Chapter V

Life-Force v/s Lesbian Feminism in Selected Plays by Shaw

Shaw’s plays have often been considered a precursor of the feminist writings in the later twentieth century. His plays often bring to the fore the opinions and emotions of the female psyche. They provide an ideal base to work for equating the status of women in society with that of men. Women in his plays actively put their point forward, fight for these points and take their stands on the same ground. They are combative rather than submissive. In their opinions and action, they provide the most apt role models for emancipating the status of women. As for their professional roles, they are continuously mixing and merging in the areas of male dominance. Despite all these attempts at bridging the gap between the two genders, the major role assigned to most of them is one driven by the life-force. Whether this drive of life-force is progressive with regard to feminist thought is the question explored in this chapter.

As a philosopher, Shaw is exponential in advocating the doctrine known as ‘Creative Evolution’. Darwin’s theory of Evolution was in contradiction with the Biblical theory of Universe and its creation. It not only challenges the existence of God, but it also denied the belief that man is the highest in the chain of creations. His theory suggested that Man is the crowning glory of creation only for the time being; until further evolution of cells and species create one that is superior to man. Shaw wanted a theory which combined humanity’s need for God and yet accommodated Darwin. So he coined the concept of Life Force. Emile Legouis writes:

He has given an almost religious turn to his work; that is to say, he has tended more and more to take up the problem of life after death, to try to learn something of that God whom he regards as the Force hidden in evolution. (Legouis, 385)
A.C. Ward writes in this context:

His gospel of Creative Evolution and his belief in Life-Force were opposed to Charles Darwin’s theory of Evolution by Natural Selection. In Darwin’s theory the Survival of the Fittest comes about through the displacing of the weak by the strong, but the idea of Shaw’s Creative Evolution is that the fittest are those who survive by superior intelligence and by the exercise of will power. Shaw held that if we desire with passionate strength of will to be better and finer people and to live longer, in fact to be changed into Superman, and if that strength of will is passed on to our descendants, what we desire will ultimately be brought about.” (Ward, 126)

The earliest proposal of this appears in his Man and Superman as the doctrine of Life Force. In its Preface, Shaw writes, “this is the true Joy in life, . . . the being, used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one.” According to this, each sex has its role: man incarnates the philosophic consciousness of Life, woman incarnates its fecundity. She is the primary player, doing all she can to get a husband and to continue the race. After doing his part, the man is free for intellectual pursuits which in turn increase the collective consciousness of the Life-Force. This doctrine runs through most of his later plays and takes final shape as the doctrine of ‘Creative Evolution’ in his Back to Methuselah published in 1921.

In Man and Superman, Shaw expounded the philosophy that humanity is the latest stage in a purposeful and eternal evolutionary movement of the “life force” toward ever-higher life forms. Shaw’s play Man and Superman (1903) has been said to be “invested with eugenic doctrines” and “an ironic reworking” of Nietzsche’s concept of Übermensch. The main character
in the play, John Tanner, is the author of "The Revolutionist's Handbook and Pocket Companion", which Shaw published along with his play. The Revolutionist's Handbook includes chapters on "Good Breeding" and "Property and Marriage". In the "Property and Marriage" section, Tanner writes:

To cut humanity up into small cliques, and effectively limit the selection of the individual to his own clique, is to postpone the Superman for eons, if not for ever. Not only should every person be nourished and trained as a possible parent, but there should be no possibility of such an obstacle to natural selection as the objection of a countess to a navy or of a duke to a charwoman. Equality is essential to good breeding; and equality, as all economists know, is incompatible with property. (Shaw)

In this Shaw was managing to synthesize Eugenics with Socialism, his best-loved political doctrine. This was a popular concept at the time. Eugenics believes and practice ways through which genetic quality of human population can be improved. Eugenics is the social philosophy advocating the improvement of human genetic traits through the promotion of higher reproduction of people with desired traits (positive eugenics) and reduced reproduction of people with less-desired or undesired traits (negative eugenics). Shaw’s socialist purpose in his philosophy of life-force has been aptly put in the following words:

Since all social evils are caused by the lack of intellectual courage, the cure in every case must be sought in the logic of a courageous thought. . . . His reason leads him to profess a Socialism tempered with anarchy; to preach an ethics of ascetic simplicity; to bring love, the family, and the future of the species under the
disciplinary law of a common sense fortified with ‘eugenics’; to turn the ‘superman’ into a biological and near reality. But it leads him even further: to confute Darwin by means of Lamarck, as Samuel Butler had done; to set up vitalism against materialism; to discover at the core of the universe a ‘Life-Force’ which is at first that of Schopenhauer, but tends to become that of Bergson; to trace a current of divine will in the apparently fatal flood of events. . . . A proclaimed enemy of sentimentalism, he still thus allows revealing emotions to act and speak within some stamp of the Bible on his childhood and education has never, in fact been effaced from the mind of Bernard Shaw. (Legoius and Cazamian, 1312)

