

Stickers & Billboards

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/musings/swamped-by-stickers-and-billboards/>

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Every single house in the neighborhood had stickers on the boundary walls. This was apart from billboards of various sizes on all the electricity poles, electricity transformer enclosures, and even on trees. Where ever one saw, the smiling mug shot of the candidate was staring at you. This was after all election season and all was fair in love and elections.

The best part was that the candidates had not yet been announced. All this was so-called advance publicity which obviously did not come under the expenditure limit of the Election commission. And so, for the last 6 months or so, the ticket hopefuls were making sure that their beatific faces were recognized by all. Of course, this was only part of the strategy- sponsoring religious discourses, organizing caste specific meetings and making your presence felt at all social gatherings was also being done. One of the hopefuls, a very wealthy businessman was way ahead of the others when it came to plastering his face all over town.

Initially the sight of the bearded hopeful was annoying, but soon one got used to seeing his image everywhere. The stickers though got my goat. And so, I did my bit as a responsible citizen and decided to take some action against this blatant violation of the model code of conduct. I had read in the newspapers that the election Commission had an app called cVIGIL which allowed vigilant citizens to report such violations. What was more, the app advertised to resolve all such violations within 50 minutes- 15 minutes for the field team to arrive at the venue, 30 minutes to execute the action and report and 50 minutes to close the complaint. This all sounded too good to be true.

Yesterday, on my morning walk, I took photographs of a sticker on a house as well as billboards on an electric pole near my house and lodged complaints on the app which captured the location automatically.

Amazingly, I soon got a message saying my complaint had been verified. This didn't seem possible since I had not seen any one come and check the site where the violation had taken place. But then, no one said that advertisements have to be true!

However, after about 2 hours, I received a message saying that my complaint has been resolved. I went out and saw some officials come and deface the sticker as well as take down the billboards from the pole. The speed at which the complaint had been addressed was indeed very impressive.

There was one small thing though- right next to the sticker and the billboards whose pictures I had uploaded, there were many more stickers and billboards. But these were not touched! Clearly the field team's remit only extended to the actual complaint and not to other violations close by.

And so, I have two options now- one, I can upload photos of all the billboards etc., something which will take me till 2029. Or I could continue to look at the airbrushed visage and see him smiling at me. It is as if he is saying, "look who had the last laugh!"

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