



## AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFICACY OF APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE OF WAKROKTI (AN OBLIQUE UTTERANCE OF A WORD) IN FORMULATING TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS.

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### ABSTRACT

*The relationship between audio-visual theory and Indian poetics has been an under-researched phenomenon. Kunthaka, the pioneer of the theory of Wakrokti, is the art of using language to communicate effectively. There are six main components of Wakrokti in literature according to the obliqueness of a word. Varnavinyas; Padpurvardh; Padparardh; Vakya; Prakaran and Prabandh Wakrata. However, only the final two components of Wakrokti, Prakaran (obliqueness derived from the contextualization of a statement or passage.) and Prabandh Wakrata (how one's imagination leads to deciphering subtle meanings in epics.) were selected for the following research. Within these two elements, six sub categories each have been used and in order to describe these elements, examples have been taken from a selection of Sri Lankan television advertisements. It must be noted that each of these is evident in Hindi literature, especially in epics and they fulfill the purpose of captivating the reader and adding more deepness and emotion to the story. This research attempts to study the same concepts in terms of advertisements, in the way in which the Wakrokti elements help to attract more customers into purchasing these products. Of the twelve selected elements of Vakrokti, advertisements were not found for two of these and thus it can be assumed that this concept has not been utilized to its maximum potential. It can be stated that an overall better knowledge of Vakrokti and any future studies done in this aspect will be greatly beneficial not only to the field of advertizing but also in areas such as film making and videos for social welfare.*

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**Key Words:** Advertisements, Audio-visuals, Indian Poetics, television, Vakrokti.

## **Introduction**

The relationship between audio-visual theory and Indian poetics has been an under-researched phenomenon. Kunthaka, the pioneer of the theory of Wakrokti, is the art of using language to communicate effectively. There are six main components of Wakrokti in literature according to the obliqueness of a word. Varnavinyas Wakrata (for instance, the repetition of the initial consonant sounds in two or more neighboring words or syllables, similar to the concept of alliteration in Rhetorics, used to bring out beauty in meaning); Padpurvardh Wakrata (where the first part of a word is accentuated to generate obliqueness); Padparardh Wakrata (where the second part of a word is accentuated to generate obliqueness); Vakya Wakrata (where the syntax or the word order of the whole sentence is considered in order to bring out subtle meanings); Prakaran Wakrata (obliqueness derived from the contextualization of a statement or passage) and Prabandh Wakrata (where one's imagination leads to deciphering subtle meanings in epics).

However, only the final two components of Wakrokti, Prakaran and Prabandh Wakrata were selected for the following research and it is important to note that each of these has six elements. They are as follows;

**1. Prakaran Wakrata** (obliqueness derived from the contextualization of a statement or passage.) This deals with the importance of contextualization in bringing out 'wakrata' or indirect meaning and singularity within a statement.

1.1 It can be used to reveal an emotional or sentimental feeling.

1.2 The use of a new and original ideal to reveal a revolutionary concept.

1.3 Prakaran Wakratha makes it possible to rearrange or amend the oblique ideals provided in a popular statement or previously known account in order to bring out a unique meaning.

1.4 Such contextualization allows for a detailed, descriptive narration of interesting and entertaining parts of a story.

1.5 Prakaran Wakratha allows for subsidiary scenarios or deviations from the major plot of the story which help to fulfill the main purpose.

1.6 The oblique meaning of a statement has a natural order or sequence and meaning is brought out in a systematic way.

**2. Prabandh Wakrata** (how one's imagination leads to deciphering subtle meanings in epics.)

- 2.1 How alteration or interchangeability of principles of poetic sentiment, for instance from heroism to a more romantic theme, increases the viewer's appreciation of a sentiment and allows one to relish in its artistic value.
- 2.2 How events that are rich in historical value can be adopted in epics to highlight the eminence of the central character of the story.
- 2.3 How a surprise element is introduced to the story to arouse the curiosity of the reader.
- 2.4 Acquisition of an additional and complementary benefit apart from the desired end result is used in epics for various positive outcomes.
- 2.5 How the title consists of a statement that is expressive of the collective events of the story whose subtleness becomes evident even prior to reading the full text.
- 2.6 The main purpose of an epic is to provide a vital and life changing message, for instance concerning patriotism and national unity.