A.C. Ward has traced the growth and development of Shaw’s philosophic doctrine in the following words:

This play was Bernard Shaw’s earliest full statement of his conception of the way of Salvation for the human race, through obedience to the Life Force, the term he uses to indicate a power continually working upon the hearts of men and endeavouring to impel them towards a better and fuller life. In later plays the Life Force seems to become more and more closely identified with what most people mean when they speak of the Will of god and the Holy Ghost. . . . The philosophy of the Life Force introduced in Man and Superman, ran through most of the later plays.

Unlike Hardy’s Immanent Will, Shaw’s Life Force is represented as a power making consciously towards a state of existence far more abundantly vital than anything yet experienced by mankind. His startling themes on slum landlordism
and prostitution, the folly of punishment and revenge, religion, politics, the medical profession, marriage, parenthood, and phonetics—came into the stage. They came with the force of life. But the Life Force is not purposed to work unaided; men and women are required to act as willing and eager agents for the furtherance of its great work. The existing rage of men, however, (so Shaw thought in 1903), was too mean-spirited and too self-centered to serve the Life Force, which would consequently be compelled to supersede man by a more effective instrument of its will – the Superman!’ In Back to Methuselah once again the purpose and claims of the Life Force were stressed; Once again, and in plainer terms than before, he spoke his warning that if man did not come up to the mark, Man would be replaced by a less tragically futile creature.” Shaw “pleads for the substitution of Creative Evolution – his ‘religion of the twentieth century – which teaches not only that man is the potential Superman, but also that man can himself hasten the evolutionary process by ‘willing’ his own upward development.

In this agenda of creative evolution, new women can be an ideal partner. New women of Shaw are an epitome of free will. They present role models for the subsequent generations with regard to independence and rejection to submissiveness. These new women appear to be breaking the set standards of the patriarchy to establish their own identity. A close examination of the play Pygmalion by Shaw shows that a number of avenues were left open to Eliza for selection after her transformation into a feigned Duchess. In Act V, Higgins tells Eliza:

HIGGINS. If you come back, come back for the sake of good fellowship; for you'll get nothing else. (Shaw 104)
It was a suggestion of continued spinsterhood—a life of independence and free will, to expand one’s skills as Vivie did in *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*. Further he also points out:

HIGGINS. Marry some sentimental hog or other with lots of money, and a thick pair of lips to kiss you with and a thick pair of boots to kick you with. If you can’t appreciate what you’ve got, you’d better get what you can appreciate. (Shaw 102)

Pickering had offered to put up a Flower shop for her and she herself had discovered a more tempting and independent vocation:

ELIZA. I’ll offer myself as an assistant to that hairyfaced Hungarian. (Shaw 103)

But Eliza’s choice was for the least ambitious of them— one that was least tempting for a pretty and independent girl with Eliza’s skill and disposition, one that was presented in the least favourable light and one that forces Eliza to settle down for a weaker person who needs to be taken care for instead of caring:

ELIZA. I’ll marry Freddy, I will, as soon as I’m able to support him.

HIGGINS. Freddy!!! That young fool! That poor devil who couldn’t get a job as an errand boy even if he had the guts to try for it! Woman: do you not understand that I have made you a consort for a king? (Shaw 103)

The readers and audiences are as shocked as Higgins himself at this choice of Eliza. Critics argue that this choice was out of the creative energy meant for the purpose of procreation to ensure manifestation of Life-Force. Being a low-bred Eliza saw the best prospect in her life in marrying someone slightly above her in social hierarchy to breed individuals socially and genetically
superior to her. Higgins and Pickering being confirmed old bachelors would not have served this purpose. Thus, she tells Higgins:

LIZA. I wouldn’t marry you if you asked me and youre nearer my age than what he is. (Shaw 100)

Throughout the play Shaw’s opinions and efforts to make a class-less society are evident but through this philosophy of life-force, he seems to be creating an entirely different class distinction altogether based on genetically superior and genetically inferior individuals. With her newly-learnt skills, Eliza was in every way superior to Freddy. But the dynamics of eugenics placed Freddy in the category of superior genes and hence, superior. Eliza with all her ideas and opinions resembling that of a new-woman ultimately seems to surrender to the norms of class and patriarchy in making her choice of Freddy.

