



## National Journal of Hindi & Sanskrit Research

ISSN: 2454-9177

NJHSR 2025; 1(63): 208-211

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## “Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower”: A Romantic Vision of Life, Death, and Nature’s Education

Jayantakumar Panda

### Abstract

William Wordsworth’s “Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower”, also titled “The Education of Nature”, presents a moving synthesis of poetic beauty and spiritual depth. This research explores the poem through the lens of literary devices, Romantic form, and its alignment with Vedantic and Upanishadic wisdom. Central to the poem is Nature’s nurturing role in shaping the young Lucy into an ideal being, embodying serenity, beauty, and divine harmony. Her death is not viewed as a tragedy but as a return to the eternal rhythm of Nature, akin to the soul’s merger with Brahman in Advaita Vedanta. Drawing from the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Vachanamrut, and the Shrimad Bhagavatam, the analysis uncovers the poem’s profound philosophical resonance with Hindu thought, particularly its non-dualistic, spiritual view of life, education, and death. Through this confluence of Romantic literature and Sanātana Dharma, the poem becomes a contemplative meditation on the eternal soul, the role of divine nature, and the beauty of spiritual transformation.

### Preface

Poetry, at its best, not only stirs the emotions but also mirrors the deeper truths of existence. William Wordsworth, a master of English Romanticism, found the sacred in the simple and the eternal in the everyday. “Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower” is a delicate yet profound poetic reflection on the soul’s journey through life under the guardianship of Nature. At its heart lies a spiritual narrative that transcends cultural and religious boundaries.

This study aims to uncover the philosophical and metaphysical layers of Wordsworth’s poem by examining it through the prism of ancient Hindu wisdom. The Upanishads speak of the soul’s unity with the cosmos, the Bhagavad Gita teaches us the imperishable nature of the self, and the Vachanamrut reminds us of God’s immanence in creation. All these teachings find surprising echoes in Wordsworth’s lines.

This work is offered as an interdisciplinary exploration—where poetry, philosophy, and scripture meet. It seeks not only to interpret a literary masterpiece but also to build bridges between the Western Romantic imagination and the spiritual legacy of the East.

### 1. Literary Devices and Figures of Speech

Wordsworth masterfully weaves a variety of literary devices to enrich the poem’s emotional and philosophical depth:

- **Personification:** The most dominant device is the personification of Nature, which takes on the role of a conscious, nurturing being who chooses Lucy to be her own and raise her. (“This Child I to myself will take, / She shall be mine...”)

- **Imagery:** The poem is saturated with vivid imagery—“sun and shower,” “floating clouds,” “stars of midnight,” “rivulets dance”—all evoke the natural world’s beauty and tranquility.
- **Metaphor:** Lucy is compared to a “flower” and later shaped by nature like a work of art—this elevates her to a spiritual ideal.
- **Simile:** “She shall be sportive as the fawn” – highlights her innocence and vitality.
- **Alliteration:** Phrases like “silent sympathy” and “breathing balm” create musicality and emphasis.
- **Symbolism:** Lucy symbolizes innocence, purity, and humanity’s harmonious potential with nature.
- **Irony:** Despite Nature’s grand plan, Lucy dies young—this creates a powerful emotional irony.
- **Oxymoron:** The line “mute insensate things” combines silence with sentience, suggesting spiritual communication beyond human understanding.

## 2. Structure and Form

- **Rhyme Scheme:** The poem largely follows an **AABCCB** or **ABABCC** rhyme scheme, providing a melodic and reflective rhythm.
- **Meter and Rhythm:** The poem is primarily written in **iambic tetrameter**, which gives a flowing and measured pace that mirrors the calmness of nature.
- **Stanza and Line Breaks:** The use of six-line stanzas (sestets) enables a compact development of imagery and emotion in each segment.
- **Enjambment:** Used throughout, especially in descriptive sections, which allows ideas and feelings to overflow across lines, mimicking the boundless continuity of nature.

