

# “Portrayal of Women in Advertisements Ethics and New Law”

**Dr. Asha A Suratkal**

Asst. Prof. Sinhgad Law College  
E-Mail ID: [ashasuratkal@gmail.com](mailto:ashasuratkal@gmail.com)  
Cell No. 9423006082

## **ABSTRACT**

Advertisement is one of the major media that affect our daily life consciously and unconsciously. Media is the buzz word in the globalized scenario. During the Financial 2017 and 2018 Indian advertising expenditure across media was Rs. 612.63 and Rs. 693.47 billion of which T. V. accounted for Rs.279.61 and Rs.315.96 billion and print medium accounted for Rs. 177.79 and Rs.184.47 bn. respectively. Representation of women in advertisements has been experiencing a shift from the housewife centric advertisements to the career women advertisements. Irrespective of the relevance to the product image women are found on the advertisements. Advertisers feel that presence of women figure in the advertisement will boost its sales as it attracts attention of the prospective customers. It has been observed that advertisements where women were treated merely as an object to sell

need to be abandoned and women need to come up openly and boldly against their degrading presentation. Advertisements in India are not fulfilling their duty towards the society. It is high time advertisements where women are treated merely as an object to sell need to be abandoned and women need to come up openly and boldly against degrading presentation. The present day Women Organizations have rightly taken up such advertisements in right prospectively and vehemently coming out and bringing pressure on the government and the society to ban such advertisements to project better image of the Indian women. Every responsible individual should condemn the product, where women are sexually featured.

**Keywords:** Print advertisements, portraying of women, Press Council of India Code, **THE INDECENT REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN (PROHIBITION) ACT, 1986**

## Introduction:

Advertisement is one of the major media that affect our daily life consciously and unconsciously. Media is the buzz word in the globalized scenario. Advertisements with detailed product information greatly help the consumer to make a buying decision. The Advertising Standards Council's code for Self-regulation defines an advertisement as a paid-for communication, addressed to the Public or a section of it, the purpose of which is to influence the opinions or behavior of those to whom it is addressed. Any communication which in the normal course would be recognized as an advertisement by the general public would be included in the definition even if it is carried free-of-charge for any reason. Use of women to promote a concept or product is going on increasing. Women in many cultures make the majority of consumption decisions: hence they are important target of these advertisers.

Over the years the expenditure on account of advertising in various medium has been rapidly increasing. During the Financial 2017 and 2018 Indian advertising expenditure across media was Rs. 612.63 and Rs. 693.47 billion of which T. V. accounted for Rs.279.61 and Rs.315.96 billion and print medium accounted for Rs. 177.79 and Rs.184.47 bn. respectively. One of the reasons for increase in the advertising expenditure is the cur-

rent fierce competition in almost every sector of economy, which is the effect of adaption of globalization and entry of multinational companies on the Indian marketing horizon. The role played by the advertising in communication is significant.

Advertisements depict different ideas, attitudes and values which shape our social life and consumption pattern. The last few decades witnessed that there has been a great socio-cultural change in the society particularly in the context of role and position of women in the society. Representation of women in advertisements has been experiencing a shift from the housewife centric advertisements to the career women advertisements.

Irrespective of the relevance to the product image women are found on the advertisements. The marketers in achieving their sales targets use the advertising media and portray women in such a way that they have to compromise women dignity. Unethical and unrealistic projection of women in advertisements is still on. Women models are portrayed even to sell a male product, as advertisers believe by portraying beautiful women they will be able to make more sales. In reality many changes have taken place in the status of women. There is the difference in the portrayal of women in Asian countries as compared to that in the US and other western countries. Advertisements in India are not fulfilling their duty

towards the society. Values, Integrity and Ethics play a very vital role in a man's life and the advertisements also depict these values and ethics.

