Chapter 8

THE SUGGESTIVE INDECENCY

8.1 INTRODUCTION:

Since independence, a host of important developments have taken place, especially, in 1985, the late Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, gave the nation a dream of India in the twenty first century. In 1991, when Dr. Manmohan Singh become the Finance Minister, he was given a free hand to deal with the economy. He implemented free-market economy and winds of liberalisation started sweeping the country. The manufacturers, the brands and the products about which we used to just read in foreign magazines and used to wait for some relative or friend from abroad to gift it to us, is made available at even ordinary stores on the road side. From ordinary ice-creams to complicated machines — everything is available. In fact the markets are flooded with the consumer products. But with all these changes, there is frenzied competition to grab maximum market share. This has resulted in gradual introduction of some disturbing trends "of shocking tactics" in Indian advertising. Advertisers also changed the luring strategies from comparatively simple and soft techniques to something mind blowing, and shock giving, culturally and morally in the Indian environment.
8.2 USE OF SEX IN OBSCENE, VULGAR AND INDECENT WAY:

Indian consumers have a weakness for 'Phoren' goods. They are ready to buy at exhorbitant prices. But now they are paying a heavy cost for this weakness culturally. Indian advertisers also, realising this 'Phoren weakness', have suddenly developed an obsession for western ideas and themes which are difficult to digest for Indian consumers. We still live in a country where traditions and customs are cherished. Some of advertisements are such, that no conscientious Indian consumer will like the public exhibition of such private and delicate sentiments. Is this the contribution of liberalisation of the economy? But the net outcome is that, the society is suffocated with this kind of advertising.

Recently such a blow was struck by the advertisement of Tuff Shoes. If we just glance at the advertisements published by Tuff shoes, they do not look like advertisements of shoes, but some nudie or pornographic magazine. Note the kind of write-up even 'Mid-day' has given for this advertisement. All these years advertisers were restricting themselves to the figures and poses of female models. Now, they do not feel hesitant to show naked bodies of male and female models in erotic postures. All those "cultured and educated", who generally get disheartened by comparing Indian progress and development, with that of the west, must have also felt ashamed on viewing such advertisements. Additionally, the picture copy of the advertisement does not convey, in any way, that this is an advertisement of shoes.
SO YOU’RE the hottest modelling pair around, and you’re in love. You can cavort on the catwalk together, you can act in TV serials together and you can take off most of your clothes — separately — for a shoe ad.

And then, when you’re together, you can take everything off. And like Calvin Klein and American Express, you never leave home without your Tuff shoes from Phoenix and a friendly serpent.

This is Madhu Sapre and Milind Soman in the ad for Tuff, by Ambience Advertising, to be released in select magazines soon.

We have nothing to say about obscenity...
Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) from whom society and consumer associations have great expectations, failed to take suo-moto action against this advertisement, and then gave an excuse that the matter is sub-judice. Infact, ASCI in its code clearly states in chapter II - "Advertisement should contain nothing indecent, vulgar or repulsive, which is likely in the light of generally prevailing standards of decency and propriety", the cause of grave or widespread offense. Similar views are expressed by Malaysian code of advertising, which also has a traditional society and is making rapid economic progress. It states - "No advertising matter, which tends to offend proprieties of ethics generally observed by the community shall be accepted".

When some consumer activists met Police Commissioner of Mumbai in this matter, his attitude was frustrating and he said :- "We live in a democratic country". But Maharashtra Government, especially Cultural Minister, Pramod Navalkar, being a media man, took keen interest in the issue and tried to put an end to the controversy. Some innocent citizens feel that models should refuse to do such advertisements. But when this was discussed with the models, the models said :- "If we will not drop the clothes, someone else will do it".

Now there is another advertisement of Wranglar Jeans, which suggests in bold letters "DROP YOUR PANTS". and in the photo copy of the advertisement, there is a young girl in the company of two young men with dropped pants, and holding the jeans in her hands. It is a straight copy of western advertisement.
DROP YOUR PANTS

8.2 (Source - Times of India; Wills World Cup Booklet).

