



## Comparison of Two Daffodils: A Study of Perceptual Cognition of William Wordsworth and Robert Herrick

Dr. Sagar Sureshbhai Vyas (M.A., Ph.D.)  
I/c Principal,  
R.B. Patel Arts and Commerce College,  
Sanand, Gujarat, (India)

**Abstract:** *The present paper is an attempt to compare the two poems To Daffodils and The Daffodils of Robert Herrick and William Wordsworth respectively. Both the poem though composed on the same object called daffodils by two distinct poets differs in many ways in the presentation and treatment. However, both the poems share similarity to some extent. These two poems are compared on the basis of theme, rhyme scheme and style.*

**Keywords:** *Daffodils, theme, rhyme scheme, lexical features, syntactic features, 'abcddceae', 'ab ab cc'*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Both, *To Daffodils* and *The Daffodils* are the two different poems written on the same object called daffodils flower. The former is written by Robert Herrick whereas the later is designed by William Wordsworth. However, both poems differ in their treatment in many ways as they are composed by the two different poets. Robert Herrick is a predecessor to William Wordsworth. Robert Herrick did not earn much acclaim in his time but later his only collection of poems has been taken into consideration by the critics and scholars. His poems express depressed mood. In *To Daffodils*, he might have expressed his depressed mood with the allusion of daffodils. It seems that through the reference of daffodils he may express his sadness of civil war and expresses his grief for those whom he had lost in the war. He says that life is too short to live like daffodils as they grow very fast and perish also fast without the noticed by many.

Wordsworth is a very romantic and nature poet. His poems are full of joy and power. He praises and prays the Nature, as he believes that he is a child of Nature. He sits in the lap of the Nature and sings the songs of her. In his poem, *The Daffodils*, he praises the beauty of the flowers and also gives advice to the human being to enjoy the sight of beautiful nature.

### II. THEME OF THE POEMS

*To Daffodils* is a poem divided into two stanzas. In the very first stanza, Robert Herrick talks about the flower daffodils. He grieves that the human does not enjoy the beauty of the flowers as they grow very fast. The duration of their gloom is so short that it seems even the rising sun still has not reached the noon-time. Thus, in the very beginning he has struck a note of mourning at the fast dying of daffodils. The poet then addresses the daffodils and asks them to stay until the clay ends with the evening prayer. After praying together, he says that they will also accompany the daffodils. This is so because like flowers, men too have a very transient life and even the youth is also very short-lived. As he sings;

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see  
You haste away so soon;  
As yet the early-rising sun  
Has not attain'd his noon (*To Daffodils*)

In the second stanza he says;

We have short time to stay, as you,  
We have as short a spring;  
As quick a growth to meet decay,  
As you, or anything.  
We die (*To Daffodils*)

Robert Herrick symbolically refers to the youth as spring in these lines. He compares human life with the life of daffodils. Further, he says that both of them grow very fast to be destroyed later. Just like the short duration of the flowers, men too die away soon. Their life is as short as the rain of the summer season, which comes for a very short time; and the dewdrops in the morning, which vanish away and never return. Thus, the poet after comparing the flowers to humans later turns to the objects of nature – he compares the life of daffodils with summer rain, dewdrops.



Thus, Robert Herrick in the first stanza of the poem talks about *the daffodils* flowers and in the immediate stanza he compares human life with *the daffodils* flowers employing through various natural elements like rain, dew drops, summer etc.

*The Daffodils* is a poem composed by William Wordsworth divided into four stanzas. He believes that Nature is a means of salvation and spirituality. He firmly believes that Nature has all the solution of the human's problems. Unlike Robert Herrick, Wordsworth is very positive and energetic in the presentation of the daffodils. The theme of this poem i.e. *The Daffodils* is based on the healing and refreshing power of nature. Wordsworth opens the poem with simile and compares himself with the lonely wandering cloud. When he sees the beautiful golden daffodils growing beside a bay beneath the trees, he finds himself captivated by the magical beauty of the scene. Thousand of daffodils are dancing and fluttering with the light breeze. In the second stanza, the poet compares daffodils with the stars. He sings;

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance (*The Daffodils*).

The poet is so impressed by their beauty that the near-by lake whose waves are also dancing and sparkling, thus looking enchanting also captivate his attention. The poet begins to admire the mesmeric beauty of *the daffodils* and is unable to think of anything else. In fact, at that time he could not think of the great importance of the scene for him but later while lying on his couch he realizes the very great importance the scene had on him.

The ending stanza of the poem is the most important part of the poem which is considered as the essence of the poem. In this stanza, the poet speaks about the healing and refreshing effect of nature and also praises solitude. According to him, when one is in the state of solitude, one becomes retrospective and meditates on all the good and pleasurable moments which one had or which had happened to him-in his life. The speaker reveals that he not only still has the memory of the daffodils, but that he has also kept the memory of how they made him feel. He reveals this when he says;

And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
and dances with the daffodils (*The Daffodils*).

These memories have a cheerful and lively effect on him. He greatly feels happy not only with himself but also with all that happened to him. This is how nature influences him.

Thus, Wordsworth praises the beauty of the flowers and he draws the water of inspiration every time from the Nature.

### III. COMPARISON BETWEEN *TO DAFFODILS* AND *DAFFODILS*

*To Daffodils* was first published in the year of 1648 by Robert Herrick whereas *The Daffodils* of William Wordsworth was published in the year of 1802. However both the poets have dealt with the same element i.e. daffodils, they differ from each other in their presentation and treatment of the theme. From the beginning to the end of the poem, Wordsworth differs from Herrick in many ways such as in the numbers of line, selection of words, figure of speech, metre, rhyme scheme, mood, phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic style. In the present paper, the researcher compares these two poems on the basis of above mentioned parameters.

