. Since the late 19th to early 20th century, many circus performances have taken place under in large tents commonly referred to as "The Big Top". In Ancient Rome, the circus was a building for the exhibition of horse, equestrian shows, staged battles and display of featuring trained animals. The circus of Rome is thought to have been influenced by the Greeks, with the exhibition of animals as traditional attractions. The first circus in the city of Rome was the Circus Maximus, in the valley between the Palatine and Aventine hills. The first circus structure was built completely with woods. After rebuilding at several times, the final version came to a structure of stone instead of woods measuring 400m in length and 90m in width where 2,50,000 people could enjoy the performance of Circus Maximus. After the fall of Rome, large circus buildings fell out of use as centres of mass entertainment. Performers, animal trainers and showmen travelled from town to cities throughout Europe, performing at local fairs. The word circus acquired a new sense in the late 18th century for the exhibition of equestrian, acrobatic and other performances. Several aspects of the modern circus tradition can be traced back to shows created by British equestrian Philip Astley, whose troupe brought trick horse-riding through rings. Astley's first performance is said to have been held on January 9, 1768. Later, to suit equestrian acts moving from one circus to another, the diameter of the circus ring was set at 42 ft, which is the size for horses to circle comfortably at full gallop. When Astley added tumblers, tightrope-walkers, jugglers, performing dogs, and a clown to fill time between his own demonstrations, and he created the first modern circus. Charles Hughes, opened the *Royal Circus* on 4 November 1782, a short distance from Astley's 'Amphitheatre of Equestrian Arts' in Lambeth, London. Astley was followed by Andrew Ducrow, whose feats of horsemanship had much to do with establishing the traditions of the circus, which were perpetuated by Henglers and Sangers celebrated shows in a later generation. In England circuses were often a combination of the circus, the menagerie and the variety theatre, where wild animals such as lions and elephants from time to time

appeared in the ring. In 1782, Astley established the Amphitheatre Anglais in Paris, the first purpose-built circus in France, followed by 18 other permanent circuses in cities throughout Europe. Astley leased his Parisian circus to the Italian Antonio Franconi in 1793. The Englishman John Bill Ricketts brought the first modern circus to the United States. He began his theatrical career with Hughes Royal Circus in London in the 1780s, and came over from England in 1792 to establish his first circus in Philadelphia. The first circus building in the US opened on April 3, 1793 in Philadelphia. Victor Pepin, a native of New Yorker, was the first American to operate a major circus in the United States. Later the establishments of Purdy, Welch & Co., and of van Amburgh gave a wider popularity to the circus in the United States. The American circus was revolutionized by P. T. Barnum and William Cameron Coup, who launched P. T. Barnum's Museum, Menagerie & Circus, a travelling combination of animal and human oddities. In 1840 the equestrian Thomas Cooke returned to England from the United States, bringing with him a circus tent. During this time, itinerant circuses were becoming popular in Britain. William Batty's circus, between 1838 and 1840, travelled from Newcastle to Edinburgh and then to Portsmouth and Southampton. Pablo Fanque, who is noteworthy as Britain's only showed black circus. One such structure in Leeds, which Fanque assumed from a departing circus, collapsed, resulting in minor injuries to many but the death of Fanque's wife. Three important circus innovators were Italian Giuseppe Chiarini, and Frenchmen Louis Soullier and Jacques Tourniaire, whose early travelling circuses introduced the circus to Latin America, Australia, South East Asia, China, South Africa and Russia. Soullier was the first circus owner to introduce Chinese acrobatics to the European circus when he returned from his travels in 1866 and Tourniaire was the first to introduce the performing art to Ranga where it became extremely popular. Following Barnum's death, his circus merged with James Anthony Bailey, and travelled to Europe as The Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show On Earth, where it toured from 1897 to 1902, and its combination of circus acts, a zoological exhibition and a freak show. In 1919, Lenin, head of the USSR, expressed a wish for the circus to become 'the people's art-form', with some facilities and status with theatre, opera and ballet. The USSR nationalized Russian circuses. In 1927 the State University of Circus and variety arts, Moscow Circus School was established and all performers were trained from the Soviet gymnastics program. When the Moscow State Circus company began international tours in the 1950s, its levels of originality were widely applauded. From the late 19th century through the first half of the 20th century, travelling circuses were a major form of spectator entertainment in the US and attracted huge attention in a city. Finally the popularity of the circus declined with the arrival of 'television' the public tastes became more sophisticated. From the 1960s onward, circuses became the victim of growing criticism from animal rights activists (Wikipedia.org). Bangladesh has a very long history of traditional circus. Once it was very popular for entertainment different levels of people in the society. There are more than eight big circus troops across the country now. At least 80-100 people work in a big troop including main performers, assistants, helping hands and so on. Many of them involved in circus from their childhood. Circus is all about fantasy. They perform to entertain people showing different games including balance on rope, cycling, jump from the top and knife game. Some circus shows game with animals like lions, elephant, dogs, monkeys etc. But circus is passing through a hard time now. They could not earn like they did before and many performers became jobless because of the satellite culture of the country. Sometimes the owner has to sacrifice money to run the circus. As a whole the circus tradition is under threat. It will not survive if no proper initiatives have been taken by the government or relevant people of the society (Abir Abdullah). The exotic acrobatics and caricatures of two circus troupes are drawing by Bangladesh Shipakala Academy (BSA) premises to accommodate. Organised by the Department of Dramatics and Motion Picture, the eight-days circus festival features performances performed by The Lion Circus of Dhaka (June 1-4) and The Rowshan Circus from Nilphamari (June 5). Though lately, the urban educated class is uninterested in circus, the shows at BSA have generated interest among people from all walks of life.

