Unnecessary fear stands in the way of love between a man and a woman because of patriarchy. Men are deprived of the true and pure sense of love from women because of the uneven societal system against women. If the world was a place where men and women were treated equally, I am more than sure that every man would be loved by his woman in a way they've never known before, because a free woman is capable of loving better than a bonded and deprived woman.

If the world changes for the betterment of women, I am more than sure that men would benefit from living in that world just as much as women. But the reasons why most men are hesitant to raise a movement to create that world are, firstly, because they fear losing the powerful position and the male privilege, and, secondly, they are not certain what will happen to the world order if patriarchy was to be demolished.

Basically they fear change.

It is not only men who fear change, but it is women as well. Not only men, but women can be just as sexist. Patriarchy as an institution is guarded by women as well as men. Feminism as a movement could aim to change the minds of not only men, but women as well. Men could be feminists as well as women in order to make our world a better place.

If we take bell hooks, an African-American feminist theorist's definition of feminism, then it will become apparent that feminism is not a movement against men, but "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression."

I must point out that a prevalent misconception about feminism is that it is a Western movement, but women in our country have been fighting to end sexism and sexist exploitation for over a century now. Women who took part in our *muktijudho* denied their societal role as domestic beings by stepping into the public realm.

NGOs in Bangladesh work very hard to gain women's legal rights and to stop institutions of sexist exploitation like domestic violence, rape, child marriage, and dowry. Everyday, millions of Bangladeshi women fight to get their equal share in both the public and the private arena. We can say that all these women are actually working to make the world a more equitable place for men and women, and therefore, they are all part of the feminist movement.

As bell hooks has pointed out: "Initially when feminist leaders in the United States proclaimed the need for gender equality here they did not seek to find out if corresponding movements were taking place among women around the world. Instead they declared themselves liberated and therefore in the position to liberate their less fortunate sisters, especially those in the 'third world.'"



AMIRUL RAJIV

But there have also been counter-arguments made by feminists about the local movements around the globe. Women in Bangladesh obviously have a different set of issues to address than those in the United States, China or India, but the common ground is that feminists around the world desire to throw off sexist discrimination and exploitation for a more equitable system.

By labeling feminism as men-bashing and inherently Western, we actually shut ourselves off from taking the opportunity to create our own definition, ideology, and agenda of feminism.

Women in Bangladesh are becoming more and more visible in the workforce. Women working in the garment factory are the backbone of our foreign exchange, but still women are culturally dominated and exploited along the sexist lines. It is because we don't yet have our consciousness raised about gender equity.

Feminism as an ideology can help us gain that consciousness, and the first step towards that could be at a personal micro-level. Each man and woman can practice it in their everyday life and creative work. For example, if a person is a children's book illustrator then that person could initiate writing children's book that focus on issues of gender inequality, take the Meena cartoon for example. We simply need more of that. We simply need more people, regardless of their gender to understand the ideals of feminism and incorporate it in their lives for the betterment of everybody.

It is just as hooks said: "Come closer. See how feminism can touch and change your life and all our liyes. Come closer and you will see: feminism is for everyone."

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