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RESEARCH ARTICLE

COVID 19, LIPSTICK INDUSTRY AND NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020.

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Abstract

Lipstick is one of the most favourite cosmetics of women. It has been with us since the dawn of civilization. Covid 19, social distancing and mask culture have cast a gloom over lipstick industry all over the world. Present study makes a brief history of our encounters with lipsticks since ancient Mesopotamia to Modern world. It analyses how covid and its mask culture is possibly going to affect lipstick industry from demand side. At the end of the article, the investigator analyses the socio economic impacts of child labour involved in the supply chains of mica, one of the major ingredients of the lipstick, in the background of New Education Policy 2020 of Government of India.

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Introduction:-

Since the very first ray of civilization cosmetics have been with us. Beauty life of human beings is nothing but unending experiments with cosmetics. Emergence of Individualism as a strong idea among social sciences and 'uniqueness' of man among behavioural sciences have opened hitherto unimaginable opportunities in the world of cosmetics and fashion. Lipstick is one of the most fascinating cosmetic goods in the world. Culturally and biologically genital of women has been evolved little expressive as a sexual object in public sphere unlike animal world where female genitals are beautifully projected as exuberant and attractive sexual object. Place of genitals in animal world was taken over by breasts, buttocks or lips in human world¹. Lips have become symbols of sexuality across cultures. Lips play significant role in determining women's beauty. Naturally cosmetic industry has found greater investment opportunities in such goods that adorably decorate female body. History of lipsticks is really fascinating. Origin of lipstick could be traced back to antiquity. Humans, right from their known history have used all possible ways to paint their lips to be distinct and attractive. Remnants of ancient tombs of kings, queens and other rich people give us ample evidences of lip colouring culture prevailed among them. In the beginning lip colouring was not gender specific. Men and women coloured their lips. Colouring the lips was a symbol of elevated social status in many ancient cultures. Ancient literatures in their lengthy descriptions of women protagonists are illustrative of our age old relationship with lipsticks. Later it assumed a product of elite women. At sometimes it was treated as an identification mark of 'prostitutes'. In modern days lipsticks are being used by all women as an expression of their persona.

History of Lipsticks

First reference to lipstick goes back to Sumerian region of Mesopotamian culture². Sumerian Queen Schub-ad, about 3500 BC, had regularly used lipsticks made of mixture of led and different coloured stones³. Excavation sites of

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Mesopotamian cultures throw light into lip colouring culture of people. Mesopotamians people buried their bodies with lip colouring substances kept in sea shells. Lipstick culture slowly grew out of the bounds of Sumerian regions and reached Assyria and Egypt. In those days lipstick was not a gender specific thing. Both men and women used it lavishly in all occasions especially in festival days. It was treated like a symbol of pride, prestige and social status. Life of Cleopatra is a testimony of lipsticks too. When lipstick reached Greece it assumed a gender specificity and degradation in social status⁴. In Greece prostitutes used lipsticks and it was an identification mark for such women. Greek rulers passed rules that prostitutes should not solicit men without wearing lipsticks. Prostitutes standing in their assigned places and inviting men without wearing lipsticks was a punishable offence in Greece. Prostitutes or elite women used lipsticks and lower class working women did not use lipsticks or any kind of artificial make ups. In ancient Rome both men and women used lipsticks and it was a symbol of high social status. Emergence of Christianity was a blow to artificial make up of men and women. Church did not approve of any kind of make-ups that were treated as falsification of one's face -a divine work of god. Any attempt to change the natural appearance of one's face was treated as a sin and it was punishable as per middle age Christian morality. In 1700s England had passed a law describing that any woman luring men by falsified make up with cosmetics, fake hair or high heeled shoes shall be punished under witchcraft laws. In early 20's America banned the use of lipsticks thinking that it would kill men who kissed women who wore lipsticks. Surprisingly during the Second World War, lipsticks emerged victorious. Governments in many European countries rationed red lipsticks to their women soldiers and other female workers in ammunition factories and military hospitals just to help them look good and feel good and there by raising their morale. "The first memoir of Moaveni is entitled Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran. Lipstick Jihad constitutes a paradoxical concept insinuating Iranians" identity crisis, specifically, that of Iranian women. Lipstick, as Moaveni is trying to demonstrate, both on the cover page of her book, and within its content, is a symbol of resistance for Iranian women to defy the restrictive rules of their country. When put beside a totally Islamic concept, jihad, lipstick gains a much more profound implication and shows how Iranian women, who are seemingly entrapped in an Islamic society that has mandated hijab, take most of the Western conventions including makeup saffron-tainted Iran of her imagination"⁵. Lipstick Jihads show us the unbroken link of modern world with our middle age barbarian cousins. Modern women use lipsticks as free expression of their self and identity, a political assertion of their rights and cultural resistance against patriarchal hegemony.

