Chapter 2

Constructing an ‘Indian’ Nation through the Positioning of Women as a ‘Sacred’ Inner Space in Media Advertisements

Introduction

The cultural space that represents the ‘ideal’ Indian context in advertisements is created in conformity with the ongoing debates over the nature of ‘Indian nationalism.’ It is marked by the convergence of various ideological positions. The inner-outer dichotomy this is central to the definition of the ‘nation’ plays a crucial role in advertisements. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the focus of earlier research seems to be far greater on the linguistic, rhetoric, semiotic and other structural aspects of advertisements than on the internal ideological architecture or the cultural implications of advertisements in public life. Consequently, it may be said that much less attention has been paid to the aesthetic, literary, and cultural aspects of such texts. The aesthetic/literary quality of advertisements is not merely a beautifying or attention catching technique. It is deployed to confer on texts an economic value arising from entrenched cultural and aesthetic conventions. An attempt has been made through this research to analyse advertisements for their popular ‘aesthetic’ value which is also their ‘economic’ value. It is through an aesthetic lens that such texts execute various ideological positions, apart from playing their cardinal function as commercial messages. The term ‘text’ here refers to the observable product of interaction, a cultural object, and not merely a written or spoken linguistic content. Visuals are as much a part of the text as language. It is through a balanced combination of both these modes of
representation that the culture specific meaning is created in advertisements. (Sen 1997: 2)

Advertisements make extensive use of cultural elements, such as popular myths, legends, and beliefs, as they aim not only to address people, but also to imprint the brand name in the mind of their audiences. While doing so, they reiterate their ideological content within the framework of which the commercial message of the advertisement is embedded. It is this very cultural aspect of advertisements as ideological tools that is discussed here. This chapter explores how the position of the ‘Indian woman,’ is constructed to represent the inner spiritual space of home, and how this is portrayed to be central to the preservation of the uniqueness of ‘Indian’ identity with respect to globalization.

Advertisements derive their aesthetic appeal from abstract structural components of the cultural resources of a specific society. Unlike literary texts or other forms of art, however, the chief function of advertisements is not to offer aesthetic pleasure to their target audience but to appropriate the aesthetic appeal for the realization of their commercial objectives. Using cultural tokens in the design of advertisements is but a strategy to align the text as a structurally integrated part of the social context for which it is designed. For example, most advertisements meant for the audio-visual media, are designed keeping the strategies of audio-visual narration in mind: thereby, they utilize both the materiality of the medium of ‘sound’ and the ‘page’ to utilize multimodal affordances latent in each mode. The design of
an advertisement follows certain principles of popular aesthetics. These are used to enhance their beauty and appeal as cultural texts.

'Aesthetics' is the study of art and beauty. Beauty in an object is supposed to transform it into an artform by giving aesthetic pleasure to the audience. Advertisements as the textual narrative form follow their own parameters of beauty and aesthetics. Aesthetics is usually considered to be a formal feature of art – a feature that pleases the viewers. In classical aesthetics, beauty is considered transcendental and apparently does not do anything except pleasing the viewers. This very 'valuelessness' of beauty is also its supreme value – being cherished for its own sake and hence exclusive, at least as far as a theology of art is concerned. Benjamin (1936) considers this a 'negative theology' since it promotes the 'idea of “pure” art.' (Benjamin, 1936: 224) Benjamin discusses the highly ritualistic origin of the traditional art in his famous article 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.' He also discusses how traditional artforms are kept out of reach of the masses by the elite. He uses the term 'negative theology' to refer to the collective effort of the elite to maintain the ritualistic nature of the production of art that deprived forms of art from appearing what they are, i.e. functional categories emerging out of human responses to life. Benjamin critiques the doctrine of 'art for art’s sake' as it neither acknowledges 'any social function of art,' nor does it allow forms of art a scope for 'categorizing by subject matter.' (Benjamin 1936 :224) Whatever quality that the form possesses has also been considered to belong to a sphere above the ordinary.
The technological progress in subsequent centuries and the media revolution as the chief ally of globalization the ‘exclusive’ quality of ‘art,’ as a product of ritualistic origin, is made ‘commonplace.’ Hence forms of art traverse from the domain of the privileged ownership to the level of ‘signs.’ (Valery 1928 cited in Benjamin 1936: 217) However, what distinguishes the original from its numerous reproductions that acts as mere ‘sign’ is the context in which particular forms of art are located (Benjamin 1936). The dislocation of ‘art’ from its original context as a result of mechanical reproduction makes it lose its ‘authenticity’ resulting in the loss of ‘authority’ of the form of art (Ibid). Nevertheless, forms of art when used as part of the design of advertisements, their ‘exclusiveness’ is used to create a privileged position of viewership or readership as the case may be by transferring the quality of ‘exclusiveness’ to the audience to whom this artform is made available. Forms of art turned signs seem to reflect an iconic value about them which are utilized to create ideological argument inherent in the text. Strategies of design for advertisements bank on this transformation of values to align the audience with the archetypal consumer projected in the text, and transform members of the audience into active participants through the act of meaning making via consumption.

Aesthetic principles that create the ‘beauty’ in any form of art play interesting roles in construction of advertisements also. However, the function of aesthetics in advertisements is limited. The main function of aesthetics in case of traditional artforms is to ‘please’ the viewer/reader while in advertisement it seems to be the secondary function. As a strategy of the textual design in advertisements principles of aesthetics are utilized to
construct the ‘virtual’ reality making the projected lifestyle, its value system and privileges accessible to the audience; in addition it also makes use of ‘beauty’ to represent the ‘ideal’ to create the desire among the viewers to possess what is an integral part of ‘beauty.’ In other words, aesthetics in advertisements is put to use in order to create the ‘hyperreal’ (Baudrillard, 1976, 1993) to simulate the ‘ideal’ as the ‘real.’ The (hyper)real is to present the ‘ideal’ in the advertisement. The quadrant of meaning potential, used to analyse advertisements in this dissertation, will help us see how through an organized and balanced representation of the cultural components the ‘ideal’ is posed into the text. Through an aesthetic juxtaposition of various heterogeneous signs Advertisements create a self-sufficient world in which the viewers are apparently given a kind of ‘virtual’ autonomy. As said above, aesthetics is used in such cases as a tool to create this ‘virtual’ reality. Advertisements offer this ‘virtual’ world to their addressees where the desired standard of living is attributed to consumers via certain products.

The following analysis of different Indian advertisements unfolds the subliminal arguments of selected advertisements. The analysis of texts aims to look into the following:

1. Various representational strategies of advertisements that help one unfold the dominant pattern of ‘design’ in a specific historical point of time.

2. The process of construction of the ‘inner spiritual space’ in reiteration of the ‘Hindu’ identity as the default Indian identity.
3. The position of the cultural ‘other’ in advertisements either through a stereotypical homogenized figure or an absence of such a figure altogether

4. Explore the intended meaning using the quadrant of meaning-potential of the multimodal social semiotic theory

The advertisement of *Waghbakri Chai* (Wagh-Bakri Tea) published in *Sananda* October, 2004 (also in *Anandalok*, the corresponding issue), is analysed in details to exemplify affordances of various modes in the design of the text (please see P. IL1-4 for the advertisement). The persuasive argument of the advertisement seems to depend heavily on cultural grounds promoting a specific ideology. The analysis unfolds how through subtle cultural and religious references the uniquely Indian ‘inner spiritual space’ to define the stereotype of Indian femininity is created following a highly gendered upper caste patriarchal Hindu iconography. The projected ‘inner space’ is culturally sacrosanct and free from corrupting outside influence for its inherent strength. The chief occupant, i.e. the Indian [middle class Hindu] woman, is also the caretaker and the protector of this space the contamination of which brings about impurity in the ‘identity’ of the outer of which this inner space is a cultural shield. By rendering the right of central occupation to the representative individual from particular cultural and religious group, such texts tend to define the default identity of the Indian woman and therefore create the position of the ‘self’ with respect to Indian ‘nation.’ This analysis is followed by analyses of some more advertisements that duplicate similar agenda. The analyses show the ideological alignment of advertisement with the political and ideological discourse present in other public domains such as
education, writing history of the nation, outside the media. Some advertisements are also analysed to show the issue of representation of the ‘other’ communities. In its ideological alignment with other forms of discourse advertisements act as tools for ‘motivated manipulation’ mentioned earlier in this dissertation.

In the above advertisement the modes of image and written language apparently occupy distinct territories with occasional overlapping of frame of the product connecting one with the other in the text. The five distinct frames shown above are the semiotic resources for the meaning in the text under reference. The framing plays a significant role in representation and communication of meaning of this advertisement. The frames identified above are not disjunctive elements in the visual design of the text but are used as tools to unite elements from different social and cultural contexts to create an ideological argument through it.

The topmost frame including another frame (the logo) represents the ‘ideal’ in combination of the mode of writing (the caption – greeting) and image (the product logo). This frame represents ‘the ideal’ in that it introduces a new concept on one hand (i.e. celebration of the *Mother’s Day*) and makes use of the ancient Hindu myth through the logo, on the other.