## **Results and Discussion**

The following discussion will study in depth the various elements of Vakrokti with special attention given to Prakaran and Prabandh Wakrata. Within these two elements we find six Prakaran and Six Prabandh Wakrata and in order to describe these elements, examples have been taken from a selection of Sri Lankan television advertisements and have been compared below. Prior to analyzing the elements in depth it must be noted that each of these is evident in Hindi literature, especially in epics and they fulfill the purpose of captivating the reader and adding more deepness and emotion to the story. This research attempts to study the same concepts in terms of advertisements, in the way in which the Wakrokti elements help to attract more customers into purchasing these products.

- 1.1 The first of these elements is one which deals with emotional or the sentimental feeling in human beings and how that universal feeling is used to captivate the reader. In this instance, the study has focused on the advantage of using this element in television advertisements to captivate a group of television spectators. In that perspective of marketing a product with the use of sentiment or emotion, the following advertisement can be taken into consideration;

The first advertisement which has been selected for this purpose promotes a popular telecommunication network in Sri Lanka by using human emotion to captivate the society. The advertisement deals with the real life situation of a young married couple.

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Despite there being any signs of a mobile phone or any form of verbal communication, the advertisement brings forth the idea of the troubles of the young husband who has returned from a tedious day at work. The advertisement goes on to reveal how he is at peace in the comforts of his home and how the solitude, a hot homemade meal and the embrace of his wife mean the world to him. This emotional ideal is then revealed with a simple statement at the end of the advertisement, “I promise to always be close to you,” thus emphasizing how the care offered to their customers is similar to that of a loving wife’s.

1.2 The second element studied under Prakaran wakrata deals with the use of a new and original ideal to reveal a revolutionary concept and in the analysis of the selected advertisements, this element too has been seen on several occasions, one of which is described here in length.

One such revolutionary concept that was found was the idea of promoting a product by offering customers a service while also offering them a reward, or in this case by offering money in return to the customer. This too is an ad for a Sri Lankan telecommunication company and the plot revolves around a somewhat ordinary situation where a man goes to a food outlet to purchase his dinner, a hot kottu rotti. The kottu chef expressively adds the ingredients and begins to chop them up to the familiar beat. Despite the seemingly ordinary events, the buyer is taken aback when the chef ultimately hands over his meal while also paying the customer.

This advertisement can thus be studied under Prakaran wakrata to show how the inclusion of such a revolutionary concept can lead to attracting customers. While the company’s product, their IDD call service, is allegorically compared the satisfaction derived from a hot and spicy kottu rotti, the advertisement goes on to reveal that their services are not limited to the ordinary and that they will go beyond the usual measures to fulfill customer satisfaction.

1.3 Advertisements were not found for the third element.

1.4 The next element of Prakaran Wakrata is the idea of explaining in depth and great detail the interesting parts of a story. Such emphasis on specific details is evident in the narration of epics and this research has tried to prove that its presence in the local advertisements has also had a similar and great impact on the promotion and marketing of products.

The advertisement selected for this purpose deals with a series of characters who are each ecstatic about a personal accomplishment or the achievement of a loved one. These accomplishments are the events that are most interesting to them and the creators have utilized many similar instances in this advertisement to emphasize the theme of fortune. For instance, a man comes home to his wife extremely happy about a promotion he received at work. Another scene talks of a mother who is full of pride at hearing the news of her daughter's university graduation. A little girl is over the moon on hearing about the arrival of a new baby brother. In all these instances their happiness is shared with loved ones and people closest to them, and it is here that the interesting stories of their lives are emphasized on and explained in depth. Finally we are made aware of the product, a home phone, and the concluding statement is that this phone would bring fortune to your home similar to the collective fortune of all the individuals in this advertisement. The element of wakrokti is evident in the way in which many individuals have been utilized to reveal the underlying theme rather than just one or two persons.

