ADVERTISMENTS AND IMAGES OF WOMANHOOD: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "Advertisements And Images Of Womanhood: A Sociological Analysis" submitted by Urna Dutta in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University, has not been previously submitted for the reward of any degree to this or any other University. This is a bonafide work.

We recommend this dissertation to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Advertisements are an indispensable part of our daily lives. They are regarded as one of the best ways of making people aware of the entry of new products into the market. Their codified and minimalistic use of words contain within themselves implicit and explicit messages which are deciphered by the audiences. On the whole, it is acknowledged that the latent message of the commercials is more demeaning than the manifest messages. As a result, one cannot fail to notice the power of the spoken words or the writings on the wall or even the punch inherent in pictures. Hence it would be wrong to underestimate the power and usage of advertisements by considering them as merely tools to propagate a product. Rather, as Rita Clifton (1994) says, "advertising only holds a mirror up to the way society is. It doesn't lead trends...it doesn't create needs where they currently don't exist. And/guess if your problem is with society as it is, then advertising will always offend"[1]. Advertisement is considered as an integral part of mass media. Hence it is seen as a kind of social system containing within itself a series of sub-systems. Among these sub-systems, a series of complex relationships can be observed which involve the socio-cultural system, the media and the audience. This socio-cultural system is seen to be the origin of the socio-cultural norms. These norms are passed through coded messages, which are none other than the advertisements. The effect of such coded messages on the audience is to reinforce the status quo of the existing social norms and values.

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Thus, as said earlier, advertisements portray in their own ways, the dominant values of the society. Hence, like the other media of communication, ads cannot remain unaffected by the prejudices of the society. What the advertisements represent are thus the values and sentiments of the society since they are created as part of it and not in isolation.

The focus of this study is to understand the way in which women are being portrayed in the advertisements. Advertisement, as a field of visual representations has long been recognised for its extreme significance regarding questions of sexuality. In its simplest formulation, the difference between the sexes has been associated with visual processe. Hence, to be sexualized as a 'woman' is to be objectified as an *image* to be looked at. The power of 'man' lies in his gaze, i.e. the pleasure and anxiety generated by the desire of looking[2]. In this respect, the advertisement's new found power plays a disproportionate role in organizing our visual field and is seen as one of the hallmark of globalization. This, in turn, involves the study of the politics of representation. Advertisements, which basically fall upon the category of visual representation, are regarded as a sphere of consumption. Consumption of any visual image is regarded as dangerously asymmetrical. Advertisements in that sense follow the same notions of representations. Images are made by men for themselves, thereby leading to a shrewd version towards women's representations. As Soma Chatterjee (1993) explains, it is through advertisements there results a misinformation, misrepresentation and mystification about the role and status of women in Indian society inclusive of both rural-urban setups. Hence what results is the creation of a closed, conclusive relationship between makers of advertisements and the prime consumer, not negating the viewers. Control over the media is regarded mostly as a male prerogative, and hence, in those images women are

represented mainly as objects to be displayed and to be looked at. Thus, the advertisements that portray women, can be otherwise read as men's imagining of women. The study thus tries to understand these various representations of women as done by advertisements.

The quest of any scientific endeavour is to see a change in the status quo of the subject under study. In this study too, the objective is to find out how advertisements project women and also to see whether in recent times there been any drastic changes in the nature of this representation. Thus, in order to understand the way women have been represented what has been done is a thorough analysis of selected cases where advertisements reflect the popular culture of our society.

We are at a point in society where there has been a gradual erosion of the indegenious culture, which is being replaced by a trans-global one. Hence at this juncture the relevance of this particular study can be cited. The influence of globalisation coupled with the inflow of trans-national capital, in the Indian case, has resulted in trans-nationalization of markets and consumer culture[3]. Vilanilam (1989) criticises the role of advertisements that results in a spread of such transnational culture. What he feels is that such a culture tries to cut at the roots of the cultural autonomy of politically independent countries. In other words, the transnational corporations use advertisement as an ideological apparatus for spreading imperialism within the 'Third World' countries. Inspite of the counter arguments to this notion the view persists. Whatever be the explaination the impact is felt in Indian society in general.

Advertisements are an important part of our everyday life. They, in their own way, help in manipulating and cajoling the human mind. As a result, advertisements are often regarded as instruments of manipulation and control. Such being the case, ads becomes an

important area of study for the social scientists in general and sociologists in particular. The task of the sociologists, therefore, entails understanding of these deeper meanings of advertisements and the reinforcement of such stereotypes. In this regard this study gains its relevance as it tries to understand how women are being represented - and increasingly so - in various advertisements.

Having understood the need for such a study we now go on to situate the study within the existing research. Though a need for such a study has long been regarded as a necessity, it is surprising to note that the field still lacks detailed thorough analysis. This work, thereby, bases its study on the limited secondary sources that have come upon during the course of research work.

In any research work, methodology[4] is one of the most important part of the study. It is often regarded as the connecting thread that links up the work. In this study the methodology that has been used is none other than interpretative understanding. The subject that has to be studied is advertisement and what is needed is an understanding of the inner meanings that advertisement portrays. The aim of this work is to understand the connotations of gendered advertisements. There have been some methodological assumptions taken in before starting on with the analysis of the advertisements. However, before going in details over these assumptions, a quick look is given to what one means interpretative understanding and by how it is different from the other methodologies. To explain it in precise terms, it may be said that interpretative sociological approach advocates no single assumptions about social reality.

The interpretative method is thus based on the understanding of behaviour social actors and the meanings they give to their actions. When people interact they interpret

what is going on from the meaning of symbols. To the theorists of symbolic interactionanism, ethnomethodology and other interpretative perspective, this is what that gives social life its patterned quality. This methodology differs sharply from the idea which regards social life to be governed by objective and structural characteristics that are external and independent to individuals. This methodology therefore strictly opposes any form of construction of rigid scientific laws that explain patterns of behaviour as fixed and determined by social situations in which people find themselves.

Thus, Max Weber's concept of verstehen[5], which means 'understanding', can be applied in this study. The study thereby tries to shift from an objective understanding of meanings of expressions, towards, a subjective understanding of the text under consideration.

Following this interpretative methodology of analysis, some general assumptions have been made before the start of the study. These are:

- society is regarded as hierarchically arranged, with the females placed in an inferior position vis-à-vis the male

- the patriarchal ideology tries to maintain this, status quo by determining 'appropriate social behaviour' of the genders

- social institutions are extensions of the patriarchal ideology

- advertisements are seen as a reflection of social reality.

These four assumptions help in the direct broaching of the subject that is to become our center of study.

Having talked about the methodology used in the study of gendered advertisements we now move on to the source of data that was used in the study. The data for the work is

obtained from advertisements that were featured in popular magazines or broadcasted in the television channels. The magazines selected are based on their degree of popularity. These magazines could be typecasted into two types: the family magazines and women's magazines. The family magazines that have been consulted are namely: *Outlook, India Today, The Telegraph Magazine*. The women's magazines included *Femina, Stardust, Sananda, Flimfare* etc. These are the secondary sources of data that has been used in the research project.

The research work has been divided into five chapters of which the first chapter is the introduction to the project. It deals with the motivation for the study and prepares the reader as to where this particular project will lead to. It also deals with the nature and relevance of the project, the methodological position and source of data used. It gives a brief summary about the content of the chapters that are to follow later on in the study.

Chapter II goes into an analysis of the understanding of the sociology of sex and gender, which are important concepts in this work. In order to have better understanding what is desired is an indepth knowledge of the distinction between sex and gender, and how the latter becomes an important sociological study. So a study of their distinction becomes important in this aspect. Then one goes on to understand how institutions like family and religion led to the reinforcement of the stereotypical images of woman's role within and outside the home. As a result it goes on to explain the relations between dominant stereotypes and that of patriarchy. It deals with how there are some stereotypical images of women and how patriarchy helps, in its own way, towards a reinforcement of these images. Then one moves on towards a study of feminism as a movement, which rose to challenge these stereotypes. It then deals with the rise of the woman's consciousness, as

an entity independent of any pre-assumed conceptions. The rise of feminism and its challenge to the persisting male dominant social structure questions the earlier stereotypes. This challenge of feminism thereby led towards a study of the old stereotypes along with the rise of the new images and in this respect the relevance of the study is brought out. In the background of this, the aim is to study the role of the advertisements in modern society, which continues to play a significant part in both the production and transmission of patriarchal culture. The study also tries to have a deeper understanding of the complex relationship that exists between the advertisements (as part of mass media), modernity and patriarchy. To view their complex relationship one cannot fail to but understand how advertisements functions in larger system of patriarchy and capitalism that controls this media structure and organization. Thus the understanding of representation of women as sub-ordinates in this complex structure becomes worthwhile for study.

The third chapter continues the strands of thought that have been developed in the earlier chapter but gives a special attention on advertisement which is seen as being a part of a discourse on imagery objects. At the same time it shows how advertisements bring out the basic of human relations, values and beliefs. The exposure to mass media in general and advertising in particular in traditional societies like India, is said to be an important indicator of modernity. This chapter takes on some of the existing social theories of advertisement which help in understanding the nature of advertisement. This in turn helps in their interpretation and explanation. Among the various existing theorists on advertisements the work of Vance Packard (1979) and Erving Goffman (1979) have been selected for this study. Hence an understanding of their perceptions adds to bring clarity to the advertisements that are to be dealt with in the following chapters.

Advertisements in contemporary society are regarded as being responsible for the construction and consumption of social knowledge and the meaning people adhere to social reality. In this sense advertisements are seen to reinforce the existing social values, themes and points of views. Thus whatever portrayal is done of men and women is regarded as a reflection of reality. But another thing that is to be noted and kept in mind is that an advertisement does not represent the entire reality. Rather, it selects and highlights selected aspects of social attitudes, values and beliefs. Repetitive projection of such sectional view, results in counter influence on reality which in turn shapes one's consciousness.

Having defined advertisements, the research work then takes the usual course of finding out the changes taking place in the nature of advertisements that are portrayed in Indian context. The aim is to situate the present day advertisements in comparison to the earlier ones so as to understand the growing impact of consumerism in today's world. Thus a shift towards an individualistic, self-actualistic culture has been highlighted through the study of changing nature of advertisements.

In this regard, the work further leads towards an understanding of the social context of advertisements coupling with the rise of the new Indian middle class. How the middle class a the new entity faces the challenges of consumerism and, in this context, the role of advertisements in enhancing the consumer culture ?. In this context the work takes on a challenging nature. It tries to decipher the relationship that exists between less objectified and more 'wholesome' body images of women on one hand and the Indian economy and society (which is opening up from a state 'regulated' capitalist culture to a global consumerist culture) on the other. In this context the study of the impact and its

significance in such a changing time becomes quite interesting. Selected examples have been cited in order to support this notion.

The fourth chapter goes on to deal with a detailed analysis of the fact as to how these advertisements portray a sexist attitude. An interpretation of the otherwise harmless advertisement from sociological approach help in a deeper understanding of the implicit meanings associated with the representation. Both the feminist approach and the symbolic interactionist approach help in this study of re-interpretation of the advertisements. The chapter goes on with the minute explanation and interpretation of the selected advertisements that have been either collected from the magazines or referred to from television channels

The collected advertisements have been catagorised into four broad sections, each of which has respective social meanings to convey in relation to the representation of women. These broad sections can be itemized as: commodification of women; trivilization of women's work; devaluation of womanhood and assertion of the new women. While the first three broad sections focus on the negative representation of women in various aspects, the last section tries to show the changes that have resulted in the feature of the 'new Indian woman'.

The following chapter i.e. the conclusion tries to draw in all the strands of thoughts and give an overview of the entire study at the same time bring out those unanswered questions which the study could not deal with.

NOTE:

[1] Rita Clifton quoted from Andrew Hart, Understanding the Media, Routledge, London, New York (1994:175)

[2] a number of feminist scholars have begun to question the unqualified positive valency placed on women's agency, and in contents that bear interesting connections to issues of sexuality. (Kumkum Sanghari1993; Rajeswari Sunder Rajan1993).

[3] the most obvious wider context for the mobilization of desire is that of consumer culture, with its proliferation of images and commodities, its promise of happiness through the possession of products.

[4] methodology represents an essential path through which scientific progress is brought about. It also refers to practice and techniques used to gather, process, manipulate, and interpret that can be used to test ideas and theories about social life.

CHAPTER TWO

MAKING OF WOMANHOOD

In this chapter, we wish to raise a series of conceptual as well as substantial questions relating to femininity and social identity, feminism as a mode of protest and the increasing awareness about the reproduction of patriarchal stereotypes in divergent cultural products and symbols. A rigorous understanding of these deeper sociological issues, we hope, would enable us to make sense of the representation of women in the contemporary culture of consumerism which often manifests itself through extremely powerful and seductive advertisements on television as well as in the print media.

I

SOCIOLOGY OF SEX AND GENDER

To begin with it is important to reflect on how social scientists make a distinction between two categories i.e. sex and gender. To put it simply, it is important to realize that because of the growing critical consciousness the distinction between 'biological' sex and 'culturally constructed' gender has acquired immense relevance. Probably it would not be wrong to say as British sociologists Ann Okley in her work *Sex, Gender and Society* (1972) has emphasized, the distinction of sex and gender is also a distinction in terms of task allocation between bio-medical sciences and cultural social sciences. Bio-medical sciences deal with the formation of identity — how one is trained or socialized to respond to the world in a gendered fashion, be it in a 'masculine' or 'feminine' way. Generally it is believed that one is born with one's specific biological-physiological self. But eventually how one sees the world and

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relates to it depends on a set of complex politico-cultural and economic factors. It would therefore not be wrong to say that a large number of social scientists seemed to have agreed to the point that sex is essentially the raw material out of which gender is constructed (Mead1963;Oakley1972;Rubin1975).

But then, in recent times the distinction between sex and gender has not necessarily been accepted as easily as one would think about. Instead a series of complex questions have been raised regarding the dialectical interplay of biology and culture. For example Alison Jagger (1983) would argue that what we define as biological sex itself is not a simple static phenomenon. Infact, as it would be argued, human biology is constituted of a complex interaction between the human body, the physical environment and the state of development of technology and society. In other words, sex is not an unchanging base upon which society constructs. Rather sex itself is affected by various factors external to it.

What is worth examining is the way feminist thinkers like Susan Griffin and Andrea Dworkin have come forward with some kind of essentialist differences between the sexes. For example for them because of difference between biological and reproductive roles women unlike men are closer to nature as they go through the actual process of mothering a child. They are therefore endowed with distinctive qualities like caring, nurturing and intimacy. These scholars argue that a patriarchal social order is brutal and insensitive. It degrades these 'feminine' qualities. Hence for them the real challenge is to reverse this trend and restore the life-affirming values to femininity.

Likewise even the notion of culturally constructed gender acquires more complexity when the questions of caste, class, religion and race are raised. Infact, this political sensitivity raises a very serious issue. It points out the fact that, even in a patriarchal society there is no monolithic gender identity because one's gender identity

are being mediated through one's caste/class/religion/racial experiences. So women are not just defined as 'feminine' but also as black, muslim, dalit or peasant woman. If these questions are not taken into account the simple distinction between sex and gender may prove that one is incapable of comprehending the complexity of the entire issue.

While it is absolutely important to negotiate with these questions and issues we however wish to emphasize that in this dissertation we would retain the critical sensitivity. That which would enable us to see how in a male dominated patriarchal society women, irrespective of their other identities, are put in a hierarchical relationship that tends to devalue their agency and human capabilities. Infact Kate Millett is not wrong when in her celebrated work *Sexual Politics* (1970) she argues that the patriarchal ideology aggregates or intensifies biological differences between men and women. Masculinity means domination, power and superiority where as femininity is associated with passivity, weakness, inferiority and lack of freedom. This ideology is powerful, and it reinforces itself through conditioning. Thus through institutions like the academy, the (church) religious organizations and the family this reinforcements continues.

A further analysis on the construction of gender identities starts with defining the word 'gender'. The etymological genealogy of the word 'gender' is taken from the German Marxist dictionary. It goes on to explain it as:

> The root of the English, French and Spanish words is the Latin
> verb *generare*, to beget, and the Latin stem *gener-*, race or kind...
> the substantives 'Geschlecht', 'genre,' and 'genero' refer to the
> notion of sort, kind and class.... The modern English and German
> word, 'gender' and 'Geschlecht', adheres closely to concepts of
> sex, sexuality, sexual difference, generation, engendering, and so
> on, while the French and Spanish seem not to carry those meanings

readily. Words close to 'gender' are implicated in concept of
kinship, race, biological taxonomy, language, and nationality.

<div align="right">(Haraway Donna 1991:130)</div>

Thus the study of gender is involved in understanding of interrelations between women and men and the role it plays in structuring human societies, their histories, ideologies, economic systems and political systems. It can no more be marginalized in the study of human societies, as any kind of study of social science is impossible without the concept of gender.

As Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement goes:

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"

<div align="right">(Beauvoir1953: 295)</div>

Our task is therefore to examine how these hierarchical differences between powerful man vs weak woman, rational man vs emotional woman, participation in the public domain vs confinement to the domestic domain are perpetually reproduced through major institutions like family and religion.

Family, the institution in which an individual is born and which nurtures his/her development, is regarded as one of the major site for reproduction of gendered identities[1] and inequalities. The power relations within the family are manifested in gendered forms of hierarchy. The struggle is not only over resources and labour but also over socially constructed meanings and definitions, which are multiple, contradictory, fluid and contested.

Gender roles in a patriarchal society within the institutions like family are conceived, enacted and learned within a complex of relationship. Thus family structure, at a given time not only serves the function of demography but at the same time it also helps in socializing and inculcating those social norms and values of society which have to be passed on from old generation to the new. The main ideology underlying the family structure is that of patriarchy. Inequality and hierarchy are implicit within the

term itself. The term "Literally means 'power of the father' indicating male supremacy. It is understood variously as 'a symbolic male principle' governing social and gender relations, as institutional structures of male dominance or an ideology based on power of men" (Walby1986: 114). In the understanding of the patriarchy therefore two core elements are mandatory: one, the core notion of gender inequality and the other, is that of system whereby different aspects of gender relations are interconnected. First, by the notion of gender inequality one here refers to not only biological categories[2] but to those social structures and practices[3] in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Patriarchy is all pervasive within the institution of family as a result of which gender bias results from the initial stage of a person's development[4]. Hence in the light of this discussion one can explain the reason behind the special value accorded to a male child. According to the patriarchal notions, it is the son who is supposed to be the successor of his father. As a consequence, with the birth of every male child, there results in reinforcement of such values. A girl child on the other hand, from her very day of her birth is considered to be a burden to be disposed off at the time of her marriage. Her place at the natal home is therefore regarded as temporary. So she is groomed in a way so as to present her best behaviour at her in-laws' place. This gender stereotype treatment towards a girl child continues from her birth and ends with her death.

The devaluation of girl child coupled with the importance of male, justifies parent's preference for sons. Daughters are seen to drain out the family's resources, hence are treated as burden who are to be continuously guarded from all evils. Emphasis on her purity in the form of her being a virgin until her marriage leads to the problem of her protection. The reason behind a woman's restriction can be understood only when one places it in the context of the honor involved with the whole issue. The

dominant family pattern being patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal, hence women's sub-ordinate position can be well justified. Her position in her in-law's household rises only with her delivering a male child. She is thus, totally controlled both physically and mentally, by her husband. This control gains importance because of the fact that woman is looked upon as an inexhaustible resource, which the husband can draw upon any time (Allen and Mukherjee1982; Dube1986). A woman, thus throughout her life from her birth till her death is passed on from father, husband and son to be protected and looked after at all times. She is economically, mentally and physically dependent upon each of them at different stages of her life.

