



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

## On studying PERFORMING ARTS

IMTENAAN MOHAMMAD JAQUIE

With the publication of the HSC results, the battle of university admission tests will soon begin. Now is the time for students to think about the subjects they want to major in. Let us shed light on the prospects of pursuing a degree in the field of performing arts.

Medical science, engineering, business studies, pure science, social science and humanities are popular subjects when it comes to higher education in our country, while creative subjects such as theatre, music, dance, and fine arts are hardly sought after. Owing to family and societal pressures, many students are still apprehensive of choosing such subjects and some are even unaware of the fact that it is possible to earn a degree in these creative subjects from Bangladesh's public universities.

Most of the public universities in Bangladesh offer various degrees on Theatre (or Dramatics). Dhaka University (DU), Jahangirnagar University (JU), Chittagong University (CU), Rajshahi University (RU), Jagannath University (JNU) and Jatiyo Kobi Kazi Nazrul Islam University (JKNIU) offer undergraduate and graduate degrees on Theatre (or Dramatics). Candidates who pass in B and D units in DU, CU and JNU, C1 unit in JU, A unit in RU, and E unit in JKNIU in the admission tests have to face practical tests. A student's proficiency in pronunciation, music, dance, rhythm sense, acting and overall interest in the subject is judged by teachers before the final selection.

Besides acting, broadly speaking, the field of theatre covers various forms of performing arts such as, music, dance, yoga, mime, mask-making, make-up, costume, set and light design, prop making, script writing, directing, event management, camera techniques and an array of others. Meanwhile, the theoretical side of theatre studies includes different styles of theatre, Anthropology, Sociology, Psycho-analysis, Marxism, Research-Methodology and much more. Further to this, there are plenty of research opportunities in this field, especially if students can earn scholarships to study abroad. Performing arts graduates can also sit for BCS exams, bank recruitment exams, teacher recruitment exams and other academic and administrative exams. They can join national or international NGOs, private TV channels, advertising and designing firms, production houses and other private organisations as well.

Government colleges now are also looking to add performing arts subjects to their curriculum. So, the pathways for pursuing a creative education are now more prominent than ever.

The writer is a student of the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at Dhaka University.

## RETURNING TO THE ROOTS Charity to eradicate poverty

FAIZAH A EERINA

The greatest irony for mankind is the inability to recognise that, as we engage in conflict for our rights, we often neglect the responsibility that comes with them. The responsibility towards the human race; for all our fates are eventually tied together. We forsake the commitment that we have towards other people and set the profound label of 'charity' when we do engage in acts of kindness. It is to be questioned, however, whether we can continue calling it charity instead of taking accountability for it.

Charity is present in the essence of all religion. Charity in Judaism is found in the Mitzvah of Tzedakah, which interprets to the "good deed of giving" and entails giving a portion of an individual's personal resources for the greater good. In the broader sense, Tzedakah is derived from Hebrew and refers to fairness, justice or righteousness. Giving the poor, in Judaism, is more than an act of generosity; it is a duty, an act of being fair to all (Judaism 101 1999).

In Christianity, 'charity' was translated as *agape* in the earlier version of the Bible for King James and is literally translated as 'love' in the modern versions, representing the mutual love between man and God that is displayed through the selfless love towards one's fellow man. The Gospel of John enlightens, "If anyone has material possessions and

sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" (John 3:17-18).

The Buddhist perspective on charity is more symbolic and the act of giving voluntarily in Buddhism is driven by the belief that, living things need to co-exist by depending on one other. However, an essential practice in Buddhism is Dana, which is a Pali and Sanskrit word, connot-



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ing to the virtue of generosity. Similarly, in Hinduism, the practice of Dana, emphasised in the Rig Veda, refers to donating a portion of your income as a virtuous act to the ones in need or in distress. The other characteristic, according to the Upanishads, goes hand in hand with Dana is Daya, i.e. love or compassion for all forms of life.

In Islam, one of the five pillars of

Shahadah is Zakat, meaning "that which purifies" and it entails giving Sadaqah, signifying 'voluntary charity'. Zakat is an obligatory act of benevolence and involves any act of charity performed out of love, friendship, generosity, or compassion. Investing in Sadaqah is explained in the Quran, "Spend (in charity) out of the sustenance that We have bestowed on you before that time when death will come to someone, and he shall say: 'O my Lord! If only you would grant me reprieve for a little while, then I would give in charity, and be among the righteous.'" (63:10)

Poverty does not take birth naturally, but emerges at the interference of human beings and it can be overcome by our very hands; only if we offer it to those in need and be just by giving. Mother Teresa worked devotedly to create this balance and overcome distress, suffering and poverty. It is in her remembrance that 5th September, the day of her passing, was officially declared in 2012 as the International Day of Charity by the United Nations General Assembly. This year, the United Nations will focus on 'eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions'. However, the solution to poverty is opportunity, not purely charity.

