

# Theatre from Home?

How Spardha is redefining the experience



**The lack of community spaces in this country and the traffic congestion restricts people from travelling to the available conventional venues that usually stage plays.** – Syed Jamil Ahmed

MORMEE MAHTAB

With an objective to redefine the live theatre experience, prominent troupe Spardha has been staging their third production, “Bismaykar Sabkicchu”, at people’s living rooms around the city. The single-act interactive play sheds light on depression for the sufferer and the ones in their ambit, while encouraging us to talk about it.

Candyfloss, rainbows, getting to watch television past your bedtime, the smell of old books, and making up after a fight – these are just a few items listed by a 10-year-old girl as she explores, “What

makes life worth living?” in the play.

She compiles the list as a heartfelt response to her mother’s attempt to commit suicide. As the girl ages and faces hurdles that her own life brings, the list gets longer – what started as an attempt to cure her mother’s depression ends up saving the girl from her struggles later.

“Bismaykar Sabkicchu”, translated and directed by Syed Jamil Ahmed and performed by Mohsina Akhter, borrows its narrative structure from celebrated British playwright Duncan Macmillan’s “Every Brilliant Thing”.

A prominent scholar and director,

▲ **Eminent cultural personalities at a recent show of “Bismaykar Sabkicchu”.**

PHOTOS:  
COURTESY OF  
SPARDHA

Ahmed is known for breaking barriers of convention, and has been a driving force in the growth of theatre and arts in Bangladesh for years.

He is the founder of the Department of Theatre and Music at Dhaka University, and has contributed immensely to the field through brilliant plays that provide new interpretations to theatre-based practices.

Ahmed’s idea to create an alternative space together with his students led to the inception of Spardha in 2017, with an aim to produce experimental plays.

“There are personal, ideological,

and organisational aspects behind the creation of Spardha. After working in the Department of Theatre and Music at Dhaka University, and freelancing in various theatre groups for a long time, I realised that ideological need alone does not drive young students to work, they also have to think about their survival,” he explains. “Looking for an alternative together with some of my trusted collaborators, I decided to form an organisation where we could take risks and experiment with what we do, adhering to our ideologies.”

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## EMPOWERING WOMEN

**60% of 4 million** apparel workers are women

Access to garment factory jobs significantly lowers the risk of early marriage and childbirth for girls in Bangladesh.\*

- Bangladesh garment industry has remarkable contribution to increase in girls’ enrolment.\*
- 98% of apparel workers think they are self-reliant while 93% say they have important role in making family decisions.\*\*
- 70 female garment workers are pursuing higher studies at Asian University for Women with the support of their respective factories.

\*‘Manufacturing growth and the lives of Bangladeshi women’ – a study by Rachel Heath and A. Mushfiq Mobarak

\*\*‘Garment Workers in Bangladesh: Social Impact of the Garment Industry’ – a study by the Asian Center for Development

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