Then, there is the character of Candida in the play Candida, whose name embodies one of the main characteristic of new woman— frank and non-subservient, one who opines fearlessly what she thinks. And on the surface, Candida do makes some candid and scandalous confessions. She tells Morell:

CANDIDA. It seems unfair that all the love should go to you and none to him; although he needs it so much than you do. (Shaw 40)

Further she adds:

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 well as I
would give my shawl to a beggar dying of cold, if there were nothing else to restraint me. (Shaw 42)

She raises the most relevant question about female independence-freedom to choose. She was given an opportunity to choose between her poet lover and her husband. With her husband she would have the same mundane routine of daily household which Marchbanks feels is not worthy for his beloved:

MARCHBANKS. No, not a scrubbing brush, but a boat: a tiny shallop to sail away in, far from the world, where the marble floors are washed by rain and dried by the sun; where the south wind dusts the beautiful green and purple carpets. Or a chariot! to carry us up into the sky, where the lamps are stars, and don’t need to be filled with paraffin oil everyday. (Shaw 36)

Marchbanks offers independence and appreciation while Morell had marital ties with her. Marchbanks made her feel younger and Morell reminded her of being the mistress of his household. But Candida’s choice of being the person in charge of Morell and his household over a life of independence is again driven by life-force. As discussed in previous chapters, Candida was proclaimed as the true master of her household unlike Morell who was just functioning as a rubber stamp. She knew that Marchbanks has the independent soul of a poet that cannot be tamed to commit to her creative energy for the task of creative evolution. For this purpose Morell had been the ideal choice. As it is mentioned- Candida chose Morell “for natural reasons, not for conventional, ethical ones.” These reasons are procreation and creative evolution. Again like Eliza, Candida settled for the weaker of the two men because she knows that it’s the weaker one who couldn’t escape her traps and will settle down.
But these opinions of the leading ladies of these plays are strongly objected by radical, liberal and separatist feminists. Shaw’s attaching women with only procreation significance has been interpreted by these feminists as a mechanism suiting the needs and interests of patriarchy. According to them, it is not only against women’s right of free choice but also against their choice of sexual orientation. In this way, Shaw’s ‘Life-force’ seem to be just a sugar-coated covering for the drug of patriarchal interests and which undermines and attaches feminine identity as inseparable from masculine.

Liberal feminism is said to be a particular approach to achieving equality between men and women. This philosophy emphasizes the power of an individual person to alter discriminatory practices against women. Liberal feminism's primary goal is gender equality in the public sphere - equal access to education, equal pay, ending job sex segregation, better working conditions primarily through legal changes. Private sphere issues are of concern mainly as they influence or impede equality in the public sphere. Liberal feminists also tend to support marriage as an equal partnership, and more male involvement in child care, abortion and other reproductive rights that have to do with control of one's life, choices and autonomy. Ending domestic violence and sexual harassment have to do with removing obstacles to women achieving on an equal level with men. However, critics have often accused liberal feminism of judging women and their success by male standards.

Radical feminists tend to be more militant in their approach (radical as "getting to the root") than other feminists are. Radical feminism opposes existing political and social organization in general because it is inherently tied to patriarchy. Thus, radical feminists tend to be sceptical of political action within the current system, and instead tend to focus on culture change that undermines patriarchy and associated hierarchical structures. Radical feminism aims
to challenge and overthrow patriarchy by opposing standard gender roles and oppression of women and calls for a radical reordering of society. Radical feminism opposes patriarchy, not men.

According to them, the eugenistically coloured spectacles of George Bernard Shaw show woman as a spider who spins her web around its prey in such a way that it cannot escape from being captured. The idea of spider-woman was first formulated in the works of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and dramatized in the works of Strindberg but not as one finds in the works of Shaw. While Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Strindberg gave treacherous image to this pursuit of woman, Shaw endowed it with a holy purpose- the pious role of hunting and capturing a father perfect to breed ‘Superman’, not due to her lust or sex obsession but to give birth to another Superman- mentally and physically better. Shaw is known for his ability to present the ugly reality in sugar-coated tablets and here also he appears to hide the mechanisms of patriarchy by making them appear holy.

