

EMPOWERING VOICES: THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING IN PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS

Mahima Danu

Department of Fine Arts, Graphic Era Hill University, Dehradun



ABSTRACT

Advertising acts as a powerful vehicle to amplify marginalized voices and sensitize issues relating to human rights, in particular in the context of India. By strategically exploiting emotional narrative, advertisers can connect with the public on a personal level, illuminating the struggles faced by under-representative communities. The study focuses, the use of several narrators and visual representations of the marginalized communities contributes to an authentic representation of their experiences lived, promoting empathy and understanding between a wider audience. These practices not only increase awareness, but also encourage social responsibility and inspire collective actions. In addition, ethical considerations in modern advertising require a weighted approach; The brands must avoid exploitation images and ensure that the stories they tell resonate respectfully with the communities they represent. Advertising that combines the artistic expression with social responsibility can challenge social norms and mobilize support for legislative change, acting as catalysts for social transformation. Advertising in India exemplifies potential not only to promote awareness of human rights, but also to encourage greater social consciousness regarding issues such as gender equality and social justice. By using effective strategies that prioritize the ethical narrative, advertisers can play a fundamental role in modeling the narratives that give power to the marginalist voices and the speech on human rights advance. The data has been collected through taking interviews of graphic designers and surveys of the audiences, discussing with people about the advertisements.

Keywords: Advertising, Indian Advertising, Human Rights, Advertisers, Indian Advertising

Introduction

Advertising is a powerful influence in today's world and has the ability to influence the way people think and the way society norms are formed. It can reach the masses and influence the culture narrative, and it's not just about making money. It is now regarded as a force for good, and its role is making people conscious of the most pressing issues such as human rights. This study delves into the numerous roles played by advertising in India, a nation with energetic diversity, transforming social and cultural landscape, and diverse human rights issues, and a rapidly transforming advertising world. The overall question this paper attempts to address is how Indian advertising has been involved in the past and is currently involved in making people conscious of human rights. Through a review of the history of advertising in India and its relationship with prominent human rights issues, this paper attempts to present an all-encompassing perspective of the tactics, success, failures, and ethical issues that accompany this relationship. The research will be logically structured, with the first section examining how advertising has evolved in India and its overall social impacts, followed by a summary of the key human rights issues in India. Subsequently, the paper will present some examples of Indian advertising campaigns aimed at making people conscious of human rights, examine the tactics and strategies used in the campaigns, and present what has been reported about their impact. It will examine the issues and constraints advertisers encounter when addressing sensitive human rights topics, including the ethical issues and potential adverse reactions. Finally, the paper will describe the manner in which various advertising media disseminate human rights messages in India and conclude with an overview of the conclusions and recommendations for the future of advertising in this significant sector.

The Historical Evolution of Advertising in India and its Social Footprint

The history of advertising in India is a fascinating tale linked with the cultural, political, and economic development of the country. It dates back to the 18th century when the initial forms of advertising began in early print media. Hickey's Bengal Gazette, India's first newspaper initiated in 1780, was the primary platform for these initial advertising activities. The advertising in early newspapers was rudimentary and largely consisted of mere text announcing some products such as medicines, educational services, and political happenings. Advertising in this initial phase primarily played the role of informing people, and its social or cultural impact was restricted to imparting basic information regarding goods and services to a small group of people.

Mapping the Landscape of Human Rights Issues in India

India is a constitutional democracy and is supposed to have constitutional protections for human rights, but it is still beset by numerous human rights problems. Reports by organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the US State Department repeat a similar pattern of top problems. Freedom of expression is highly valued but at risk due to restrictions on media freedom and routine closure of the internet, particularly in areas such as Jammu and Kashmir. Such acts of restraint are barriers to individuals and groups speaking out and discussing human rights matters, and advertising can be an effective tool of delivering information. Religious minorities, and Muslims in general, have profound problems, such as discrimination, hate speech, and violence, and this is constantly fanned by government ministers and political parties. Islamophobia and attacks on Muslim property and individuals are particularly alarming trends. Advertising can be a double-edged sword; it can be used to combat prejudice and promote religious tolerance, but it can also be an incitement to backlash in today's politics, as the scandals over advertising interfaith tolerance have shown.