GET INTO

Wrangler
The Western Original.
“इन्सटांट” व्या साही 800% ज्यासत का गावे?

जर एक चतूर्थाश किम्नाटीत आयण लिर्वू शकता कॉफीच्या खरा 100% आनंद.

8.3 (Source - ASCI).
Similarly 'Bare' brand of jeans advertised a spot on television, where models are barely wearing any clothes except 'Bare jeans' --- like its brand name.

Similar stunt was enacted by the MR Coffee advertisement. There was no need for them to show men and women in a provocative pose for Filter coffee. Firstly, comparing sex and coffee has no meaning. Secondly, filter coffee is as it is popular in India, amongst the coffee drinkers. Thirdly, large section of population cannot afford the exhorbitant prices of instant coffee. Fortunately, the advertisement was pulled up by ASCI after receiving complaints.

8.3 PARENT'S HEADACHE - FAMILY PLANNING:

Every educated and uneducated Indian is fully aware of the population burden. Educated people know very well, that what ever level of progress and development we achieve, it is all meaningless as long as we are not in the position to restrict the ever growing population. 'Family Planning' authorities popularised the red triangle with the quote --- "Hum do, Hamare do". Many urban educated couples feel like Sunil Gavaskar - "Mi our, mera Ake". All this indirect advertising was alright in the context of the seriousness of the problem, but suddenly family planning authorities and private condom manufacturers have raised their pitch and have started making loud appeals about it.
MAKE
silken
LOVE
TONIGHT

Let your love find its own expression.

Luxury Condoms from Kohinoor

8.4 (Source - India today; Jan 31, 1996).
The only advertisement pulled-up on this issue is of Kamasutra Condoms. General attitude of the manufacturers is - 'Do not show it to the children'. But think carefully, do we have the choice ? Most of these advertisements are shown on television at prime-time, when most of the Indian families are sitting around the television and watching some popular television serials and then suddenly advertisement of Mala-D, Saheli, Copper-T, some different brands of condom are flashed on screen and changes the atmosphere in the room. Grand parents feel shy and weak by the presence of their grown-up adult children, who themselves are parents. Middle-aged parents feel uncomfortable to watch it with their college going children. Young parents feel nervous that their children may ask some uncomfortable questions and spoil the atmosphere in the room. Young college going children feel like getting up and walking away from the room or look at the ceiling. Children below the age of 8 or 10 is the only audience which watches it quite curiously and is puzzled to know the utility of the product. They all get-set to ask explanations from the parents in the form of number of questions as usual, innocently. Are children the targetted audience of these kind of advertisements ?

While collecting primary-data, the samples quoted some unpleasant incidents related to these products. Ad-watch club, a branch of Mumbai Grahak Panchayat was literally showered with letters and signatures from men, women and youth to stop advertising of these products on television, in newspapers and on hoardings. Some of the reactions in the interviews while filling-up the questionnaire for primary-data and in the letters written to Ad-watch club, are
worth noting. They are:-

[1] An eighty year old lady 'born and bought up' in Mumbai said :- "I have seen so many transformations taking place in my life. I was happy when first time I saw the television twenty five years back, but never knew that I will have to see 'these' advertisements along with my children, grand children and great-grand children. If 'these' advertisements will continue attacking our sitting rooms, one of these days I will get a heart-attack while watching television". (she refused to even use the words like love, sex, condom with the fear that children might listen!).

[2] One young father who has written - "One day while saying :- 'Good night' - 'sweet-dreams', my seven year old son told me that he knows what Daddy is going to do with Mummy once he goes to sleep, behind the closed doors of the bedroom. So instead of making 'Silken Love', as specified in the Kohinoor Luxury Condoms advertisements, shocked with son's expression, I suddenly lost the interest in sex for days and months together and developed a guilty feeling for such natural desire and feeling".

