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### WORDSWORTH ENVIRONMENTALISM REFLECTED IN HIS LUCY POEMS

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#### ABSTRACT—

The present paper intends to explore Wordsworth's environmentalism in his Lucy Poems. Wordsworth is regarded as the poet of nature. His philosophy of nature shows his environmentalism. His philosophy and love of nature poses the problem of conservation, love of nature includes all these aspects of environmentalism. It is the major concern of the present paper to study his Lucy poems in the light of the philosophy of environmentalism. The interpretative, analytical and evaluative methods are research.



preservation and protection of nature. Environmentalism is a broad concept and philosophy which concerns the environment of health of environment. It also deals with the impact of changes to the environment on humans, animals, plants and non-living things also. It stresses need to control pollution. Wordsworth's

**KEY WORDS:** Environmentalism, Conservation, preservation, protection, improvement, pollution, nature.

#### INTRODUCTION :

William Wordsworth (1770-1850), famous English poet is one of the greatest lyrical poets of the 19th century. He is one of the major poets of the Romantic Movement. He 'was born in Cumberland and had his education at the grammar school of Hawks head and St. John's College, Cambridge. He visited France in 1792, welcomed the French Revolution, and was enthusiastic of the new movement. In France, he had a love-affair with Annette Wallon. Afterwards, he lost his enthusiasm for the revolution and in later years increasingly conservative in his political views and orthodox in his religion. In 1795, he received a legacy which made him adopt literature as his profession. He married his cousin Mary Hutchinson and settled down at Rydal Mount near Grasmere in the Lake District, a beautiful area in the north-west of England. In 1843 he was appointed Poet Laureate of England and he died in 1850.

The poetical output of Wordsworth was enormous. Some of his well known poems are The Prelude, The ode on Immortality, To The Cuckoo, Lucy Gray, The Solitary Reaper, His Ode to Duty etc. He wrote some lovely sonnets, which contain much of his best work. Many of his poems describe the beauty of Nature in the Lake District and the lives of the ordinary people there.

As a poet Wordsworth is noted for his extraordinary love of nature and country life. He did not love nature for her beautiful sounds and sights, but for the feelings of joy and calmness and spiritual strength which she roused in him. He hated the artificial life of the cities and loved the simple life of the rustics. He is also known for his humanitarianism, his early sympathy with democratic liberalism and his interest in the common speech of the common people. He loved and worshipped nature as a goddess and hence he is called the high priest of nature. He believed that there was essentially no difference between the language of poetry and that of prose. His style, at its best, is noted for its extreme simplicity and naturalness.

### LUCY POEMS

There are five poems in which Lucy is referred to. The Lucy poems were written about 1799 at Goslar (Germany). The poet was very lonely at that time. The Lucy poems are sad and Lucy's death is mentioned. The Lucy poems are the love-lyrics said to have been based on personal experience. If so, it is probable that the poet recaptures the memories of some boyhood love. The name 'Lucy' should not be mistaken with 'Lucy Gray' another poem named after a girl.

Wordsworth never clearly explained who the girl Lucy was. Lucy's identity has been the subject of exhaustive critical discussion. Some critics think that Lucy was Annette Vallon whom Wordsworth loved in France. But others do not agree with this view and think that Lucy stands for Wordsworth's sister, Dorothy. But these two ladies did not die young and hence these two references are not acceptable. It appears that Lucy had been loved and lost in her early age. Hence, some critics identify Lucy with Mary Hutchinson, who was a friend of Dorothy and who died, of consumption in her early life. Geoffrey Durrant does not agree with the attempt to identify Lucy with some living persons and remarks that 'there is no reason to suppose that Wordsworth had any particular person in mind'

We can, however, reach certain conclusions about Lucy from these five poems, 'Lucy is a young girl and dies in her youth. She lives in the company of Nature. Nature educates her mind and shapes her body. Lucy might be an English peasant girl. Once the poet went riding on horse-back to her cottage, on this occasion the moon set and the poet thought that this suggested Lucy's end. She died just at that time. The poet calls himself a lover of the girl. After her death she is absorbed among the powers of Nature.' The Lucy poems reveal that the poet considered nature as an embodiment of divine glory. The poems are elegiac in tone and character as they deal with the mystery of death and consequent grief. The poems lucidly reveal the deep insight of the poet into the life Lucy and his overflow of feeling for her. The sum total of the Lucy poems is that Lucy has attained immortality by becoming one with Nature.

### In poem I, 'Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known'

The poet describes how he once visited his beloved's cottage in a dream. He looked at the setting moon and took his horse to the cottage of Lucy. But as soon as he reached it, the moon disappeared behind the cottage. He felt shocked and thought that the setting moon suggested Lucy's death.

The poem is a simple but beautiful lyric written in an effective manner. The poet narrates his dream-experience. He does not describe Lucy, but her youth and charms are aptly suggested. He compares her with 'a rose in June' (use of simile). The poet's journey is described in vivid words of progress. The words 'the wide lea', 'the Orchard Plot' and 'the hill' suggest that Lucy lived in the distant country-side. The mention of her cottage suggests her humble origins. It is a dream-experience and the poet describes sleep 'Kind Nature's gentlest boon I' which shows his apt use of metaphor. Lucy does not appear in the poem, but her presence is felt all through the poem.