Violence and discrimination based on caste against Dalits, Adivasis, and other marginalized communities is a primary societal issue. Addressing caste-based discrimination and violence through advertising becomes challenging due to societal stigmas, as well as a history of oppression against a marginalized community. Although some campaigns have tried to challenge societal norms, as seen in advertisements promoting inter-caste marriages or open-mindedness, the backlash against the Zomato "Kachra" advertisement shows that the sensitivities and vulnerability to misinterpretation exist. Women's rights is also a significant issue, where even in contemporary societies women encounter the continued threat of violence based on gender discrimination in every aspect of their life and bodily autonomy. Advertising has an important role in challenging gender stereotyping in negative or oppressive ways and empowering women. Campaigns like Ariel's "Share the Load," a campaign promoting societal beliefs about traditional gender roles in housework, and Dove's "Stop the Beauty Test," a campaign challenging unrealistic beauty norms, show how advertising can create social change in these areas.

The LGBTQ community in India has experienced some legal progress for their rights, however, they still face considerable challenges around social acceptance and discrimination. There is increasing, but still limited, visible representation of LGBTQ people in Indian advertising that typically centers around one of the few special occasions for LGBTQ people in India, Pride Month. Advertisements featuring same-sex couples or transgender people seek to promote inclusivity and address bias. As articulated throughout this report, child rights as a general, and specific issues related to child labor, inability to access a free quality education, child safety, etc. remain an important concern across the country. Advertising can serve as a powerful method of public engagement to raise awareness around these child rights issues, or finding a way to actively support child rights, as shown through advertising campaigns executed by UNICEF, CRY and other brands with applied focus on child education, health, or protecting children. Finally, the rights of persons with disabilities, and issues relating to accessibility, social inclusion, and stigma, have too observed insufficient attention. Overall, representation of people with disabilities in advertising in India remains lackluster when compared to representation of other marginalized or underrepresented identities, however, campaigns executed by McDonald's India, Dabur Honey, and others make consistent efforts at breaking institutional stigma and stereotypes of a variety of disabled persons in India's diverse advertising landscape.

To summarize, India grapples with a wide range of human rights issues, which require specific and ongoing advocacy initiatives. Advertising has an inherent capacity for dissemination and influence and, therefore, has the capacity to respond to human rights issues and alter attitudes, perhaps resulting in positive social change. Nevertheless, establishing the efficacy and ethics of this possibility is necessary for consideration in India's distinct socio-cultural and political context. Although the Constitution of India guarantees fundamental rights, reports of human rights abuses remain ever-present and highlight the pressing need for advocacy and awareness initiatives, which advertising can inform significantly.

illuminating Voices: Case Studies of Indian Advertising Campaigns Promoting Human Rights Awareness

Ariel, Dove, Bhima Jewelry (Respectively)

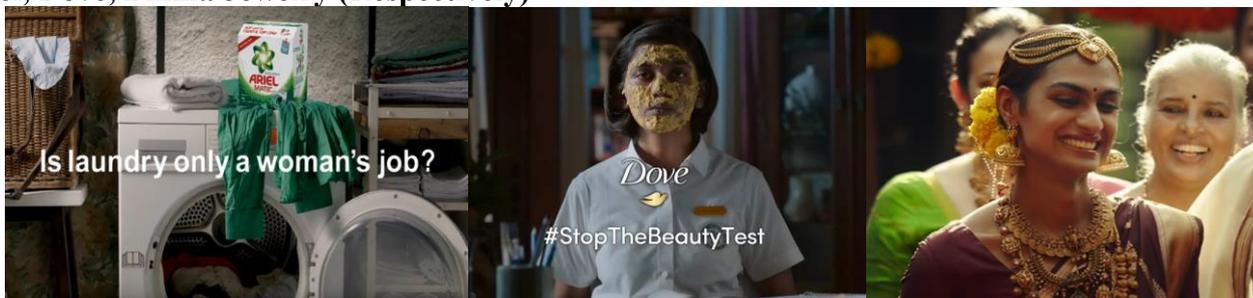


Fig.1 Ariel's "Share the Load"

Fig.2 Dove's "#StopTheBeautyTest "

Fig.3 Bhima Jewelry's "

