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Shavian Humanism: A Bird's Eye View

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Abstract:

Humanism is a philosophy centered on human progress. It has its basis in rationalism, secularism, free thinking, non-religious morality, human dignity and rights, and human welfare. Particularly, in the modern era, the word humanism takes a non-theistic definition relating to the good life, the nature of man and man's place in the universe. "An understanding of man as the central value of history has become more important today than the study of differences among the various types of humanism" says Ivan Svitak. (Fromm, 1966, p.18). Therefore our concern here in this paper is not of the types but of the application of the philosophy in literature in general and by George Bernard Shaw in particular. The philosophy began to flourish in Athens in the 5th century BC with respect to rationalism. It is through the words, "Man is the measure of all things" of Protagoras that humanism was very much apparent in Greek Literature. In England, Renaissance Humanism flourished in the hands of Sidney, Bacon, and Shakespeare. "The proper study of mankind is man" better illustrates the humanistic spirit in Pope, the representative writer of the age, during the age of reason and enlightenment. The watch words of French Revolution – Liberty, equality and fraternity – accelerated the wheels of humanism to the core and the literature of the early nineteenth century deeply influenced by the revolution. William Blake, Wordsworth and Charles Dickens were followers of the ideals of French Revolution in England and thereby immensely contributed to the welfare of humanity. Thus, the English writers, down the ages, focused their themes that often depicted the lives of mankind and they firmly believed, as Sartre's says, in the religion of humanity. It is in this strain that the two dramatists John Galsworthy and George Bernard Shaw put on the mask of social reformers to unmask the shortcomings and injustices of the English institutions in the twentieth century. While John Galsworthy is considered a humanist with reference to his plays, no serious attempt has been made to regard Shaw as a humanist. This paper is a perseverance to fill the gap. All these aforesaid concepts of humanism were tactfully handled by Shaw in some of his plays and this paper brings to light the humanistic ideals that have not been seriously contemplated hither to in Shaw.

Keywords: Rationalism, renaissance, humanism, non-theistic, free thinking, Shaw.

The origin and gradual development of humanism in literature

The Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines humanism as a system of thought that considers that solving human problems with the help of reason is more important than religious beliefs. It emphasizes the fact that the basic nature of humans is good. Humanism is not a recent philosophy emerged in the field of literature. It laid its initial foundation in Greek literature with writers like Socrates, Plato, Epicurus and Protagoras. Socrates and Plato were proponents of rationalism with their method of questioning the rules of others and conducted cross-examination to the inception of the Humanist tradition in Greek Literature while Epicurus and Protagoras

were totally atheistic in their stand. Epicurus was known as the 'apostle of common sense' for he advocated people to have a philosophy of life that would allow them to enjoy a happy and tranquil existence, free from fear (of God). Protagoras believed in the power of mankind and protested against all illusions and superstitions, and he found man as the measure of all things in the world.

In English literature, the term humanism came to light only during the period of Renaissance that underwent the revival of classical literature and the spirit of learning that made the human beings determine for themselves the facts and fabrications. Humanism was prevalent particularly in the renaissance drama. Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), a Dutch writer, was a follower of Christian Humanism and also described as "the father of humanism". He ridiculed the corrupt church practices like Chaucer. Shakespeare, a renaissance dramatist, being a liberal Christian, advocated religious humanism for he believes reason is vital in human affairs, but in matters of religion it is not enough. He shared the Renaissance desire to seek the truth about human nature. In the words of Bernard D. Grebanier:

Shakespeare is perhaps the perfect expression of Renaissance Humanism. His profound sympathy for humanity enabled him to pierce to the very core of his characters; his unexcelled gifts as a poet made his men and women unforgettable creatures of flesh and blood. This may be said as much of the best of his earliest plays as of *The Tempest*, where Prospero is himself a kind of incarnation of the best of what the Renaissance had extended to mankind. (Bernard, 1950, p.242)

