

Charles Lamb: Prince of English Essayists

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Abstract-

This paper covers how the renowned English writer Charles Lamb became an essayist and why he is regarded as the prince among English essayists. The position of Charles Lamb as the unique one among other essay authors of his day has been admired throughout the history of English essay writing. His essays include a wide range of topics, including autobiography, humanitarianism, profound sadness, lyrical quality, and mystification. His essays are an intimate reflection of his ideas, life, and temperament. In his essays, he described Lamb himself.

Keywords: autobiographical, familiarity, variety of theme, poetic style, humour

Introduction:

Charles Lamb wore many hats as a writer, devoting his early career to poetry and writing *Tales from Shakespeare*, a well-known version of Shakespeare's plays for children. However, as a writer, Lamb is perhaps most renowned for his contributions to the essay form. Lamb published his essays a little more than 200 years after Michel de Montaigne's *Essays*, which established the blueprint for the essay as we know it today. As a Romantic, Lamb made a significant addition to the relatively new form, injecting his own personal experiences to give the essays a conversational tone.

Lamb's writings reveal his passions and fears, giving nonfiction a personal and literary dimension. In fact, many of his writings blur the border between fiction and nonfiction, employing methods such as dream or gradually exposed deception to make readers question the validity of what they are reading. This move serves a dual purpose in Lamb's writings, reminding the reader of the author's humanity while also injecting some energy into a sort of writing that can sound stuffy and blandly philosophical.

The Elia persona appears to have given Lamb permission to fictionalise his life just enough for him to feel comfortable writing about it. While we have little reason to believe many of the facts in these essays are mystified, Lamb's choice of a pseudonym for himself meant that he could assign pseudonyms to others in his life and shift their relationship to himself ever so slightly to better fit the purpose of an essay. As a result, when he talks about this brother John in "Dream-Children; A Reverie," he may simply claim that John died rather than mentioning their real-life estrangement. The imaginative licence used there, benefits the essay about Lamb's fantasy life better, allowing him to explore the maze of dream life without being too engrossed in sad reality. His essays demonstrate Montaigne and Cowley's eloquent style. He was called "the Prince of English Essayists". His essays express human nature, sweetness of heart, humour, profound pathos, and the entirety of man's life experiences. Hugh Walker liked Lamb's essay writing prowess. –

"There are essayists like Bacon, of more massive greatness, and others like Sir Thomas Browne, who can attain loftier heights of eloquence, but there is no other who has in an equal degree the power to charm. If an attempt to be made to discover the secret of this power, it will be found that first and chief among the factors contributory to it is the incomparable sweetness of disposition which Lamb not only possessed but had a unique gift of communicating to his writing."

Such a tribute from critics proves the greatness of the genius of Charles Lamb. Lamb's works were intensely personal and autobiographical. He was always a reflection of his dignity, simplicity, good humour, and humanity. Thomson observed “Lamb wrote in his essay, a record of episodes which can be connected with the addition of a few links and the elimination of a considerable amount of delightful fiction into a substantial account of a large part of his life.” Lamb discussed the various periods of his life, including his childhood, boyhood, and adulthood. Throughout his essays, his personal life was always quite obvious. His essays describe his individuality, his likes and dislikes, his nature, his character, his relatives, his workplaces, and so on. Anyone who reads his essays can learn something about his life. In his pieces, he frequently shared prior recollections and persons from his past life. throughout truth, Lamb's own life is told throughout his articles. His essays can truly give anyone with enough material to create a substantial section of his biography.

Since Bacon, the essay has been utilised as a means for conveying a writer's inner views on any general subject. In his time, Lamb contributed a great deal of variety to essay writing. Throughout his life, he expressed his experiences and what he witnessed. He preferred to convey unexpected notions of imagination rather than present thoughts in a logical manner. In a real sense, his essays are his own revelations. In his pieces, he consistently divulged everything about his life to the reader. While reading his essays, one can discover his thoughts, feelings, emotions, prejudices, likes, and dislikes. His essay writing is characterised by a wide range of tastes. Edmund Blunden correctly stated, “In treatment of almost every essay moves through a series of moods, wild and sweet, grave and subdued, clear and practical, sumptuous and sonorous, Elia is all there. They are promiscuous, meagre and fragmentary, the essays are differenced many blossomed and handsome.”

