CHAPTER 2

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A writer’s mind and his art are formed by his own experiences and the spirit of the age. Therefore, before appreciating Shaw as a critic of social and political ideas, it is very necessary to study the formative influences, which form and unending list of contacts, impressions, factors, forces, events, situations and condition of his life and age.

G.B. Shaw was the youngest of the three children of an ill-assorted couple,¹ George Carr Shaw and his wife, Lucinda Elizabeth Gurly. He was born in Dublin, the capital of Ireland.² This city continued to be the nursery and training place for the men of the theatre for several generations. He was baptized in the faith of the Church of England in Ireland, where the general belief held was that God was a Protestant and that Roman Catholics were destined to go to hell. The Shavian stock belonged to Hampshire family and his ancestry was well connected with the predilection of the extra-ordinary persons. Shaw’s predilection for preaching and sermonizing can also be traced back to some of his immediate ancestors. William Markham, Archbishop of York³ and great grandfather of Shaw, was denounced for preaching pernicious doctrines. Shaw’s own grandfather, a Dublin Solicitor⁴ was as such quite an argumentative person like the dramatist himself. Shaw’s father, being a second cousin to a Baronet⁵, inherited the aristocratic tendencies, which forced him to embrace class distinctions,
social snobbery and Victorian respectability at the cost of his meager means of livelihood. Consequently, his family was never well off, it was downstarts.\textsuperscript{6} George Carr Shaw was a sinecurist in the court of justice in Dublin. After the abolition of his post, he retired on an annual pension of 60 pounds. But he commuted his pension in order to invest money in a corn business, about which he had no experience. Consequently, his family became a victim to a series of financial difficulties and class snobbery. Thus, Bernard Shaw “grew up in an atmosphere of genteel impecuniosities, which he has described as more humiliating than the life of the born poor, who have no social standing or cultural background to maintain.”\textsuperscript{7}

Bernard Shaw’s distaste for aristocratic tendencies-respectability, decorum, sentimentality, class superiority and snobbery-which stood on false notions, can be traced back to this sad experience of his early life.

Shaw’s mother was the daughter of ‘an improvident Irish country gentlemen\textsuperscript{8}, who, after the death of his wife, “married again into what Shaw described as a genuine county family.”\textsuperscript{9} This new conjugal union did not allow the girl (Shaw’s mother) to be properly nurtured. She “was brought up by her grand aunt with exceptional strictness and with all the lady like accomplishments but without fortune to sustain them,”\textsuperscript{10} and without care for her future fortune. Moreover, her father also did not reflect much fatherly affection and care for her. He was deeply embogged in debt and his ‘rule was, when in difficulties, mortgage.’\textsuperscript{11} This situation of restlessness, uncertain future, the clutches of respectability and feminine womanhood
compelled her to seek release from the situation and the bondage of her aunt through marriage. In 1852,\textsuperscript{12} she was forced to have for her husband the unlikely choice of George Carr Shaw, who was “a bachelor of forty with a squint and vein of humour, who delighted in anticlimax.”\textsuperscript{13} He was not only double the age of Lucinda, but also that she could never know before marriage that George was so extremely addicted to drinking. Disillusioned by this state of her husband, she forced herself to settle down to a cold and miserable conjugality. In view of her husband waywardness and tipplery, she became loathsome even towards her home and family life. The constant shocks of misfortune made her develop an unloving heart and a peculiar sense of humour, which was no humour at all. She was afraid of being touched and kept herself scrupulously to herself, never yielding to the embraces of her husband. George Carr Shaw was also an undemanding man and seldom asserted himself or fussed about anything. However, under the shadow of this shabby- genteel matrimonial union, in four years, her (Gurly’s) three children were born-Lucinda Frances Carr, commonly called Lucy; Elinor Agnes, sometimes called Yuppy, the only member of the family, who looked like a Gurly; and George Bernard, known as Sonny, though his father, when was a baby, had called him Bob.\textsuperscript{14}

Shaw could not get much affection from his mother. “The fact that her son physically resembled his father, seemed to make her more antipathetic to him than she was to his sisters.”\textsuperscript{15}
The parents of Shaw were poles apart temperamentally. His father was drunkard who cared little about the family. He was a happy-go-lucky merchant of no success, of no demand, of no fuss but of surmounting funny freak whereas Shaw’s mother was musical from her vocal cords to the tips of her fingers. She was a capable, practical and brave woman, who never lost her temper in spite of being burdened with the responsibility of three children and a drunken husband and she had to try hard to make both ends meet. On account of the inherent dislike for domesticity, maternal emotions and forced situations to keep herself busy in earning livelihood, she left her children and home entirely to the care of her servants who, being irresponsible, could not extend any sincere up-keep and motherly care to the children. They kept them under their control with constant threats, intimidations and terror. Thus, the home where Shaw was brought up, was not a happy one. “It was graceless house, ill-managed and impecunious”¹⁶ a house, “in which there was no love and little affection”¹⁷ a house, in which Shaw in his childhood could never ‘get the chill of poverty out of his bones’.¹⁸

Under these unfortunate family circumstances, the neglected life of Shaw not only failed in developing the qualities of emotional integrity but instead made him develop positive antipathy for the institution of family. As he asserts, “The institution of the family, which is the centre of reverence for carefully brought up children, was just the opposite for me.”¹⁹ On the one hand, avoiding his father, who often returned muzzy with drink
from his mill, and being disregarded by his mother on the other, Shaw, very much like Shakespeare, Byron, Shelley, and Ibsen, moulded his character and shaped his own life and mind by himself. He had to found his feet because of the negligence of his parents. He became teetotaller because he noticed the drinking habits of his father, when he was well past the age, at which he would have been observed even by an ordinary child. Later on, Shaw came to realize that a man, fed on whisk and dead bodies, cannot do the finest work. He disliked his father’s filthy habit of smoking, which created filthy smell in his house of little ventilation and decided to keep away from it.