[3] One mother said :- "One day I noticed my seven years daughter had cut-out from the magazine condom advertisement which had a rainbow in its copy, advertising for coloured condoms according to different moods. She was all set to paste it in her note-book as a picture to explain rainbow. I noticed it in time and stopped her with a bitter argument. But I cannot imagine what would have happened if she would have shown the
"Kissing, marking with the nails and making lovebites should... always precede lovemaking."

Kama Sutra, Book II, Section III

Be it the well known treatise or the celebrated condom, Kama Sutra holds only one promise. To make you a better lover. The first tells you how to do it, the second helps you do it better. Because KS as you know is the only condom dedicated to the pleasure of lovemaking.

Of course it comes in dotted, textured, contoured, scented and ultrathin varieties. But more than anything, it'll add to your own variety in making love. So ask for KS by all means, but "once the potter's wheel begins to turn," as Vatsyayana says, "there's no law, no rules, no science. Only ecstasy."

According to the World Health Organisation, the condom is the best known protection against AIDS and also is one of the safest contraceptive methods. So slip it on.

8.5 (Source - Times of India; Dec 11, 1994)
notebook with this advertisement to her teacher, who is a nun. I am sure, that we would have been called to the school and my daughter would have been punished and fined severely”.

❖ One senior ad-executive from reputed agency while filling-up the questionnaire said :- “I have two college going sons. If we are watching the television together in a family at dinner time, which is a rare occasion, I generally know when these condom advertisements are coming. Few seconds before that, I walk out of the room for some or the other excuse. I know they also feel relaxed by my disappearance act”.

Condom manufacturers are now taking undue advantage if AIDS for putting additional fear in the minds of viewers. So eventually whole issue of family planning is side tracked totally. ‘Love’ a private delicate sentiment is exposed publicly and sold in the market as a product through these advertisements. They are the exhibits of hedonistic society. No one surely likes to discuss sex and condoms with their primary or pre-primary school going children. One can have and should have healthy dialogue on the issue of sex with their grown-up children, which will be a step in the direction of proper sex-education. But the kind of society and kind of environment we have in India for this subject, the question is, how many parents are really in the position to discuss sex with their grown-up children ?. And how much are these advertisements going to help in it ?. In fact, as aptly shown in one of the advertisements of condom brands, men still feel extremely shy to go and ask for condoms at chemists.
"My kids are too precious to me. That's why I trust only Aquaguard water purifier."

- Only with Aquaguard you can be sure the water is 100% safe. Because Aquaguard's renowned Ultra Violet technology ensures that all known waterborne disease-causing bacteria and viruses are eliminated.
- Plus, only Aquaguard has the unique **electronic monitoring system** which stops the flow of water if the purification level falls below the pre-determined standard. • In addition, with Aquaguard, you have the Eureka Forbes guarantee of After-Sales Service at your doorstep. • No wonder then that over 8 lakh homes and reputed establishments trust and prefer only Aquaguard.

11.1 Is there anything really wrong in Aquaguard Advertisement ? Yes !.
(Source - Times of India; Q & A Booklet).
8.4 **UNWARRANTED USE OF RELIGION**

Advertisers have not restricted themselves to children, women, feminism, sex, violence, obscenity and vulgarity. They are now trying to enter the domain of religion also. They are aware of hypercritical situation in our country on religious issues. They also know its long lasting and far reaching consequences. The industry on its own should throw away this (exploitation of religion) small plant, before it grows into a big tree, deeply rooted in Indian society. Later on it will be difficult to foresake it. At the same time, it will lead to number of social-economic-cultural and religious complications.

ASCI has received number of complaints where the complainants have asked for the complete ban on the use of all religious symbols in advertisements and have cited the constitutional guidelines with reference to religious symbols in advertisements and have cited the constitutional guidelines with reference to religious matters. However Consumers Complaint Council (CCC) a part of ASCI is of the opinion that general ban is an impossibility, since such symbols have been a part of the trade-marks or logos of some companies for a long time.