The division of work within the family is also based on gendered lines. Work around the kitchen, menial, dirty household work and childcare falls in the feminine sphere. The male on the other is expected to handle all work outside the house and does not interfere with the everyday running of the household. This distinction between the feminine and masculine work comes early in childhood and becomes sharper as the child grows up. Woman's work however strainous it be, is always trivialised and underestimated. To this 'natural' division of work of the woman the notion of sense of service (*sewa*) is added thereby making it a part of her necessary duty. The notion of tolerance and self-restraint along with self-denial are consciously cultivated into feminine role. This is embedded in and legitimised by culture and cultural ideology.

Thus family is one of the core institutions from where on the gender inequality starts to develop within the child. Family, through the process of socialization[5] passes on the gender biases and stereotypes from one generation to the next. Having talked about family, one now shifts the focus to another such institution, which also, through its principles and practices produce gender stereotypes in society. This institution is none other than religion. Religion provides ultimate answers to questions such as

meaning of life and death as well as explainations for injustice, inequality and unfairness in life. Rituals attached with religion punctuate social life and develop among individuals, inner conviction regarding their legitimate position in society. Thus religious symbolism provides connection between the sacred and secular aspects of life. Apart from influencing the popular belief system, the institution structure in any society is informed by religious tenets. Thereby, it provides them with the aura of legitimacy to the existing order of things.

In the history of the philosophy of religion, gender bias has long operated to shape the ways in which the traditional problems and orientations of the field have been constructed. Like the cultural phenomenon of religion itself, philosophy of religion originated in male tradition of production and transmission with a history of excluding and devaluing women. It has also been defined by many concepts and symbols marked as 'masculine', which stands in oppositional relation to those marked 'feminine'. For women, religion is a mixed blessing, as most world religions are patriarchal in nature. This distinction is most apparent in a topic that discusses the problem of God, and which optimizes the pervasive gender bias. Even if one ignores at this point other structures of patriarchal rule, the concept of male God has come under major criticism from feminist thinkers like Mary Daly (1975), Rosemary Ruether (1979), Naomi Goldenberg (1979) and others, as to be humanly oppressive.

Explanations to such terminologies point out that the concept of God transcends gender and 'he' is not literally male. Yet the problem remains as, once the masculine has been raised to the universal human beyond gender, feminine alone must then bear the burden of sexual differences. Hence, despite the de-anthropomorphizing efforts of many generations of theologians and philosophers, the sign of God remains stubbornly male in religious thoughts. Thereby it results in a hierarchical domination within the

gender. The discursive practice that construct the divine as male have been so intimately connected to the production of ideologies that it devalues, all that is not male. Male is defined as reflection of the image of God and hence male principles are given primacy. Woman is made to feel as the 'other', who is inferior and thereby develops the concept of domination and control. Mary Daly explains this in her words:

"If God is male, then the male is God"[6].

Even though the text guarantees some feminist strands, yet as these texts are mainly interpreted by men hence the male biases intervene within the explainations. The male interpretations before the public thus underline their patriarchal biases.

The subject matter of religion is so notoriously riddled with misogyny and androcentrism, that the philosophy of religion can hardly ignore the question of gender ideology. Indeed gender bias in religion has not been accidental or superficial. Of all the manifold form sexism takes, none has been more pernicious than the religious and theological restrictions on women's lives. For philosophers studying the intellectual effect and belief systems of religions, the opportunity to critique and correct sexist and patriarchal constructions in this field are ample. The right to do so is also regarded as urgent, given the ubiquitous presence of gender ideology in all known religions. Not one of the religions of the world has been totally affirming to women's personhood. Every one of them conforms to Heidi Hartmann's definition of patriarchy as "relations between men, create independence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women"[7].

Talking about religions generally, the case of Hinduism can be cited as one of the religion, which also accords its women a secondary status by promoting the androcentric ideology of *pativratya*, which literally means husband worship. This ideology stipulates that women must find self-fulfillment in this life and salvation by

devotion and service to their husbands. For wife, husband is the personal God. Her identity is integrated with that of her husband. A man's body is regarded as ritualistic pure while woman's susceptible to pollution. This ideology has historically formulated in the making of the institutional structures and social practices in Indian society.

All sacred literatures of the world display an unvarying ambivalence on the subject of women. For every text that places well-domesticated womanhood on a religious pedestal, another one announces that, if uncontrolled, women are the roots of all evil. Religion thus comprises a primary space in which and by means of which gender hierarchy is culturally articulated, reinforced and consolidated in institutionalized form. Though religion is hardly the only such space, but of course, it appears to have been a particularly persistent and recurrent way of underginding and santifying gender hierarchy in the West. In way both implicit and explicit, this has tended in turn to justify various social and political structures of patriarchy that exalt solitary human patriarchs at the head of the pyramids of power.

Thus to conclude the discussion, one would like to comment on the fact that family and religion which are regarded as the basic/fundamental institutions of any society are themselves not free from such gender biases. Rather, one would point out the fact that these are the sites in which the construction and maintenance of such biases take place. Apart from family and religion, there are other institutions like state, media, etc where biases towards gender are continuously reproduced. These various institutions develop some stereotypical notions of women, which once constructed becomes difficult to break. The term stereotype is often used to indicate those representations, which are misleading and offensive. A stereotype is a conventional way of representing someone or something, so that the views get frozen in that respect leading at times, to prejudice. The social stereotype[8] into which a woman is typecast is

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however not unidimentional in nature. A woman is either stereotyped as being the ideal moral/pure form, or the domestic one or is represented in the form of commodification. In each of these cases, woman is presented in an ideal manner and these are the stereotypes which categories woman. She is thus surrounded within a web of ideal constructions, which is independent of her own construction. Even though these stereotypes are social constructs, yet are typically 'male' produced. They are constructed and idealized on the basis of male visions. The following part of the discussion would briefly highlight the social stereotype of woman as seen as:

- moral/pure woman

- domesticated woman

- woman as commodities

These stereotypical constructions of women will be dealt with in the following section.

II

DOMINANT STEREOTYPES AND PATRIARCHY

A dominant stereotype as we have just pointed out is that of an ideal pure moral woman. Infact this stereotype has entered the collective consciousness so much that even the honour of the nation is often equated with the honour of its women. Her purity, virginity, moral character and the highly romanticised notion of motherhood are often seen as the characteristics of a good nation. For example even sensitive minds like Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi often refer to the strength of pure women for creating a new resurgent Indian nation. If we look at the roots of this stereotype and its santification by scriptures and religious texts it will be easier for us to understand its hold over our consciousness. For example if we look at

some of our religious and cultural symbols in India, we see the assertions of certain archy-types recurring time and again in epics and puranic mythologies. Enough have been said and written about say the ideal of womanhood implicit in severe suffering and single-minded devotion of women characters like Sati, Parvati, Sita and others. A text like ManuSmiriti[10] — as recent studies have demonstrated did play a great role in santifying these stereotypes. These stereotypes talk about 'pure' woman who does not articulate her voice, who submits completely to the male authority be that of a father, husband or son and leads a life of purity and self-sacrifice.

By studying Manusmiriti and its different strictures imposed on women one cannot but help to comment on the fact that all the expected social roles depended on the culture of the society. As roles were seen more as binding norms in such social situation hence an adherence towards them became mandatory in nature. But then the question arose as to whether by adhering to such role resulted in taking a step back in history. Answer to such a rhetorical question has always been avoided as a result of which there still persist the age-old stereotypes in today's society.

The other stereotype talked about is that, of the domesticated image of woman in society. As the saying goes, woman's place is said to be in the kitchen,. The development of the image of an ideal domesticated woman in the Indian context is not a recent one. Rather, it has been the social construct since ages. The notion of serving the husband is a dominant concept rampant even in religious thoughts. Thus Goddess Lakshmi is shown sitting at the feet of her husband Vishnu- indicating the subservient position of woman to man. According to the Indian tradition, a woman who is the ideal wife always caters to her family's needs. An ideal *pativrayta naari* would be complacent to serve her family members and consider this *sewa* as the greatest reward. In return of this she receives does not receive economic gains. Thus there results in a

trivilisation of the hard work that she puts in her domestic sphere. This trivilisation of her work however leaves her unperturbed because of the fact that since her childhood day she has been socialised to accept it as inevitable part of her being. This secondary role of being a satisfied 'housewife only' is the result of prolonged social conditioning, psychological brainwashing by parents from early childhood. It is again followed by the sub-conscious imitation of the mother and mother-in-law. Thus she complies with the dominant stereotype and remains satisfied within its folds.

However, there are some women who have been able to break this public-private divide of work and have taken up jobs outside their homes. In such a case a woman's position has elicited a mixed reaction. Even though she gets paid for her job outside her home, yet her place within the household does not change vis-a-vis her new role. She therefore gets trapped in a doubly burdened situation - having to cope up with not only her household work but also the work outside. In her place of work too, she has to face discrimination and hence has to work harder to establish her worth.

Another major stereotype we are talking about is that of woman as consumption and pleasure items. Apparently it is paradoxical because on the one hand a woman is seen as pure, virgin and moral on the other she is seen as evil, full of lust and hunger – reason for the downfall of men. But this paradoxical perception of womanhood is rooted in the rational of patriarchy itself. Because patriarchy as a structure and mode of relationship does not engage with woman as they are. Instead it either valorises or degrades womanhood. A woman is not seen like her male counterpart having her likes and dislikes. Neither importance is given of her identity and autonomy. She is either seen as 'devine' or 'devil'; 'soul' or 'flesh'. This virgin-whore dichotomy however is not a modern day construct, rather has a historical background. That is why since ancient times we see the recurrence of both these images. A woman is *shakti* goddess;

she is also a sensual commodity that diverts the attention of male gods and jogies. In our times, this stereotype has acquired further intensity. With the growth of consumerism, market rationality and profit oriented culture industry, the portrayal of a woman, as sexual commodity has become more frequent and all pervasive.

The advertising industry and sales promotion mechanism for example fully exploit the body/physical charm of woman. She is presented as a model devoid of her acting, feeling and thinking being, who is put up to be looked at and desired. Her body therefore, is exposed to the viewers' gaze (read 'male') for their accaimation or scrutiny. Not only the body, but different parts are used to give 'special effect'. From lips to legs almost every organ becomes a means to tempt customers. Women are seen as being a part of advertising those objects which have no relations to them. With economic changes like globalisation resulting in liberalisation of the economy, countries have opened themselves to the onslaught of new multinational companies. Each of them tries to tempt the customer towards their product and in this process women are being increasingly used in various ways to market their product.

Thus Mary Ann Doane (1991) suggest that this commodification of woman asks for a deeper understanding when placed in the context of patriarchal society. The protest is not only to this commodification but to the whole process which lies beyond her control. A study of woman's position in the society reveals the very fact that however much she tries she has to operate within the parameters of dominant gender ideologies.

So in order to break away from these stereotypes what is needed is a study of the structures within which they are situated. As revealed in the earlier discussion, the dominant structure within the whole relationship occurs is that of patriarchy. A definition of the concept would entail two important elements, which constitutes its

core. Firstly, patriarchy has within it the constructed image of gender inequality. Secondly, that there is a degree of systematicity, in that the different aspects of gender relations are connected in some way. The notion of gender difference should entail gender inequality that is expressed as men's domination over women, using both biological categories (Firestone 1974) as well as social structures and practices (Hartman 1979). Overemphasis on the former would result in the biological reductionalism. Another issue, which rises with regard to this definition, is whether the notion should be tied to solely the household. Some of the writers define it in relation to household where the eldest male member dominates all others (Hartmann1979; Moghadam1992; Weber1947). However there are others who feel that expansion of the concept would result only when the concept is left open and not tried to a single household. Thus patriarchy as a concept expands itself and becomes omnipresent as the all-pervasive social structure, which is found in any social relationship relating with gender.

The system of patriarchy is conceptualised as being composed of several interrelated structures. Thus one finds patriarchal relations in household work, paid work, within state, male violence, sexuality and even in cultural institutions. In the household labour, the husband appropriates his wife's labour. In paid work there exists sexual differentiation in work and in pay. Even the state has a systematically biased attitude towards women in making policies. Male violence is also seen to be patriarchal in nature as any kind of state intervention is often lacking in such cases. In sexuality, the patriarchal relations are seen in the form of sexual double standards, prostitutions, pornography etc. In cultural institutions this patriarchal element is revealed through complex relations. The structure is composed of a set of institutions. which create the

representation of women within a patriarchal gaze in a variety of arenas like religion, education, or media.

As patriarchy is often seen as the root cause of gender inequality in the society, the feminist theorists have often envisaged the end of patriarchy. For them therefore, if the root cause is eradicated then the inequality within the social structures would be easily removed. So basically the aim of the feminist movement was: first of all locate all of these various ways in which women were represented, secondly try to find out the sources which resulted in their gradual construction and later, the deconstruction of these representations.

III

FEMINISM: A WAY OF SEEING AND A MODE OF DISSENT

Before embarking on a discussion of feminism as a social movement, a brief explanation of the genealogical root of the term feminism gives a better understanding of the whole aspect. The term 'feminism' has its root in the Latin word 'femina' or women, which originally meant 'having the qualities of females'. It began to be used in reference to the theory of sexual equality and the movement of women's rights, replacing 'womanism' in the 1890's. "Feminism has only working definitions" says Donna Hawxhurst and Sue Morrow (1984), "since it is a dynamic, constantly changing ideology with many aspects including the personal, the political and the philosophical. It can never be only a belief system. Without action, feminism is merely empty rhetoric, which cancels itself out"(Hawxhurst & Morrow1984; 107). Charlotte Bunch (1981) points out that feminism is about transforming society, because every issue is a

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women's issue, and there is a feminist perspective of every subject. The Third World feminists have used a definition of feminism {as proposed by Rhode Reddock (1996) of Trinidad}whereby it meant an awareness of women's oppression and exploitation within the family, at work and in society, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation.

From the onset, feminism started as a social enterprise, a moral and political framework concerned with redressing social wrongs. It had an ethical stance whereby it started and continuously returned to the questions of value, of good and evil, right and wrong, what is worthwhile and significant and what is not. A general opinion irrespective of gender, regards feminism, or the more commonly used term "women's lib"(Hooks 2000:18), as a movement which aims at making women the social equal of men. This broad definition popularized by media and mainstream raised some problematic questions. Major limitation, as to not having a common vision of equality, was seen as the main drawback of this women's liberation movement. Emphasis was give to look at feminism more so as a reform which would help them attain equality rather than to see it as a movement meant to eradicate domination and transform society.

> Whatever the organization, the location, or the ethnic composition
> of the group, all the women's liberation organizations had
> one thing in common: they all came together based on a biological
> and sociological fact rather than on a body of ideas. Women
> came together on a women's liberation movement on the basis
> that we were women and that all women are subject to male domination.
> We saw all women as being allies and all men as being
> the oppressor. We never questioned the extend to which American
> women accept the same materialistic and individualistic values
> as American men. We did not stop to think that American
> women are just as reluctant as American men to struggle for a
> new society based on new values of mutual respect, cooperation
> and social responsibility[11].

Feminist theory has a distinctive subject matter. While studying women is not new, studying them from the perspective of their own experiences so that they can understand themselves and the world, is something that came up with feminist studies. They insist that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane, as the overt subject for scrutiny in the result of research. It means that the class, race, culture and gender assumptions, beliefs and behaviour of the researcher her/himself must be place within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint. This brings in an empathic understanding within the study.

Feminism as a social movement[12] started by raising fundamental questions about the ways in which social sciences analysed women, men and social life. Before going into an in depth analysis on the issues it dealt with, what is important is to look into its historical origin. Women's movements are commonly divided into 'waves' or different periods. Thus the first wave of feminism is said to span the 19th and early 20th centuries, while the second wave rose from 1960s and is said to continue into the present. However, it does not mean that the period before the first wave had no women's activism. Rather the demands of women's rights became widespread with the first wave of feminist movement. Women for the first time came out in the open to actively participate in social issues related to gender in particular. It was at this time when little progress was internationally visible on the women's question, that the French intellectual and political activist Simone de Beauvior wrote her path-breaking and monumental work *The Second Sex* (1949).

The second wave of feminism, which started around 1960s onward, saw a fresh phase of issues coming up with regard to women's problems. A gradual broadening of women's occupational and educational choices in the 1950s and 60s amidst a host of

discriminatory practices contributed to a growing awareness about gender injustices. This fuelled the new women's movement. There was protest against the normal prejudice about the demarcation of women's place of work. They were made to believe that their place was that of housewives and mothers. Those who resisted this experienced a growing dissatisfaction and emptiness in their lives. It was this problem, 'the problem that had no name' which resulted in the emergence of a new wave of feminist consciousness and women's activism. Feminism as a movement during the entire span of its development had within itself different strands — liberal, radical and socialist or Marxist. For the liberal feminists, the emphasis was mainly on liberty, rights and equality. However despite its success at the level of changing existing laws and influencing state policy, its limitations lay precisely in being so closely a part of the guiding structures of contemporary western society. Thus in the eyes of the other feminists, the liberal feminists did not go far enough in examining the causes of women's oppression as it was class biased[13].

The most publicized strand of the women's movement has been that of radical feminism. It emerged by making, a radical break from the existing politics. Radical feminists of the 1960s symbolized most powerfully the anger of women against the shackles of male power. They wanted to create a space for women where they could voice their grievances, think and act on the basis of their experiences. They felt that women needed to recognize all those including their personal lives that were affected by patriarchal influences. They were successful in broadening the agendas of both liberal and socialist feminists.

Socialist and Marxist feminist developed their critiques in relation to the political Left. These feminists sought to develop Marxist perceptions of a socio-economic system based on class division combining it with gender issues with

dimensions of private. Sharing with radical feminist a commitment to politicize the personal and private, they too were concerned regarding the fate of women's work both at home and at work place. Thus by looking at these different strands of feminist thoughts, it can be said that despite the difference in orientations among them, these were not hard and fast distinctions. Hence there were differences as well similarities between these different modes of thoughts.

Thus, the early years of feminism was focused on sexism and gender biases of the mainstream society. Feminism for them was a struggle to end sexist oppressions. They realised that neither a feminism that focuses on women as autonomous human being worthy of personal freedom, nor one that focuses on the attainment of equality of opportunity with men can rid society of sexist oppression. Therefore feminism is seen more as a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates society in various levels. By 1980s, however emphasis of the movement shifted over to its internal problems where there was large amount of disagreements within the movement. These disagreements led to asking open questions regarding the biases present within the movement itself as it was said to be in favour of the white middle class heterosexual women. However the present study would not deal with these internal biases, but focus on those other issues, which they raise in general, related to women's position in the society.

Feminism as a movement, originated primarily not in any old women's experiences, but in women's experiences in political struggles. Kate Millett (1970) and others remind us that the bedroom and the kitchen are as much the site of political struggles as are the boardroom or the polling place[14]. It may be that only through such struggles that one come to understand oneself and the social world. Thus they felt that this private/public divide is an ideological construct which confines important aspects

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of subordination of the women to the domain of the 'private' thereby allowing some of the most violent manifestations of power of man over woman to go unchecked and unrecognized. Thus feminist studies involve elucidating the ways in which the 'public' penetrates the 'private'- home, family, bedroom and the individual psyches of women and men.

The movement insisted on bringing on centre stage, areas of life hitherto considered secondary, even irrelevant, to 'serious' politics – the division of labour in the household, relations between men and women at home and in the workplace, emotions, sexuality, even the Unconsciousness. Thus this typical issue also sets apart, giving ground to a conviction that the women's movement is opening up to explore whole new arenas. The movement tried to establish the importance of housework that women do. They showed how the daily routines undertaken by the women, which includes housework, childcare and other services are as critical to the reproduction of society as those jobs done by men. Today the primary concern among the feminist theorists is women's equality. The most obvious form in which women's inequality is expressed by the society is the rigid sex based or gender based division of work. This rigidity is found strictly in contemporary society. Feminist object to this division and explain that they should be left a choice to work outside. This ability to go out and work outside forces the society to recognize her talents, her rights and her status. Moreover it also raises protests regarding the discrimination a woman has to face in her workplace. Establishing herself at her workplace also proves her worth, and her ability to be at par with her male counterpart. Thus feminist try to deconstruct the social stereotype notion of women as found in the societies.