Bernard Shaw “inherited humorous sense of anti-climax from his father and uncle William,”20 who had a strong sense of the ludicrous. He inherited different strains from the elder Shaw’s. “The Shaw’s were the younger sons from the beginning”, 21 and under the institution of primogeniture, which was a feudal necessity, they had to be lulled between poverty and respectability, which forced them to follow blasphemy. Shaw had a hatred for the Shaw’s as they “cherished respectability in the world in spite of their lack of opportunity.”22 He has clearly started, “I had an enormous contempt for this family snobbery.”23 On account of poverty and over drinking habit of his father, Shaw became a perennial victim of shame and remorse and did not like the situation to mix up with the society. Consequently, “the whole family was finally dropped socially.”24 Shaw had to cut himself off from the social mill and he “grew up frightfully shy.”25
Moreover, “Shaw could develop the taste for comedy because he was goaded by his father to visit the National Gallery and to go to the theater and the opera.”26 Thus, his comic taste was hereditary as he admits himself, “All my comedy is Shavian inheritance.”27 Then, the anti-conventional and anti-sentimental viewpoint of his father, and the rational religious discussions among the Shaws at home fostered in Bernard Shaw an attitude against conventionalities or sentimentalities,28 and made him follow rational religion of his own kind.

Shaw’s mother was a modern woman in as much as she was hardworking, independent, self-reliant, strong-willed and impervious to the frowns of the priggishness and the orthodox behaviour, along with her disconcerting indifference to other people’s opinions. She had a fertile and imaginative mind, and an unchallenging musical sense. She had undoubtedly a great impact on Shaw in moulding not only his conception of and attitude to women but also in giving an inclination towards music, which influenced his life and career over a span of about eighty years. Righteousness, hard work, insight, imagination, anti-orthodoxy, and self-sacrifice are some of the other virtues, inherited by Shaw from his mother.

Shaw received some of the elements of formal education first from his governess, i.e. Caroline Hill29 and then from the Rev. William George Carroll,30 Rector of St. Bridges, Dublin, who taught him Latin. He was sent in 1867 to a Protestant School called Dublin Wesleyan conational school and later to a private school in the country. In 1869, he was transferred to
the Central Model Boys School in Dublin. This school was attended mostly by Roman Catholic children of the Commercial class. While at this school, he was so much shocked at the attitudes of the Protestants towards the Roman Catholics that he felt ashamed of belonging to any church. Here, he found that Protestantism was the symbol of social and political inferiority. This assumption of superiority by an alien minority had tremendous psychological effect on the growing mind of Shaw and he suffered from the pangs of the emotional scar until he had passed the age of nineteen. Shaw did not find the atmosphere in his schools conducive to education and failed to learn anything there. He has himself asserted:

I was never in a school, where the teachers cared enough about me, or about their ostensible profession, or had enough conviction and cruelty to take any such trouble; so I learnt nothing at school, not even what I could and would have learned, if any attempt had been made to interest me.  

This explains why Shaw grew into a diatribe against his schools and teachers. Schools appeared to him concentration camps or penitentiaries and schools masters as the brutal warders or sadistic commandants. All this led to his rebellion against the conventional society in general and was responsible for the views, he contributed to the Fabian Society.

In his schooling, he was supposed to be generally near or at the bottom of the class. His teachers considered him “to be an incorrigible dunce, a source of idleness in others, distracting them from their studies by
interminable comic stories about a character called Lobjoit,”32 whom he had invented, though he had taken this name from tale in Dicken’s magazine, *Household Words*. But now he was neither dull nor at the bottom of the class. On one occasion, he jumped to the second place because of sudden display of biblical knowledge. He was seldom idle in the study of music pictures. “Despite the harsh reports of his masters at Wesley, he was, in several respects, more cultured, better educated and more widely read than any other person, teacher or pupil in the school. In music alone, he was superior to them all.”33 During this period, he was prompted by his father to like and read literature, as a result of which he read Scott’s novels, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Dicken’s *The Arabian Nights*, Williams Robertson’s *History of Charles, the Fifth* and his *History of Scotland* etc. His study of Mozart, Verdi, Meyerbeer, Handel, Beethoven and Wagner was to affect his outlook profoundly as a music critic and even as a dramatist. The influences of both Wagner and Mozart could be traced in the philosophical themes and treatment of a number of his plays. The other major influence, which sprang during these early years of school-going age, was that of socialism. “A nurse-maid took him as a child into the heart of the Dublin slums and the horror of it was never to leave him.”34 At the age of his schooling, he started to realize that he had three father-his official father, the musician, and his maternal uncle. The musician was George Vandaleur Lee, a teacher of singing, who helped to expand his musical horizons and also first awakened his appreciation of scenic beauty. Lee had a cottage at Torca Hill,
above the little town of Dalkey, which Lee lent to Mrs. Shaw and her family. There Shaw spent many happy weeks for many summers and there his love for Nature was roused. The Sunlight, the cloud, the grass, the dew, the soft Irish air and the expansive landscape fed the romantic spirit, which never deserted him.