We need to build such opportunities by shaping a future that resists an inequitable economic system. The stem of the future is the children of today and by sowing the seed of knowledge within them, we provide

them with the mightiest ammunition- The Pen. When we invest in the future of the children by instilling knowledge, we provide them with a route out of poverty. These children will pay it forward as they get equipped with confidence and knowledge and turn out to lead a more productive life. Many organisations are looking into educating underprivileged children.

One such organisation is JAAGO Foundation, which connects the children in need with benevolent individuals through a sponsorship programme. The sponsors selflessly choose to contribute a small amount of their earnings each month to educate them and make a difference. A monthly donation of only BDT 2000 provides a child the access to educational necessities, supplementary nutrition, health care benefits and prospects to learn significant life skills. By donating at JAAGO Foundation, our contribution will not only create prospects for a child in need, but also provide them the opportunity to liberate themselves from the grasp of poverty.

As John Bunyan said, "You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you."

To learn more about JAAGO, visit their official website: <https://jaago.com.bd>

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PHOTO: NAUSHAD ALI HUSEIN

## The hope of moving-island schools

SANJIDA TANNY

Let's travel through a different kind of school today, which goes beyond excellent academic results and ensures students come out with good character and moral strength. However, what makes it so different?

To answer that, we need to travel to the chars and find out. What is a char? Chars are riverine land formations, temporary in nature, but, inhabited by millions in Bangladesh. Permanent structures are impossible in these regions because the land is constantly eroding and forming anew. The time and expense required to even reach many chars leave inhabitants deprived of basic state infrastructure, healthcare, justice, roads, and electricity.

It is very difficult to manage secondary schools here. A decade ago, many char villages lacked any school at all. Today, most chars have primary schools. Finding and assigning secondary school teachers is almost impossible too. A few government schools do employ teachers from the mainland, but, due to difficulty in commuting, these teachers rarely attend the classes.

This is where Friendship (an NGO) steps in. It has been working on the char regions for 16 years now, innovating solutions to problems one by one. The solution Friendship came up to this particular problem is to use pre-recorded video lessons projected onto TV monitors powered by solar panels, as there is no electricity in chars. The lessons are recorded in Friendship's studio in Dhaka by teachers from nationally renowned schools and sent to local Friendship schools on CDs. The classes are supervised by facilitators who are among the char residents and have also received trainings from experienced teachers. The facilitators are regularly able to take students' questions to the teachers as well.

This year, Friendship had their first batch of JSC examinees, and out of the 56 examinees, 36 received A, 19 got A-, and one got a B. These results show that the children are no less talented compared to any other student around the nation.

Then again, what makes these char schools and their approach even more unique is the code of 12 ethical principles: compassion, confidence, courage, rights, empathy, honesty, patience, justice, non-violence and tolerance, dignity, humility and commitment. Friendship's char schools ensure students come out with good character and moral strength besides great academic achievements. Every month, these students are taught one of the above 12 ethical principles through story-telling and discussion. They are encouraged to contemplate and try to understand these simple, but abstract, ideas by applying them to situations in their own lives.

The tale of contribution doesn't just end here. Through these schools, Friendship has been addressing several much broader social issues. Giving young girls a chance to study in these char schools help prevent early marriages. Another vital issue that it solves is the building of responsible citizens. Friendship's curriculum, therefore, extends to ethics, identity, and character-building.

Via such schools, Friendship has brought classes closer to home. The NGO has provided local char communities with quality secondary school classes, thanks to their ingenuity and technology. With this, they now have fully functional secondary schools reaching out to students and flourishing their facility of education regardless of its physical infrastructure.

## Verses of truth from a young author

SHABABA IQBAL

For Naem Hossain, 15-year old author of a poetry collection titled *Something You Need to Know*, writing is a part of daily life. "I find clarity and navigate my life each day through writing in morning pages," says the young poet. "I begin at the top of the first page, with my heart as heavy as lead and as I go on to the bottom of the third page, nuggets of truth begin to glimmer. My most authentic voice comes from writing. It is my source of creative inspiration."

Poetry is the best outlet for Naem to express his feelings and personal experiences. He is a student of Little Jewels School, Chattagram.

Fascinatingly, Naem did not really like poetry until he read *Love her Wild* by Atticus. Reading that book showed Naem that feelings can be expressed immensely well through poetry. Another poetry book that Naem highly recommends is *Uncaged Wallflower* by Jennae Cecelia. After writing poetry for a while, Naem knew he wanted to see his work published in literary platforms. So, he began participating in writing workshops and spending his time submitting pieces to literary journals, magazines and anthologies, only to receive rejection after rejection. As he was picking which pieces to submit, he came upon a realisation. "I figured out that all my

poems came together to make one body of work," explains Naem. "It was not right to pick off pieces because readers would only fully understand the emotions behind them if they read all the pieces in the order that I put them." So, he set his eyes on self-publishing the poetry collection. Even though publishing his book was a tough nut to crack, Naem feels that it was worthwhile. His family did not even know his plans of publishing his book until the proof-reading copy arrived at their door. Today, they are proud to have a son who is a published poet at such a young age. Naem hopes to publish a novel in the future.



Naem Hossain