

# INDIAN POPULAR CULTURE

## Lecture21

### Visual Narrative: Advertisements

Hello, everyone. Today, we will be discussing module five, which is visual narratives advertisements. We will be looking into the inception of advertisements in India from the pre-British time. We will also investigate how the dynamics of advertisement have shaped the economy and the inclusion of politics. Advertisements being a major chunk of mass media or, mass production, relate to the larger idea or the study of popular culture. Mass production means and this mass production is directly linked to advertisements. and today we will start by discussing Indian-ness and everyday nationalism. Everyday nationalism is a theoretical concept. We will not be looking into the theoretical concept of everyday nationalism, but in context as to the usage of the products or how it has been marketed and used in every day by the people of India. Indianness- from Raj to Swaraj. The pre-independence era started with print media. There were newspapers, pamphlets or weeklies, which in the pre-independence era used to publish advertisements and during that time, we mostly saw clothing, medicine and services being part and parcel of the products that were advertised.

It was just simple words put as advertisements. But if we want to trace the genealogy of Indian advertisement, we need to go to the streets where we saw the vendors using their mouth or word of mouth to demonstrate their products in the streets to the people who are passing by so that they can attract customers and calling out people by using jingles which were attractive and people were lured to go and buy the product.

That was a marketing strategy initially used by these local vendors. and then we also see hand-painted signs. These hand-painted signs usually were drawn on the walls of either streets or even houses of people. Those were the early signs of advertisement in India. this idea of Indian-ness is much rooted in the idea of the Swadeshi movement.

The word Indian cinema is linked to the Swadeshi movement and therefore it got its name of Indian cinema. Similarly, the Swadeshi movement in India is popularly linked to the advertisements, early advertisements in India, Indian-made goods and boycotted British-made products. Swadeshi movement was started by Gandhi telling people to boycott foreign goods and endorse handmade items, khadi, etc.

James Augustus Hickey started the Bengal Gazette. We will also look into the idea of vernacular versus the English-speaking audience and how it creates a class barrier. Again, bringing in the idea of popular culture where they talk about, the idea of the low culture and high culture, here we see the class distinction between the language English spoken by the elites and the Britishers and vernacular, which is spoken by the local people.

This Bengal Gazette advertised clothing, books and medicine initially when it came into existence. It has also been discussed in comics that because later Bengal Gazette also published cartoons perhaps the first commercial advertisement began through B. Dataram and Company in 1905 it was only in 1920 that we see Stonach and DJ Keymers coming into the advertising industry.

What is relevant about DJ Keymers- renowned film director, and filmmaker Satyajit Ray was an illustrator with DJ Keymers before he became significant in the cinema industry. It was indeed a long journey for him as well. The famous JWT or the J. Walter Thomas, brought professionalism in advertisement in India. in around 1929.

These were the remarkable beginnings of advertising agencies or bodies that situated themselves in India, through which what we see the transformation of advertisements that have taken place in India or the Indian consumer market. These are what these Swadeshi advertisements were about or how they endorsed products. They used to use tricolor flags in the wrapping of certain products. Khadi usage was growing because of Mahatma Gandhi's Swadeshi movement.

We witness the attachment of emotions to the product, and it is not new. One example is Vande Mataram. Vande Mataram was written on products and stated that it's a homegrown product that people should use, and it associates with the indigenous Indianness of people. Another important oil was Sugandhi Kasarangan oil. which was sold, and promoted by Nagendranath Sengupta in 1908, became a product of Swadeshi. It was sold as an indigenous product. Wherever you write Indigenous, it's like organic, more organic products, or eco-friendly is the new cool.

As we understand in the advertisement the word Indigenous is attached to such products as Indian medicine and railways (though we know that Indian railways were not exactly built by Indians it was brought in by Britishers, but it was endorsed in a way that it is for the Indian people). Therefore, the advertisements that revolved around were quite Indian. We situate Indian-ness or everyday nationalism when we talk about Kaila's brain tonic, it was a medicine that will stimulate your brain. It will increase your brain power to 100% which was their tagline to advertise.

The advertisement was for Swadeshi clothes and the slogan was Wear Swadeshi, wear pride. In a way, if you are not wearing Swadeshi, you are not owning it and you are not Indian enough. Maybe that was the meaning that was directed. Even the image was of an Indian family dressed in traditional attire. All the family members were in traditional attire wearing khadi and the message was to support Indian weavers and craftsmen.

