

Introduction Charles Lamb's essay 'Poor Relation'

Poor Relation is a famous essay written by Charles Lamb under the pen name - Elia. The theme of the essay is 'the disadvantages of a poor relationship? It has a universal appeal. We get an idea of its universality from the very first sentence of the essay, Lamb remarks: -

"A poor relation is the most irrelevant thing in nature"

There is a nice blend of humour and pathos in it. The element of realism can also be seen in the essay clearly.

In order to explain the meaning of poor relation, Lamb uses a series of metaphors and comparisons. He calls a poor relation

"a perpetually recurring mortification, a fly in your ointment"

A poor relative comes with a wish to have dinner with us at the time of dinner but to go away. Because of his inferiority complex,

By praising some particular articles of the house, he becomes the reason of humiliation for the possessor. We feel a great relief on his departure.

Poor relation is unwanted everywhere - Whether in England, India, or all over the world. It is considered as hail in harvest in all over the world. So none welcomes a poor relation and regards it as a kind of blet.

* Lamb's prose style is perfect justify.

Lamb's prose style is a peculiar one. His unfavourable circumstances, his nature and philosophy, feeling and experiences, all cause him to create his own style. Some critics says his style is old-fashioned.

According to Compton Rickett: — "The blossoms are culled from other men's garden but their blendings are all Lamb's own, Passing through Lamb's imagination they become something fresh and individual."

There is variety in his style. When he is in solemn mood, he can write like Donne. On the contrary, he write like Bacon while talking about the several objects he resembles Wordsworth. Some times Lamb quotes from his favourite authors but words and phrases are woven into his own texture and style. A critic says that Lamb's style is the only thing in English prose that can be called absolutely perfect.

* Lamb throw light on the literal and real meaning in 'Poor Relation'

By using the figure of speech, where in the real meaning is different from the literal meaning or words Charles Lamb specifies the meaning of 'A Poor Relation'. It is as unwelcome and unwanted as anything or anybody that may spoil the pleasure and purpose of something. Lamb very rightly calls a poor relation, 'a perpetually recurring mortification'

'a fly your ointment', 'The hail in your harvest' etc.