The crowd amused by the tricks of the dwarfs and jesters, while a balancing act on a rope had them thrilled with apprehension of an accident. A common feature of the circus troupe is pranks and comic acts by a dwarf and jester. The Lion and Rowshan circus showed a man who demonstrated several skills while maintaining balance on a rope. The Rowshan Circus troupe's performance was truly entertaining although some of the acts seemed a little crass at times. The bellowing crowds seemed incredulous act when a member swallowed gallons of water without a pause and then filled empty jugs with the water coming out of his mouth. Chinese latim balance, fire dance and roller skating on the table are among the most enjoyable acts by The Rowshan circus of Bangladesh (Circus in the City, Daily Star, 2011). The owner of Lion Circus, Bangladesh is Niranjana Sarker who established this circus team in the year 1992. This was started with two Asian elephants named Gopal and Chandrika. This pair of elephant produced a calf Chand in captivity in 1992 and then Rashmoni in 1998 (Lion Circus of Bangladesh).

Materials and Methods

Selected circus team of Bangladesh: Though in Bangladesh there are more than 8 circus teams only Rowshan circus was studied (Plate 1). Rowshan circus is continuing its tradition from the very beginning. I saw this circus with my father first. For the study of circus tradition of Bangladesh and fate of animals this study was important. All the year round this circus team is performing except Ramadan of Muslim festival. Circus team is like nomads. They are circulating with their family day after day with all troops.

Wild, domestic and pet animals in circus: From the poachers, illegal wildlife trader, snake charmers and gypsies are involved with the supplying of the animals. They catch them and sell with a small amount of money to the circus team. Sometimes domestic or pet animals like cow, goat and horses are used for performing in the circus. Genetically abnormal such as five legged cow and three legged goat are involved in the circus (Table 1; Plates 2-9).

Animal trainer: A trained animal trainer is needed for a good circus team. During the time of research or field survey a good animal trainer who gained training on animals from India. He was trained by a famous animal trainer from Bhutan and Japan. Animals were trained on the main round stage of the circus gallery. When training comes the animals are just frightened by the trainer using wheeping and hooked. Some occurrences mainly the bite of carnivore animals was common for the animal trainer.