## 3. Theme and Subject Matter

The poem explores several interconnected themes:

- **Nature as a teacher and nurturer** – Nature’s intent to raise Lucy is central.
- **Innocence and growth** – Lucy represents childhood and natural development.
- **Death and Transience** – Despite Nature’s design, Lucy’s life ends prematurely.
- **Unity of man and nature** – The girl is shaped by the elements around her.
- **Romantic idealism** – The poem reflects the Romantic belief in the spiritual power of nature.

## 4. Tone and Mood

- **Tone:** The tone is **contemplative and serene**, with moments of tender admiration. The final stanza brings a tone of **sorrow and quiet resignation**.
- **Mood:** The reader is drawn into a world of **natural beauty**, then made to feel the poignant **loss and solitude** that follows Lucy’s death.

## 5. Philosophical and Spiritual Interpretation

Wordsworth’s poem aligns with:

- **Romanticism:** The glorification of nature as a moral and spiritual guide is quintessentially Romantic.
- **Vedantic and Upanishadic thought:**
  - Nature as a divine force reflects the **Prakriti-Purusha** duality of the **Sankhya philosophy**, where Nature (Prakriti) nurtures and interacts with consciousness.
  - The **Isha Upanishad** says: “All this—whatever exists in this changing universe—is pervaded by the Lord.” Nature’s involvement in human life echoes this unity.
  - **Bhagavad Gita (Ch. 10.20):**<sup>1</sup> “I am the Self, O Gudakesha, seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings.” Lucy’s education by Nature echoes the omnipresence of the divine.
  - The **Vachanamrut** (Gadhada I-1) explains that God’s power permeates everything, just as Nature pervades Lucy’s being.
- The poem suggests a **non-dualistic** worldview—where soul and nature are not in conflict but exist in symbiotic harmony.
- **Moral Value:** The poem champions **simplicity, purity, and a life attuned to the rhythms of nature**.

William Wordsworth’s poem “**Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower**”, also titled “**The Education of Nature**,” beautifully aligns with **Upanishadic and Vedantic** wisdom and reflects deep **Hindu spiritual insights** from scriptures like the **Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Vachanamrut**, and the **Shrimad Bhagavatam**. Below is a comprehensive analysis connecting the poem’s core ideas with **Sanatana Dharma**:

### 1. Nature as Divine Educator and Manifestation of Ishwara

Wordsworth personifies **Nature as a conscious, nurturing, and divine force**, which is perfectly aligned with **Vedantic teachings**.

#### Scriptural Parallels:

- **Isha Upanishad (Verse 1):**<sup>2</sup>

*“Īśāvāsyam idam sarvaṁ yat kiñca jagatyām jagat”*

*“All this—whatever exists in this moving world—is pervaded by the Lord.”*

— The poem envisions Nature as a living, divine force that takes responsibility for Lucy’s growth. This reflects the Vedantic idea that **Ishwara (God)** pervades all of nature and orchestrates the development of all beings.

- **Taittiriya Upanishad (2.1):**<sup>3</sup>

*“From Brahman arises space, from space air, from air fire, from fire water, from water earth, and from earth plants, food, and finally human beings.”*

— Lucy, being raised by Nature, is part of this divine chain of manifestation. Her education is the unfolding of **Brahman’s plan through Prakriti** (nature).

### 2. Unity of Atman and Brahman

Nature’s desire to “take Lucy to herself” and integrate her into the eternal rhythm of the natural world reflects the **Advaita Vedanta** principle: **Atman (individual soul) is ultimately non-different from Brahman (universal soul)**.

#### Scriptural Parallels:

• **Chandogya Upanishad (6.8.7):<sup>4</sup>**

*"Tat Tvam Asi" – "Thou art That"*

— Lucy's soul, molded by Nature and then absorbed into it, symbolizes the **soul's return to its cosmic source**, echoing the truth that we are not separate from the Divine.

• **Mundaka Upanishad (3.2.9):<sup>5</sup>**

*"Just as rivers flow into the ocean and lose their name and form, the illumined soul, freed from name and form, merges with the divine."*

— Lucy's death is not a loss but a **return**, a **spiritual merger with the divine**, just as described in the Upanishads.

