Chapter III

Shavian Women on Marxist Feminism

This chapter attempts to analyse the perspective, statements and understatements made by women in Shaw’s plays *Pygmalion, Candida, St. Joan* and *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* from the viewpoint of Marxist Feminism. To highlight the emergence of New Women in Shaw’s plays as an epitome of free will, women’s thoughts on various issues is sidelined. Shaw’s women are not meek Victorian ones but they are mobile—who expand their skills outside the realms of household. They are thinking beings who not only feel, but also express. However, only those aspects of their thinking process are given weightage that are clearly manifested in dialogues. But those issues that lend their thought a particular rationale are taken for granted.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel jointly established the Marxist school of thought. The ultimate goal of Marxism has been bringing a classless society, based on the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. They identified two main classes—proletariats and bourgeoisies, the struggle of power between whom brings about progress in society. Marxism has been defined as “a worldview and method of societal analysis that focuses on class relations and societal conflict that uses a materialist interpretation of historical development, and a dialectical view of social transformation.”

Marxism brought to light the plight of workers who are either underpaid or who remain unpaid for the products made by them while on the other hand the Capitalist prosper through the profits gained by these commodities. This drives these workers to a state of alienation as they do not own the products they made. This ultimately results in the workers becoming ‘deskilled’ which ultimately adversely affect the quality and quantity of commodity and commerce. The
alienated workers undergo the process of reification, i.e. they and their relationship to the social phenomena is perceived as things and those with things.

Marxism popularised the concept of socialist realism in literature which glorified the proletariat’s struggle towards societal progress. These ideas guided both literary creation and official literary criticism in the Soviet Union, where works began to be focused on the lives of the different classes. In the years since then, the beliefs of some Marxist schools regarding literary theory have been modified to acknowledge that literary creation is a result of both subjective inspiration and the objective influence of the writer's surroundings. Marxist criticism makes a division between the ‘overt’ (surface) and ‘covert’ (latent) content of a literary work and then studies this covert subject matter of the literary work in relation to basic Marxist themes such as class struggle, or the progression of society etc. Another method of Marxist literary criticism studies a work within the framework of the social-class and status of its author. Sometimes literary text is interpreted in accordance with the social assumptions and political circumstances that make the consumption of a particular subject matter or genre popular. The English literary critic and cultural theorist, Terry Eagleton, defines Marxist criticism this way:

Marxist criticism is not merely a 'sociology of literature', concerned with how novels get published and whether they mention the working class. Its aim is to explain the literary work more fully; and this means a sensitive attention to its forms, styles and meanings. But it also means grasping those forms, styles and meanings as the product of a particular history.
Marxism generally focuses on the clash between the dominant and repressed classes in any given age and also may encourage art to imitate what is often termed as an "objective" reality. And thus it found successful inclusion in the Feminist Movement. Marxist feminism is a branch of feminism focused on investigating and explaining the ways in which women are oppressed through systems of capitalism and private property. Engels observes in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* that the shift from feudalist enslavement to ownership of land also affected the status of women. He argues that a woman's subordination is not a result of her biological disposition but of social relations which is similar to those opined by feminists such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar who gave the idea of ‘social castration’ with regard to women’s lack of social power. Engels explains the traditional stress on sexual mores to be observed by women was to ensure the passing of inheritance to their real offspring. This was the traditional concept in ancient slave owning classes that passed on to the subordinates when feudalism ended.

As such, gender oppression is closely related to class oppression and the relationship between men and women in society is similar to the relations between proletariat and bourgeoisie. On this account women's subordination is a function of class oppression, maintained (like racism) because it serves the interests of capital and the ruling class; it divides men against women, privileges working class men relatively within the capitalist system in order to secure their support; and legitimates the refusal to pay for the domestic labour assigned to women. Women therefore have to face dual struggle for power and status—one at the level of class and the other at the level of gender; one at a broad, unfamiliar setting of society and the other within the narrower, familiar setting of their household. Women workers are more underprivileged in terms
of wages than their male counterparts and women are never paid for household work. This further leads to the feminisation of the poor.

Marxist feminists like Margaret Benston and Peggy Morton stressed that in the capitalist system, two types of labour exist-productive and reproductive. The productive labour is a remunerated one either monetarily or in kind while reproductive labour is that unpaid labour that we all perform in our private sphere for ourselves which includes the entire realm of domesticity, the majority share of which if not whole, is on the feminine gender. However, in recent times many feminist scholars have seen Marx’s theory to be gender blind and in want of some additional theory to understand gender-relations as well. But Marx’s historical materialism and basic concepts have been kept by these feminists as a starting point to elaborate upon. And in this elaboration, Shaw’s influence cannot be ignored as many of the concepts and contentions given by these Marxist feminists coincide with Shaw’s ideas which he voiced and presented in his plays decades before the proposal from the Marxist feminists came. This chapter attempts to trace how Shaw’s plays have influenced and guided the course of this form of feminism as well.

Shaw’s career as a politically committed, campaigning writer and public speaker can be traced back to his reading of a French translation of Marx’s Das Kapital in 1884. It came as a revelation to him and he later referred dramatically to his “complete conversion by it. . . . From that hour I was a speaker with a gospel. . . . This went on for about twelve years, during which I sermonized on Socialism at least three times a fortnight average.” (Shaw 58) As with the writer of books like The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Socialism, Capitalism, Sovietism and Fascism and The Quintessence of Ibsenism, it is impossible that his plays would have escaped his stand on Socialism and Marxism. And apart from this Shaw was a self-acclaimed feminist and in his struggle to create equality among various classes of society, how can women escape their
inclusion owing to their doubly marginalised status in a class divided society. Class consciousness, clash of classes, social mobility, ownership clash, remuneration prospects, effects of underpay and author’s class representation in the text are thus addressed here from the point of view of women characters in the plays *Pygmalion*, *Candida*, *St. Joan* and *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*.

Shavian women are a class apart from their contemporaries in their outlook and perception of the world. They are not of that kind that can be subdued. Their expressions are backboned by some rationale. Educated or not, they are women of intellect; capable of accompanying a thinking mind and feeling heart together. They are often a live manifestation of the reformatory modernization, presenting before the women of the society, a new role model- a figure capable of voicing her choices and having the courage to pursue them. And as such they often surpass the heroes of their plays in popularity by outwitting them. They are no longer the weaker sex but an essential pillar for the manifestation of ‘Life-force’. They embody the ‘New Woman’ in every inch and ounce of them. Not only the heroines but also other ladies in these plays were able to leave their mark in the minor role they are playing. Their sole purpose is not limited to looking pretty and arranging matrimony but to opine ideas that can be analysed by the readers as well as the audiences.

Shaw being an iconoclast himself scrutinizes social institutions relentlessly under the cold searching light of his penetrating intellect and projects the evils inherent in these institutions. As he had stated once: “I write plays with the deliberate object of converting nation to my opinions in these matters.”
*Pygmalion* has class distinction at the centre of its plot. As Marxism attempts to bring a classless society through common ownership of products, Prof. Higgins in *Pygmalion* attempts to remove class distinction through phonetic training. The nobility of his cause can be seen in Act III when he tells his mother, Mrs. Higgins:

HIGGINS. But you have no idea how frightfully interesting it is to take a human being and change her into quite a different human being by creating a new speech for her. It’s filling up the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul. (Shaw 63)

Clash of classes can be visibly seen in Eliza’s constant defiance “I’m a good girl, I am” in *Pygmalion*’s Act I and Act II. She refuses to be submissive or frightened against Higgins offensive remarks. When in Act II, Higgins tries to dismiss her as being useless to him because he had got the records of her accent, she reacts sharply and says:

THE FLOWER GIRL. Don’t you be so saucy. You aint heard what I come for yet.

