



## GEORGE BERNARD SHAW - A CATALYST OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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### Abstract

*George Bernard Shaw was an Irish playwright, a critic and a social reformer. He was a novelist, journalist, socialist, politician, and a public speaker. He wrote to bring the social change. He was one of the greatest satirist who created humor to improve human institutions. For the sake of social justice, equality and the right to vote, he rebelled against the governmental and social structures, fake morality, sham religion, unfair economic systems, imposed nationalism and patriotism, capitalist systems of production and distribution, organized injustice and the suppression of free will.*

*The writings of George Bernard Shaw had a significant impact on society, influencing dialogue and inspiring change on numerous levels. Shaw's revolutionary humor, insightful social criticism and fearless endorsement of progressive causes made him a revolutionary in the nineteenth century and still have an impact on modern culture.*

*Shaw's works acted as a strong stimulant for social awakening, challenging conventional wisdom and igniting a critical conversation about topics like gender equality and socioeconomic inequality. His several plays highlighted social injustices and hypocrisies compelling people to face difficult realities about privilege, power and prejudice.*

*Shaw's legacy lives on as a source of ethical courage and intellectual enlightenment, even beyond his creative achievements. Generations of intellectuals, activists and artists have been motivated to confront injustice and work toward a more equitable and caring society by his unwavering commitment to the truth, justice and dignity of humanity.*

*This paper presents and discusses how George Bernard Shaw had a profound influence on society that goes beyond literature; he left a lasting mark on people's minds and ignited the constant quest of social progress and flourishing for humanity.*

**Key words:-** Society, Social change, Social reforms, Capitalism, Women's status, Human dignity.

### INTRODUCTION:--

One of the best playwrights in the English language is George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), an Irish dramatist, critic, and polemicist. Born in Dublin, Ireland, he relocated to London in his

early twenties in order to pursue a literary career. From more than sixty plays that Shaw authored are "Pygmalion," "Man and Superman," and "Saint Joan."

Shaw is well- social known for his wit, social satire, and analysis of complex people and concepts throughout his works. He was a prominent member of the Fabian Society, a socialist group that supported democratic, progressive social reform. Shaw's plays, articles, and speeches which frequently questioned conventional thinking on subjects like capitalism, feminism, and religion, are representations of his political and ideas.

In addition to being a well-known political theorist and Victorian dramatist, Bernard Shaw is credited for being a Fabian socialist. George Bernard Shaw's primary concern was to address social problems such as education, religion, marriage and class privileges (Ganz 1983).

In addition to the inspiring multiple ideological reformulations in Britain, Shaw's numerous writings reflected his political character which combined Socialism, Communism, Feminism, Philosophy and Government policies together. After attending Henry George's Progress and Poverty talk, Shaw embraced socialism and became a pillar of the Fabian Society and Fabian Movement. He declared himself to be a communist. Shaw wrote extensively to support women's organizations, the middle class and struggled for removing the class differences at the same time which was the most neglected aspect of Victorian society. Bernard Shaw travelled to explore and spoke in support of exhaustive prediction to transform Victorian society. Being a well-known political ideologist of both the cultures, he had recorded his observations and propagated freedom of expression.

This paper analyzes Shaw's social and political movements, his figurative and mythological viewpoints and his use of the "figurative pen" as a weapon against the "individual" and "community's" detrimental political ideas.

Received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1925, Shaw's work "is marked by both idealism and humanity, its stimulating satire often being infused with a singular poetic beauty" in addition to his contributions to political discourse and literature. His influence as a writer and intellectual is still great and his plays are still produced and studied all over the world.

### **SHAW'S CONTRIBUTION IN THE SOCIAL CHANGE**

George Bernard Shaw made a number of literary advances that had a big impact on society. Among his most renowned creations are:

**Against Identity and Class:** One of Shaw's most well-known plays, "**Pygmalion**" (1912), has had a profound effect on the society. "Pygmalion" delves into topics related to identity,

class, and the influence of language. It emphasizes education and self-improvement while challenging the idea of social hierarchy and the belief that one's value is set by birth. The play's depiction of Eliza Doolittle, a working-class flower girl who becomes a sophisticated lady through speech training has received appreciation and praise from all the corners of the society and was translated into a number of musical plays, movies and other platforms.

**Voicing Women's Rights:** Shaw was a very strong supporter of women's rights and equality which he clearly encouraged with his writings, speeches and activism. Some of his key contributions include the play "Pygmalion," in which he explored themes of gender and class, highlighting the struggles of women in a patriarchal society. Shaw's female characters were often strong, independent and assertive, challenging the traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

**Challenging Victorian Norms:** Shaw's works often challenged the strict social norms of Victorian society. Through his plays, he tackled issues such as class privilege, gender roles, and the hypocrisy of the upper class. By exposing these societal flaws, Shaw encouraged audiences to question and reconstruct their beliefs and value system.

**Promoting Socialism:** Shaw was a committed socialist and a prominent member of the Fabian Society, a socialist organization in Britain. He believed in the equal distribution of wealth, healthcare for all and social welfare programs. Shaw's plays often promoted socialist ideals and critiqued the capitalist system, advocating for a more equitable society.

**Use of Satire and Humor:** Shaw's sharp wit and satirical style were the powerful tools for criticizing social injustices and exposing the hypocrisy of the ruling class. His plays used humor and irony to highlight the absurdity of societal norms and conventions, prompting audiences to reconsider their own beliefs and prejudices.