Touching Pathos and Humour - Lamb's essays display profound compassion and humour, distinguishing him from other essayists of his day and after. He is regarded as the most original comedian of all time. His pieces, written in a variety of styles, present the humour of life. In some ways, the humour and melancholy reflected in his essays allow him to remove himself from the unpleasant realities of his existence. He never harboured any bitter feelings in his heart, but rather regarded his life through the lens of humour, in a steady and overall manner. He pulled humour from the most heinous aspects of human nature. He believed in art that plays with life's regrets and creates its own fascinating universe. His articles are filled with bizarre details, amusing scenarios, puns, and raucous laughter. Hallward and Hill noted in the introduction to their version of Elia's Essays:– “The terms Wit, Humour and Fun are often confused but they are really different in meaning. The first is based on intellect, the second on

insight and sympathy, the third on vigour and freshness of mind and body.” The laughter he offered in his essays was well balanced with sadness, which is an important part of humour. He was aware of his life's sadness, which was mirrored in the shape of humour in his articles. His novel *The Dream Children* is noteworthy for its humour and melancholy. He had a genius for comedy that allowed him to disassociate himself from reality and create a new universe of people in which a faint reflection of reality can be found. Lamb's Poetic Quality and Style
Lamb's writing style, as expressed in his writings, is amusing, unique, and a reflection of his personality. Saintsbury put it this way “The style of Lamb is as indefinable as it is inimitable and his manner and method defy selection and specification as much as the fluttering of a butterfly.” In all of his pieces, especially pieces of *Elia*, we may detect emotional fervour, conversational ease, affecting pathos, epigrammatic depth, nostalgic allusiveness, shy satire, and other stylistic traits. He had the most natural and original style, yet it is difficult to analyse it. Hugh Walker recognises the particular nature of Lamb's style. “Neither the brilliancy of Hazlitt, nor the harmony of De Quincey, not the vigour of Macaulay, nor the eloquence of Ruskin, nor the purity of Goldsmith could for a moment be thought capable of expressing the meaning of Lamb.” Brown, Burton, and Fuller of the 17th century impacted Lamb's style. Many times, his emotions were portrayed through quotes from classic writers.

“His style is highly personal and mannered, its function being to “create” and delineate the persona of *Elia*, and the writing, though sometimes simple, is never plain. The essays conjure up, with humour and sometimes with pathos, old acquaintances; they also recall scenes from childhood and from later life, and they indulge the author’s sense of playfulness and fancy. Beneath their whimsical surface, Lamb’s essays are as much an expression of the Romantic movement as the verse of Coleridge and William Wordsworth.”

Thus, his style possessed the poetry's appeal, emotional fervour, and a distinct allusiveness with frequent use of irony and pun. Lamb's essays are poetic in nature. The main traits seen in his essays are poetic beauty and appeal. Lamb’s finest essays are nearest of all to poetry.” Sampson observed. His *Dream Children*, *A Quaker's Meeting*, and *Essays of Elia* are filled with poetry as well as spontaneity and grace.

Conclusion:

Thus, Charles Lamb was an essayist with a remarkable poetic style, an autobiographical outlook, a wide range of themes, and a comic and tragic touch rarely found in other English essay writers. According to Deighton, "no amount of study will stale their

infinite variety, and that even if they have been read a hundred times, they will be all the better loved the hundred and first time." Lamb is ranked among Montaigne, Sir Thomas Browne, Steele, and Addison as an essayist. He possessed all of the essential qualities of essay writing, as well as the finest creative brilliance and brilliancy. His nobility of life and delicacy of heart elevated him to the ranks of English literature's greatest essayists.

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