Two things are happening; they are saying that through endorsing homegrown fabrics like khadi, you are wearing the pride of India, and you are helping for self-reliance, communitarianism or entrepreneurship. People will become self-reliant if they start wearing the textiles, the homegrown fabrics and that is how the advertisement around Swadeshi came into existence.

Another significant example is the Swadeshi soap. This Swadeshi soap's slogan ran as pure, clean and Swadeshi. Later, we'll see how soaps and detergents were associated with the larger aspect of religion and how religion got intermingled or intertwined with politics. The image of a soap bar with the Indian flag and a spinning wheel, the charkha symbol. Charkha can be seen in two ways. One is how Gandhi propagated it. On the other when you spin in a speeding way, signifies cleaning something, the same idea was situated in a later advertisement called Wheel. Wheel is a detergent where we see a wheel that is spinning and as it spins using the products it is made of as it claims it was talking about or relating to cleanliness and how cleanliness is associated with rituals situated in religion and tradition. There again how religion was associated with politics further. The message said to experience the purity of Swadeshi, the idea of purity and cleanliness is situated in the Indian context in the larger paradigm of culture or tradition. Keep yourself clean with a product that's truly Indian. How you're going to purify yourself, how you're going to keep yourself clean, it is only through an Indian product, like how in 'Printing' printer used Gangajal to sell the Gita, (the marketing strategy).

Similarly, this marketing strategy is toying with your emotions; what can clean you. Something that is truly Indian can clean you.

According to a study done on Hindi Aaj daily the papers. The timeline of the newspaper taken into consideration was between 1935 to 1938. Between these years, a study conducted by Kaushik on Aaj daily was published from U.P (it is before the conceptualization of the state). On January 4th, an advertisement came up in this Aaj Daily it said the Indian Postal Telegraph Department had reduced the prices which gave the readers information about the reduction in telephone rates since September 1934. they strategically said that they showed the rate chart, published the rate chart as well and said that this was what was before, and this is what is. You can see or make out the differences on your own. Along with that, as a part of the strategy, they said that if you do not have a telephone, you will lose opportunities. Maybe, you want to apply to a place, or you want to send something to someone you will lose that opportunity. This is how they advertised their department. Advertisements of soaps like Lux, Sunlight and Godrej also came during this era and they quite popularly advertised as Indian beauty through Lux soap. It's not as Indianized as Swadeshi, but they were, talking about the Indian beauties.

Most famous actresses of the time were debuting with Lux in advertisements. and then there was Sunlight and Godrej. Godrej, again, Indianizes through Indian culture. And then medicines came up again, as indigenous. The names also suggest that they are indigenous. they were tonics and names as follows: Santogen, Kalzana, Mrit Sanjeevani, Sudha, Sundari Sati, Gonokin and Recto Sero P. Most of them are indigenous names except a few. They are associating it with how indigenous the tonics were. Again, back to the railway how they advertised later. They said that it is a cheap and convenient way to travel with scenic beauty. But that was not it. In this study by Kaushik, he remarks and gives a detailed explanation of the advertisement that came in Aaj Daily. He says, that travelling by train was presented as an enlightened and liberating experience. Great figures from distant as well as recent past. From Buddha to Swami Vivekananda including Shankaracharya, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and their life in wandering and their search for the truth were equated with wandering and travelling. But altogether excluding Sufi saints who also have contributed to this great wandering tradition got incorporated in the advertising strategy of Indian

railways. Leaving out the Sufi saint names as if they were not enlightened enough or they cannot be put in the same category as these people that have been named explains the bias. Kaushik mentioned, the exclusion with deliberation.

This paper comes from a Hindu-dominated area and maybe the readers, are also Hindu, which is one of the reasons they have conveniently removed the names of Sufi saints. Further wanderers are searching for truth, and you will also be enlightened and find truth if you travel in the Indian railways.