Animals and feeding: Feed for the elephant were husk, rice and banana tree at the time of noon to afternoon; 5 kg of gram, wheat and rice husk are provided to the horse trice a day; for donkey same items as horse but 3 kg at one time. Rice, milk, bread and honey mixed at a time 2 kg of feed are provided for a Asian black bear at 12 am and 12 pm. At 9 am, 1 pm and 12 pm the items of rice, fish and meat were served for a dog which is measured 0.75 kg. Feed for Indian porcupine- carrot, potato, cabbage and banana were served which is 0.25 kg at a time for three times like dog. Only one avian species lesser adjutant 1 kg fish is enough for the whole day at 9 am and 4 pm and one reptilian species Indian python it needs not take any food during the time of winter but in summer only one chicken or duck is enough for a day (Table2).

Sections of circus show: There are some sections of the circus as song, acrobats, comedy, magic and finally animal showing or its performing. For relaxation and avoid boredom of this show this sections are important to the people.

Results and Discussion

Human is socially dominated creature among all animals in this world that directly influence others (Coe, 1999). Avoid locating public viewing areas where are used as show in design and perception (Coe, 1985). Suffering from various diseases due to mainly malnutrition is the fate of animals. Though some vets are appointed, they are not sufficient according to demand. Most of the animals suffer from

common diseases like dysentery and colic pain due to unhygienic condition of the shelter and feeding pots. Till now no occurrence or any remarkable incidents were found except one incident (see: incident(s), Lawsuit filed). A lot of circus movies were found in the world. In the year 1928 a great movie named 'The Circus' directed by great comedian Sir Charlie Chaplin, is mentionable. Some other important movies on circuses are Circus (1936), The Greatest Show on Earth (1952), The Big Circus (1959), Jumbo Circus (1962), Water for Elephants (2011) and Big Fish (2003). These movies actually showed the ancient condition of the circus team and use of animals. Worlds' greatest animal trainer Melvin Koontz, mainly lion trainer invented the techniques to tamed lion its photographs are available in the market named Jackie 1 then Jackie 2. On the other hand famous elephant trainer Axel Gautier was killed by his elephant in Florida, USA in 5 May, 1993 (see: incident(s), Lawsuit filed). A report showed that from the year 1978 to 2001 most of the circus animals' incidents were happened in Florida and New York of USA (4 incidents), then California and Moscow (3 incidents). Only 2 incidents were recorded in England and Pennsylvania and other countries it was only 1 attack by circus animals. Of the total incidents during performing the circus or handling of the animals 10 peoples and 6 animal trainers killed by elephants; 3 peoples bite by bear, 16 injuries and 3 animal attacks were occurred. On the other hand this report suggested that 8 elephants, 2 bears, 1 Arabian horse and 1 donkey were killed by police due to threatened for human life in circus time (Updated news, 2001). From a another report showed that most elephant attacks were found in USA, Florida (10) and less (1) were found in India and Bangladesh during the year from 1950 to 2005, where 18 people killed by elephant, 15 elephants killed by people for attacking to people, 1 lion killed due to elephants attack, 4 complete attacks, and 26 peoples were injured during performing the circus (see: incident(s),lawsuit filed). Isaac A. Van Amburgh entered a cage with several big cats in 1833, and is generally considered first wild animal trainer in American circus history. Mabel Stark was a world famous female tiger-tamer.

Animal acts and introduced animals

Animal rights activists allege that these acts involve cruel training methods (The proposed wildlife act). Elephants from Cole Brothers Circus parade through downtown Los Angeles in 1953. Both Asian and African elephants are legally banned by CITES in 1990 (updated March, 2001). A variety of animals have historically been used in this circus acts. While the type of animals used vary from circus to circus- big cats, elephants, horses, birds, sea lions, bears and domestic animals are the most common. The earliest involvement of animals in circus was just the display of exotic creatures. Going as far back as the early eighteenth century, exotic animals were transported in the circus for entertainment. The first true animals' acts in the circus were equestrian acts. Soon elephants and big cats were displayed as well.

Conclusion

We need to protect animals legally and ultimately release in nature. No cruelty to the animals should be done. This report suggests that in worlds' circuses most of the mishaps have been by elephant, bear, horse and donkey. So, it needs to protect these animals from the cruelty of man. The banning of the use of elephant in circus in 1990, need to follow by the latest wildlife act. If we deduct the animal portion from the circus it will be better for all especially for animals' and general people of the audiences.