In the same line she goes on to display and flaunt her class mobility from the newly acquired riches as she asks Mrs. Pearce:

THE FLOWER GIRL. Did you tell him I come in a taxi. (Shaw 23)

The class struggle issue reaches its climax after Eliza’s transformation in Act IV. She becomes an outcast for either of the two classes:

LIZA. I sold flowers. I didn’t sell myself. Now Youve made a lady of me I’m not fit to sell anything else. I wish youd left me where you found me. (Shaw 77)
And again in Act V, she regrets:

LIZA. Oh! If I could go back to my flower basket! I should be independent of both you and father and all the world! Why did you take my independence from me? Why did I give it up? I’m a slave now, for all my fine clothes. (Shaw 100)

So rigid were the class systems that Eliza couldn’t make an entry in either of them with her recently acquired lady-like education. The problem of what would “become of her” after the experiment was over was foreseen by Mrs. Pearce as well as Mrs. Higgins. In Act III, Mrs. Higgins says:

MRS. HIGGINS. The advantages of that poor woman who was here just now! The manners and habits that disqualify a fine lady from earning her own living without giving her a fine lady’s income! (Shaw 66)

These Shavian women could empathize with Eliza in the matter concerning this class struggle-the issue now being that of the maintenance of high-class status just as the Eynsford Hill family. Eliza’s future in laws are a hapless victim of class struggle and middle class morality who in their attempts to maintain their social status at surface level are becoming hollow to their financial roots. They portray the class of genteel poverty who try so rigidly to prevent their downward social mobility that they are hardly able to fit in either, due to their lack of proper allowance. The plight of this family can be read aloud in these words of Mrs. Eynsford Hill:

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. You mustn’t mind Clara. We’re so poor and she gets so few parties, poor child! She doesn’t quite know. (Shaw 62)
Eliza’s low class vocabulary causes quite a sensation at Mrs. Higgins at home day and Mrs. Eynsford Hill’s remarks on it again depict clash of social classes:

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. I daresay I am very old-fashioned; but I do hope you wont begin using that expression, Clara. I have got accustomed to hear you talking about men as roters, and calling everything filthy and beastly; though I do think it horrible and unlady like. But this last is really too much. (Shaw 60)

Desirability to stay as a respectable and desireous member of their class, their members often stoop to these kinds of affectations. This not only increases class consciousness but also furthers the gulf between various classes. Mrs. Higgins first reaction to the news of Eliza’s arrival at her ‘at home day’ was of shock:

HIGGINS. Well, its like this. She’s a common flower girl. I picked her off the kerbstone.

MRS. HIGGINS. And invited her to my at-home! (Shaw 53)

Receiving a low class, common flower girl as her guest was quite out of question had she not been convinced of the skills of her own son. And immediately after her guests were gone she declares that Eliza is not yet presentable:

MRS. HIGGINS. You silly boy, of course she’s not presentable. She’s a triumph of your art and her dressmaker’s; but if you suppose for a moment that she doesn’t give herself away in every sentence she utters, you must be perfectly cracked about her. (Shaw 62)
She concludes that upper class will be able to see through Eliza’s extremely common content of conversation and her identity will be betrayed. She fears that the class consciousness of aristocrats won’t allow her to intermingle with them even after her portrayal of extremely refined manners. Similarly, class consciousness prevented Eynsford Hill children from better education as their status maintenance costs them greater fortune. But Clara, in spite of her mother’s desperate attempts moved downwards on the social scale by joining as a Lady’s assistance at a shop. This might have hurt her social interests but it definitely bettered her monetary prospects.

The plight of Eynsford Hill family in their genteel poverty is quite similar to Shaw’s own in his childhood. Mrs. Eynsford Hill struggling to prepare her children according to her class’ social manners is quite similar to that of Shaw’s mother.

Ownership clash, remuneration prospects and effects of underpay such as alienation and reification can be clearly found in Shaw’s *Pygmalion* with their effect on female psyche. The Ownership clash regarding the success of Eliza’s training began in Act IV with the indifference of Prof. Higgins and Colonel Pickering soon after the Ambassadors Garden Party. In the whole scene Higgins appeared to be a heartless, exploiting Capitalist who denies Eliza her share of credit in winning his bet:


HIGGINS. You won my bet! You! Presumptuous insect! (Shaw 75)

The issue of ownership of Eliza’s learning again arises when she proposes to be a teacher of the same in Act V:

LIZA. I’ll go and be a teacher.
HIGGINS. Whatll you teach, in heaven’s name?

LIZA. What you taught me. I’ll teach phonetics.

LIZA. I’ll offer myself as an assistant to that hairy faced Hungarian.

HIGGINS. What! That imposter! That humbug! That toadying ignoramus! Teach him my methods! My discoveries! You take one step in his direction and I’ll wring your neck. (Shaw 103)

Earlier in the same Act, Higgins and Doolittle had discussions regarding the possession of Eliza when Mrs. Higgins asked Eliza’s father to provide for her:

MRS. HIGGINS. Well, I’m very glad youre not going to do anything foolish Mr. Doolittle. For this solves the problem of Eliza’s future. You can provide for her now.

DOOLITTLE. [with melancholy resignation] Yes, ma’am: I’m expected to provide for everyone now, out of three thousand a year.

HIGGINS. [jumping up] Nonsense! He cant provide for her. He shant provide for her. She doesnt belong to him. I paid him five pounds for her. (Shaw 88)

Since the beginning of the play, Higgins had been treating Eliza as an object of his making and his claim shows that he continues to do so. The modern Pygmalion is quite different from the mythical one as the mythical one had turned the sculpture of Galatea from an object to a human being, to be loved while this modern Pygmalion (Higgins) turns the very much alive Galatea (Eliza) into an object.
In Act II, When Mrs. Pearce asks the question of the terms and conditions of Eliza’s stay, Higgins was hardly considerate about the wages although afterwards Eliza took off much of the affairs of domesticity and Higgins’s engagements from the hands of Mrs. Pearce:

MRS. PEARCE. But what to become of her? Is she to be paid anything? Do be sensible, sir.

HIGGINS. Oh pay her whatever is necessary: put it down in the housekeeping book. What on earth will she want with money? She’ll have her food and her clothes. She’ll only drink if you give her money.” (Shaw 29)

A similar excuse was given by Burgess in Candida for underpaying his workers. However, here again the issue of non-payment of reproductive labour comes to the fore - the labour which is not remunerated being that of the private household sphere.

Again, as for remuneration Eliza wasn’t offered a word of gratitude and was treated by the two men as if she was a work of wood; a thing that has been completed now and needs no further attention. On previous occasions Higgins had often attributed her with object metaphors like a baggage from gutter who can be thrown back to the place from where she was picked once his purpose was over. And now he hardly cared for her any more than that. As such she was what Marxists would have called, ‘thingified’ by him. Her disposition after the Garden Party was one of detached alienation: “She is tired: her pallor contrasts strongly with her dark eyes and hair; and her expression is almost tragic. She takes off her cloak; puts her fan and gloves on piano; and sits down on the bench, brooding and silent.”

