

How animal rescuers in Bangladesh save lives

There are dozens or hundreds more animal rescuers in our country. There are even more individuals who may not be rescuers but are doing noble work for the strays of their community by feeding them and taking care of them. However, the truth that arises after careful thought is that if everyone did their part, there would be no need for animal rescuers in the first place.

TINATH ZAEBA

In Bangladesh, stray animals can be spotted on nearly every corner in rural and urban areas. Dhaka alone is home to around 40,000 stray dogs. Most of these dogs live in deplorable conditions and are subjected to atrocities every day. Following recent political events and climate catastrophes, this has become even more true.

As our country reeled under the pressure of massive political reform and devastating floods, many people prioritised these urgent issues, leaving the animals' welfare in the background. Amid the chaos, as former politicians fled and resources were stretched thin, thousands of dogs and cats were displaced. Pets were abandoned at the last minute as airports crowded and flights overbooked. Dozens of paralysed or ill animals were inadvertently released from the shelters they had refuge in. However, their plight was not entirely forgotten. Animal rescuers stepped in during these trying times, even as their resolve was tested like never before.

Camelia Kisku is a 40-year-old animal rescuer who runs an animal foster home and shelter called Amar Asroy Home. She was one of the rescue volunteers who massively contributed to rehoming abandoned dogs when their owners and shelter supervisors fled the country.

"I rehomed around 25 dogs from shelters. When I heard that their shelter was about to be looted and possibly damaged, I knew this meant they were at risk of falling into the hands of the wrong people. So, I decided to take these dogs, many of whom were in critical condition, to my foster home to provide them treatment and shelter," said Kisku. "Despite our best efforts, approximately 20 or 25 dogs are still missing. Some of them were paralysed, sick, undergoing cancer treatment, etc. Thus, while rescuing and rehoming efforts are ongoing, we really must focus on changing how people in our country view these animals. People's empathy must be extended to them."

The negative perception people have regarding stray animals arises largely due to the overpopulation of these animals in Dhaka. People view them as unnecessary and a nuisance, rather than helpless and dependent. As a result, these animals become victims of everyday abuse, starvation, and fatal accidents.

Many dogs and cats meet the brutal fate of being roadkill or succumbing to diseases that would



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

have been preventable through better healthcare and attention from local people and relevant authorities. The overpopulation itself is a result of the negligence of the authorities towards spaying and neutering these animals.

Many animal welfare organisations like Obhryanno and 50 for Paws and independent animal rescuers have been working around the clock to arrange spay and neuter programmes in danger-prone areas. 20-year-old Sarah Fathima Brotee, founder of 50 for Paws, is one of the animal rescuers arranging a mass spay and neuter programme.

She said, "The biggest issue has been the commute. The vans needed to transport dogs are not readily available in our country, and the available ones are expensive. Even if we can arrange the transportation, the next problem is shelter. Spaying and neutering are major operations, and the animals need at least 48 to 72 hours of shelter afterward. We have to pay that foster fee as well, which, when you look at it, comes up to such a big amount that you

could easily neuter more animals with that amount itself."

While undeniably brave in pushing against these odds to help stay animals, these rescuers are not endlessly immune to the hurdles they face. Sarah, who has rescued over 100 animals with the help of fundraising, opened up about the mental strain on rescuers. "Mentally, it's very draining. Nobody wants to work for themselves or take responsibility. Even if it's something as simple as posting on Facebook for adoption, they're constantly depending on us to take care of everything."

The mental strain is not the only problem rescuers face. The limited manpower of these organisations also hinders them. In Bangladesh, animal rescuers work using a step-by-step procedure. There are numerous communities on social media constantly spreading awareness about the current situation of strays in our country. When an injured animal is spotted, people post its picture on these communities, so that it can

get shared by others and hopefully reach an animal lover in the area. Spot treatment then occurs using accessible medicines such as Scabo and Viodin. If the animal's situation is severe, it is later rehomed to a shelter. Most of this process relies on fundraising, where the rescuers post the medical prescriptions on social media to ask people to donate. These donations are used to cover the costs and lighten the financial burden.

