

A Comparative Study on the use of Metaphors of Nature with reference to selected Buddhist Verses and Shakespearean Sonnets

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ලෝකයේ පවතින භාෂාවන් වඩාත් මිනිසාට සමීප කරවීමේ මෙවලමක් ලෙස එම භාෂාවන් කරණකොට බිහිවූ සාහිත්‍ය නිර්මාණයන් ප්‍රධාන තැනක් ගනී. ලෝකයේ භාවිතාවන භාෂාවන් අතර ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂාව වඩා අද්විතීය තැනක් උසුලනු ලබයි. ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂාව පදනම් කොටගෙන බිහිවූ ඉංග්‍රීසි සාහිත්‍ය අද වනවිට ලෝකයේ බොහෝ රටවල් අධ්‍යනය කරමින් පවතින අතර, නව සාහිත්‍ය නිර්මාණයන්ද, ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂාවෙන් නිර්මාණය කරමින් එම සාහිත්‍ය පුළුල් කරමින් පවතී. යම්කිසි සාහිත්‍ය නිර්මාණයක් සිදුකරන විට එම පාඨකයාට වඩාත් සමීප කරවීම පිණිස සාහිත්‍ය කරුවන් විසින් විවිධ කාව්‍ය අලංකාර (Techniques) භාවිත කරනු ලබයි. ඒ අනුව ලෝකයේ බිහිවූ ශ්‍රේෂ්ඨතම මිනිසා වන බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේද තම ධර්මය ප්‍රචලිත කරවීම සඳහා තම පාලි භාෂාව විවිධ ක්‍රමයන් ඔස්සේ භාවිතකර ඇත.

ඉංග්‍රීසි සාහිත්‍යයේ නව යුගයක් බිහිකල ශේක්ෂ්පියර් නම් අද්විතීය සාහිත්‍යකරුවාද තම නිර්මාණ පාඨකයාට (Audience) සමීප කරලීම සඳහා විවිධ ක්‍රම ශිල්ප භාවිතකර ඇත. ඉංග්‍රීසි සාහිත්‍ය කුල විද්‍යාමාන වන විවිධ ක්‍රම ශිල්ප (Poetic Techniques, Poetic Devices) ශේක්ෂ්පියර් විසින්ද බහුලව භාවිතකර ඇත. එම කාව්‍ය අලංකාර අතර රූපක (Metaphor) වලට ප්‍රධාන තැනක් ගනී. මෙම ලිපිය තුළින් මා බලාපොරොත්තු වන්නේ බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේ තම ධර්මය ප්‍රචලිත කරවීම සඳහාත් ශේක්ෂ්පියර් තම පණිවිඩය පාඨකයාට ඒත්තු ගැන්වීම සඳහාත් රූපක භාවිතකර ඇති ආකාරය පෙන්වා දීමටය.

ඒ සඳහා මාගේ අධ්‍යන පරාසය යොමුවන්නේ ධම්මපදයේ තෝරාගත් ගාථා සහ ශේක්ෂ්පියර් විසින් රචිත තෝරාගත්

(Sonnet s) සංසන්දනාත්මකව (Comparatively) අධ්‍යනයක් කිරීමය. බුදුන් වහන්සේ තම ශිෂ්‍ය පරම්පරාවට ගම තුළ හැසිරිය යුතු ආකාරය රූපයකින් මගින් දක්වා ඇති ආකාරය අති විෂිෂ්ටය “යතාපි භමරෝ පුප්ඵං” මී මැස්සා මල නොතලා රොන් ගන්නා සේ මුනිවරයා ගම තුළ හැසිරිය යුතුය. එමෙන්ම ශේක්ෂ්පියර් ද මිනිස් ශරීරය පෙන පිඩක් යැයි පෙන්වාදී ඇත. මෙම සාහිත්‍ය නිර්මාණ ද්වයම අධ්‍යනය කොට බුදුන් වහන්සේ සහ ශේක්ෂ්පියර් රූපක යොදාගත් ආකාරය මෙම ලිපිය තුළින් පෙන්වාදීමට බලාපොරොත්තුවේ.