And the ultimate result was Eliza becoming ‘deskilled’. Eliza who was the apostle of flawless phonetic speech at the Garden Party few hours back began to stutter and use
grammatically incorrect speech of her earlier days under the dissatisfaction caused by Higgins
dindifference and ingratitude:

    LIZA. You don’t care. I know you don’t care. You wouldn’t care if I was dead.
    I’m nothing to you – not so much as them slippers.

    HIGGINS. Those slippers.

    LIZA. Those slippers. I don’t think it made any difference now. (Shaw 75)

However her rebellion against Higgins’ bullying finally forces him to acknowledge her
worth in Act V. Higgins appeals to Eliza are like that of an owner of a factory whose workers
have gone on strike and he tries all that is in his power to make them return to work – from
threats to requests, from bullying to coaxing. But ultimately the communist cause won causing
the capitalist to surrender:

    HIGGINS. I can do without anybody. I have my own spark of divine fire. But I
    shall miss you Eliza. I have learnt something from your idiotic notions: I confess
    that humbly and gratefully. And I have grown accustomed to your voice and
    appearance. I like them, rather. (Shaw 98)

Although Marx’s critique is often seen to be lacking in the consideration of gender, it is
completely not so. He not only points out the concrete situation of working class women under
capitalism but in his 1846 essay/translation of Peuchet’s work on suicide he also discusses
familial oppression: “The revolution did not topple all tyrannies. The evil which one blames on
arbitrary forces exists in families, where it causes crises, analogous to those of revolutions.”
Marx mentions in this passage from Peuchet to emphasise that family in its bourgeois form is
oppressive. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels argue that the families in bourgeois structure are built on management and transfer of ancestral property. Since, the proletariat families are at loss of this transfer of property as they are hardly able to make any, the power and authority of a father figure diminishes in them giving rise to a new and more independent family structure to which Eliza belonged. But the things continue to be ancient in bourgeois households and women thus undergo more oppression there.

The ardent supporter of the communist cause, James Morell finds himself placed in the position of a Capitalist in the play *Candida*. Shaw’s play *Candida* was subtitled by him as ‘A Mystery’. And a person of Shaw’s genius would not have subtitled a domestic drama as a mystery had its scope been limited to its characters; it is mysterious with regard to its theme and throughout the play Shaw has left subtle hints that one has to pick to reach the conclusion Shaw may have intended one to derive.

On the surface, *Candida* appears to be a love triangle that brings up the issue of a woman’s choice. There is much dispute among the critics with regard to *Candida* taking a feminist or an anti-feminist stand. On one hand Candida has been given the privilege of choice and her declaration of belonging to herself is what gives liberation and identity to her while on the other she is shown to settle for her husband only. This scene has been interpreted, re-interpreted and misinterpreted numerous times. However, a close examination of the play suggest that it may be dealing with a much more important issue of recognition and remuneration of domestic labour and is a play that takes a Marxist stand in feminism.

In his ‘political primer’, *The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Socialism, Capitalism, Sovietism and Fascism* (1928), Shaw repeats his chief argument, that is, “Before there can be any
wealth to divide-up, there must be labour at work” (1928 45). There is a similar statement in Candida, which shows that when Shaw wrote the above mentioned lines, his contention was not that simple:

CANDIDA. Ask the tradesmen who want to worry James, and spoil his beautiful sermons: who it is that puts them off. When there is money to give, he gives it; when there is money to refuse, I refuse it. I build a castle of comfort and indulgence and love for him and stand sentinel always to keep vulgar cares out.

(Shaw 65)

The division of money here is not possible on account of the labour of Morell but it is the labour of Candida in her household management that divides the money earned by him in such a way to satisfy all of them who stand a party to it. It is the recognition and payment of this labour that Candida is all about. Starting from the stage setting in the first Act Shaw has struck the chord that plays throughout in the background of the play as the song on socialism and equal remuneration rights for men and women:

The wall behind him is fitted with bookshelves on which an adept eye can measure the parson’s casuistry and divinity by Maurice’s Theological Essays and a complete set of Browning’s poems and the formers politics by a yellow backed Progress and Poverty, Fabian Essays, A Dream of John Ball, Marx’s Capital and half a dozen other literary landmarks in Socialism. (Shaw 2)

Right from the beginning of the play, Morell’s socialist lectures and his chants about equality have been shown:

MORELL. [amused] Ah; but you see theyre near relatives of mine.
PROSERPINE. [Staring at him] Relatives of yours!

MORELL. Yes we have the same father- in Heaven. (Shaw 4)

He is shown to be proud of this empathy in him and he could not be more mistaken because as the play progresses the hypocrisy in his lectures get exposed. He rebukes and despises his father-in-law, Burgess for underpaying his workers, especially the female workers:

MORELL. Yes, the, because you paid worse wages than any other employer-starvation wages-aye worse than starvation wages- to the women who made the clothing. Your wages would have driven them to the streets to keep body and soul together. [Getting angrier and angrier] Those women were my parishioners. I shamed the Guardians out of accepting your tender: I shamed the ratepayers out of letting them do it: I shamed everybody but you. (Shaw 11)

However, Morell’s support to Burgess when he says that he has ceased to employ women workers puts this great socialist speech and his intentions to a question mark:

BURGESS. [unctuously] Ive turned a moddle hemployer. I do not hemploy no women now: theyre all sacked; and the work is done by machinery. Not a man ‘as less than six-pence a hour; and the skilled and gits the Trade Union Rate. (Proudly) What ave you to say me now?

MORELL. [overwhelmed] Is it possible! Well, theres more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth! – [Going to Burgess with an explosion of apologetic cordiality] My dear Burgess: how splendid of you! I most heartily beg your pardon for my hard thoughts. [Grasping his hand] And now, don’t you feel the
better for the change? Come! Confess! You're happier. You look happier. (Shaw 12)

Gone to the winds are his concern about his women parishioners who when earlier had been underpaid would have taken to prostitution but now having lost their jobs, what will become of them is no longer his concern. He turns a complete blind eye towards them and is overwhelmed at the thought that men workers are paid suitably. Also, while describing the nobility of his cause at depriving Burgess of his tenders what Morell fails to notice is that this apostle of social justice figure of himself, which he was trying to project on Burgess through these arguments, was equally guilty of underpaying Proserpine and is brought to his notice by Candida in Act II:

CANDIDA. Yes, Prossy, and all the other secretaries you ever had. Why does Prossy condescend to wash up the things, and to peel potatoes and abase herself in all manners of ways for six shillings a week less than she used to get in a city office? (Shaw 40)

This failing on his part wasn’t a revelation as Marchbanks and Burgess both had given reference to it in the previous Act:

BURGESS. [crossing to him with great heartiness, whilst Morell joins Candida at the fire]. Glad to meet you, I’m shore, Mr Marchbanks. [Forcing him to shake hands]. Ow do you find yoreself this weather? Ope you aint letting James put foolish ideas into your ed?