Over the years, many ad campaigns in India, some outdated and some not, have understood or unknowingly attempted to raise awareness of basic human rights on a number of important matters. In the context of gender equality, Ariel's long-term "Share the Load" campaign is one of the most prominent examples. This campaign started in 2015 and over the years has aimed at recognizing normative gender stereotypes, focusing primarily on gendered roles for household chores. Using emotive advertising and addressing of questions such as "Is doing laundry only a woman's job?", Ariel has propelled a national discussion and encouraged men to take part in household chores, demonstrating the sustained impact of the messaging and focus on generational household affairs and gender biases reflect the ability of advertising to address changing norms on gendered roles. As do similar campaigns by Dove, specifically the "Stop the Beauty Test" ad campaign targeted at addressing normative societal pressures on women to conform to a predetermined and narrow definition of beauty related to marriage in India. Dove has attempted to dismantle negative sociocultural narratives and encourage women to feel good about themselves through the depiction of actual stories of women that have suffered beauty biases and the importation of ideology concerning beauty and marriage. Bhima Jewelry's ad featuring a transgender individual and their experience of familial acceptance in their journey to self-acceptance relays a very consequential and inclusive message against gender rule, and indicates that the representation of LGBTQ individuals in mainstream advertising is becoming more prevalent.

Lifebuoy



Fig.4 Lifebuoy's

In the realm of public health, Lifebuoy has an extensive history of undertaking significant campaigns and initiatives to positively influence handwashing and hygiene behaviors, which are an important aspect of a fundamental human right to health in this case. For example, the brand launched an impressive "Roti Reminder" campaign during the Kumbh Mela in 2013 which creatively, and in a very impactful way, communicated messages of hygiene by stamping them on rotis (a type of Indian bread) that millions of pilgrims would then consume (eat). The "Swasthya Chetna" campaign is another example of Lifebuoy's commitment to public health education and specifically hygiene in rural populations to improve handwashing and hygiene behaviors, thus promoting public health by encouraging individual behaviors that impact health

Red Label, Tanishq



Fig.5 Red Label

Promoting interfaith harmony using advertising is an important effort in India to deliver messaging around social accords and support divinity through solutions. Many times, this has involved product messages from Brooke Bond Red Label - promoting a tea drink brand or Tanishq - promoting a jewelry product brand, often with advertisements depicting individuals engaging via the social act of having a cup of tea or an engagement on social principles across a segmented population. However, many advertised messages of interfaith or mixed communication approaches have been seriously challenged or rejected as weak and leading to disrupting the sanctity of a particular religious viewpoint based on several factors, including "appalling religious minorityC beliefs, rhetoric" unfounded existence in society's tradition and in recent times technology, a notable example was Tanishq's advertisement of an interfaith couple engaged in celebrating a baby shower event in a structured manner, following the customs of Hinduism, where the ad message was challenged and induced perceptions of "love jihad". Tanishq then decided to stop running their advertisement, well aware of the disorder interfaith communication causes for some religious clergies. Tanishq's experience with their advertisement presents examples of interfaith mixed communication presently. These examples demonstrate the potential and power of social media communication in complicating the sensitivity of interfaith scenarios in India.

McDonald, Dabur Honey, Vicks



Fig.6 mcdonald's "EatQual campaign"



Fig.6 Dabur's Campaign



Fig.7

Vicks's "tells the true story of an orphan who was adopted by Gauri Sawant, who's transgender."

In the domain of disability inclusion, McDonald's India's 'EatQual' initiative shows tangible ambitions of a brand for accessibility and inclusion of disabled individuals to enhance specially coloured, easy-to-cut packaging, so that people with limited upper hand flexibility can eat their products. Dabur Honey's campaign with an empowered blind couple defiantly living independently is aimed to spread the word of the idea of equal opportunity and that of bridging the skill of people with disabilities. Vicks featuring real-life storey of transgender activist Gauri Sawant and her adopted daughter has received acclaim for awareness and acceptance of transgender as a growing visibility and representation of their community in mainstream advertising.

Talking about the rights of children, NGOs such as CRY (Child Rights and You) have used advertising as a tool to educate people about the soaring issues such as child illiteracy. Their "Right to Write" campaign – for example – used a visual type of people breaking out of a thumbprint illustrating illiteracy as a symbol of a child freedom of education. Besides, UNICEF has contributed to launching extensive multi-players campaigns like "Say YES for the Children" too, which encouraged many themes of child right such as education, health and protect, show how international organisations use advertising to expand social influence. These different cases demonstrate pervasive contribution of Indian advertising campaigns to publicising a wide selection of human right issues and implementing varied tactics with various degrees of impact and viewership within the multifaceted Socio- Cultural landscape of India.