When Shaw left school in 1871 and he was a lad of fifteen, one of his uncles found for him a post of a junior clerk in Dublin Estate Agent’s Firm-Uniacke and Townsend-on the then not outrageous rate of eighteen shillings a month. He had no liking for the job but he did it as efficiently as his self-esteem demanded. His duties included rent collecting, an experience, he was to put to use in his first play, *Widowers’ Houses*. But now he enjoyed an intellectual awakening into life far different from that, which he had hitherto lived. At Townsend’s office, he was in continual contact with the sort of people he liked-young men of ample education. Notable among the persons he then came in contact with “Chichester Bell, a relative of Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, and Melville Bell, who devised a Phonetic script and Visible Speech. Thus, was born Shaw’s interest in phonetics, to be demonstrated in the character of professor, Higgins in *Pygmalion.*”\(^{35}\) Shaw was appointed cashier and got a raise in his salary. He was still unhappy with his service and wanted escape from it as it hardly provided any scope to his talents; he was virtually chilled by its uncongenial routine. Moreover, his employers objected to his argumentative nature and got a written assurance from his that he would not indulge in
talks about religion or anything else while in office. This undertaking pinched Shaw’s conscience. He felt that he had been robbed of his freedom of speech. So, he gave a month’s notice to leave his service in March, 1876 and sized the first opportunity to emigrate to England to associate with his mother in April, 1876 in anticipation of enjoying a full literary life in London. Shaw spent his first months in London in learning his way about the place. He soon started writing novels and had no idea of accepting further commercial employment. But his sister, Lucy, who had never been congenial to him from the beginning, requested her mother to turn him out, if he did not seek a remunerative job. He tried for a job or two but in vain. Having failed in getting suitable job, Shaw set to writing novels. His first novel, *Immaturity* was finished in 1879, but when it was not accepted for publication, he was again advised to seek some employment. Meanwhile, Shaw’s cousin, Mrs. Cashel Hoey, a woman of letters, introduced him to Arnold White, the manager and secretary of the Edison Telephone Company of London, who offered him an apprenticeship, leading to the profession of a telephone engineer. He started work in the Telephone Company on November 14, 1879. The work was, no doubt, a little distasteful but he did it to the best of his ability. When the Edison and Bell companies were amalgamated on June 1, 1880, he had to leave his job and thenceforth, he decided devote himself entirely to writing because writing came naturally to him, as he started, “I never felt inclined to write any more and then to breathe.” His own faculty of writing was so instinctive and
prominent in him that even when Shaw was boy of ten, he used to write stories and other pieces of composition. While Shaw used to send his compositions of the periodicals for publication but none of his writings saw the light of day before 3rd April, 1875, when Public Opinion published his letter from Dublin, in which he had objected to the revivalist methods of the American Evangelical missioners – ‘Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey’. However, now that he had taken his decision, he followed it with persistent industry but with little success. Between 1879 and 1883, he wrote five novels- Immaturity, the Irrational knot, An Unsocial Socialist, Cashel Byron’s Profession and Love Among the Artists – but all of them failed in getting publisher. In the end, he was so disappointed that he abandoned this form for good. They were, nevertheless, full of the socio-logical and artistic ideas, which were to vivify his plays later.

(iv) The Debating Societies, Wide Reading and Intellectual Friends

This barren phase of Shaw’s life was punctuated by a few fortunate events, which determined the course of his future career, in the winter of 1879-80, he came in contact with James Lecky, an authority on music and musical instruments. He took Shaw to a debating society, called the Zetetical Society (the word Zetetical means seeking, presumably, for the truth). Here Bernard Shaw made his first speech, which was full of nervousness and trembling, but this produced in him a grim determination to become an expert in the art of public speaking. This oratorical power proved a potential force in making and excellently successful use of his
dramatic dialogue. It was at this society that he met ‘Sidney James Webb’, a person three years younger than Shaw. He became acquainted with Sydney Olivider, a colleague of Webb in the Colonial Office. Later on, those three became close friends and exercised a considerable influence on the world, and a profound influence on British affairs.

On September 5, 1882, Shaw went to meeting in the Memorial Hall, in Farringdon Street, London to listen to Henry George, the author of ‘Progress and Poverty,’ describing how poverty could be abolished or greatly reduced by the taxation of land values. Shaw’s strict conversion to socialism started through his veins from that day. Soon after it, Shaw spoke on Socialism in a debate the “Social Democratic Federation, a society, which was founded by a well-to-do Ulsterman, Henery Mayer Hyndman, who was a disciple of Karl Marx.” A subsequent speaker told him that no one had any right to discuss socialism unless he had read Das Capital. This provoked Shaw to visit British Museum to read Marx of all, for some weeks, he, assiduously and regularly, read the two books, i.e. Karl Marx’s Das Capital (in French), and Wagner’s Iristan, and Isolde. After this study, Shaw not only became completely converted to socialism but also found the basis of economic principles for his socialistic cravings. In addition to this, he read many other thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Acquianas, St. Augustine, Rousseau, Hobbes, Locke, Machiavelli, Bentham, Green, Mill and Jevon etc. and various supplementary books of knowledge. The reading of Plato’s Republic impressed him so profoundly that for the rest of
his life, he could not redeem himself from Plato’s thought of Eugenics, Justice, Philosopher- Kings, and ideal State. Again it was the British Museum, where William Archer first saw him reading in the winter of 1882-83. They became friends when they met at a party after some months. Thus, British Museum laid the foundation of Shaw’s debating capabilities on various subjects. In fact, asserted by Maurice Colbourne; “If the world was his school, the British Museum was the study, where he did most of his home work.”⁴³ Among the societies, Shaw now joined, was the Land Reform Union which included James Leigh Joynes, Henery Salt (both masters at Eton) and Henry Hyde Champion as its members. Their association added to his mental vigor and attracted him more to unconventionality, vegetarianism, and love of Shelley. He also came in contact with Edward Carpenter, George Moore and Sidney Webb, the social democrats.