MARCHBANKS. Foolish ideas? Oh, you mean Socialism? No. (Shaw 17)
It was the first conversation between Marchbanks and Burgess and Marchbanks had not been the audience to the previous conversation between Morell and Burgess and yet it took him few seconds to understand what Burgess was referring to. Further, during his confrontation with Morell, he openly tells him:

MARCHBANKS. Do you think that the things people make fools of themselves about are less real and true than the things they behave sensibly about? [Morell’s gaze wavers for the first time. He forgets to warm his hands, and stands listening, startled and thoughtful]. They are more true: they are the only things that are true. You are very calm and sensible and moderate with me because you can see that I am a fool about your wife; just as no doubt that old man who was here just now is very wise, over your Socialism, because he sees that you are a fool about it.

(Shaw 23)

Marchbanks was introduced as a shy and sensitive poet who within the span of few lines turns into a bold lover declaring his love interests to the husband of his inspiration. Following the sequence of lines and arrangement of thoughts, the reason for this sudden outburst is nowhere in the romantic arena. The sensitive poet was fuelled with anger at the disregard of the desires and demands of the lady he adores. Morell clearly anticipates Candida’s intention in telling Marchbanks not to stay for the lunch even if Morell insists. The “something sacred” Morell referred to may be seen as the hint to the demands of private intimacy that may or may not be of sexual nature but well deserved by a wife after being away from her husband. But Morell’s disregard for Candida’s emotions infuriates Marchbanks:
MARCHBANKS. [With a gesture as if sweeping something behind him]. Oh, let us put aside all that cant. It horrifies me when I think of the doses of it she had to endure in all the weary years during which you have selfishly and blindly sacrificed her to minister to your self-sufficiency: you! [turning on him] who have not one thought-one sense- in common with her. (Shaw 22)

Here, the issue was not of a lover’s plea but of proper reward, recognition or payment of what Candida was doing for Morell and his household. The issue is not about monetary remuneration but of recognition and reward in terms of equality. Candida and her demands were treated when Morell pleases to do so. She was taken for granted as a piece of furniture which won’t leave its place in household unless Morell wishes for the same. The ‘scrubbing brush’ symbol is used at the right time to portray it. Morell had used that brush for ‘blackleading’ which Candida uses for scrubbing and he paid no heed towards a replacement of it to cater to Candida’s needs:

CANDIDA. [with serious vexation] My own particular pet scrubbing brush has been used for blackleading. [A heartbreakening wail bursts from Marchbanks. Burgess looks round, Amazed. Candida hurries to the Sofa]. What’s the matter. Are you ill, Eugene? (Shaw 36)

Eugene’s poetic horror is the metaphor of scrubbing brush that gets associated with Candida in relation to Morell’s treatment of both- whenever and whatever way he pleases. As Eugene points out:

MARCHBANKS. Sermons and scrubbing brushes! With you to preach the sermon and your wife to scrub. (Shaw 36)
It was this objectification of Candida and her skills as the mistress of the household that led to the famous auction scene in this play where he objectifies her as his greatest treasure:

MORELL. [Bracing himself for the catastrophe] I have nothing to tell her except [here his voice deepens to a measured and mournful tenderness] that she is my greatest treasure on earth- if she is really mine. (Shaw 60)

Candida is clearly offended by this as again he fails to realize that she is not someone’s possession, she is an individual. This objectification and auction of women can be seen in many plays of George Bernard Shaw. For instance, in *Arms and the Man*, Raina faced the same situation of accepting either of the two men available, to which she objects and reacts in the same way Candida did. Thus, objectification of women and their emancipation from the same has been a key theme in Shaw’s plays repeatedly and Candida also seems to be following the same track.

Marchbanks has pointed in the earlier lines that Morell has been treating Candida as an object right from the beginning of his relationship with her:

MORELL. It was there that I earned my golden moment and the right, in that moment, to ask her to love me. I did not take the moment on credit; nor did I use it to steal another man’s happiness.

MARCHBANKS. [rather disgustedly, trotting back towards the fireplace]. I have no doubt you conducted the transaction as honestly as if you were buying a pound of cheese. (Shaw 53)

Just like Eliza in *Pygmalion*, Candida can be seen detached and alienated from her surroundings in the beginning of Act III:
Candida is in the easy chair. The poker, a little brass one, is upright in her hand. Leaning back and looking intently at the point of it, with her feet stretched towards the blaze, she is in a waking dream, miles away from her surroundings and completely oblivious of Eugene. (Shaw 48)

Candida, the most efficient housekeeper; the most charming hostess; the most earnest audience fails in her skill of entertaining Marchbanks at this moment and in this moment Candida is “deskilled”, because her skill as an excellent manager was that of hospitality:

MARCHBANKS. Havnt you been listening?

CANDIDA. [with a guilty excess of politeness] Oh yes, its very nice. Go on Eugene. I’m longing to hear what happens to the angel.

MARCHBANKS. [letting the manuscript drop from his hand to the floor]. I beg your pardon for boring you.

CANDIDA. But you are not boring me, I assure. Please go on. Do Eugene.

MARCHBANKS. I finished the poem about the angel quarter of an hour ago. Ive read you several things since. (Shaw 48)

But this deskilled state doesn’t last long as her motherly instinct and natural skill at nurturing forces her to guide Eugene out of his confusions. However, in the process of guiding Eugene, Candida realizes her own objectification and finally stands up to struggle against the Capitalist thought that perceived her so. She declares in Act II that her skills and virtues are not to be objectified because if they were so, they would have been given away to a more deserving lot, by then:
CANDIDA. Ah, James, how little you understand me to talk of your confidence in my goodness and purity! I would give them both to poor Eugene as willingly as I would give my shawl to a beggar dying of cold, if there was nothing else to restrain me. Put your trust in my love for you, James; for if that went, I should care very little for your sermons: mere phrases that you cheat yourself and others with every day. (Shaw 42)

In the above lines, Candida had already asserted her ownership over herself but Morell being at a loss of understanding asks her to objectify herself in order to stay with one of the customers whose bargain she feels more suitable for herself. What both the men fail to realize is that the product they are offering their bargain for is not Candida herself but her skills as a housekeeper and the caretaker that both of them adore and idealize.

Candida’s selection of John Morell over Eugene Marchbanks is not an issue of submissiveness to the set norms as feminists have seen it. Rather, it’s a choice to continue her ownership on the household she created from her skills. A very important issue in Marxism was brought to the fore in this selection. Dissatisfaction at not receiving the desired remuneration for their work makes the workers give up their right on the things created by them. Instead of claiming their right of ownership they seek other possible places for better chances which may or may not yield the desired result. And in the process they leave and never again think about what was rightfully theirs—their own creation.

If Candida had chosen Eugene she would have done the same—leaving her claim on her own creation. Eugene’s heart was that of a poet. He advocated freedom and would have given Candida the same without compromising his own. But Candida’s skills would have to rot with
him because she was the queen ruling her own domain. Candida wasn’t a domestically challenged lady for whom the definition of freedom would have been freedom from a domestic life. Rather, freedom for her was to have things her own way in her household. Thus, she was annoyed at the use of the scrubbing brush by Morell and at not finding her house in the state she left it.

For Marchbanks she was an inspiration; his muse; whom he wanted to rest on a pedestal and worship:

MARCHBANKS. [firing up] Yes, to be idle, selfish, and useless: that is, to be beautiful and free and happy: hasn’t every man desired that with all his soul for the woman he loves? Thats my ideal: whats yours, and that of all the dreadful people who live in these hideous rows of houses? (Shaw 36)

And again in Act III, he states:

MARCHBANKS. Nothing but to repeat your name a thousand times. Dont you feel that every time is a prayer to you?

