who was a talented artist suffer the same fate for much the same reason.

For every female track runner like the Indian P.T. Usha , there are hundreds of other girls who are discouraged from following their interest in sports, because their parents deem those (or some other) interests to be undesirable or unfeminine. Similarly, I suspect there are few boys who are encouraged to learn how to cook, even though this is an eminently practical skill that can be useful for anyone - male or female! While celebrity chefs such as Tommy Miah may achieve fame and fortune, in much of Bangladesh the idea that cooking is "women's work" remains entrenched (especially if there is no particular financial reward involved).

And if anyone has any doubts about this assertion, or considers these stereotypes to be old fashioned or out of touch with modern Bangladeshi society, one has only to look at the advertising campaigns beaming their way into millions of homes to realise otherwise. Once again, the same company, which also promotes the cookery competition (though by no means the only offender) does itself proud in this category, particularly with their advertisement for spices, which shows a young bride being chastised by her husband for "not even being able to cook" as she serves food to other family members at the dining table - where there is not even an empty seat available for her to sit...Nor is such a place made available once she finally manages to satisfy her husband and in-laws, by using the magical spices being advertised!

Similarly, advertisements like the recent offering promoting a range of melamine utensils portray women as utterly foolish - empty-headed and irritating creatures who are fit only to bat their eyelashes at others, and giggle and share breathless excitement over the "latest design" in kitchenware. The worst thing is that there is no dearth of intelligence and attractive advertising campaigns Bangladesh today. The mobile phone industry has clearly demonstrated this.

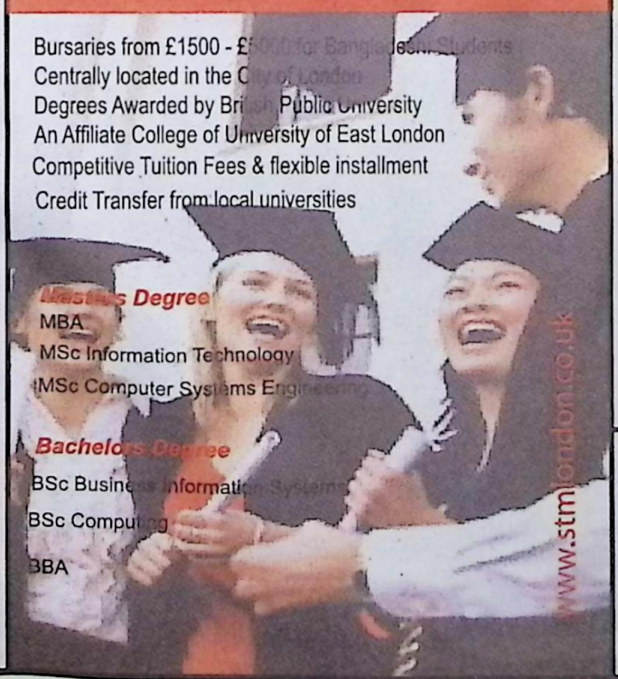
Whether it is by appealing to patriotic sentiments related to our land or its flag, playing good music by talented local artistes, or using humour and a clever tagline or two, there are any number of products being sold on television today, showing how far the industry has come. The recent ring tone advertisements from WARID are a good illustration of this, as is the GrameenPhone campaign that illustrates the rewards of reactivating old SIM cards - especially those belonging to your unsuspecting friends!

It's hard to understand why such approaches cannot be equally effectively applied to products such as cooking spices and melamine...Or is it because those products are (presumably) being marketed to a female - and therefore, low IQ - consumer?? Please, take our money, but don't insult our intelligence!

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