

ISRG Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ISRGJAHSS)



ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Arts Humanit Soc Sci

ISSN: 2583-7672 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjahss>

Volume – IV Issue - IV (July – August) 2026

Frequency: Bimonthly



The 'Rowshan Circus' drops animals, keeps the wonder—a circus for the future of Bangladesh

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| **Received:** 15.07.2026 | **Accepted:** 21.07.2026 | **Published:** 28.07.2026

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Abstract

The Rowshan Circus is one of the oldest and famous circus team of Bangladesh, a pioneering model designed to revitalize the region's heritage by transitioning into a completely animal-free, human-centric spectacle. Personal experiences at circus team and interview with the performers enriched this popular write-up. The production highlights a spectacular array of classic and contemporary circus acts executed by highly trained artists. The performance lineup features high-velocity acrobatics, including floor tumbling passes and the breathtaking, high-altitude releases of the swinging trapeze. Audiences are treated to mesmerizing displays of object manipulation and balance, such as high-tempo football balancing, multi-hoop Russian ringer routines, and the high-stakes instability of the Korean roller balance. The show further amplifies theatrical suspense through traditional thrill acts, including gravity-defying high wire bicycle crossings and knife throwing. This study was conducted in May-June 2026.

Keywords: Rowshan Circus, cultural tradition; Saidpur; Bangladesh Circus Owners Association (BCOA).

Introduction

Circus is a cultural tradition of a country. Circus performers are like nomads and they have diversified life due to shifting from one place to another all the year round either season or in off-season. Once it was only recreation for people. At the present context, new generations are not showing interest to the circus but at the same time by using many modern tools the circus team is becoming well-equipped day by day. Most of the events in circus are life threatened for the performers. People do not like animals in circus, so biological sciences must guide entertainment that protects both human and non-human life. Biological studies on stress hormones

show captivity reduces animal welfare. We should remember that caging animals for performance raises ethical questions. A very good sign is that circus teams of Bangladesh are not keeping both wild and domestic animals. A true circus always exhibits real hard work, coordination, team work, unbelievable courage, inspiration, job area who are interested, family beyond blood as well as pride without fame. To secure life for the performers, trust is everything in circus and discipline is more important than their talent while performing. In circus, team effort is mandatory than an individual. A circus team is consisted with many sections—singing,

gymnastics, acrobatics, magic, and acting (Plate 1). Based on the activities of the performers in circus team, there are quite differences between traditional and modern circus (Batoool *et al.*, 2024). Performers in circus take healthy food always. They need small but frequent food on the basis of performance schedule. The objective of this write-up is to modernize and save the Bangladeshi circus industry by replacing animal acts with high-skill human performances.



Plate 1. The Rowshan Circus at Saidpur Cantonment area

Personal experience

When I was a kid, I watched circuses on the lap of my father. My father liked and loved animals, so at the end of circus show, he insisted me to see animal acts. My subject is zoology which has come from that core of heart. Now my father is no more but such affections continue within my mind, and from that core of feelings, I used to watch circus in my country. Actually, three types of people go for watching circus—kid, researcher/journalist, and nostalgic people. The motto of a Bangladeshi circus is – we are safe, we are Bangla, and we are yours. Understanding life is not complete until we also feel it. The only strength of circus is tradition and weaknesses are money and scientific thoughts.

Unbelievable acts in ‘The Rowshan Circus’ of Bangladesh

Triple knife catch act: This is a classic, high-stakes variety performed by professional jugglers and circus artists. This act relies heavily on a blend of precise physics, muscular activities, and curated showmanship to create an illusion of extreme danger.



Cycle acts: These are high-energy circus disciplines that showcase balance, core strength, and momentum. Performers use wheeled vehicles to execute acrobatic stunts and jumps. It combines extreme balance, and acrobatics using one or more wheels. The high wire bicycle act is one of the most nerve-wracking extensions of classic funambulism. It removes the stable footing of the acrobat, replacing it with the spinning wheels of a bicycle suspended on a taut steel cable high above the circus floor. The act combines precision steering, extreme center-of-gravity physics, and absolute trust. A shoulder-ladder cycle act is a premier, high-stakes discipline within acrobatics and cycle circus that fuses the mechanics of physics of a unicycle or bicycle act. In this discipline, a base performer balances or rides a cycle while supporting a heavy, freestanding vertical ladder on their shoulders—a flyer performs daring acrobatic balances at the very top of the ladder.