CANDIDA. Doesnt it makes you happy to be able to pray?

MARCHBANKS. Yes, very happy.

CANDIDA. Well that happiness is the answer to your prayer. Do you want anything more?

MARCHBANKS. No: I have come into heaven, where want is unknown. (Shaw 50)
And in these lines, one can clearly see the ending of Candida’s role and guidance in Eugene’s love life. Also, Candida is not in the realm of heavenly attributes and happiness “where want is unknown”. Had Candida desired a freedom like this where her skills are not used but worshipped, she would have encouraged Marchbanks in these accusations against Morell. But she didn’t. Instead she strongly recommended and showed the kind of equality she would like:

CANDIDA. [quaintly] He cleans the boots, Eugene. You will have to clean tomorrow for saying that about him.

MARCHBANKS. Oh, don’t talk about boots! Your feet should be beautiful on the mountains.

CANDIDA. My feet would not be beautiful on the Hackney Road without boots.

(Shaw 36)

Thus, it would have been quite unlikely if she had chosen Eugene as he has got nothing to favour her interests in his bargain. What she craved for was the recognition for her work and her ownership and authority on it, which she got as Morell recognized the same:

CANDIDA. Now I want you to look at this other boy here: my boy! Spoiled from his cradle. We go once a fortnight to see his parents. You should come with us, Eugene, to see the pictures of the hero of the household. James as a baby! The most wonderful of all babies. James in his first frock coat! James under all sorts of glorious circumstances! You know how strong he is (I hope he didn’t hurt you) how clever he is: how happy. [With deepening gravity] Ask James’s mother and his three sisters what it costs to save James the trouble of doing anything but be strong and clever and happy. Ask me what it costs to be James’s mother and three
sisters and wife and mother to his children all in one. Ask Prossy and Maria how troublesome the house is even when we have no visitors to help us to slice the onions. Ask the tradesmen who want to worry James, and spoil his beautiful sermons: who it is that puts them off. When there is money to give, he gives it; when there is money to refuse, I refuse it. I build a castle of comfort and indulgence and love for him and stand sentinel always to keep vulgar cares out. I make him master here, though he does not know it, and could not tell you a moment ago how it came to be so. [With sweet irony] And when he thought I must go away with you, his only anxiety was- what should become of me! And to tempt me to stay he offered me [leaning forward to stroke his hair caressingly at each phrase] his strength for my defence! His industry for my livelihood! His dignity for my position! His [relenting] ah, I am mixing up your beautiful cadences and spoiling them, am I not darling?

MORELL. [quite overcome, kneeling beside her chair and embracing her with boyish ingenuousness] It’s all true, every word. What I am you have made me with the labour of your hands and the love of your heart. You are my wife, my mother, my sisters you are the sum of all loving care to me. (Shaw 64, 65)

In the above lines, Candida clearly gives the reason of not going away with Eugene. She points towards Morell’s ironical statements when he was putting up his bargain and asserts that whatever Morell was offering for bargain was actually not what he could offer as he receives it from Candida only. Candida also proves herself as the great manager of her household—something which in the perspective of Marxist feminism falls in the realm of a respectable salary. Candida’s mocking of Morell’s ironic statements points out that the livelihood he was
actually offering as a favour in the bargain was equivalent to the salary she would have earned had she utilized her skills outside household in the present times. So if the remuneration of all the affairs of the domesticity would have to be given, Morell had definitely failed. And by the end of the auction scene, he himself becomes the beggar Candida was earlier referring to.

Throughout the play there have been moments when Candida and Marchbanks might have shared private conversations while he was helping her. It is quite possible that he had made Candida realize what she deserves and what she is being paid. Morell and the audience both have thus noticed that Candida and Marchbanks have repeated one another’s words at different occasions. As in Act III, Candida says:

CANDIDA. Ah, James, how little you understand me to talk of your confidence in my goodness and purity! I would give them both to poor Eugene as willingly as I would give my shawl to a beggar dying of cold, if there was nothing else to restraint me. Put your trust in my love for you, James; for if that went, I should care very little for your sermons: mere phrases that you cheat yourself and others with every day.

MORELL. His words! (Shaw 42)

And again Act III, Marchbanks also uses the same beggar simile:

MARCHBANKS. I could only go to her as a beggar.

MORELL. [starting] A beggar dying of cold! Asking for her shawl! (Shaw 53)

Thus, there is a possibility that the entire drama on stage was a result of the ideas of claiming her worth in the eyes of self and others put into Candida’s mind by the poet Marchbanks who given
to the habit of talking in metaphors and poetic decorations has been misunderstood as having romantic interests in Candida. Also, he had denied such interests in her when he first confessed his love for her:

MORELL. [sitting down to have his laugh out]. Why my dear child, of course you do. Everybody loves her: they cant help it. I like it. But [looking up jocosely at him]. I say, Eugene do you think yours is a case to be talked about? Youre under twenty: she’s over thirty. Doesnt it look rather too like a case of calf love?

MARCHBANKS. [vehemently] You dare say that of her! You think that way of love she inspires! It is an insult to her! (Shaw 22)

Shaw has carefully and shrewdly brought up the point of recognition and remuneration of domestic labour on which the later feminist critics have elaborated upon. Under the brightly coloured cloak of a love triangle within the four walls of a domestic household, he has hidden the uniform of recognition, remuneration and equality that he advocates. Candida is frank and free. So what if she is skilled according to Victorian tradition. Most women in Shaw’s time were the same. And thus, were taken for granted. Through Candida, Shaw brought to notice the fact that domestic hospitality and household management are also a trade but the unpaid one. The reproductive labour goes unnoticed in every household thus. However, Shaw has also given a non- monetary solution to this, i.e., sharing of reproductive labour which will awaken the eyes of the men with regard to this. Morell shares domestic responsibilities by polishing his boots by himself, peeling potatoes and doing dishes while Marchbanks, who though a guest there, assisted in cutting onions. Similar suggestion has been given by Marxist feminists like Heidi Hurtmann who in the movement for the wages for “Housework Campaign” supports the cause saying that
these efforts “take as their question the relationship of women to the economic system, rather than that of women to men, apparently assuming the latter will be explained in their discussion of the former.”

Throughout the play the entire conflict and confusion is over Candida’s worth. For Morell she is a treasure that he possesses. For Marchbanks, she is an idol that he wants to worship. This is all these men have to offer to her. And for this they want her to give up what is rightfully hers. Candida uses the numerical metaphor to indicate the gap between what she has and what Marchbanks is offering:

   CANDIDA. When I am thirty, she will be forty five. When I am sixty, she will be seventy-five. (Shaw 66)

There is no mention of the age in the above lines and the age that Marchbanks is referring to carries the connotation of the time they were living in. In this gap, Candida affirms that she is the owner and mistress of her own will with Morell at her disposition which is much more than the free soul of the poet could ever offer her.

The poet’s secret is neither about failure in love as he had already been guided out of it by Candida; nor is it about some greater aims. He himself confessed few lines back that he has become a mature person that day who has superseded the barrier that his chronological age was putting. In the metaphor of the impatient night, he gave words to his ignorance that was too impatient to understand what Candida really wanted. He felt that he was trying to free her from the servitude of her husband but by the end of the play Morell took the subordinate position in his posture as well as in his relationship with Candida. The secret in the poet’s heart that was
rushing him towards the dawn of understanding was the new frame in which he could see Candida now.

