

Examrace

Competitive Exams Essay: ... All the World's a Stage and All the Men and Women Merely Players.

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These lines were spoken by a character in the Shakespeare's play 'As you like it' What do these lines suggest? Are they symbolic of the author's or the character's abject surrender to fate and nature's laws or they represent his renunciation of the worldly pleasures and material gains as being momentary and unreal. Whatever it may be, it will be really interesting to try to understand it further.

'All the world's a stage' symbolizes the world being like a stage on which plays are performed. Just as different scenes are enacted on the stage, different events and incidents happen in the world. As scenes change on the stage during a play, in a similar way, times change in the world. Plays are performed by players on the stage, events and incidents occur with men and women in the world. Men and Women are as much a part of an event or an incident as actors are of a play. They perform their role in their respective, domains the world and the stage respectively. As role ends, the actor leaves the stage, similarly as man's work in the world ends, he leaves it. So the correlation that Shakespeare has tried to highlight appears quite reasonable.

However, the important part of the statement is the word 'merely' Actors at that time were not like stars of today. They obeyed their director and performed as he directed. They could not change their roles, modify it or perform it differently from what the director or the writer desired. Hence, the word 'merely' Here, Shakespeare by calling 'men and women merely actors' has tried to emphasize their state of helplessness and submission. Here the authority is the God. He has complete control over the human beings and makes them do things as he wishes. Man is bound by his fate. His role is pre-assigned and he cannot change it. This to some, may sound like defeatism. But to some extent, we are indeed bound.

To elaborate it further, let us take the example of birth and death. Birth is the biggest accident that happens in one's life. Accident may sound harsh but birth just happens. Else how can we explain two infants born at the same time, one of who has silver soon in mouth and other may have just rags to cover his body? What makes them different? Then how can two new born have such a different life when neither of them has performed any action. Some explain it in terms of our previous birth and some call it pure fate. Whatever it may be, certainly it is beyond our control. Similar is the case of death. Why so many very talented people like Ramanujam, Vivekananda etc. Died so early when they had so much to do and why Hitler and Stalin lived so long? We cannot deny that for most of us,

the course of our life is determined by the family we are born in, the place we are born in, the upbringing and many other beyond our control.

Though, one's upbringing plays a major role in determining one's future, the situation is not so helpless. If a man is determined enough, has the guts and courage to face adversities, he can do wonders by his hard work. Even in a play, there are different actors. Not all of them perform equally. Even, the same role can be done by two different actors very differently. Some actors stand out because of their performance and become famous all over. Same is the case in this world that a few people make their mark in different fields of activity. They become great leaders, academicians, doctors, artists etc. There are people who have shown in adversities and rises from the bottom because they faced circumstances head on:

However, this is only one aspect of the statement. It also hides another very deep and very relevant thought. It is that world is too big a place for anybody to consider himself its master. All the great kings, generals, leaders had to leave one day. The world did not stop them. They played their role and moved away to let others play theirs. We are not immortal, the world is. Different actors play different roles in a play. Some are important ones and some are not-so-important ones, but no one can say that play is because of him. Everyone has to bow to the Almighty, a great and unknown power which is all encompassing and all knowing. We should keep away from attachment, lust, greed etc. Because we are in this world only till our role demands it. This was the philosophy that ancient Indians propounded and that all religions have commanded.

All this does not mean that one should leave everything to him. An actor has to give his best to the role he performs. Similarly all of us must do our duty with devotion and honesty. A play is successful only when each one of the actors performs well. World will progress when each one of us contributes his best to it. A director can promote an actor; God can change man's life. 'World being as stage' doesn't mean that we are puppets but that we are actors. We have to shun not hard work but our negative traits like attachment, greed and lust. A well performed role howsoever small is well appreciated by the audience. Similarly, a well lived life becomes a lesson for others to follow. One gets praise, love, respect and fame if he does what is assigned to him with devotion and honesty howsoever small or as it may appear.

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