ප්‍රමුඛ පද:- බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේ, ශේක්ෂ්පියර්, රූපක, ධම්ම පදය, Sonnets

Introduction

Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets. Out of these, the first 126 sonnets have been written for his male friend, who is believed to be a very handsome young man known among the critics as the “fair youth”. In these sonnets the poet advises his friend to get married and procreate children who would be handsome like him (first 17 sonnets), and also he expresses his extreme love for him. And the rest of the sonnets have been written for an unknown dark lady. Shakespearean sonnets have often been anthologized and read by a wide audience throughout the world irrespective of their race, religion, language, etc. Apart from the above Shakespeare wrote 03 long poems too. The present research deals with sonnets of Shakespeare and out of many figures of speech he has used in those, similes he has used in connection with nature will be especially focused on.

The Dhammapada

The Dhammapada is a popular text in Buddhist literature. It contains 423 verses and 26 vaggas. Each verse in the Dhammapada was originally recited by the Buddha in response to a particular incident. In his teachings, the Buddha used the

normal conversational language with similes, metaphors and some other figures of speech. He spoke about the relative truths in the world with living examples, but not the absolute truth always because it cannot be described in human languages as it is ‘not easy to see, not easy to understand, not easy to understand by logic, skilled and can be perceived only by intelligent persons (Duddaso, Duranubodho, atakkavacaro, nipuno pandita vediyo). But in explaining certain matters leading to exposition of absolute truths, He has used metaphors drawn from his experience. The present research expects to investigate metaphors the Buddha has used in the Dhammapada with reference to nature.

Metaphors

While both similes and metaphors are used to make comparisons, the difference between similes and metaphors comes down to a word. Similes use the words like or as to compare things— “Life is like a box of chocolates.” In contrast, metaphors directly state a comparison— “Love is a battlefield.”

Examples

Life is like a box of chocolates. (Simile)

My life is an open book. (Metaphor)

That baby is as cute as a button! (Simile)

Baby, you’re a firework. (Metaphor)

Research problem

Buddha and Shakespeare have talked on life, but they both have used various poetic techniques to express their ideas on life by taking things in the environment. Although they have discussed regarding life using various poetic techniques, we

can see sometimes both of them have used metaphors related to nature to present the same perspective on life. In this research it is expected expect to investigate how they both use the metaphors in the same or different manner.

The objectives of this study are to

- Find out the metaphors and related to nature in both the sample works under concern.

-To analyze the imagery included in the metaphors and found in the samples.

-Compare the imagery found in both works to understand their references.

Significance of the research

Will contribute to the comparative and multidisciplinary literary studies in English literature Will prove the literary value intermingled with the intellectual value offered by both these pieces of literature.

The Dhammapada will be exposed to the world audiences of different races, cultures, religions, etc., as a great piece of literature.

Research background

English literature is a well-known and worldwide field that should be studied in deeply by the followers, therefore I suppose to compare a slight area of such kind of literature with the Buddhism, because of this studying would be introduced the great philosophy to the foreign audience also.

Research limitations

The deep spiritual teachings included in the Dhammapada had to be ignored

To avoid the redundancy certain imagery used in metaphors in some sonnets and the Dhammapada verses were ignored.

Research methodology

His research is based on a qualitative research and a library research. All the areas like transience, actions, sins and merits of selected sonnets and Dhammapada verses will be compared under the literary technique of metaphor in each other with together.

Review of literature

There are of course a large number of books and research papers on Shakespeare in large and well organized libraries. However, such libraries were not in easy access to the researcher but much on his work can be found on the internet. The Dhammapada is easily available. There are a number of editions published in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. European scholars have been interested in the Dhammapada since about the late 18th century and some recognized Buddhist scholars such as Bhikkhu Bodhi (1996), Bhikkhu Thanissaro (1997) have edited and translated this Buddhist text.