But what Shaw actually showed is women as “mighty huntress”. On the surface, *Man and Superman* is a delightfully Shavian romantic comedy which reverses conventional roles by making the woman the vigilant pursuer and the man the hapless prey. In *Man and Superman*, Jack Tanner says:

TANNER. You think that you are Ann’s suitor; that you are the pursuer and she the pursued; that it is your part to woo, to persuade, to prevail, to overcome. Fool: it is you who are the pursued, the marked down quarry, the destined prey. You need not sit looking longingly at the bait through the wires of the trap: the door is open, and will remain so until it shuts behind you forever. (Shaw 74)
This Spider-woman or husband huntress image, trying to get on to her prey also appears in
*Pygmalion* when Doolittle in Act V says:

**DOOLITTLE.** They played you off very cunning, Eliza, them two sportsmen. If it
had been only one of them, you could have nailed him. (Shaw 96)

According to Shaw, as motherhood is the biological need of a woman, nature has
invented man as a tool to fulfil woman’s purpose. In assuming the concept of spider-woman
Shaw presented men as being relentlessly hunted by various women. But it seems, he is
confining the role of a woman to that of a mother- a creative energy for creative evolution and
limiting the expansion of her skills to the process of nurturing, rearing and upbringing- Ann’s cry
in Act III, Don Juan in Hell of *Man and Superman* is out of the horror of not being able to create
a superman that is being portrayed as a woman’s sole purpose in life:

**ANA.** Tell me where can I find the Superman?

**THE DEVIL.** He is not yet created, Senora.

**THE STATUE.** And never will be, probably . . .

**ANA.** Not yet created! Then my work is not yet done. I believe in the Life to
come. A father-a father for the Superman! (Shaw 144)

Shaw’s mouthpiece John Tanner, truly, though bluntly, said about women:

**TANNER.** They tremble when we are in danger, and weep when we die; but the
tears are not for us, but for a father wasted, a son’s breeding thrown away. (Shaw
48)
Shavian women thus have been interpreted as often settling down for the choices where they see the prospect of creative evolution and manifestation of life-force through them. In doing so, they reject the stronger ones who could have provided a better match for them but who definitely are untameable for the purpose of creative evolution at the same time. They reject the satisfaction of their skills, desire and ambitions in favour of procreation purpose. It appears that in his philosophy of life-force, the free ways and independence of new woman are nothing but her aids in fulfilling the traditionally acknowledged patriarchal function of breeding rather than any other worth-while area of interest.

But this is to judge a book just by its cover. There have always been more and completely different significations provided by Shaw’s genius than is signified to the eye of readers, audiences and sometimes even the critics. No matter, what the patriarchy suggests, there is no denial of the fact that women are biologically superior to men as they bear children rather than just fathering them. This has undeniable social and political results and thus, women must be more careful in the choice of mate, for she will carry the child for nine months developing a bond that makes her more concerned about their character.

While Second Wave feminists conceptualised the “freedom of womb” as abstinence from motherhood, Third and Fourth Wave feminists see it as the freedom to choose whose child and into what character they want to nourish in their womb. For Third and Fourth Wave feminists there is nothing more degrading and exponential in establishing the superiority of men than giving up their womanhood to be like men. It would then certainly seem to be the longing and the manifestation of penis envy that Freud talked about if women seek to be like men. It is giving up their natural disposition, their prized possession to adapt their identity with men just as is in the institution of marriage. But this can never establish their superiority leave alone equality of
which Shaw was ardent promoter. These feminists seem to follow from Shaw when they too realize women’s responsibility towards themselves and the kind of children they rear for which they need to pursue and persuade suitable men into making desired children with them.

Among Shaw’s most popular and unconventional creations was Miss Vivie Warren, an ideal woman to fit his criteria of ‘creative energy’ necessary for the evolution of Superman. But removing the gender bias, Vivie appears to be a ‘Superman’ of Shaw’s conception. The text refers to her strength, vitality, intelligence, and morality, beginning with her introduction as “an attractive specimen of the sensible, able, highly-educated young middle-class Englishwoman…prompt, strong, confident, self-possessed.” She is a third wrangler in Mathematics, is hardly sentimental, has an indomitable spirit and is free of hypocrisy as she mentions that she can’t live one life when she believes in the other:

VIVIE. Yes: it’s better to choose your line and go through with it. If I had been you, mother, I might have done as you did; but I should not have lived one life and believed in another. You are a conventional woman at heart. That is why I am bidding you goodbye now. (Shaw 78)

She is certainly much above her counterparts and thus, no match offered to her in the play was good enough. And so was the condition with the society as Shaw’s plays hardly had fictional characters but those that one can find in the gallery of real world walking beside them. Thus, she decides to go on the intellectual pursuit independently to satisfy her instincts rather than spending her life in vague affectations that other women of her age were doing and what her mother wanted her to do. She has higher goals in life which she is not ready to give up for the sake of “worthless” pretence:
VIVIE. I don’t think I’m more prejudiced or straitlaced than you: I think I am less. I’m certain I’m less sentimental. I know very well that fashionable morality is all a pretence, and that if I took your money and devoted the rest of my life to spending it fashionably, I might be as worthless and vicious as the silliest woman could possibly be without having a word said to me about it. But I don’t want to be worthless. I shouldn’t enjoy trotting about the park to advertise my dressmaker and carriage builder, or being bored at the opera to shew off a shop window full of diamonds. (Shaw 76)