In the age of reason and enlightenment, Pope wrote didactic essays and poems directing the man to follow his own path of life to unfold his hidden potentials, "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan, the proper study of mankind is man" (Long, 2003, p.269). Thus, he proved that he had a profound trust in the supremacy of humanity. The English literary history took the path of humanism with a serious intention when the French Revolution influenced the literary works of English writers such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and later Dickens, and Carlyle. Wordsworth's pictorial representation of rustic lives in his poems and his definition of a poet as *man writing for men* acknowledges him a poet with a humanist's spirit. On the contrary, Shelley's *The Necessity of Atheism* expelled him from the University he studied for he believed in the scientific humanism and questioned the existence of god. Shelley's humanism is atheistic and scientific in nature. He recorded his plight as follows: "Prejudices are so violent, in contradiction to my principles that more hate me as a free thinker than love me as votary of freedom"(Goddon). In the Victorian literature, Dickens was a remarkable novelist with a humanitarian vision. His sympathy and compassion with the downtrodden and a zest for social reform made him a moralistic humanist with a tender heart amidst the novelists of the era. Dickens' humanitarian vision is observed by Ramamurthy thus,

Inspired by the philanthropists of the humanitarian movement, Dickens introduces humanitarianism as the predominant note in his novels. It is obvious that in every novel he takes up the contemporary vices, exposes the social evils and draws the attention of the readers towards the need for social reform. (Ramamurthy, 1994, p.80)

The conflict between science and religion in the nineteenth century led to the questioning of creationism of Christian theology and all the conventional beliefs in general. The late

Victorian society further expanded the gap between religion and science. In early twentieth century, adding fuel to the fire, the World Wars kept the people at peril and thereby skeptical in thought. Religious belief had its gradual decline while scientific developments seemed to enrich the livelihood of mankind and in turn, secularization occupied the minds of the English. Writers naturally turned to picture the realities of man's life and a trend of social realism dominated the novels and dramatic art in the early twentieth century literature. There were humanists like H.G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, E.M. Foster, Bertrand Russell, and Thomas Hardy who worked for the progress of mankind in the twentieth century. Psychology, sociology, anthropology, and economics were the common areas of interest in the field of history and literature. Humanism is a branch that consists of all the afore said fields of knowledge and the literature of the early twentieth century became human-centered and worked vehemently for the instant progress of mankind in almost all the fields as the community of humanity had a heavy blow from the World Wars. England was deeply confused with the ideals of conventional religion and secular thoughts of modern. A. C. Ward beautifully observes the plight of the early twentieth century people that were perplexed by the two extremes of thoughts with his citation from Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*:

Andrew Undershaft's declaration in Shaw's *Major Barbara*: 'That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps its obsolete steam engines and dynamos; but it won't scrap its old prejudices and its old moralities and its old religions and its old political constitutions'. The effect of this was invigorating to some; but others might have expressed their sensations in the words of Barbara herself, 'I stood on the rock I thought eternal; and without a word it reeled and crumbled under me'. (Ward, 1964, p.4)

Discussion

It is in this scenario that Bernard Shaw, Galsworthy and many became playwrights to portray the social reality. Their aim was to reform the society with their pen. Galsworthy was compassionate enough to cry for the poor and downtrodden and established the depth passion for reform in his plays. He was obviously a humanist at heart. His humanism was of Marxian and moralistic. It is required to classify the emerging trend in humanism in the present age. Modern Humanism takes its origin from religious and secular humanism. Religious humanism emerged out of ethical culture and universalism. The religious humanists believe that the progress of mankind is possible by firmly abiding only to religion. But, secular humanists believe in mankind's potentials and they trust in rationalism and free thought. One of the significant artists of the modern theatre is Shaw. He has not been absolutely acknowledged a humanist by many of the critics yet, a renowned free thinker of his age. He may be safely placed under the banner of secular humanist with respect to his rationalism and free thinking. Further, he could be taken under the category of Marxian humanists with respect to some of his social plays that strongly advocate the theory of Marx. His concern for the development of women in his plays and his conception of "New Woman" confirms his place amidst the humanist writers who strenuously work for the rights of women. The anti-war elements and respect for a saint bring to light the hidden tenderness and humanistic craving of the so-called rigid heart of Shaw.

This paper attempts to prove Shaw a man behind the vile of a dramatist with reference to his private life and his humanistic ideals explicated out of his multi-faceted roles as socialist, supporter of women's rights, rationalist, a warrior against war and its glamour, a man of his own

religion and spirituality, philosopher, social reformer, iconoclast and ultimately a man with human heart with a few citations from some of his writings.