The canned Rasagullas from Bengal were a creation of Nobin Chandra Das. But it was only his son, Krishna Chandra, who made this breakthrough with this Rasagulla that we see in cans nowadays. It can reach from Bengal to the last tip of the nation because of this breakthrough in canning and exporting it across the country. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century advertisements of mostly foreign brands, which are like Cadbury Dairy Milk and Pears Soaps. This Pure Soap is an inherited version of this Pears soap. In the ad, there is a lady who is holding a child, and she is almost dressed like a goddess and sitting on a lotus. It is talking about the purity of the soap, associating it with religion again.

The emphasis on self-reliance was the common theme in Swadeshi advertisements during colonial rule. The advertisements that we have just seen, belong to colonial times, and pre-independence. Swadeshi is the dominant theme in these advertisements.

Another important inception of advertisement came in Aaj Daily in the year 1935 on the occasion of Diwali. During Diwali, they were selling sweets, and they named the sweets after the leaders of India. Many of the known leaders of India or the Swadeshi movement, one was Gandhi Gaura. They named it Gandhi Gaura, dedicating it to Gandhi. Rashtriya Barfi, which translates to National Sweet. Jawahar Laddu Sandesh after Sardar Patel. And then Madan Mohan. after Madan Mohan Malviya.

And this ad was sponsored by a shopkeeper whose shop's name was Ram Bhandar. We see how relevant these meanings are, where it is trying to situate and how they are trying to promote the product. There was another renowned medicine during the British time. Localities situated near the railway tracks have messages or guarantees to deliver a son. Taking a certain medicine, you will bore a male child under some conditions they give cash back as well. The name of the

medicine was catchy it was called Sukh Sagar literally meaning the sea of happiness. It also talks about the temperament people had about having a male child and the desperation that led these people to endorse these medicines in their daily lives. Hindustani chai or Bharatiya chai sponsored by ITMEB, the tea is represented as a health drink with no side effects. During 1935 and 1938, tea was endorsed. One of the ads of this Hindustani chai or Bharatiya chai, is associated with Indianness, or close to Indianness. If you see the linguistic category of how it is called Hindustani chai or Bharatiya chai, there is a difference, right? This difference is in a way promoted these ads when they, later, started replacing it with the name Bharatiya chai. A woman is sitting in front of a charkha wearing a white khadi sari, sipping tea associating it with Swadeshi along with this chai being much Indian. In the 1940s and 1950s ads were Indian enough or could be associated with everyday nationalism, and how it was promoted.

Soap is used every day and can be said as a tool of everyday nationalism. You're cleaning yourself; you're purifying yourself. It is happening on two levels. One, you're promoting the indigenous brands making people self-reliant and on the other, you are cleaning, you are purifying yourself, associating yourself with being more Indian and daily since you are washing yourselves every day.

In the 1940s and 50s Tata Group was established and they were leading India to what was called as Sampurn Swaraj. In a way, they were providing essential machinery and farm equipment to industries and developing the transport infrastructure with steel made in India by Tata Steel. They hinged on made in India. This made-in-India title made it Indian; it is being used daily, producing and selling to other industries that require it. During World War II, India joined hands with four advertising companies and these four advertising companies, one was Keymers, Stonach, and the Edarts and the fourth and most significant was JWT, which was J.W. Walter Thompson. They joined hands for campaigning and since it was the time of World War II, they came up with 'don't spread rumours theme' or advertisement. Don't waste food and contribute blankets for the troops participating in the war. It was a major ad done by the government

Post-independence, the white revolution came in. What we know today as Amul or the Amul brand, the utterly butterly Amul came during this time and it was Verghese Kurian, who came up with this witty humorous slogan displayed on billboards across the country. Dr. Verghese was a significant man who started this

white revolution. He was the one who replicated the model in other parts of India as well. The 50s advertisements have become educators, more like they will show you or they will tell you how to use a product, what a product does. Before the 1940s, it was more like how to use the product. A revolution was about to start during the 1940s and 50s.

Swastik detergent came up with a revolutionary idea. Before people used to wash their clothes under the tap with soap or in ponds. But they came up with a revolutionary idea of washing clothes in a bucket. and that became a trademark. It was a swastika detergent that told people how to wash their clothes. But it was not Swastik, but HUL's Hindustan Unilever Surf that popularized the idea more, though it was started by Swastik. Surf and Dalda were not Indian, but it was promoted as an Indian brand, ads, where mothers are cooking for the kids brought in the idea of how mothers are warm and nurturing. The inception of the product Dalda came from the Dutch company called Dada from where they imported the product, they put the Lever's L between Dada and then it became Dalda. Dalda the name itself became a product. We never say we are going to buy ghee or oil. We say that we are going to buy Dalda, or we are going to buy Fortune another brand of oil, but we never say we are going to buy Fortune we say we are going to buy oil. But with Dalda, it was different. People used to say that we are going to buy Dalda itself.

