

# A Critical Study of Comparison of Similes and Metaphors on Nature in the Selected Shakespearean Sonnets and the Verses in the Dhammapada

කෝරාගත් ධම්මපද ගාථා හා ෂේක්ස්පියරියන් සොනට්ස්වල විද්‍යාමාන වන ස්වභාව ධර්මය හා සම්බන්ධ උපමා උපමේයයන්හි සන්සන්දනාත්මක භාවිතය පිළිබඳ විමර්ශනාත්මක අධ්‍යයනයක්

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## සාරසංකෙෂ්පය

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

ඉංග්‍රීසි සාහිත්‍යයේ නව යුගයක් බිහිකල ශේක්ස්පියර් (Shakespeare) නම් අද්විතීය සාහිත්‍යකරුවාද තම නිර්මාණ පාඨකයාට (Audience) සමීප කරලීම සඳහා විවිධ ක්‍රම ශිල්ප භාවිත කර ඇත. ඉංග්‍රීසි සාහිත්‍ය තුළ විද්‍යාමාන වන විවිධ ක්‍රම ශිල්ප (Poetic Techniques, Poetic Devices) ශේක්ස්පියර් විසින්ද බහුලව භාවිතකර ඇත. එම කාව්‍ය අලංකාර අතර උපමා හා රූපක (Similes Metaphors) වලට ප්‍රධාන තැනක් හිමි වේ. මෙම ලිපිය තුළින් මා

බලාපොරොත්තු වන්නේ බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේ තම ධර්මය ප්‍රචලිත කිරීම සඳහාත් ශේක්ස්පියර් තම පණ්ඩිතයා පාඨකයාට ඒත්තු ගැන්වීම සඳහාත් උපමා හා රූපක භාවිත කර ඇති ආකාරය පිළිබඳ පෙන්වා දීමය.

ඒ සඳහා මාගේ අධ්‍යයන පරාසය යොමු වන්නේ ධම්මපදයේ තෝරාගත් ගාථා සහ ශේක්ස්පියර් විසින් රචිත තෝරාගත් නිසැදැස් (Sonnets) සංසන්දනාත්මකව (Comparatively) අධ්‍යයනයක් කිරීමය. බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේ තම ශිෂ්‍ය පරම්පරාවට ගම කුළ හැසිරිය යුතු ආකාරය උපමාවක් මගින් දක්වා ඇති ආකාරය අති විශිෂ්ඨය “යථාපි භමරෝ පුප්ඵං” “මී මැස්සා මල නොතලා රොන් ගන්නා සේ මුනිවරයා ගම කුළ හැසිරිය යුතුය”. එමෙන්ම ශේක්ස්පියර්ද මිනිස් ශරීරය පෙණ පිඬක් යැයි පෙන්වාදී ඇත. මෙම සාහිත්‍ය නිර්මාණ ද්විත්වයම අධ්‍යයනය කොට බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේ සහ ශේක්ස්පියර් තම පණ්ඩිතයා සමාජ ගත කිරීම සඳහා උපමා හා රූපක යොදාගත් ආකාරය මෙම ලිපිය තුළින් පෙන්වාදීමට බලාපොරොත්තු වේ.

යතුරු පද:- බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේ, ශේක්ස්පියර්, උපමා, රූපක, ධම්මපදය, Sonnets

**Abstract**

Similes and metaphors are used to intensify accurate idea or meaning of a text. Simile is one of the most used literary techniques. It is quite easy to spot. A smile is a comparison between two objects. Metaphor is also a comparison. However, unlike simile, metaphor does not use the help of words such as "like" or "as" In short, metaphor is a direct comparison. Both literary techniques used by Shakespeare in the Sonnets as well as Buddha in the Dhammapada to convey their intended meaning. Although Buddha uses the techniques to show the path of Nibbana his followers, Shakespeare's intention is different and his aim is to grab the attention of the reader. Doing this research, the researcher tries to get the attention of the scholars for further research comparing two pieces. Qualitative data is

collected for this research, as well as through the bibliographic methodology. According to the qualitative research method, primary and secondary data was collected.

