

## Rope walking

Rope walking is considered as one of the ancient traditional custom of the Tajik people, which is believed has started 2,5 thousands years ago in the ancient near east and gradually spread all over the world. Tajik held tightrope walking events during the celebrations of Navruz and Mehrgān festivals including weddings and other traditional joyful events where a local people's circus would have been invited to perform tightrope walking.

Rope walkers would travel wide and perform in big cities, such as Khujand, Konibodom, Istaravshan, Isfara, Panjikent and Hisar. The tightrope walking teams would normally include 2 or 3 rope walker, 2 clowns and 3 or 4 music players (drum and horn). Traditionally in tightrope walking a rope made from wool was used, but starting from the twentieth century they iron wires are employed instead. The height of the pole to which the rope is pooled together for walking can be 5 to 6 meters or even higher.

The rope walking events are very lively and accompanied by a loud music, which mainly is played to attract the crowd. After the viewers are gathered the music will stop and an elderly man will pray blessing over the players. The music will starts again when a tightrope walker would appear in the scene who would not just walk but also perform different sorts of the tricks. Some tightrope walkers would perform

dance on the rope or some would walk with their eyes blindfolded or walk with the copper plates attached to their feet. To excite the viewers they would walk by holding jars filled with the waters or wearing amusing shoes with high heels or elaborate designs, including covering themselves in a sack.

After the tightrope performance the turn is given to clowns who would recite humorous songs, poems or tell anecdotes, including imitating the voice of animals, birds or famous people. The clowns would do juggling, knife throwing to the target or dance with the lit fire sticks.

Tightrope walking is a skill, which is taught from an early age. The training for tightrope walking includes many features of gymnastics and the trainer would normally watch over the diet of their students. The tightrope walking practice is at first conducted on rope pooled in a short height and if it is high above the grown a string is tight from two side of the waist of the student to help him balance while walking.

After finishing their training as a tight rope walker students would organize a party to honor his tutors and ask their blessing for his new vocation.

Due to the establishment of a professional circus the people's circus, including traditional tightrope walking has seen great decline.