The logo depicts a man sitting in a yogic position with his arms outstretched overlooking a goat and a tiger drinking from the same container. The design of the logo is strikingly similar with the *Pashupati Seal* from the days of Indus Valley civilisation found in Mahenjodaro (see Figure 6). The narrative in the
design invokes several ancient Hindu myths about Lord Shiva and goddess Durga. For example Lord Shiva is known as Pashupati (i.e. the Lord of animals and therefore is capable of bringing about magical coexistence of the predator and the prey as is depicted in the logo), Mahayogi (the greatest of all yogis, i.e. Hindu ascetic sages who adopt Yoga as a form of union with the Supreme Being, the logo depicts a man in yogic position) Goddess Durga is believed to be the consort of Lord Shiva and one cannot exist without the other (please see Appendix II).

The subtle reference to Yoga in the design has a special connotation: the word is derived from the Sanskrit root yuj, ‘to control, or ‘to unite.’ The contemporary meanings of the word are ‘joining’ or ‘uniting’ or ‘communion’: the slogan of the brand is ‘building relationships.’ Hence there is an abstract relationship established between the slogan and the cultural reference used as part of design of the text. The ownership of the yoga as a tradition lies with Hindu belief. The image of coexistence of the tiger and the goat also depicts the myth in relation to the Hindu concept of Nirvana (State of pure consciousness and bliss as a result of enlightenment – the ultimate target of Hindu and Buddhist religious beliefs) (please see Annex II). The reference to yoga and Nirvana along with references to Hindu mythology helps weaving the Hindutva (the Hinduness) as the default Indian value into the design and inherent oblique argument of this advertisement.

The most salient element is the image of a young woman with a cup of tea (representing the feminine in the narrative). Celebration of motherhood is represented as something given and therefore positioned accordingly in the
design. Though the concept of divine motherhood is central to Hindu religious beliefs, the idea of celebration of motherhood for happiness of individual is the cultural ‘new.’ The location of the product is at the right of the consumer in the same ‘real’ plane but under the domain of ‘new.’ This placement is to construct concerns about the act of consumption as a matter of individual choice to be a new dimension in women's identities in India. Both the consumer (the woman in the text) and the product are made salient though the degree of salience differs. Their location in the visual design, colour-coordination and location of the mode of writing aids representation afford the possibilities of multiple meanings to be made by readers in their act of reading.

The location of the logo in simulation of the image of Lord Shiva on the topmost frame (Figure 9) affords another cultural significance as it reminds an Indian reader of the design of the frame of the idol of goddess Durga during Durgapuja, the biggest Festival of Hindu Bengalis (Figure 8 and 10). In the advertisement the woman is centrally placed as the most salient element; so is Goddess Durga in Figure 10. An image of Lord Shiva is always there in the frame of the deity of goddess Durga (see figure 8 and 10). Moreover the divine deities are always placed at the highest plane as the ideal and the first frame of the advertisement places the logo as the icon of the Hindu culture and belief on the ideal plane thereby conforming to the cultural convention and reinforcing the ideological premise of Hindutva that the advertisement belong to.
The packaging and the dress of the woman and the background colour of Frame 1 belongs to the same family of colour (warm shade) with different shades. The image of the cup on the packaging and the cup in the hand of the consumer share the same colour, white. In fact in the advertisement there are two layers – the woman with the cup of tea posing in an act of consumption affords the simulation of reality and the actual act of consumption while the product plays an agentive role in realizing the consumption. The framing on the packaging (Figure 4) is also very interesting. The aura around the brand name reminds one of the halo around divine and celestial beings. The frame on the packaging resembles very much a sanctum sanctorum in a Hindu temple where the deity is placed. Indeed the frame has a deity, the logo and also the naivedya (the sacred offering to god, derived from Sanskrit nivedan meaning to offer). Second in order to the deity is the label for the product within an oval frame the background colour of which is that of Kunkum/Sindoor (vermillion powder) representing the female divine principle and the brand name written in white, the colour of Bibhuti (the ash), also representing Lord Shiva, the male divine principle. These two colours are associated with the goddess Durga and Lord Shiva respectively. Lord Shiva is believed to smear himself with ashes. Kunkum/Sindoor is an essential ingredient for the worship rituals of goddess Durga. This framing makes the advertisement very subtly but definitely a Hindu text.

Analyzing the advertisement through the quadrant of meaning potential proposed by Kress (2003) unfolds the following interesting aspects in the construction of meaning of the advertisement.
1. The celebration of the Mother’s Day is a cultural import to Indian concept. The positioning of the caption at the ideal plane with partial overlapping to the space of New/Ideal affords this meaning of a new cultural concept.

2. There is a structural ambiguity in the greeting message in the Caption, *Happy Mother’s Day*, i.e. it is not merely celebrating the Mother’s Day – it is celebrating the day of the Happy Mother. This happiness can be considered as an attribute of the product.

3. The image of the cup positioned centrally in the Fourth Frame plays an iconic function for the product (synecdoche = whole for the part, i.e. tea leaves are just one ingredient for making a cup of tea).

4. A clone of the iconic cup is held by the consumer to represent the act of consumption and also to link the product with the rest of the design of the text.

5. The product is positioned in the space of New/ideal. The Fourth Frame also has a caption, i.e. ‘Building Relationships.’ The framing of the product with the caption positioned next to the textual mode defining a mother affords a culturally significant meaning of (re)shaping of a relationship that is very central to that specific culture. The man in yogic position in the logo and the coexistence of the predator and the prey reinforce the slogan of unity of various entities. Here the product is agentive in making such union possible.

6. The use of a different font of bigger size affords the salience of message conveyed through the main caption.

The quadrant of meaning potential, though provided this analysis with some important preliminary insights into the affordances of spatial design due to
location of images in the text, appears to be inadequate to account fully for the meaning potentials of this advertisement. The Indian spiritual tradition allocates specific locations for its icons in a frame and the advertisement seems to follow the pattern. This location of visual elements plays important role in construction of meaning in the text. The framework provided by the quadrant is insufficient to capture the affordances of spatial design in the Indian context.

The image of the consumer in the text appears apparently as secular. It is so in the sense that from the appearance of the person it is difficult to predict her social, religious and local identity, i.e. whether married or not, whether a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian, whether a North Indian or a South Indian. However, the design and framing of the text as discussed above makes it a typical Hindu text. The use of Devnagari\textsuperscript{xx} script to carry the product name can be considered a subtle index equating the Indian identity to a Hindu North Indian identity. The brand name, Wagh – Bakri Chai – also carries the same subtle indexicality related to Indian (Hindu) identity. Wagh is the Sanskrit word for ‘tiger’ but the colloquial Hindi word used for tiger is ‘sher’ which has its origin in non-Hindu etymology. Bakri is the Hindi word for ‘goat’. The use of a Sanskritised archaic Hindi word for the brand name has the affordance of representation of a cultural position with heavy bearing on the Hindu ideological position. Hence the Hindu identity is made to appear as ‘default’ in Indian context through the design of the text.

The dominant colour of the advertisement is Saffron – indexical of Hindu religious faith. The audio visual advertisement of the brand also makes use of
colour Saffron extensively (please see Appendix II). Saffron is the theme colour of the flag, Website of Hindu organizations including Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, the Indian political party which is the Hindu revivalist party of India: See Appendix III). The manifesto of all these organizations is to restore *Ramarajya* (the reign of Lord Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu on earth), the glorious days of *Hinduism* in India. The ideal *Ramarajya* cohabits the meek and the powerful, a theme represented in the logo in the advertisement.

Finally the *Hindutva* argument comes to a full circle with the mention of ‘fully vegetarian’ on the packaging once and in the text just next to the product. Vegetarianism is treated as an ideological issue in India propounded by Hindu religious organizations (see No 1, Appendix III). Vegetarianism is indexical of Hindu religious identity (determined by the socio-cultural conventions, generally members of the upper caste North/South Indian Hindu family are vegetarian and lower caste Hindus, Muslims and Christians eat non-vegetarian food).

The meaning-potentials mentioned above are social and political in nature and culture specific. Specific affordances of each element in the visual design along with the affordances of each mode influence the maker of the design in his/her selection of elements and modes to construct meaning in the advertisement. The ‘cultural resonances’ of the design as a complex combination of the modes of language and image, and framing reveal not only the interests of the designer but also the interest of the imagined target
audience (Kress 2004) thereby making the text an integral part of the 'popular culture' or the 'culture of the masses.'

A clarification needs to be given as to what we specifically mean by the term 'popular.' Owing its origin to the Latin word *popularis* (i.e. the people), the word 'popular' means 'of or relating to the general public; suitable to the majority.' In other words, something is known as popular when it is acceptable to the people or borne out of mass necessity or demand. In that sense, advertisements cannot be included under the term 'popular' for advertisements are not created on the basis of mass necessity or demand. However, in terms of their impact and influence over the community of viewers they can be called so. If Culture be classified in a simplified manner as the way of life of a certain group of people, advertisements have the potential to motivate, subliminally influence, modify and even ratify desires of the *popularis*.

