

"Yes, what my son is telling me is true. The song is full of four-letter words"

— Pulikal Bhaskar

Page 4A

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Take time to look inside package

It's a weekend evening. A lazy stroll around the campus, I have discovered, is one of the nice ways to spend time this season. For one thing, you don't encounter anybody moving in a hurry.

There is enough time to appreciate the lawns on either side of the pathway; admire the contrast of the colors of the cardinal with the surrounding greenery; stop and watch the bold, gray squirrel stare back at you. The smells of spring blossoms waft in the slight breeze. Even the sun is reluctant to set. To quote Browning, "God is in his Heaven, All's well with the World."

The picture is perfect when my wife joins the stroll holding my left arm and my son follows tugging the other arm. Along the way, we pass a residence hall. Music blares in some room, but at this distance, it is pleasantly in the background. I get caught up with the rhythm, and a new gait is visible in my walk. That is when my son pulls my arm so fast that I stop in



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tactics that parents perfect over time. But I have to admit the song has a nice, catchy rhythm, notwithstanding the lyrics. At the moment, the music reminded me of an attractive package. Quite a few times, it is the outer cover or package that attracts you to a product. You only worry about the contents of the pack-

my tracks.

"Hey, dad, how come you like that song?"

"Well, what's the problem? The music is good," I reply.

"But then the words are all foul," he says.

I try to catch the lyrics. Yes, what my son is telling me is true. The song is full of four-letter words. I get over the embarrassment by using one of those diversion

age later.

At least some people in Canada seem to agree with me. Canada is trying to become the first country to pass legislation to make it mandatory to sell cigarettes in plain packets. The package is expected to be plain like brown paper with the name of the manufacturer printed on the wrapper. No more glitzy cartons. The intention, I understand, is to prevent the young and the impressionable from falling for the attractive packaging and getting hooked unwittingly on nicotine in the process.

It is clear that with a strong anti-smoking lobby and a growing awareness among the public, it is becoming tougher to sell tobacco. It is almost like witnessing the decline of a colonial empire which had, at one time, seen the citizens under its benign (malignant?) clouds of tobacco smoke.

Of course, I don't expect the tobacco czars to give up easily. Perhaps they will follow the strategy of analgesic sellers. "My husband is an oncologist, and he recommends YYY cigarettes. Well, it takes 20 cigarettes of YYY to cause the same damage on your body as 10 cigarettes of ZZZ. That's why oncologists recommend YYY." But this, as we know, can't go on for long.

Many governments are under pressure to stop all forms of advertisement for the cigarettes. One more solution is to follow the lead of Corn Flake sellers.

The cigarette manufacturers can agree to plain paper packing and then put an incentive for smokers in small print on the package. "Mail 10 wrappers, and we will send you a metallic cigarette case. Mark your choice - gold or silver. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery."

But, if the manufacturers are basically unhappy over this transformation to plain packaging, all they have to do is declare their present glitzy cartons and cigarette wrappers works of art. They are creative expressions. And nobody has the right to prevent such expressions. Knowing what can pass under the guise of an art, I am sure this is one argument even they can't lose in the courts!

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