In 1884, the Fabian Society, which was formed “as a kind of intellectual Vanguard of the Liberal Party, was founded It was a small, middle class body with a membership totally out of proportion to its later political influence.”⁴⁴ Shaw joined it in the same year as an active member. His Fabian friends and colleagues included Sidney Webb, his talented wife,-Beatrice, William Morris, H. G. Wells and Mrs. Annie Besant etc., who debated socio-political issues. Social preaching, that are so prominent in Shaw’s plays, have their roots in his activities as a Fabian Socialist.
It was William Archer, who brought a tremendous change in Shaw’s fortune. He was an eminent dramatic critic and also the first translator of Ibsen. It was his provocation, that made Shaw embrace Iberian outlook on social problems, which are found in his plays. Archer got him a job as a reviewer of books for *The Pall mall Gazette* in 1885, and that of the pictures for *The World* in 1886. Now with his help, Shaw started his career as an art critic, which lasted for four years (1885-1888), followed by seven years as music critic (1888-1895), and thereafter, for three years as dramatic critic (1895-1998). These years established Shaw as a writer. It was Archer, who prevailed upon Shaw to write plays. Shaw’s first dramatic work was also inspired by Archer, who suggested that they should collaborate in writing a play. Archer confessed that although he could construct a plot for a play, he could not write scintillating dialogue. G.B. Shaw confessed that he could write reams of flashing dialogue but he could not construct a plot. “It seemed, then, that heaven has intended them to join their talents together, Archer, bringing his plots to be embellished by G.B. Shaw’s dialogue.”

The proposed joint authorship, however, did not materialize, and the play, taken in hand, *Widowers’ Houses*, was shelved without getting completed. This failure dismayed Shaw but he kept on moving forward in the company of his friends, who were numerous by that time and who were intelligent seekers of truth. Now Shaw studied Ibsen Ian plays, which discussed public affairs in Ibsen’s satirical manner. The slogan of Ibsen’s plays appealed to the imagination of Shaw and he decided to
expose the rottenness of the civilized conventions. Shaw grasped three vital things from Ibsen’s plays—where the life of a so-called good man has been represented as based upon falsehood, hypocrisy and treachery: where woman had been found to rebel against the emptiness of marriage: where human conduct was justified by its effect upon life and by its conformity to any rule or ideal. Henceforth, under the leadership of Shaw, the father of English drama of ideas, English drama started its triumphal march through the arch of socio-political problems, on social follies and on political vices.

Bernard Shaw was a person of friendly temperament. “This gift for general and varied friendship was one of G.B. Shaw’s most engaging qualities.”\(^{46}\) This extra-ordinary fervor not only won for him varied knowledge and immortal popularity but also ranked him among the great extroverts. He was a man, whose friends, in addition to those already named before at different places, included “Graham Wallas, A.B. Walkley, Ellen Terry, H.W. Massignham,, Lillah McCarthy, Gilbert Murray, Lady Astor, Sybil. Thorndike, G.K. Chesterton, H. Granville Barker, lady Gregory, Sir Horace, Plunkett, Sir Edward Elgar, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, sir Barry Jackson, the Masaryk’s, father and son, Dean Inge, T.E. Lawrence, Gene Tunney, and the Abbess of Stan brook, together with a great diversity of labor and other politicians.”\(^{47}\) Sir Arthur Pinter, Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Irving’s son, Laurence etc. were also usually on friendly terms.
That women exercised a great influence over him cannot be denied. They shaped his views about love and marriage and also provided the basis for his faith in the Creative Evolution, and man as an instrument of woman. Upto the age of twenty-nine, poverty and shyness, shabby dress and face constantly undermined his self-confidence in mixing with the women of his own class. He always suffered from an inferiority complex that he could not appeal to any woman. This also contributed to the slow development of his interest in women. That is why “One of those, whom he later captivated and jilted, the artist Bertha Newcomb, described him as a passionless man.”

To a great extent it was true in the sexual sense. “His passion was mainly for causes, including the well being of people as a whole, rather than any individual.” However, Shaw had his first experience of love during his stay in Dublin, after his mother had deserted his father. He has described it in a letter to Mrs. Patrick Campbell, dated August 19, 1912:

Once in my Calfish teens, I feel widely in love with a lady of your complexion: and she, good woman, having a sister to provide for, set to work to marry me to the sister. Whereupon I shot back into the skies from which I had descended ….