**3. Education Through Sattvic Qualities**

The poem emphasizes **serenity, harmony, beauty, calmness, and vital delight** — all of which are **sattvic** qualities in **Vedantic philosophy**, conducive to spiritual growth.

**Scriptural Parallels:**

• **Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 14, Verse 6):<sup>6</sup>**

*"Sattvam sukhe sanjayati jñānam"*

*"Sattva binds the soul with happiness and knowledge."*

— Lucy's education involves **experiencing joy through natural beauty, silence, and purity**, embodying a **sattvic life** that uplifts the soul.

• **Vachanamrut, Gadhada I-18:**

*"When one reflects on the virtues of God or the creation of nature, divine joy is experienced. This joy purifies the mind and leads to God-realisation."*

— The poem reflects this directly: Lucy is immersed in the divine play of clouds, stars, wind, and storm—learning through experience and harmony with creation.

**4. Death as Transformation, Not End**

The poem ends with Lucy's death, but Wordsworth presents it as a **peaceful return to Nature**, not as annihilation—very much in harmony with **Vedantic views on death**.

**Scriptural Parallels:**

• **Bhagavad Gita (2.20):<sup>7</sup>**

*"The soul is never born, nor does it ever die; it is eternal, ever-existing, and primeval. It is not slain when the body is slain."*

— Lucy's soul continues, having been formed and beautified by Nature. Her physical end does not mark spiritual loss.

• **Shrimad Bhagavatam (11.14.43):<sup>8</sup>**

*"Just as a flame can be absorbed into the fire from which it arose, so too the soul, once purified, merges into the Supreme."*

— Lucy's being becomes one with the eternal nature—just like a flame merging with the fire.

**5. Nature as God's Power (Shakti or Prakriti)**

In the poem, Nature is **feminine, creative, and intelligent**—this closely parallels the **Hindu understanding of Prakriti or Shakti**, the **divine mother** who nourishes and transforms.

**Scriptural Parallels:**

• **Bhagavad Gita (9.10):<sup>9</sup>**

*"This material nature is working under My direction, O son of Kunti, and is producing all moving and nonmoving beings."*

— Nature is not inert—it is divinely guided. In the poem, it acts intentionally and compassionately.

• **Devi Bhagavatam:**

*"The Goddess is both the creative force and the one who nurtures and dissolves all."*

— Lucy's rise and death under Nature's care echo this cycle of **creation and dissolution**, under the watchful eye of the **Mother aspect of the Divine**.

**6. Lucy as a Jiva Journeying to Moksha**

Lucy is symbolic of the **Jiva (individual soul)**, whose journey begins in innocence, grows in harmony with Nature, and ends in **absorption or liberation**.

**Scriptural Parallels:**

• **Katha Upanishad (2.3.14):<sup>10</sup>**

*"When all desires clinging to one's heart fall away, then the mortal becomes immortal and attains Brahman here."*—

Lucy's tranquil departure suggests this attainment of peace and **release from worldly bondage**. **Vachanamrut, Gadhada I-37:**

*"One who realizes God in this life lives in the body, but is free from bondage, and upon death attains Akshardham."*— Wordsworth's Lucy embodies **a soul that lived in simplicity, beauty, and surrender**—ready for the highest liberation.

**Conclusion**

Wordsworth's **"Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower"** is not merely a Romantic elegy—it is a profound **spiritual allegory** of the soul's education by **Divine Nature**, its growth through **sattvic harmony**, and its **merger with the eternal**.

The poem beautifully parallels Vedantic and Hindu teachings on:

- The **divine intelligence of Nature**,
- The **non-duality of soul and cosmos**,
- The **impermanence of the physical**,
- And the **immortality of the self**.

It shows that real education—the **education of Nature**—leads the soul beyond personality into **universal existence**, just as the **Upanishads** and **Bhagavad Gita** proclaim.

**6. Historical and Cultural Context**

• **Written in 1798**, during the early Romantic period in England.

- A part of the “**Lucy Poems**,” which were deeply personal to Wordsworth.
- Reaction to **Industrialization**: The poem is a response to the disconnection from nature caused by the Industrial Revolution.
- Reflects Romanticism’s ideals: **emotional intensity, nature-worship, and individualism**.
- Echoes the **pastoral tradition** yet transcends it with a deeper philosophical introspection.