Her father being unknown and her mother’s positive affirmation that her father was not one from the list of intellectually inferior people of her present social circle points towards a man who had been so superior in his intellect that he bred a bright and intellectually advanced girl like Vivie from a woman in a brothel. He seem to be more like a man who would have participated in the “Government sponsored program of eugenic breeding to accelerate the grand experiment toward producing the superman” that Tanner talks about in his handbook in *Man and Superman*—where the philosophy of Life-Force has been cooperated fully—who having done his part goes again on his intellectual pursuits instead of having associations with Mrs. Warren.

Given that Shaw has developed his full theory of Life-force much after writing *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*, it might be possible that he felt the need of the same to find a fitting partner for his ‘New Women’, all of whom are intellectually evolved when compared with their Victorian counterparts. This became more essential in post world–war I scenario following which women claimed their progressive rights with greater affirmation. However, an equivalent match for them was still missing. Thus again in the characterisation of Joan, a matching male
counterpart is absent, in his play *St. Joan*. Unlike, Vivie’s goal of celibacy, Joan harbours the wish to mother:

   JOAN. I wish you were one of the village babies.

   DUNOIS. Why?

   JOAN. I could nurse you for a while.

   DUNOIS. You are a bit of a woman after all.

   JOAN. No: not a bit: I am a soldier and nothing else. Soldiers always nurse children when they get a chance. (Shaw 51)

But her will to accommodate motherhood with her will to be a soldier could not be accepted by the society then as they had not reached the level of Joan who was spiritually evolved and enlightened which could be one of the traits of the ‘Superman’. Also her wittiness was superior to her male counterparts as is clear from her dialogue with most of them:

   CHARLES. I don’t want a message; but can you tell me as secrets? Can you do any cures? Can you turn lead into gold, or anything of that sort?

   JOAN. I can turn thee into a king, in Rheims Cathedral; and that is a miracle that will take some doing, it seems. (Shaw 28)

Thus, there is a possibility that the first ‘Superman’ that Shaw actually conceptualised was a woman. And to find a suitable mate to her intellectual and varied faceted personality, he felt the need of creative evolution to become an earlier reality than Darwin thought of. And for this purpose, Shaw made his other heroines take to choices inferior to them instead of remaining single so that they can contribute to making better and evolved species of humans. In their
critique, feminists have mostly criticised Shaw for making men have a superior hand in intellectual thought:

Feminists have abhorred the portrait of Ann and the attendant theory of which among other things mother women seems to confirm the traditional view of man’s superior capacity for abstract thought. (Griffith 179)

But Eliza in Pygmalion and Candida in Candida show themselves as intellectually superior women trapping inferior men to use them as a tool not only in an attempt to ensure life and evolution but also to ensure that their superior skills do not become extinct with them and are passed onto the next generations. Thus, the claim of feminists regarding Ann becomes invalid in case of other Shavian heroines who are superior in their mental abilities - who are somewhat a mixer of conventional and unconventional woman but not a complete new woman just like Mrs. Warren but who for the next generation can definitely breed a new woman or even a ‘Superman’. Had the role of Eliza and Candida been only limited to that of a huntress, they would have persuaded Higgins and Marchbanks respectively until they surrender to their wishes of Creative Evolution. But it is not. Also, if the weaker ones would have been left out by them, they would be working on ‘Darwin’s Survival of the Fittest’ theory and not as a manifestation of ‘Life-Force’. These women are self-sufficient in improving the human race even through inferior men. From this, it may also imply that the reason Shaw placed less stress on the pursuit of intellectual thought by women because he might had felt that women are already evolved in that regard but men still need to undergo that evolution.

However, the philosophy of Life-force is antagonistic to the interests of lesbian feminism and queer theory. Separatist feminism is a form of radical feminism that does not support
heterosexual relationships. Lesbian feminism is thus closely related. Separatist feminism's proponents argue that the sexual disparities between men and women are irresolvable. They generally do not feel that men can make positive contributions to the feminist movement and that even well-intentioned men replicate patriarchal dynamics. According to author Marilyn Frye separatist feminism is “separation of various sorts or modes from men and from institutions, relationships, roles and activities that are male-defined, male-dominated, and operating for the benefit of males and the maintenance of male privilege—this separation being initiated or maintained, at will, by women.”