Nationalism in the eyes of Shaw

Shaw is a universal thinker in a sense that his plays have been recognized and popular all through the world only next to Shakespeare. His plays - though intended to educate the contemporary London - were written for the whole human community with an aspiration to reform the misrepresented ideals and misguided lives. His view on patriotism proves him to be a universal writer who aspires to work for the unity of the world, "You'll never have a quiet world till you knock the patriotism out of the human race. Patriotism is, fundamentally, a conviction that a particular country is the best in the world because you were born in it." (Alva, 1943, p.271) Tien says that Shaw was "deeply patriotic, with a warm love for humanity, and very much concerned for the fate of the human species" (Shaw *Bulletin* September 1957 15)

Christian Humanism Vs Shaw's Religion

It is to be confessed that Shaw is never serious about any religious institutions in the world. He can never be deemed a preacher of theology at any cost. The portrayal of the martyrdom of Thomas Beckett by T.S. Eliot is apparently in the opposite pole of the martyrdom of St. Joan by Shaw. He is a puritan and his belief in Christian theology is very limited and obscure. He is often regarded as an atheist by some critics, his religious orthodoxy is vehemently put to question particularly by his comrade, G.K.Chesterton, a strong believer of religious ideals, who praises Shaw for his social criticism and literary talent but attacks him for his anthropocentric humanism in his remark:

True humanism, argues Chesterton, is theocentric.... Christian humanism honors the fact that, though created of dust, the human being is the only creature made by God in his very own image and likeness.... The old idealistic liberal humanism born of the Renaissance and Enlightenment was giving way to a militant, anti-theistic secularism, whose child is nihilism.... A postmodern world requires a Christian humanism grounded in philosophical realism.... The Modern writers' Secularism needs to be replaced by faith, he says unabashedly, and relativism by firm standards of right and wrong. (Guroian, 2005, p.25)

There is only little trace of Christian humanism in Shaw's life and plays and his religion is the religion of humanity. One must spend his only life on earth for the welfare of himself and his fellow being. It is not to live eternally after demise that man should pretend to be pious. He proclaimed in his play *Major Barbara* that poverty knows no religion. He opines that religion is to harmonize mankind and guide man to attain happiness on earth. It is better to cite the actual words of Shaw to illustrate his conception of religion:

If religion is that which binds men to one another, and irreligion that which sunders, then must I testify that I found the religion of my country in its musical genius and its irreligion in its churches and drawing rooms. (Henderson, 1911, p.290)

Therefore, it is apparent that Shaw could never find solace in prayer. Though Shaw seems to have great regards for the true Catholic Church, he is not supposed to be religious and pious. He says, "There is still one serious obstacle to the churches on the very day when most people are best able and most disposed to visit them. I mean, of course, the services." (*Savoy* I, p.23.) Shaw, being a symbolist, is always implied and often used religion as abstract symbol to preach virtues. He never invites Jesus to stand for his message but the message will be well-communicated through his daring characters as disciples that are puppets in the hands of Shaw, a savior. Eric Bentley points about Shaw's use of biblical tradition as follows:

The theology is transformed into symbolism; the God is human as well as divine, pagan rather than Christian, a fusion of old ideas into a new form, "part brute, part woman, and part God." By using traditional religious themes and Language to illuminate his philosophy, Shaw cloaks his ideas with a seriousness and imaginative power which are here highly effective. (Bentley, 1976, p.1)

For Shaw, spirituality is not in the sweet tongue that praises the lord but in the one that actively participating in the higher growth of humanity in deed. He suggests the theory of Life Force that stands for the humanity's spiritual possibility. He warns about the men who believe the existence of God in the sky and never ready to participate in the steady evolution of Life Force that leads the human society to reach its desired purpose. As universally agreed, Shaw's spirituality and religion refer to his metaphysical philosophies of the Life Force and Creative Evolution. He attacked Darwinism and thus seemed to support religion only to stabilize socialism. His adoption of religion is better expressed in the following lines:

In opposition to Karl Marx and Socialists who say that they want to have nothing to do with Religion one way or the other, Mr. Shaw maintained that it is only Religion which will supply a sufficient motive power for the accomplishment of Socialism--and incidentally attacked the "Materialistic and soul-destroying conception of the Universe" which has been associated with the name of Darwin. (Berst p.87)

Shaw's spirituality neither attempts to elevate the man to the Heaven above with his counted merits or throw the man down to the dark Underworld measuring his sins. It is a life of intellectual pursuit on earth that is the only real life to be lived happily and meaningfully.