### 7. Poet’s Perspective and Emotional Mindset

- Wordsworth was emotionally affected by the death of his younger sister or possibly a lost muse—**Lucy’s identity remains mysterious**.
- The poem reflects **grief sublimated into artistic expression**.
- Wordsworth’s own childhood experiences in the Lake District may have inspired the deep communion with nature shown in the poem.
- The sense of **loss** is not one of despair but of **quiet, meditative melancholy**, in tune with Romantic idealism.

### 8. Target Audience and Purpose

- **Target Audience**: Educated readers, nature lovers, and those reflecting on life, death, and the role of the divine in everyday experiences.
- **Purpose**:
  - To immortalize Lucy.
  - To present Nature as both **educator and spiritual force**.
  - To help the reader accept loss as part of the eternal rhythm of life.
  - To remind humanity of its **deep, often forgotten, connection to nature**.

### 9. Personal Interpretation

“Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower” offers a moving exploration of **life, growth, and inevitable mortality** through the metaphor of a child nurtured by Nature. While it may appear sorrowful due to Lucy’s early death, the poem’s enduring message lies in the **celebration of spiritual unity between humans and nature**.

From a **Vedantic lens**, Lucy’s absorption into Nature is akin to the **atma (soul)** merging with **Brahman** (universal consciousness). Her life, though brief, achieves a **transcendental union**, suggesting that real education lies not in human institutions, but in **living harmoniously with divine Nature**.

For the reader, the poem offers a **reflection on impermanence**, but also the comfort that life, when aligned with higher forces, is never truly lost. It is an elegy that uplifts rather than depresses, teaching that **death is not an end, but a transformation**.

### Conclusion

“Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower” is not merely an elegy to a lost child—it is a lyrical meditation on the eternal journey of the soul. Lucy’s growth under the watchful eye of Nature is symbolic of the soul’s divine education under the cosmic order. Her death is not final but a return—a moksha-like release into the embrace of the Absolute.

Wordsworth’s poetic vision, when viewed through the lens of Vedantic philosophy, reveals a striking spiritual alignment. The unity of Atman and Brahman, the role of Prakriti as a conscious shakti, the Sattvic path of natural growth, and the bliss of spiritual dissolution are all themes that echo across the poem and Hindu scripture alike.

In a world increasingly distanced from nature and the spirit, this poem stands as a gentle reminder of the sacred interdependence between the human soul and the divine cosmos. It invites us to rediscover the timeless wisdom that lies in the rustling of leaves, the murmuring of streams, and the quiet surrender of the self to something far greater. In Lucy’s short life, we witness an eternal truth: that to live in harmony with Nature is to live in harmony with the Divine.

### References

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अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च || 20||
- 2 ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।  
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृध्रः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥ १ ॥
- 3 ब्रह्मविदाप्रोति परम् ॥ १ ॥
- 4 स य एषोऽणिमैतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वं तत्सत्यं स आत्मा तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो  
इति भूय एव मा भगवान्विज्ञापयत्विति तथा सोम्येति होवाच ॥ ६.८.७  
॥  
इति अष्टमः खण्डः ॥
- 5 स यो ह वै तत् परमं ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति नास्याब्रह्मवित्कुले भवति ।  
तरति शोकं तरति पाप्मानं गुहाग्रन्थिभ्यो विमुक्तोऽमृतो भवति ॥ ९ ॥
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सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ || 6||
- 7 न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचि  
नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः |  
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो  
न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे || 20||
- 8 तत् सर्वव्यापकं चित्तमाकृष्यैकत्र धारयेत् ।  
नान्यानि चिन्तयेद् भूयः सुमितं भावयेन्मुखम् ॥ ४३ ॥
- 9 मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सृयते सचराचरम् ।  
हेतुनानेन कौन्तेय जगद्विपरिवर्तते ॥ १० ॥
- 10 यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।  
अथ मर्त्यो मृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥ १४ ॥