Decoding the Message: Advertising Strategies and Techniques for Human Rights Advocacy

The Indian ad campaigns that aimed at promoting human rights awareness operate with a variety of methods and techniques, finely tuned to the issues being taken, the groups targeted. One major method is the invention of storytelling, compelling storeys with viable characters are produced so as to stimulate sympathy and stimulate a far more profound bond with the listener on emotional terms. Campaigns like Ariel's films painting a picture of dads doing laundry, Dove storeys of women overcoming beauty prejudice and Vicks storey of Gauri Sawant, journey of a mother told in the same human language to communicate about social issues, to make it more approachable to a much broader audience. Emotional storytelling can be really powerful in creating understanding and empathy for marginalised communities.

Another essential policy is to contest stereotypes that multiply discrimination and inequality . Ariel's relentless challenging of the assumption that washing is a woman's job, and Dove's straightforward confrontation of the "beauty test" that is set for women are two perfect illustrations of campaigns which try to blur societal deeply-rooted prejudices and to inducing more inclusive mood. By focusing in on and demystifying damaging sex norms, look standards, and other social constructs, advertising may make a difference as part of a bigger transformation.

Celebrity endorsements and influencer marketing have also deployed to multiply voices human rights and to enlarge its reach to much bigger number of listeners especially the youth . Being associated with well-known individuals in an association with a social cause can give their legitimacy and publicity, they can possibly effect their fans and followers. However, the effectiveness of this strategy hinges on the authenticity of the endorsement and the alignment of the celebrity's values with the campaign's message.

The tactical use of humour and the emotional is another method which is employed in order for the delivery of messages concerning to human rights . Lifebuoy's memorable "Bunty Tera Sabun Slow Hai Kya?" campaign employed humour to advertise handwashing, by texting the message and making the message more compelling as well as memorable. On the other hand, a lot of other campaigns ask for a sense of emotion; empathy, compassion, terror or urgency to keep a lasting impression everlasting on the viewers. Humour can finally sometimes be used to breach a barrier and to make conversation a little bit kinder while emotional calls to actions can work to build more meaningful connections and motivate individuals take action. A large majority of these campaigns include strong calls to action, with explicit behaviours that people should adopt or items that the individual is being asked to engage on. Take Ariel's "Share the Load" campaign for instance, which has included a man committing a pledge to

share household chores, or Dove's "Stop the Beauty Test" campaign which has appealed to people to take a pledge against the beauty-based prejudices. The key is to find concrete ways for people to be involved with the cause so they can become the actual movers and shakers of the issue. The incorporation of digital and social media has become more and more important for communication of human rights messages and dialogue. These platforms provide the largest possible audience, especially among younger populations, and in an interactive format they allow people to share their own stories, establish social media-driven movements, and build a community around a particular human rights issue. The inherent interactivity in social media enable new options for engaging with audiences and constructing support systems.

Last, relationships built with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government bodies and other appropriate organisations can greatly bolster the authenticity and the results of human rights ads launched by advertisers. Working with organisations that have expertise and a successful track in particular human rights areas can give credibility and weight to the advertising message, and also deliver access to wider networks and resources. In other words, Indian advertisements focused on the awareness of human rights apply as a multi-layered strategy, various method being laid down skilfully to effectively convey the targeted messages, reach to the targeted audiences, create an appeal in the audiences and ultimately aim to created a society that more justice and fair.

Measuring Impact: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Advertising on Human Rights Awareness

Assessing the effectiveness and broad impact of Indian advertising campaigns meant for raising the awareness about human rights is difficult undertaking, but it is critical for figuring out the real worth and potential of such campaigns. Many studies and reports have shed light on the impact of particular campaigns on awareness and attitudes of the public. To take just one example, Ariel's "Share the Load" campaign, apparently prompted a significant rise in awareness - and of the number of Indian men to admit to and do household chores, longitudinal data suggests a clear shift towards society changing their views over time of what is the appropriate upholding of gender roles within the home. Preparing facts provided here; shows that long and sustained messaging over numerous years can lead to actual behavior and perception change. Also, Dove's "Stop the Beauty Test" campaign has achieved a lot of reach and engagement, especially on social media platforms, driven were, notably his impact on the self-esteem of women and greater awareness of the negative impacts of the laser beauty standards. Metrics like campaign reach, social media engagement (likes, shares, comments) and shifts in brand perception specifically in relation to the campaign's central message can provide great insights of its impact in raising awareness and promoting conversations.

