Misleading TV Advertisements

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MOST of us spend a good amount of our time everyday with the 'idiot box', aka television. After a long day at school or work, or both for that matter, we tend to relax in front of our television sets with a cup of coffee or tea in our hands to tune into our favourite channels or just do some channel surfing. Of course, favourite channels would vary widely from person to person, starting from the very popular news programs of the local private channels to sports programs (read 'cricket'), informative things like the History channel, Discovery and National Geographic or the daily Bengali, English and Hindi soaps that are offered in a countless number channels. Or some movie channel HBO, Star Movies and the likes.

But like it or not, one of the most integral aspects of all these programs are the commercial breaks, or simply, the advertisements. At times, more often than not these days, we tend to have the feeling that we have sat to watch a chain of advertisements, with drama/movie breaks in between! Given the increasing cost of maintaining the TV channels and the competition from the other channels, the channel authorities cannot really be blamed for this. But, it sure gets annoying, when in certain sports channels, a whole minute or so, at a crucial point in the match, gets lost in ads while the game is still going on! It's high time that there should be a limit to these things. Specially with the types which tend to mislead people into believing wrong ideas or notions.

Much has already been talked about the 'Fairness Cream' ads by Feminists and other concerned people. But, these advertisements are still going strong in all forms of publicity billboards, electronic media, newspapers, magazines and everything else. Seemingly, most of the major cosmetics or toiletries companies have this sort of product and we are always bombarded with silly advertisements of 'dark' girls failing to achieve anything in life, starting from a good job, a modeling or acting career to getting a very eligible or good looking husband. And then, some 'well-wisher' of the girl would hand her over a tube of a fairness cream of a certain company, and within weeks, Va-va-voom!!! She becomes the most sought after and 'fair' girl the world has ever seen, with jobs, good looking guys, and a hell lot of other things coming her way! Which would suggest that education, smartness, confidence, leadership qualities, technical expertise of the 'dark' girl holds much less value than someone without these qualities, but sporting a fairer complexion? Of course not! This surely does not apply in this twenty first century the rule is simple 'survival of the fittest, not the fairest'. And fit here would mean the qualities just mentioned above.

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And if this string of fairness cream ads weren't enough, a whole new series of ads have recently started showing their face these days. Fairness cream for men! Come on, give me a break! Whatever happened to the age old idea of 'tall, dark and handsome' to be the ideal characteristics for men? Is this being turned into 'tall, fair and handsome' by these companies? A stuntman turning into the hero thanks to the fairness cream? So acting skills aren't of any importance any longer? It won't be long when they'd show that the President's bodyguard replaces him because he is....Yes you've guessed that right 'fairer'!

Thanks to the government ban on the publicity of any sort for tobacco, we no longer have to withstand the ridiculously funny cigarette ads. Explaining those ads would take another complete day, but now that they are off for good, there is no point speaking about them.

Environmental awareness should also be taken into account when making an ad. There was this certain beverage commercial which showed this dancing guy, overly merry and joyous that he is, throws the empty plastic bottle into a lake! I know many of us tend to disregard the laws and litter here and there specially in public places, but surely there is no meaning in encouraging such practices further by showing it on TV.

Of course, not all advertisements are silly or misleading. This sector in our country has had a significant improvement in quality since the inception of private channels and the involvement of multinational companies in the sector. Some of the recent cell phone ads are indeed very praiseworthy. But something surely needs to be done against the misleading and untimely ads!