John Alt (1982) refers to popular culture as the cultural process whereby people create or ascribe meaning to their activities and artifacts. According to him popular culture, as a process of ascribing meaning, is an act of symbolic interpretation and understanding, which is socially particular. As he observes, popular culture is not rooted in traditional social relations but is an integral part of the process of mass consumption, a part of the 'culture industry'. Mass consumption is a social process through which the culture is mass-mediated. Tony Bennet (1990) interprets popular literature as a form of entertainment generated by the duplication of ideology. According to him, this new form stands opposed to an older form of popular 'folk' art in which there is no
fundamental division between the addressees and the performers. In this popular 'folk' art meaning is democratically produced. By contrast, he argues, that this new 'mass' art of capitalist society addresses passive addressees that register meaning produced elsewhere. This explanation of the 'popular' art and literature fits very well when one thinks of advertisements as cultural texts. For example, though the convention of 'shared' experience of meaning making is emphasised as the expressed agenda of such texts, in actuality they seem to address passive addressees who are supposed to register meaning produced elsewhere. In doing so they seem to ‘invent’ a tradition, construct an “identity,” “imagine” a nation.’ (Ray 2003, p.ix)

However, there is an attitudinal overtone related to the notion of popular culture. Popular culture is of highly marked value, treated as essentially different from 'art.' It has a marked connotation or indexical of a particular culture. Popular culture is treated as culture of lesser aesthetic qualities. This has been given a stigmatized value by the 'connoisseurs' of 'art.' They consider popular culture as left over after subtracting traditional cultural forms from existing types of entertainment.

Aligned ideologically with the advertisement of *Wagh Bakri Chai* discussed above the Santogen Frabrics advertisement (No 2 – appeared in the Filmfare magazine in 1997) represents another human experience in which the 'Indian' culture and tradition is equated with Hindu culture and tradition. The design of this advertisement depends on a blend of tradition and modernity; tradition represents cultural root and belief while modernity represents progress as well as contemporaneity. The moment of consumption is merged into an
important social and personal moment, i.e. marriage. The social ritual represented here is both ‘traditional’ as well as ‘modern.’ A woman is the narrator of the event. She is recalling the incident of legitimization of her relation with her partner. It is not ordinary marriage. The system in which they get married is what used to be called *Gandharva Vivaha* in ancient India\(^{xxxii}\).

‘At the feet of the lord’ they ‘exchanged garlands the *sadhvis* gave\(^{xxxiii}\).’ The temple, the reference to God’s presence and the *sadhvis* make the marriage appear traditional. Yet the marriage portrayed here seems to be deeply linked to the contemporary idea of ‘living in.’ The reference to *yoga* as indexical of the Hindu faith is prevalent in this advertisement as well. The sadhvis are female *jogis* who are portrayed to be instrumental in the worldly union of the prakriti and the purusha principles to get what is considered the most perfect. While the idea of *yoga* is used to unite two opposing principles in the first advertisement, the same is used here to unite what is complementary in nature. The social concurrence of the man-woman relationship in the text is imposed through the act of mediation of *sadhvis*, the sacred agents of divinity to give the currently ‘unacceptable’ form of conjugal union the gloss of tradition and legitimacy within the *Hindu* tradition by glorifying the nation’s past.

The man portrayed in the text is shown to be deeply rooted in ‘Indian’ tradition. Yet he is radically modern in his acceptance of a ‘traditionally’ unacceptable marriage. This blend of the tradition and the modern appears to come from the apparel that he is wearing. The man here breaks the code of conventional dressing by wearing a formal suit with an *uttariya*\(^{xxxiv}\). This *uttariya* is an important part of the traditional Hindu male attire. The black suit
is traditionally worn by the western/westernized (Christian) bridegroom. In his attire both traditions find a balanced coexistence.

The coexistence of tradition and modernity forms a pastiche in the advertisement. The visual background of the text shows a huge idol of a bull, Nandi, the carrier of Lord Shiva the foremost among the Hindu Trinity. The ancient black sandstone structure of the bull and the old sandstone parapets of the temple which is the representative location of the text bring under reference a glorious, rich and ancient cultural inheritance into the contemporary. The visual and linguistic references to ancient Indian temple architecture and the social system, coupled with the references to the modern system of values which are rather global than local, form the pastiche here. Each component of the textual design is carefully chosen keeping in mind its socio-cultural connotation. A composition comprising heterogeneous symbols from varied cultural resources helps recreate a new meaning for an already existing socio-cultural system.

This re-created meaning is a study in contrast. The constancy and dignity from the ancient times is juxtaposed along with the freedom and individuality of the modern living. The decontextualised ancient temple is indexical of Hinduism and the archetypal consumer seems to refer to the Hindu identity. This decontextualisation of a form of Indian art turns it into an icon. However, the significance of art as icon, here, is restricted to induce cultural and ideological meaning into the setting in general and the consumer product in particular. The presentation of convention and tradition with a re-created meaning renders an aura of romanticism into the text. The romanticism of the
text has its reference in the mention of the past and an attempt to glorify it much along the Gandian and the Nehruvian way. *The discovery of India* project seems to be at work here as well. In its use of the ‘glorious’ past the advertisement creates a verbal ‘demand’ addressed towards the addressee by creating a sense of nostalgia and nationality which seems to be the ‘Hindu’ by default in case of India. By placing the woman as the narrator of the text and *sadhvis* as spiritual mediators to bring about the union between the inner and outer it creates the sacrosanct inner spiritual space.

The following three advertisements (No 3 appearing in Femina September 2003, No 4 appearing in Femina September 2003 and No 5 appearing in October 2005) in also derive their arguments regarding Indian spirituality with reference to Yoga to represent the Indianness in which the *Hindu* identity is treated as the default (Please see P. IL 5-6).

The verbal components of these texts are as follows. The text begins with the caption ‘Awaken your spirituality’ followed by an array of pictures of designer pendants followed by the narration –

A collection of spiritual jewellery from Inter Gold. The 21 *Rudraksha* pendants, studded with diamonds and precious stones come with a *pothi* (booklet) explaining its *spiritual* significance. Inter Gold, India’s largest diamond jewellery company, is part of the Rosyblue Group – the world’s largest diamond manufacturing company’ [emphasis added].

The idea of spirituality mentioned in the text has an obvious reference to the Hindu spirituality of particular kind. Even the monotheist Hindu groups are not included into its target audience. The reference to *Yoga* shown present in the
two advertisements analysed above is subtly present here too as indexical of the Hindu identity.

The Sanskrit word *rudraksha* is formed out of two words *Rudra* (the name of Lord Shiva as the destroyer; literally means the ‘violent’ one) and *Aksha* (meaning eye as well as axis). The word *rudraksha* stands for ‘the eye of Rudra or Lord Shiva.’ According to the Hindu mythology *rudraksha* was created out of Lord Shiva’s tears. As described in the *Bhagavat Puran*, Lord Shiva destroyed the *Mayasura* along with his two brothers upon the request of all gods including Brahma, Vishnu and Indra, the king of gods. He went to meditate after destroying the *Tripurasura/ Mayasura*. When he opened his eyes after the meditation, tears fell from his eyes. The drops of tears were transformed into *rudraksha* trees. These bids are believed by Hindus to have the highest cosmic power. The qualities and glory of *rudraksha* is described in details in the 25th Chapter of the *Vidyeshwar Samhita* of the *Shivamahapuran*. *Shivamahapuran* is a Hindu text believed to be created by Lord Shiva himself. It is also considered to be the only means to help a believer in the *Kaliyug* to reach out for Lord Shiva by way of cleansing one’s mental and spiritual impurities and *demonic* tendencies, that are the characteristics of the age. This Hindu mythical reference is of particular importance so far as the intended meaning of this advertisement is concerned.

The allusion to *Rudraksha* affords the text its multilayered meaning-potential laden with heavily Hindu cultural reference. The myth regarding Rudraksha as the manifestation of the cosmic power belongs to the Hindu collective
knowledge. The text seems to exclude that part of audience that falls outside the periphery of this collective knowledge, i.e. the non-Hindus and subaltern Hindu groups who are not given access to this knowledge. In addition, the expensive product, i.e. diamond and gold, may materialistically also represent this lack of access. While the upper-caste Hindus are privileged with the Hindu collective knowledge, their economic capacity allows the willing member of the group to possess the expensive as well as exclusive product as the manifestation of the abstract knowledge. It is to be noted here that not only individuals of the non-Hindu and subaltern Hindus are excluded from the target audience of the text, but also those belonging to the target caste among the Hindus who lack the required economic capacity. The process of ‘otherisation’ and subsequent exclusion in this context takes place on the epistemological as well as financial grounds.