Atheistic Humanism & Constructive Ideals in Shaw

Shaw suggests that armaments and drugs are used often for the destructive purpose and the man has become mad as he never contemplates the productive phase of weapons and medicines. Man is really a devil's disciple in his attitude towards the utility of the so-called scientific advancement and medical discoveries. The point is vividly pictured in Shaw's *Man and Superman*, says the Devil:

I tell you that in the arts of life man invents nothing; but in the arts of death he outdoes Nature herself, and produces by chemistry and machinery all the slaughter of plague, pestilence, and famine... In the Devil's eyes, "the power that governs the earth is not the power of Life but of Death" (Shaw, 1903, p.142- 144.)

Thus, the man must think it over and evolve to a higher level to perform something productively. Instead of indulging in prayer for the lost souls to rest in peace, let the progress be made to safeguard the rest. Some critics consider Shaw as an atheist for his theories of Life Force and Creative Evolution. The following words of Shaw touch the idea of atheism: “The fact that a believer is happier than a skeptic is no more to the point than the fact that a drunken man is happier than a sober one”. (*dailyatheistquote*, 2013). Not in the view of neglecting God that Shaw has invented the idea of Creative Evolution but to make the idle and dreamy world of mankind to be active enough to achieve a purposeful progress with a desired direction. While everyone is directed to church to pray for the growth and peace of mankind in general, Shaw has other ideas about going to church. In a work, *On Going to Church*, Shaw ironically attacks the practice of going to church with a strange purpose. He says, “I dwell in a world which, unable to live by bread alone, lives spiritually on alcohol and morphia” (Moat, 2011). This statement makes it clear that Shaw could be labeled as an atheistic socialist and his humanism is nothing but secular in thought. Marx’s atheistic views are found in Shaw’s writings. Marx once said, “Religion is the opium of the masses”. (Fromm, 1966, p.66). Shaw’s ideals are partially similar to the views of Marx with respect to religion. Marx had believed nothing but his own socialist conceptions to reform the whole community of mankind and neglected almost all the other institutions in his pursuit of humanity’s well-being. His outlook on religion is manifested here:

For Marx, the most complete alienation of man stems from religion, because religion separates man from nature, from society, and from himself in order to enclose him in an abstract world where he cannot realize his potentials. (Fromm, 1966, p.66)

His Socialism is Humanism

Henderson states the occasion with which Shaw became a serious socialist thinker to take his axe for breaking the hypocrisy and idiotic idols of the contemporary England. He says:

One night, in 1883, he wandered into the Memorial Hall in Farringdon street; by chance the speaker was the great Single-Taxer, Henry George. For the first time did the importance of the economic basis dawn upon Shaw’s mind. He left the meeting a changed man; and soon was devouring George’s *Progress and Poverty* and Marx’s *Das Kapital* with all the ardor of youth and burning social enthusiasm. (Henderson, 1911, p.293)

Another influence on socialism of Shaw owe to the drama of ideas that made its entry in England with William Archer by his introduction of the plays of a Norwegian playwright, Ibsen in English. The plays of ideas helped the socialist writers to record their craving for social reform and Shaw was considered the forerunner of a dramatic revival and a social revolution. Shaw was an ardent socialist that he found *Das Kapital* a “bible of the working classes” as a jeremiad against the *bourgeoisie* (Henderson, 1911, p.293). His socialism was strengthened by the dynamic generation of socialists like Sidney Webb (member of Fabian Society), Stanley Jevons, Philip Wicksteed, and Henry George. He found drama as a suitable form to propagate his socialistic ideas owing to the influence of Ibsen. His *Quintessence of Ibsenism* is a witness for his profound influence on the Norwegian playwright. It is essential to say a few words on the work to find Shaw’s selection of Creative Evolution and Socialistic Humanism as major themes

in his plays. The contemporary playwright Oscar Wilde had a great regard for the work and stated, “The book is such a delight to me that I constantly take it up, and always find it stimulating and refreshing”(Hart-Davis, 1962, p. 332). According to Wilde, the book is about Shaw’s public criticism of ‘the ridiculous institution’ of stage censorship and his intention to become a playwright for society. Wilde is a follower of Aesthetic Movement that suggests art for art’s sake. It is interesting to note that unlike Wilde, Shaw’s slogan is art for life’s sake and he vehemently opposed Wilde’s conception stating that he would never pen a single word for the art’s sake. Such is his social concern as a true social reformer.