Lesbian separatism and Separatist Feminism which became popular in the 1970s have inspired the creation of art and culture reflective of its visions of female-centered societies, including various works of lesbian science fiction where new technologies in human reproductive strategy have created Lesbian utopias, eliminating the need to have men for human reproduction. *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* (Simon & Schuster, 1973) is a collection of essays written by Jill Johnston that were originally printed in *The Village Voice*, where Johnston discusses elements of breaking off from the male-dominated institutions. The *Wanderground* is a separatist utopian novel written from author Sally Miller Gearhart's personal experience in rural lesbian-separatist collectives.

Lesbian relationships as such seek complete independence from patriarchy towards the establishment of matriarchy even though it comes in the way of essential procreation. It is a philosophy to promote “sisterhood” among female community. In their attempt to develop complete independence from their oppressors, i.e., their male counterparts they give up their dependency over them in the sexual activity. For them an independent state for women is a better prospect. In a way for achieving freedom from patriarchal traps they start with sexual freedom.
And this directly opposes the mechanics of creative evolution for it will interrupt with the procreation itself. This is seen as a better attempt at making the patriarchal society realize the crucial role women play in maintaining the necessary balance in human race rather than attaching a holy significance to persuade them for the purpose. It is like a non-cooperation movement for the demand of identical rights.

The multi faceted personality of Shavian heroines is not limited to that of a huntress and pursuers. Unlike the lobby of male writers who had portrayed women standing against women and as jealous and scheming against each other, Shavian ladies are sisters in their endeavours in the plot. Even if their interests clash or coincide, a solution is struck between them in such a way that neither is in loss nor has to sacrifice. They are one in their struggle for power and recognition within the patriarchal and capitalist system. They recognize and empathise with each other’s struggle quite often. Thus, the “sisterhood” or a mature lesbian bond does exist between them though without any sexual affiliation. This bond depicted by Shaw is much more conductive to the interests of feminists as well as to the insurance towards sustaining the evolution of species.

Inter-women bonds can be seen as being formed in the plays Pygmalion, Candida and Mrs. Warren’s Profession. In Pygmalion, there is a threesome bond between Higgins’s Housekeeper Mrs. Pearce, Higgins’s mother Mrs. Higgins and Higgins’s “Galatea”, Eliza. The first connection between Mrs. Pearce and Eliza got established in Act II when Mrs. Pearce took Eliza for the purpose of cleaning her. In that very scene, Eliza was stripped naked in front of her not only in body but also in soul. From a “very common girl” from the gutter she immediately became “child”: 
LIZA [weeping]. I couldn’t. I dursnt. Its not natural: it would kill me. Ive never had a bath in my life: not what youd call a proper one.

MRS. PEARCE. Well, don’t you want to be clean andsweet and decent like a lady? You know you cant be a nice girl inside if youre a dirty slut outside.

LIZA. Boohoo!!!!

MRS. PEARCE. Now stop crying and go back into your room and take off all your clothes. Then wrap yourself in this [Taking down a gown from its peg and handing it to her] and come back to me. I will get the bath ready.

LIZA[all tears]. I cant. I wont. I’m not used to it. Ive never took off all my clothes before. It’s not right: it’s not decent.

MRS. PEARCE. Nonsense, child. Dont you take off all your clothes evry night when you go to bed?


MRS. PEARCE. Do you mean that you sleep in the underclothes you wear in the daytime?

LIZA. What else I have to sleep in?

MRS. PEARCE. You will never do that again as long as you live here. I will get you proper nightdress.
LIZA. Do you mean change into cold things and lie awake shivering half the night? You want to kill me, you do. . . But you don't know what the cold is to me. You don't know how I dread it.

MRS. PEARCE. Your bed won't be cold here: I will put a hot water bottle in it. . . .

Eliza comes back with nothing on but the bath gown huddled tightly round her, a piteous spectacle of abject terror. . . .