In the exposition scene, it is mentioned that the person who has gifted the ‘Virgin of Assumption’ picture on the earth considers the two alike symbolically. The Feminist Dictionary describes Virgin Mary as, “Absolutely obedient to the male God, she derives all her status from her son.”(258) Simone de Beauvoir writes about Virgin Mary as, “For the first time in human history the mother kneels before her son; she freely accepts her inferiority;”

Though Marchbanks is more probable to attach the purity significance associated with Virgin Mary in the motherly nature of Candida, the above image of mother kneeling to the son she nurtures gets reversed in the last Act when Morell kneels before her:

MORELL. [quite overcome, kneeling beside her chair and embracing her with boyish ingenuousness] (Shaw 65)

And so does Marchbanks:

She takes his face in her hands and as he divines her intention and falls on his knees, she kisses his forehead. (Shaw 66)

Thus, the two boys Candida has been nurturing throughout the play finally accept her reversed ‘Mary’ status. And here lies the secret to the poet’s heart who now knowing that they couldn’t be free of each other but either of them will have to take subordination in the reign of Candida’s domesticity goes out. The subordination and servitude that Marchbanks’s knightly blood was forcing him to rescue Candida from would have bound him instead. The same has been
explained by Shaw when he answers to the queries of a play-reading society at Rugby (dated 8 March 1920):

The secret is very obvious, afterall- provided you know what a poet is. What business has a man with great destiny of a poet with the small beer of Domestic conflict and cuddling and petting at the apron strings of some dear nice woman? Morell cannot do without it. . . .To Eugene, the stronger of the two, the daily routine of it is nursery slavery, swaddling clothes, mere happiness instead of exaltation- an atmosphere in which great poetry dies. . . .When Candida brings him squarely face to face with it, his heart rolls up like a scroll;

Thus, the entire play is about recognizing that what the men are calling theirs on account of being the bread earner is not rightfully theirs as they haven’t put in their skill there. Candida who actually put that hard earned money into proper usage is given no heed and her work goes unnoticed as a duty.

There couldn’t be a more antifeminist interpretation of Candida if she is banished from the lot of new women just because she refused to give up the home she made a heavenly abode both for Morell and Marchbanks. In fact, she asserted her emotional independence from the two men. There was nothing traditional about her accepting Morell but it was a decision that was intelligent enough to gain her worth in the household where she was being taken for granted. Thus, when seen from a Marxist standpoint it was not a triumph of motherhood against which the radical and second wave feminists stand; rather it is a triumph of domestic and reproductive labour that gained recognition. And all the above hints that Shaw carefully placed throughout the
play are possibly indicating his Marxist intentions that he might have wanted to be included in
the feminist movement.

The most unconventional profession among the heroines of Shaw was taken by Joan. *St. Joan* although being a historical play doesn’t have the touch of Shaw’s genius missing. The trial of Joan of Arc does not merely stand testimony to the struggle between ecclesiastical court
and a common peasant woman. It is actually an attempt to expose the resistance and subjugation
a common person faces when his or her authority and worth seem to move on social scale and
may seem to challenge the authority of those sitting at the peak of this social ladder. And the
subjugation is more fierce and speedy if the person is a woman that too coming from the lowest
order of social hierarchy. And here comes the class struggle and resistance Marx talked about.

In the very first Act, Captain Robert de Baudricourt talks about the impending
disturbance in the existing class systems if they proceed to listen to Joan’s demands:

ROBERT. Second, she’s not a farm wench. She’s a bourgeoisie. That matters a
good deal. I know her class exactly. Her father came here last year to represent his
village in a lawsuit: he is one of their notables. A farmer. Not a gentleman farmer:
he makes money by it, and lives by it. Still, not a labourer. Not a mechanic. He
might have a cousin a lawyer, or in the Church. People of this sort may be of no
account socially; but they can give a lot of bother to the authorities. (Shaw 7)

This prediction of the squire proved to be true although Joan did nothing to cause the
trouble as she wonders in Act V:

JOAN. Why do all these courtiers and knights and churchmen hate me? What
have I done to them? I asked nothing for myself except that my village shall not
be taxed; for we cannot afford war taxes. I have brought them luck and victory; I have set them right when they were doing all sorts of stupid things: I have crowned Charles and made him a real king; and all the honours he is handing out have gone to them. Then why do they not love me?

DUNOIS. [rallying her] Sim-ple-ton! Do you expect stupid people to love you for shewing them up? Do blundering old military dug-outs love the successful young captains who supersede them? Do ambitious politicians love the climbers who take the front seats from them? Do archbishops enjoy being played off their own alters, even by saints? Why, I should be jealous of you myself if I were ambitious enough. (Shaw 50)

The trial scene in *St. Joan* is often seen as the precursor of protestant repression but Shaw has left clear hint that it was not so by meddling with historical dates. In Scene IV, Warwick mentions the name Protestantism:

WARWICK. It is the protest of the individual soul against the interference of priest or peer between the private man and his God. I should call it Protestantism if I had to find a name for it. (Shaw 48)

The context in which the English General used the term is quite different from what actually ignited the movement although its goal was the same. The trial of Joan of Arc was done in the year 1431 and the term Protestantism gained popularity in the year 1517 when Martin Luther King published the Ninety-Five thesis as a reaction against abuses in the sale of indulgences, which purported to offer remission of sin to the purchasers. The first people to be called Protestants were the six princes of Roman Empire along with the fourteen rulers of imperial free
cities against the edict of Diet of Speyer (1529). During reformation in Germany, the word that was popularly used to denote this movement was evangelical and not Protestant.

This meddling of dates with approximately a century’s difference is probably done deliberately by Shaw because for a person of his knowledge, it is quite unlikely that he doesn’t know his history. It is possible for a person who is unaware of historical dates to take the events happening in the trial as those resulting from Protestantism. But by mentioning the word and its coinage by an English general a century before, he immediately draws one’s attention to the fact that Shaw’s intention wasn’t as simple and historic as it seems.

Shaw’s intention might have been to show how the rising power of a woman was subdued by the institution of Church under the pretext of Protestantism as Protestantism as a movement didn’t fail but Joan’s attempt to escape from being burnt as a heretic for being a protestant did. The struggle between the Church and Joan is quite the same as that between bourgeois and proletariats. The object being fought for is ‘Faith’. And in whose authority and submission should be the individual’s Faith. The Church’s intention was to force the continuation of faith in Church as the mediator between God and Man while Joan proposed of having direct communion with her maker. And thus, this entire struggle has a Marxist underline to it too.

There are constant hints throughout the trial scene that Joan’s execution has been pre-determined and the trial was only to put up a show for her followers:

WARWICK. [deprecating but by no means denying]: Oh, my, lord, you are very hard on us poor English. But we certainly so not share your pious desire to save The Maid: in fact I tell you now plainly that her death is a political necessity which I regret but cannot help. (Shaw 63)
And to ensure this, all provisions were made:

CAUCHON. [continuing] And that reminds me what provisions has the Earl of Warwick made for the defence of the secular arm should The Maid prove obdurate, and the people be moved to pity her?