Another area of feminist study includes the structures of patriarchy that governs the society in general and family in particular. Unlike other forms of oppression, most

people witness and/or experience the practice of sexist domination in family structure. The family in our society, is seen to both traditionally and legally, reflect the dualist values of hierarchy and coercive authoritarian control, which are exemplified in parent-child and husband-wife relationships. It is this form of the family where most children learn the meaning and practice of hierarchical, authoritarian rule. Here is where they learn and accept male supremacy and group oppression of women. It's also the place where the relationship of super-ordination-subordination, of superior-inferior, of master-slave is first learned and accepted as 'natural'. Thus the sexist oppression perverts and distorts the positive function of family. Family exists as a space wherein people are socialized from birth to accept and support forms of oppression. Power struggles, coercive authoritarian rule, and brutal assertion of dominance, shape family life so that it is often the setting of intense violence, suffering and pain. An attack against this dominant structure might lead to the abolition of family. However with reference to the important role played by it in the society what the feminist aims, is to get rid of the abusive dimensions created by sexist oppression without devaluing the overall structure. Thus for the feminist, the movement to end sexist oppression, is the only social-change movement that will strengthen and sustain family life in all households. What the feminist aims at, is a deconstruction of the oppressive structure of patriarchy, replacing it with the ethic of communalism, shared responsibility and mutuality.

In sharp contrast to the movement in western societies, feminism in the Third World societies has mainly been responsive to issues dealing with economic and social aspects. On studying the Indian feminist philosophy, one theme that keep on recurring is the different ways in which 'woman' has been linked with notions of timeless traditions in both the colonial and post-colonial periods. This reinforces the sense of

woman as a stable, unchanging ground upon which an active male subject rebuilds the sense of self, shaken by uncertainties of colonial and post-colonial societies. So Sanghari and Vaid argue:

"...the recovery of tradition throughout the proto-nationalist and nationalist period was the recovery of the 'traditional' woman – her various shapes continuously readapt the 'external' past to the needs of the contingent present".

(Sanghari and Vaid 1990:10).

It is a familiar argument among both the feminist and non-feminist that woman plays a key role in preserving and transmitting cultural traditions, specially in Third World countries. But the work of a member of Indian feminist suggests a rather different and a more complex understanding of the woman-tradition connection. Sanghari and Vaid feels that this connection is neither value free or unproblematic. They say:

"...how change is made to appear as continuity [since] the ideologies of women are carriers of tradition often disguise, mitigate, compensate, contest actual changes taking place. Womanhood is often part of an asserted, or desired not an actual cultural continuity".

(Sanghari and Vaid 1990:17).

Uma Chakravarti likewise therefore says that it is not woman who transmits a self-evident already constituted body of tradition; rather it is constantly reinvented. Woman's place in it is constantly reinterpreted, and the contemporary woman's self-definition is being reproduced in relation to that invented tradition (Chakravarti 1990).

In the post-colonial context, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (1993) points to popular cultural representations of the 'new Indian woman', a construct that aims both to at reconciling, in her person, the conflicts between tradition and modernity in Indian society. Thereby it denies the actual conflict that women experience in their lives. As an example of this process, she looks at advertisements of Indian State Television that promote the 'pan Indian' subject, as opposed to specific regional, religious or

communal identities. She notes that this is only achieved, ironically, by 'westernizing' the Indian male consumer, whose project of modernization without westernization is saved by the presence of 'the Indian *woman,* perennially and transcendentally wife, mother and homemaker' whose specific role is to balance (deep) tradition and (surface) tradition (Rajan1993:133). Thus she says that women and religion both occupy the same space for modernity as a transitional phase, disguising the permanent essence of tradition. Woman's emancipation is made to appear as individual woman's achievement and choice. Thereby it indirectly does not pose any threat to the tradition, which projects an idealized conjugal and domestic sphere. This is done by reinforcing those sites of woman's oppression i.e. sexual harassment, domestic work, dowry demands etc. by santifying, trivialising and glamourizing these moments; the female advertisements project them instead as means of 'remaking female identity'.

The related spatial move in both nationalist and communalist movements that have interested the Indian feminist is the association of 'woman' with 'home'. There is of course nothing particularly new in the feminist looking at the ways in which woman has been associated with concepts of the private, home or inside. One complication that Indian and other post-colonial feminism have brought to this question, is their insistence on the fact that the feminist space of home is productive and it not only has gender but also of raced, national and other community identities. The broad divide of public related to male and private to female lead the feminist theorist to question its basic premise. Thus resulted, a deconstruction of the private-public barrier, which was one of the major achievements associated with the feminist movement in India. Majority of the feminist analysts regarded the State to be patriarchal in nature, which was united with institutions like family. Thus for them, laws that were made by the State were also patriarchal in nature and they recreated the hegemony of the male

dominance. It should be noted here that, even though these feminists are sure about the fact that the state is patriarchal in nature, yet they still have no definite analysis as to how male power has transformed into State power (Hartman1981). Marxist feminists explained this in relation to capitalism, which wielded economic power and thereby helped in subjugating both State and women[15].

Feminism as a social movement thereby helped in understanding not only the social stereotypes that prevailed in the society, but also in deconstructing these stereotypes. Thus it raised some serious questions related to the perception of women's position and thereby helping in developing consciousness about those otherwise neglected field. It helped in questioning the old stereotypes that dominated both men and women and made people realise that nothing should be taken as granted. Woman should be aware of her situation and protest against any form of domination. Having talked about the way in which feminism developed as a form of consciousness and later as a political force, the focus of the paper now shifts on to study the way in which there resulted in the construction of the New Indian Woman.

IV

OLD STEREOTYPES NEW IMAGES: RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

We have already written about the stereotypes and feminism as a mode of protest. It is however important to note that Indian society is also undergoing rapid social transformation and its having its impact on the destiny of women. It is no body's contention to argue that the state of women in India has really undergone positive changes in a very meaningful fashion. These are changes, even though limited to largely urban educated middle class women, which cannot be altogether denied.

It is true that we live in a society in which everyday we encounter domestic violence, dowry deaths, rape and continious degradation of femininity. But then there is also slow but steady assertion of new women who are actually entering the sites of higher learning and joining modern professions. They are seen to overcome the duality of public and private divide thereby acquiring both social and economic autonomy. We need to look at these changes while examining the formation of gender identities. But what is sociologically relevant is that despite these changes, the traditional stereotypes of a passive and inferior women continues to prevail. Infact it would not be wrong to say that, at times modernity itself reinforces traditional stereotypes and even glamorises them. Sociologically what is interesting is to note that there exists an unholy alliance of traditional patriarchy and modern consumerism. Some examples would make this point clear. In recent times we have seen the proliferation of say beauty contests and fashion parades and the entire industry promoting the image of an independent, confident, beautiful woman. These women are not definitely as what one sees in Manusmriti. They are articulate, outspoken and possibly economically well off. Nevertheless, these changes look nearly ornamental, but are not substantiate because these women are often reduced into objects of patriarchal gaze and mass consumption. In other words, new femininity also becomes a carefully derived cultural product manufactured by men for their pleasure and consumption. Likewise innumerable sociological studies have demonstrated that women, despite education and other changes, continue to bear the burden of oppression. They perpetually experienced the tensions implicit in contradictory expectations: expectations from traditional roles of mother/wife and new roles of professionals in the public sphere. It is therefore important to examine whether the 'newness' of the new woman is really substantial or halfhearted and ambiguous.

It is in this context that our research acquires special relevance. We wish to examine how ads portray or represent the complexity of womanhood in India. The reason why ads have occupied the attention of cultural anthropologists and sociologists will be discussed in the chapter preceding to this. We can however make some observations here. First, advertisements have become major carriers of social stereotypes, changing and images. In other words for sociologists, ads are indeed significant cultural tools or mirrors through which she/he can make sense of the society. Second, with the growth of the new middle class and consumer culture in Indian society ads have become very powerful vehicles to portray this changing representation of human needs and aspirations. Third, ads as major component of culture industry do portray femininity in way that have occupied the attention of social scientists, feminists and women activists.

It is in this context, that we wish to examine what kind of images or representions of womanhood one finds in advertisements. It is obvious that traditional stereotypes of a passive domesticated woman are bound to recur in ads. But then, as we have already said ads are also responding to the needs and aspirations of what we have just described as the new Indian woman. The question is how ads portray this 'newness' – whether this newness is really about agency, autonomy and dignity or whether it is merely a glamorised version of the same traditional stereotype. The question is how the interplay of tradition and modernity, patriarchy and consumerism, male desire and feminine beauty are portrayed in advertisements.

Before we reflect on these issues in subsequent chapters, we wish to conclude this chapter with some critical observations, which would prepare the ground for entering into more complex discussions.

For example, there lies a sharp polarization in the projection of the younger and older women. The younger women are shown as rebellious and sometimes project sexual desires, while the older women are shown mostly to be married and established, exercising her autonomy. The common points however a lie in that, both are shown to be controlled and made acceptable by certain 'femininity' that is encoded as physical charm. In a popular textile advertisement a woman is shown to play outstanding billiard in an all-male environment. The advertisement ends not with her triumphant look but her shy, modest feminine smile refusing all of the acclaims thereby reinstating her traditional status. The image of this new woman in no way jeopardizes the notion of a tradition idealised in the form of a conjugal and domestic sphere. The traditional values are brought out in a very subtle form through these advertisements. Thus in the advertisement of a pressure cooker (Hawkins) a young woman with the product is shown to be accompanied by an older woman encouraging her with an expression of approval. The caption reads: "Because my family depends on me, I depend on Hawkins". Thus the ad glamourizes woman's household work. Advertisement portrays those areas of women's life like – sexuality, work, marriage and family – to define womanhood through its various projections. These are incidentally the arenas, which the women's movement deals with. Though, at one level, there is an apparent conflict, yet at another level, it undercuts them by offering a similar desired image of the liberated woman arrived at, by a different trajectory.

Thus advertisements are seen to target the most frequent sites of women's oppression-sexual harassment, domestic work, dowry demands, joint family- and redefine them in glamorized or trivialised forms thereby remaking female identity. A woman who attracts stares from the male crowd on a street, bus or any public place is

shown to be the ideal attractive and sexually desirable woman. Thereby it negates the harrowing experience that is actually associated with the whole episode.

The construction of the new Indian woman must conform to her national identity as well as her modernity: she is Indian as well as new. The emphasis on a pan-Indian identity has been the aim of the Indian State. Its achievement in advertisements however is presented by 'westernizing' the Indian consumer. In this context, the Indian woman perennially and transcendentally the wife, mother and homemaker, saves the project of modernization-without-westernization. 'Good' modernity, as Tejaswini Niranjana calls it, must be skin deep[16]. It is only the female subject who can be shown as successfully achieving the balance between (deep) tradition and (surface) tradition, through strategies of representation.

It is also important to note that the spectator is generally masculine while the camera appears to be held by the gaze of a male. The gaze it also a male patriarchal one. The image that results is designed to flatter or console the male ego. Feminists have therefore launched a substantial criticism against this production and reproduction of fetishistic and sexual images of women, constructed by the male look. The camera is conceptualised as an instrument of gaze, which controls the spectator's eye. Feminists have countermanded its patriarchal look where it is always the woman who is in front of the camera while the man behind it.

Is the woman the target audience for whom a product/service is aimed at? Is she the primary consumer of the product/service advertised? Or is she herself the product or service? Questions of such nature have been raised frequently by feminist scholars. This is the basic ambivalence that leads to the great unyeilding debate on the portrayal of woman in advertisement, which includes both the print as well as the electronic media. Studies on this issue reveal the problem of distorting the image of

women to uphold the power the patriarchal society wields upon them. The feminist

scholars in Delhi like Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin founded *The Committee of*

Portrayal of Women in the Media. They justly claim that it is not only the physical

exposure of women that is derogatory but also the reinforcement of other stereotypes

that are damaging to the dignity of women. The ads are insulting, humiliating and

derogatory to the woman-image and make all talk of women's social, educational,

political progress as a complete farce.

Deepa Dhanraj, a Bangalore based activist and documentary film maker, wrote

in a paper for an international seminar:

In Indian advertising, women are used as models in sexist ads for diverse products from tyres to ceiling fans. Apart from this, a stereotyped notion of gender roles is explicit in the casting of ads. Primary role for men as demonstrators, and experts are used and their physical presence is strongly felt as the authoritarian 'Voice of God' in commentator. Women, by contrast, are cast either in auxiliary roles or as feather headed clients who have to be convinced at length to purchase X product, in pseudo-scientific terminology. The image bears no relationship whatsoever to the reality of Indian women or their on-going struggle to achieve economic and political autonomy (Dhanraj 1990).

During the recent decade there has been a change with regard to the concept of

advertisements. It has become the most vital force, which constructs and deconstructs

the opinion of people. Symbolism is a major part of advertisement and it is here that

there has resulted a sea of change in it. Woman is used as symbols to influence various

buyers, to promote a product, to induce, to motivate or to tempt and seduce to buy it.

Projection of such image of woman is questioned and is a matter of dispute. It has often

been charged that women are projected in an unflattering and unrealistic manner. A

number of studies concluded that the overall effect of the portrayal of women in media

is to reinforce, rather than reduce prejudices and stereotypes. This distortion tends to

justify and perpetuate existing inequalities. Centuries of conditioning have turned them

into willing victims of subtle forms of oppression, cruelty, and discrimination. Thus the

man-woman relationship that have developed are injurious to women's personality and antagonistic to their emancipation and equality. Modern communication has been a source of powerful support to the force of status quo.

Thus portrayal of women in advertisement reinforces and creates the impression of women being mere sex symbols. Advertisements use beautiful women to sell the products to both male-female viewers by virtue of their two dimensional roles as housewife, mother and daughter and then function as sexual object. In order to attract male viewers, not only the body, but its different parts are used to give 'special effect'.women are seen to model for products which have no relation to their needs. Thus representations of the female is used in advertisements like that of bikes, cars, beer, cigarettes where the product has no relation to women. It shows the blatant commodification of women. She is seen as an extension of commodity, having a dummy expression on her face thereby looking as a mannequin in the advertisements. The construction of a 'willing and eager female sexuality' across the advertisements represents a constant struggle to define and contain cultural politics of sexual identity. For a woman the concept of the male approval of her beauty supercedes her own individual approval. Advertisements related to toiletries and the cosmetic ads are the worst examples that can be cited in relation to the concept. In these ads the be-all and end-all of a woman's existence is shown to depend on how successful she is in attracting the male attention. With immense discomfort it is noted that even for a successful woman, her prized catch remains a man.

The consumption of visual image remains dangerously asymmetrical this is because men make images for themselves. Modern advertising thus can be read as that which portray men's-imagining-of-women. It is therefore men who exist in a more narcissistic condition, gazing lovingly either at themselves in visual images or at what

they think desirable in the objectification of the 'other'. Apart from the portrayal of women as sex symbol, advertisements also reinforce the traditional image of women. Hence a very common depiction of woman shows her to be engaged in household chores. She is shown to derive special joy by washing clothes with a particular brand of washing powder, cooking delicious food for her family, taking care of her children and so on. There also results in a trivialisation of women's work. Household chores are shown to be easy with the introduction of modern machines as a result of which a woman is shown to enjoy her leisure time. This particular washing machine ad shows a woman applying nail varnish while the caption reads: *this lady is busy washing clothes.* The impression given is that housework can be extremely easy thereby underestimating woman's work. Women are thus always shown as dull headed thereby not worthy of holding any important position in jobs. Men on the other hand are thus portrayed as successful professionals and decision-makers while women are shown as their followers and dependents.

The impact of media is quite deep on the young minds and hence plays a crucial role in moulding social attitudes of the new generation. By presenting only the extreme stereotypes, ads tend to underscore and reinforce the already existing negative feelings that women already have about themselves. The problem lies also in the fact that women themselves are often the uncritical consumers of anti-women portrayal. Media affects their socializing process influencing what they learn, they consume etc. This institutionalization and one-dimensional images of women through the media makes it harder for them to break out from sexist modes that encage them. The questionable ethics of decency and obscenity with respect to women associated with their physical exposure alone is based on perverse ideology[17] dictated by patriarchy. The construction of a 'willing and eager female sexuality' across the advertisements represents a

constant struggle to define and contain cultural politics of sexual identity. Gender

differentiation in the advertisements will remain hierarchically grounded in conditions

of dominance so long as patriarchal truth is deemed to correspond with 'the real world'.

The neglect of woman has over time, reinforced the image of the patriarch and his

power vis-à-vis his wife and other women. This dominance has thereby discouraged the

emergence of the new woman. However much the portrayal of this new woman is

drawn; she is never shown to disassociate herself from the traditional image. Thereby it

makes the image of the 'new woman' problematic and weakly etched out.

NOTES:

[1] heterosexual macho masculinity.

[2] the use of biological categories was emphasisied by Firestone(1974), over emphasis of only biological categories often lead to the problem of reductionalism.

[3] this was emphasized by Hartmann(1979).

[4] it is family, which is regarded as the first stage of socialization in a child's life.

[5] it is the process whereby the child inculcates all the values and norms of the society.

[6] Mary Daly, "Feminist Post-Christian Introduction", in her The Church and Second Sex, 2nd ed (New York;Harper and Row 1975:38).

[7] Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union", in Lydia Sargent (ed.) "Women and Revolution: The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism"(South End Press, Boston:, 1981:41).

[8] the term refers to generalization made in describing social groups. They are culturally learner and landed down from one generation to the next.

[10] Manusmriti written in 2685 verses is also described as Code of Law of Manu, is actually a treatise that deal with the social life of man in Hindu society.

[11] written by anomymous author of a pamphlet on feminist ussues published in 1976, Women and New World.

[12] social movement has been defined as a form of protest where a group of people with a purpose which will bring about change and whose influencing is spreading in opposition to the established order in which it originated.

[13] catering mainly to the needs of the demands of the white middle class.

[14] Kate Millett, Sexual Politics, (New York: Doubleday & Co1969).

[15] according to the Marxist argument economy is the base of all social relations. Thus the capitalist weilds a power over the State and in turn to all other social institutions – gender being one among them. The Socialist feminists have extended Marxist categories of analysis to these radical feminist ideas and argued that capitalism and patriarchy are two interconnected systems of relations.

[16] Niranjana, WS:86.

[17] by ideology we mean a pattern of ideas (common-sense knowledge) – both factual and evaluative – which purports to explain and legitimate the social structure and culture of a social group or society and which serves to justify social actions which are in accordance with that pattern of ideas. Ideology shapes our daily feelings, thoughts, and actions. Ideologies provide partial/selective knowledge; hence a dominant ideology may serve to construct certain aspects of the social world as natural hence remaines unquestioned. As dominant ideology is produced usually by men of power hence it is often regarded as male biased e.g. patriarchal ideology.

CHAPTER THREE

ADVERTISEMENTS AS CULTURAL PRODUCTS

We have already discussed about the formation of gender identity and how social practices give a degraded/inferior orientation to femininity. The main objective of this dissertation is to concentrate on a specific theme i.e. how advertisements as powerful cultural and symbolic devices in a market driven economy also contribute to the construction and reproduction of gender stereotypes. This would require a deeper analysis of the sociology of advertisements, the growth of consumer culture and the changing aspirations and life-styles of the emerging middle class. Only then we would be able to situate the problem in a specific social context and establish the relationship between ads and gender identities. In this chapter an attempt has been made to respond to these complex questions.

The aim of this research is to integrate women into the present system having an equal basis with men. In order to reach that what is required is an understanding of the three main issues that are a must in this study. The first issue involves the study of the relationship between the media and reality; the second include the problems with content analysis; and the third relates to problem with 'images of women'. While talking about the first issue, it can be said that the relationship between the media and reality within the research paradigm rests on the assumption that media acts as the 'window on the world' (Hollows 2000). It is assumed that media images should reflect or represent the actual social reality. However the problematic aspect that exists in this is that, the researchers have found that the images of women that the media portray do not keep up with the real social changes. There seem to exist a kind of 'cultural lag', with regards to women representation. So much so that often media misrepresent what

women really are and rather work to reinforce 'traditional' images of women. This becomes problematic in nature because the task of media is to reveal the 'real' women so that she becomes a model of womanhood. However if in that representation the reality is overshadowed and is coloured by male biases then it makes the situation problematic in nature. It is said that media do not represent or misrepresent gender identities but work to construct and structure the meaning of gender. However within this constructions comes in the biases of society that exists against women thereby misrepresenting the reality.