In spite of this incident of romantic passion, he tried to evade sexual relationships until 1885, when Mrs. Jennie Patterson, a young widow and music student of his mother, pursued him romantically with all her might. Shaw tried to resist her advances in vain. Shaw did escape from her by
using brute force but he had to be her captive for about eight years only because she had plenty of money. As Shaw went on flirting with her, she provided him with enough material to make his fortune as a writer of romantic scenes. And to this early experience of Shaw may be traced his theory of spider woman. In the end, she proved herself to be a rose with thorns for Shaw. His Blanche Sartorius in *Widowers’ Houses*, Julia Craven in *The Philanderer* and Eliza in *Pygmalion* has been modeled on her. Thereafter, as his attraction for women reached an active stage, there were a number of philandering adventures. Shaw had a brief comic affair with William Morris’s lovely daughter-May-near about 1885. He flirted with a career woman, called Florence Farr and then with another woman, Edith Nesbit. He fell passionately in love, for the first time in his life, with Alice-Lockett, a beautiful hospital nurse and one of his mother’s pupils. It is said that Mrs. Annie Besant also had illicit relations with him, which Shaw did not like much. Grace Gilchrist became the centre of Shaw’s attention for some time. He met her in 1888. She was a charming girl and a member of the Fabian Society. At the age of fifty six, Shaw fell in love with Mrs. Patrick Campbell, an actress, who teased him later on. Another actress, who influenced Shaw’s life, was Ellen Terry, who was his senior by eight years, and with whom he had platonic love through a number of letters. Besides these, Shaw had many other love affairs throughout his life. Ever being chased and trapped by women more often than not, the pursued became the pursuer. Women hovered around Shaw like moths around a flame. He had a
reputation of being a Philanderer and Leonard charters in *The Philanderer* is Bernard Shaw himself. Shaw got married at a later age. In the year 1896, he was introduced to a remarkable woman, Green eyed Irish millionaire,\(^{51}\) Charlotte Frances Payne Townshend, whose father was the member of the family of estate agents, where once Bernard Shaw had been employed. Charlotte had Met Shaw, after she had an unsuccessful romance with Alex Menthe. Shaw and charlotte were married on June 1, 1898.\(^{52}\) The bride-groom was forty two and the bride was forty one. She was a woman of a great character and firmness of will. Even though this marriage was never consummated, their affection for each other was profound. She cared for his health, for his happiness and for everything. She gave him what he needed most, a settled, regulated, nice, peaceful, undisturbed and unburdened household atmosphere as a result of which he could get maximum time to serve mankind to his maximum capacity through his oral and written contributions. She maintained this till her death in 1943. His life after Charlotte’s death became empty and care bound. He almost completely withdrew himself from the world, in which he had flourished with so much vigor, vivacity and gay abundance of mind and experience. He “Gradually sank into quietness at Ayton St. Lawrence with him memories of her to sustain his through the solitude that was to last for seven years.”\(^{53}\) Thus, she not only influenced Shaw but also paved the way to the great heights that he occupies in the world of literature today.
While Shaw wrote plays of socio-political ideas, she could find time in between for the active political kind of work, which made him competent to gather first hand practical experience of politics. Along with the political work, rendered by him as an active Fabian from 1884 to 1911, Shaw also held the post of a vestryman of the London district of St. Pancreas from 1897 to 1904. Under this body of vestrymen, he served on the Public Health, Parliamentary, Electricity, Housing and Drainage Committees. He fought against the slum landlords and brothel keepers (Many of the hotels round the three great railway stations were brothels). He was a pioneer in providing public lavatories for women and in demanding the representation of women on the committee. In 1904, he was adopted as a Progressive candidate for the London country council but he refused to become a common party hack; he was not ready to conceal his opinions on some important local issues.

When, in 1913, the First World War appeared to be hovering around the horizon, he wrote articles and letters and made speeches about the measures, which must have been adopted to ward off this danger. On November 14, 1914, he wrote “Common Sense About The war” in order to express his hatred against war, which was regarded by the people as his hatred for England. His many other statements and articles were similarly misunderstood, as most of the people were of the doctrine, ‘My Country, right or wrong’, but his country had no right to be wrong. Under social and political craze, Shaw visited many countries. On his return from a nine days
tour of Russia, he declared that heaven had been established in Russia. The conditions of the world between the two world wars naturally increased his interest in political problems more than in social ones as seen in Shaw’s Political plays and comment.

Shaw covers a long life of ninety four years, which begins with the later half of the nineteenth century and ends in the first half of the present century. Shaw’s early childhood was spent in Victorian environment, which was marked by the contradictory reactions of warm appreciation and commendations in some, and the feelings of resentment and condemnation in many. This was because the fruits of all round prosperity and progress were tasted by a few only, who were destined to control and exploit the masses according to their snobbery. Hence, the people belonging directly or indirectly to the newly emerging business class, found this period as the most glorious epoch. On the other hand, the suffering masses could not check themselves from presenting its devilish manifestations. Shaw was the champion of the latter group. As a prolific writer and intellectual philanthropist, Shaw argued and put forward his views as to how society could be properly organized.

The Victorian Age was essentially period of peace, prosperity, progress and happiness for the Britishers, who could complete the transformation of all aspects of their industrial, commercial and social life without any risk or violent interruption. Moreover, they paved the way even
for scientific development, new inventions, discoveries, experiments; learning’s and researches in all walks of life. As a result, a new set of values, morality, and outlook of life on the one hand, and new social principles and organizations, on the other, were called for.

During this period, man’s knowledge of the material world developed more rapidly and profoundly. Europe, North America and almost all progressive countries of the world made their contribution to the scientific revolution. The scientific enquiry into the nature of things led to a changed view of the nature of the universe and man’s place in it. And the increasing application of scientific knowledge led to a series of remarkable mechanical and technological inventions, which revolutionised progress in industry, agriculture, commerce and communications. Mills and factories were established at important centers, and the whole of England, thenceforth, became mainly a nation of mechanics and factories. The rapid growth of manufacturing necessitated improved means of transport and communication. As a result of the new industrial economy and new medicinal and therapeutically facilities, there was a phenomenal growth in population. From about nine millions\(^57\) in 1801, it grew more than treble in 1901, necessitating more and more territorial expansion and migration. Moreover, “The industrial towns were growing fast and the trend of urbanization was called for. They lacked adequate housing and sanitation and conditions were made worse by the increase in the population.”\(^58\) In every town one could see row upon row of cheap hovels, erected for the
new factory population by the professional renters, belonging mostly to the
so-called honorable class, who enjoyed pleasure some life on their unearned
income.