THE CHAPLAIN. Have no fear on that score my lord. The noble earl has eight hundred men-at-arms at the gates. She will not slip through our English fingers even if the whole city be on her side. (Shaw 69)

Had it been a fair trial, just for the crime of heresy, every proof that may have contradicted the allegations should have been taken into account, but as Joan complains, right at the start of the trial, attempts were to gather and preserve proofs that may point towards her witchcraft:

JOAN. [continuing] They are determined that I shall be burnt as a witch and they sent their doctor to cure me; but he was forbidden to bleed me because the silly people believe that a witch’s witchery leaves her if she is bled; so he only called me filthy names. Why do you leave me in the hands of the English? I should be in the hands of the Church. (Shaw 70)

In these lines, the entire reality of the trial against the charges of Joan’s heresy gets exposed. It wasn’t the matter of faith in Church. Rather it was an issue of growing popularity of a woman who took the unconventional role of a soldier in a hopeless battle and had it won. This popularity gained her the power which threatened the institution of ecclesiastical authority. As is clear from the charges against her:
D’ESTIVET. I must emphasize the gravity of two very horrible and blasphemous crimes which she does not deny. First she has intercourse with evil spirits, and is therefore a sorceress. Second, she wears men’s clothes, which is indecent, unnatural, and abominable; and inspite of our most earnest remonstrance and entreaties, she will not change them even to receive the sacrament. (Shaw 75)

Joan’s reply to the charges clearly show that the charges were not filed against a supposed heretic but against a woman who dared to enter the trade reserved for men and refused to leave:

JOAN. I was a soldier living among soldiers. I am a prisoner guarded by soldiers. If I were to dress as a woman they would think of me as a woman; and then what would become of me? If I dress as a soldier they think of me as a soldier and I can live with them as I do at home with my brothers. (Shaw 76)

Shaw has recreated a historical event in his play and thus, has emphasized on the things that he might have wanted to highlight about Joan’s trial. And, this being among the two main charges against Joan is certainly noteworthy. In her final assertion in the court, Joan again mentions the real motive of men behind her execution is to prevent her from remaining in men’s trade:

JOAN. You promised my life; but you lied. . . . to chain my feet so that I can never again ride with the soldiers. . . . I could do without my warhorse; I could drag about in a skirt; I could let the banners and the trumpets and the knights and soldiers pass me and leave behind as they leave the other women, if only I could still hear the winds in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and blessed blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind. (Shaw 81)
Again and again Joan gives the same reason for the sentence of being burnt at the stake that was being given to her. In epilogue too, the vision of newly canonised St. Joan affirms the same:

JOAN. I was no beauty: I was always a rough one: a regular soldier. I might almost as well have been a man. Pity I wasn’t: I should not have bothered you all so much then. But my head was in the skies; and the glory of God was upon me;

(Shaw 90)

Signing the confession was the moment of Joan’s deskilling where having felt betrayed by her faith, she gives in to the demands of the Church and the Court:

JOAN. [despairing] Oh, it is true: it is true: my voices have deceived me. I have been mocked by devils: my faith is broken. I have dared and dare; but only a fool will walk into a fire: God, who gave me commonsense, cannot will me to do that.

(Shaw 78)

But even after signing and submitting to the authority of court and the Church, Joan was subjected to an imprisonment of lifetime to ensure that the rebel in her cannot venture to enter the forbidden men’s world again in future. Joan thus was victimized to prevent her upward social mobility, her being coming from the doubly marginalised class of woman peasantry. Her execution as is clearly mentioned in the text was a political agenda and not a religious one even though all were assured of her innocence:

THE INQUISITOR. One gets used to it. Habit is everything. I am accustomed to the fire: it is soon over. But it is a terrible thing to see a young and innocent creature crushed between these mighty forces, the Church and the Law. (Shaw 83)
Even after, being acquitted of all the charges against her, she was placed among saints and not among martyred soldiers because it would have been a way open for other women of her class and others to turn into soldiers, which was unacceptable in the power hierarchy that was then. And it was quite unlikely that the huge lot of men soldiers would have offered to be comrades or subordinate to some woman had they not seen her as someone with the capacity of doing miracles. It was done to socially castrate women from power, a phenomenon that has been pointed out by later feminist critics like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar.

The corruption and hollowness in the institution of the Church increased to even a greater extent after the century in which Joan lived, won, was excommunicated and canonised. The examples of which Shaw didn’t fail to include in his plays with a contemporary setting of his time. The most common case contended with regard to Marxist interests in feminism is that of prostitution which has been dealt with in *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* by Shaw. Unlike Reverend James Morell in *Candida* who was introduced with his concerns about the ladies of his Parish who may take to prostitution because of being underpaid, in *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* there is Reverend Samuel Gardener, former lover of Mrs. Warren— a prostitute who took to this profession on account of the above mentioned reason. Marx himself asserted that “prostitution is only a specific expression of general prostitution of the labourer.” Prostitution therefore can be seen as standing as a symbol of all that is wrong with the world policies in society. Shaw has asserted the same in the preface to *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* when he says his intention is “to draw attention to the truth that prostitution is caused, not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing and overworking women shamefully that the poorest of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep their body and soul together”
Through numerous examples within the text Shaw gives us the glimpse of near to none wages given to female workers at that time. Firstly, Mrs. Warren’s description of the circumstances in which she took to the profession show the meagre wages that were given in face of inhumane conditions:

MRS. WARREN. One of them worked in a white lead factory twelve hours a day for nine shillings a week until she died of lead poisoning. She only expected to get her hands a little paralysed; but she died. The other was always help up to us as a model because she married a Government labourer in the Deptford victualling yard, and kept his room and the three children neat and tidy on eighteen shillings a week—until he took to drink. That was worth being respectable for, wasn’t it? (Shaw 45)

Just as it was in Pygmalion and Candida, the plight of working class labourers was described by Shaw in the same way in Mrs. Warren’s Profession too. In the above lines the height of pathetic conditions at the factories was mentioned where being paralysed was taken as something that is inevitable yet acceptable and in spite of which workers were eager to spend their life and death working there. Further, Mrs. Warren describes her own condition before she took to the profession that pays “35 percent in the worst years”:

MRS. WARREN. Then I was a waitress and then I went to the bar at waterloo station: fourteen hours a day serving drinks and washing glasses for four shillings a week and my board. That was considered a great promotion for me. (Shaw 45)

Mrs. Warren though considers working in lead factory a prospect closer to death, her profession has its own demerits and insufficient remuneration as she describes in the following lines:
MRS. WARREN. I’m sure I’ve often pitied a poor girl, tired out and in low spirits, having try to please some man that she doesn’t care two straws for- some half drunken fool that thinks he’s making himself agreeable when he’s teasing and worrying and disgusting a woman so that hardly any money could pay her for putting up with it. But she has to bear with disagreeable and take the rough with the smooth, just like a nurse in a hospital or anyone else. It’s not the work any woman would do for pleasure, goodness knows; though to hear the pious people talk you would suppose it was a bed of roses. (Shaw 47)

In Act III, Crofts discloses how the high class socialites thrive on money coming from questionable sources; prostitution and trafficking being one of them:

CROFTS. Why the devil shouldn’t I invest my money that way? I take the interest on my capital like other people: I hope you don’t think I dirty my own hands with the work.