However, the CCC did take the objection to the advertisements of Calcutta's Ahar Restaurant, one of which depicted Lord Krishna holding a rolled-up dosa like a flute and saying :- "Come Radhika come, for the largest dosa in the town". This according to CCC, offended the religious sentiments of people.
IT'S DIFFICULT TO give up EVERYTHING

Specially your favourite Duke T-Shirt. So comforting, that it's hard to give up, even while meditating on the lord. The exquisite fabric blends with international styling to make it quite irresistible, even to the most ascetic. Now choose from a colourful range of plains, stripes, prints and jacquards. And be on your way to Nirvana.
Similarly, a television advertisement which showed a sadhu on a bed of nails, intoning 'OM', and reaching for a cough drop, was asked to delete the word OM. Recently, Philips had also shown in its television advertisement, sadhus being disturbed in their meditation and then getting interested in its products. The advertisement of Duke T-shirts shows a bunch of sadhus who have given-up everything of this material world. They preferred to sit on the mountain for peace and offer prayers to God. Can they suddenly develop an interest in an object like T-shirt? Isn't it making fun of their way of living?

8.5 ATTACKING THE NATIONAL PROPERTY AND RESPECTED MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

The advertisers have not spared the members of religious institutions, for whom the traditional Indian society has highest respect. Similarly they have not felt shy, while using National flag, Rashtrapati Bhavan, as well as people, who matter to the nation.

The National Flag of any country is given the highest place, as a symbol of the country. Our National Flag with Tricolour and Chakra, definitely has symbolic meaning and sanctity behind it. But supreme Hosiery Industry of Delhi, in their Star and Style magazine's advertisement depicted flags of India, U.K., U.S.A., Australia, Saudi Arabia against the display of Bras and Panties on models.
Ortem spreads its wings to
The President's house

Ortem proudly associates its fans with the first house of the Nation-the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

For, now this place of national interest has Ortem fans adorning its ceilings.

Which for Ortem means playing host to heads of state and to the head of our state. A proud privilege indeed. And a compliment to Ortem fans manufactured with the highest quality standards in mind.

Ortem
Fans for the Nation

FROM THE HOUSE OF METRO TYRES
Metro Appliances Ltd., 517, Devika Tower, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019
SUPPLIED UNDER DGS & D RATE CONTRACT

8.7 (Source - ASCI).
Modern Appliances Ltd., manufacturers of Ortem Fans tried to gain commercial mileage in an advertisement by an objectionable way by depicting visuals of Rashtrapati Bhavan and referring directly to the President himself. This kind of advertising not only lowers the esteem of national institutions, but also gives the impression that the brand has the official sanction of the highest office in the country.

Advertisers have not stopped there. They have dragged the Father of Nation --- Mahatma Gandhi. Lakhani Foot Wear Ltd, while publishing their advertisements for slippers in India Today, have used the photograph of Gandhiji, of whom every Indian citizen is proud, for his contribution and sacrifice, for the nation. He in his wildest dream also, must not have though that he will be used for commercial purposes in Independent India.

As it is, there is a growing trend of lack of respect for teachers in the Modern Indian Society. It was further encouraged by a reputed company like Hindustan Cocoa Products (Cadbury), who have a dominant share in the Indian Confectionery market. It is difficult to believe that they can use such cheap publicity stunts to popularise, while promoting their 'Gems' brand toffees on television. The advertisement showed students in the class-room eating 'Gems'. And after a while, teacher starts looking to them like a goat and then like a duck, school children are shown enjoying not only the Gems, but the ridiculous joke even more. Is this depiction of the teacher respectful?
India. The land where feet are respected.

Lakhani
The shoes that respect your feet.