When we examine lipsticks in Indian context, we can see that they have been with us since the days of our ancient ancestors. Ancient Indians had used different varieties of cosmetics. We have extensive references to our cosmetic tradition in our ancient text books and literary works. Indus Valley civilization, the first known civilization of India, was not blind to cosmetics and body beautification. Kamasutra of Vatsyayana has ample references to various forms of make-up suitable to different occasions. Mahabharata, the epic of India tells us of the beautiful story of Draupadi, wife of Pandavas, who during her exile worked as a personal aid of queen of King Virata⁶. Draupadi had always kept a cute tiny box with her in which she stored all her things like lipsticks, perfumes and other cosmetics to decorate her beauty⁷. The great Indian poet Kalidasa describes his heroines with enchanting makeups. Shakuntala and Parvati two illustrious heroines of Kalidasa are portrayed in the luxury of various face shining makeups and lipsticks. Indians used cosmetics not only as cosmetics but also as medicines. Our Ayurveda texts testify this aspect of our cosmetic tradition. Again we have the tradition of using different natural cosmetic substances suitable for different seasons. Ashtanga Hrudaya, a 1500 year old text book of medicinal practices in India refers to various Ayurveda cosmetic formulations that could be used as cosmetics as well as medicines. Indian kings were great patrons of medical practitioners. They spent money lavishly on medicinal plant gardens and plant Herbarium⁸. Fair skin and beautiful face were obsessions to ancient Indians. They had used different skin whitening creams and lip balms and lipsticks. Present day Indian cosmetic market is flooded with products following ancient preparations with natural ingredients and modern products with synthetic ingredients.

"Demand side" market trends of Lipsticks

Lipstick is one of the widely used cosmetics all over the world by women. Lipstick helps women to project the shape of their lips in distinct way. It enhances the beauty of female lips and gives them an instant look of serenity. It makes women more confident and creates a kind of inner well-being in them. Lipsticks aid lips to conquer others' attention. Lipsticks help lips to possess a distinguished place on female face. Good quality lipsticks are not only a beauty substance but also an added protection for female lips from the vagaries of weather. Lipsticks with judicious combination of other makeups enhance visual aspects of female personality. Wearing elegant lipsticks suitable to their complexion is a source of pride and happiness for most women. Covid 19 and its trademark face masks fell over the lips like a spectre. Masks covering the lips have casted a shadow of gloom over the lipsticks industry.

Nobody is going out, no big travel, no exciting outing, no partying and mostly work at home all motivate women to wear less make-up especially less or little lipsticks during covid. In this new colourless life naturally all thought that demand for lipsticks would fall to some abysmal depth. Prices of lipsticks in many online trade platforms show considerable drop of about 20 to 30 percentage or more. May be those price cuts may give lipstick industry new life. Following table shows average price discounts offered by lipstick sellers in popular online trade platforms during the beginning of August 2020. To know how potential consumers would respond to price discounts in lipstick market during covid pandemic is the major objective of this paper.