MRS. PEARCE. [deftly snatching the gown away and throwing Eliza down on her back] It won't hurt you. [She sets to work with the scrubbing brush.] (Shaw 34)

This scene is not intended to be staged yet inclusion of this in the play shows Shaw's intention of pointing to this mutually conductive bond between two women. This scene describes how the association between these two ladies got established. Mrs. Pearce actually bathed Eliza off, not only from the physical dirt but also her practices of her former life. In her transformation, the "Pygmalion", Higgins just provided her with voice, but the charm, manners and elegance of a lady was taught to her by Mrs. Pearce and Mrs. Higgins only. Mrs. Pearce treated her like a human being while the bully in Higgins continued to treat her like an object. She points this out and ensures that Higgins does not use his abusive language in front of Eliza. She is not only concerned about Eliza's feelings (regarding her hat) and continuously checks Higgins against bullying Eliza but also was the first person to foresee the problem of belongingness that Eliza will face once the experiment is over:

MRS. PEARCE. But what to become of her? Is she to be paid anything? Do be sensible, sir. (Shaw 29)
Similarly, the next person to predict the same problem was Mrs. Higgins who mentions in Act III:

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)

Over time, Eliza might have developed such an association with Mrs. Higgins that she was the first person she could think to run to after leaving Higgins home. And she was most welcome there. The person who helped Eliza in the escape was again none other than Mrs. Pearce who realizing her state of mind did so quietly without telling her masters:

HIGGINS. She was left last night, as usual, to turn out the lights and all that; and instead of going to bed she changed her clothes and went right off: her bed wasn’t slept in. She came in a cab for her things before seven this morning and that fool Mrs. Pearce let her have them without telling me a word about it. (Shaw 83)

Mrs. Higgins on the other hand tried to make Higgins and Pickering realize their mistake and also suggested the solution of the dispute by asking Doolittle to take care of his daughter as he with his newly acquired riches and position could well support Eliza’s status as a lady:

MRS.HIGGINS. She had become attached to you both. She worked very hard for you, Henry. I don’t think you quite realize what anything in the nature of brain work means to a girl of her class. Well, it seems that when the great day of trial came, and she did this wonderful thing for you without making a single mistake, you two sat there and never said a word to her, but talked together of how glad you were that it was all over and how you had been bored with the whole thing.
And then you were surprised because she threw your slippers at you! I should have thrown the fire-irons at you. . . . Well, I’m afraid she won’t go back to Wimpole Street, especially now that Mr. Doolittle is able to keep up the position you have thrust on her; (Shaw 89, 90)

Instead of looking up to her son’s interests, Mrs. Higgins took the stand for her own sex. Had it been her interest to keep Eliza away from her son, she would not have accepted her in her house as at that moment Mrs. Higgins wasn’t aware of Eliza’s father’s latest fortunes. Her stand in favour and protection of Eliza’s interests was due to the special bond these women share through empathy for their own sex. This was the reason why she was able to understand Eliza’s perspective and affirmed that she would have been worse had that kind of treatment been met to her.

The bond shared by Candida and Proserpine in Candida is one of a love-hate relationship. Proserpine secretly admires Candida’s husband and Candida is aware of the fact and yet both the ladies are at an understanding about it without ever talking about the same. Proserpine doesn’t harbour the desire to replace Candida (unlike Marchbanks who somewhere desires to replace Morell); for Candida Prossy’s affection is neither held in an unfavourable light nor as a threat. Proserpine openly expresses her displeasure at Morell’s constant talking and obsession about his wife but she also admits how well she admires Candida at the same time:

PROSERPINE. [indignantly] I have no feeling against her. She’s very nice, very good-hearted: I’m very fond of her and can appreciate her real qualities far better than any man can. [He shakes his head sadly. She rises and comes at him with intense pepperiness]. You don’t believe me? You think I’m jealous? Oh, what a
knowledge of the human heart you have, Mr Lexy be so nice to be a man and have a fine penetrating intellect instead of mere emotions like us, and to know that the reason we don’t share your amorous delusions is that we’re all jealous of one another. (Shaw 8)

Proserpine quite aptly speaks and takes stand against the accusation that women often face, that is, of being jealous. She affirms that being a woman she can understand and appreciate Candida and her qualities way more than any man (including Morell) can. She is just disgusted by Morell’s vanity about Candida just as Burgess, Candida and Marchbanks are about his socialism. Throughout the play, whenever Candida and Proserpine have encountered, no trace of jealousy is found in her reactions unlike Morell and Marchbanks who soon were caught by jealousy and got themselves engaged in a competition due to same. In Act II, Candida too shows a perfect understanding and insight into Prossy’s behaviour:

CANDIDA. Yes, Prossy, and all other secretaries you ever had. Why does Prossy condescend to wash up the things, and to peel potatoes and abase herself in all manner of ways for six shillings a week less than she used to get in a city office? She’s in love with you, James: thats the reason. They are all in love with you. And you are in love with preaching because you do it so beautifully. And you think it’s all enthusiasm for the kingdom of Heaven on earth; and so do they. You dear silly!

MORELL. Candida: what dreadful! What soul-destroying cynism! Are you jesting? Or- can it be? – are you jealous?