Come! You wouldn’t refuse the acquaintance of my mother’s cousin the Duke of Belgravia because some of the rents he gets are earned in queer ways. You wouldn’t cut the Archbishop of Canterbury, I suppose, because the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have a few publicans and sinners among their tenants. Do you remember your Crofts scholarship at Newnham? Well, that was founded by my brother the M.P He gets 22 percent out of a factory with 600 girls in it, and not one of them getting wages enough to live on. How d’ye suppose they manage when they have no family to fall back on? Ask your mother. And do you expect me to turn my back on 35 percent when all the rest are pocketing what they
can, like sensible men? No such fool! If you're going to pick and choose your acquaintance on moral principles, you'd better clear out this country, unless you want to cut yourself out of all decent society.

VIVIE. [conscience stricken] You might go onto point out that I myself never asked where the money I spent came from. I believe I am as bad as you. (Shaw 60)

With this realisation by Vivie, Shaw’s contention was to make the entire society that seems to act clean handed, realize its share in the evil of prostitution and how the Capitalists thrive on the exploitation of these sex workers. In the above declaration, Crofts proudly states how his brother underpays the girls who work for him there by not leaving these low class women with many choices or open resources other than prostitution. Thus, the fact that most prominently visible form of objectification of women has been as sexual objects since time immemorial comes to the fore again. And just because they are dependent on men economically, sex is being traded for money by them may it be within the institution of Marriage or outside it in prostitution. The central Marxist argument with regard to women is this in Mrs. Warren’s Profession:

MRS. WARREN. What is any respectable girl brought up to do but to catch some rich man’s fancy and get the benefit of his money by marrying him? - as if a marriage ceremony could make any difference in the right or wrong of the thing! Oh, the hypocrisy of the world makes me sick! Liz and I had to work and save and calculate just like other people; else ways we should be as poor as any good-for nothing waster woman that thinks her luck will last forever. [With great
energy] I despise such people: they’ve no character; and there’s a thing I hate in a woman, its want of character. (Shaw 47)

In the course of the play, both the Warren ladies are revealed as economically independent but the definition of the same is different for both of them. For Mrs. Warren it’s being free from servitude that men impose through household and being economically independent as a thorough business woman:

MRS. WARREN. How could you keep your self-respect in such starvation and slavery? And what’s a woman worth? What’s life worth? Without self-respect! Why am I independent and able to give my daughter a first-rate education, when other women that had just as good opportunities are in the gutter? Because I always knew how to respect myself and control myself. Why is Liz looked up to in a cathedral town? The same reason. Where would we be now if we’d minded the clergyman’s foolishness? Scrubbing floors for one and sixpence a day and nothing to look forward to but the workhouse infirmary. Don’t you be led astray by people who don’t know the world, my girl. The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her. If she’s in his own station of life, let him marry her; but if she’s far beneath him she can’t expect it: why should she? It wouldn’t be for her own happiness. (Shaw 47,48)

The existential feminists of today seem to have expanded upon this perspective given by Mrs. Warren and are also in agreement with her. In Carol Pateman’s words directed towards the role of a woman as a prostitute, “the man may think he ‘has’ her, but his sexual possession is an
illusion; it is she who has him . . . she will not be ‘taken’, since she is being paid.” She further expands this idea in *The Sexual Contract* where she mentions that “the objection that the prostitute is harmed or degraded by her trade misunderstands the nature of what is traded. The body of the prostitute are not offered in the market; she can contract out use of her services without detriment to herself.”

Shaw had been foresighted enough to see through this aspect of independence in prostitution although it wasn’t what Marxist contention originally was. On the other hand, Vivie expresses her independence exactly in accordance with Shaw’s idea which he expresses in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*: “unless woman repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to the law, and everyone but herself, she cannot emancipate herself . . . Therefore Woman has to repudiate duty altogether. In that repudiation lies her freedom.”

And this is what Vivie does when she breaks all ties with her mother, her only known relation. In the above mentioned lines, Mrs. Warren stated the first and foremost trait of independence, i.e., pursuing something that doesn’t mar their own happiness. And the same reason Vivie gives for her breaking of ties:

VIVIE. They cost you nothing and you ask me to give you the peace and quietness of my whole life in exchange of them. What use would my company be to you if you could get it? What have we two in common that could make either of us happy together? (Shaw 76)

Happiness of independence, according to Vivie, was in being single and giving upon the servitude or dependence on men in any form. Even her employer was a woman and her
independence was in the trade of her choice. Along with this, Vivie who portrays herself as the epitome of ‘New Woman’ also gave up all sentimentality and romanticism:

VIVIE. If we three are to remain friends, I must be treated as a woman of business, permanently single [to Frank] and permanently unromantic [to Praed].

(Shaw 68)

The discussion between the two ladies seem to be like that between seasoned business women but through this dialogue between the two, Shaw has cleverly exposed the extent to which society is involved in the objectification, negotiations and persuasions that are carried on in the flesh trade without ever mentioning the word:

MRS. WARREN. It means a new dress every day; it means theatres and balls every night; it means having the pick of all the gentlemen in Europe at your feet; it means a lovely house and plenty of servants; it means the choicest of eating and drinking; it means everything you like, everything you want, everything you can think of. And what are you here? A mere drudge, toiling and moiling early and late for your bare living and two dresses a year. Think over it. . . .

VIVIE. So that’s how it is done, is it? You must have said all that too many a woman, to have it so pat. (Shaw 74)

Even the marriages are carried on monetary temptations as in Crofts’ proposal in Act III:

CROFTS. You understand what I mean. Well, now as to practical matters. You may have an idea that I’ve flung my money about; but I haven’t: I’m richer today than when I first came into the property. I’ve used my knowledge of the world to
invest my money in ways that other men have overlooked; and whatever else I may be, I’m a safe man from the money point of view. (Shaw 57)

Although they were the other way round, but even Frank’s intentions for marriage were also on the monetary grounds which he reveals both in the first and the last Acts:

FRANK. Good old Praddy! Ever chivalrous! But you mistake: it’s not the moral aspect of the case: it’s the money aspect. I really can’t bring myself to touch the old woman’s money now.

PRAED. And was that what you were going to marry on?

FRANK. What else? I haven’t any money, nor the smallest turn for making it.

(Shaw 70)

So deeply these characters are sunk in their Capitalist’s ground that everything they talk about is in terms of their investment and interest. In this play from his plays unpleasant trilogy, Shaw strips the society to its naked form where all affectations are exposed. Each and every character is business minded and hardly sentimental with the only exception of Praed. As such, Mrs. Warren Profession exposes the effect of materialism, industrialization and marketing even in the sphere of human relations where even the emotions seem to be manufactured in the ratio of demand and supply to cater to the needs of the market.

Summing up in the light of above discussion, it is clear that at many places the perspective of Shavian ladies is undoubtedly underlined by Marxist influences. Shaw’s women fight both- the oppression by opposite gender and ruling class. The ‘New Woman’ of Shaw embodies ideals that are not of submissive but combative kind. They are well aware of the social
changes conductive to uplifting their status and quite inclusive of those thoughts that will help them do so. They take the liberty of choice voicing their perspectives and claiming their rights. They play a crucial role in bridging the gap that separates the two genders across the classes by claiming identical rights for better future prospects. They actively break class barriers and are socially mobile. Thus, their thinking mind prevents them from becoming a ‘Doll-figure’ and expands their horizon from a Victorian household to the whole expanse of Man’s world.
Works Cited