Lifebuoy 's ongoing efforts for hygiene through advertising have also been assessed which found out that there is a positive correlation between their ad campaigns and increased handwashing practises, most notably in rural areas and reduced waterborne diseases In programmes focused in public health, reachable outcomes as changes in hygiene habits and lessened incidence of disease can be considered solid evidence of the campaigns being capable to advance the right to health. At the same time, it is necessary to recognise the inherent difficulties with directly linking changes in the public awareness or attitudes merely with someone's advertising programme. Many other factors such as education, media coverage, and wider socio-political changes also significantly contribute to set the public agenda and individual beliefs. Hence, an assessment of human rights advertising is often subject to complex research whose design try to manage the impact of these several variables. Though proving direct cause-and-effect can be tricky, the evidence from numerous campaigns implies that advertising can be an effective means to increase awareness, shift attitudes and effect changes in behaviour regarding human rights issues in India. The increasing trend towards holding advertisers accountable for their social impact, beyond traditional metrics such as sales data, reflects an understanding of the bigger part brands can play in positively altering society. Gaining insight into what maximises the effectiveness of specific human rights advertising campaigns can be of be substantial value in the design and implementation of campaigns to follow, yielding their full potential to create the prospect of a more intelligent, compassionate and equitable civil society.

Navigating the Nuances: Challenges and Limitations for Advertisers in Addressing Sensitive Human Rights Topics



Fig.8 Tanishq's "Ekatvam"



Fig.9 Zomato's "Kachra"

Advertisers in India are in a difficult condition and subject to certain restrictions when they wish to address sensitive human rights topics in advertising. Perhaps the most difficult obstacle is the inherent danger of backlash and the possibility of boycotts from constituencies of the population that might see certain human rights messages as disturbingly sceptical about its deeply ingrained traditional values, religious convictions or cultural customs. The media storm created by Tanishq's advertisement of an interfaith couple highlights the ferocity of such reactions and the risk of brands incurring severe negative outcomes -and even threats to their physical premises and staff. This fear of losing customers and risking business fallout variants can encourage advertisers not to confront it in the straightforward manner head-on human rights messages, and instead lend to a cautious take or even an entire certificate steers clear of such matters. This fear usually leads to self-censorship by advertisers and advertising agencies. Fear of provoking hurt responses, a fear of lawsuits, or a fear of pushing the wrong people can inhibit the necessary strong statements and tacit opposition to human rights issues. This self-denial can constrain the size and effectiveness of human rights marketing, so that the key message as well as the main issue either suffer or are obscured.

Dealing with cultural and spiritual sensitivities as along with varied and strenuous country like India poses another big challenge. What one crowd might think of as a progressively-backed message, could be a slap in the face to another crowd. The flak that ads trying to push the idea of religious harmony receives proves how difficult a tightrope advertisers must walk to make a proper message without alienating people or losing touch with cultural specifics. This entails a comprehensive understanding of assorted cultural terrain and a high degree of awareness of the discrimination of diverse believes and customs. Even a possibly missing representation as well as a knowledge deficiency in the advertising industry may as well create massive forerunners. If lack of diversity prevails among advertising teams and they do not consist of people from minorized communities, the risk of producing tone deaf or insensitive rundowns when talking about human rights increases. The outrage that has surrounded the Zomato "Kachra" ad, which was broadly trolled for its casteist undertones, points to the feature of having a multitude going all restlessly into the same page for making the creation and getting reviewed content of the advertisement. Growing diversity and inclusion in advertisement teams, then, is crucial for generating more authentic, respectful message about human rights.

Advertisers equally face the like between rank representment and fair persuasion. There is increasing concern among consumers around "woke-washing" -- when brands appear to be using social issues for marketing, but aren't really investing in the cause for the long haul. For brands to make meaningful human rights advocacy claims, however, they must do it authentically, tying their messaging to their core values and showing lasting commitment and not simply from a campaign, just to run weekly ad campaigns.