CANDIDA. [with curious thoughtfulness] Yes, I feel a little jealous sometimes.
MORELL. [incredulously] Of Prossy?

CANDIDA. [laughing] No, no, no, no. Not jealous of anybody. Jealous for somebody else, who is not loved as he ought to be. (Shaw 40)

Again like Proserpine, Candida affirms that they as women are not jealous of each other but they feel sorry and jealous on behalf of someone else. And just like Proserpine, no trace of jealousy can be seen in Candida’s behaviour against Proserpine when in the third Act her traits as the perfect host were shown. Thus, a sisterhood is established between Candida and Proserpine on the same topic of jealousy. And Shaw would not have shown this particularly within the span of the three acts had his intention wasn’t to point this out. Not only this, she also points out that Proserpine is being underpaid by her Socialist husband. As a devoted wife she would have overlooked the monetary aspect while mentioning the fact to Morell. But she points out Morell’s failing in providing proper wages to her gender.

In *St. Joan*, Joan, due to her preference of male comradeship and also due to the aristocratic affectations of her century, couldn’t form any significant bond with other women in the play. But there definitely exist inter-women tie ups in her spiritual communion with the voices of St. Catherine and St. Margaret who soon included her in their league and legion.

*Mrs. Warren’s Profession* presents to us Vivie who despite all her traits of a new woman has an impartial ability to empathise with her own sex. It is because of this empathy that she understands her mother’s perspective in taking up her profession and it was her empathy for other girls which made her give upon her mother. She declares at the start of her conversation with her mother:
VIVIE. Everybody has some choice, mother. The poorest girl alive may not be able to choose between Queen of England or Principle of Newnham; but she can choose between ragpicking and flowerselling, according to her taste. People are always blaming circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can’t find them, make them. (Shaw 44)

She shows quite an insight into people’s choices but soon after with an open mind understands her mother’s perspective fully that resulted in the dawn of her first direct and personal association with her mother:

FRANK. Look: actually has her arm round the old woman’s waist. It’s her right arm: she began it. She’s gone sentimental, by God! (Shaw 53)

Her relationship with her mother was based on friendship and understanding:

VIVIE. Let us be good friends now. (Shaw 49)

But her sentimentality and newly found bond with her mother is immediately lost on learning that she continues to trade in other girls. This proves that the bond she had initially established with her mother wasn’t that of mother and daughter to which Mrs. Warren appeals in vain:

MRS.WARREN. [lapsing recklessly into her dialect] We’re mother and daughter. I want my daughter. I’ve a right to you. Who is to care for me when I’m old? Plenty of girls have taken to me like daughters and cried at leaving me; but I let them all go because I had you to look forward to. I kept myself lonely for you. You’ve no right to turn on me now and refuse me now and refuse to do your duty
as a daughter. . . I tried honest work; and I was slave driven until I cursed the
day I ever heard of honest work. I was a good mother; and because I made my
daughter a good woman she turns me out as if I were a leper. (Shaw 77)

To all the wailings of Mrs. Warren, Vivie had one reply:

VIVIE. Now once for all, mother, you want a daughter and Frank wants a wife. I
don’t want a mother; and I don’t want a husband. I have spared neither Frank nor
myself in sending him about his business. Do you think I will spare you? (Shaw
77)

Vivie’s bond was with the girls of her age who not having better prospects like her had to suffer
in the trade of their bodies. She established a bond with her mother with the description of what
she had been in the age Vivie is now. And that bond was being broken by the present
businesswoman status of her with regard to other girls of her age. That’s the only question she
asked her mother, upon which she based the decision regarding the continuance of relationship
with her in negative:

VIVIE. Tell me why you continue your business now that you are independent of
it. Your sister, you told me, has left all that behind her. Why don’t you do the
same? (Shaw 76)

Thus, the bond between Shavian women occurs as a sisterhood where they take stand for their
own sex instead of trying to bring them down. They stand for womanhood first, no matter what
issue Shaw might be addressing. This is a common characteristic of most of his heroines. They
might not be lesbians with regard to their sexual affiliations but they may be considered lesbians
in their emotional affiliations. The Third and Fourth Wave queer theories place as much importance on emotional relationships as they do on physical.

It has been said that Life –force theory of Shaw is against the interests of feminism. But it was a Second Wave thought. As discussed above Third and Fourth Wave feminists not only support it and consider it as one of the essential ways to celebrate and establish the superiority of woman but also there is much possibility that these recent waves have adapted their tenets from the ideas that Shaw has already lain down in his plays.
Works Cited