#### 1.5 The fifth element of Prakaran Wakratha allows for subsidiary scenarios or deviations

from the major plot of the story which help to fulfill the main purpose and this epic element too has been observed in the creation of certain television advertisements, one of which is described below.

The advertisement selected for this purpose is one which promotes a popular brand of cement and here a minor incident is highlighted instead of the major message about the cement quality, thereby attracting customer to ultimately choose this brand of cement. The fact that a group of skilled workers have chosen this particular product for their building work is the major message of the plot. However the advertisement centers on a little girl who is on her way to school, holding a bouquet of flowers for her classroom. As she is crossing the road to get to school, the workers on top of the building notice a large lorry speeding its way forward, unable to control the vehicle and the girl is in grave danger. The men shout to warn her however there is nothing to be done. Then at once one of the workers gets an idea and throws a bag of cement on to the road, thus creating a powerful barricade which stops the lorry and saves the girl.

This subsidiary feature of saving a life is highlighted in the advertisement rather than the qualities of the cement in itself, however by that means the strength and quality of the cement is also brought out in a more appealing manner.

1.6 The final element of Prakaran Wakratha shows how meaning is brought out in a systematic way by means of a logical order or sequence.

This was particularly evident in the selected advertisement of an insurance company in Sri Lanka where a loving father recalls the special moments of his daughters life. The events are portrayed in a logical manner in the way in which he raised her until the time that she was capable of taking care of herself. The sequence here is revealed in the way in which the father cherishes the daughter's birth and how he held her close when she cried. When she was injured, it was he who carried her to the hospital and he stays up late on the nights that she was studying for her exams. Finally he has no words to express how proud he is of the young lady she has turned out to be. The father states at the end that no love would ever match up to a father's love and no one is better suited to protect her than him. It is the use of this element of the logical sequence in Prakaran Wakratha that has made this advertisement more appealing to its viewers.

Having discussed the Prakaran Wakratha in Waktokti it is also important to bring examples to describe the elements of Prabandh Wakratha. Unlike in Prakaran Wakratha where contextualization of a statement is highlighted, Prabandh Wakratha focuses more on how the viewer's imagination helps to interpret or decipher the meanings of a story. Prabandh Waktatha includes six elements which are used not only in literature and epics but also in advertisements to attract readers as well as television spectators.

2.1 Thus the first element under Prabandh Wakratha deals with a change of the poetic

sentiment to increase the viewer's appreciation and allow them to relish in its artistic value. In epics for instance this is found in the instance where the mood of the story interchanges suddenly from heroism to a more romantic theme. Such a change of the thematic element is evident in a selected advertisement for IDD calls by a local telecom network.

In the advertisement, a young man grows impatient as the bus he is travelling in is dawdling to get to its destination. The man becomes increasingly irritated because he needs to arrive at home on time to make a phone call to his brother who is living abroad. Throughout the course of the ad he grows angrier and the atmosphere is tense and the others around him are affected by the mood.

However a young lady turns to him and says it is unnecessary to travel home, for if he has the particular mobile connection that is being advertised, he can make an IDD call anytime and from anywhere. From that point onwards the entire mood changes from tense to a more romantic one and the young man who takes a seat beside the lady and enjoys her company so much that he jokingly requests from the bus driver to take it easy and drive slowly.

The element of *Wakrokti* is revealed much like in literature by way of the central character and the way his mood changes from anger to romance.

