



# Charges of Misogyny: Reading Lamb's "A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People"

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the charges of misogyny against Charles Lamb by reading his essay, "A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People". This essay was published in the collection of *Essays of Elia* (1823). Lamb is known as *Prince of all essayists*. In this essay Lamb talks about the limitations of married people. There is no didacticism in this essay. Lamb is entirely subjective and sarcastic. He accuses females more than the males. Some might think that Lamb is a misogynist after reading this essay. According to many people, Lamb, being a confined bachelor, gives impression to his sadist ideas.

**Keywords:** Misogyny, Feelings of Bachelors, Showoff made by married people.

**Charges of Misogyny:** Charles Lamb is one of the supreme essayists of the Romantic Era. In this essay, Lamb accuses married people and their behavior towards bachelors. Women are discussed more in this essay. There are charges of misogyny which can be put on Lamb. Misogyny means hatred or prejudice against women typically exhibited by men. Lamb feels that a married female puts all her efforts to make it obvious to others that she needs nobody but her husband.

Lamb starts his essay with "*As a single man*". His first complaint against married people is that "*they are too loving.*" They openly shows their love in front of bachelors. Married people are shameless. Lamb advocates that couples need to mask their overt gestures in society. Married couples, especially newly-weds, annoy him a lot. Lamb recounts a married woman who disagreed with him on a certain point and mocked him by saying - "*how such an old bachelor pretend to know anything about such matters.*"

Lamb's writing style was different from other essayists. As Waker Hugh said – "*Lamb was, among other things, one of the wisest men of his time.*" His sister, Mary Lamb, was his best friend and intellectual partner. Although he started his literary career as a poet yet he got successful by his collection of essays – *Essays of Elia*. Many of his essays are influenced by his personal experiences. Lamb wrote under the pen name Elia.

According to Lamb, women feel more proud when they have children. Lamb condemns such behavior by saying that women are insecure, jealous and possessive. If a person ignores their children then he is believed to be an arrogant while on the other hand if a person befriends their

children then a mother tries one or the other way to send her children out of the room. Lamb here says, *"I was always rather squeamish in my women and children"*, which proves his nervous temperament and which is misunderstood as misogyny. Lamb is believed to be a pessimist, always sad, unapproachable and a hater of children.

Lamb believes that after marriage bachelor's friends look for an opportunity to break up with them. No matter, how old your friendship is, no wife can tolerate her husband's friendship with an unacquainted. Lamb uses an analogy of a new king who declares that all old coins will be re-stamped, to explain that the wife monopolizes your friend's life in such a way that her approval is compulsory for the survival of your friendship. Lamb declares that females are outspoken and unapologetic in expressing their dislikes for someone (husband's friend). Some may think of this as a misogynistic behavior. She would start to do all which is possible to distance her husband from that bachelor. This is hurting for Charles Lamb.

Lamb asserts that women use different ways to separate their husbands from bachelor friends that they don't approve of. One of the best ways is to laugh at everything a bachelor friend does or say. By this they are willing to prove that these bachelor friends of their husbands are not fit to introduce to ladies or a wife keeps telling her husband that he is far superior to his bachelor friends. In another technique used by women she will make her husband realized that he was made a mistake in choosing a friend. She will sarcastically say- *"this, my dear, is your good Mr. \_"*. As John Gray said, *"She corrects his behaviors and tells him what to do as if he were a child."*

Lamb complaints about a married lady who insulted him by saying that she had heard about him from her husband and she thought her husband's friend would be a tall and good-looking man. Lamb says her husband was not tall and handsome too, so how can she thinks that her husband's friend will be so handsome.

In the last part of the essay, Lamb narrates two instances of English women – One of the ladies made Lamb wait for hours at the dinner table since her husband was late. According to Lamb, that women did not have good manners. The second women surpassed all limits of courtesy by passing a delicious dish to her husband and leaving an ordinary dish for Lamb. He scares all such females, jovially, that they must mend their ways or else Lamb will mention their proper English names in his next work. His narrative would have inflicted dirt, ignominy and shame upon named females, however Lamb gives his views in a mild way, masking, protecting those who even misbehaved with him. Maybe, he wasn't a misogynist. Like most of his essays, this essay is also based upon his personal experiences. William Henry Hudson rightly said, *"The substance of what he writes is almost wholly driven from himself, his experiences, reminiscences, likes, dislikes, whims and prejudices."*

**Conclusion:** Overall, the essay *"A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married people"* is full of the complaints of Charles Lamb (a bachelor) against married people especially married women. This essay also involves the presence of a reader. The major purpose of Lamb writing this essay is to make married people realize that unknowingly their attitude offends the singles. Many people read this essay with a misogynistic view. Nowhere, in this essay, is a trace of brutal or cruel comments even against women.

**References:**

- (1) Walker Hugh: *The English Essays and Essayists*
- (2) John Gray: *Men are from Mars Women are from Venus*
- (3) William Henry Hudson: *An Outline History of English Literature*