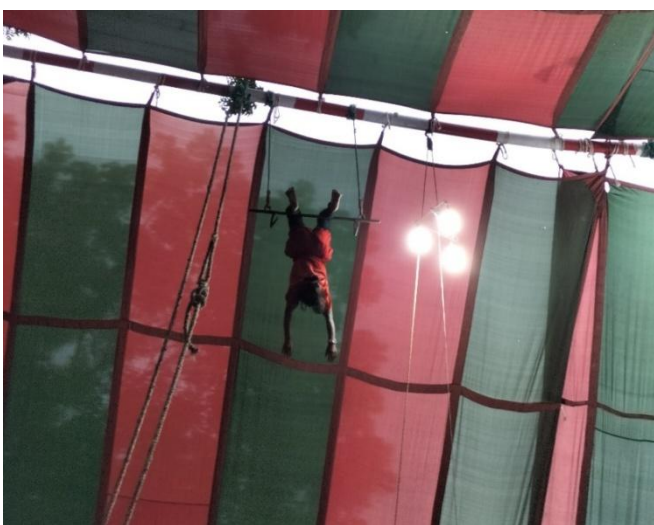
Roller skating with a kid: This is a high-energy recreational activity that combines physical fitness, balance training, and family bonding as well. The activity transitions from a hand-held learning experience into a shared, fast-paced sport as the child gains confidence.



Bamboo pole balancing act: Chinese high-pole acrobatics utilize the natural flexibility and immense structural strength of giant bamboo to achieve gravity-defying feats.



Aerial silks: Aerial skills are one of the most visually mesmerizing and physically demanding disciplines in circus. Suspended from heights that can reach over 10 meters, performers climb, twist, and drop using a net by several assistants.



Wire acts: This is the ultimate circus display of balance, nerve, and psychological endurance. Performers walk across a taut, thin steel cable suspended at heights. It is a discipline where the margin for error is zero, and the thrill comes from defying gravity and conquering human fear.



Knife throwing: The most thrilling discipline in the circus. Rather than aiming to injure, a professional circus knife thrower uses split-

second timing, geometric physics, and absolute muscle memory to flip razor-sharp blades away from a live human target.



Korean roller with juggling: This is a thrilling discipline centered on unstable equilibrium. A performer stands on a flat board, unattached cylindrical roller. To increase the difficulty, the artist place four glasses on the board and execute complex acrobatic with juggling. Juggling is a core circus discipline that blends precise dexterity, spatial awareness, and mathematical rhythm.



Football balancing: This act is popularized in traditional circus as ball balancing and integrated as freestyle football dance—is a highly specialized discipline that combines athletic soccer tricks. Performers stall, spin, and juggle standard footballs on distinct parts of their body, often while executing other acrobatics. It transitions a global field sport into a mesmerizing art form centered on friction, body contouring, and absolute spatial awareness.



Russian ringer: This act is used in South Asian circus traditions to describe an extreme, high-speed manipulation and contortion

discipline. Typically performed by a solo female acrobat, the act is celebrated for its blending of rapid, multi-hoop rhythm with intense, continuous physical flexibility.



Regurgitation act: This type of act is a rare and provocative sideshow at circus discipline. Performers leverage extraordinary, voluntary control over their digestive tract to swallow massive volumes of fluid or live fish. It sits at the absolute boundary between biological anomaly, stomach-churning endurance, and illusion.



Swinging trapeze: It is a thrilling aerial circus discipline where an artist executes high-level acrobatics, releases, and catches while moving on a wide, sweeping arc. Suspended from heights often exceeding 12 meters, the performer utilizes momentum, timing, and gravity to transform a simple metal bar into a dynamic launching pad. Swinging trapeze focuses entirely on a solo act working on a single, continuous pendulum.



Conclusion

The modern circus is entering a new era of professionalism, sustainability, and ethical entertainment. Under the guidelines of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA, 2025), the industry is transitioning into a structured organization where government funds actively support a dedicated training school for the performers. By moving away from outdated practices—such as banning the co-existence of wild and domestic animals—and securing proper land permissions, the circus is redefining itself as a safe, family-friendly space for all sorts of people. Operating as formal businesses, circus teams will contribute to the national economy through yearly tax submissions while safeguarding their workforce with a mandatory, single team life insurance policy. Though annual license renewals ensure high operational standards, the long-term survival of the show depends heavily on financial collaborations. By corporate sponsorships and embracing digital tools like online ticket promotion, the circus can reach a new generation of viewers. Ultimately, continuous and proactive publicity is mandatory to keep this vibrant art, encouraging audiences to return to the big top and witness a centuries-old tradition.

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