

**Charles Lamb's Sensibilities / Charles Lamb as a Man in *Dream Children*;
A *Reverie* (part-2)**

[BA (Hons.), Part-2, Paper-IV]

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...Continuing from part-1

[...]The very little *Dream Children* is suggestive of its pathos, for Lamb never had any children, and yet here he imagines the things that 'might have been' if he had married and had children of his own. He casts sorrow over the by-gone times passed with the grandmother Field, his brother's death, and speaks sadly of the girl whom he once had loved, but could not marry. This whimsical role-playing, this conjuring up of two children from nothingness to solace for an hour by his lonely hearth suggests the pathos in the core of the essayist's heart.

Humour is very neatly allied to this pathos. Lamb's humour is the product of a sane and healthy protest against the over-whelming melancholy induced by the morbid taint in his mind. He wore a martyr's heart beneath the suit of motley and jested that he might not weep. Thus in *Chimney-Sweepers* he jokingly calls the blackened and innocent children 'dimspeaks-poor blots.' In *Dream Children*, too, he makes his two dream children Alice and John behave in a most sweetly humorous manner in the course of his narration. Alice, during the narration, assumes 'her dear mother's looks, too tender to be called upbraiding,' involuntarily moves her leg at the reference to a dance, even though these actions have pathetic details of the past in their back. Again, at the reference to ghost, John assumes a

courageous figure and on the mention of fruits cannot resist his hands from clutching at fruits in front of him. In the essay, the unique rhythm of humour and pathos gives this essay its unique charm and makes it a veritable prose-poem.

Lamb's essays bring out an apparent artlessness in its form and reveal the essayist's habit of incoherent dreaming and fluctuation of spirit. That is why the titles of his essays are casual and their subjects are as if the products of a feeling in a moment of high spiritedness. In *Dream Children*, his relation of his past is scattered with his impressions of life: 'and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance there in betwixt life and death.'

The subject of the essay and its progression towards a pathetic naught_also reveal that Lamb as a man sees things in glimpses and feelings, not in systems.