Shavian conception of humanism is better manifested in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. In this essay, Shaw penetrated into the subconscious of Ibsen and brought forth the humanistic spirit mixed with socialism in the works of him. Shaw’s humanism absolutely centered on man and his progress. He anticipates the man to treat another in terms of ends and not as means. Humanists believe that human beings are perfectible but in Shaw’s view, man can easily lose his progress that he has made if he does not strive to work vitally at keeping it with his high spirits. He rejects the idea of salvation by grace and suggests the conception of salvation by deed that prescribes an exemplary life of love, forgiveness, helping others physically and intellectually to attain their goals. Thus, Shaw’s socialism is itself humanism. What Marx tried to achieve with his *Das Kapital* is a question to be clarified first. Marx aimed at reforming the whole world with the help of his socialistic principles. His ambition is observed, in short, in the following lines of Leopold Senghor:

Marx’s ambition – and his paradox- has always been to express, throughout his entire work, the dignity of man and his spiritual needs without ever resorting to metaphysics or ethics or religion, not even philosophy. (Fromm, 1966, p.64)

It will be out of discussion if Shaw’s point of view on socialism is not discussed in this context. Shaw, being a member of the Fabian Society, fought against the class division and capitalist trend in England. He set a platform to discuss his socialistic principles in his *Plays Unpleasant* and further extended it in *Major Barbara* to its full length. His Fabian socialism was sometimes apparently discussed in his plays, particularly in his play *Philanderer*, Ibsenism was largely discussed. His socialistic plays were seriously admired by a few of his contemporaries and cursed by many as mere discussion plays and lacking dramatic elements. One of the famous opinions on Shaw’s Fabian socialism justifies his stand as a moral socialist:

The Fabian Socialism of Mr. Shaw, accepted as a mere eccentric detail by the play-going public of two worlds, is in reality not only the essence of the man, but the source and abiding inspiration of his entire literary output as well. (Fuchs, 1926, p. 4.)

James Fuchs further complimented Shaw as a master craftsman, “the inventor of ... the spoken operetta of social criticism”. Socialistic instinct of questioning the authority was immensely witnessed in Shaw. He valued intellectual freedom more than anything else in the world and found it essential for democracy and socialism to flourish. Shaw, in his essay, *Socialism for Millionaires*, says:

Our whole theory of freedom of speech and opinion for all citizens, rests not on the assumption that everybody is right, but on the certainty that everybody is wrong on some

point on which somebody else is right, so that there is a public danger in allowing anybody to go unheard (“Millionaires” p.100).

Hence, he has great patience to listen to others’ opinions and wit enough to reply them without patience. His love for mankind is not in serving them physically with wheel chairs to ride but to fix them wings to fly to the skies not to see the God but to realize their potentials as supermen. The ultimate aim of the birth of man is to serve for the progress of him. God does not expect man to be idle and dependent. His opinion on the relationship of God [Life Force] and Man is delivered in his play *St.Joan*, “We are all subject to the King of Heaven You must not think about your duty to your feudal lord, but about your duty to God” (Shaw, *St. Joan*, p.69). Through the spectacles of a socialist, Shaw determined to fight against the social hypocrisy, humbugs and misgivings. He has taken plays as his arms to fire the conventional cult of the modern England. He stays stubborn in his idealism to remove much of the idealistic principles encircled the world in his period. With his sharp blue eyes like the sky, he observed the whole England and its follies. The things he saw as a socialist were, in the words of Henderson:

He sees the individual involved in the social complex, and powerless, as an individual, to remedy his lot. He sees in money the basis of modern society, and attributes the slavery of the workers and of the women to the omnipotence of capitalized wealth. Modern society represents that phase in social evolution which history will classify as the age of the exploitation of man by man....Woman, in marriage, is still the slave of man; and romance is only the pleasing illusion which makes the relentless functioning of the Life Force. (Henderson, 1911, p.321)

Therefore, he has a humanist heart with a mind of a socialist. His socialistic turn of mind turned the bare existence of mankind into a meaningful one. As a socialist humanist, Shaw brought forth the theory into his drama and thus made the real aspirations of Socialists true. The term socialist humanism does not alone blindly discuss the mechanism of economic theory but perseveres to solve the long-unanswered question of man’s significance in the universe. What it is meant to be a socialist to Shaw, here is his answer:

Socialist will be a definitely fixed political labour, to struggle not against the malevolent machinations of the capitalist, but against the stupidity, narrowness, in a word, the idiocy of the class which actually suffers most from the existing system. (Shaw, *L’Humanitis* Novelle, 1900)

Shavian Problem plays

His problem plays are meant to solve the problems that have been left untouched by many predecessors of Shaw. While every writer pictures the vital issues of the society, Shaw tried to show a vital direction to overcome the miscellaneous troubles and turmoil. He is a problem finder as well as a problem solver. He found opportunity to write a play in every problem he came across. He indulged in a penance to bring forth his problem plays with a dialectical brilliance and wit so that it could delight his audience initially by his verbal wit and will make them later contemplate the hidden truth and shocking realities pertaining to social institutions. Again in the words of Henderson, the purpose of his problem plays is better manifested:

A profound student of human existence through actual contact with many diverse forms of life as it is actually lived to-day, and a philosopher as well, with a powerful imaginative grasp of social and sociological forms, Shaw sees that progress is possible only through the persistent discovery of mistaken conceptions of life and of society. If, as philosophers affirm, error is only imperfect knowledge, then the discovery of vital truth eventuates through that disillusioning process by which, in some psychologically crucial instance or dramatically potent conjuncture, we discover that our ideals, our conventions, our social laws and our religious conceptions are inadequate either to meet the facts or to solve the problems of life. (Henderson, 1911, p.320).

His dramas are widely known as discussion plays. His themes are varied and rare to be found in English literature before him. Henderson opines that Shaw's drama is an "ordered sequence of pictured incidents in which pitfalls are uncovered, illusions unmasked, and vital secrets displayed". (Henderson, 1911, p.320). Shaw's wisdom and goodness lies in questioning of accepted standards of belief and established ideals in his plays. His humanism can thus be classified as moralistic humanism with respect to his problem plays. According to A.C. Ward, Shaw "was a natural literary artist fettered by reforming zeal, and his plays are a continuous record of the long struggle between artist and moralist". He further says,

...employing the weapon of laughter and ridicule to attack bad housing, bad education, bad conditions of labour, bad morals, and other social evils which troubled him so deeply that he would have paraded London with a barrel-organ and in a clown's attire if he could have got a hearing upon no other condition. (Ward, 1964. p.96-97)

Humanistic characters in Shaw's plays

It is necessary to say a few words of his characters in his plays to unmask the humanist in Shaw. His contemporary John Galsworthy opines that his [Galsworthy] characters have feelings which they cannot express; Shaw's characters express feelings which they do not possess. Characters of Shaw are types of hypocritical English men and women. Often his characters are the mouthpieces of him. He, like a cab driver, controls their action and intellect through his whip and sometimes loosens the rein to make a jest and tightens them often to be unemotional for just. His helpless characters are victims either of their romantic notion or of their firm realistic thought. Henderson makes a perfect analysis of some of Shaw's renowned characters with humanistic notions in the following passage:

Laugh as sardonically as we may, we cannot blink the fact that Trench is powerless to resist the Sartorius Idea, that Mrs. Warren is the victim of social extremity rather than the instrument of sexual passion that Julia is the slave of a social convention. Barbara refuses longer to be the dupe of subsidized religion; Tanner is strong-minded enough for self-contempt in the disillusioning discovery of that "vital lie", romance; and Candida clarifies the preference of "natural instinct" to "duty" as a guide to conduct. Shaw's characters, whether involved in social labyrinths or confused by conventional dogmas, break through to the light by discovering their false allegiance to some stupid current fiction or some baseless fabric of cheap romance. (Henderson, 1911, p.322)