With the agro-industrial revolution in U.K., the English society of
Shaw’s time also had a new pattern of living and manners. It was divided
into three classes—the land-lords and the capitalists, the business-men and
the labouring class.59 The landed gentry still commanded highest respect
and included small land owners as well as the great dukes. No rigid line
separated the gentry and the upper middle class or the capitalists. In the
past, middle classes—shop-keepers, merchants and bankers – used to be
concerned only with the supply of goods and money. They had nothing to
do with manufacture, which was the business of the craftsmen. But now
there was a change. The factory owners or the industrialists claimed
superiority over the merchants and the bankers and sought equality with the
landed gentry. These industrialists “had been enterprising men, often of
poor education, but with technical or business ability, which had earned
them their individual fortunes.”60 As a result of which they became the
capitalists, who started all round exploitation and dominated all aspects of
society in England. These people as a class felt free to spend some of their
money on luxuries. T.K. Derry States:

A factory owner was tempted to indulge in such luxuries as expensive
as law suits for himself, expensive education for his children, or even
expensive pictures for his dining room. In consequence, the Bar, the public schools, and the arts flourished. The persons, employed in these new professions, were merged into this new middle class, which dominated the posts and professions of lawyers, doctors, engineers and civil servants. On the other hand, being a victim of class snobbery and respectability, the young gentleman could take up only such honorable professions such teaching, Navy, Army or the Church. The Church was the congenial profession for the country gentleman. Sometimes he became the Parson as well as the Squire. In general, the Squire and the parson, representing the church and the capital, lived in a world of dogmatic certainties and had no misgivings about the permanence and sanctity of its ideals and institutions. The woman of this class was strictly restricted to remain within her home, which was the only legitimate sphere of activity for her. “the marriage to a man of her own or a higher social grade was her only recognized vacation.” She was deprived of economic opportunity and the benefits of professional training. The sole purpose of her education was to prepare her for matrimony and domestic drudgery. “Home was the girl’s prison and woman’s workhouse.” The ideal of womanly woman was in vogue. Delicacy, beauty, grace, decorum and subjugation to man were the attributes of the fair sex. Marriage was treated as mystical and eternal union. Conjugal relations were allowed only within the bond of marriage. The property of the woman after her marriage was transferred to the name of her husband. The family was supposed to be a citadel of respectability
and conservatism and the paterfamilias was after represented as the guardian of accepted morality and ideals. Under Victorian family life, “children were under fierce and sometimes cruel subjection, often into adulthood.” The freedom, sought by the younger generation and its tendency to depart from the existing norms of the conduct, generated fight and unrest within the family fold. This was the social scene of the landed gentry and newly made capitalists of the Victorian period. “As time went on, businessmen of all types tended to imitate the manners of the landed gentry, who still dominated the English social scene.” The workers and the laborers formed the third class of society, which comprised the majority. They obviously had no capital. “Their only asset was their physical strength and possibly their trained skill.”

The industrial revolution transformed the agrarian economy of England into an industrial economy. But it did not develop in the same dynamic way as industry. Its reason was its misorganisation. “The gentry owned the land, the farmers rented it, and the laborers worked it. This was the normal pattern of English agriculture under Queen Victoria.” The small farmers were on the verge of disappearing the large farmers were going to increase in number day by day as a result of mechanical farming and the craze of the highest class to possess it. Then the small farmer was poor like the farm labourer. In the queen’s reign, the plight of the farm laborer’s was miserable and farm labour constituted the largest number of the people in villages. “They were paid six or seven shillings a week. Farm
laborers’ cottages were neither built nor well cared for. They were cold, damp and overcrowded.”68 This unhappy state of affairs and unemployment forced the rural laborers to find their fortune in industrial complexes far from their quiet villages. There they “had to live in whatever accommodation they could find – cheap lodgings, cellars, old houses- in which people were allowed to sleep, sometimes twenty to a room, for a penny a night.”69 Thus, in Victorian England, as a result of scientific farming, agriculture was organized on capitalistic basis and the problem of acute poverty due to unemployment among the rural laborers was at its peak. On the other hand, the industrial progress resulted in the creation of a capitalistic society, in which the rich grew richer and the poor poorer. The workers were exploited to the maximum. The employers cared only for their own interests and were criminally apathetic to the health and morals of workmen. Children and women were employed on cheap wages for long hours under the most depressing conditions. The children, who survived the prolonged torture, grew up as sorry specimens of humanity, deformed, debased and brutalized by ill-treatment. The Women belonging to the poor family were bound not only to serve in factories on cheap wages but also to sell their chastity:

Prostitution was one of the gross evils of London and other great cities. The evil was aggravated by the fact that employment open to women was for the most part drab, ill-paid and often sweated.70
Stating the inhuman conditions of women and children, belonging to the lowest strata of the society of Victorian period, Colbourne asserts:

If fallen women’ walked the streets after dark or children were sent down mines and harnessed as beasts of burden, or girls slowly poisoned by phosphorus in match factories. 71

Moreover, the boys and the girls of six had to work even for twelve or sixteen hours a day and remained without attention in the unhygienic conditions. Thus, the industrial revolution brought in its wake smoky factories; crowded towns build on unhygienic patterns, and extreme exploitation of the man of the street. It made a few capitalists and gave rise to a large number of wage-earners. The tendency of wages to be kept to a minimum and that of the hours of labour to a maximum was only counteracted by painful organization among the workers.

