

## **What does Changing a Brand Name means to Women Empowerment?**

In a country largely obsessed with fairness, Unilever's India subsidiary, Hindustan Unilever Limited, late last month, decided to re-brand its skin-lightening cream, Fair & Lovely, a South-Asian beauty giant, removing the words 'fair/white/light' from its packaging and replacing them with 'glow', hence renaming it 'Glow & Lovely'. "We recognize that the use of the words 'fair', 'white' and 'light' suggest a singular ideal of beauty that we don't think is right, and we want to address this," said Sunny Jain, Unilever's beauty and personal care division's president.

While many had been supportive of the change and had applauded the media, there were some which pointed out the lateness of this decision. The brand had been built upon the rhetoric of 'fairness is beauty', which internalised self-racist and anti-blackness sentiment in the society. However, at the same time, the company benefited from such issue where people felt the desire to be white—raking billions as profit in their bank accounts. While the move may outwardly look like a 'fight to end colourism' and a 'step towards inclusion', it's timing is awfully convenient with the 'Black Lives Matter' movement raging around the world since the past few months. Given its timing, this feels more like a reactive measure, rather than a change out of self-realization.

As the citizens of the world, we cannot elude from the term capitalism where motives change in the façade of social responsibility. However, even if forget the notion, can the society revive back from the damage the fairness products have caused over the years? Using terms like skin-brightening and glow also seems fishy for they act as back-door entry terms to the wider world of fairness. Brands have a moral responsibility of shaping their consumers' psyche without reinforcing regressive belief systems. At the same time, we need to identify the target audience

majorly being women who are taught ways to be powerful by having a certain kind of beauty. This creates a sense of self-hatred. One might argue that their heart is in the right place but is a name change enough to revert the consumer psyche about skin colour which is deeply rooted in society and has been constantly perpetuated by the brand itself for the past four decades?

Dropping a word and claiming innocence seems suspiciously less than a cosmetic change but hinged on cold, hard profit—prompted by the American introspection of colourism. HUL and other skin-whitening brands have amassed huge profits, largely by peddling the narrative that fair IS lovely, and perpetuating racist, casteist ideas of skin colour. Their advertisements have deviously been focused on twisted ideals of women emancipation and aspirational messaging; how dark-skinned women are unsuccessful, but start prospering if they become ‘fair’, and therefore, ‘desirable’. Thereby, these notions have also twisted the meaning of what it means to be an empowered woman and created a blank box of wrong notions on body image, self-acceptance and self-love.

To conclude, it has to be said that in the twenty-first century with the movements like womanism, as a society, we need to address the anxiety capitalism is causing to the youth.

#fairenesscream #racism #womenempowerment #job #education #makeachange #youth  
#womenforindia #change #equality #justice #blackisbeautiful #selfrespect  
#womenemancipation