In ‘ideal’ level of the quadrant of meaning potential the pictures of the iconic pendants are given equal salience. The pendants represent different gods who were involved with Lord Shiva’s act of destruction of the Tripurasura and restoration of the divine order. The gods mentioned in the advertisement are

1. **Vakratunda** – one of the eight incarnations of Lord Ganesha – which means ‘one with a crooked trunk’ – this incarnation is considered to be ‘the absolute as the aggregate of bodies’ or the bindu brahma

2. **Mahadeva** – one of the eleven forms of Rudra – refers to an important epithet of Lord Shiva that is manifested through his three heads representing aghora (right), soumya (centre) and shakti (left – and the feminine principle).
3. **Durga** represented through the pendant title *Om Namo Durgaya* – the consort of Lord Shiva and also the manifestation of **Shakti** represented through one of the three faces of **Mahadeva**.

Interestingly this pendant is placed next to the **Mahadeva** pendant in the advertisement and significantly placed also at the left of it, the position meant to be occupied by the wife in Hindu rituals.

4. **Omkara** – is considered to be the most important sound in the Hindu belief – it is also called *Nada Brahman* (the primeval sound) or *pranava* (something that runs through *prana*, the life itself) according to the *Mandukya Upanishad*. *Om itiyetadaksharam idam sarvam* – ‘all this, whatever is visible, whatever is cognizable, whatever can come within the purview of sense-perception, inference or verbal testimony, whatever can be comprehended under the single term, creation - all this is Om’.

5. **Purushottama** – the Sanskrit word is derived out of combination of two words *Purusha* and *uttam* to signify the ‘supreme being.’ This is also the name that is used in *Bhagavad Gita* to represent Lord *Krishna*, the omnipotent absolute cosmic entity that is beyond *kshar* (changeable) and *akshar* (non-changeable). It is to be noted here that this term is also used to describe *Rama* of *Ramayana* in the phrase *maryada purushottam*

6. **Ravi Anshuman** refers to the Sun who is considered in the Hindu mythology to be the only manifested form of the divine and an aspect of Lord Shiva and Vishnu respectively.

7. **Samba Shiva** refers to idea of Shiva according to the **Advaita** thoughts of Hinduism. The name refers to Lord Shiva accompanied
by goddess Durga – i.e sa – amba – or with Amba, an epithet of goddess Durga. The name Samba also may have its origin in the Sanskrit word Swayammbhu that means ‘originated from the self.’

8. Shrinathji refers to Vishnu – owing its origin in two words – Shri (goddess Laxmi) and nath (husband/consort) – i.e. the consort of goddess Laxmi.

9. Shri Ganeshaya Namaha – to invoke Lord Ganesha, also called siddhidata, the bestower of success.


11. Madanmohanji is another name of Lord Krishna – refers to his quality of enchanting Madan, the Indian god of love.

Pendants, as established icons of Hindu belief, are arranged in the ‘Ideal’ level of the quadrant of meaning potential in the advertisement. The ‘given’ and ‘new’ demarcations seem to have merged since all the icons are treated as the culturally ‘given’ though the materialistic availability and consequent consumability of these icons as products appears to be ‘new.’ However, the cultural and religious loftiness of these icons as agents to bring about spiritual upliftment for the consumer qualify them to be placed at the ‘ideal’ level of the quadrant. The last component of this level is another caption in Sanskrit which is indexical of Hinduism, i.e. svayambhu, Sarvadevapriya Rudraksha, to mean ‘Rudraksha, emanating from the self, dear to all gods.’ The icons are made a part of the ‘Given/ideal’ or the default. The font used for the last caption immediately reminds one of the Devnagari script. The word rudraksha is written with a capital ‘r’ in likeness with the way the word ‘God’ is written in English to refer to God, the creator according to the Christian belief. The
‘real’ level of the quadrant is made to give ‘factual’ information about the nature of the product being displayed. The reference to pothi (booklet) in this portion is indexical of Hinduism and its ancient origin. The traditional knowledge, treated as sacred, of the ancient times is preserved in pothis. The use of the Sanskrit word for ‘booklet’ is used to render cultural authenticity to the advertisement. The reference to the ‘inner spiritual space’ as unique and central to the Indian identity is obvious. The intended meaning of the advertisement subsumes a common cultural [religious] knowledge and faith regarding the special nature of Rudraksha as cosmic material available on earth to bring about spiritual salvation in the Kaliyug. The idea of Kaliyug is the Hindu idea of an era in which the boundaries (particularly of castes) imposed by the Hindu religious anusasan (principles) are taken to be disintegrated, the spirituality in individuals is believed to have taken a back seat unlike other ages where righteousness prevailed. Hence is the importance of this prescription asking the individual to awaken his/her spirituality. The spirituality spoken of in this advertisement refers to the obvious Hindu identity excluding all other faiths. The colour scheme of this advertisement, like the colour scheme of the two other advertisements analysed above, is also saffron, another index of the Hindu faith.

The product logo is given at the ‘new/real’ part of the quadrant. The Logo is allotted the highest salience through its central placement in the linear sequence of the time-based modes of words. In spite of being a space-based mode, the image of the logo is made a part of the verbal element thereby rendering the verbal mode the affordances of image. The logo (p. IL6) immediately reminds one of the bilva patra (the bel leaves), the trifoliate that is
an essential ingredient of Hindu rituals being considered the most liked by Lord Shiva. This trifoliate leaf symbolically represents

1. the Indian male trinity (brahma, vishnu and mahesh) and the idea of trikal related to them
2. three eyes of lord shiva
3. Trishakti (Volition, action and knowledge represented by Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati),
4. three lingas and
5. three syllables of Omkar, the primeval sound, i.e. /a/, /u/ and /m/.

The logo can also be taken as an abstract representation of Ganesha, an important god of the Hindu Pantheon. The son of Lord Shiva and Parvati, Ganesha is considered to be the master of mystic wisdom and of art. He receives the first offering in the Hindu rituals since he possesses the power to remove obstacle from human lives; this attribute is recognizable in one of his names, namely Vighnesh or Vighneswara. Lord Ganesha is also considered the supposed writer of the Indian epic Mahabharata of which the Gita is a part. Let us have a look at the following iconic representations of Lord Ganesha (P. IL 5) The logo aptly fits the inherent Hindutva (Hinduness) of the textual argument. It wraps up the argument that initiated with the first caption of the text, i.e. ‘Awaken your spirituality.’

Finally the Indian indigenousness is given global authenticity by way of the products’ declared association with well-known multinational diamond and jewellery company Rosyblue group. The corporate caption of the group is
‘more than diamonds.’ The Indian Hindu cultural value expressed through the iconic pendants in the advertisement is what can be called the ‘more’ element that the product promises.

The next advertisement (No 4) follows a similar design while structuring the advertisement (Please see P. II 7-8). Notably, here the ‘given’ and ‘new’ positions seem to merge in the ‘ideal’ plane as well as the real plane of the quadrant. Such merging of fields in the quadrants may denote an absolute superiority of the cultural ‘given’ and the cultural ‘real’ only with reference to the ‘given.’ If this is so, the cultural given functions as the antecedent of the cultural ‘real.’ The ‘real’ derives its significance solely from the cultural ‘given.’ The iconic ‘eye’ that represents Shakti or the Hindu divine feminine principle is the most salient figure in the advertisement. It is placed in the topmost frame at the ‘ideal’ plane of the quadrant. The caption goes as follows – ‘the power of Laxmi, Durga, Saraswati in your home this festive season. Get these specially compiled devotional music CDs free with an annual subscription to Femina and Filmfare.’ [Emphasis original] a closer look at the spatial design will help one understand the meaning potential in this advertisement.

The affordances as discussed in the earlier chapter, is a quality that enables modes to play significant representational role in construction of messages and design of texts as resources for meaning making owing to their materiality. However, such intrinsic enabling aspects of modes are rather dynamic than fixed. Affordance of a mode is subject to modification in keeping with changes in the new media of communication and information exchange (Kress 2003). For example image, icons, architectural and other three-
dimensional forms are space-based modes and the materiality of these modes determines their affordances creating possibilities of meaning-making through spatial distribution of simultaneously present elements. In advertisement no 2 the simultaneous placement of the ancient temple, Nandi, sadhvis, and a couple aspiring to be united in marriage creates the context for meaning making in general in which the directed reading path leads to creation of the Hindu identity of the participants. In the advertisement no 3, the iconic ‘eye,’ the space-based mode, has been given the highest salience among structural elements by its placement at the topmost space in the ‘ideal’ level of the quadrant. The highest salience of the image is made to create the affordance that forms ‘demand’ or the reading path ploughing the readers towards the intended Hindu meaning of the text.

The affordance subsumes shared knowledge and the religio-cultural affordance of the bhuvaneshwari myth. According to Hindu mythology Bhuvaneshwari is considered to be the Mother Goddess of the Earth or Universe. The Hindu Trinity, i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar is considered to have received inspiration from this primal goddess living Manidweep, her abode of light, to begin the sacred duty of ‘creation,’ ‘preservation of life thus created’ and ‘destruction.’ No temple is assigned to Bhuvaneshwari as she is believed to be eternally present in all life forms. Her power is manifested through different divine forms such as Durga, Laxmi, Saraswati, Kali, Sati etc. In the advertisement the iconic Shakti seems to envelop the essences of its three main manifestations such as Laxmi, Durga and Saraswati and therefore invoking the myth of Bhuvaneshwari by implication. While the ‘simultaneous placement’ of space-based modes
determine the affordances of modes in particular design, it is ‘the temporal ordering’ of elements (Kress 2003) in a linear sequence in case of time-based modes, such as speech, music and/or written texts that functions as the meaning-making resource.