Table 1:- Average price discounts offered by major lipstick sellers in online shopping sites*.

Sl no	Lipstick brand	Price discount
1	Mac	40%
2	Revlon	28%
3	L'Oreal	25%
4	Faces Canada	39%
5	Maybelline	25%
6	Lakme	35%
7	Sugar	10%
8	Ell 18	25%
9	NYN	42%
10	Soultree	22%

*Based on price data from popular online shopping sites. [August 11,2020]

The investigator conducted a quick online survey, among women of middle class background to know how covid 19 has influenced their lipstick buying, collecting data through phone calls. No respondents said that they would stop buying lipsticks because of covid or mask. Instead they revealed that they would buy more of their favourite brands due to price fall. Most of the women feel that lipsticks have a shelf life of two or more years so they don't see any reason to postpone their lipstick purchase during covid. There is considerable change in the models of lipsticks women purchased or preferred to purchase. 80 per cent of the respondents prefer to buy such lipstick varieties that have the property of "non-transferable"-lipsticks that do not easily fade off by masks. Fashion world of women possesses many curious features. Most women keep their beauty things in their kitten for special occasions like some special outing, some partying, family occasions like marriage of a close relative or friend, some merry makings in their work place or some other gatherings. They need many lipsticks for meeting requirements of many different occasions. What they told that availability of a favourite brand with considerably lower price is the right time to buy more lipsticks though covid and masks are with us. Due to covid and social distancing norms most of the women prefer online purchase. No one prefers buying cosmetics from stores or other local shops. Online sale of lipsticks and covid restrictions have clearly affected demand conditions of local sellers. Middle class respondents especially college teachers and other government employees with regular income prefer high end brands of lipsticks and now they are purchasing online so their contributions to local beauty shops' demand would surely fall.

73 per cent of the respondents living in nuclear families stated that they buy lipsticks and other cosmetics not for outdoor use alone. They buy many cosmetics just to use them in their private rooms just for fun. In typical patriarchal families women may not be willing or may not be allowed by their husbands, in-laws or elder men in the family to use some cosmetics. So they use lipsticks behind the privacy of their closed doors and enjoying watching their beautiful face in the mirror for hours. People use cosmetics not only enhancing their beauty but hiding their less beautiful spots also. Covid masks motivate women to do some added make-ups and beautification on their eyes like a little more eyeliners, mascaras or some curious works on their eyelashes. Most of the respondents agreed that after covid they do more makeups on their eyes than what they did before. Respondents conclude that they have not seriously thought of reducing their lipsticks' purchase and consumption due to covid. They revealed that they have plans to buy more of their favourite brands at lower prices. Most of the respondents showed positive attitude towards lipsticks and they do not expect that the pandemic would prevail for long time. This highly spirited attitude of women is a great relief for companies manufacturing lipsticks. Quick survey indicates that pandemic may not give an unrecoverable blow to the lipstick industry. Women usually wearing face covering clothes also are fond of wearing lipsticks is classic testimony that covid 19 and mask culture are not going to affect the lipstick industry in such a big way as some industrial pundits predicted.

Dark side of the glossy Cosmetic Industry .

One of the major ingredients in many cosmetics is mica. Lipsticks also have mica in them. I do not explore if mica is useful or harmful for those who use lipsticks. Instead I try to show some unhealthy practices seen in supply chains of mica. India and Madagascar are major exporters of mica in the world market. The saddest part of mica industry in these countries is that it uses large number of children in its supply chain. The greatest difficult parts of mica production are mica mining and sorting that are the most labour intensive phases of mica production too. Children are mostly involved in mica mining and sorting .Most of the regions in these countries where mica mines are operating are the poorest regions of those countries. They have been facing acute poverty, severe food shortages and lack of employment opportunities. So people in the locality are forced to do whatever jobs available for them to ensure their mere survival. Unfortunately what is offered to them are tiny holes of mica mines. Children are being used in all lines of mica production before it is exported to companies.

