



THE SEVEN AGES OF MAN

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.

-William Shakespeare, "As You Like It"

In this theater of life the curtains have been pulled back to reveal the drama.

- First we see a helpless chick, mouth open waiting for food.
- Second, childhood, the turtle ventures out into the world but if necessary is able to duck back into the safety of his shell.
- Third the adolescent or lover, the egret, dramatically sings of love and expresses himself by awkwardly standing upright for the first time.
- Fourth the soldier or young adult, the cheetah, the fastest creature on earth, powerful and aggressive. His coat has matured into its unmistakable pattern and he looks confidently toward the future.
- Fifth the justice or adult, the peacock, comfortable on his fine pillow, he is at ease, and his appearance is dignified and regal.
- Sixth is old age, the lowly frog looking back over his life. When he speaks he croaks, his physical charm diminished, he is the brunt of others' jokes.
- Seventh and final age, mental dementia and death. An empty shell lies motionless. In front of all sits the Earth, upon which this drama is played.

At first the infant, Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms. Then, the whining schoolboy with his satchel And shining morning face, creeping like snail Unwillingly to school. And then the lover, Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier, Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard, Jealous in honour, sudden, and quick in quarrel, Seeking the bubble reputation Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice In fair round belly, with good capon lin'd, With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut, Full of wise saws, and modern instances, And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon, With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side, His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide, For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice, Turning again towards childish treble, pipes And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all, That ends this strange eventful history, Is second childishness and mere oblivion, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything

The man in the poem goes through these stages:

- * Infancy: In this stage he is dependent on others and needs to be constantly attended to.
- * Childhood: It is in this stage that he begins to go to school. He is reluctant to leave the protected environment of his home as he is still not confident enough to exercise his own discretion.
- * The lover: In this stage, comparable to modern day adolescence, he is always remorseful due to some reason or other, especially the loss of love. He tries to express feelings through song or some other cultural activity.
- * The soldier: It is in this age, comparable to modern day young adult, that he thinks less of himself and begins to think more of others. He is very easily aroused and is hot headed. He is always working towards making a reputation for himself and gaining recognition, however shortlived it may be, even at the cost of his own life.
- * The justic: In this stage, comparable to modern day adult, he has acquired wisdom through the many experiences he has had in life. He has reached a stage where he has gained prosperity and social status. He becomes very attentive of his looks and begins to enjoy the finer things of life.
- * Old age: He begins to lose his charm — both physical and mental. He begins to become the brunt of others' jokes. He loses his firmness and assertiveness, and shrinks in stature and personality.
- * Mental dementia and death: He loses his status and he becomes a non-entity. He becomes dependent on others like a child and is in need of constant support before finally dying.