The affordances inherent in the materiality of each mode shape the potential for representational and communicational action by their users’ making a contemporary text interactive and bidirectional in essence (Kress, 2003: 5). For example the names of forms of the feminine divine principles are placed in an order in which *Durga* occupies the central position with *Laxmi* and *Saraswati* given peripheral position. This order of arrangements of names corresponds to the popular image of the female trinity of Hindu faith (p.IL 8).

However, the linear ordering of the three names of Hindu goddesses and their spatial placement just beneath the iconic eye determine affordances of the space-based mode (i.e. the eye and the images on the cover of the CD) and time-based mode (the words and description) as organic whole of the design. The spatial design thus is responsible for creation of a position of argument that is ideologically Hindu. However, the feminine trinity of the Hindu religion is not complete by itself. The divine forms of the female trinity complement the male trinity (Frame 4) as their consorts. *Laxmi*, the goddess of wealth and prosperity is considered to be the consort of *Vishnu*, the preserver. *Durga* is the consort of *Maheshwara*, the destroyer. *Saraswati*, the goddess of cosmic knowledge and the mother of the *Vedas*, is considered to be the consort of *Brahma*. The representation of the two trinities can be seen as complementary. Nevertheless, this intended meaning is available to readers
only through the shared cultural knowledge and beliefs. Each mode present in a text compels the readers into making specific commitments about meaning for their varied affordances (Ibid). For example the temporal ordering of proper nouns such as Laxmi, Durga, Saraswati in the advertisement corresponding to the spatial organization of deities in the Hindu feminine trinity creates the religious affordance leading the reader into decoding the advertisement only in terms of an obviously Hindu mythical association. The ‘you’ in the advertisement consequently is aligned with the Hindu identity.

The iconic images, symbols used in designing the above texts through ‘the distinct representational and communicational affordances of modes’ can be seen to ‘lead to their functional specialisation’ in combination of their ‘culture specific repeated use over time’ as well as ‘through use by individual sign-makers and/or designers driven by particular ‘interestxxxix’ (Kress 2003: 46 and Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001: 64). ‘Functional specialisation’ can be described as the inherent attributes of specific modes that creates their affordances for being used in a text conveying specific meaning while guiding the reader with resources in the meaning-making process of a generic text. The functional specialisation of affordances consigns functional load on each mode used in the text’s spatial design depending on culture and social domain in which the mode is contextualised in (Kress 2003: 36, 46). For example the functional load in advertisements 1, 3 and 4 lies predominantly on the mode of image rather than on written language while the functional load of advertisement 2 is distributed between the space-based modes and time-based modes in a balanced way. It is to be noted that each mode has different affordances or ‘meaning potential’ and in itself ‘is a partial bearer of
meaning only’ (Kress and Mavers, 2005: 172). Therefore it can be said that the ‘meaning potential’ for the entire text arises out of ‘motivated manipulation’ of different modes that are used in the design of the text. Kress and Mavers (2005) observe that ‘the different material make-up and differing cultural histories’ of each mode is the source of varying affordances of each mode (172). Hence modes as resources for representation in communication act as tools for constructing position/stance, subjectivity, directed meaning and/or reading path in a text. The selection of modes in design of a text, therefore, is an issue with serious ideological implication. The affordances of modes and the role of ideology in their selection for representation in particular advertisements appears to result in their being used as ‘apparatus’ rather than simple resources for construction of meaning within the ‘Culture Industry’ of a particular society.

Owing to the multi-layered meaning potential that each mode is endowed with, modes form the semiotic resources of particular culture. However, semiotic resources are not limited to modes alone. Actually semiotic resources can be considered as ‘actions and artefacts’ used for the purpose of communication (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). Semiotic resources seem to derive affordances from their ‘theoretical semiotic potential constituted by all their past uses…’ and therefore depends on social as well as cultural contexts governing the appropriateness of use and interest of the users (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 4). Van Leeuwen connects the concept of ‘semiotic potential’ to that of affordance which according to Gibson (1979) stems from the ‘observable property’ of a given mode (cited in Van Leeuwen, 2005: 4). For example, the reference to Padma in the following advertisement (No 5) can be read in alignment with
reference to the Hindu iconography in which the Padma or the lotus is considered to be a polyvalent symbol (please see p. IL 9-10). Padma has religious association with Vishnu, Brahma, Laxmi, Saraswati and Durga, divine forms of the Hindu trinities. The semiotic potential of the lotus symbol lies chiefly in its use since time immemorial to denote particular ideas of specific religious importance. Taken as the symbol of spiritual beauty and perfection, the eyes of gods are compared to lotus. Rudraksha was born when Lord Shiva opened his eyes after meditation and drops of tear feel from his ‘lotus-shaped eyes.’ The deity of Durga holds a lotus in her hand along with weapons given by different gods. The lotus originates from the navel of Lord Vishnu during his Yoganidra [the Yogic sleep]. The fully bloomed lotus is the seat of Brahma, the creator. Its origin in the mud and its quality of remaining untouched by mud signifies a promise of spiritual bloom and upliftment according to the Hindu belief. The polyvalent symbolism associated with the idea of the lotus within the premises of Hindu faith has been used as the semiotic resource in this advertisement. The woman sitting in a yogic position at the centre of the ideal level of the quadrant with the image of a golden lotus at the background invokes the Hindu religious association immediately. This figure is given the highest salience in the design of the text embodying the cosmic power and subsequent empowerment owing to the lotus at the background creating the demand or the reading path for the intended meaning of the text. She can be taken as the recipient of cosmic benevolence too. The caption – i.e. ‘May the lotus, the seat of all gods and goddesses, bestow you with prosperity and spiritual enlightenment’ – makes a similar promise. The ‘you’ or the target addressee of this advertisement appears to belong to an obviously Hindu identity.
It is to be noted here that each mode, though playing a crucial role in representation and communication of meaning act in conjunction with each other as part of the unified whole in the design of the text. As said above modes in multimodal ensembles are governed by distinct logic resulting in different affordances. The logic of time and linearity governs the organisation of writing whereas the logic of space and simultaneity governs the organisation of image (Kress, 2003: 1-2). Simultaneity and linearity of temporal succession are the materiality or materials property of space-based and time-based modes respectively. However, while the verbal elements as time-based modes follow the linear succession to create the affordances, they also act as space-based mode, i.e. visuals. The selection of font or graphemes for English words in advertisements to render likeness in appearance with *devnagri* script seems to confer on verbal modes the affordances of the visual mode. Consequently, words are made to carry indexicality of particular ideological position apart from their meaning as in case of advertisements discussed above.

The ‘real’ level of the quadrant offers a narration regarding the availability of icons representing spiritual power of various kinds. The brand name, *Padmasutra* meaning ‘the doctrine of lotus’ aligns the brand with available Hindu scripture. Though as a symbol lotus is central also in the Buddhist faith, the advertisement plays on its Hindu association. The exclusive construction of the Hindu association of this polyvalent symbol is done through representative icons in the advertisement including *Padma Ganapati, Padma Laxmi, Padma Durga, Padmasana* (referring to Yoga Mudra), *Padma*
Advertisements as a genre of contemporary discourse make use of
affordances of various modes and a variety of semiotic resources to represent
culture, ideology and social relations through the design of the texts. The
design of contemporary advertisements carries argumentation mainly through
visual representation (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996). The accent or the tone
of advertisements becomes a mark of personality and identity in the text. The
accent is related to geographical and historical displacement or
‘deterritorialized locations’ (Naficy 2001). This penetrates the structure of the
text (i.e. advertisements in this study) from narrative, visual style, characters
to the overall theme of the text. These texts can also be visualized as dialects,
since they represent a different ‘grammar’ and level of understanding. Such
indices of narrative are discernible all over the text, influencing the
comprehension and interpretation of it, constituting the affordances of various
modes in the design of the text.

Several components of the accented style, together with their constituting
elements, are listed and exemplified in the appendix. For example, visual style
is a component that combines several constituting elements or general
characteristics as well as aspects of visual grammar. A close look at the
design of each text may unfold the underlying principle of their organisation
and mutual relationship. Naficy (2001) observes that the visual style
‘simultaneously exhibits spontaneity and anxious formality; [it is] less driven
by action than by words and emotions; [it has an] uneven pacing,
incompleteness, etc.’ (Appendix A). Under visual style, other components such as mise-en-scène, setting, motivated props, lighting scheme, filming style and framing also have to be taken into consideration. This form of illustrating each theoretical point allows the reader, even if s/he is not familiarized with exilic and diasporic film-forms, to follow didactically the progression of such texts. It also becomes a useful tool for Cultural Studies, and other multidisciplinary studies analysing other media of visual representation. In certain advertisements of the post-1992 India some attributes of ‘accented cinema’ can be identified particularly in points of racial, communal and gendered disterritorialisation and the representation of a ‘nostalgic, even fetishized, prior culture – before contamination by the West’ (p. 31).

