

# Can MP Sachin hawk colas?

## Activists Say He Shouldn't, Elders Say There's No Wrong

CDSMani | TNN

**Chennai:** Now that he is a parliamentarian, can cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar continue to push products he has been endorsing? No, feels Delhi-based Alliance Against Conflict of Interest, which wants him to stop promoting a leading cola brand.

"Nobody challenged him all these years when as a cricket celebrity he endorsed the drink, but it is time for him to ponder if, as a member of the Rajya Sabha, he should push a beverage considered unhealthy," Alliance convener Arun Gupta told TOI.

Gupta, a member of the Prime Minister's council on India's nutritional challenges, cited WHO reports linking excessive consumption



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of aerated drinks to obesity, heart disease and other ailments to justify the demand. "As a paediatrician with 37 years' experience and working on nutrition issues, I strongly feel Tendulkar should stop endorsing the drink in public interest," Gupta said.

Congress Rajya Sabha

MP and lawyer B S Gnanadesikan begged to disagree. "Tendulkar is a much bigger role model as a cricketer than as an MP and the argument that he should stop endorsing the product because he has become a parliamentarian is flawed," he said.

Just as parliamentarians who are doctors, film stars or advocates continue to pursue their profession as that is their source of earning, cricketers too can continue to play and promote products in their capacity as celebrity sportspersons, he said. "I take colas that do not contain sugar and calories though friends and relatives advise me against it," he admitted, adding, "Colas contain caffeine that acts as a stimulant and also increases the heart beat rate."

Another Rajya Sabha MP Sudarsana Natchiappan, who has introduced a private member's bill on conflict of interest, feels that till there is a law in force on the issue Tendulkar or other celebrity parliamentarians can at the most be culpable only at an ethical level.

Conflict of interest would arise, he said, if Tendulkar becomes a member of the parliamentary committee on water resources or health and wants to speak on the subject. "He then has to reveal his role as an ambassador for the cola brand prior to participation in the debate," said Natchiappan.

"The conflict of interest concept has not matured in India so far and it is up to the individual MP to take a call," he said.