### Poem II : 'I travelled among unknown Men'.

This is the second Lucy poem that was written in 1799 when Wordsworth, returned from Germany. He did not much enjoy his stay in Germany and afterwards remembered his sojourn abroad as a 'melancholy dream' In the poem he says that he remembered Lucy when he was abroad. He felt the absence of Lucy very keenly. Now that he has come back, the sad dream has ended. Wordsworth does not

wish to go away again. It was the English mountain-side that gave him his experience of love. His beloved i.e. Lucy was English by birth and she lived by spinning. Her associations have made England dear to him. He has now realised how much he loved England and therefore he resolves that he would not leave England a second time. The poet remembers the bowers where Lucy played. He says that English field was the last green thing she saw. Hence England is dear to him for the sake of Lucy. The poem is written in a simple stanza of four lines with alternate rhymes. Simplicity of style and diction is the most remarkable characteristic of the poem.

### Poem III : 'She dwelt among the untrodden ways'

The poem was written in Germany in 1799, but published in 1800. It tells the story of Lucy's growth, perfection and death. Who Lucy was is not known as Wordsworth has left no record of the history of his emotional life. The poem arouses our pity and is an example of Wordsworth's gift of pathos. The poem is the most perfect in the whole range of English love-song. It combines the depth of emotion with great economy of expression and its diction is quite simple.

Wordsworth tells us that Lucy lived a lonely life by the spring of the river Dove. The place where she lived was not frequented by people. There was no one to praise her beauty. There were very few people to love her. She was as lovely as a violet flower beside, a mossy stone half-hidden from the sight of the people. She was as fair as a single star shining in the sky. She lived unknown throughout her life and hence, nobody came to know when she died. She is no more alive and her death has made a great difference to him. The last stanza has a poignant expression of the poet's deep attachment to Lucy. Himself and Lucy are one soul in two bodies. The only difference is that he is alive but she is not. The poem contains two beautiful and significant similes when Wordsworth compares Lucy with a violet and a single star shining in the sky respectively. He beautifully conveys Lucy's sweetness through these two similes.

### Poem IV : 'Three years She grew in sun and shower'

OR

#### The Education of Nature

Wordsworth is rightly regarded as a poet of Nature. His greatness consists in his philosophy of Nature. Stated broadly, it means that Nature is living; and as the same principle runs through man and Nature, man can learn from Nature. In this philosophy of Wordsworth, the poem 'Three Years She Grew' is naturally an important one. 'The Education of Nature' is another title of this poem which is meaningful and more appropriate as it directly states the theme of the poem. The educative influence of Nature is the theme. In this poem, Nature is personified, and she says that she would take up the education of Lucy, a girl of three, in her hands and make her a lady of Nature. -Lucy is taken up by Mother Nature to be educated in her care with reasonable control. Nature promises to make Lucy a lady of her own — almost a perfect woman. All her emotions and her actions will be guided by nature. Lucy would be sportive like the fawn. She would learn dignity from the clouds and she would be supple like the willow. She would have beauty and fascination in her face as found in the midnight sky and in the murmur of the rivulets. Thus various objects in Nature would not only mould her beauty but teach her moral principles. At the end of the poem, Wordsworth says that Lucy became a perfect woman; but unfortunately she died soon after. The poet is filled with grief as his hopes and aspirations are shattered to pieces. The poem brings together a feeling for Nature and a touching personal reference. It is remarkable for the beauty of imagery. It contains a beautiful simile when the poet says 'she shall be sportive as the fawn' and also a metaphor when he says 'a lovelier flower on earth was never born'. The poem has a smooth, musical flow of tender feeling. The poem, thus, shows us how a child is certain to grow into a perfect specimen of humanity, if it is left to the care of Nature.

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**Poem V : 'A slumber Did My Spirit Seal'**

This is the last of the series of poems called 'The Lucy Poems'. The key-note of this short poem is immortality. Wordsworth, here, seems to think that Lucy was a thing apart from the ordinary conditions on the earth; however, Lucy; in her death, has become a part of the earth's daily rotation.

Wordsworth says that he lived in a slumber of the mind with the gates of perception closed. Nothing on the earth would make him fearful. Lucy was so young and cheerful that she seemed to him to be above the conditions of mortal existence. He thought that she was invested with a special immunity and was not subject to time. But now she is dead and no longer alive. Her seeing, hearing and moving have stopped. Her spirit has now entered the rocks, stones, and trees of the earth. She moves round the earth as a part of Nature. In her death she has become so much a part of the earth that she is rolled round with it like the rocks and trees and stones. Thus, the poet's idea came true in a different sense.

The five Lucy poems are full of mystery, but they illustrate Wordsworth's theory of education of man by Nature. They also combine the depth of emotion with a strict economy of expression. They are models of simplicity and pathos. They are truly Wordsworthian as they set forth the simplest incidents and things in the simplest manner and language.

**CONCLUSION:**

Wordsworth's love of nature includes all these aspects of environmentalism. It is the major concern of the present paper to study his Lucy poems in the light of the philosophy of environmentalism.

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