2.2 Advertisements were not found for the second element.

2.3 How a surprise element is introduced to arouse the curiosity of the reader.

The advertisement selected to reveal the presence of this element is one which promotes a brand of wall paint and the plot revolves around a young gentleman who has come to his girlfriend's house to ask her parents for their blessings to marry her. Throughout the course of the ad, the man appears to be distracted and gives irrelevant and insensible replies to all the questions asked by the girl's father about his future plans. The viewer is also made to believe that he is secretly trying to glance at the girlfriend's sister who is walking in the distant corridor. The angry father proclaims that this man is unsuitable for his daughter to marry, which upsets the girl very much.

However, it is later that we find out that the man was only staring at the walls for he was distracted by the beauty of their wonderful colours. This surprise element not only captivates the audience but also their attention is drawn towards the subtle artistic value of the product.

2.4 Acquisition of an additional and complementary benefit apart from the desired end result is used in epics for various positive outcomes.

This element is evident in a local advertisement for a popular brand of men's cologne. The young man in the advertisement lives in a house by the sea. He applies the cologne after a bath and almost immediately he hears a woman's cry for help. Realizing that she is drowning he gets on a boat in a great speed in an attempt to rescue her, he then dives into the ocean and brings her back onto the boat safely.

The advertisement thus reveals in a subtle way how despite the desired end result of saving a life, the cologne also helped this man to captivate the heart of a beautiful young

woman. In that sense, elements of Prabandh Wakratha is evident in the way that it plays on the subtleties of emotion in order to create a more appealing product for the viewers.

2.5 How the title consists of a statement that is expressive of the collective events of the story which become evident even prior to reading the full text.

This feature too is patent in Indian Poetics for most often the title of a book or a film reveals to the audience a sense of what the story is going to be about, thus giving them an idea even before reading or watching it. In advertisements too this feature can be observed, especially in the selected example of an advertisement for a popular women's savings account in Sri Lanka.

Here the title clearly illustrates the main story and depicts that this account is for the wellbeing of women, and this is highlighted by the fact that the entirety of the advertisement consists only of cheerful women, carefree because their savings have ensured them a secure future.

2.6 The main purpose of an epic is to provide a vital and life changing message, for instance

concerning patriotism and national unity and this is the final element found under Prakaran Wakratha. This feature too has been found in several Sri Lankan television advertisements and the key attribute in these is to provide a national message of goodwill. Thus the promotion of any type of product is merely a subsidiary or byproduct of the endeavor.

One such instance where this message can be seen is in a local advertisement for a brand of cement. The central character, a construction worker, begins by narrating his story; first, how his parents raised him while undergoing a great deal of troubles and thus how he understands that only a hard and honest worker will get ahead in life. While narrating, he notices a young man boarding a bus, dropping his wallet outside without him noticing. The narrator quickly picks it up, boards the bus after the gentleman and returns the wallet. A similar incident takes place when he is purchasing his groceries. The shop lady hands him his balance but once realizing that she has over paid him, he immediately returns to the shop to explain the mistake and to return the money. When opening up his lunch packet he notices a poor man on the side of the road. His generosity is seen once again when he hands over the food for the old man to satisfy his hunger.

The advertisement goes on to reveal that the construction worker is further being honest when he uses this particular brand of cement for it is oh high quality and not mixed with



any inferior quality product. However when analyzing this advertisement by means of Prabandh Wakratha, it can be understood that its main purpose is not the promotion of the cement but rather, the promotion of developing kindness and honesty in society.

## **Conclusion**

Of the twelve selected elements of Vakrokti, advertisements were not found for two of these and thus it can be assumed that this concept has not been utilized to its maximum potential. More research done in this area in the future would greatly benefit the field of advertizing.

Furthermore, this research has been limited to the study of Prakaran and Prabandh Wakratha in Indian poetics. However there are yet many aspects of Vakrokti yet to be studied. Thus in conclusion, it can be stated that an overall better knowledge of Vakrokti and any future studies done in this aspect will be greatly beneficial not only to the field of advertizing but also in areas such as film making and videos for social welfare.

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