‘Madagascar is the fifth largest island in the world with an approximate population of 25.5 million in 2017. Most of the Madagascar children are working in the field of agriculture but about 4 per cent of children are working in mica mines’ [Sanne Van Der Val, et.al 2019]. Child labour in mines is considered as the worst form of child labour by ILO. Education is free up to 16 years of age in Madagascar but a large number of these children do not attend school due to poor socio economic conditions in which these children are living. 2.5 million People are engaged in mining but only around 6000 people are officially included in the pay roll of companies. This large discrepancy shows the extent of illegal mining. About 86000 children of age between 5-17 are engaged in mica mining in Madagascar.[Instat/Unicef Madagascar,2018]. Poverty and economic deprivations compel these children to work in dangerous and inhuman conditions. If they do not work, they won’t be fed by anyone. It is a life or death situation.

The same conditions exist in Indian mica mines too. Thousands of children under the age of 14 are working in mica mines in Jharkhand. According to a survey conducted by the National commission for protection of child rights [NCPDR] over 5000 children in the age group of 6 to 14 years of age work in mica mines in Jharkhand. The survey was conducted after the publication of a report by Terre Des Hommes ,an international development agency ,on child labour in Jharkhand. They estimate that there are about 20000 children are working in mica mines in the state.[Wire news,27 August 2019]. Lakhs of children are out of schools though free education up to 14 years is compulsory and a fundamental right in India as per Article 21A of Indian constitution. Children are destined to work in mines under inhuman conditions. They undergo all kinds of socio economic tortures from forced labour and underpaid to commercial sexual exploitation. Most of the mica mining in India has been outside the supervision of authorities. Mines are illegal and unregulated. Most of the workers in mines including children are exposed to dangerous working conditions. They are constantly exposed to quarts and other dusts in mining and sorting activities. Recurrent and blood vomiting coughs are waiting for each miner and these coughs gradually lead to Asthma, black lung disease, tuberculosis and eventually cancer. Most of the accidents and deaths in mines are barely reported so workers do not get any help from the government. What they have been doing is illegal so they cannot put complaints against mine owners. Mines are feeding these children but at the same time mines are killing them too. They are underpaid and their paltry wages are not enough for them to lead a decent life. Their parents, in the first instance, would never think of sending their children to school because they cannot afford school expenses. Entire members in the family are to be worked in the mines just to secure at least a meal per day. Due to poverty and underdevelopment these children and their parents have been eternally trapped in the vicious circle inhuman social existence. I have narrated only one sector where child labour prevails. In this regard mica mine is not companionless in India. It has many siblings and cousins. In the light of child labour and poor economic conditions that help thriving child labour in varied forms in India, we should read New Education Policy 2020 of Government of India. It has ambitious plans about the future of our children. When millions of children are toiling in open fields, away from schools and their dreams, we need concrete workable solutions to enhance family income of parents of such children to help them to come out of inhuman working conditions like mica mines, send them to schools and leading them to their ambitions and dreams.

Conclusion:-

National education policy, taking away all its empty, noisy and flowery rhetoric, proposes ways to make education a kind of a profit making joint-stock company. Multiple exit options⁹ [probably a euphemism for forced exit] with inadequate skill for a living in a world where social hierarchy still matters, are nothing but caste formation in new forms. Special education zones plus funding based on performance and graded autonomy all aim at a single objective- that is ‘education is a commodity and poor people are just stepping stones for richer class’. What Dr B.R. Ambedkar said years back is still true “I feel, however good a constitution may be , it is sure to turn out bad because

those who are called to work it ,happen to be a bad lot. However bad a constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot” [B.R.Ambedkar speeches]. Let us hope that one day those poor hapless children working in agriculture fields or mica mines or myriads of child labour may fall in the radar of rulers and their development agendas and may be freed them forever from the vicious circle of poverty political rhetoric.

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