

*Critical appreciation of the poem "All the World's A Stage"*

(English) Degree 1 (Sub)

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This poem is an extract of Shakespeare's romantic comedy *As You Like It*. It is a philosophical statement of Jacques who gives his ideal speech on the philosophy of life. In this poem, Shakespeare describes this world as a stage and men and women are merely players who perform their actions according to their capacity and will. Here Shakespeare describes the cycle of life from the beginning to the end. In this process, a man has to pass seven stages of life from his birth to death. The poem is written in free verse. It does not have a rhyme scheme. The dominant figure of speech used is metaphor as the entire poem is an extended metaphor and indirectly compares the world to a stage and all human beings to the players of the play. It compares the different stages of life to the acts of the play.

The seven stages of man's life also refer to *The Seven Stages of Man*. These ages are: infant, school-going boy, lover/husband, soldier/fighter, justice/ability to understand the right and wrong, pantalone (greediness and high in status) and old age. In this poem Shakespeare has compared life with a stage. He has used different words to beautify the poem in a

wonderful way. He has taken this concept from medieval philosophy, which showed glimpses of several different groups as the seven deadly sins for theological reasons. Theology is the study of God's nature as well as religious belief. The poet has used the narrative form to express his innermost emotions about how he thinks that the world is a stage and all the people living in it are merely players and characters. These characters go through seven different phases in their lives.

When the man enters into the world, he has seven stages to go through. When he goes through these stages, he has to play different roles. These roles depict a man as a son, his responsibilities as a brother, father, husband, fighter for the nation etc. The man begins his act on the stage as an infant, he is in the arms of his nurse and cries to be in the comfort of his mother. The second act starts right when he turns into a school-going boy, who is unwilling to go to school and unwilling to take the responsibility of being a student. The third act then comes when he turns into a lover, he is the only person, he sees dancing in front of his eyes. For him there is absolutely no other place that can comfort him than the embrace of his lover. The fourth act portrays the man as a soldier or a fighter for the nation. His beard depicts all those strange oaths he takes to protect his country and all the men and women living in it. No doubt he quarrels but he also maintains his dignity to create and

develop his reputation Infront of others around him. This is perhaps the toughest stage in life. then comes the fifth act where he turns into justice, the one who knows what is goods and what is right, at this stage, he is perhaps the best person to approach to find out who is correct and who is wrong.

The sixth stage comes into his life as he enters the stage of pantalone, where he has a high status in society, yet he is greedy for more. This stage does not remain long in his life.

Alas! The last stage comes for him to go through oblivion. No matter how hard he tries to remember things, he is just not able to. When he enters into old age, he turns into a child again. Slowly he begins losing his teeth, his vision the taste in his mouth and the love and greed for everything that he once wanted in his life.

Personally, I feel that this poem also talks about the roles of other people in your life. Just like you are playing your part, so are they! They enter into your lives to teach you something new and leave, gifting you a bunch of memories to dwell upon.