Next issue deals with the problem of content analysis that exists in media texts. In this the study deals with 'what the media showed' rather than with 'how they produced meanings' (MacDonald1995). What media texts do is that it tries to understand its textual content. What it neglates is the study of differences in way men and women are portrayed. Moreover it also oversimplifies the textual content, overlooks the multidimensional interpretation and also ignores the way in which the meanings are organized within the text. For example in a particular advertisement the male partner is shown to help out his wife with washing. The way it was portrayed regards the male's task as being 'exceptional' more as a form of favour. By taking this image from the text and deciphering the implicit sub-text helps in the understanding of the problematic nature of the text.

The third problem deals with that of 'images of women' analysis. In this regards the problematic nature of the interpretation comes into being. It is to be noted however that all texts are inherently 'polysemic', meaning that a text would have a multiple interpretation. If a text is interpreted in the same way by the general mass it would mean that either the text by nature is all-powerful and audience totally passive; or that the audience share a common cultural background that makes the same interpretation.

Whatever be the fact, the diverse interpretation of the text, often result in a gender-biased analysis, which is omnipresent in any society. Thus the gender biased interpretation of the text result in a negative colouring of the textual context.

I

MAKING SENSE OF ADVERTISEMENTS

We live in a world in which advertisements are everywhere – on television channels, in newspapers and magazines, in the streets. Indeed it is difficult to separate modern urban living from the culture of advertisements. It is obvious that ads are very intimately and immediately related to the products. Advertisements are created in order to evolve a taste for specific products. But then the fact is that ads are not so simple. Ads are not just about buying and selling, they also convey meanings, values and aspirations. That is why in recent times ads have become an object of inquiry for sociologists and cultural theorists. A careful look at some of this rigorous inquiry would help us to make sense of the advertisements.

At one level it is possible to argue that ads are essentially articulating the existing values and aspirations of people in a given society. In other words there is nothing particularly wrong with the ads as such because ads are seen to be in tune with the mood and aspirations of people. So it is said advertisements does not invent social values or ideals of its own, rather it usurps or exploits what advertisers take to be the prevailing values. But an opposite view comes forward with a sharper critique of ads. In this view it is believed that ads constitute an important component of the entire 'culture industry' in a market driven capitalist economy and they perpetually produce

standardized images and stereotypes, creating 'false needs' and stimulate the desire to buy more and more. In other words, as critical Marxists or the Frankfurt school theorists would argue, ads play an ideological function in the industrially developed advanced capitalistic societies. These Critical theorists of Frankfurt School mainly Adorno (1969) and Horhheimer (1972) brought out the identical nature of monopoly in all mass societies. In their essay "*The Culture Industry: enlightment as mass depiction*" (1972)[1] they talked about the negative consequences that result when culture and entertainment fuses with each other. Thus for them the merging of advertising with the culture industry results in the process of manipulating men. They explained that "the triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them"[2]. Ads mythologies certain notions of success and failure, good life and bad life; as a result perpetually manipulates human consciousness, divert their attentions and induce them to an imaginary world. In a way the 'fetish' of consumption has been criticised. This critic is tremendously powerful amongst the social scientists and the intelligensia. Even J.K.Galbraith articulated almost the same voice when he argued that the central function of advertising was to create and construct desire. Thus he said economists are unable to see that consumption produced the very wants that production was ostensibly intended to satisfy:

'Synthesized by advertising, catalyzed by salesmanship and shaped by the discreet manipulations of the persuaders' (Galbraith 1987:152)[3].

Advertisements as a form of persuaders have been however dealt with in details in Vance Packard's book *The Hidden Persuaders* (1975). He asserted that: "advertising not only play a vital role in promoting our economic growth but is a colourful diverting aspect of American life: and many of the creation of the ad men are

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tasteful, honest works of artistry" (Packard1979:15). Advertising is seen as a model of modern unfreedom. Ostensibly, the very epitome of capitalist competition, advertising both represents itself and is attacked as a dominating even scientific power which organizes individuals into masses. This is most clearly brought out in this book. Vance Packard's argument was that, advertising possessed scientific psychological technologies that through knowledge of their unconscious desires and motivations would compel individuals to set against their will, buying whatever the advertisers wished them to. The individuals confront these forms of power directly, without mediation by collective values or relations. This individualism of competition leads to destruction of the individuals. Packard sets out to expose the tasteless and dishonest 'depth approach'; that is the use of 'mass psychoanalysis and social science in order to discern the 'hidden meaning' which lay below the level of consciousness in everyday behaviour. Hence there results in manipulation of symbols in advertising which leads to all forms of publicity to sell anything from products to politicians (1979:11-16). Thus Packard through his writings in the journalistic muckracking tradition of American positivism spoke of 'the little man' (particularly the middle class) who is being squeezed in between the proletariat and immigrant mob (gathered by industrialization, urbanization and destruction of traditional order) and the power of modern corporation. Consumer culture thus threatens to slide these people into the arms of the masses. The same line of thought is seen to reflect in the works of Leavis (1930) for whom too advertising was an 'extract process'.

While talking about important works on advertisements, one cannot fail to take into account the contribution of Erving Goffman in this field. Goffman in his book *Gender Advertisements* (1979) was concerned with the visual imagery that the advertisements portrayed. He says how through the positioning of the male-female in

the ads the relative social status of them can be understood. For instance, he explains women and children are pictured on floors and beds much more than men. These positions are literally perceived as lower positions, hence men are never shown in that position. Thus he says that the advertisers highlights the existing gender codes in a most naturalized manner which does not raise a doubt in viewer's mind. Gillian Dyer's (1982) comprehensive and readable study of advertising as discourse highlights the significance of advertising images in particular, as opposed to text. Although one tends to think photographs as realistic, images are subject to the same selection and editing as text. She explains that the act of 'seeing' is not essentially natural or passive, rather it is culturally inscribed. Dyer thus explains how an array of non-verbal, image based elements in advertisement help in creating meaning. To clarify this point one can take examples of the ads of deodorants. The deodorant of women's show them to be keeping cool and fit for leisure while that of men show keeping them cool after a hard strainous exercise. Thus such studies convey compelling evidence of the extent of gender inequality in the advertisements.

The semiological approach on the other hand plays an important role in the further understanding of advertisements. This approach helps in analysis of culture through the 'science of signs' which have been developed by Saussure and other structuralist linguists in Europe. Semiotics is a structuralist methodology which is defined as the study of signs, specifically their selection and combination. This approach has come under criticism, yet it has been employed widely as an analytical tool to investigate how advertisements create and fix meaning. According to this methodology, all messages comprise a combination of signs or what Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) called 'syntagmatic relations', meaning the way the signs are combined that creates the message. When applied to advertising, semiotics is

an attempt to extricate explicit and implicit meaning from the interpretation of both verbal and visual signs. Saussure's linguistic signs divides into two parts: the 'significant' (translated as signifier, sound-image/expressions) and the 'signifier'(translated as signified/concept/context). Semioticians identified gendered representational differences in advertisements by studying the use of set-up, music and the background atmosphere of the advertisements. For them language was seen to have a whole system of rules governing the selection and combination of different signs out of which meanings are created. So, they have taken 'language' as model for all forms of cultural 'discourse', (i.e. coded meaning systems in culture) and advertisements are seen as an inevitable part of this cultural discourse. Semiotics provides a way of understanding how text constructs and reproduces the ideas of 'reality', rather than reflecting the pre-existing reality.

Similarly Roland Barthes (1988)[4] regarded advertisements as a clear and purposeful form of signification[5]. Thus when one studies the 'text' i.e. in this case a particular advertisement, one sees that advertisements both *denotes* a literal image (just a 'naturalized' photograph of certain objects) and *connotes* an ideological meaning associated with the image. Barthes says that he recognizes that such an analysis of the communication of the meaning of the text depends ultimately on the knowledge of denoted codes and connoted associations. These associations are brought out by the readers themselves from that cultural world of which they are a part. Like Bathes, Judith Williamson in her work *Decoding Advertisement* (1978) explains the ideological processes in advertising by which goods are given meaning. She combines Roland Barthes's theory of myth production with a Marxist and psychological analysis to reveal the mechanism by which advertising 'works' on consumer. Thus she says:

> 'Advertising may appropriate not only real areas of time and space, and give them a false content, but real needs and desires in people, which are given false fulfillment. We need a way

of looking at ourselves, which ads give us falsely...we need to make sense of the world, which ads make us feel we are doing in making sense of them'

(Williamson1978: 169).

Thus advertising transforms the practical 'use value' of products into the symbolic 'exchange value' of commodities. She feels that in advertisements it works on like this: 'Things "mean" to us, and we give this meaning to our product, on the basis of an irrational mental leap invited by the form of the advertisements' (Williamson 1978:43). To her advertisements exploits the real needs of the people and in its place makes promises of false fulfillment. Thus one recognizes these falsity of the advertisements but at the same time one is aware of the fact that advertising is just not ideological brainwashing forced upon from above. As such, advertising is not simply manipulation but what ad-maker Tony Schwartz calls *"partipulation"* with the audience participating in its own manipulation. The commodity image-system thus provides a self-validation that is integrally connected with what one has rather than what one is – a distinction often referred to as one between 'having ' and 'being', the latter now being defined by the former. Thus advertisement is basically seen as a system of propaganda, by which it has a certain power over the people. Critics and commentators from every discipline have grappled with advertising's potential for power. It has therefore been called "the most potent influence in adapting and changing habits and modes of life, affecting what we eat, what we wear and the work and play of the whole nation" (Fox 1984:97). In the magnitude of its social influence advertisements, has been compared with long standing institutions as the school and the church. Because it dominates the media and has vast power in the shaping of popular standards, it is seen as one of the major institution, which exercises strong social control. Thus the power of advertisements could not be undermined in any aspect in moulding of people's mind.

Since the incipient stage, advertisements have undergone great many changes the basis of which is located in economic factor. Hence the section following this would deal with the changing nature of the advertisements in general and with some reference to the Indian context.

II

CHANGING NATURE OF ADVERTISEMENTS

Having defined and made sense what advertisements means and refer to in a society, the next stage that comes on is to find out the changes that are taking place with regards to advertisements. Where consumer centric economic expansion was on rise, the role of advertisements in those spheres gained importance. Thus the rise of advertising was for the creation of effective consumers. But the question arose as to how that was possible? To answer that question, a study of the early advertisements and then a comparison of them with recent one comes in. The changing nature and meaning of the advertisements thus can be gauged from the study of the advertisements. The study does reveal that the early advertisements did not really attempt to create consumers in any serious way. The nature of the advertisements was much a take-it or leave-it type. The basic motive was to make consumer aware of the prices of the product as well as places where one would get them. It should be carefully noted that at initial stage, advertisements did not aim at to create a desire within the consumer. Hence persuasion was not the mood of the advertisements.

However in recent times changes can be perceived with regards to the nature of advertisements. More and more advertisements are now produced so as to create a desire among the onlookers. Thus the purpose of modern advertisements is to suggest

to the consumer that they lack something in their relations with others and then propose the product as the only answer. So, it is not that advertisements simply creates desires within the individuals that begin and end with those individuals in an entirely self-contained way. Rather, that desire has to do with relations with the people. Modern advertising concentrates at those points where the individuals and society meet, and claim to have ways of making the individual a more successful social being. This approach has been traced back and seen to have its influence on advertising of the psychologists. Allport(1924), a psychologists argued that: "our consciousness of ourselves is largely a reflection of the consciousness which others have of us....My idea of myself is rather of my own idea of my neighbor's view of me"(Allport cited in Corrigan 1997:68). So the very idea of myself is not at all self contained and individual in any classically bourgeoisie sense is depended upon how others see me. Edwen remarked that this notion of the individual as the object of continual and harsh social scrutiny underscored the argument of how much of the ad texts of the decades. Human beings are always scrutinized and evaluated and here lies the interest of the manufacturer who espoused these approaches so as to permit a market for their products.

Thus if in earlier times consumer turned a critical eye upon the product, now things have changed whereby the attention is more on the individuals. So it is no longer the product which is inadequate rather the individual – hence the person will find adequacy with the help of the product avaliable in the marketplace. Thus to summarize Edwen's notion:

> "The functional goal of national advertising [in the US] was the creation of desire and habits. In tune with the need for mass distribution that accompanied the development of mass production capabilities, advertising was trying to produce in readers persoיal needs which would dependently fluctuate with the expanding marketplace"

> (Edwen 1976:37 quoted in Corrigan 1997:68).

One of the primary aims of the advertising, was the creation of a population who could be consuming the same brand product. Thus the role of advertisement was crucial in giving a sophisticated look regarding the nature of marketing. The spread of consumerism constructed a new mood of social solidarity, which was based on none other than unity acquired due to the usage of common brand names. Thus the changing nature of advertisements brought into focus the rise and spread of consumerism.

One now turns towards the case of Indian advertising world. Indian advertising grew in a protected economy, catering to a market, which was relatively limited in terms of class and culture. The incipient stage of Indian advertising was located in the British era were mostly the American advertisements were adapted in Indian settings[6]. Advertising was often seen as an avocation for poets, artists and others of a creative bend. Thus the urban English biases were seen in the advertising at these initial stages. There has however been a shift in the medium of language in recent times. Even though still now most original ad copy is written in English, yet, many companies have shifted to acquire Hindi as the medium. P & G India for example spends a mere 5 % of their ad budget on English advertising. These are however the technical changes in the advertisements. Apart from these, the main change that is viewed, is the shifting of focus of the advertising in order to allure the middle class and lower income groups into its circuit. Ads adopted an explicitly pedagogical strategy in the earlier versions and the only aesthetic value was may be found in form of a jingle. However, now the mode of presentation too has undergone changes and hence importance is given to particulars of appearances, psychological satisfaction and individual self-actualisation. A shift in the target audience has resulted in the development of advertisements having a polished lifestyle, where maximum values are seen to be avaliable. The latest style of advertisements is an amalgamation of both the east and west cultural traits. At the same

time ads trying to maintain a certain bit of 'Indianess' within them so that the common mass do not feel totally alienated from the whole product.

Advertisements during the decade before liberalization (i.e. during the time there was protected domestic market) gave little value in the theme of national culture as in itself a market of product difference. Even the then multinationals did not draw any attention towards their origins. The ad industry as itself did not unfold itself properly, as they were not exposed to the rigors of an open market and hence lacked in professionalism. Moreover as the domestic market was small and homogeneous hence it resulted in a simplified work of the ad industry. There was a lack in rigor and competitiveness among the advertisements. However with the globalisation and liberalization of the economy came some radical changes. As a result of which each of the earlier assumptions and limitations came to be exposed and revealed. Thereby it resulted in a complete change of image in the advertising front.

Advertising in India has historically been dominated by subsidiaries of multinational. Since the British era, the multinationals were always a part of the Indian economy. It was rather after the independence when restrictions were placed on foreign ownership. However the scenario changed with the onslaught of globalisation coming into the scene. Globalisation is often seen as a continuing factor rather than a new phenomenon in the Indian advertising. The difference is rather between the new multinational and that of the old ones. The older multinationals companies like Hindustan Lever, Nestle through their advertisements harped on becoming suitably modern which meant western. At the same time held on to one's ethnic, regional identity. However with the second wave of MNC entries like Coca Cola, Pepsi, IBM, advertisements became the chief signposts and stimulant of desires. However it is to be noted that in recent times the television channels are seen to to blazing with not only

the big-ticket advertising but also from that of the small brands. So one finds that along with the MNC brands like Pepsi, Coca Cola, there co-exists minnows like Dandi Namak, Lux underwear, No Marks cream etc. so on one hand if Amir Khan says 'thanda matlab Coca Cola'then Govinda comes up with 'Yeh Araam ka mamla hai' for Rupa Underwear. So Indian advertising industry is seen to be an amalgamation of both Indian and phoren brands. Advertisements thus which were the vehicles of capitalism helped in developing desires involving complex messages. The changing nature of advertisements that took place especially as a result of globalization and liberalization highlighted the new consumerist culture in society.

Hence one of the major criticism that rose against the kind of transnational advertisements during the 1970's and 1980's was that it was regarded as the main cause behind the rise and spread of consumer culture. It is often said to have created an increasing gap and disharmony of interest between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The sheer volume and effectiveness of advertisements have often said to have introduced or condone aggressiveness, materialism, romanticism, elitism, radicalism, conformism and so on. Such believes have therefore gradually contributed to the creation of a new elite oriented culture, which is rapidly replacing the indigenous culture. Thus among all other criticism, this criticism brings in worries of a different kind. This is because, although it is hard to argue against the positive benefits of economic growth, it is equally hard to argue for the destruction of this indigenous culture. There is in fact no doubt about the fact that advertising has contributed to the creation of a lifestyle segment, particularly among the youths which is heavily oriented towards Western culture. Hence to quote from *The Economist*:

> If there is one thing that unites this diverse region, then advertising has been the match that sparkled the fire. As a form of public communication, advertising transcends nationality and

ethnic origins. It is this discourse – not just about products and services, but about lifestyles –
that have had the greatest impact in creating a worldwide 'culture of convergence'.

<div align="right">(The Economist 1992:85).</div>

III

ADVERTISEMENTS IN A SOCIAL CONTEXT: EMERGENCE OF THE NEW INDIAN MIDDLE CLASS

It is now obvious that advertisements play a crucial role in shaping and manipulating consciousness and in creating desire and constructing identities. But ads do not exist in void. There is a social context that promotes or sustains the culture of ads. Although ads are extremely important in advanced capitalism they are also acquiring importance in a developing country like ours where we are witnessing the emergence of a new middle class with changing aptitudes, orientations and aspirations.

Before we write about the social implications of this middle class it would be better if we examine even though briefly how social scientists seek to conceptualise the middle class. Debate ranged among the scholars regarding as to what constituted the middle class. The Weberians regarded it with the indicators like status, occupation and income. Giddens on the other hand distinguished middle class from possession of qualifications. Scholars like Gunnar Myrdal[7] had his opinion that in India, the middle class belonged to a tiny portion of the upper class. This opinion however came under major criticism and was refuted. Till 1980's middle class constituted only 10 per cent of the total population, but the post liberalization era marked a radical expansion of this class. For C. Write Mills (1956) the new class was the result of the demise of entrepreneurial capitalism coupled with the rise of corporate capitalism with its army of

<div align="center">56</div>

managers, technocrats, marketers and financers. Thus according to Mills' classic formulation of a definition of middle class in United States, it involved all those who were the white-collar professionals who had a distinct lifestyle of their own (Mills1956). However, the specific conditions of contemporary globalisation distinguished the process of the invention of the new Indian middle class in significant ways. The distinctiveness of the new middle class lies largely in its discursive construction as a sign of the potential promise of India's integration with the global economy. In contrast to Mills' classic formulation of the concept of the middle class in United States, in Indian context it takes on a new meaning. Hence in India the new middle class becomes a sign of the promise of a new national model of development having a global outlook who adheres to the larger processes of economic globalization.

Recent studies suggests that there is a certain expansion of the middle class since 1980s onwards. Possibly the growth of this class and its aspirations can be related to the changing self-perception of India's political economy. We know that the post-colonial Indian state was engaged in what social scientists would best describe as 'left of the center broadly socialistic, Nehruvian agenda of nation making'. This state sponsored modernity was definitely giving birth to a new professional class situated in what Nehru described as 'temples' of modern India i.e. industries, modern institutions, science laboratories, and universities. With the growth of industrialization and urbanity this class also grew in size. But then because of a broadly self-reliant economy under the shadow of certain kind of socialistic experiments the social aspirations of the middle class were primarily nationalistic i.e. creating and building the new nation and lending it to the path of progress. In a way there was continuity with what A.R. Desai (1998) described as nationalist bourgeosie which grew in the colonial era out of new education and engaged in the struggle for India's independence.