Robert Herrick makes an analogy between the life of *the daffodils* and the short life span of humans. In this poem, the poet laments on the short life of the human and says that the life is so short that it ends without being noticed. As he moves gradually in the poem, he turns to the nature and employs natural elements like season, dewdrops, rain. As in the nature, any season does not remain for the long time in the same way, human life is mortal and it ends all of sudden. Nobody knows what will happen to the next moment. The poet by employing the allusion of daffodils points out at the various developing stages of the life i.e. birth, youth and death as any flower has its growth in these three stages. Wordsworth does not compare the human life with *the daffodils* on the contrary; he compares himself with the lonely wandering cloud. He freely praises the beauty of the nature. By comparing the two poems, it seems that Wordsworth does not want to preach the human being like Robert Herrick. Wordsworth believes in the principle of Art for Art Sake whereas Herrick believes in the principle of Art for Life Sake.

#### 3.1 Rhyme Scheme

Herrick composed his poem into two stanzas having total twenty lines and ten lines in each stanza. The poet has employed alternative stressed, unstressed syllabus and irregular lines in the poem. Such kind of composition creates the rhythm of the poem or in other words, the meters of the poem. Poem has end rhymes and the poet cuts and separates the fifth lines of both stanzas into two lines to achieve the form of rhyme and rhythm. The rhyme scheme of the poem is 'abcbbdceae'.

Fair daffodils, we weep to see  
You haste away so soon;  
As yet the early-rising sun



Has not attain'd his noon.  
Stay, stay (*To Daffodils*)

Wordsworth composed his poem into four stanzas having total twenty-four lines and each stanza has six lines. In each stanza, the first line rhymes with the third and the second with the fourth. The stanza then ends with a rhyming couplet. Thus, throughout the poem, we find 'ab ab cc' rhyme scheme. The poet has also put the element of alliteration in the poem.

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze (*The Daffodils*).

In the above stanza we find alliteration in 'lonely as a cloud', 'high o'er vales and hills.', 'when all at once', ('w' and 'o' have the same consonant sound in this phrase), 'beside the lake, beneath the trees' in respective lines. Wordsworth unifies the content of the poem by focusing the first three stanzas on the experience at the lake and the last stanza on the memory of that experience.

### 3.2 Lexical Features

Herrick uses accurate, vivid, expressive and plentiful words to convey the meaning of the poem. Poet uses 'haste away', 'growth to meet decay', 'die', 'dry Away' etc expressions to describe the brevity of the daffodils' life. Here the poet also personifies *the daffodils* and his use of the word 'decay', 'die', and 'dry' evoke a note of melancholy in his poem which arises out of the realization that beauty of *the daffodils* as well as all beauties are not going to stay forever.

Wordsworth personifies *the daffodils* in the poem. The poet uses individual words and phrases in different patterns in different linguistic context. In the first stanza, the poet used contrast between "lonely" and "crowd" & "o'er" and "beneath". The poet used contrast words to stress and emphasize the meaning. This poem contains four stanzas and all are talking about poet's imagination on nature. The Poet uses maximum nature related words. The poet describes nature by describing *the daffodils* and comparing them to stars and waves. He is also writing about himself in relation to nature. Nature is a source of happiness.

### 3.3 Syntactic Features

Herrick used simple English so it can be clearly understood by even average readers. With his simple language, the poet has painted the cycle of daffodils' life in a beautiful way. There are no very strange and complicated sentences in this poem. Most of the sentences obey the grammar rules. As the poet personifies the daffodils, the poem develops as a conversation between the poet and the daffodils. There is also an imperative sentence in the poem such as 'Stay, stay', which makes the expression more forceful and convincing.

Like Herrick, Wordsworth also used simple language in his poems. He is considered to be a poet of simple language. He believes that the language of the poem must be simple and pure so everyone can enjoy the essence of the poem. In his *The Daffodils* he also uses very simple English. He uses very simple words like lonely, cloud, vales, hills, crowd, golden daffodils, lake, beneath, breeze, stars, milky way, bay, tossing, glee, gay, couch, inward eye, pleasure fills etc. Clauses, phrases, words, nouns, verbs, in a sentence of any language need to be distinguished and put through in analysis to find out the foregrounding and the deviation. The poet likes to begin each stanza by using a complete sentence and he expands it by using elaborate predicates. The title of the poem itself is in a complete sentence.

## IV. CONCLUSION

After comparing both the poem on the same title of Robert Herrick and William Wordsworth it can be concluded that both the poets differ from each other in the treatment of the daffodils. They are similar in the presentation of language and words. Both the poets use simple English so even average readers can easily understand the intention of the poems. Herrick laments on the fast melting life through the allusion of daffodils whereas Wordsworth sings the beauty of daffodils and the sight of the thousands of daffodils gives pleasures to him until the life ends.

## REFERENCES

1. Wordsworth, William. *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth: The Daffodils*, Wordsworth Editions, 1994.
2. *Pinnacles: A Textbook for College Students*. Herrick, Robert: *The Dafodils*, Macmillan Education, 2017.
3. <https://poemanalysis.com/daffodils-william-wordsworth-poem-analysis/>
4. <http://assets.vmu.ac.in/BAEG03.pdf>
5. <https://karinacognomen.com/2009/11/14/short-analysis-of-robert-herricks-to-daffodils/>
6. <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/html/1807/4350/poem1002.html>