

1

5

ART IN ADVERTISEMENT

(10.3.1969)



ART IN ADVERTISEMENT

by

SHRI SVETOSLAV ROERICH  
at The Advertising Club, Bangalore  
on 28.10.1968

Friends:

I am glad to be here today and I am grateful to Mr. Menon for his invitation to say a few words on the interesting subject of 'Art in Advertisement'.

When Mr. Menon asked me first, I hesitated, the subject being a very vast one, one can hardly touch upon it in the course of a few minutes and there are many specialised fields within it which would require separate consideration. But, Mr. Menon, I must give him credit, advertised his cause so well and with such consummate skill that I had to give in and the results of his mission, are now before you.

Art, that subtle, often indescribable quality is of paramount importance in whatever field it may be utilised. It is difficult in a few words to describe or analyse the nature of Art, but one of the finest definitions was given by Rabindranath Tagore who said: "In Art the person in us sends his answer to the Supreme Creator who reveals Himself to him in a world of Infinite Beauty across the lifeless world of facts." We have also the functional analysis of Plato who said: "He who contemplates the Beautiful elevates himself". Many were the beautiful sayings, but I shall not take your time trying to define Art, but deal with the subject at hand - Art in Advertisement.

Whether in advertisements, or any other sphere of human activity, Art is a most important ingredient. Art is that greater skill and vision which can breathe life into an otherwise inert expression. And that is why our so-called



commercial artists, our advertisement experts, should have a sound training in Art and the Art of Advertisement. This will immeasurably help them in the application and exercise of their profession and ensure a fine production for presentation to the public.

Our lives are so organized that advertisements in one form or another have become part of our very existence. We are surrounded by them, we read them, we see them, we think of them and we are of course influenced by them. In other words it is something we cannot escape hence it is our duty to make them more acceptable, less jarring, less offensive and less vulgar.

I remember in old Russia, before the revolution it was considered that to advertise a product of some sort was an admission of its weakness, since a good product was its own best advertisement and any attempt to force it on the public was a doubtful procedure. On the contrary in the United States and some other Western countries a large advertisement campaign was a sign of prosperity, a sign of success which bespoke the excellence of the products so advertised and was considered a natural outcome of a very successful product of manufacture. Both views are correct, but our general approach has changed with times to treat advertisements as an essential part of a sales campaign and people accept it as a normal procedure.

It has been once said that what is really important is not so much to have the very best possible produce as the ability to persuade the public that what you offer is what the public really wants. This is also true, but only up to a point.

One prominent industrialist in the United States once told me that whenever his firm was able to produce an



exceptionally fine design or product, the public was quick to appreciate it and reacted to it in a spontaneous manner. So, we see again that we must strive for a sort of 'via media', like with everything else in life. We must always strive for better products and at the same time persuade the public that what is being offered is what is really needed. A really fine product is sure to hold the market after the initial start, while an inferior manufacture may be sold at the start, through a clever campaign, but fall away at a later stage.

What are the essential functions of an advertisement?

- (1) To catch our attention,
- (2) To convey a message
- (3) To make us remember it and make us feel we may need it.

Hence it must be striking (which means it must be different), it must be clever, and it must evoke a familiar note within us. That is very important. Colour is of course the best medium to catch our eye. A colour can be bright by its own inherent glow or by means of a contrast or by both. It is like a sudden flash that catches our eye. After the initial impact come the secondary reactions. Our intellectual interpretation and analysis. From its striking quality, so to say, the advertisement passes on to the plane of conveying a message, it must be important, attractive, different and as I already said, it must strike some familiar to us note.

It is in many ways the same process which we can witness in the course of an exhibition of paintings. First of all it is the colour of a painting that strikes us, and arrests our attention. Then it is the composition,



arrangements, design, subject matter and execution. Then again it is a combination of all these in the final analysis. There are stages in the process of our assimilation of a work of Art or for that matter of any experience that presents itself to us.

When I said that an advertisement must be attractive, I thought also in terms of the subject matter. This is also very important.

India as a country is pre-eminently filled with wonderful imagery, wonderful pictorial material whether animate or inanimate and we can endlessly draw upon this treasure house for all purposes and to very great advantage. There is wonderful human material in both men and women. Beautiful types, scattered over the entire breadth of this subcontinent, a wonderful pageantry of children, that would hold anyone's attention and delight people. Beautiful scenery, works of Art, unique and rare flora and fauna, beautiful butterflies and other insects. Endless is the pageantry that Indian life unfolds before us. It is only for us to be aware of it, to make use of it and reap the benefits of having done so. Take for instance the beautiful human types one finds over the whole length and breadth of India. In villages, in remote corners one suddenly comes across a most remarkable type almost perfect in the harmony of its features. Calendars or advertisements of this type, would be searched after all over the world. They will give joy to so many people and enrich at the same time their lives. It is the duty of those who think in terms of advertisements to remember that our advertisements must be socially acceptable, they must not destroy our surroundings, but contribute or at least be a constructive background to our life.



Remember always Nature is our greatest teacher.

Look at Nature how it advertises its own products. When the fruit on a tree are unripe they blend with the mass of foliage, they are of the same colour, indistinguishable, well hidden. But when they become ripe they change their colour to a sharp contrast, a colour that will be the opposite or near opposite of the foliage. They turn red, orange or yellow, they develop a lovely aroma. All to catch the eye and to attract.

Study what the people want, learn their hopes and aspirations and mould your approach and language accordingly.

By inducting the skill of Art into our advertisements, by striving to create more beautiful and eloquent means of communication we also help immeasurably the cause of social welfare and education. Let us ask ourselves the question - can an advertisement be beautiful, and we shall answer yes, it can be beautiful. Can it be attractive? Yes, it can be attractive and constructive.

It can be a definite contribution to our every day life and to this end we must all strive -



# DECCAN HERALD

REGD. No. BG 201

8 PAGES

Vol. XXI No. 294

BANGALORE, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1968

CITY

12 PAISE

## Artist's tips for better ads

Artists working for advertising firms can learn great lessons from Nature, particularly the play of contrast, to attract attention, according to Mr. Svetoslav Roerich, the reknowned artist.

Speaking on 'Art in Advertising' at a meeting of the Advertising Club, Bangalore, on Monday, Mr. Roerich said that in advertisement, the artist must capture the inner feelings of the people. The advertisements should evoke a feeling of familiarity so that the people respond quickly when they look at them. They must also convey a message.

Mr. Roerich pointed out that advertisements should not be ugly and jarring. They must have a healthy social background and a positive outlook.

He said India was having endless materials for advertisements in her countryside, rural people, monuments, shrines and pilgrimage centres.

Mr. T. K. Menon, President of the Club, presided.

Mr. S. R. Venkatachalam, Secretary, introduced the speaker to the gathering.

Mr. Upendra Rao, one of the Vice-Presidents, proposed a vote of thanks.

SIX DECCAN HERALD Monday, October 28, 1968

### In the City Today

Advertising Club: Mr. Svetoslav Roerich speaks on "Art in advertising," Mr. T. K. Menon presides, Canara Bank, 6 p.m.