But with the demise of Nehurivian era and the grand consensus we could see a new perception of the political economy. Since mid 80's we could see something like a paradigm shift from Nehurivian socialism to liberalised economy. It welcomed the global market and capitalism. With the steady entry of multinationals, transnational corporations, new informations, technologies a new social milieu was created that began to alter the aspirations of the fast growing middle class. Popular parlance it can be argued as V.G.Kulkarni described :

" Whether by design or default, a series of government economic policies has helped to give birth to [a] generation of 'Indians who have money to spend".

(Kuklarni 1992:42)

Thus the demographic expansion of the middle class was reinforced by its cultural constitution. The emergence of this whole new section of our society has greater exposure to a commercial mass medium. The rapid expansion of consumer market was evident from the following statistics: sales of TV jumped from 2 million to 23.4 million between 1981 and 1990; the annual sale of package consumer goods shot up by 220 % (Kulkarni 1992). Thus, inspite of spiral inflation, consumer-spending habits continued to rise inclusive of both rural urban middle classes. With the penetration of mass media even in the rural areas, there too resulted in a rapid spread in the consumerism. The influence of advertisements is often regarded by industrial leaders as the "most persuasive; the most cost-effective and the quickest medium"[8]. There have been many critics of this phenomenon, for example, Arvind Singhal and Everett Rogers, expressed their concern that consumerism "upsets the previous balance between the socio-cultural development goals of the mass media versus the mass consumer goals in India" (Shingal and Rogers cited in Manekekar 1989:81). Indian feminist too entered this debate. Hence one finds Anite Dhinghe and Prabha Krishnan

arguing about the fact how consumerism detracts national development by focusing on the desires of the upper class individuals. The actual fact is that the focus of the majority of the advertisements is on the upper and middle class lifestyle with modernity. The advertisements are made keeping in mind to bring out all the positive aspects to the viewers. However it is purposefully kept in mind to feature this middle class woman who emblems both 'modernity' and 'tradition'; despite the fact that she uses modern products she resembles the picture of an ideal *bharatiya naari*.

> The direct impact of this proliferation of advertisement was on the lifestyle of families: the home became the site for fulfillment of their dreams about middle class security and more than that, their desires for modern lifestyles. A news report thus claimed that "the rise of the middle class in India is amply reflected in the country's shopping centre and malls. On offers today are whole new ranges of choice in domestic appliances, including washing machines, vaccum cleaners, slow and fast cookers. mixer-grinders, room-coolers, hot geysers and that ultimate sign of middle class decadence the 24 chime doorbell.
>
> (Ninan 1985:73).

Public discourse in India through their reports produced an image, which depicted the urban middle classes getting beneficiaries due to the new economic reforms. Advertisements and media to a large extend helped in developing this idealized image of the urban middle class getting benefits from the policies. The rise of this new middle class brings along with it the consumerist culture. This culture, is distinctly seen in relation to rise of demand of consumer items like cellphones, cars, washing machines etc. Academic studies and public discourses have also emphasized on rise of a culture of consumerism with growing indifference of the middle classes to rural and urban poverty (Kothari 1993; Karma 1998) and the potential threat of excessive westernization[9]. Thus the policies of economic liberalization initiated in 1990s produced a debate which centered around the role of the urban middle classes within the culture of consumption. As said earlier, to the development of this culture of

consumption the role of advertisements and media are seen to be indespensible. Thus with the avaliability of the cell phones, automobiles and other consumerist product a particular social standard is created which this new middle class always aspires to reach. In this process, the new (urban) Indian middle class becomes the central agent for the re-visioning of Indian nation in the background of globalization. This has however sparkled some public debates in terms of the social role and responsibility of the Indian middle class. Padma Varma, in his book *The Great Indian Middle Class* (1998) initiated a significant national public debate regarded the declining social responsibility of this emerging class. It also questions the decline of the ethical and moral aspect present within this class towards the poor in particular and nation in general. Thus what is found is a shift from the earlier Gandhian and Nehruvian vision of India towards a culture which is based on consumption.

The invention of the new middle class in the context of economic liberalization involves the development of a new cultural image of this class and is not seen as a new entry of a social group. Partho Chatterjee (1992) argues that the specificity of the new Indian middle class in colonial context also had this paradoxical position. Then too they were created due to cultural invention like English education, yet had structural limitations as it lacked basis for economic expansion. In modern times the new middle class at the structural level is constituted not by the newness of its social basis (i.e. new groups entering the middle class) but through the newness of the economic sector. The discursive boundaries of the new middle class are thus constituted by a shift in aspirations, standards and direction of the new middle class. The new middle class talked about is however not homogeneous in nature[10]. With the inflow of transnational capital into the country in the post-liberalization era, there resulted an inflow of more information and desire. Hence came the era of consumerism. Liberalization helped to a

great extend the breaking down of a traditional system of making identities within middle class. Commodity became the strength of the nation. The shift from producer to consumer capitalism has meant its disruption. It has brought transience of new flattening temporarily and the reduction of the self to the mere polities of representation (Lash and Friedman 1996). So ran the theme of the song of a popular advertisement for Bajaj scooter:

"Buland Bharat ki buland tasveer, hamaara Bajaj" (Mankekar2000:48).

Media thus played a major role in this cultural construction of 'middle classness' through consumerism. Consumption that is basically dominated by the consumption of commodities is related with cultural reproduction, which is exercised by free personal choice in the private sphere of everyday life. To the spread of this consumption practice, advertisements are an integral part. It is often said therefore that the aim of the advertisement is not only to sell consumer goods but 'consumerism' as a concept. Hence advertisements and marketing have not only helped in increasing the demands of a particular brand, rather have also helped in changing values from a puritan orientation of saving, preservation of goods to a hedonistic ethos of spending and playful culture. Thus it is said that with the increased commercialization of television, coupled with the influence of advertisements have created a consumer revolution (Narayan and Roy1994). The all-pervasive medium has been able to bring hitherto unknown lifestyle of the people of industrially developed nations into the living rooms of most middle and upper class Indians. As the middle class in general are prone to 'cultural borrowing' (de Mooij and Keegan 1991) the desire to imitate the western lifestyle comes as a tremendous boost. An executive from one of the multinational alcohol company described the Indian middle class as having 'the right kind of attitude: they are willing to try out new brands and new tastes' (Advertising

Age International 1994). Studies bring out contradictory facts regarding the nature of these middle classes. While some regard this middle class as avaricious, insensitive and self-indulgent, the views contrary to them regard them as dynamic whose hunger for consumption spurs the economic growth (Dubey 1992). Thus advertising seems to have played a strong role in developing and spreading this culture of consumption among these 150 million strong Indian middle classes.

While talking about the rise in consumerism in India, the words of the famous American writer Simon N Patter (1852-1922) comes into forefront. He argued that society should preach not renunciation of desires but an expansion of consumption. Hence for him plentitude marks the origin of what he called 'the culture of consumption'. Economy works through rhetoric of image (as instanced by advertising), while the image works through the rhetoric of economy. So if previously the image was of *jai jawan, jai kisan,* i.e. a Nehurvian cooperativism, now it is more in terms of achieving fulfillment through consumption. So the motto has now changed from *'Be Indian. Buy Indian'* to *'To Buy is Indian'* (Rajagopal 1999:73). To this new culture a person becomes oriented to the rise of consumerism as well as that of rise of individualism. It is in the background of this where marketing has penetrated every domain of needs, that advertisements carry a double message in its "deep" structure, which apparently might not be visible in the actual text or image. What is needed is a deeper understanding of these coded messages and an interpretation of them with regards to the social evnironment of which they are an integral part.

Advertisements are seen as an integral part of commodity culture. What commodity culture (which also is relevant towards advertising) does is that it creates and solves problems in the production and maintenance of self[1]. Thus for example, if in a certain cosmetic advertisement a woman's face is shown to be involved with series

of 'problems' (bags under the eyes, thin lips, dark skin, pimples etc) cure of each of which could be found from the commodities. All of them are thus depicted essential and desirable to give that look to the face which society demands. Thus consumer culture is shown to have an interconnection between the expanding domain of meaningful consumer goods and the project of maintaining a self. This is what is broadcasted continiously through the advertisements thereby creating not only a demand for goods but also a certain social outlook towards maintenance of self. Thus accordingly to Marchand (1986), Leiss, Kline and Jhally (1986) and Schudson (1981,1984) 'discourses' through and about objects are ones which allows one to orienate oneself to the social meaning of things in a commercial world. Advertisements thus replace traditional authorities about such meanings (eg religion and custom) with a modern informative system. Advertisements in modern times create images of lifestyle, goods, and advice with which the viewers can identify their own self. As a result the viewers not only identify but also aspire to be that which is shown in the advertisements. Thus body is regarded as a commodity that can be worked upon (by using commodities) through scrutinized diets, fitness regimes to live upto the image that is of demand in the society (Featherstone 1991a, 1991b; Gaines and Herzog 1990; O'Neill 1985; Shilling 1993; Turner1985).

Consumption conceived as 'the work of the imagination' (Appadurai 1990), is an activity that simultaneously captures the distinctive disciplines of modernity and draws attention to new forms of expenditure and social identity. One thing that comes out with the study of consumption pattern is that it has a profound basis for group identity. There has been an increasing search for the burgeoning middle class by the entrepreneurs for their interests. They are the targets of the media who are often influenced by the messages of the media. The values, priorities, message undoubtedly

influence this middle class in such a way that there often results a potential for social basis of cultural transformation. Thus the study also tries to bring out and examine how the negotiation with modernity implicate not just the 'consumer habits' of viewing subjects, but also their long anxieties and desires. In order to grasp the inter-discourses content, which viewers of the advertisements engage with, what is necessary, is the inter-locking contents of the role of transnational forces. These forces ranges from technological collaboration with the international agencies to transnational flow of discourses of modernity, money and desire which tends to the production of advertisements in the form of text. Hence what is proposed or endeavored is a reconstruction of the history of the advertisements i.e. advertisement in terms of the role of private industry, the growth of the middle class and the spread of consumerism. By doing so it would undoubtedly demonstrates the ways in which power and knowledge transgress local, national and international borders. Thus the changing nature of consumption is clearly brought out from the following excerpts:

> Ten years ago, the political rhetoric centered on abolishing poverty; today it looks forward to the 21st century. Then it was a question of reining in monopoly capital; now the government talks of industrial modernization and opening up the economy. Then the goals were more food, water, steel, aluminium, hospitals. Now, it is all that plus telephones, TV sets, scooters, cars, refrigerator. Then it was a question of taxing "luxury" goods find money for the basics; now the government has reduced the taxes on these so that more people can buy the things that make for a better life.
>
> (Ninan,T 1985:71).

Thus the story tries to find out how the advertisements contribute to the spread of consumerism among the Indian middle classes[12] but never goes into the debatable issue regarding whether luxury goods provide consumers with a 'better life'. Hence, what one finds is a situation whereby along with the expansion of this new middle class there is a rise in the culture of consumerism. The situation is a complex one whereby

each one is related to one other at the same time enhancing one other. Also a detail study indicates the changes that have resulted regarding the nature of consumption practices among the society in general and middle class in particular. Hence after a study of this changing nature of consumption practices one moves forward to study the advertisements in details. Advertisements are thus the medium through which changes have resulted and could be perceived. Thus what is required is an understanding of the social meaning that lay behind in the making and portraying of the advertisements. What is endevoured is a study of the interrelationship that exists between advertisements on one hand with that of the market, the life-aspirations, needs, and relationships on the other. The following section deals with these aspects of the advertisements in details.

IV

ADS: ADDED SIGNIFICANCE IN CHANGING TIMES

With the advent of advertisement as a medium of propaganda for commodities, there has been a considerable rise in the market situations of these products. Moreover with television having commercial sponsoring from the mid-eighties, expectations were raised enormously which altogether again imposed strict criteria of market performances. As the television pervaded each and every corner of Indian society, including the rural areas, there resulted an expansion of market. Thus between 1990 and 1996, Indian advertisements have said to expand tremendously, with an average growth of over 32 percent per year to reaching to a historic high of 49.5 percent in 1994-95[13]. Hence at that study it was expected to reach a growth rate of 25 % by the

year 2000[14]. However in spite of such increase in gross revenue of the advertising industry, the real growth of the industry is still considered to be considerably less. In recent times however, the role of advertisements have gained enough importance as a result of which it is considered as an important medium through which people get to know about new products that hit the market. Thus each company spends a considerable amount of their budget for advertisements so as to make their products a common name among people. Advertisers are left to decide what nature of consumer that product would satisfy as to the plan and advertise accordingly. Indian market is segmental in nature and with the advent of advertisements the relation between the income and affordability has been disrupted. Advertisements inspire among people to reach out for higher goods thereby in turn increasing their status and lifestyle in society. Thus good which otherwise would have been termed as luxury item for a particular segment of population becomes a must buy by which their status increases name to the buyers.

Thus, traditionally, advertisers had not attempted to go beyond highly patronizing modes of address in selling goods to lower income sections of the society. For example if one looks at the advertisement of a particular detergent *Wheel*, in this case scoring over *Nirma* as it was low-cost in regards to the later as well as better product (highlighted in terms of whiteness). Ads adopted a pedagogical strategy, the only aesthetic value was found in terms of some musical jingles that followed the advert. If in this regard one would risk making an overtly general statement, one might say that utility was presented as a salient feature of consumer aspect for lower middle class and working class. Thus between the advertisement meant for both, the difference lay in the nature of appeareance, psychological satisfaction as well as individual self-actualization. Hence there existed a clear stratification within the ads. However now

there has been a change in perception, which can be explained by citing the example of cell-phones. Initially the cellular phones were targeted to top executives and ads also portrayed the characters in that background. However it was self employed businessmen often betel-stained bazaar traders who found of its usefulness for their trade. Thus as a result the target audience expanded when their products usefulness came into forefront. If the advertisers wanted to steer consumers to western lifestyle, it was necessary first to locate the customers who were to be addressed.

While talking about the changing nature of advertisements and its significance, one cannot but fail to notice an important aspect with regards to the change in the nature of the presentations of ads. The notable aspect, which is seen in case of Indian advertisements, is the maintenance of a rural-urban continuum. So what we see is that along with an international look, attempt is made also to incorporate the authentic Indian essence that is found in rural society. In Indian where still the bulk of the population resides in rural areas, the success of the advertisements would invariably be based on the acceptance of the ads in these areas. So it has been noticed that the ad makers are keeping this aspect in mind while making their advertisements so as to incorporate a large audience. Selected examples of such advertisements can be cited where the rural background is emphasised. The particular advertisement of the *Liril* soap (where a girl is shown having a bath while the Rajasthani women are shown splashing water on her) or Govinda (movie actor) who features in the advertisement of a particular hair oil have all a rural setting. In the latter, even the song used has got a regional intonation in it. However with regards to this, the best cited example is that of the series of advertisements that have been produced by *Coca Cola* company. Here the film actor Amir Khan is shown in different moods and settings which clearly brings out a specific regional characteristics (emphasizing on the dress style, the dialect and even

the settings). It has two effects, first the use of a well known actor attracts the audience's attention, moreover the presentation of the advertisements emphasizing a regional connection makes the viewers feel being a part of the ad. Thus by emphasisng the regional aspect in the advertisement what is achieved is a pan-Indian character. In connection to this pan-Indian notion another advertisement that comes to one's mind is that of the *Asian Paints* which too emphasized on the regional diversity while maintaining the unity of Indian culture. The advertisement situates its series admist a recognizably regional culture and a religious festival. These advertisements emphasis on regional diversity, collective festivity, religious tradition or family union. So be it either Onam in Kerela, Diwali in North India or Durga Puja in West Bengal, in each the cultural diversity of India is focused keeping in mind the pan Indian character. Another aspect that is seen while studying these advertisements is that they are situated within a family narrative thereby also emphasizing upon the importance of family as a social institution.

With the influence of globalization coupled with the inflow of transnational capital, in Indian society there has resulted in the transnationalization of markets and commodity culture. So to indicate that consumption is apart of international phenomenon, advertisement interweaves a local setting with that of international referent. Thus to 'go international' is the cry of today's market and the consumers are swayed by this trend. It is observed that most of the product in their ads use 'phoren' settings or even an international jazzy look so as to make it alluring. For example the advertisement of *International Lux* (as the name signifies) relies on the connection between national and international image and appeals. Thus set against the background of Manhattan is the portrayed of a 'film star' (Sridevi) along with that of an international star. However the former gains predominance over the latter. The Indian

star's appearance is westernised so as to associate her with the international setting. Below the caption reads: 'The favourite complexion care soap of 70 countries is my favourite too!' This portraying of an international look which is a dominant feature of the people in Indian context.

Ad making has become an expensive affair where increasing importance is being given to having an international look so as to attract a global consumer. They have become subtle, sleek thereby striking a balance in maintaining an Indian authenticity with an international look. So what is often said is that, ads within a facarde of an international look still continue to portray the typical traditional outlook thereby resulting in an inner contradiction. Thus it can be said that while the values remain the same, it is only the change in the nature of packing which has resulted a change towards outer glamorization.

Advertisements are said to help in the development and spread of a global corporate culture (Vilanilam 1989). This culture 'cuts at the roots of cultural autonomy of politically independent countries. Thus it is often said that transnational corporations uses advertisements as a part of their ideological apparatus for spreading imperialism within the 'Third World' countries. With the forces of globalisation at play in Indian market, debates of such influence have always existed, however this study would not go into such debatable issues.

Hence to conclude, one would regard the role of advertisement basically as a medium through which there is a reflection of social values. Advertisers see themselves as modernisers, trying to uplift oppressed women by placing before them the choice of commodities to choose. By its portrayal of women too advertisements tries to improve women's status. But often this portrayal has a negative connotation attached within itself thereby re-establishes the age-old prevalent prejudices. Moreover an unquestioned

normative commitment to an idealized upper caste aesthetic trends too gets reproduced in advertiser's conception of middle class. The creation of new type of gendered consumers is treated in advertisements as natural and inevitable which is seen as fulfillment of previously unrealized or repressed possibilities. The advertisements thus show how traditional/dowdy women 'realises' her potential by the use of right product. Thus the wife is now outgoing, aggressive bargainer (eg. Lalitaji in *Surf*) who is nonetheless a doted mother, housewife and an *adarsh naari*. While the older power relations – keeping the woman in the home or sub-ordinate her to the mother-in-law are superseded, yet in their place comes new relations the salience of patriarchal nuclear family which brings along with it new sets of power relations within which women are placed.

The Manushi Collective (1980) carried out an extensive study of three national women's magazines in 1978-79. They came to the conclusion that in favour of conservative and traditional smoke-screen there resulted a purposeful negation of the actual women representations. All issues of *Femina, Eve's Weekly* (both in English language) and *Sarita* (Hindi) were analysed over a period of a year. Despite their claim to be 'concerned, involved, alive', the magazines are found , without exception, to foster traditional patterns of female subordinations although wrapped in deceptively modern trappings. Competitiveness (within female sphere) and consumerism are dominant promoted values. Half the pages in both Eve's Weekly and Femina are taken up by advertisements,. Of these bout 95 % are for cosmetics, women's clothing, household goods and children's products, suggesting an 'ideal' role for women as alluring housekeeper. There is a denial towards women's sexuality, intellectual independence and political situation. All in all, the survey concludes, the aim of these magazines seems to daze readers into becoming passive spectators rather than to

activate them. What is usually portrayed is the image of a 'happy womanhood', which

overshadows the actual reality. A reinterpretation of the advertisements however helps

one to uncover these hidden meanings and help one to combact these stereotypes. The

next chapter therefore deals with an interpretation of various advertisements that were

selected from various magazines which brings out the biased attitude that exists in

society towards women.

NOTE

[1] in *Dialectics of Enlightment* (New York, Herder & Herder:1972).

[2] quoted from the book "*The Frankfurt School*"(1984:45) by Tom Bottomore.