The agro-industrial revolution brought great prosperity to England but it was not an unmixed blessing. The discipline in factories and on farms was like that of a prison. The wages actually paid to the laborers were so low that it was practically impossible for them to keep body and soul together. This sorry state of affairs of the poor workers gave birth to the trade unions to improve the conditions of their employment through common action. Consequently, many unions of different professions came into existence. After an acute and constant exploitation of the workers by the capitalists, the class war between the haves and the have-nots—the
exploiters and the exploited-came into prominence. To bridge this gulf, many reformers for common welfare came to the forefront. Karl Marx, the exponent of Socialism, exhorted the workers to fight for Socialism, which according to him was their birth right. Dr. Engels (1820-95), a friend and collaborator of Marx, also bitterly criticized the capitalistic hold on society and prepared the famous communist Manifesto in 1848. St. Simon (1760-1825) also devoted his life for the betterment of the poor people. Robert Own (1771-1858), popularly known as the father of British Socialism, was immensely interested in the betterment of the lot of the workers and he was closely connected with all social reform movements in England. P. J. Proudhon, a French (1809-65), generally known as the father of anarchism, was one of the greatest critics of Karl Marx. Communism, according to him, is a Utopia. He put emphasis on the conditions of self-respect and human dignity. Crooking (1842-1921), a Russian, was famous anarchist, who worked and wrote much for the common people. The Fabian Society, founded in 1884 by a band of reformers prominent among whom were Sydney Webb, G. B. Shaw, Sydney Olivier, G. Wallis, Mrs. A. Besant, Headlam and Pease aimed at the constitutional reorganization of society by the emancipation of land and industrial capital from individual and class ownership and vesting them in the community for the general benefit. Similarly, Guild Socialism, as a counter reaction to wage policy came into being. It was popularized by Mr. G.D.H. Cole, who strongly criticized the
capitalistic system of production and advocated the reorganization of society on a functional basis.

Utilitarianism was essentially an English system of philosophy, which played a very important part in the early half of the nineteenth century. According to it, nature has placed man under the government of two sovereign masters—pain and pleasure—which govern us in all we say, in all we think. The pleasure was universally desired and the institutions of society were to be so directed as to increase the same. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1852) was the father of this thought. According to him, pleasure and pain supplied the motive force to the activities of man. He was dissatisfied with the plea of natural right and the existing political institutions of Great Britain, and also criticized the machinery of justice and punishment with more emphasis on prison system of his country. He advocated church and educational reforms. James Mill (1773-1836) was also a famous utilitarian, who pleaded for law reform and stood for a representative form of government, but he did not favour universal suffrage. Similarly his son, J.S. Mill (1806-73), who was deeply influenced by the writings of Darwin, Spencer, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Comte, emerged as a new thinker with a deeper sympathy, a wider intellectual outlook and a keener perception of the needs of human beings. He launched the slogan that it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied, better Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.
In the Victorian period, education was left in the hands of either the Church of England or the private individuals and institutions. For the children of working classes, education was provided by private effort in schools of three kinds (1) the profit-making schools charging fee of about 4 d. to 9 d. a week (2) the schools supported by the private subscription. These schools used the Bible as the text book, and gave instructions in reading, writing, and arithmetic with a smattering of Geography or general knowledge. A whole school could be run by one teacher in one room. The teaching was usually fostered by monitorial system. (3) The Charity and Sunday schools, mostly free, were aimed at promoting Christian knowledge and they were connected with Church or Chapel. However, all these schools, suffered from lamentable deficiency. “The chief weakness, was the quality of the education offered. The fault was principally with the teachers.”\textsuperscript{72} Moreover, “The very bodies, which encouraged education for religious purposes, opposed any liberalization of the curriculum, for they believed that, for example, the study of imaginative literature would lead to moral depravity and political discontentment.”\textsuperscript{73} As regards the education of children of rich people, it was provided on the stereotyped pattern. They got governesses at home or engaged private tutors for their children. Their schools were called the grammar schools or the public schools and only children of ruling classes were allowed to be educated in them. But they were also the den of defects and unworthy to impart any education. Thus, Shaw developed an immense hatred for the prevailing schools. Quite
disgusted with the school, where he had studied in his childhood, Shaw criticized them severely:

My school was conducted on the assumption that knowledge of Latin still be all, and conjugations and installments of the vocabulary by rote on pain of being caned or kept in after school hours, ‘If failed to reel off my paradigms without prompting.\textsuperscript{74}

Owing to the pitiable condition of education, most of the public attention was directed towards the reform in the system of elementary education, Consequently, by different acts, the expansion of quantitative and qualitative education at elementary, secondary and university level was strived at and the government shared its responsibility, Apart from these developments, “there also came in vogue a fad among the reading youths, which was known as ‘self-education’. This was a direct equivalent of the public school movement among the middle classes.”\textsuperscript{75} Shaw was also the man of self-education, who had conducted wide and deep study in British Museum for a number of years. Along with educational expansion, the press also came into its own and became a potent force not only in awakening social and political consciousness but also in increasing reading habits among the people of this age through daily and weekly newspapers, magazines and journals as well as heavy publication of cheap readable books. Theatre-going habit also developed particularly among the people of
well-to-do middle classes. “The new type of theatre-goers wanted a quieter type of acting and greater realism.”