This ‘multiperpectival’ representation is what Naficy (2001) calls the ‘third optique’ that is ‘tolerant of ambiguity, ambivalence and chaos’ (p.31). One can be situated within a country, a nation, even a social group, or in another country or nation or group, nonetheless there is the ‘border’ issue, a real physical or abstract border that has to be crossed or sustained. Besides being dangerous, it is a space of ‘ambiguity, ambivalence, and chaos’ (Ibid). The films that portray this aspect are ‘hybridized and experimental’ (p.32). Their characters are ‘shifters’. With this reference Naficy makes use of a linguistic term. The pronoun ‘I’ becomes a ‘you’ according to the context of the utterance. In this process a character can become the subject representing the minority, border-crossing ally or the patron representing the ‘nation’, a person who grants entry of the representative minority to the fold of the mainstream, depending on the character’s place and function. These
characters are 'split, double, crossed, and hybridized' in their identity. Similar patterns in visual representation of race, culture, community, gender and ethnicity can be found in contemporary Indian advertisements. In this context the patron may or may not be present overtly as part of design of the text. Nevertheless, the oblique yet ubiquitous presence of such a position may be felt palpably while making sense of the text. However, such similarities are driven by different motivational considerations while making use of 'aesthetics of provisionality' and certainly not 'experimental,' 'imperfect' or amateurish nor is it 'artisanally' produced as the 'Third' or 'Accented' cinema.

As observed by Naficy (2001) the notion of self and the nation ultimately leading to the ethics and politics of identity are the main foci of accented films. This seems to be true for some advertisements as well. In performed identity, fear and freedom permeates the text. The boundaries in relation to 'minority' or the 'other' seems to be ever growing. In most advertisements the category 'other' is almost invisible. Texts with an apparent secular appearance carry subtle references to specific identity as the 'default.' The 'other' and its representation, when made present within the textual design, tends to exemplify defensive, resistive, subversive and even submissive strategies. They seem to rely on 'differences' of dominant paradigms in the societies they inhabit. Filmmakers/ authors/text designers tend to use ironic devices to subvert such as doppelgänger [German = double walker] figures or a shadow figure or a mirror image as present in Oscar Wilder's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). These are performative strategies. The text-designer tries to represent what Derrida (1982) calls the ‘différrance’ or what lies in between, containing both the idea of difference and the process of deferral of meaning. In Derrida’s words,
the signified concept is never present in and of itself in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself. Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts (Derrida 1982, 1996: 30).

Such texts seem to dwell upon the idea of ‘otherness.’ Consequently the text reveals a kind of overlapping identity in different forms ‘of fragmented narratives, consisting of ellipses, ruptures, and generic juxtapositions’ (p. 271). Biographical elements and feelings of this otherness are interwoven in the text. The advertisement No 6 for hairspray represents the archetypal consumer, i.e. the ‘you’ the specific religious or cultural identity of whom is not apparently clear. The representative individual in this text is not carrying any explicit marker of cultural or religious identity. The most salient figure in the visual design of the text is the representative individual while the next degree of salience is given to the product. In terms of salience the image of the driving license held by someone invisible in the frame figures. However the least salient image of the textual design of this advertisement carries the most crucial cultural index so far as the identity of the representative individual is concerned. The level of the ‘given/real’ represents the ‘driving license’ in which the name of the individual is partially shown. The first name that is visible in the driving license is ‘Aditi’ which is a common Hindu name with dense religious references. *Aditi* is the wife of the sage Kashyap and the mother of seven primary celestial beings known as *Adityas*, as referred to in the *Rigveda*. However, *Taittiriya Samhita* mentions eight Adityas. Major Hindu gods, such as Surya (the Sun), Varun (the god of water), Indra (the king of gods), and Vishnu (the preserver), are considered to be her sons according to *Puranic* accounts of Hinduism. The obvious Hindu cultural connotation of the name, thereby, subtly establishes a Hindu identity in the
apparently secular image of the representative customer in the text. The information regarding the identity of the individual is placed in the assigned position of the ‘Given/Real’ plane of the quadrant. The placement of her name in the ‘given/real’ plane has the affordance of the socio-cultural identity of the individual.

As opposed to this position of the liberated and independent Indian women, there is another position of the traditional Indian women as the projection of the female divinity. This position of Indian women is full ‘of compassion, of love’ and ‘the crowning excellence of God's creation’ as Bankim describes her in his *Kishnakanter Will*. The advertisement (No 7 – please see p. IL 12) featured Smriti Irani, a face that earned familiarity by playing *Tulsi*, the lead role in a Mega-Soap *Kyun Ki Saas Bhi Kabhu Bahu Thi* which was Asia’s the most watched and awarded Television show during the time it was being telecast. This has been the longest running mega-serial in the history of Indian Television creating the highest TRP for more than eight years in its nine years of telecast tenure. Smriti Irani became synonymous with *Tulsi Virani*, the archetypal Indian [Hindu] woman who holds the welfare of her family as the topmost priority of her life. The name *Tulsi* in Sanskrit means ‘incomparable’ or ‘unique.’ The *Tulsi* plant [basil] is considered to be sacred and holy for Hindus for its association with Lord Vishnu. The Holy union between Lord Vishnu and *Tulsi* is commemorated by Hindus through a ritual called *Tulsi Vivah*, held on the day after Kartik Ekadasi and goes on for five days. Considered as an incarnation of Mahalaxmi according the Hindu mythology *Tulsi* was born as Vrinda and married to a demon called Jalandhar. She prayed to Lord Vishnu for the safety and protection of her husband from
other gods. Formidable as Jalandhar became as a result of this, Lord Vishnu was requested by other gods to aid them in destruction of the demon. Lord Vishnu assumed the form of Jalandhar and came to live with Tulsi. However, Tulsi gets to know about this after Jalandhar was killed. She cursed Lord Vishnu and He became a stone [Saligam shila] and she sacrificed herself in the pyre with her dead husband’s body. From the ashes emerged the Tulsi plant. A Shaligram Shila is always adorned by a Tulsi leaf during hindu rituals. In another mythical account Laxmi was born as Tulasī in the home of Dharmadwaja and Madhvi and was brought up to be a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. She was even married to Lord Vishnu. In order to remain always associated with each other she turned herself into a River called Gandaki upon Vishnu’s suggestion and Vishnu began to reside in form of Shaligram Shila in the river. From the hair of Tulasi emerged the Tulsi plant, a necessary ingredient for the worship of Vishnu in general with its leaf being the sole ornament for the stone. Incidentally the Shaligram shilas [the ammonite fossils] are only available in River Gandaki. The Holy basil represents purity, serenity, harmony, luck, happiness and good health. Hence is created not only the typical Hindu nature of a documentary-like advertisement but also an underlying Brahminical stance that goes in to the formation of specific subject position. The advertisement features her as Smriti Irani though her appearance is that of Tulasī. The following two pictures will demonstrate this point.

Much like a documentary the advertisement takes us through Smriti’s visit to different departments of the Company. After crosschecking each step in the manufacturing process, she declares it safe for her parivaar’s [family]
consumption. It must be stated here that the idea of parivaar is not only very relevant in the serial but also highly central as the metaphoric unit for the Hindu social structure that BJP projects. The Hindu rightwing groups are together called the Sangh Parivaar. Smriti Irani is also associated with the BJP actively. The advertisement was made and telecast at a time when the BJP was running the Indian Central Government. The appearance of Smriti in the advertisement as a typical Hindu married woman with sindoor and mangalsutra much in line with Tulsi of the mythology who prayed to Lord Vishnu for the security and protection of her husband from other god’s malevolence, establishes a subtle Hindu reference as central to the nature of the Indian nation.

Smriti Irani also appears in other advertisements in her fictional persona of Tulsi. One such advertisement is of the Star Tripple Five Namak (Salt) (No 8 – p. IL 13). This audiovisual advertisement was telecast in SAB TV (an ancillary Channel of the SET) in 2005 and 2006. Smriti Irani appears in this advertisement not only in her fictional persona of Tulsi of Kyun Ki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi, but also as the protector of the home from the corrupting influence of the outside. Purity is the focal point of this particular advertisement. The narrative plot of the advertisement is as follows. The dishonest milkman comes with impure milk. When challenged by the lady of the home about the purity of his product he boasts of the impurity running rampant ‘everywhere’ in the outside world by saying – ‘zamana fifty fifty ka hai, sou taka suddh to namak bhi na mile’[‘this is an age of impurity, i.e. 50% essence with 50% impurity, even salt available is not 100% pure’— translation mine]. The lady dismisses the milkman’s claim about the age as a blatant lie.
The man vows to shave half of his moustache, the typical mark of masculinity in Indian context, if he can be proven wrong. The lady then brings out a packet of salt and starts describing its ingredients to prove its purity. Through her argument she proves the milkman wrong. As vowed by the milkman, half of his moustache is automatically uprooted as the lady makes her point.