[3] the following quotation was taken from the book "*The Affluent Society*" by Galbraith (1974).

[4] Roland Barthes "*The Semiotic Challenge*" (Trans.. Richard, Howard, Backwill, Oxford:1988). He contributed to the development of this semiological approach regards 'signs' as entities endowed with signification. In this context, ads are seen as signs having signification in terms of gender and patriarchy.

[5] signification means 'something that is left unsaid in the actual text' {Hervey Sandor (1982) *Semiotic Perspectives* , George Allen & Unwin, London, Boston, Sydney).

[6] the statement was based on fieldwork done in Mumbai, October 1996-February 1997, which included interviews with advertising and market research executives. There is little published research on the Indian advertising industry itself that was found for my inclusion in this text.

[7] Myrdal, G; *Asian Drama*, Penguine Press 1972

[8] Mike Khanna, the chief of Hindustan Thompson and Assiociates, a subsidiary of the multinational J. Walter, Thompson, quoted in Mitra (1985:104-105).

[9] westenization as is regarded as the new threat to Indian culture. Dipankar Gupta has however argued that a confusion exists between consumption and consumerism. Moreover he suggested that Indian middle class is too fragile to economically engage in consumerism (*Elitist Middle Class: No Consciousness Beyond Consumption*, Times of India, 1998).

[10] Manekar's understanding of the cultural construction of the middle classes in India draws on and depart from Marxian and Weberian understanding notions of it. The Indian middle class is a heterogeneous group having different access to relations of production, status, political power. What is also included is the discourse of gender, domesticity and sexuality to further enrich the notion of middle class.

[11] in this connection it is to be noted that according to the Frankfurt School theorists as well as Weber, modernity is seen to approach and engross into understanding of different problems of which the problem related to identity is one. Consumer culture, which is undoubtedly a product of modernity 'technicizes' the project of self by treating all problems as soluble through various commodities (Bauman: 1940).

[12] the demographic expansion of the middle classes in 1980's led to a proliferation of group, including bureaucrats, professionals, small businessmen and entrepreneurs. They are an upwardly mobile working class, all of whom have differential access to economic security and political power.

[13] The data was taken from 'Seventh Agency Report', compiled by Iqbal Singh with Ritu Paul, Nithya Subramaniam and Sapna Leene, A & M (Advertising & Marketing), (31st December 1969:41-48). The survey was based on 143 agencies that made their financial details avaliable to an A & M study.

[14] Arun Bhattacharjee, Report to Citibank on the Indian Advertising Industry, Investment Research and Informative Service, Mumbai 1993.

CHAPTER FOUR

SEEING THROUGH THE IMAGES OF FEMININITY

We can now concentrate on the central theme of the dissertation i.e. the representation of womanhood or femininity in advertisements. As we have already suggested, advertisements as very powerful cultural symbolic devices play an important role in popularizing, reinforcing and constructing certain images and aspirations of womanhood. In a society like ours, which is extraordinarily complex because of the prevalence of different layers of social development (feudal patriarchy, corporate capitalism, consumerism etc), it becomes necessary to examine the role of ads as carriers of old stereotypes and new images.

In fact, as we have already pointed out social scientists and cultural theorists have taken interest in advertisements and the portrayal of femininity. For example if we recall Erving Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* (1979) we see a thorough discussions regarding the gender representation in the advertisements.

It concerns with the presentations of the body raises philosophical and psychological questions (issues of selfhood); while also questions regarding aesthetics (what is beautiful?) and of the mechanism of social interaction (body language, posture and gesture). Important theoretical developments on the sociology of the body in the west has located consumption as a major social space where bodies interact (Featherstone1991b; Schields1992).

While studying the advertisements, Goffman explained that there are certain aspect that needs to be studied. He catagorises them into the following heading. These include the relative size of the image of both men-women; the feminine touch; and ritualization of sub-ordination. While talking about the relative size, Goffman

comments that it is often assumed that when two people are represented in ads, the taller one will represent authority. Relative size in this sense, is an index of power. So generally men in advertisements are made to appear taller than women. The reverse holds true in only some cases that too in situation when she is shown to represent a higher social class. Similarly in case of examining the feminine touch, women are always shown to be cradling, or caressing an object and usually not grasping, holding, or manipulating it in a utilitarian way. While the men are always shown to have a firm grasp to whatever object they are holding on to. This can be interpreted in the following way, where as women are expected not to impose themselves on the objects while men by nature seem to have a possessive streak in them. Advertisements thus clearly bring these distinctions through its representations. Goffman then goes on to explain how power relations are brought out in the advertisements through ritualization of sub-ordination. One of the ways in which display of inferior position is demonstrated through the less powerful is by the position of the placing to the characters. Hence positions like lying on the bed or sitting on the floor demonstrates the inferior position where on is usually seen as defenceless. Goffman says that in studying the advertisements, "it appears that children and women are pictured on floors and beds more than men" (Goffman 1979:41). For Goffman, high physical space symbolizes high social place. Moreover the man is usually shown to be looking at the woman, while her head is shown to be turned away demurely. Thus the power of being the one who surveys the object (in this case it's the woman) lies on the male. Also the postures like that of lowering of head or croughing is more prone to woman than man. Thus the physical postures to a great extend brings out the male-female power relations.

Generally the body, specifically the female body, is presented to promote the consumption of services or material objects – banks, cars, household appliances – or to

be consumed itself commonly as an image, by the gaze of the beholder. Media is not concerned with the aesthetic of the body but with the exploitation of what is indeed an aesthetic cannon for largely commercial needs. Moreover the concern of the print media and advertising is with the *presentation of the image* rather than towards the understanding of embodied self.

The body concerned in this work is that of the adult woman as depicted primarily through photography. The ones selected in this work are however by no means the only ones. While there is, of course, such a thing as biological body, this biological body is at all times presented through clothing decoration, posture, location in spatial relationship to other bodies and hence is constantly interpreted. It is this interpretation that constitutes the social construction of the body (Foucault 1976). This social construction is an ongoing process, and hence continiously redefines the cannons of appearances and presentation. The role-played by media in this representation thus gains importance. Thus the social construction of the body that takes place in media can be seen as the commodification of the body. It is represented in such a way so as to induce desire, to engineer the shape, size, colour, and posture of the body through fashion, decoration, diet, fitness and even surgical alteration so as to fit in the ideal body image (Lee 1993). Advertisements are one of the major manifestations of media, and there are cultural variations within which manifestations occur. Thus according to Judith Williamson, advertisements create "structures of meanings' (Williamson 1995:217). These structures of meanings are not developed in vaccum, rather they reflect the societal norms and values.

Just as in the west, similar is the case with the Indian advertising world. Women representations in advertisements have been a major issue of discussion among the critics. In India however a strong sense of appropriateness still prevails in fashion and

advertising world. There has always been debated regarding setting up limits as to how much of the female body can be exposed. With the opening up of market to global forces, the decision has become tougher in the sense as new morals and values based on western concept challenges the age-old Indian values. Thus in this part of the study the focus will be on those selected advertisements which have been choosen in order to understand the way advertisements portray Indian women.

In this chapter we intend to go beyond mere theoretical reflections and choose concrete examples from the site of advertisements in order to substantiate the arguments we are developing. We have chosen selected ads from popular magazines and glosses like *Sananda, Femina, Society, Flimfare, Stardust, Outlook, The Telegraph Magazine, India Today*. Further more references to some significant ads have also been made which are frequently broadcasted in the television within the span of the year 2002 – 2003.

With a socio-anthropological imagination we have tried to read these selected ads and decipher their social, cultural and symbolic meanings as far as the representation of women are concerned. In order to give concentrated focus to our discussion we have catagorised the advertisements into four social meanings that they seek to convey. These are:

I)   Commodification of women

II)   Trivialization of women's work

III)   Devaluation of womanhood

IV)   Assertion of new woman

I

COMMODIFICATION OF WOMEN

This particular section deals with representations of women in various advertisements and therefore it takes into accounts all those visual representations telecasted in TV as well as published in various magazines. Advertisements always have a consumption aspect attached to it. The main reason behind producing an advertisement is to make the people aware about the existence of any particular product or services. So the more attractive the package comes with the greater is its demand for it. To a large extend the attractive power of the advertisements is said to be enhanced by a woman's role in it. As most of these images are created by men, for men, hence the presented image is asymmetrical in nature. A perusal of advertisements would make one conclude that in maximum cases, women are projected as objects of possession to satisfy the whims of the male desire. The advertisement agencies reap huge profits through projection of such sexist advertisements where women are portrayed as a 'mannequin' having whatsoever no relation with the actual product. Such a de-humanising display of woman thereby can be regarded as a form of female prostitution with the only difference that it is done in a subtle manner. The manner that apparently raises no protest from the public due to the sophisticated veneer of the projection. This commodification of woman 'which exhibits her as a 'thing' to be possessed and displayed off is thus the underlying thought that runs through all of these advertisements (as diverse as ranging from very personal to public items).

In close reference to the above theme, this particular advertisement may be referred to, which typecasts a woman as a plaything for the man. The wordings of a particular brand of men's after-shave (*Denim*) goes on like this... 'For men who

Fig I

doesn't have to try too hard', implying that the usage of the product would lend such an alluring and irresistible quality to men, that women would be drawn like a fly towards fire. Hence, women are projected as insensible devoid of intellectual prowess who easily falls for outer charm. Example of another such advertisement of a men's aftershave *Censored*, broadcasted in the television, shows a woman beating a man at chess. Before he loses, the man splashes himself with the scent, prompting his opponent to leap on him lustfully. These ads are particularly sexist because of the male prowess they associate with seducing a strong woman as opposed to submissive one. Here her intellectual superiority is underplayed by emphasizing on her sexual urges.

By highlighting the physical features of a female model, these advertisements add glamour to the whole aspect. Hence, the female model is more in demand for a product representation even if that product has no relation to the presence of the model. Examples of such advertisement are too many. So a selected few have been taken, of which, one can refer to this advertisement of a sanitaryware (*Hindware, fig.1*) which features a female model posing in a very alluring manner occupying the major part of the page. It would be interesting to note that the actual product takes a backstage while the figure of the female model dominates the whole page. By reading the advertisement nothing is left to viewer's imagination regarding the kind of meaning the particular ad wants to convey as it reads… "So appealing, you wouldn't mind spending a fortune. Thankfully, it's got an affordable price-tag". The model's sultry looks along with her posture seem to allure the viewer's interests towards her as a commodity. It comes out very clearly that the female model is shown to be an extension of the notion of commodity, which can be acquired at an easy price. This advertisement is an ideal depiction of the concept of male gaze. Here she is made to stand as a subject displayed – her eyes giving the audience her reciprocal gaze. The gaze suggests that she knows
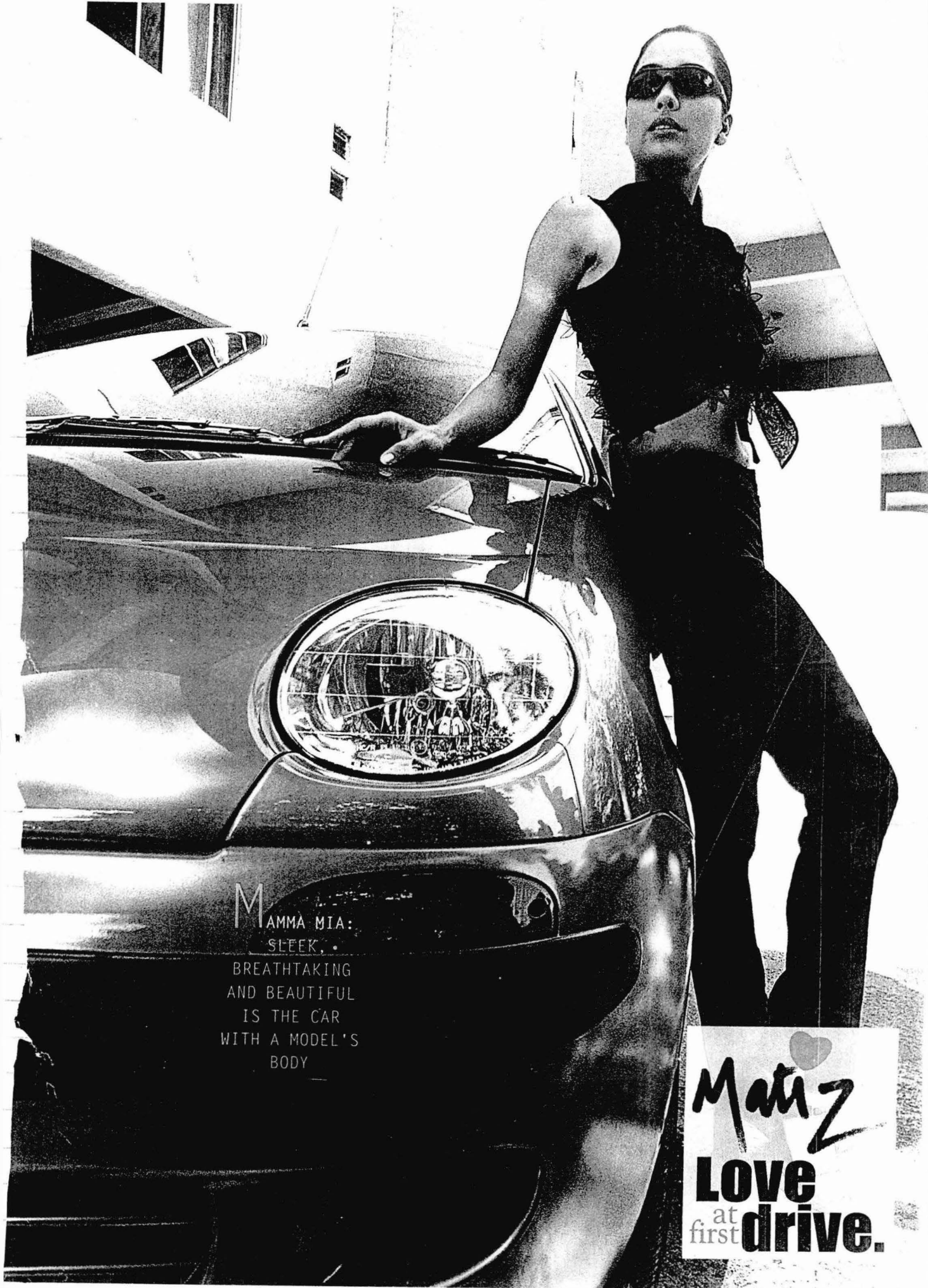
Mamma mia: sleek, breathtaking and beautiful is the car with a model's body

Matiz
Love at first drive.
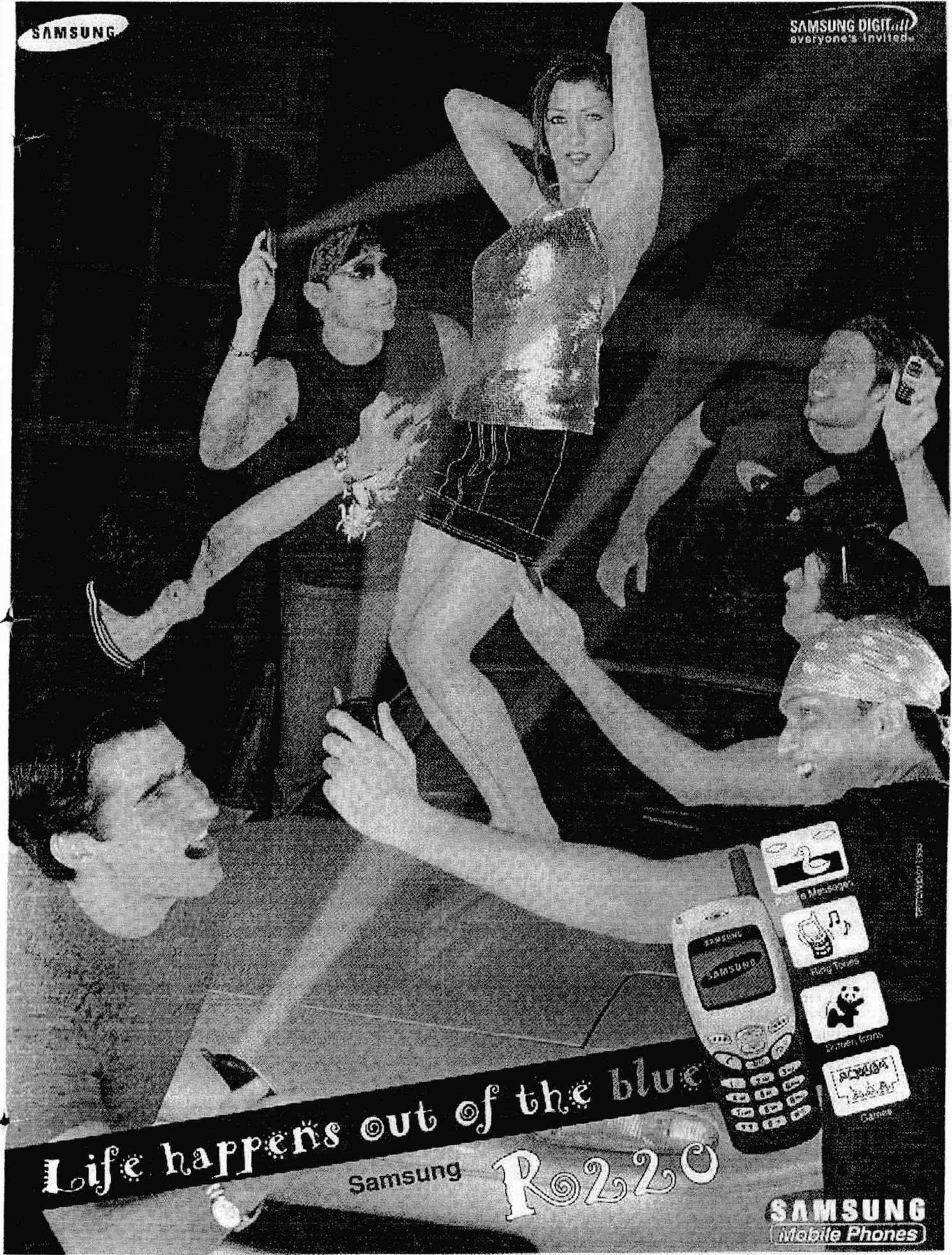
Fig2

Fig 3

that she is looking attractive but at the same time she is inviting the male for a game –
deliberate and suggestive baring of her shoulders invites the attention of male viewers.
Thus, the whole depiction is oriented to be a feast for the ideal audience (read male).
The advertisement defiles the outlook that society has towards its women, thereby
devaluing their position in society. This disrespect towards women reflects the very fact
that in a society, women are looked upon as commodities which are to be looked at or
possessed if 'affordable'. The typical patriarchal notion, which regards women as
properties to be possessed, is thus projected through this advertisement.

The same attitude is reflected in another advertisement, which is that of a car
(*Matiz fig2*), where the female model is shown to be posing beside it. Both the body of
the car and that of the female model receive same praises (sleek, breathtaking,
beautiful) thereby indicating the model as an extension of the car. So here, again the
female model merely lends glamour to the advertisement who otherwise has no relation
to the product. Her entire existence obliterates turning her into a mannequin put up for
display.

The following advertisement is again drawn on the same lines. The product
here, is a mobile phone (*Samsung fig 3*). The model is shown to be the centre of
attention from men surrounding her who undoubtedly seem to relish the situation. Even
though her physical position is above others, yet it does not imply her superior status
because here she is the object of display to the surrounding men. The model totally
aware of her seductive charm on the men around her casts her spell even on the readers.
Thus she is represented as an alluring object which might be fantasized if not
possessed.

The representation of women ranges from her being seductress, alluring to even
gentle, fun loving — but in this section as one is talking about her commodification.