Limited resources and a strong focus on product promotion often hold advertisers back from investing in social awareness campaigns, especially when it comes to sensitive human rights topics. With tight budgets and the main goal of driving sales, messages about human rights can easily get pushed aside in favor of more direct product advertising.

Ethical Crossroads: Considerations and Criticisms of Advertising as a Tool for Human Rights

The use of advertising in India for human rights awareness has created important ethical challenges and received many negative critiques from various stakeholders. The main problem relates to how social issues might get used for exploitation purposes. Brands tend to partner with human rights initiatives as a business move to gain marketing benefits while using social awareness as a tool to boost their reputation instead of showing continuous support for actual problems. Organizations develop suspicions about their dedication to human rights work when their activities are profit-driven. A brand seeking human rights advocacy status needs to show sustained genuine support for its cause instead of relying only on short-term promotional campaigns. The ethical issue arises from the simplified presentation of complex human rights problems during their communication. The time-efficiency of advertising typically resorts to precise messaging that occasionally degrades detailed human rights matters because advertisers limit messaging to appeal to broad audiences. Similar to other sensitive matters advertisers need to maintain a careful balancing act between constructing practical advertising content which audiences can understand while presenting the complete scope of difficulties accurately.

Conclusion

The study examines the increasing importance of Indian advertising as it functions to spread knowledge about essential human rights. Since its initial start in print media India's advertising sector evolved into the current state of sophisticated multi-platform advertising while tracing national social economic and technological progress. Advertising developed through its historical stages to become an exceptional instrument for transforming public mindsets while fighting ingrained stereotypes and supporting essential social shifts.

Various advertising campaigns highlighting human rights problems such as gender equality and public health, religion coexistence and disability rights, and child welfare showcase multiple advertising approaches and techniques. Various techniques such as storytelling and stereotypical challenges combined with celebrity support alongside emotional appeals and action-based prompts and digital media integration and partnership creation help advertisers reach and engage their target audiences. The documentary evidence indicates that durable human rights advertising that follows logical design principles does contribute to growing public understanding combined with attitude transformation and human rights behavioral change.

The usage of advertising for human rights advocacy throughout India faces multiple complex barriers on its path. The advertising process carries the danger of adverse reactions and consumer abandonment together with demands for sensitive cultural approach and concerns about self-truncated messages alongside requirements to present authentic minority representations. A responsible approach must be taken when using commercial advertising because ethical concerns demand avoidance of exploitation and misrepresentation and prevention of unintentional harm when utilizing a commercial medium for altruistic goals.

India provides numerous advertising channels to circulate human rights messages which possess different broadcasting capabilities and unique strengths. Each section of India's population can be reached through television media along with print media and digital and social media and outdoor advertising and radio and mobile marketing. Multiple channels used together create the most powerful methods for reaching the desired audience. Future

research needs to focus on understanding long-term societal changes due to particular human rights advertising campaigns in India and it should examine how regional advertising solves local human rights problems and study which advertising approaches work best for different rights matters throughout India's diverse cultural communities. Ethically used advertising presents substantial potential to highlight human rights awareness in India which leads toward developing a better informed and compassionate society that embraces justice.

Reference

1. Amnesty International. (2022). Annual report: The state of the world's human rights. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/4870/2022/en/>
2. CRY - Child Rights and You. (2020). Right to Write campaign. Retrieved from <https://www.cry.org/right-to-write>
3. Dove India. (2021). #StopTheBeautyTest [Advertisement]. Retrieved from <https://www.dove.com/in/stoptestbeauty.html>
4. Human Rights Watch. (2022). World report 2022: India. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/india>
5. Lifebuoy India. (2013). Roti Reminder campaign [Advertisement]. Retrieved from <https://www.lifebuoy.com/in/rotireminder>
6. McDonald's India. (2022). EatQual initiative. Retrieved from <https://www.mcdonaldsindia.com/eatqual>
7. Tanishq. (2020). Ekatvam campaign [Advertisement]. Retrieved from <https://www.tanishq.co.in/ekatvam>
8. UNICEF India. (2019). Say YES for children campaign. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/india/sayyes>
9. S. Department of State. (2021). 2020 country reports on human rights practices: India. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/india/>
10. Vicks India. (2018). Gauri Sawant's story [Advertisement]. Retrieved from <https://www.vicks.com/in/gaurisawant>