



IMAGES THROUGH A THEODOLITE

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HeForShe

All that is needed for the forces of evil to triumph is for enough good men and women to do nothing.

— Edmund Burke (1729–1797)
Irish statesman

Growing up as a boy in the '90s, an eventful decade for more reasons than one, I was allowed to read widely. Of course there was no Internet, no e-books, or online libraries. I cannot even recall being a member of one, because almost every household had a selection of books, no matter how small or insignificant it may now seem.

Our parents were often unaware of what we were devouring at the dead end of the night. Or, so we liked to think. Today, almost two and a half decades later, I realise that parents were simply not intimidated by our passion for Teen Goyenda-s and how we graduated to Sheba Western-s and Masud Rana-s.

It was considered what it was — a part of growing up! Perhaps, their logic was simple. If someone's reading-list never goes beyond detective stories and clichéd romances, chances are s/he will never have a penchant for literature anyway.

A certain brand of writers, however, always remained a taboo; outside limits. It was a fear shared by both parents, and one that gradually diffused into our collective psyche as we aged. The pages of those untouchable tomes spoke of women and their share in society. My argument here is not to critic the literary content of novels, but to point out that even the underscored notion of feminism expressed in books appeared preposterous.

Feminism is the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes. Yet, somehow it is an unpopular

word, and the section of women who prefer to align themselves with the movement, considered too strong, too aggressive, isolating, and anti-men.

The male to female ratio on a global scale is roughly 102:100; a figure that does not go unchallenged. Setting aside the mathematical debate with a biological overtone, it is clear that over half of the global population is men; and the other half engaged in a battle against them, for equality!

Some argue, while men can associate with the campaign, women's right is not a war for them to fight.

vently seek a conducive environment where women can not only work with men as equals, but also enjoy a workplace free from all gender biases and sexual exploitations.

The stereotype image of a chauvinist is that of a man depriving his wife of her right to work, or choose a profession of her choice, her right over her body, and her God given equality as a citizen of this planet.

This generalisation excludes fathers, brothers, friends, associates, companions, partners, colleagues... numbering in hundreds of millions and half of them being male! One must keep in mind that bigotry is

This is the very notion the UN campaign HeForShe hopes to shatter. It is a movement that hopes to mobilise and re-educate men, and to some extent women, that it is a world to share by all, as individuals, equal in all respects.

Society can never be free from perils; that makes it more important for us to try. Human life is not about achieving perfection; it is a strife to taking it as close to that desired goal.

The HeForShe movement was inaugurated through a speech by UN Goodwill Ambassador, actress Emma Watson on 20 September, 2014. Widely acclaimed from certain quarters, her speech, lasting little over 10 minutes, also managed to stir controversy. Some considered Watson's speech exasperating; others went as far as comparing her to a damsel in distress, eagerly waiting for her knight in shining armour — the very stereotype activists are trying to dissuade across the globe.

Others failed to understand why the torch for a movement called HeForShe is carried by a She, while a He may have been more apt.

But, even the harshest critics admit — her speech did strike a chord!

In her words, she said —

"Men, I would like to take this opportunity to extend your formal invitation. Gender equality is your issue too. If we stop defining each other by what we are not and start defining ourselves by what we are — we can all be freer and this is what HeForShe is about. It's about freedom."

HeForShe, or any movement of similar nature, hopes to achieve one thing — shatter gender disparity. Be the 'he' for 'she' and stand in front of the mirror and ask yourself, "If not me, who? If not now, when?"

Photo courtesy: Korvi Rakshand



Our society, possibly like any other society, is woven in deeply rooted patriarchy that shamelessly refuses women their fair share of rights.

Over decades in Bangladesh the feminist cause has seen widespread changes. While it fights and still continue to campaign for women's rights, including the right to vote, to work, and to have equal pay, the movement now encompasses contemporary global movements like MeToo, which fer-

not an innate human behaviour. A boy being served chicken drumsticks in every meal all his life soon turns to think it is a birth-right, handed over to them by their mothers, no less.

In this battle of gender equality, where the mind-sets of both are seeped deep in prejudice, it is time to seek freedom. Boys become men, and bombarded with bigotry from all strata of society, embrace it with open arms.