Caution:
goodtaste
could turn into an OBSESSION

Taste that speaks for itself

Seagram's
BLENDERS
PRIDE
MAGICAL NIGHTS

Fig 4

trouble

trap

01
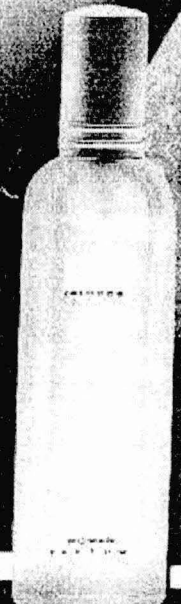
e range of Parfums, Deos, Aftershave and Talcs.
ble at all leading stores and Archies outlets.

Fig 5

Fig 6

Ads projecting her as the temptress would be dealt with in this particular advertisement of the product of a drink (*Blenders Pride fig 4*). The female model is shown, facing the viewers giving a sultry look. This depection shows female not giving much attention to the male who is accompanying her, because she prefers to have a larger audience for appreciating her looks. Her suggestive smile and look in her eyes, is mainly for the spectator. Even her body posture totally negates the man beside her. The male model is shown to be mesmerized by her appeal so much so that the surrounding milieu obliterates. Like his drink, her potent charm weilds a power over him from which he is unable to come out. This is brought out by the caption which reads: 'Caution: good taste could turn into an obsession'.

The next advertisement of this particular perfume (*Zeroone fig5*), shows a woman reclining on a sofa looking towards the viewers with that 'smoky look' in her eyes. Her posture in the sofa makes her lower placed than the spectator who is looking at her from the top; this connotes her socially inferior status – as being easily available for sexual participation, as being at the mercy of the male. Her posture shows her to be a seductress, which shows her dual role of surveyors and surveyed. At the same time her lifted eyebrow (right) signifies two things – a symbol of pride and glamour and a source of envy for the female; and an open challenging invitation for the males. She is shown as the temptress, who intoxicates one and all and entraps them. The words 'trap' and 'trouble' associated with the picture, truly bring out the message thus conveyed.

Next in line is the particular advertisement of men's T-shirt (*Paisano fig 6*) which violates the aesthetics by its sheer obscenity. The indescent projection of her body has whatsoever no connection with the product advertised. It projects a strong sexist attitude that equates the woman to a sex object.

Box shaped.
Bubble shaped.
Wedge shaped.
But then,
gentlemen prefer curves.

More style. More space. More power.

The sleek, contemporary European styling of the Tata Indica turns heads wherever you go. The extra roomy interiors seat five comfortably with more headroom, legroom and elbowroom. Its powerful 1400 cc engine handles the steepest inclines with ease. Even with five adults, luggage and the air-conditioner on. The smooth diesel option outperforms most petrol engines. Plus a whole array of safety features. And a list that goes on and on. But we suggest you surprise yourself at the nearest dealer.

**TATA
Indica**

More car per car

Telco
A TATA ENTERPRISE

Fig 7

Fig 8

It is interesting to note that the three advertisements mentioned before are all featured in black and white. The role of colour in an advertisement is of great importance. Black and white are the two colours, which are usually associated with good and evil. These two shades are also seen as part of the life, which adds mystery to the whole nature. The particular advertisement of Paisano also has the use of the colour *red* splashing on the picture. The colour red stands for passion (sexual innuendoes) and hence its usage in the advertisements bring out that aspect in a very blatant form. Thus the use of colours as well as words make up an advertisement. The importance of the latter are also very crucial for the study, cause it is often through words, that meanings are revealed – meanings which are deeper than what is apparently given having underlying meanings in them. Thus what is required is a good interpretation of these meanings of the words. Such can be seen in this particular advertisement of that of a car (*Tata-Indica fig 7*) in which the one liner…. 'Gentlemen prefer curves' captures the male outlook, which associates 'curves' with women.

In majority of the advertisements, woman is shown as the weaker sex, to be rescued and protected from troubled situation by the male. This is a very common notion nurtured in a patriarchal society where the male is the inevitable symbol of masochism and women, the means to boost it. The *VIP (fig 8)* advertisement highlights exactly this 'macho' image of a man who saves the helpless woman from the eve teasers. Advertising such aspects encourages men to indulge in masochistic behaviour and paints women in a derogatory manner. Thus by doing so the advertisement undermines the woman's feeling in the whole process. Instead of highlighting the traumatic experience, which she undergoes, it plays up the male ego. Her physical weakness juxtaposed against male dexterity highlights the male influence on her. Here too the use of the colour red signifies the boldness of the action and thereby stands out

in the entire background. The overall image portrays a machochist situation where the female model is shown more as a trophy to be rescued and possessed. She is regarded as a property and the male model's physical features reveal it.

The indecent exposures of female models reflect the perverse outlook which society has towards women. She is stripped off naked to the gaze of male viewers and has no way to protect herself from it. Hence she is used as an artifact to decorate the product, an asset to be displayed so as to allure men for buying the product. All these advertisements deliberately go out as a result of which the attitude of the society towards their women never remain of a very high opinion.

II

TRIVIALISATION OF WOMAN'S WORK

A historical study of the nature of work done by women in comparison to men shows that their work is always given less importance in relation to that of men. Women are shown to restrict themselves in jobs, which involve less risk. Hence they are mostly engaged in household chores, which restricts their movement within the four walls of the house. Men on the other hand are involved in jobs like hunting, gathering, farming i.e. spheres outside the boundaries of home. Thus women are restricted to work within their private sphere; while men cater to the outside world. This demarcation of the workspace became more evident with the coming of the industrial age where production was no longer apart of household sphere. With the distinction of public-private, there resulted in changes in the nature of women's work. Earlier, when she worked in fields (i.e. outside her house) it was regarded as an extension of household

Fig 9

work, but now the same thing did not hold true. Thus, when a woman went out for work in modern times, it was for the sole purpose of earning. Even though she works at par like her male counterpart, yet her work does not get the due recognition. Rather, the common conception is that for a woman, work is not a necessity and hence her work is grossly underrated.

As a result of this underestimation, the worst affected are those women who do not go out to work but stay in the house looking after the family's need. Household work does not entail any economicgains; hence men trivialise it to such an extent that all the hard work that goes behind it is totally disregarded. Thus, no matter how much she works, she never gets her due acknowledgement for it. As said earlier, advertisements reflect the thoughts that prevail in the society, hence this trivialisation of woman's work gets reflected in the advertisements. A case in reference is an advertisement of a washing machine (*National Home Appliances fig 9*), which quotes: "This lady is busy washing clothes", while it shows a woman leisurely applying nail varnish. The impression given is that, housework is a leisure time activity, easy and fun thereby distorting the reality of grueling efforts. Such advertisements deliberately put up a wrong notion before the viewers.

Another example can be cited which throws light on this same aspect. This particular advertisement is that of a pain reliever (*Moov*) which shows a housewife catering to the endless demands of her family members to such an extent that her sigh of pain goes unnoticed by all. However when brought into notice, by her father-in-law, she is shown the due concern, but immediately after her relief she is back to her same demanding work without a grudge. If one analyses this advertisement, several aspects can be looked at. Firstly, the work, which the woman does, is not given much importance to- the work is trivialised to such an extent that on one has the urge to see

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real care
real you

I love my mum. She is different. She did her MBA from Harvard, but chasing after clients all day was just not her. She'd rather be with me. So, she quit... and now we both chase rainbows together.

Real products for real people, thoughtfully put together in a range that encompasses the best and the largest selection of beaut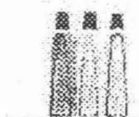y and pharmaceutical brands. And there is more. In here, you will find real out-of-the-way products that you won't find anywhere else. From natural baby lotions to teething gels. So, why don't you just spring in today!

Perfumes

Cosmetics

Skin care products

Hair care products

Medicines

Health supplements

Lifespring
The health & beauty store

Shop for free during HAPPY HOURS
(from 1 pm - 4 pm on weekdays only)

• Rajouri Garden, R-14, Main Market, Ph: 543 8224/30 • South Extension, E-12, Main Market, Part II, Ph: 626 1821/2
• Vasant Vihar, 35, Community Centre, Basant Lok, Ph: 6155158/59

wejdelkindia.vsnl.net.in

Fig 10

whether it leads to her physical exhaustion and discomfiture. Secondly, her resumption of work at the end of the advertisement is shown to be such an obvious conclusion that it is assumed to be the most feasible course of action. The easy acceptability with which woman do her household chores triviliases her labour before the other members, hence her work is always treated without respect. Thus advertisements are a major source of reiterating the notion that household work is trivial.

The plight of modern women is worse because she finds herself in a double-edged situation. She not only has to manage her work outside but also must take care of the family too. Thus she is worst struck by the 'bug' of modernity which, in the pretext of giving her more freedom leaves her in a situation worse than before. Though she works with equal effort both in her office and at home, yet her work fails to receive due recognition in either place. She is supposed to fit in with perfect ease in both the situations, which sometimes takes a toll on her to the extent that she is often forced to choose between her two roles. Whatever her status outside, it is always the household jobs that gain predominance in a woman's life; hence, a switch-over for the sake of her family is seen nothing unusual. In this context, the *Lifespring (fig 10)* advertisement can be cited which emphasis the fact about how a woman had to sacrifice her MBA career for looking after her son. Highlighting such sacrifices cause problems for those working women who find themselves in such a hard, demanding career. These advertisements play with the emotions of not only the woman, but also her in-laws, and drive her to opt for either her family or her career. Thus it is always the woman who bear the sacrifice, rather than her male counterpart making her solely responsible for her child's future. Projecting such advertisements pressurizes the woman in one way or the other into suppressing her individuality.

SADLY, WOMEN STILL FACE **DISCRIMINATION AT THE WORKPLACE.** FOR INSTANCE, ONLY THE BEST DRESSED ONES GET **ALL THE ATTENTION.**

Blazers, trousers, shirts, leather bags, salwar kameezes, we've got everything you need to get dressed for a day at work. At prices that make good business sense.

SHOPPERS' STOP

Feel the experience. While you shop.

Fig 11

রান্না করা,
কাপড় কাচা, সেলাই করায় দক্ষ। ই-বিজনেস
চালাতে আপনি তো সফল হবেনই।

Fig 12

Apparently in modern society equality between sexes is always emphasized. However with regards to women's work in the office such equality is seen merely as a lip service. Woman is seen as an asset to be displayed in the office and hence her intellectual prowess is conveniently overlooked. Many advertisements reflect the same feeling (*Shopper Stop fig 11*). The advertisement of a woman very blatantly highlights the sexual discrimination rampant in a workplace. It accords praises to their garments being the cause of it. Instead of enthusing the woman to combat this discrimination through her intellectual powers, she is tempted to take the easy way out – exercising her physical charms to get work done.

It is always expected of a woman to be efficient in her work, but often, this effeciency is taken for granted. Advertisements play a crucial role in this projection. They project a role model who is shown to be balancing all her fronts very effectively. The advertisement of (*e-business fig 12*) thus reads : 'As she excels in cooking, sewing, it is natural that she will run the e-business with equal success'. Launching of an all woman's magazine in Bengali called *Sananda* had its advertisements done in the same light. It showed a modern woman in various arenas of work taking all ups and downs in her stride. All these advertisements project the same fact, that, even if a woman works outside there should be an equal balancing of all her fronts. This projection consciously or unconsciously creates a pressure on her mind and worse, raises the expectations of her family members.

Balancing both the fronts is often a strain on the woman as she is expected to indulge in all her relationships with equal ease. In this context, advertisement of peel off mask (*Ever-Youth*) can be talked of. It shows a woman returning home from her office after a hard day's work. Reaching home, she finds a note from her friend in which she is expected to dine out with him within few minutes. Ignoring her state of

Father

Through son

Lives on

Dreaming fractured daydreams

The battle-weary child

Tiptoes through playtime

Alone

Looking for tomorrow

He stumbles on his past

PHOTO Sanjoy Chatterjee

A·SIRKAR

The Future of Gold

Fig 13

exhaustion she dresses up to please him. The authoritarian attitude of the male is brought out in this advertisement. It does not take into account the wishes of the woman but takes it for granted that she would comply with his wishes.

Thus all the above advertisements points out the basic aspect that a woman's work is trivialised and she fails to receive her due. As a result she never regards her labour worthy of recognition resulting in the development of a low self-esteem, this being the worst thing that can happen to her as a person.

III

DEVALUATION OF WOMANHOOD

Gender distinction is regarded as one of the major forms of social stratification where a disparity between the sexes is relevant in every sphere of life. In a society where patriarchy is the norm; the male wields a power over the female; hence she is always subjected to a sub-ordinate position to that of her male counterpart. This strong patriarchal outlook, which has a negative bias towards women, pervades in each and every aspect of social life. Advertisement being one of the major field of communication is also the sphere, which helps in manifestation of these stereotypes. Thus it is through these advertisements that there results in a reinforcement of the already persistent patriarchal outlooks. All queries about the nature of the outlooks will be quelled after a look at the assortments of advertisements.

The first advertisement brought in for discussion is that of a gold jewellary (*A.Sirkar fig 13*). In patriarchal society, a son is always preferred to a daughter, because by the rule of inheritance it is through son that the family line is carried on. The property is thus passed on from father to the son. In this regards the importance of a

woman's place within the family comes only with bearing a male child by her. Thus her position whatsoever is with relation of her giving birth to a male child. This indicates the lowly status accorded to women by the society. A reflection of such an attitude is clearly brought out by this particular advertisement. Through its words the advertisement bring out the preference of a boy over a girl as the words say.... 'Father/Through son /Lives on...'thereby reinforcing this strong patriarchal attitudes. Thus without visually demeaning the woman, this advertisement very clearly by the use of words brings out the strong negative feeling that society has towards the woman. The impact of such advertisement is greater and more harmful as it strikes at the right cord of people's attitude. What the advertisement does is that it leaves a greater impact in belittling her, at the same time very easily conveys the special treatment that the son gets by virtue of his gender.

The attitude of a patriarchal society towards woman is always that of a protector. Woman is regarded as a property, to be owned and whose rights are to be passed on from her father to her husband and later on to her son. Thus, at every stage of her life, she is written off as someone's property. For a woman, the most crucial point of her life is marriage, because she experiences a major change in her life. Advertisements always therefore play up this aspect in manipulating their own views. Hence one finds examples of such advertisements (like *ICICI, Bajaj scooters* etc.) which play with this emotional aspect of woman's life. Marriage is seen in each of these advertisements as something like a security, which a woman gets. The vermilion on the forehead, which is the mark of a married Hindu woman, is mostly given emphasized upon. The comparison between the vermilion and the products is stretched to the extent that it indicates 'security'. Thus it is often said that marriage bring in all the securities in a woman's life. It is this security that the products are compared to.

What's on your mind is what's in here

No matter who you are, if it's marriage on your mind then look no further. Times Matrimonials, India's largest matrimonials, helps you choose from a vast range of suitors. Be it doctors, engineers, teachers, bureaucrats, MBAs. Or green card holders. So call 3492027 and place your ad, as picking a perfect partner has never been easier.

SUNDAY TIMES
matrimonials

Fig 15

Hence according to the advertisements, whatever a woman be, it is marriage that finally fulfills her as a person and also gives her the social security. This strong patriarchal outlook is reiterated in these advertisements, which is grilled into our psyche.

A woman since her birth is socialized to the concept of getting married. Whatever be her professional qualification, her totality is reached with her marriage. Often the educational qualification acts as a positive reinforcement of her status in the marriage market. Thus the advertisement of the *Sunday Times matrimonials* (*fig 14*), goes on the same line. It shows a woman who is an efficient doctor in the attire of a traditional marriage sari operating on a patient. Her being a doctor adds on to her value in the marriage market.

Related to this importance given to marriage in a woman's life some other important aspects come into focus. In a marriage market, a woman's physical attributes gain relevance. Her whole being is narrowed down to the fact whether she is beautiful or not. Obsession with the concept of fairness had always been an important aspect in this area. Thus being 'dark' is regarded as the worst crime and hence her transformation into a fair, lovely lady has always been desired. The majority of the fairness creams have therefore exploited this theme aspect for the sale of their own products. Thus the transformation from an 'ugly duckling' to a 'beautiful swan' is the major theme that runs through the majority of the advertisements related to soaps, fairness creams etc. In this regard the worst kind of advertisements that have come about are those related to the product of fairness cream called *Fair & Lovely* where woman have been shown in a most demeaning manner. Several of its ads (*fig 15*), have hence come under public criticisms. For example one of such ad shows a perturbed father concerned with the possible outcome of a meeting between his daughter and the groom's family. While the mother assures him of the positive results as she has all her confidence on the fairness

I believe
the one sure thing
my fairness cream has got me
is compliments.

Your fairer, glowing complexion is the result of the unique 2 way action of Fair & Lovely.

Its Special Fairness Vitamins control
the skin darkening pigment, Melanin,
making you fairer in just 6 weeks.

Its Double sunscreens protect
your new fairness from the
darkening UV rays of the sun.

Fair & Lovely

Discover a new glow in your life.

A quality product from Hindustan Lever Ltd.

Lintas FAL 485 2721

Fig 16

Fig 17

cream that the daughter uses but not on her daughter herself. Such demeaning representation has been the recurrent theme in majority of such fairness ads.

Advertisements depicting the same line of thoughts, of the same product show the *kundali* that of a dark damsel is being matched to dark, fat, ugly man showing nothing can change the fate of her. But lo! Behold! By the use of the product a gorgeous guy comes swooning (emphasis is now on her fairness attributed by the use of the cream). Similarly another ad shows a woman being slighted by her husband till she starts applying the cream. Suddenly amorous feelings are aroused, and he shows up with a bouquet of flowers (*fig 16*). While in the former ads, what is suggested is that woman is a victim of fate, with no agency to find a worthy mate and no option but marriage. Her worth is irrelevant because as long as she is dusky, a shadow hangs over her and her family. The fairness cream is therefore shown to 'boost confidence' with which the woman steps out from her role of the victim. Another ad of the same product comes up with a blatant proposition. It shows a girl giving singing lessons on the terrace while the boy next door is oblivious to her charms till she uses the product. Then miracle take place as the quotation goes on... *"Aawaz mein jo nikhaar hai who chehre par bhi aajaaye to?"*

The worst one (*fig 17*) is that which shows a dark-skinned daughter stuck in a job without promise and a very unhappy father remarking.... *"Kaash mera ladka hota...*(if only I had a son)". A miracle tube later makes her fair and she lands the coveted job of no, not rocket scientist but airhostess. The scene ends with her father enjoying a coffee at a five star restaurant and the father calling out to his *beti* as *"beta ek coffee milegi"* indicating thereby that good jobs with high income is always associated with son. So when a daughter earns like a son, symbolically she becomes the son. Thus it shows that the earner of the family is always of a masculine gender.

Fig 18

Fig 19

A careful study of the advertisements shows how, through the positioning of the male-female model, the patriarchal attitude is reinforced. As mentioned earlier, Goffman also talks about the positioning of the male-female according to superior-inferior position. The common notion is that women are dependent and hence are to be guarded. This is clearly reflected in the relative position of the woman to that of the man. She is always place in a position lower, and is also shown to be clinging on to her man for support, comfort and assurance. The advertisement of the *VIP* *(fig 8)* wear reflects this attitude. In another ad of the same type, the female model is positioned in a manner, which brings out the dominant nature of the male model (*Prince* winter items *fig 18*). In this advertisement the woman is seated at the feet of the male model, clinging on to his legs as his conquest, while the male takes on the stance of a predator. The body language, the placing of his legs, reflects arrogance, whereas that of the female conveys compliance. For a layman, however, the positioning may not be of any importance, but a sociological study takes into account such aspects like facial expressions, postures of models and interprets them in their own understanding. A study of body languages and facial aspects too reveal of the reinforcement of patriarchal attitude.

A woman is often shown to achieve completeness only in relation to a man. Thus what these advertisements portray is a very stereotypical image of woman unsure of herself. She is shown to lack confidence in her own abilities as a result, is dependent on the male assurance complimenting her on her looks. What is projected in these ads therefore has quite an adverse effect on the woman's character. One can refer to the advertisement of the *Philips Satinelle (fig 19)*, where the wording goes on like this .. 'Shyly, she asks me, do I look attractive?'– even without any reference to the male counterpart, the words are enough to let one realise whom the question is addressed to.