References to Previous Research on Nature in Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Dhammapada

According to one PhD dissertation published online (2017, Nature in Shakespeare's Sonnets), Shakespeare has chosen out imagery carefully to suit his themes. For instance, in

his ‘fair youth sonnets’, the speaker uses imagery and metaphors from nature to describe man’s life cycle. In the first phase of his sonnets, he has used imagery overtly to emphasize the fact that reproduction is a must to continue the beauty of his lover. At a deeper level, such imagery with the similes refers to the inevitability of death and our acceptance of that. In the first sonnets of the ‘fair youth’ sonnets, the poet emphasizes on the reproduction but after Sonnet 16, the theme gradually changes to death and inevitability.

The Dhammapada also has used many metaphors to describe nature. In any culture, nature is believed to be close to the changes of human life as nature’s impact on human life is unmistakable. The Buddha is one of the great philosophers who focused much on nature and most of His life was also spent in close association with nature. Probably owing to this, many of the similes and metaphors as well as the imagery He has used in His teachings have been extracted from nature. For instance, the Buddha has discussed in the Dhammapada how monks should behave in the village. There, the Buddha takes bees and flowers to explicate it clearly.

Yathipi bhamaro puppham

vannagandhamahethayam

paleti rasamadaya

evam game muni care.

(Puppa Vagga.Verse 49:)

As the bee collects nectar and flies away without damaging the flower or its colour or its scent, so also, let the Bhikkhu dwell and act in the village (without affecting the faith and generosity or the wealth of the villagers).

Kennedy, 1963 discussing the imagery used in the Dhammapada, says there are 4211 aphorisms and the Buddha uses more than 140 simple images to put across his teachings. Of these, he says, ‘over fifty are nature images, relating to plants or animals. Nine of them relate to the other elements of fire, air and water, that is, to nature in the broader sense’. Emphasizing that research has not been done on the use of imagery, and the similes and metaphors included in them, Kennedy refers to many types of imagery the Buddha has used in the Dhammapada verses such as animals, water, flowers, woods, fire, stars, sky, etc.

Metaphors in Shakespearean Sonnets and the Dhammapada

From here I am going to discuss metaphors related to nature that are used in the selected sonnets and verses of the Shakespearean sonnets and the Dhammapada. The imagery in which metaphors have been included is also focused on.

When we study or rather read Shakespeare’s sonnets for pleasure, we are amazed to find wonderful imagery created by the poet. His imagery is seen in the similes and metaphors he has used almost in every sonnet. One striking feature in the metaphors of Shakespeare is their connection to nature. It is well known that in general, poets look or observe nature to find metaphors. As most of the poets in general, love nature and enjoy and observe the beauty of nature, naturally they tend to draw their metaphors from nature. For example, we can see in the sonnets, Shakespeare quite often refers to the sun, moon and stars. Then we can see that like so many other poets, he makes use of flowers, especially the Rose as hundreds of other poets in England as well as all over the world. When we compare a Buddhist text like the Dhammapada, we can see that, in that oriental text too, metaphors spring from nature, and there too we find the earth, the sun, moon, stars, rain, and flowers, especially the Lotus, to have been used as metaphors.

We have mentioned before that the two texts or compositions, the sonnets and the Dhammapada differ with regard to the subject and theme. The sonnets of Shakespeare are exclusively of personal nature. The poet talks with no inhibition about his love for a boy and for a particular lady. The Pali or Buddhist text contains verses with universally significant subjects and a wide variety of characters representing a range of characters in ancient India. In general they relate stories of Buddhist monks who lived over two thousand six hundred years ago in India at the time of Buddha.