**Key words:-** Dhammapada, Sonnets, Simile, Metaphor, Buddha, Shakespeare.

## **Introduction**

In this study, a general discussion on the similes and metaphors found in Shakespearean sonnets was undertaken in which similes and metaphors found in the Buddhist text the Dhammapada too were considered for comparison with the sonnets of Shakespeare. This article will be expected to discuss a few selected Shakespearean sonnets and Dhammapada verses will be taken for a detailed and comparative discussion. The present research may concentrate more on the poetic features such as similes and metaphors found in the sonnets and verses of Shakespeare and the Dhammapada.

## **Literature review**

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 is 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.

Though there are plenty of researches about sonnets which have been published by various scholars, published researches of comparing between Shakespearean sonnets and Dhammapada cannot be seen in the academic field.

As a result of this finding, researcher was able to find the gap that there are lack of researches of "Comparison of Similes and Metaphors in the Shakespearean Sonnets and the Verses in the Dhammapa". Here, researcher has limited the research area as "selected sonnets and verses" to make it simpler.

### **Research question**

Have Shakespearean Sonnets and the verses in the Dhammapada employed Similes and Metaphors related to nature to present the same perspective on life, actions, merits, and sins?

The objectives of this study are to,

- Find out the similes and metaphors related to nature in both the sample works under concern.
- To analyze the imagery included in the similes and metaphors found in the samples.
- Compare the imagery found in both works to understand their references.

To unfold both pieces to the academic audience for further investigation.

### **Research methodology**

This research is based on a qualitative research and a library research.

Throughout the selected sonnets and Dhammapada verses where Shakespeare and Buddha have discussed specific concepts from life and other concepts like transients, actions, sins and merits by using similes and metaphors will be compared with together

## Comparison

There are so many instances in the Dhammapada which contains similes and metaphors which remind the reader of similes and metaphors used by the Great English bard Shakespeare. The similes and 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, unless 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 thine 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 your 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  
pacessati’ 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 sea 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.

Divā tapati adicco

ratti mabhati candima

sannaddho khattiyo tapati

jhayi 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 presenteth nought but shows  
 Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;  
 When I perceive that men as plants increase,  
 Where wasteful Time debateth 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 present- 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.

‘As he takes from you, I engraft you new.’

This means although time consumes everything, I will eternalize your image in my poems. Shakespeare, being a dramatist, imagines this whole world as a stage. All the people are acting on this stage.

‘That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows

Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;

In the play ‘As You Like it’ Shakespeare has included a verse with the same idea: ‘All the world is a stage.’ In Buddhism, although Buddha does not directly say, all the people in the world are players on a stage, he has said,

"The individual writes and performs the script for his own life'. 'You are responsible yourself or what happens to you in life. You cannot blame others for what happens to you. So do not rely upon others for your liberations. You are your own Lord'. In the drama of your life, you are the author and you are the principle character."

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

‘Oneself, indeed, is one’s saviour, 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. A number of scholars like Stephen Booth have criticized this sonnet as it has aroused much academic interest due to its language and the poet’s attitudes it suggests. One of the interesting points in the sonnet is the poet’s attempt to immortalize his love for the young man. Then this theme of immortalizing love through his ‘lines’ is repeated in the sonnets. 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 Puppā 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 give 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.**

The poetic techniques, similes and metaphors have been used in both pieces of literature Dhammapada and Sonnets to give an effective message to the reader. When someone reads the relevant works he or she can easily comprehend the lesson given by authors with similes and metaphors. Authors of the both pieces have used poetic techniques perfectly

Dhammapada and Shakespearean sonnets are well known pieces used to get the knowledge each and every occasion in day to day life. The similes and metaphors on nature are quite realistic because they came from personal experience gained from Buddha's close contact with nature as he loved the trees, mountains, forests, streams, rivers, meadows, flowers, clouds etc. as well depicted in the episodes of his life. Thus reading

Shakespeare and Dhammapada was entering into a new world and filling the mind with unique feelings. Shakespeare shows his readers, the sun, moon, stars, the sky, clouds and such things they have seen often but had not felt anything special. However when the reader sees them, in the sonnets of Shakespeare it would be from a new perspective, as if he sees them for the first time. In the Dhammapada also although the verses in general may not be so poetic, the way they see the world, trees, plants, grass, cows, horses, sky, clouds, rivers, hills, kings, farmers, cowherds etc. giving them a new meaning and value, the reader would be surprised, but ecstatic due to the pleasure her feels by reading them due to the vision of life the sonnets and the Dhammapada verses offer him.

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