

**THE LANGUAGE OF MYSTICAL STRAINS IN SHAKESPEARE’S PLAY
‘AS YOU LIKE IT’****Kavita**

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Abstract

Shakespeare, the greatest dramatist of the English soil, has created his niche in the world of wisdom and wonder. He wrote plays based on human actions and feelings that are universal and fundamental. The touch of real scenes, based on lives of nobles and dukes, and feelings like love, jealousy, revenge, conspiracy and hatred, made him the dramatist par excellence. The touch of wisdom and philosophy of life, at the time of adversity and suffering, shows his latent belief in hope and humanity. In his airy and fairy world, bibs and bobs of verse, here and there in his plays, reflected his unchallenging and unparalleled faith in the approaching rays of strength and courage, blessed by the spiritual showers. The philosophy of hope and life, and his towering optimism, is reflected through his genius characters like Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, Duke Senior in *As You Like It*, Prospero in *The Tempest*, and Hamlet Jr. in *Hamlet*. Passing through the pain of body and flesh, and burning in the fire of revenge and hatred, but at the same time maintaining human values they pour out the messages which have everlasting and universal appeal. In the series of such characters, dialogues aired by the Duke Senior in solitude of ‘The Forest of Arden’ in the play ‘*As You Like It*’, present Shakespeare’s mystical approach to the general story of the suffering humanity. The play being a drama of acts and actions, scenes and speeches, love-affairs and hatred, usurpation and reinstatement, melancholy and hope is well embedded in the philosophical lessons of a contented and happy life. The man is the ultimate source of all joys and sorrows. All the things of nature, and the cycles of seasons add richness and happiness to life. If the phases of prosperity bring happiness, the time of despair and adversity teach him the real lessons of life. The present paper will make a humble attempt to analyse the language used by Shakespeare in his romantic comedy ‘*As You Like It*’ to reflect upon the mystical threads in his philosophy of life through a study of selected speeches in the text.

Human life is a tale of joys and sufferings, and the human mind has an inherent system to make it balanced in every situation. William Shakespeare had the potential to present this new lease of life in his characters, through the mystical language, superb dialogues and verbal biblical messages. His characters leave the impression of his deep life philosophy, and well knit wisdom in their philosophical dialogues. In his famous play, clowns and jests appear with a simple face, but shower shining and witty dialogues. The bibs and bobs of his poetical lines, aired by his characters, express his own ideas about the world in general and the society of his time in particular.

The man remains happy in the days of prosperity and feels himself contended with luxuriose things of life. The same happens more intensely in the case of kings and nobles. But a person, who leaves his wealth and kindred, goes to the woods and remains happy and saturated even in the days of adversity, acquires the true satisfaction. The Duke Senior in the play '*As You Like It*' does the same. After the treachery of his brother Duke Federick, he passes his time in the 'Forest of Arden'. His hard days in his solitude elevate his soul and teach him true lessons of life. The lap of nature makes him a royal in the true sense. He is fed up of deceits, revenge and lust and learns the value of peace and humanity. The wind passing through the trees appears gentler to him than the wind passing in the heart of men. The same content is revealed through the dialogues when in the company of his loyalists, he says-

Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
The season's difference, as the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind
Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say
This is no flattery: these are counsellors
That feeling persuade me what I am'. (Act II, Scene I, 12-17)

In the play *As You Like It*, the marvellous dialogues, aired by the Duke Senior, show Shakespeare's genius and depth about the mysteries of life and their solution. The play is a drama of deeds and dangers, age and anger, love and lust and finally woes and wisdom, in the life of kings and nobles. It is a story of throne and its usurpation between two brothers, Duke Frederick and Duke Senior. It is a tale of rage and revenge between Orlando and Oliver, two other characters of the play. Entwined in the love affair of two pairs, Rosalind and Orlando and Celia and Oliver, the plot revolves around the theme of courage and strength shown by its different characters in the general affairs of the day. Shakespeare's love for nature and natural scenes is well shown in the solitary place of 'The Forest of Arden', where the Duke Senior passes his time in the company of his followers and loyalists. The treachery and jealousy of his brother may have made him hard and revengeful, but the company of nature makes him a hermit, a pious man who sacrifices everything and wants to live a simple life, away from mask and matters, as well said by W. B. Yeats, in his poem, *The Mask*

'Put off the mask of burning gold
With emerald eyes.'
O no, my dear, you make so bold
To find if hearts be wild and wise,