Comparison of Metaphors in the Selected Sonnets and Verses in the Dhammapada

Comparison

There are so many instances in the Dhammapada which contains metaphors which remind the reader of metaphors used by the Great English bard Shakespeare. The metaphors in the Dhammapada reflect the thoughts and views of ancient Indians and Buddhists whereas the English poet's sonnets have only a trace of religious flavor or ideas; in the sonnets predominant mood is reflecting the European mentality, or Christian way of looking at the world while those in the Dhammapada reflect Buddhist ideas. However, as noted earlier some ideas of Shakespeare tally with some of the principle teachings of Buddha. For example, the idea of 'impermanence' which recurs in the sonnets is one of the major doctrines of Buddhism. In Buddhist terminology this is mentioned as 'anicca', and the concept of impermanence, changeability, or uncertainty contain in so many verses in the Dhammapada. In the Dhammapada, our body is compared to 'foam' where as Shakespeare compares it to 'bubble' in the water.

‘From fairest creatures we desire increase
 That thereby beauty’s rose might never die’
 ‘Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
 Thou that art now the world’s fresh ornament
 And only herald to the gaudy content

(Sonnet I)

The message in this sonnet is: ‘Marry, have lovely children, life is too short, and don’t be such a self-obsessed narcissist’. Thus the poet urges the young man to marry soon and start procreating. This sonnet is known for its masterful structure and wonderful metaphors.

As in many other sonnets, the speaker urges the young man, or the Fair Youth to marry and procreate. If not he would be only wasting his time- or his life. The basic message in this sonnet is ‘have beautiful kids, life is too short you self-obsessed narcissist’.

From fairest creatures we desire increase
 That thereby beauty’s rose might never die

By increasing or producing children, the young man can prevent the death of ‘beauty’s rose. This obviously clear ‘metaphor of the ‘rose’ has been a favorite one of Shakespeare. Thus we find Shakespeare mentioning various other flowers in these sonnets symbolizing not only ‘beauty’ but also impermanent nature of life- and love. In the other text we have selected for comparison , the Dhammapada we find the lotus, many other flowers referred to in connection with the idea of

‘purity’ ‘scent’, bees’, uniqueness etc. For example;

‘Who will investigate the well taught Path of Virtue,
even as an expert (garland maker) will pick flowers?

Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest

Now is the time that face should form another;

Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,

Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother.

(Sonnet III)

As in so many other sonnets, in Sonnet III too Shakespeare urges the Fair Youth to marry and procreate. If not the Fair Youth’s lovely image will ‘Die single and thin image dies with thee.’ The word ‘image’ is important in this sonnet. In the first line the poet tells the young man to see his image in the glass.

Thou art thy mother’s glass and she in thee.’

Calls back ‘the lovely April of her prime.

‘You are the image of your mother seen in the mirror. If you look into the mirror, you will see your face, but in reality think of it as your mother’s image. You are now so lovely, and when you see the image in the mirror, you can think of you mother, how lovely she must have been as a young woman. She must have been as beautiful as the month of April- the best time in the year, the beginning of spring. Like the young man can think of his beauty by looking at the image in the mirror and thinking of his mother’s beauty in the prime of her life, and if he will have a son, then, the young man would be able, when he grows old to think of himself as a young man by looking at the face of his

son. In the prime of life, when the young man is still young, he will feel himself as ‘beautiful, attractive, or lovely’. The youth is like spring, the best season in the year, but it will soon change into summer and then winter and the things that were beautiful would be dry, barren, bare and too chilly. Old age too would be like that. There are other connotations in the image ‘Look in the glass and tell the face you see’. It is possible to think whether the speaker intends to revive feelings of illusiveness of what appears to the eye in the mirror. The speaker may be suggesting that as the mirror image is an illusion, so is everything else we see. Thus there is this philosophical idea of illusiveness of what appears as real, which is an important philosophical concept in Buddhism too.

‘Ko dhammapadaṃ sudesitaṃ kusalo pupphamiva
paccassati’ (v.44. p. 47)

‘Pheṇupamaṃ kāyamidaṃ viditvā marīcidhammaṃ
abhisambudāno (v.46. p.50)

‘Even as an expert (garland maker) will pick flowers.’

