

## Metropolitan

## Dhaka Day by Day

## A Master Performer Who Charms His Viewers

by Fayza Haq

Dulal who comes from Shubhornagar, Comilla, has been working as a snake-charmer for 14 years. His "guru" had been his own father, who migrated from India to Comilla.

"I have caught about 7,000 snakes by now. The reason why it was imperative to catch as many snakes is that the reptiles I catch do not last long. They die within two months and even in a shorter period due to lack of adequate feeding. I cannot obtain the necessary milk, fish or meat for them nor improve the manner of their captivity in baskets (that are carried in a pell-mell fashion all across the country)". Dulal commented on his profession.

Asked to elaborate the way in which Dulal removes the poison from the snakes, he explained, "I remove the poison glands that hang from the two sides of the lower jaws. Before I can do that, I must hold open their jaws wide with a special instrument. This operation, I assure you, is no easy task. The blood vessels connected to the poisonous fangs must be slit too, during this process. The teeth that are removed grow once more should the snakes bite, they become poisonous no more."

Elaborating on the types of snakes that he has caught so far, Dulal informed me, "I have caught kalo gokhra, gareesh, teria, bhutraj (which has marks of copper coins all over it), jhingopora, and shonkor (which is most difficult to catch) as it is extremely narrow and slippery, and whose poison has a hue more white than milk, and evaporates as quickly as liquids, like petrol, so that it is difficult to put it in a bottle, and cap a container in time. Poisons are sold to brokers, who resell them to make vital medicines, as I am told, in Bangladesh."

Asked if he suffered economically by the rapid death of his snakes, Dulal continued in his confident and spirited tone, "The skin is sold for a fairly low price, as you know full well that the go-betweens fleece you. My total earnings from the sale of poisons and snake-skins are limited due to the constant surveillance of the police, who need to be satisfied."

However, some of the snakes that professionals like myself catch, are later sold at homes at Baridhara, Uttara, Gulshan and Banani, where live the Chinese, Koreans, Thais, Japanese and Taiwanese, who enjoy the snake meat for their special Far East cuisines.



Photo: Anisur Rahman

Meanwhile, the snake poison is diluted in their drinks, which they apparently relish."

Dulal proceeded to further elucidate his means of income. "The foreign residents, like the Americans and those from the Far East, keep live snakes in tanks and feed them from time to time, as a type of entertainment and hobby. They also mount and frame the stuffed and preserved snake-skins as household decoration pieces. Let me inform you about how we preserve the snakes ourselves: we boil the dead snakes in huge metal containers, and that is enough."

Requested to give an account of his earning and expenditure Dulal, explained at a non-stop flow of speech of a confident individual, "I earn about Tk 5,000 to Tk 7,000 a month. From that, at times, I can save between Tk 500 to Tk 1,000, which is barely enough to keep body and soul together. I live in a rented room in the city along with my snakes. I have my aging mother, a physically handicapped brother, and a jobless male sibling to support. Although I am the youngest in the family, I paid for my sister's dowry and marriage-ceremony cost which, in all amounted to Tk 45,000. I send home about Tk 6,000 each month."

As Dulal plays various tunes on his bansuri, he mentioned some of his favourite ones as, "Kaun Bajae Bansuri", "Preet Hal Kaisey Bol Rey Duniya", and "Chup Ho Gava Koi Rey." He claims to know Rabindrasangeet, Nozrulgeeti, and folk songs like Bhatyalis, apart from tunes of subcontinental and Nepalese commercial "hit" films.

Dulal says that to do his job, he is compelled to travel as much as 12 kilometres at a time. He performs at the houses of the elite of Dhaka and Chittagong. He also shows his skill of snake-charming in places like Natore, Tangail and his own district, Comilla. When he operates outside Dhaka, he travels by bus.

It is a pity that someone as "gutsy", persevering, talented and trained as Dulal, who performed at a local five star hotel for four months during the last winter season, was ousted as soon as there were new managerial executives. In the fresh selection of employees that ensued, Dulal was coldly rejected. At the hotel, he used to earn Tk 10,000, with ease. Surely, he deserves a better deal.

## Tk 935.3 cr to be spent for stipends to girl students

Government will spend Tk 935.3 crore for stipends to the girl students at secondary level under a six-year project, reports UNB.

This was disclosed by the Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar while speaking as chief guest in the inaugural function of a training programme for the thana-level officials of the stipend programme under the Secondary Education Development Programme (SEDP) and Female Secondary Stipend Project (FSSP) held at Teachers' Training College premises yes-

terday.

The minister said a total of 1,23 crore girl students in 460 thanas of the country will be benefitted from the pro-

gramme.

Presided over by director general of Secondary and Higher Education Prof Eunus Mia, the function was addressed by Education Secretary Idrisul Hoq, project director of the FSSP Prof Salma Rahman and project director of SEDP Prof Azher Ali also spoke on the occasion.

The minister called upon the newly appointed field offi-

cials of the projects to devote their knowledge and energy in making the stipend programme a success.

He said government has given utmost priority to female education for educating the whole nation and field level officials have a vital role to play in implementing the pro-

gramme.



Workers' Party leader Haider Akbar Khan Rano speaking at a discussion on the occasion of 19th death anniversary of Colonel Taher at the TSC auditorium of Dhaka University yesterday.

— Star photo

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