

## **B.A. First Year**

### **Discuss Charles Lamb as an essayist**

Charles Lamb is a shining star in the sky of English essay. He is called the prince among English essayists. His essays are the finest in English prose. He brought to prose the finest qualities of Romanticism. Lamb's readers appreciate him for his wisdom, for his humanity, for his genial humour, for his profound pathos, for his sweet temperament and for his style.

**BEGINNING:** Born in a lower class family, Lamb came in contact with Coleridge. He started his career as a poet but could not succeed. He acquired immortal recognition as an essayist. From 1820 to 1833, essay writing was his main occupation. He wrote under the pseudonym of Elia. His first essay appeared in the London Magazine in 1820. The first volume of his essays was published in 1823 as *Essays Of Elia* and the second as the *Last Essays Of Elia* in 1833. Each essay of Lamb is a little wonder. Here we find a fine combination of wit, fancy, anecdote and reflection. According to Cazamian, he is above all an artist.

**PERSONAL AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENT:** Lamb's essays are personal and autobiographical. They reflect his nobility of his soul, his good nature, his simplicity, his geniality and his charity. Lamb talks about his relatives, friends and acquaintances. But he is silent about the murder of his mother for the sake of his sister. It was she who killed Lamb's mother. He often changes the name of his relations and mystifies the character by blending facts with fiction. Such deviations do not alter the truth. He is friendly and intimate with the reader. He takes him into his confidence on private affairs. He frankly tells us about his childhood, his boyhood and his manhood. Throughout his essays he remains uniquely personal and autobiographical. His humanity is visible everywhere. Though the essays are autobiographical, Lamb never gives the impression of being vain or proud. He is greatest egoist without the touch of egotism.

**VARIETY OF THEME:** Lamb's essays exhibit infinite variety. Here is God's plenty. His essays satisfy the appetite of every taste. In his essays Lamb reveals himself. He is a visualiser of memories. His essays give a glimpse into his life and thought. The essay 'Dream Children' is noted for its autobiographical description. It is a reverie. The reason behind the creation of this essay is the death of his brother John. It unveils the author's soul. It is full of pathos. 'A Bachelor's Complaint' is also an autobiographical and humorous essay. Here Lamb describes various oddities of the married couples.

**HUMOUR AND PATHOS:** As a humorist Lamb is unsurpassable in English prose. There is no humorist more original than Lamb. His style is an expression of his humour. He often interrupted a grave discussion with a light jest. His essays are marked with all shades of humour and delicate irony. Puns, absurd details, funny situations and boisterous laughter usually occur in his essays. There are even harmless strokes of fun at him and at others. The element of humour is balanced with a tinge of sadness and a vein of reflectiveness. Pathos is an essential aspect of his humour. It is a consciousness of the pathetic in life that made him laugh. He laughed to save himself from weeping. Nostalgia and wistful longing often underlie his laughter. In short, Lamb's humour is a blend of jest and tears. 'The Dream Children' is remarkable for its blend of humour and pathos.

**LAMB'S STYLE:** Lamb's style is the expression of his personality. His style is inimitable. His essays have the charm of poetry. Conversational ease, epigrammatic depth, emotional flexibility, reminiscent allusiveness all mark the essays of Elia. Lamb's style is natural and original. He is remarkably influenced by the 17th century writers like Brown, Burton and Fuller. He often used obsolete latinised words. Allusiveness is a marked feature of his style. He often quotes from the old writers to express his feelings. Lamb makes frequent use of irony and pun. J. C. Powys writes, 'Elia's style is the only thing in English prose that can be called absolutely perfect.'

**CONCLUSION:** Thus Lamb is the finest and most charming of all English essayists. He brought perfection to art of essay writing. It is Lamb who combines all the essential elements of essay writing in his essays with great artistic excellence. In short, Lamb's essays have been a perennial source of interest and delight to all the readers of English literature. Lamb remains one of the best-loved essayists of English literature not only for the nobility of his life and gentleness of heart but also for producing a body of literature unique in value.

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