For more information contact:
Marketing Services Cell, Lakhani Footwear Ltd, 131, Sector-24, Faridabad, India. Phone: 91-0129-232793/94/95 Fax: 91-0129-233320, 232790

8.8 (Source - ASCI)
It is Hindustan Cocoa Products showed non-sensical advertisement, Parle products, were not far behind them. While advertising for Melody Chocolates in a television advertisement, they showed a school assembly in progress. As soon as the speaker begins to read out a speech, a child in school uniform says: "Bhashan Shuroo, Kuch Karoon" and shoots a chocolate with rubber band catapult into the speaker's mouth and lot of laughter follows. What value system are we teaching our children?

8.6 SURROGATIVE ADVERTISING OF ALCOHOLIC DRINKS:

No wonder, today advertising in India is increasingly under attack. Erogenic pictures are indiscriminately used to sell products from coffee to condoms. And less said the better about surrogate advertising --- where in order to circumvent ban on advertising liquor, manufacturers promote products like mineral water, soda, playing cards, decanters and travelling bags with liquor brand name.

Advertisement of Aqua-pura offered a shoulder bag with six glasses --- 'free' with the purchase of six bottles of the 'Product' "Call Mr. Daruwala today and have a spirited celebration", the advertisement said. Consumers who called were informed that the offer referred to six bottles of Whisky. The caller pointed out that advertisement gave an impression, that it refers to six bottles of mineral water.
In the echelons of power only one decision goes down smoothly.

Eminent character

8.9 Is this an advertisement of silver bar accessories?
(Source - India Today; Feb 28, 1995).
This, of course is not an isolated example. In the year 1994-95, ASCI upheld as many as 42 surrogative advertisements. Sources indicate that there were around 100 liquor advertising hoardings in the city prior to the ban, out of these 20 were at prime locations.

In January 1995, Maharashtra Government came up with a new clause under Bombay Prohibition Act, 1949, due to growing public out cry against such brazen promotion of liquor brands and due to pressure from consumer groups. Now those manufacturers who will take the help of surrogative advertising will find that the approval of the label is cancelled and will invite penal action. Similarly in June 1995, Delhi Government also passed Delhi Intoxicant Licence and Sales Rules in addition to penal law to discourage the drinking habit.

Even though the ASCI has an impressive track record, it has not been able to achieve some degree of success in ensuring the compliance of its decisions. The number of complaints received by ASCI are just the tip of the iceberg. Even after rules came into existence, a socially responsible magazine like India Today, dated 15th Feb 1995, carried seven surrogative advertisements. Even the A & M magazine, which is considered to be the Bible of Advertising carried the advertisement of 'Smirnoff', in March 1996 issue. Doordarshan's first channel, while showing 'Election Analysis 96' carried a surrogative advertisement. Hi-Life soda of Shaw Wallace, every half an hour for two day continuously. From the Chic bottle, to the pack with signature tear, a concerted efforts has been
8.10 (Source - A & M; March 15, 1996).
It's pure
Mischief, baby,
the ultimate
in COOL!

WHITE
MISCHIEF

Just for kicks

Chakraview live at the
Razzberry Rhinoceros,
28th May, 9 p.m. onwards

CHEER LEADERS
SINCE 1886

8.11 (Source - Mid-Day; May 24, 1996).
made by Hi-Life brand to appeal to the today's youth. Appealing alcholic drink to the youth is not only unethical but against many international codes. Are advertising people, ASCI and Government itself taking rules and laws really seriously ?.

One should remember that an advertisement generates 90% product awareness within the first three months. The same principle is also applicable to liquor advertisements. The market is flooded with so many brands and so many advertisements that there is a noticeable change in the attitude of the people because of these advertisements. According to one survey conducted by one women's organisation, those who were once upon time completely against liquor consumption, now do not mind drinking occasionally. Those who used to drink occasionally have increased their frequency and have cultivated an aptitude for trying out variety of brands. The total liquor consumption in the country has increased drastically in the last five years. The average age at which youngsters have their first-taste has also started coming down. Times are not far-off when we will have number of social problems arising out of alcoholism, especially in the middle class and higher income groups.