There came Times of India and Times of India's illustrated weekly. They used to tell people how to use a product. What could a product do? got installed through Times of India. Earlier it was about what the product is, and what the product does, then came how to use the product and what the product could do for you. Renowned people have been the editors of this illustrated weekly, a few of them are Sean Mandy, A.S. Raman, Khushwant Singh, M.V. Kamath and Prithish Nandy. Then came the radio. We have not looked into all India radio in detail or radio in detail because we are only dealing with, visual narratives. radio does not come in that category, though it does in a way produce imagery when we hear, but it directly does not relate to visual narratives. We haven't dealt with the advertisements on the radio in detail. The radio advertisement sponsored the shows entirely in an era they were advertising products except textiles. The history of radio is important, Ceylon Radio in Sri Lanka came before All India Radio and renowned people used to work in Ceylon Radio, one of them being Sunil Dutt. Most

of the advertisements earlier went to Ceylon Radio. It was later India got its own All India Radio station when they started with programs they got full sponsorship.

English and Hindi mixed came up with a trend called Hinglish. There was Bini's textile and their logo, or their slogan read Humko Bini Maangta. It is a mix of Hindi and English and we see a trend coming like Hinglish later. The Burma Shell, which is called Bharat Petroleum was instilled in India. They came up with the slogan, 'In India's Life and Part of It'. They used Commitment as a tool to advertise. So in certain levels of advertisements, commitment is being used to sell their product. They are not telling people what the qualities of the product are, but the commitment itself becomes the most important factor in that brand.

The historical thread Singer is not an Indian brand. It came in India in the 1940s and 50s. But why this is important because Mahatma Gandhi knew sewing and he got this Singer machine. Even when he was in jail, he used to sew and use a Singer machine therefore, it is called the historical thread. He used to shift the machine from one jail to another whenever he was taken. Significant in the making of Indian-ness or making of the Swadeshi.

The 60s was a time when rationing in India started. The Soviet Co-op model was a success by Nehru. Problems came up in the 1960s and India was fighting, first social marketing program was launched in the 1960s with the Nirodh family planning campaign. Other than vasectomy, introduced by Indra Gandhi to control the population. It was the Nirodh family planning campaign by the government to instill population control and safe sex. It was a period of stagnation due to the Indo-Sino war. Indo-Sino affected the economy in India.

It affected the cinema market, and advertisement market, and many foreign companies withdrew from the market. Important to note that this was a time when other companies were leaving India.

Anyways, in India, before liberalization, there were few foreign companies. The problem with foreign companies exiting India could not help growing the GDP. Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1965 asked Dr. Verghese Kurian to replicate the Amul model, as I mentioned before. Along with this, the Green Revolution in the field of agriculture was a significant development that was witnessed in the 60s. But again, as it is not part of an advertisement, we are not discussing it further. Two significant advertisements of this age; one was India's traditional art handloom house. This



Indian traditional art handloom house came into existence in the 1960s and Indira Gandhi was promoting it. Pupul Jayakar was Indira Gandhi's friend and so Indira Gandhi started promoting this by wearing the handloom sarees. In an ad, Zeenat Aman became the face of an Indian traditional art handloom house. Zeenat Aman has also advertised for other, brands of clothing such as Bombay Dyeing and others, but this was a significant development also seen through Zeenat Aman because she was seen as a beautiful actress of those times. Godrej Storwell Ad in the 1960s, showed us again the Indian roots and Indian tradition and culture. In the ad, there is a bride who is just about to leave and there is an old lady called Maaji who says the parting words "Be more than a wife, be a homemaker". Godrej gives you that sense of responsibility in a way and she gives the keys, of the Almira to her and asks her to become a homemaker, to take care of the home, not just remain as a wife. There is a gendered aspect, it is always the women who are asked to take the responsibility of the house when it comes to household chores as compared to, men being the breadwinners of the families.