

## UNIT – 3

### (i) WILLIAM HAZLITT : ON GOING A JOURNEY

#### INTRODUCTION ABOUT AUTHOR

**William Hazlitt**, (born April 10, 1778, Maidstone, Kent, Eng.—died Sept. 18, 1830, Soho, London), English writer best known for his humanistic essays. Lacking conscious artistry or literary pretention, his writing is noted for the brilliant intellect it reveals. Hazlitt's childhood was spent in Ireland and North America, where his father, a Unitarian preacher, supported the American rebels. The family returned to England when William was nine, settling in Shropshire. At puberty the child became somewhat sullen and unapproachable, tendencies that persisted throughout his life. He read intensively, however, laying the foundation of his learning. Having some difficulty in expressing himself either in conversation or in writing, he turned to painting and in 1802 travelled to Paris to work in the Louvre, though war between England and France compelled his return the following year. His friends, who already included Charles Lamb, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, encouraged his ambitions as a painter; yet in 1805 he turned to metaphysics and the study of philosophy that had attracted him earlier, publishing his first book, *On the Principles of Human Action*. In 1808 he married Sarah Stoddart, and the couple went to live at Winter slow on Salisbury Plain, which was to become Hazlitt's favourite retreat for thinking and writing.

In April 1824 Hazlitt married a widow named Bridgwater. But the new wife was resented by his son, whom Hazlitt adored, and the couple separated after three years. Part of this second marriage was spent abroad, an experience recorded in *Notes of a Journey in France and Italy* (1826). In France he began an ambitious but not very successful *Life of Napoleon*, 4 vol. (1828–30), and in 1825 he published some of his most effective writing in *The Spirit of the Age*. His last book, *Conversations of James Northcote* (1830), recorded his long friendship with that eccentric painter.

#### SUMMARY

##### **Praise of a Journey**

The writer begins with praise of a journey. He expresses delight in journeying alone with nature being his only companion. He hates being in the company of fellow travellers who like to chat and worry about the world when they travel. He loves his solitude and freedom. A journey should be liberating oneself from the everyday world and its concerns. To remove oneself from the prison of company and anxieties one must become connected to nature. The only way to achieve such a union is through complete freedom of thought. He enjoys the silent commentary of wildflowers or the music of flowing waters than constant repartee with a fellow human over worldly topics. Such freedom does not demand a confession of feelings in words or gestures. He claims that when we are with others we should completely devote our attention to them and entertain their thoughts and opinions. However, when we are alone and travelling, we should just concentrate on our own thoughts and reflect on them. We can either be alone or together, not both at the same time. We cannot talk and reflect at the same time. We cannot converse and have internal thoughts at the same time.

##### **With Nature**

When one is with nature, he must lose all thoughts of collecting and analyzing information. One must experience and not judge or evaluate such experience. However, when we have the company of another person, we always have to communicate and express our experience into hasty words. Then one has to make such information relevant to them, express it in a way they can understand. This creates tension and a need to satisfy other people's anxiety. This way you can never truly immerse yourself in the natural environment around you. The writers praise Samuel Taylor Coleridge who could experience and narrate such experience at the same time, without flaws and corruption. He could instinctively translate his enjoyment into words. However, the writer admits his incapacity to do the same. He has to ponder and think for hours before he can put his thoughts on paper. He says there is only one topic where it is good to have company on travel and that is regarding food and meals. However, even then the sheer enjoyment of a warm meal at the end of a taxing journey can truly be experienced alone.

##### **Joy of Solitude**

The writer believes all the forms of ecstasy that a journey offers can truly be enjoyed in solitude. One can be greedy in such a setting, allowing oneself to sing, dance and be free without being judged. The pure joy of delicious food and appetizing smells coming from a steaming pot of food should not be wasted over a cheap conversation. He claims when you ignore your fellow travellers, you are ignoring your own grievances and worries. You are unidentifiable and almost invisible. You do not have to be the person everyone knows you to be. You can lose your very identity and with it your inhibitions, biases and preferences. Hence, one is free to indulge in new thoughts and contemplate the metaphysical even. He recalls many musings he has had on lonely visits to an inn. He remembers his favourite spot which he finds enchanting and returns to all the time. These feelings he does not want to share with others who may not value it the same. He wants to enjoy such beauty and delight in isolation.

##### **Travel Makes Memories**

He goes on to discuss the unpredictable nature of one's travel and experiences. A change of space can change our whole perspective altogether. We make new memories in place of old ones, new moments in place of the past ones. There is a constant shifting of viewpoints and perspectives. When we are in a place, it may seem like the whole world and when we move to a different one, we find a new world entirely. Thus, we create and register an unending list of places and things. And when we return to old places, we remember and revisit those old memories of the same place. When one is travelling alone, the journey becomes more important than the destination itself. It is more about how than where to.