And yet not cold.' (Yeats, 46)

The plays of Shakespeare are set in the living world of gestic and gestures, fairies and ghosts. The characters may be mere phantoms of his mind, but their dialogues make the airy and fairy world an earthly real world. Though single they appear in their appearances, but keep double tongues to outwit each other. They speak particular words in the particular situation, which become the universal sayings in general conditions. It is the magic of their verbal wit that they become immortal in the mortal world. They come and go, laugh and cry, but lie and do rest in the gallery of our mind. They are unique in their behaviour and character. Their dialogues are witty and sharp, sharper than the blades of a knife. They show opposite behaviour in positive situations, and the positive one in opposite situations. The same ambiguity appears in the Duke Senior, when he says-

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life exempt from public haunt
Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones and good in everything.
I would not change it. (Act II, Scene 1, 12-17)

Fortune and nature are the two other themes of the play. The play also stresses the freedom of the individuals to determine their own fates. One's point of view to a situation makes a life worth living. The silent and peaceful company of the nature makes the Duke Senior patient and calm. Far from the world of chatter and flatter, he listens and feels the sound and music of the forest life. He tries to find a solace in the lap of nature, and finds a life present in it. This closeness and proximity to nature, fills his heart with sympathy, love and care for a natural life, the life, more dependent on the satisfaction of needs, and less on the gratification of desires. The silence of the trees, the music of the brooks and the patience of the stones, felt by the Duke Senior makes him more optimistic and strengthen his hope. Fortune and favour are the matters of the fate, but a positive attitude to life makes the unfavourable situations, favourable.

Shakespeare, being a manipulator of the language, played with the words and sentences for the dramatic and poetic purpose. His deep knowledge and profound genius gets an astonishing expression in use of puns and word-order. His deep faith in inherent goodness of human beings, and embedded faith in the blessings of the Holy Spirit which is well presented in his plays, and marks his mystical tone here and there. His love for the vast humanity, and a deep concern for all the creatures, marks the height of his love for the creator and the creation of the world. At one point, his disgust for the killing and hunting of wild animals is reflected through the dialogues of First Lord-

Thus most invectively he pierceth through
The body of the country, city, court,
Yea, and of this our life, swearing that we
Are mere usurpers, tyrants and what's worse,
To fright the animals and to kill them up
In their assign'd and native dwelling-place. (Act II, Scene1, 55-60)

Shakespeare was a mystic dramatist. The philosophy of life entangled him. Though living in the world of dreams and desires, he reminded it time and again that the world is transitory, full of transition every moment. Only the human soul is permanent. A kind of detachment is needed to fulfil the duties and responsibilities fully and sincerely. He was well aware of the futility of the

glittering world. Like a true hermit, he emphasised on the role of a man in the society, positively and sincerely. His faith and belief in the active role of a human being in the affairs of the daily life, to play and act one's role, highlights his devotion and dedication in obeying of the immanent will. His characters, though may be insignificant in deeds and demands, but play a vital role in running the course of the drama. His strong obedience and dedication to the roles assigned and their fulfilment is observed through the dialogues of his witty and worried characters. At one stage of the play, *As You Like It*, Jaques airs-

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts, his life separated into seven acts. In the first act he is an infant, whimpering and puking in his nurse's arms. Then he's the whining schoolboy, with a book bag and a bright, young face, creeping like a snail unwillingly to school. Then he becomes a lover, huffing and puffing like a furnace as he writes sad poems about his mistress's eyebrows. In the fourth act, he's a soldier, full of foreign curses, with a beard like a panther, eager to defend his honor and quick to fight. Without teeth, without eyes, without taste, without evening. (Act II, Scene VII, 6-7)

In the general course of the life, Shakespeare reveals the mystical threads, underlying the moral and social codes of behaviour and character. His positive approach to the Christianity and its linkage to the man ultimately, gave a way to his genius and experience. All the words and dialogues, gives an echo of his deep faith and sound belief, in the supremacy of the immanent will. Passing through the turmoil and tumult of his age, he gives a vent to all the subordinate and primary aspects of human life. He acquired the status of the best dramatist, only and only, through the language, he adopted to communicate his ideas. His genius to reveal the inner layers of human psyche through witty and mystical dialogues, led him to the summit of success and glory. The true philosophy of all the ages and all the sages is said by the Duke Senior, in the Forest of Arden, about life and its laws, which is an epitome of Shakespeare's mysterious thinking and fine idealism.

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