WHAT A WOMAN OUGHT TO BE!

AN EXTENSION OF YOUR EGO

6844884/5. Fax: 6848509. E-mail: ctcindia@bol.net.in • Website: ctcindia.com

Fig 20

Rather than being confident about her own self, the woman seeks the constant approval from her man. This indicates two aspects: first is that she has a low self esteem and lacks confidence in her own receptions; secondly it shows that after all, it is solely for the male approval that a woman grooms herself rather than for her own self-satisfaction.

By studying the nature of projection of women in various advertisements women are seen to be catagorised into following stereotypes. One, which is the typical stereotype of conventional woman *pativraytra naari* upholding all the Indian values, at the same time effecient in her professional front. The other type is that of those who spell trouble – the seductress, sensuous and daring in her approach. The point to be noted is that we are not concerned with the nature of these stereotypes but rather about the harm that they cause in moulding the social attitude towards woman. In both cases, the standpoint is neglected and she is forcibly cast into a mould one can come to the conclusion that there exists broadly two types of stereotypes with created by society from which she is incapable of breaking away.

In these advertisements, a picture is drawn regarding 'what a woman ought to be' *Chhabra saries, CTC Plaza* (fig 20), thereby supporting the dominant patriarchal attitudes. The statement comes with strong views attached to it with regards to what an Indian woman should be. Thereby, a sociological interpretation of the statement would obviously indicate that the society sets an ideal concept of woman which undoubtedly has a patriarchal bias.

A study of these advertisements from various angles one can conclude that whatever the nature of the product be, when the issue comes to the representation of woman, it is ensured that it reinforces the existing patriarchal notions already ingrained in people's minds. Thus consciously or unconsciously, women are always looked upon

as ones who are to be dominated and possessed and this notion is clearly reflected in the advertisements. A majority of the advertisements represent women as homemaker rather than as active members of labour force. Apart from the presentation, it is significant to note that in the many of the advertisements the background voice is that of a male. This is because it is believed that an authoritative male voiceover give a product sufficient credibility which a woman's voice would lack. Thus here too a predominance of male over female is brought out. This study thus tries to explore and highlights this pre-existing conception which was otherwise overshadowed in a veneer of modernity.

IV

ASSERTION OF NEW WOMAN

This discussion of advertisements would remain incomplete unless we talk about some interesting changes taking place in the portrayal of women in advertisements. We have already said that because of the changing nature of Indian society the status and position of women particularly urban, educated, working, professionally oriented women have undergone significant changes. The emergence of new confident and economically independent women is a fact to reconcile with. It is obvious that ads in this context cannot remain indifferent to this changing phenomenon. It is therefore not surprising that we are also noticing some ads, which do portray this new woman, and not the old stereotype.

These advertisements bring out the real 'woman'; the essence that lies behind her existence, her weaknesses and her strengths thereby portraying her human nature. She is carefree, at the same time responsible, when time and situation demands. She is

91

fig 21

SHE DIDN'T HAVE A UNIFORM. BUT SHE HELD THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON.

Fig 21
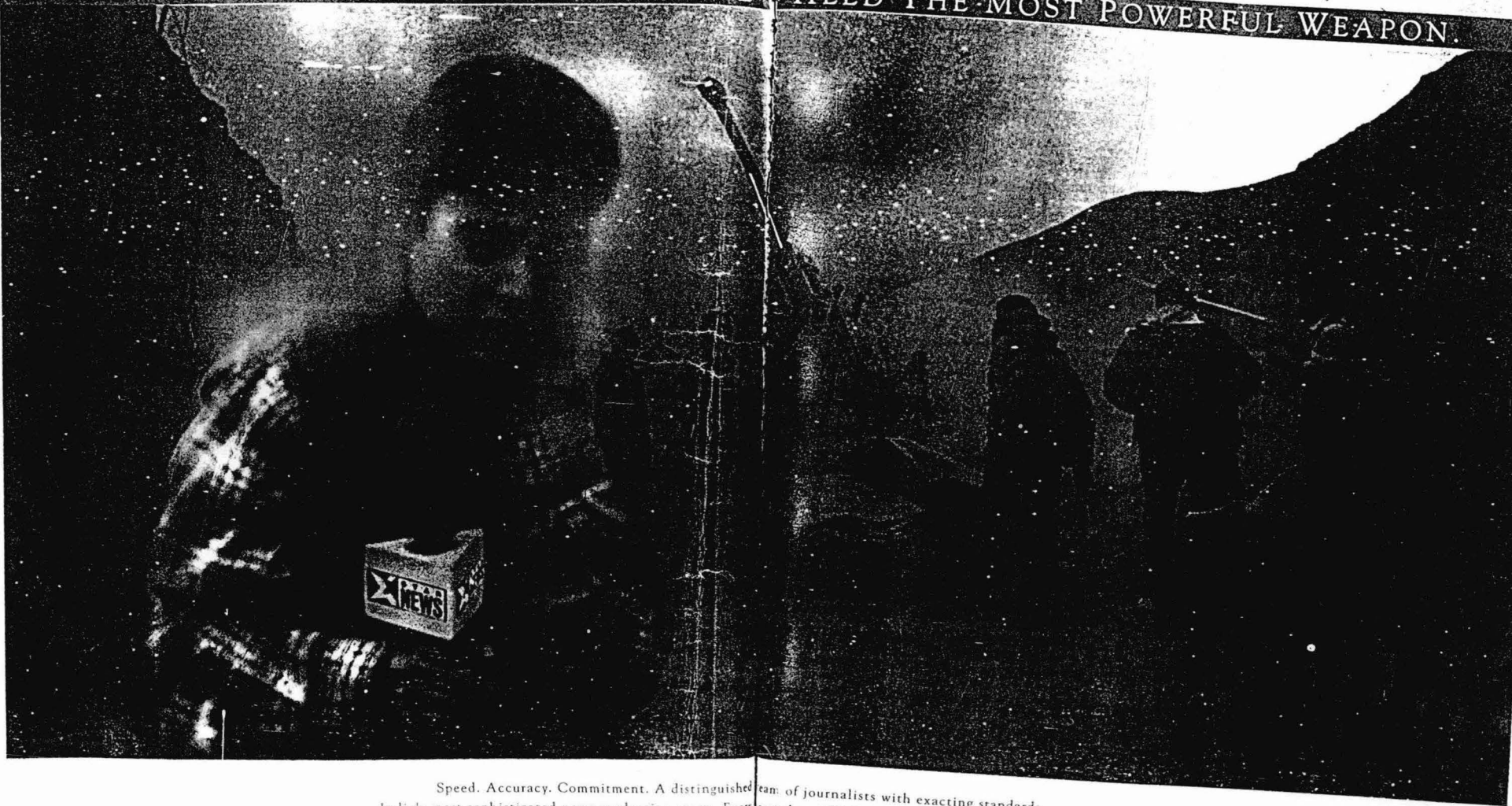
Speed. Accuracy. Commitment. A distinguished team of journalists with exacting standards.
India's most sophisticated news production crews. Every second on STAR News brings you news you can rely on.

Fig 22

Rely On Us. We Rely On Experience.

STAR NEWS

Both are professionals. Guess the one in Sales and Marketing.

"The man", you'd say. Because it's what you've always believed. Sales and Marketing has forever seemed like a man's forté. And you've never associated it with advertising, tourism, banking and insurance. In other words, the very careers the woman in you aspires to excel in.

But you're in for a surprise.

You see, skills in Sales and Marketing are the essentials of these professions.

And at NIS, we equip you with these very skills. Our Global Management Program in Sales and Marketing (GNIS) will make you a professional of global standards. So that you can make your own citadel of success in top-notch companies, anywhere.

For now, come to your nearest NIS centre.

NIS

As for who is the Sales and Marketing professional, well, now you know better.

BECAUSE SUCCESS CAN BE TAUGHT

*For 10+2 pass-outs, undergraduates and graduates.

NIS is a division of NIS Sparta Ltd. NIS Sparta is an NIIT associate company. NIS is not a University under the UGC Act and does not award degrees. Select programs are conducted at select centres.

Mudra : NIS : 0893

Present in 45 Indian cities. 2nd Floor, Kankaria Estate, 6 Little Russel Street, Calcutta -700 071. Ph.: 2472607, 2804480. Gariahat : 206 B, Rashbehari Avenue, Calcutta- 700 029.

conscious of her space, but at the same time is able to interact with the public. The carefree attitude of today's woman rejoicing in her freedom is very beautifully captured in the following advertisement of a deodorant (*Fa fig 21*) where a woman is shown to be thoroughly enjoying herself leaving behind all her inhibitions of being a woman. Instead of showing the effect of her deodorant on men, this kind of representation, projects the woman carving a niche making all look up to her. That is definitely positive for her self. The incorporation of feminist attitude has been one of the most important aspects in advertisements. Some readers (Goldman1993) regard the launch of *Charlie* perfume by Revlon in 1973 as making a distinct statement in the representation of women in advertisements. The advertisement showed a young, active woman who did not need a man to give her a meaningful existence. This seemed to be one of the earliest attempts to handle the rise of feminist critic within the field of advertisement.

Today's woman is not a dependent mother, wife or daughter, rather she is the one who takes her own decisions sharing equal footage with her male counterparts. She is shown as a reporter in this particular advertisement who is capable of extracting informations from a troubled situation by not using her charms rather by risking her life for it. Thus she is not glorified as a woman but as a daring reporter (not emphasizing upon her gender) who stops at nothing to reveal the truth (*Star News fig 22*). She is shown to have that 'daring' quality within her which otherwise is associated with that of men. This advertisement celebrates the strengths of woman, giving her a higher footage and negating all existing notions of her being the weaker sex.

Advertisements also show women to be in fields, which is usually dominated by men (eg. Reporting, sales and marketing, *NIS fig 23*) and quite comfortable in them. Her competence and confidence makes her equal if not superior to her male counterparts. This advertisement reflects how women are venturing into unconventional

Fig 24

Sometimes, you need spaces. In your togetherness.

When you say a lot without saying a word.

When a relationship simply puts its feet up.

Space. You need yours. Try ours.

Where the mind is at rest.

THE PARK
.hotel

he Park.hotel 14/7 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bangalore. Telephone: 559 4666. Email: resv.blr@theparkhotels.com
www.theparkhotels.com Apeejay Surrendra Hotels

Fig 25

Your *space* belongs to *you* because you *create it.*

— Femina, July 1, 1997

The changing attitudes of the Indian woman. Reflected from cover to cover.

FEMINA
For the woman of substance.

ENTERPRISE NEXUS 1510

Fig 26

Fig 27

professions. This positive representations not only encourage women, but at the same time tries to remove the condescending attitude that society has towards women. The multifaceted totality of the modern woman is effectively captured in the advertisements (*Whirlpool fig 24*). She is the modern woman who is shown to effectively manage and strike the right balance between her home and her career. She does not shrug off her responsibility towards one for the sake of the other. Another interesting fact that needs to be mentioned in this connection is that today's woman does not relinquish her individual or personal 'space', in order to accommodate social demands. Talking of personal space reference to woman related to it was unheard of till recent times. But in modern times where individuality is the basis of all relationship, women too are seen to be claiming of her own space. Earlier, the woman as distinct identity was not taken into account. However in recent times advertisements like that of *The Park* (fig 25) and *Femina (fig 26)*, not only talk of woman's space but also indicate the fact that it is created and maintained by her own self. So in this respect therefore one can say that there has been a positive development of woman's situation in the society. The concept of 'space' assumes great importance for her as it helps her to assert her individuality.

Thus these advertisements highlight the essence of being a woman and have a positive dimension. They too convey the message that a woman should be proud of her being and not let herself be dominated by others. Thus she should discover her own asserts and be proud of the fact. This glorification of woman's true identity is beautifully brought out in the advertisement of *Heritage handloom emporium (fig 27)*, where the rhetorical question "Don't you love being a woman?' makes the woman love herself and not cringe of the fact that her is born a woman. The advertisement glorifies woman in such a way so as to feel the privilege of being born a woman.

Beautiful.

Warm.

Exquisite.

Precious.

Gold. Everything a woman is.

World Gold Council wishes every woman a Happy New Year.

gold
www.gold.org

Fig 28

Thus in modern times women are shown in a different light which nullifies or breaks her stereotyped image and glorifies her self (*Gold fig 28*). She is represented through contradictions -- she is demure as well as bold, remote as well as sensuous. She is a complete woman knowing her weaknesses, humane as well as bold enough to acknowledge them. These advertisements thus successfully capture the modern woman and the new changing social outlook towards her. They thus seek to deconstruct the stereotyped images that society constructed of its woman thereby ushering in the new, emancipated woman. She is thus shown to split into her being a good housewife, efficient manager and adventurous. She is sporty, sexy, businesslike not limited to one role. The accompaning text is also a good example of how advertisements have incorporated feminism and used it for their own purpose. It begins "Today's woman are tuned into more than their bodies", thus claiming feminist credintials. So fashion, beauty, finance, careers, and relationships– the self of a woman is composed of these component parts. Thus the advertisements claim that a successful career woman also has traditional areas which are still a part of her. The career is just one more thing added to one's identity as a consumer self. The main aspect that comes out is that advertisers have handled the challenges of feminism by construction woman as independent and in control in terms of particular commodities.

A portrayal of this new woman is again brought out in the particular advertisement of cooking powder (*Everest Pav Bhaji Masala*). There a young woman is shown who goes up to her mother-in-law and informs her, '*Ma ji pav bhaji banane ja rahi hun!*'. The mother-in-law, 'a silver-haired, soft-spoken lady, smiles fondly, and begins to recite the list of ingredients that goes into its making. Meanwhile, the young woman dons an apron with word 'Freedom' written boldly across it. She straps on the walkman, and dancing to its music proceeds to make the dish using the particular

powder. The mother-in-law drones on her cooking instructions, while the young woman is shown to be oblivious to it, immersed in her own world. Finally she presents her palate while her mother-in-law praises her cooking abilities, while she guiltily takes off the earplug of her walkman. This brings out several aspects. Firstly, that the young woman is pleased to play her traditional role of being a dutiful housewife. Secondly at that role she plays she retains her individual freedom as being not depended neither dictated by her in-law. The use to the word freedom across the apron brings out the strong sense of her individuality. Thirdly what we find here is a perfect balance of her traditional-modern role of being a woman of today's world. She plays the traditional gender role at the same time fulfilling her desire to be 'herself' and enjoy life. Thus the new Indian woman is shown to be confident, independent lady who has support of her loving family behind her.

In order to be fair to the world of advertisements we must say – as we have done – that ads are not just about old stereotypes, ads also reflect new confident independent woman. But then if we look more critically and closely we do realise that beneath this projection of this new woman lies another politics which is subtle and more complex. For example as we have already suggested in earlier chapters the 'newness' of this new woman portrayed in the ads is problematic. More often than not in the name of newness some old perceptions are glamorised. A woman may be shown as a consumer having lot to say and choice in the market, as a carefree independent being entering the public professional world, but then the limits of her being are sharply pointed out. Despite all these changes, she remains a wife/mother dedicated to her domestic responsibilities and she must succeed in reconciling the twin worlds i.e. home and the world. In other words her womanhood cannot be imagined without certain

traditional and essentialist notion of her being i.e. as a good housewife/mother having a high degree of moral commitment to traditional role expectations.

That is why it can be argued that the broad functions of the advertisements remain status quoist and conservative. Advertisements may become sleeker, technically developed, artistically refined but their social meanings as far as the portrayal of woman is concerned are something that ought to be debunked and critiqued. No wonder with growing women's awareness and movements led by different feminist groups we are becoming more and more conscious of the consequences of these advertisements.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The aim of any research project is to have a greater understanding regarding the undertaken problem of study. In this project, the main focus of study to have for a better understanding and a re-interpretation of all those advertisements, which portrays women in various aspects of life. A critical study of the advertisements makes one aware as to how women are placed as a non-instrumental, dependent being within the structure of social hierarchy. In the guise of 'feminine beauty' what is reproduced again and again is the same old patriarchal ideology. Thus special care is given to her appearance which in turns undermines her existence as a human being. She is seen as a showpiece or a mannequin to be presented for male 'gaze'.

The lowly status accorded to woman is seen by the way she is representated in the advertisements. Her physical placing in a lower situation in comparison to her male counterpart brings out her inferior position. Glorification of her dependency on a male in any situation also brings out her feeble nature, which in turn undermines her capabilities as a person. What is revealed through these advertisements is the underlying sexual politics that exist in any man-woman relationship. Thus, to explain, this would mean that men are always shown to be the ones controlling the situation, having the power and authority. They are the ones who dictate what an 'ideal' woman should be. Thus according to their expectation she is either portrayed as a docile housewife/dutiful daughter/caring mother or the other woman whose physical (read sexual) existence is threatening. This starkly contrasting images keeps on reappearing in the various advertisements.

The aim of any study is to locate the existing status quo and then to study the changes taking place. Only then thus the relevance of any study comes out. In this case the study tries to analyse how the patriarchal ideology has maintained its status quo position in Indian society. It also highlights how advertisements play an active role in maintenance of such status quo. The study, therefore, brings out the social reflection of woman by studying her representations in the advertisements. In the first three catagories i.e. commodification of women; trivilization of women's work and devaluation of womanhood, a reflection of the negative portrayal is featured. The last category i.e. assertion of the new women in this sense differs from the previous ones. It is here that an attempt has been made to find out whether or not any change has taken place in the situation of women's representation. Interpretation of these ads show that though the ads apparently portray women who have within them a radical streak, yet a deeper understanding reveals the presence of the implicit traditional values. Thus under the facade of the new image there persists the old stereotypes.

Gender identity involves the recognition of the female as only an appendage to the male. Her existence comes only in relation to male and it serves the purpose of enhancing his ego. This reification of women is clearly and explicitly evident in gendered advertisements where women are exposed to the patriarchal gaze. Undoubtedly these advertisements are created keeping in mind the androcentric audience. Thus the way the woman poses, focuses her eyes, postures herself in front of the camera all accentuate her sexual prowess, which negates her individual existence. She is either seen to look at her male spectator coyly (indicating her shyness to face the gaze) or tries to return the gaze by a challenging look in her eyes. Nevertheless both are seen as indications of invitation to her sexuality. Foucault would term this conversion of women into a sexual object as subjectification (king vs subject)

The social outlooks towards women have been such that there occurs no form of protest towards these indecent depictions of women in advertisements. The main reason accorded is the process of socialisation itself. The patriarchal socialization has been inculcated within the minds of the people to such an extent that it is regarded as natural to see women as show piece. The internalization of such socialization thereby successfully beats down any questions that are raised to oppose the view point. Advertisements are seen as playing an important part in this internalization of the prevalent ideologies. They are hence regarded as powerful metaphors in Indian society.

The gender system in India is so entrenched in the male biased ideology that advertisements act as nothing but catalysts in the reinforcement and creation of gender role identities. The social roles of media (read advertisement) are considered to be of utmost importance. This is because they not only reflect the social reality but at the same time help in affecting reality also. This two-way relationship thereby makes advertisement's role indespensible in society (Basin Kamala 1984). Thus it is the woman's sexuality that gains importance over her other aspects which makes it difficult to counteract against such strong perceptions. Hence when advertisements depict women, the sphere remains gendered rather than biological. It is often this distinction that makes the situation problematic in nature.

All the advertisements fall under the same stereotypical notions which force one to raise fundamental questions as to why a shift from them is not possible. The answer to that is complex and need further studies. But from whatever one understands from this study, a change in the nature of women's representation would mean a fundamental change towards the notion of women in society. And what is needed is a re-structuring of the social structure, which would include the values, beliefs and meaning of what people think. A total social transformation is what is to be aimed at which would lead

to a major change in the thinking pattern itself. Though it seems a herculian job but it is not one that cannot be achieved. A change in the perception would start the whole cycle and for that what is needed is an awareness of the existing situation, and a conscious attempt from the part of the sociologists to usher in a new era.

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