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USING ADVOCATE STICKERS FOR CARS AND VEHICLES- LAW BEHIND IT

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INTRODUCTION

Like Doctors the world over, the legal community in India has also been assigned a specific logo that identifies legal profession. As those in the medical profession (medicine practitioners) use the plus sign to identify themselves, the advocates in India use their band as mark of identification in their vehicles. However, the unabated use of band in their vehicles by the advocated has more often than raised questions with regard to its misuse especially with respect adherence of traffic regulations. It has been observed that the misuse of the band let the individuals flout traffic regulations and thus escape its consequences.

It is noteworthy that advocate sticker for car is issued to the lawyers by the Bar Council of India or the respective State Bar Council. The idea underlying is to provide identification and recognition to legal professionals and grant them certain privileges. These stickers are usually put on the windshields or rear windows of vehicles of the practicing lawyers. The design of the sticker may vary, but it often includes the symbol or emblem of the Bar Council along with the advocate's enrolment number or other identification details. In this respect, it is to be pointed out that Delhi High Court Bar Association has put QR code enabled stickers to check unauthorised use of advocate stickers or badges.

POSITIVES OF THE USAGE OF ADVOCATE STICKERS ON VEHICLES

1. No issue arises in parking their vehicles as they are assigned designated parking spaces in the court.
2. The specific mark of identification on the vehicles enables the authorities and the court staff to take a quick notice of the advocates. It becomes handy in ensuring smooth access and entry to the court rooms and other restricted areas.
3. Advocate stickers being the mark of identification enhances an advocates' professional reputation among clients and peers.

NO LEGAL SANCTION

There does not exist any specific law that comprehensively governs the use of advocate stickers on vehicles. Its regulations are purely in the domain of the Bar Council of India and the respective State Bar Councils which do so by regulations and guidelines.

However, **Section 177 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988** provides that whoever acts in contravention of any provision of the Act or any rule, regulation or notification made thereunder shall be punished with a fine. If advocate stickers are misused by individuals who are not entitled to them, they might be penalised under this section. The punishment prescribed under this section is follows: If a car is found with the sticker for the first time, the penalty is a fine of Rs. 100, and for any subsequent offences, the fine increases to Rs. 300.

RATIONALE BEHIND ITS USAGE

The distribution of stickers, including advocate stickers and those given to doctors, is done for valid reasons. The main purpose behind issuing these stickers is to provide identification and recognition to individuals in their respective professions and grant certain privileges.

For instance, advocate stickers help legal professionals in accessing designated parking areas in courts and legal premises where parking spaces may be limited. In courts, vehicles without advocate stickers may require their drivers to show their permit or identification cards every time they enter or exit, which could be inconvenient, especially if they are in a hurry.

However, it must always be made sure that these stickers serve are not misused or used by individuals who are not entitled to them. Misusing stickers or taking undue advantage of the privileges, they confer is not acceptable and may lead to legal consequences. In this context, one should not lose sight of the fact that the court has allowed government officials to use such stickers only while travelling for official purposes, implying thereby these stickers should not be abused or misused for personal gains outside official duties.

CASE LAW

RAMESH V. THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

The case of *V. Ramesh v. The Vice-Chancellor*, which came before the Madras High Court in 2020, addressed several issues related to vehicle modifications and decorations. The court's decision provided clarity on certain matters and issued instructions to the vehicle owners based on the questions raised in the case. The salient points it brought up are:

- Without mentioning the use of **halogen lights, Chinese lights and high beam lights**, the High Court ruled that the use of such lights that can potentially blind other drivers pr

create visibility issues for road users should not be permitted. Further, it said that motor vehicle owners make sure that they adhere to regulations regarding permissible lights on their vehicles.

- **Flags and political party names:** The court stated that pasting flags and designation boards on the car's exterior is an attempt to impede police officers from conducting vehicle checks and performing their duties. Such signs or stickers must not be displayed outwardly. If they are considered essential, they should be pasted inwardly, not obstructing visibility from outside the vehicle.
- **Tinted glasses:** The information provided did not mention the court's specific ruling on tinted glasses. In many jurisdictions, there are rules and regulations regarding the permissible level of tint on vehicle glasses to ensure safety and visibility.
- **Photographs or portraits of political leaders:** The court decided not to allow photographs or portraits of political leaders to be displayed on the dashboard facing outside the vehicle. Such decorations may obstruct the driver's view or distract other road users.
- **Display boards in vehicles:** The court's ruling suggests that vehicle owners cannot display boards in their cars according to their whims and fancies. There may be specific guidelines regarding the permissible size and content of display boards on vehicles.
- **Number boards of vehicles:** The court's decision did not specifically address changing number boards per the owner's wishes. In most jurisdictions, altering the number plate or registration details without proper authorisation is illegal.
- The court ordered the respondents to instruct vehicle owners to remove portraits or photos fixed on the dashboard facing outside the vehicle within sixty days. Failure to comply with this instruction could result in fines and punishments for vehicle owners.

CONCLUSION

It follows, therefore, that there is no specific law that explicitly prohibits the use of taglines and scribbles painted on vehicles. However, there exists Section 177 of the Motor Vehicle Act, which expressly forbids the use of stickers on vehicles. Despite the Motor Vehicle Act's broad applicability, this section seems to be somewhat overlooked. Stickers assigned to doctors and other prominent professionals serve specific purposes, such as time-saving and facilitating recognition. However, these distinguished individuals sometimes misuse these stickers for personal privileges,

personal agendas and even for carrying out illegal acts. The same individuals, including advocates, police and press vehicles, may even disregard traffic signals with minimal intervention from law enforcement officers and thus escaping penalisation.