Particularly, Shaw's women characters are not womanly women but pragmatic in thought like Shaw. It is indisputable that Shaw was sensitive to women's issues and ceaselessly trying to fetch them a position that they craved for long in the conventional society. For instance, in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* he respected the true love of a responsible mother who had given an economic comfort and social security to her daughter by doing her profession of prostitution. *Mrs. Warren's Profession* shows the poor life of the British female workers, who work hard but earn meager pay, which is so little that they can't support themselves, but are, forced to sell their bodies. The character Kitty Warren, being a mother, found her life a tough one and almost swept off with her poverty at her young age. Therefore, she determined to undergo the profession which had been a taboo in the Victorian society. She never wants her daughter to suffer the agonies that she had undergone. She hated the caged life and loathed herself for the sake of her daughter, Vivie. Shaw's concept of New Women emerged first in the play. He remarks:

If we have come to think that the nursery and the kitchen are the natural sphere of a woman, we have done so exactly as English children come to think that a cage is the natural sphere of a parrot: because they have never seen one anywhere else (Laurence, 2004, p.45)

He, being a male writer, does the role of a feminist. He attacks the patriarchal set up of the late-Victorian society and tried to establish the rights of women. He proves to be a true Ibsenite in action. His humanism, as abiding the great humanist-Immanuel Kant who says, "Always treat people as ends in themselves, never as means to an end", is very much explicated when he treats woman as end in herself. The following lines illustrate Shaw's attack on male-dominated society:

It is not surprising that our society, being directly dominated by men, comes to regard Woman, not as an end in herself like Man, but solely as a means of ministering to his appetite" (Laurence, 2004, p.41).

In *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Shaw breaks all the conventional ideas of women with the pictorial representation of societal taboo. With respect to this play, one can take Bernard Shaw as a humanist as he played the role of a feminist. But he would neither approve that he is a feminist nor a supporter of masculinity but would approve in a point that he is a humanist as women partake half of the humanity. His concern lies on human freedom in general. It requires more than a book to discuss the conception of humanism found in some of the plays of Shaw. It is not denied that all the plays of Shaw, being a socialist, have the touch of humanistic feelings with a reforming zeal but this paper enlightens the reader of the humanistic creed ingrained in the great Victorian in his life and a few works in general and his immense contribution to the race of humanity. Finally, the personality of Shaw is to be seen here before label him a humanist in his private life.

Humanism thy name is Shaw!

In private life, he is a 'perfect gentle man' says one of his friends. He is an epitome of the proverb a friend in need is a friend indeed. Selfless love for man is the first ideal of humanism. It would be better if the actual words of his friend are given to display Shaw's personality:

His [Shaw] goodness of heart, his unvarying courtesy, his tenderness towards the susceptibilities of others, and his tactful handling of shy and timorous suppliants, are things that must be experienced to be appreciated. He has a sharp nose and a barbed tongue ready for the self-seeker, the snob, the poseur, the smiling time-server with a dagger under his coat; but to the honest friend, proved or unproved, he shows the very soul of gentle breeding.” (Henderson, 1911, p.314)

To conclude, the man behind the vile of all ill-criticism should be brought to light and this paper has endeavored to partially fulfill the stand. It would not be completed if the self-less love and dedication to the mankind of a great man is cited from his own words because he often makes his characters as his mouthpieces and desirous to do the criticism of them by himself alone. Therefore, let him unfold his humanist he[art]:

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatsoever I can”. He further says, “I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no ‘brief candle’ for me. It is a sort of splendid torch, which I have got hold of for the moment; and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.” (Henderson, 1911, p.31).

The final phase of his personality is to be exposed through his philosophy. Shaw never likes the title – philosopher and wants to call him Shaw for he is a man who never entitled to any of the designation given by anybody. He once rejected the Nobel Prize for Literature which was conferred on him in 1925. He is writer for no cause but reformer. His life is dedicated to the religion of humanity and he spares nothing for himself even at his death bed. Such is the sacrificial nature of the great personality and his contribution to the world of literature is also unsurpassable. This paper will encourage further researches in the area of humanistic concerns prevailing in Shaw’s works.

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