‘Knowing that this body like foam, and comprehending its mirage nature, one should destroy the flower shaft of sensual passions ‘

In the above verses the Buddha talks about this impermanence by comparing this body to foam.

Lo, in the orient when the gracious light
Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,
Serving with looks his sacred majesty;

(Sonnet VII)

The image or metaphor in this sonnet is ‘the sun.’ The rising sun and then the passage of the sun overhead from morning till evening. It is a powerful and beautiful metaphor because the poet does not merely compare the ‘beauty of the young man to the sun’, but he personifies the sun. The speaker shows us the moving sun in the sky brings to our mind the unavoidable reality of life. How adorable and fine and lovely every one is as a child like the sun at dawn. In the world literature, especially in the Indian Vedic literature, the sun was admired and worshipped, especially the rising sun in the morning was personified as the Goddess ‘Usha.’ Like Helios in ancient Greek culture, worshipped as the sun god’ who too, as in the Shakespeare’s sonnet travels through the sky in a chariot. In the popular or folk religion in Sri Lanka too the sun is worshipped as a god. For example the Sinhala/Hindu New Year is celebrated in April for worshipping the Sun. Although Shakespeare does not worship it he too has religious feelings when he says,

‘Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,

Attending on his golden pilgrimage:

The term ‘pilgrimage’ is rich in religious connotations. The poet tells the young man the sun is moving in the sky, from morning and when it is at mid-day, it is still strong and bright, people, even with difficulty love to see and admire it. So even if you marry in your middle age you would still be attractive and there will be many admirers to you and any woman would like to marry you. As the admirers of the sun look away, then your admirers too will look away if you wait till you are old. ‘So as the good old saying goes, ‘make hay while the sun shines’.

While Shakespeare has used the imagery of sun to highlight the passage of time and then to compare it with the admiration of the others for his lover, the Buddha has used it

in the Dhammapada in a completely different sense. He makes himself, the Buddha incomparable even to the sun. Here, the comparison of the Buddha is to a shining element with glory.

Diva tapati adicco

ratti mabhāti candima

sannaddho khattiyō tapati

jhayī tapati brahmano

atha sabbamahorattim

buddho tapati tejasa. (Verse 387)

Verse 387: By day shines the sun; by night shines the moon; in regalia shines the king; in meditation shines the arahat; but the Buddha in his glory shines at all times, by day and by night.

When I consider everything that grows

Holds in perfection but a little moment,

That this huge stage presented naught but shows

Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;

When I perceive that men as plants increase,

Where wasteful Time debated with Decay

To change your day of youth to sullied night;

And all in war with Time for love of you,

As he takes from you, I engraft you new. (Sonnet XV)

This sonnet is especially significant because of the idea of transience it conveys. The poet tells everything we see, or hold as beautiful is impermanent lasts only for a short time. ‘Holds in perfection but a little moment’. In Buddhism also the impermanence is often spoken of and followers are advised to remember it and to be prepared for the inevitable end- death. In this sonnet what strikes the most is that two contrary ideas the poet presents- i. e. impermanence and permanence. Although everything they hold is transitory, or evanescent, but the memory or the image of the young man in the poet’s mind is not so, it is eternal or permanent: And all in war with Time for love of you.

Buddha has expressed ideas like these in his discourses often. The following extracts from the Dhammapada state similar ideas:

‘Oneself, indeed, is one’s savior, for what other savior would there be?’ (Verse 160)

‘By oneself, indeed, is evil done; by oneself is one denied. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself, indeed, in one purified? Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one purifies another’.