**Transforming Public Opinion:** Shaw's influence extended beyond the stage also through his prolific writings of essays, articles and speeches. He used numerous platforms to advocate social reforms and to engage in political debates. Shaw's persuasive writing and passionate propagations helped to shape public opinion on the subjects of social issues, workers' rights and women's sufferings.

Hence, Bernard Shaw played a significant role in bringing about the social change by challenging the then existing conventional thinking, promoting progressive ideas and using his artistic talents to inspire audiences to question the status quo and strive for a more just and equitable society.

## IMPACT OF SHAW'S WRITINGS ON SOCIETY

Shaw's ultimate aim was never to be a dramatist and writer only, his areas of interest were politics, philosophy, social reform, and morality. He always saw himself as an incredibly pragmatic reformer. His dramatic profession was a means to an end with the improvement of the fallen humanity as the ultimate goal for which he had devoted his entire life. Shaw asserts his belief, saying, "I write plays with the intentional goal of converting people to my viewpoints." There is no other reason for me to compose plays.

Following works of Shaw are considered just a few of the famous works that have had a profound influence on society. His writings are still studied, dramas performed and cherished even today due of their wit, wisdom and relevance to contemporary society and events.

\*Shaw made a number of literary achievements that had a significant impact on society. His philosophical comedy "Man and Superman" (1903) is another important piece of his oeuvre. It explores issues of gender inequality, morality, and evolution. John Tanner, the protagonist of the play, embodies Shaw's concept of the "Superman," a free-spirited person who goes above accepted morality and social conventions. "Man and Superman" is a powerful and thought-provoking work that questions conventional wisdom regarding marriage, love and women's place in society.

\*Shaw's drama "Saint Joan" (1923) is a portrayal of the story of French military leader and martyr Joan of Arc. He addresses the issues of politics, religion and the definition of heroism through Joan's tale. The drama explores cultural perceptions of women in leadership roles as well as the teachings of faith. "Saint Joan" is still an influential work of art that inspires audiences and sparks discussions about bravery, faith and the pursuit of justice.

\*Shaw explores the complex issues of morality, business, and social duty in his drama "Major Barbara" (1905). Barbara Undershaft, an officer in the Salvation Army, fights with her family's fortune, which originates from producing weaponry. Shaw uses "Major Barbara" to examine the ambiguities in capitalist society and the ways in which the pursuit of profit can lead to the jeopardizing of social values.

G. B Shaw aspired to completely overthrow the then existing social structures and establish a new one. He wanted to comply with the new norms in order to allow fresh thinking. He had lost all trust in the social systems and customs of that time since they were both innate and untrue according to him. He felt that they hindered and obstructed the course of societal evolution and progress. So, for the sake of social justice, equality and the right to vote, he resisted against social and political institutions, bogus religion, immorality, an unfair economic

system, artificially imposed nationalism and patriotism, a capitalist system of manufacturing and distribution, organized injustice and the suppression of free will.

**\*Shaw Considered Poverty an Evil:-** Shaw views poverty as a sin and disregards capitalism believing that socialism is a tool for eliminating capitalism's oppressive practices which seeks to suppress the Life Force. Shaw was certain that the Life-Force could not advance until everyone enjoyed equal freedom, leisure and prosperity. Poverty needs to be eradicated because it is an embodiment of disease, frailty, ugliness, degradation, shame and meanness-all of which are significant obstacles to the Life Force. If capitalism is eliminated, all the issues will vanish as well. When all individuals have equal income and opportunities, wealth corresponds with honor, intelligence, beauty and health.

In order to maintain their self-respect, girls and women are forced by the perils of poverty to sell themselves into marriage or prostitution. **Mrs. Proserpine Garnett** represents the modern society's oppression of women in **Candida** as well. Despite their differences, Candida decides to stay with her husband Morell since he needs her care and protection. Between Candida and Morell, this is a contract for their biological, social, and economic identities. Numerous other social evils in our culture are rooted in poverty. Shaw aggressively strips away the harpooning of society's privileged classes.

**\*Shaw's Views about the Concept of Life Pressure and the Concept of Medicine, Medication:** that just as charity depends on poverty, similarly does the medical profession depend on disease. Disease and poverty are closely linked to each other. There wouldn't be any illness or medication if there was no poverty. People's health is the state's responsibility; it cannot be left in the hands of a small group of professional killers. Shaw noted that as illness is against nature, he is opposed to both those who spread sickness (capitalists) and those who profit from it (physicians). Shaw blames early mortality, illness, and disease on capitalist civilization. Diseases are caused by the congestion in slums, poor sanitation, starvation, excessive work and lethargy. Better food, feasible working hours and ventilated housing are required by the poor. This is what they actually need and not the medication.

### **CONCLUSION:-**

This paper highlighted the particular literary and other pursuits of G.B. Shaw as a social reformer, socialist, journalist, critic, economist, politician, novelist and most importantly a dramatist who won the Nobel Prize and created art for bringing the social change and to condemn the false notions of religiosity, class discrimination and segregation of the society. He utilized every opportunity to address a wide range of audiences, including washerwomen,

university preceptors, miners and entrepreneurs at open forums, street corners and debating society compartments. His public speaking proved to be so exquisite and engaging that his simple statement at the podium would have assured a full house with an additional audience. Throughout his life, he embraced every opportunity to deliver advice, engage in debates and give lectures. He created art not only for the sake of art but also to improve society, to eradicate political and social vices, and put an end to intolerable recklessness. His views and thoughts are viewed with immense respect and relevance even in the current society. His beliefs about society, politics, equality, humanity are equally relevant even today.

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