# Those Sexist Commercials!

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A new billboard displayed in the streets of the capital city showcases the advertisement of a spice company. It seems that, along with a television station as the media partner, the company is to organise a cooking competition. The competition will judge the best "radhuni" [cook]. The commercial portrays two children shouting at each other, arguing that their respective mothers are the best "radhunis" of Bangladesh.

In the same fashion, two husbands are shown quarrelling. One shouts: "My wife is the best cook"; his counterpart asserts the same.

Well, these advertisements are certainly a new way of selling spices. No one has actually tried this in the past. A best cook award is to be presented by a particular company. More people will come to know about that particular brand of spice and start using that brand. This, I believe, is the idea behind it.

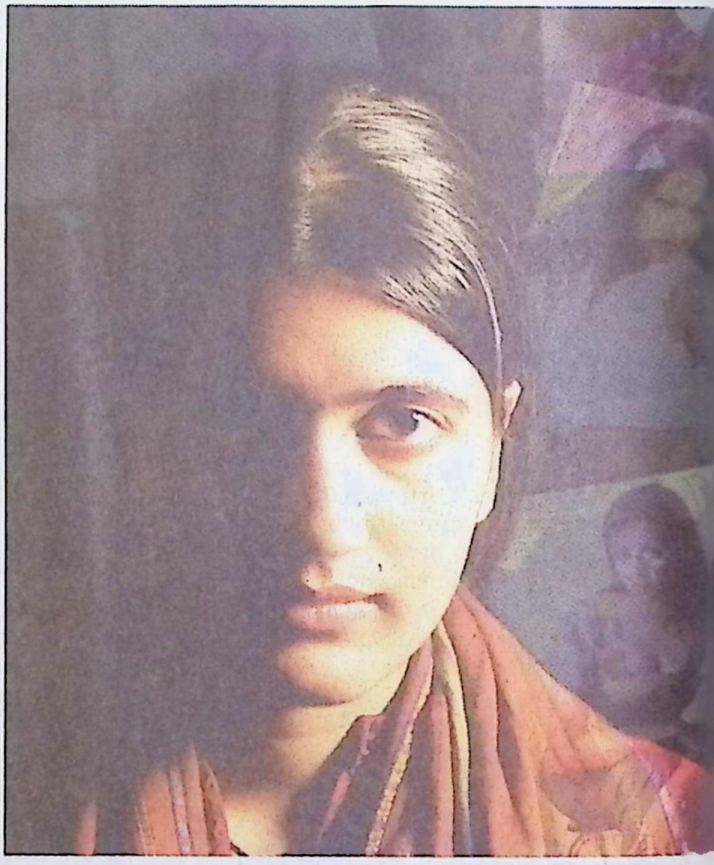
But if you look beyond what the naked mind sees, you will find it harder to accept these commercials. I, in fact, find them objectionable and sexist. Why should the mother be the "radhuni" all the time? Why isn't one of the children saying: "My dad is the best cook"? Similarly, in the commercial with the two quarrelling husbands, why can't one of the husbands say, "I am the best cook"?

Would it be so wrong for the dads of Bangladesh to participate in the contest? Yes, because no one would be able to call them radhunis? So, here lies the problem. In Bangla, there's no masculine word for radhuni. A radhuni always has to be a woman.

Isn't this the particular trend that we are trying to change in Bangladesh by speaking out slogans such as "women's empowerment", "women's rights are human rights", "I want to have a chance" etc? These words will be seen as jargon if we fail to implement them into our daily lives. True, there's a section of activists who are trying their best to change society's attitude towards women; but the corporate world, coupled with the media, is doing exactly the opposite. The media, in the form of commercials only succeed in dragging the image of a woman down to the level of a mere sex object.

This same spice company came up with another TV commercial a few years ago. A mother, busy cooking in the kitchen, feeds her graduating son with her hand and asks him to bring a radhuni in the house. She implies her son should get married and the woman of choice should become the ultimate radhuni of the household. Isn't this idea outrageous?

Let's have a look at another TV insertion. Coca Cola had launched a TV commercial which displays a woman, wearing a skirt, walking towards her home. A



group of boys, drinking Coca Cola, speechlessly stare at her in admiration and awe. One of them holds up a Coca Cola bottle at her, explicitly trying to compare the bottle with the woman's physic. Then the woman's mother arrives to receive her at the veranda and looks at the boys in anger; she understands that the boys were ogling at her daughter. The same boy, who held up the bottle at the woman, now holds up a bigger bottle, comparing the bottle with the physic of the mother. And then, the slogan -- The Refreshing Side of Life -- of Coca Cola is displayed on the screen.

If a woman's physical shape is the refreshing side of life for the Coca Cola company, then I think we should all object.