Asiya Hossain, 22, a student and animal rescuer, explained how social media acts as a powerful tool but needs to be improved. "People are aware and generous nowadays, so fundraising is possible. However, the problem is the lack of manpower. It makes it very difficult to utilise social media to the fullest because the rescuers are too busy taking care of the animals to take pictures. For instance, our teams saved hundreds of cows, cats, dogs, and goats during the flood crisis. But we were so busy physically doing all the work, that it was difficult to take pictures. We ended up sharing only half of what we

did on social media. We need greater manpower to ease this burden and help us raise awareness."

There are dozens or hundreds more animal rescuers in our country. There are even more individuals who may not be rescuers but are doing noble work for the strays of their community by feeding them and taking care of them. However, the truth that arises after careful thought is that if everyone did their part, there would be no need for animal rescuers in the first place. Perhaps, in an ideal Bangladesh, we can dream of fundamental equality for animals, where they can exist peacefully. But, right now, while scrolling through social media and seeing these suffering strays, that dream seems far out of reach. These animal rescuers are the only ones taking the responsibility that others are not willing to shoulder.

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Submitting to literary magazines doesn't have to be overwhelming

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OHONA ANJUM

Submitting to literary magazines can feel downright intimidating regardless of how optimistic or pessimistic you think you are. With countless rules to follow, it's easy to feel that your creative spark has flickered out. It was no different either when I wanted to submit a piece. I must have opened and closed the submission portal at least a hundred times before gathering the courage to hit "send".

The stress of putting myself out there and the slim chances of getting published kept me hesitant, especially because acceptance/publication rates for some publications are in the single digits. I find myself wondering whether anyone will even read whatever I've sent in. The process can feel overwhelming but understanding it from both your and the publication's point of view can make all the difference.

As an anxious writer, I know that I often judge my own work far more harshly than any editor might. But here's some good news: smaller literary magazines are often incredibly supportive and responsive, especially to emerging writers. Most usually take somewhere between less than a month to three months to give you a timely response so you're not left wondering about the fate of your work. Remember that each submission brings you closer to finding that one magazine, editor, or audience that truly connects with your words.

Submitting to any magazine, whether it has a large following or a



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

niche readership is a step in the right direction. When you're starting out, don't focus too much on the number of readers; the magnitude ideally should not define your motivation.

Instead, think of each submission as a chance to share your voice, to be heard, and to grow as a writer.

Along the way, you will likely encounter a common misconception that only writers who know others in the industry get published. Networking and knowing people in the literary world can open doors but it is by no means a requirement.

The reality is that reputable literary magazines, especially international ones, focus far more on the quality and relevance of your work.

Most magazines follow a blind submission process, meaning the editors often don't even know who the writer is until the piece has already been selected. This eliminates any chance of biased selection, giving every writer a fair chance. So, instead of worrying about connections, invest your energy into crafting a piece that resonates with the essence of the magazines you admire while also

showing off your best attributes as a writer.

However, understand that publishing in literary magazines is not going to pay your bills. A handful of established magazines might offer a modest honorarium while others pay little to nothing for published pieces. Literary magazines often operate on limited budgets, with most funds reserved for production and distribution, leaving little for contributor fees. For most writers, publication in these magazines is more about building credibility, gaining

exposure, and connecting with an audience than making money.

While the idea of getting your work published is exciting, it's essential to make sure your submission is polished and aligns with the magazine's guidelines. Literary magazines receive hundreds, sometimes thousands, of submissions, so even the smallest oversight can determine the difference between acceptance and a swift rejection. Before submitting, take the time to carefully read the magazine's specific requirements regarding format, word count, genre, and themes. Ensuring your piece matches their guidelines shows respect for the editors' time and demonstrates your professionalism. Additionally, a well-edited, thoughtfully refined piece will stand out far more than a rough draft, giving your work the best chance to make a lasting impression.

It's tough to predict every bump and twist you will face. You will have to find your own way, one step at a time. Carving out your path can feel a little nerve-wracking (maybe a lot), but the outcome is worth it. Every submission, whether it's accepted or not, helps you overcome the nerves. You are slowly breaking through the fear of putting yourself out there, which is a huge win in and of itself. With each submission, you learn more about your craft and develop a sense of what clicks and what doesn't. After all, every stumble means that you're moving forward and that's what really counts.

Ohona Anjum writes, rhymes, and studies English literature.