Advertisers feel that presence of women figure in the advertisement will boost its sales as it attracts attention of the prospective customers. According to Chatterji, (2006) sex is an emotion that has been successfully employed by advertisers in promoting jeans, perfumes, alcohol, watches, personal products and cars. Of late, the role of the women in advertisements is becoming indispensable. According to Sukumar (2014) the general perception of the audience; she does not try to explore the perception difference among the audience. Women images are used in the advertising as a commodity and as a sex object have been portrayed in audio-visual media. Nagi (2014) has observed that advertisements where women were treated merely as an object to sell need to be abandoned and women need to come up openly and boldly against their degrading presentation. J. P. Bharathi has observed that atrocities on women are mainly due to the distorted life styles adopted, inferiority complex, low self-esteem and disgusting approach towards life.

The Indian media is depicting women as scrupulous, religiously intolerant, craving only for their own family, politically naive, socially

inevitable and culturally ultra-modern. Particularly in certain types of products say cosmetics, soaps, face powders, hair removers etc. the way women pictures are presented is certainly deplorable. Many a time advertisements of inner wears, posters of Indian movies are depicted in such a way that it arouses the sexual feelings. Such advertisements are not in good taste does not present a moral role model and create bad impression on the minds of adolescents.

### **The Legal framework**

#### **THE INDECENT REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN (PROHIBITION) ACT, 1986 (NO. 60 OF 1986)**

An Act to prohibit indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

**Prohibition of advertisements containing indecent representation of Women:** No person shall publish, or cause to be published, or arrange or take part in the publication or exhibition of, any advertisement which contains indecent representation of women in any form.

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986,

also punishes the indecent representation of Women, which means “the depiction in any manner of the figure of a woman; her form or body or any part thereof in such way as to have the effect of being indecent, or derogatory to, or denigrating women, or is likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality or morals. It states that no person shall publish or cause to publish or cause to be published or arrange to take part in the publication or exhibition of any advertisement which contains indecent representation of women in any form.

S.2(d) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, provides definition of human rights as the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of an individual guaranteed in the Constitution or embodied in the international Covenants and enforceable by Courts of India. Therefore, the national Human Rights Commission and the State Human Rights Commission can take cognizance of the violations of dignity of women even in the advertisements.

The Press Council of India has established a code and has preserved the freedom of the press and of maintaining and improving the standards of newspapers and news agencies in the country. The Code states that “newspapers should not publish an advertisement containing anything which is unlawful or illegal, or is con-

trary to good taste or to journalistic ethics or proprieties” in the section elaborately dealing with advertisements, which by the inclusion of the term, “good taste” is to be noted. An editor shall be responsible for all matters, including advertisements published in the newspaper.

The remedial measure would include that women should be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to information technology. This will strengthen their ability to combat negative portrayals of women internationally and to challenge instances of abuse of the power of an increasingly important industry. Some recent studies of news stories show that sex and sensation is the primary motivation behind the reportage. Some recent studies of news stories show that sex and sensation is the primary motivation behind the reportage.

#### **Conclusion:**

Advertisements in India are not fulfilling their duty towards the society. The projection of women in Indian advertisements can be done for highlighting the real issues of women lives, for their upliftment, for the awareness among people about the rights of woman, for the empowerment of women etc. is being left out. It is high time advertisements where women are treated merely as an object to sell need to be abandoned

and women need to come up openly and boldly against degrading presentation. The present day Women Organizations have rightly taken up such advertisements in right prospectively and vehemently coming out and bringing pressure on the government and the society to ban such advertisements to project better image of the Indian women. Every responsible individual should condemn the product, where women are sexually featured.

**References:**

- Kumari, S., & Shivani, S (2012). A Study on Gender Portrayals in Advertising through the Years: A Review Report, *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, Vol. 2(2), 54-63.
- Sukumar S., & Venkatesh, S. (2011). Images of Women in Advertising and its Impact on the Society. *International Journal of Research in Commerce & Management* Vol.2(9), 128- 130.
- Dawn, S. M., Lauren, M. B., & Erika, R. c. (2011). Sexual Objectification of Women: Advances to Theory and Research. *The Counseling Psychologist*, Vol. 39(1), 6– 38.

\*\*\*