(Verse 165)

‘Come, behold this world which is like unto an ornamented royal chariot, wherein fools flounder, but for the wise there is no attachment’ (Verse 171)

Shakespeare presents another image; ‘When I perceive that men as plants increase’. When he sees the men as ‘plants increase’ he may suggest to the young man ‘even the plants increase’ and why don’t you think of increasing yourself by procreating a child? The terms ‘stars’ and ‘sky’ remind of the poet’s obsession or belief in the ‘stars’ as he has stated in some

other sonnets too. Further the use of metaphors borrowed from nature is remarkable e.g. ‘everything that grows, the stars, plants’, selfsame sky’ and ‘sullied night’. Buddhist literature is abundant with imagery related to plants because the Buddha always lived close to them. *Dvādaśaviharaṇa Sūtra* in Chinese Buddhism mentions that there are 6400 species of fish in Jambudīpa, 4500 species of birds and 2400 species of beasts. There are 10000 species of trees, 8000 species of grass, 740 types of medicinal herbs and 43 types of aromatic plants. Out of many references to plants in the *Dhammapada*, Verses 356, 357, 358 and 359 are significant not only because of the imagery with similes that the Buddha uses, but also for the message that they convey. Here, the Buddha compares the unwholesome thoughts to weeds and illustrates how mind is destroyed by them just as the weeds damage fields.

Verse 356: Weeds damage fields; lust spoils all beings.
Therefore, giving to those free from lust yields great benefit.

Verse 357: Weeds damage fields; ill will spoils all beings.
Therefore, giving to those free from ill will yields great benefit.

Verse 358: Weeds damage fields; ignorance spoils all beings. Therefore, giving to those free from ignorance yields great benefit.

Verse 359: Weeds damage fields; covetousness spoils all beings. Therefore, giving to those free from covetousness yields great benefit.

When I do count the clock that tells the time,

And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;

When I behold the violet past prime,

And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white;

When lofty trees I see barren of leaves

Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,

(Sonnet XII)

Theme in this sonnet is 'passing of time'. Shakespeare uses the 'clock' as a symbol of time. He says 'count the clock', indicating that he is aware of the passing of time and how a person grows old, and how the youth will become an old man soon. This becomes a strong metaphor. To intensify the feeling created by this metaphor he turns to nature: the sun sinking below the horizon, 'giving way to hideous night'. 'the violets past the prime' is another impressive metaphor as well as a symbol used by the poet. This also stands for the 'prime of life' and how it withers in the old age like a violet, trees, grass, fruit etc. Similes and metaphors related to flowers are extensively included in the Puppaha Vagga of the Dhammapada. Other than the evanescence nature of flowers, the Buddha has taken use of the imagery of flowers to impart much more meaningful meaning. For instance,

Just like a beautiful flower,

which has colour, but lacks fragrance,

so are well-spoken words fruitless

for the one who acts not on them (Verse 51)

And then Verse 55 as follows gives beautiful imagery with equally beautiful message.

Sandalwood and pinwheel also

water lily and striped jasmine,

amongst these kinds of good fragrance

virtue's fragrance is unsurpassed .

Both these verses have meaningfully taken the characteristics of beautiful and fragrant flowers to compare such with qualities of good people. Just as there are many kinds of flowers which are beautiful and fragrant, beautiful but not fragrant, etc., there are different kinds of people too. And in the Verse 55, the Buddha has highlighted the importance of being virtuous by comparing it to be the most fragrant thing than the other fragrant things in the world, such as of the flowers.

Conclusion

It is obviously cleared that there is a strong amalgamation of using metaphors of nature in between Sonnets and Dhammapada. Both pieces have been talked about the nature by using metaphors selecting in various paths to make the reader to better understanding. Shakespeare and Buddha both they wanted to make a good message for the society and establish it in the peoples' mind. Shakespeare always does try to convey his idea for selected person but Buddha does not. Buddha uses metaphors in nature to realize the understanding of life. His view is broader than Shakespeare. However, their purpose is to establish their view in society to make understand the audience. Although the metaphor is a poetic technique in literature field, it has been used by Buddha also to beautify his sermons. In this way by using metaphors both literature works have fulfilled their accomplishment.

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