The appearance of the advertisement is highly comical. However, beneath this comical appearance is hidden its Hindu argument. The man represents the outside world and the woman represents the sacrosanct home. When the milkman is seen pouring milk into the container the lady comes from inside the home. The man is positioned near the threshold of the projected home throughout the narrative of the advertisements, as can be seen in the first slide below. Both the man’s and the lady’s attire and accessories clearly points to their Hindu identity. The man is wearing a band in his right hand, formed of the holy red and yellow thread that is tied at the time of special worship sessions offered to the female deity. He also wears a talisman on his neck tied in red thread, another token of his Hinduness. The lady is married and is wearing all markers of a Hindu married woman – i.e. sindoor [vermillion], red and gold bangles, mangalsutra and a red saree with golden border. In her righteousness she is made to represent the ‘holy and venerable’ Hindu woman in the text, eventhough the product she argues for is a necessary commodity for everyone’s use.

As she explains the five unique qualities of the product, something magical happens. She assumes the pose of barabhay – i.e. ‘the blessings of assurance’ (translation mine). As can be seen in the following stills, everytime
she mentions an aspect of the product, a golden star comes out of her hand in *barabhay mudra* to enter the product. This gives the lady a likeness with the Durga Image who is the preserver. Bankim’s Mother in *Anandamath* assumes the form of benevolent Durga after the battle is won. Reduplicating the Tulsi myth, Smriti Irani in his fictional appearance of *Tulsi* also functions as the protector of the inner core of the nation from impure infiltration from the materialistic interventions of the outside. Her magical power of protection punishes the man trying to corrupt the purity of the inner core by magically uprooting half of his moustache; a probable reference to emasculation of the dishonest man by the woman who is ‘the crowning excellence of God's creation’ as Bankim describes her as. However much empowering the woman may appear within this text, her power to protect is restricted to a boundary defined by strong patriarchal norms: *Na sthree swatantram arhati* [women are not fit for independence- translation mine] – as Manu verdicts for Indian Hindu women. Her autonomy is but a myth, a restricted licence to be herself on terms of patriarchal conformity and not otherwise. The image of the Indian woman, portrayed thus, strictly adheres to code of conduct for the Indian women according to the *Sanatan Dharma*, or the orthodox Hindu way.

However, there is an alternative femininity available in ancient Indian literature. This alternative femininity is what accords some extraordinary women the highest honour in the society who seem to have violated the social norms meant for women. For example, the idea of salvation just by remembering the five great archetypal chaste women is suggestive of an alternative code of chastity acknowledged by the Hindu society (Bhaduri 2011). The sloka, assuming the shape of a proverb is as follows:
Ahalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara, Mandodari tatha, Panchakanyah smarennityang, mahapapaka nashiniih

[Re membering every day the five women, namely Ahalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara and Mandodari, cleanses one of the gravest of sins – translation mine]

Ahalya, wife of Gautam Muni, had a sexual encounter with Indra, the king of gods and turned into stone by being cursed by her husband. She was brought back to her human form by the touch of Lord Rama. Draupadi, quite contrary to the conventional norms, was married to five men. Kunti also had sexual encounters with four gods: the first encounter with Surya, the sungod, was out of childish curiosity while the other three encounters with Dharma, Pavan and Indra were the result of conscious decision to beget children. Tara was first married to Bali and remarried Sugriv after Bali’s death. Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, remarried Bibhishana after Ravana’s death. All the five women mentioned in the above sloka violated their respective traditional gender roles in terms of chastity in their own contexts. Such was there greatness that the social system had to device an alternative code of chastity for these women. Such an exception is also a commentary on the openness of the ancient Indian society regarding the women’s question which seemed to be lost in the passage of time. The Brahminical patriarchy and the Sangh combine carefully evades this code of alternative Indian femininity. Instead, they appropriate the one that confines women in the sacrosanct space of ‘home,’ along Manu’s verdict – Na stri swatantram arhati – i.e. no women is fit for independence.

The representational matrix of the above two advertisements, is also replicated in the advertisement of Aquasure Water Purifier (No 9 – p. IL 14).
Smriti Irani is the central character of this advertisement also. This advertisement was telecast in Star Plus channel in mid 2005. This is the same channel in which Tulsi used to regularly appear in Kyun ki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi. In this advertisement, too, Smriti Irani appears in her fictional persona of Tulsi Virani. It is interesting to note that though advertisements are made to act as fillers of the arbitrarily imposed gaps within the time of entertainment, by employing such characters in the central role of an advertisement campaign enhances its credibility as an integral part of the media. It also augments possibilities of inclusion of advertisements as part of the ideological network of the media by extension of its fictional argument through common motifs of characterisation.

Quite a few subtle cultural references used as part of this text help establishing the typical Hindu nature of the text, though the product is highly global. The idea of ‘safe’ drinking water comes to India with open market economy of the nineties. For example, bottled mineral water was first introduced in Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1965 by an Italian company entitled Bisleri Ltd. In 1969 Parle bought the brand and began selling the product in glass bottles in the Indian market. However, the market for this product boomed only after 1995 with Ramesh J. Chauhan of Parle Company expanding the business and ‘the turnover has multiplied more than 20 times over a period of 10 years and the average growth rate has been around 40% over this period’\textsuperscript{xlii}. A process of adjustment of the local to fit into the global is evident in the text. For example Smriti Irani enters the house of the host family with the signature tune of Kyun Ke Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi in the background. She enters the household when the lady of the host family is
busy boiling milk. Since Tulsi is a familiar character in ‘all’ Indian households, the little girl of the family immediately recognises her and draws her mother’s attention to Tulsi’s arrival (Picture 3). It is important to note that when Tulsi enters the house the milk is overflowing: boiling milk to the point of being overflowed is a Hindu ritual when the newly-wed bride enters the house of her husband for the first time. A newly-wed bride is considered as the Laxmi for a Hindu household. The overflowing milk denotes prosperity upon her arrival. The coordination of boiling milk and arrival of Laxmi-as-the-new-bride can be seen as a cultural approval leading to assimilation of an outsider to the innermost fold of the family as a social unit. By showing a similar cultural ritual the advertisement not only assigns the position of a cultural insider to an apparently outsider, but also accord the status of Laxmi to this character. It needs to be mentioned here that Tulsi is considered to be a manifestation of Laxmi according to the Hindu mythology. It is because of this associative meaning that the representative character appears ‘holy and venerable.’

Apart from this ritual there are some other cultural tokens as well that render the Hindu character of the text. The house has a Tulsi plant at the centre of its courtyard. It is considered auspicious for a Hindu house to have a Tulsi plant in the house. Members of the family are supposed to water it every morning at the time of worship. Both the women wear typical markers of Hindu married women. However, Smriti as Tulsi is assigned a greater salience in most of the frames enabling her to create several demand pictures exemplifying the position of authority and patronage. She points out to the host lady, much like the scriptural prescriptions, the duty of a mother within a family. Here, the portrayal of motherhood vis-à-vis womanhood is that of as
protector. Her choice and practices either protects or perils her family. However, in most advertisements women, as the ‘protector’ of the home as the inner sacrosanct core, are married women whose husbands are still alive. Advertisements prefer to represent two categories of women, the virgin and the mother. These projections are quite consistent in terms of representation of their appearance and role as the mother or (virgin) daughter/sister. Advertisements seldom portray either divorcee or a single mother or a widow. Such positions of Indian womanhood are outside the boundary of the projected ideal identity and therefore are not represented at all. This is a highly Hindu prejudice in nature. The portrayal of the motherhood in advertisements largely depends upon the expertise to raise her child or children and domestic expertise. Even though a certain advertisement represents a working women, it is either her moments of leisure at home that is configured as the most salient or her, or her domestic-efficiency to run a family or. Finally, one must notice the inner outer binaries are mutually exclusive: i.e. when one occurs, the other can never occur. A working woman, when find within her tradition-cast gender role at home, the outside identity is never seen to have any reference to her identity within the ‘home.’

While advertisement no 5 emphasises two roles of the Indian women, that of the caretaker of the home and the mother, advertisement no 10 [Anandalok April 2000] takes into consideration three roles played by the woman (Please see p. IL 15-16). Apart from the two roles already emphasised in the above advertisements the third one is incorporated to accommodate the position of the Indian woman in the context of globalization, i.e. the concern for environment. The contents of the verbal mode are as follows:
Presenting world’s first and only Ultrafresh Kitchen Environment Processor from Ultrafresh Kitchen Appliances which not only promises you the safety but also gives you various added features to take care of the SHE factor, that is Safety, Health and Environment. Also available Venthoods, Hobs, Built-in ovens and Cooking Ranges. All precision engineered and ISO 9001-2000 certified, because your safety is paramount. Add to it is its ergonomic design so you have a safe and beautiful world lined up for you.