##### **Familiar Company**

He confesses that when he travels to foreign lands with a different language, he does like a familiar company. However, he claims he loved being in France where hardly anyone spoke English. He found to be liberating and enriching to be in a land of a different tongue. Therefore, foreign travel can challenge our limitations and learn more about yourself. It takes you out of your comfort zone and helps you to grow as a human being. However, he claims that no matter how long and enjoyable the journey, it always ends at home. Every person, no matter how much he enjoys travelling, yearns for a return to the homestead. In the end, if he could travel for life he would still find another life to find his way back home.

## (ii) CHARLES LAMB : DREAM CHILDREN: A REVERIE

### INTRODUCTION ABOUT AUTHOR

Charles Lamb was an English essayist, poet, fiction writer and critic from the Romantic period who continues to be one of the most lovable and read English essayists of all times. He was one of the significant members of the Lake Poets among whom William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were his close friends. Although he could not attain enduring popularity for his poetry as his friends Wordsworth and Coleridge did, he later channelized his energies into writing prose and in this pursuit emerged as one of the best essayists of his times. Two of his collections, 'Essays of Elia' and 'Tales from Shakespeare' are considered his best works as an essayist. 'Essays of Elia', which contained a string of autobiographical record of experiences and essays of Elia, a fictitious character of the writer, is counted among the most excellent illustrations of the English style of essays and compositions. His other prominent work 'Tales from Shakespeare', which he produced along with his sister Mary Lamb, consists of plays of Shakespeare for children. Some of his other notable works are 'John Woodvil', 'The Adventures of Ulysses', 'On the Tragedies of Shakespeare' and 'Witches and Other Night Fears'.

Lamb's work along with his sister Mary, 'Tales from Shakespeare', emerged as a bestseller in the 'Children's Library' of William Godwin. His collection of essays in 'Essays of Elia' is considered one of the most remarkable works on English style of essays and compositions.

On December 27, 1834, he died after suffering from erysipelas following a fall in the street. He was interred in Edmonton at the 'All Saints' Churchyard'. Mary was laid beside him after her death in 1847.

### SUMMARY

Children love to listen to stories of their elders as children, the essay begins, because they get to imagine those elders that they themselves cannot meet. Elia's children gather around him to hear stories about their great-grandmother [Field](#), who lived in a mansion that she cared for on behalf of a rich family who lived in a different mansion. Young [Alice](#) scoffs at Elia's recollection of that rich person removing a detailed wood carving depicting the story of the Children in the Wood to put up an ugly marble thing instead. At Field's funeral, Elia recounts, everyone praised her goodness and religious faith: she could recite Psalms and some of the New Testament from memory. She was a great dancer until she was stricken by cancer, but even in the grip of that disease, she didn't lose any of her good spirits. She was convinced that two ghosts of infants lived in her house, but she didn't consider them harmful, so it didn't bother her much. But the young Elia was terrified of them, and always needed help getting to sleep, even though he never saw them. The young Elia used to wander the grounds of that mansion admiring all of the marble busts and wondering when he may himself turn into one. He spent his days picking the various fruit from around the grounds of the estate. Elia breaks from his recollection to notice his children John and Alice splitting a plate of grapes.

Elia continues that Field loved all of her grandchildren, but especially Elia's elder brother John L., a handsome and great-spirited young man who rode horses from a young age. John used to carry Elia around on his back when the younger brother became lame-footed. When John fell ill, Elia felt he wasn't able to care for his brother as well as when John had cared for him, and when John died, Elia was reserved in emotion but consumed by a great sorrow. At this point in the telling, Elia's children start to cry, asking not to hear about their uncle, but to hear about their dead mother instead.

So Elia begins by telling them of the seven years he spent courting their mother Alice, with all of its difficulties and rejection. But when he goes to look at his daughter Alice, she has disappeared. A disembodied voice tells Elia that they are not Alice's children, that the real father of Alice's children is a man named Bartrum, and they are just dreams. With that, Elia wakes up in his arm-chair, with Bridget by his side, and John L. gone forever.

"Dream Children" is a formally unique essay, channeling the logic and flow of a dream in a series of long sentences of strung together phrases and no paragraph breaks to be found. Lamb deftly uses these stylistic conceits to pull the reader into a reverie, creating a sense of tumbling through this dream world with its series of dovetailing tangents. In fact, the essay could prove confusing and hard to navigate until the reader gets to the end when, with a savvy twist, Lamb explains the formal oddness of the yarn he has been spinning all along. We're ripped out of this odd dream state into the most familiar state Lamb can be found in—sitting next to his sister.