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Table 1. Following table showing all about circus animals with global status

English name	Scientific name	Collected from	Age	Cage measured (LxWxH)	Global status	Distribution
Indian Python	<i>Python molurus</i> , (Linnaeus 1758)	Snake charmer of Jessore, Bangladesh	1 year	3'x2'x1.5'	LR	MEF, S
Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i> , Horsfield 1821	Sudden fall on ground due to environmental disaster then from Thakurgaon Fun City, Bangladesh	1 year	Open	VU	W
Indian Porcupine	<i>Hystrix indica</i> , Kerr 1792	Tribal people of Tangail, Bangladesh	2 years	2'x2'x2'	-	W
Japanese Spitz	-	Buy from Dhaka, Bangladesh	1 month-8 years	5'x4'x4' 2'x4'x2'	D/P	W
Asian Black Bear	<i>Selenarctos thibetanus</i> , G. Cuvier 1823	Tribal people of Chittagong, Bangladesh	1 year	6'x4'x4'	VU	MEF
Donkey	<i>Equus africanus asinus</i> , Linnaeus 1758	From gift	15 years	Open	D/P	AC
Domestic Horse	<i>Equus caballus</i> , Linnaeus 1758	Buy from market, Bangladesh	10-11 months	Open	D/P	W
Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i> , Linnaeus 1758	Hired from Chittagong Forest Department, Bangladesh	40-50 years	Open	EN	MEF

Source: IUCN, Red Data Book, LR=Least Risk, VU=Vulnerable, D/P=Domestic/Pet, EN=Endangered, MEF=Mixed Evergreen Forest, S=Sunderbans, W=Widely distributed, AC=Asian Countries

Table 2. Table showing the feeding management of zoo and circus animals

Animals	Feeding in zoo (daily)	Feeding in circus (one serve)	Feeding time in circus
Indian Python	1.7 kg rabbit weekly	April-August: Chicken/Duck 1 piece	10 am
Lesser Adjutant	Fish, lizard, snail, crab	Fish 0.5 kg	9 am, 4 pm
Indian Porcupine	Rice 100 g, carrot 100 g, cabbage 100 g, sweet potato 100 g, soya 20 g, ground nut 50 g, banana 2 pieces	(Carrot, potato, cabbage, banana)=0.25 kg	9 am, 1 pm, 12 pm
Japanese Spitz	Normally not in zoo	(rice, fish, meat, milk, bread)=0.75 kg	9 am, 1 pm, 12 pm
Asian Black Bear	Loaf 2 kg, milk 0.5 litre, banana 2 kg, boiled egg 1, vegetables 2 kg	(rice, milk, bread, honey)=2 kg	12 am, 12 pm
Donkey	Green grass 10 kg, solid food 1.5 kg, vegetables 1 kg	(gram, wheat and rice husk)=3 kg	2 pm, 8 pm, 12 pm
Domestic Horse	Normally not in zoo	(gram, wheat and rice husk)=5 kg	2 pm, 8 pm, 12 pm
Asian Elephant	Grass 100 kg, vegetables 15 kg, banana 10 kg, banana tree 120 kg, sugarcane 20 kg, gram 5 kg, sacrid fig leaf/banana leaf 30 kg	(rice, wheat husk)=not maintained, banana tree 20-25 pieces	From noon to afternoon

Source: Animal nutrition section, Dhaka Zoo (python, adjutant, donkey, bear, elephant- left 2nd column); Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Tamil Nadu, India (porcupine-left 2nd column)



Plate 1. Circus entrance

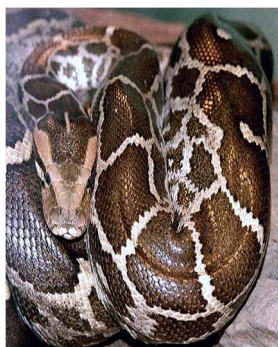


Plate 2. Indian Python



Plate 3. Lesser Adjutant



Plate 4. Asian Elephant



Plate 5. Japanese Spitz



Plate 6. Domestic Horse



Plate 7. Donkey (in front)



Plate 8. Asian Black Bear



Plate 9. Indian Porcupine



Plate