The language of may indicate that the advertisement is addressed to a man who is absent in the text, yet who is authorised to consider the promise of the SHE Factor that the advertisement speaks of. However, the two roles, i.e. of the protector of the inner space of home and the motherhood are hinted at by the reference to ‘safety’ and ‘health’ of the family. We find an echo of these concerns in advertisements of the salt and the water purifier discussed above. Here, too, Smriti Irani appears in her typical fictional self of Tulsi. In her fictional role of Tulsi, she already performs a two-fold role – that of the protector of home in the role of a daughter-in-law [i.e. projection of Laxmi] and a reminder of divinity through her name [i.e. as a mortal manifestation of the celestial Laxmi] In the teleserial she is the daughter of the priest of the Virani family – it is in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple that she meets her future life partner, Mihir. The name Mihir means the sungod who is one of the Adityas [sons of Aditi, the mother of gods] and Vishnu’s sibling. Lord Vishnu is the last Aditya who is the consort of goddess Laxmi. However, the mention of the three role may also taken as a reference to the Hindu feminine trinity comprising Laxmi, Durga, and Saraswaty. In the role of Laxmi the woman representative of the advertisement brings about prosperity exemplified by the
purchase of the product. The role of Durga enables her to safeguard the family from the impending danger. As Saraswaty she possesses knowledge and wisdom to improve the quality of life in the household. Interestingly three of her images appear in the advertisement at the ‘ideal’ level of the quadrant and are given the highest salience within the visual design of the advertisement.

A few more advertisements shown below will exemplify the representational logic of the Indian women as a confined figure of the inner core of the family as a unit of the nation. For example, the advertisement No 11 [Anandalok, March 1995] also projects the woman subject as confined to home (Please see p. IL 16 - 17). Unlike advertisements discussed above, the male figure of the husband is present in this text as the protector and the carer of the feminine. The product exemplifies the husband’s concern for his wife’s security at home. This is an exclusive sacrosanct space for women according to the traditional Hindu ways of life as is expressed in Mahabharata:

\[
Na griham grihamityahuh
Grihini grihamuchyate
\]

[No home itself is a home/ the woman is the home – Translation mine]

The women are made to appear as the essence of the idea of home. Nevertheless, the idea of home in this particular advertisement is reduced to kitchen only. In this advertisement also the issue of safety plays an important role in the discourse of the text. However, the safety of the woman who is the ‘essence of home’ is taken care of by the man, who is the benefactor and protector of this sphere also. The archetypal couple of the advertisement has a distinct Hindu identity. The identity if established by the appearance of the woman in the text. She is wearing the markers of a Hindu married woman, i.e.
bindi, mangalsutra and bangle. The man in the advertisement exemplifies discretion and judiciousness of a patron while the woman portrays a happy submission to the traditional gender role. The man possesses the true intelligence to protect the woman from the impending danger. While the position of the man reiterates the gender role of the Indian man as the bread winner of the family and the outer sphere (the office), the woman’s is structured around the idea of the home, exclusively as a homemaker. The inner sphere of the home creates her identity.

Advertisement No 12 [Femina February, 2000] though portrays a working Indian woman, reiterates her confined role as an ideal homemaker (please see p. 18-19).

The advertisement has a secular appearance in the sense that the most salient image of the visual design of the text does not explicitly exhibit any particular marker of any communal identity. However the verbal mode certainly poses subtle reference to create the Hinduness of the textual argument. For example, the continuum of culture in Indian context is referred to in expressions such as – ‘the new millennium Sun rose the same way as it always did. Because the nature of life hasn’t changed. Life has.’ The lack of change expresses the text’s cultural rootedness to India’s past: the present only makes sense with reference to its past. Though the archetypal consumer, the millennium woman,’ is a professional woman, following the demand of the globalised India, she seems to be ‘always on her toes’ to take ‘care of home.’ Though the stringent compulsion of the globalised outside coerces the woman respond to the demands of the time, the traditional Indian woman delivers her
domestic duties with equal ease. In this advertisement also the archetypal Indian woman adheres to her patriarchal gender role as the protector of the home in spite of being a professional woman. Though the representation matrix of this particular text does not include any explicit marker of the Indian Hindu identity, the text is not free from subtle reference to Hinduism. For example the logo at the top right corner of the text shows a woman holding onto the cylinder. The very appearance of the iconic lady has a distinctly Hindu identity. It is this image of the logo that had the affordance of a specific projected culture. The strategic placement of this logo at the ‘new/ideal’ plane of the quadrant in the visual design of the text creates the meaning-potential of the advertisement. This image is the objective correlative of the projected tradition and thus provides cultural context for identity of the ‘millennium woman,’ the most salient object in the visual design and inherent argument of the text. Hence it can be inferred that a combination of affordances of the verbal mode and the visual mode help establishing the Hindu identity as the default Indian identity and the Hindu cultural context as the default Indian cultural context.

The steady growth of the Sangh combine in the 80s and 90s in India resulted in the decline of officially ‘secular’ Indian nationalism. As part of their spatial strategies, a process claiming imagined-spaces as the location of nation, the combine also assigned exclusive spaces for identity. For example, the space of the cultural other is beyond the abstract margins of the nation-space structured around Savarkar’s notion of Punyaboomi, the Holy Land. The neighbourhood is claimed as a nation-space as it ‘emphasises the everyday familiarity of the site in all its spatial concreteness’ (Deshpande, 1995: 3224).
Family may be considered as an intensely personal nation space in which kinship relations are built and nurtured. The family, thus, as a nucleus of the neighbourhood as nation-space is sacred in the Hindutva parlance. Sarkar (1991) shows how the women’s wing of the RSS becomes an important force for disseminating the ideology of Hindutva through the women’s humble yet constant liaison with personal spaces of family and domesticity in the ‘neighbourhood’ of the cadres. While Savarkar’s idea of Punyabhoomi/Pitribhumi remains extremely central to the ideology of Hindutva, the popular notion of the nation as the Mother and the nation-space as the motherland is no less important for their ideological propagation. The space that is inhabited by the Mother is considered sacred in the way the imagined nation space is sacred. It therefore becomes imperative for the Hindutva argument to invent an exclusive space like this. Appropriating Bankim’s idea of women as ‘holy and venerable’ who project God’s ‘crowning excellence,’ the proponents of Hindutva arguments impose a sense of divinity on the space of home as the space for women. This assignment of sacredness to a particular space as ‘bearer of singular essence’ conforms to the spatial strategies of the Hindutva forces.

Confining women within the limits of home as a sacred inner space the proponents of Hindutva, thus in a regressive mode, re-cast the colonial Indian patriarchy’s projection of Indian femininity. The advertisements discussed here reinforce this regressive gendered politics of spatiality as reconstructed by Hindutva.
Sarkar (2001) observes that household conjugality seems to represent the ‘last independent space left to the colonized Hindu’ (Sarkar, 2001: 198). The importance of women in the nationalist imagination enabled the emergence of Indian Hindu femininity as an effective signifier of ‘the unviolated, chaste, inner space’ of the ‘nation that needed to be protected by Indian patriarchy from the corrupting influence of the colonizer (Sarkar, 2001: 265). Since at the cultural level, the rise of Hindutva was, on one hand, a resistant reaction to the hegemonic powers of globalisation (Castelle 2004), a logical corollary was the compulsion to invent an inner sacred space to safeguard the nation as Holy Land ‘from corrupting influence’ of Globalisation on the other..

However, since the colonial period of nationalism to the globalisation of the 21st century, the position of Indian women has undergone noticeable changes. Far from remaining confined within the limits of home and bound within the imposed restrictions of domesticity, Indian women slowly but steadily reached out to what is considered the masculine domain. This progress is evident in the assertive actions of women right from the late nineteenth century to the present day. The autobiographies written by Rashsundari Dasi and Binodini Devi broke new grounds in the late nineteenth century and twentieth century by writing about the politics of women’s personal space. A new era of awakening of Indian women in the position of social and political leadership in mass movements was exemplified through actions of Bimala Maji in Tebhaga Movement in Bengal, Chityala Ailamma in Telengana Movement in Andhra, and Matangini Hazra in Quit India movement. Emancipatory actions like Literary writing, largely considered as a masculine profession, was taken up by women such as Ashapurna Devi, Lila Majumdar and Mahasweta Devi, to
be followed later by a whole range of women Indian authors. Begum Rokeya’s contribution to the spreading of women’s education in India demonstrated participation of women in social reformation which remained a strictly masculine domain before her time. The inclusion of a huge number of working women as a result of influx of refugees from the East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in India massively changed the workspace demography in India.

The Hindutva propagation of Indian femininity, contrary to this entire scenario, comes to represent the ‘locus of unconquered purity’ for nationalists. (Sarkar, 2001:143) This particular representation of the stereotype of confined Indian Hindu femininity and exclusive women’s space is directed towards negating the emancipation of Indian women achieved through years of subversive actions.