The reign of Victoria witnessed the growth of literature, which was big in volume and high in quality. The literature of this period is loaded with critical temper, moral notes, cry of revolt, social purpose, realism and patriotism, reflecting the scientific impact as will be evident from the few passing references about the prominent figures of this age. Charles Dickens (1812-70), the great novelist, who described the life of middle and lower classes and resorted to satire to attack the abuses of his times, is described as ‘A Cockney Shakespeare’. William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-63) was a master of easy and faultless prose. He was witty and satirical. George Eliot (1819-80) was one of the famous novelists of her time. Her most successful novels were marked by reality of character, sketches, and the statements of philosophical principals. Robert Browning (1812-89) was a poet of passion, pathos, and great dramatic power. Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was a Tory, a democrat and a religious revivalist. He hated the industrial revolution and fought tooth and nail individualism, laissez-faire policy and Benthamism. John Ruskin (1819-1900) also criticized industrial revolution because it was physically ugly and carried with it a sense of false spiritual values. His view was that the pursuit of money lowered mankind. William Morries (1834-96) was a known socialist of the Victorian period. He was a poet, novelist, painter, designer and socialist. Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) was the Poet-laureate of England. He was the uncrowned king
of poetry. Windborne (1837-1909) was a great author of poems and ballads. Mathew Arnold (1822-88) was the leading literary critic. He criticized ‘Philistinism’, which was the outcome of material prosperity. Oscar wiled, H. G. Wells, Thomas Hardy and Shaw were also the prominent literary figures of Victorian age, who dominated their regime with the heart touching ideas, infused in their literary contributions. Besides, the newly printed mass of material, which appeared in newspapers, magazines and books, interested many. Political speeches, reported at full length, occupied many columns of the newspapers. The articles, written in the monthly and quarterly and fortnightly reviews, were not intended for light reading but to provoke serious thought:

Many of the great Victorian writers were concerned with criticising the time, in which they lived. In particular many of them felt deeply about the social problems of the day and were offended at the self-satisfied air of the more prosperous Victorians.  

With the rapid progress of science, people began to believe that with the help of science, they were sure to advance towards an ideal society. The impact of advancement of science on society was far reaching as it had not simply added to material prosperity but also brought a sea-change in the habits of thought and the main attitude to Christian faith. The advancement of science brought an upheaval in thought, transformed man’s outlook on life and affected every channel of intellectual activity. With the
introduction of marked realism and reason in the society, the people
developed an analytical and critical habit of mind. The Victorian age saw
development in all branches of science such as Chemistry, Physics,
Ecology, Botany, Zoology, Anthropology and Astronomy. Remarkable
inventions were made in Chemistry by James Young, Maxwell, Joule and
John Tyndall, in Geology by Charles Lyall, Adam Sedwick and Miller, in
Biology by Charles Darwin, Rober Chamber, Chopenhaur, Bergson and
others and in Medicine by Dr. Jenner, Charles Bell, Dra. Simpson etc. New
inventions, investigations and theories came into existence and were in
conflict with old facts and facets. The ancient intellectual order was shaken
to its roots with the result that the entire Period came to be marked by a
spirit of enquiry and criticism along with spiritual struggle and unrest.

The Victorians were very much interested in religion and three main
trends- the Oxford movement, the Christian Socialist Experiment and the
controversy over the theory of Evolution- stood out prominently. The
Oxford movement was started by a few clergymen of Oxford especially
Apostasy’ on July 14, 1833 marked the beginning of the movement. They
wanted to justify the Church of England on grounds other than merely
impendency and custom. They started a series of Tracts for The Times, in
which they emphasized the Old Catholic Beliefs. But opposition soon
developed against its Rome-Ward tendencies,. In tract XC, Newman tried to
prove that the 39th article of faith was not in contradiction with ancient
Catholic doctrines. It was condemned by the Oxford authorities. In 1845, Newman and Henry Edward Manning embraced Catholicism. Both of them were later made cardinals of the Church of Rome. Soon the Oxford movement broke up. The Christian Socialist Experiment, which came into existence in 1842, stressed the practical rather than the dogmatic side of Christianity. It was led by Charles kingly, Thomas Hughes and F. D. Morris. They founded clubs for the working class and the boys in London. Kingsley wrote westward Ho, *The Water Ballies* and other novels and articles to point out the evils of industrialization, which, he believed, could be cured by practical Christianity. The theory of Evolution, propounded by Charles Darwin, shook the very foundation of faith. Darwin, in his book, *Origin of Species*, written in 1859, propounded the theory of Natural selection or the survival of the fittest. By innumerable facts and arguments, he built up the theory of evolution of man from the ape in the ascending scale of creation, the process of creation producing better and better forms of life. He naturally came into conflict with the story of creation in the First Book of the Bible. However, Darwin failed to prove his theory logically and he could hardly impress to the intellectuals. But he had sown the seeds of doubt on the position of the Evangelicals and it was never the same, as it was, when the evangelical movement began with Wesley’s protest against the apathy of Church of England in the Eighteenth Century. It cured a good deal of selfishness and cant, but few grave abuses remained for attack in the church of England after 1850:
The scientific thought of the age was not only concerned with the scandals of the church organisation but it had also undermined the very foundations of belief. No one could foretell what would happen to society after these disintegrating theories had passed into general circulation and affected the masses.\textsuperscript{78}

Moreover, French revolution and atheism also toppled down the established religious theories with the result that religious uncertainties and skepticism were the constant hovering in the minds of the thinkers of the age.

The Victorian Era is marked out as a distinct political entity. As George IV and William IV left no heirs, Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1937. With her started a politically glorious, materially grand and socially grievous period of British history. In addition, it was a remarkable era of political consciousness, democratic reforms and charters, empire building, curious studies and researches in political economy, jurisprudence, collective movements in politics and political currents. The political development in this period decisively ensured the emergence of Britain as a first nation state of a new type. Culturally, it combined the best features of Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy. Appraising the political achievements of the Victorian Age, Sir Marriott asserts:

..... The nineteenth century will take rank among the age by virtue of its contribution to political achievement and the art of government. The
coming of democracy, extension of overseas empire and the evolution of self governing portions of that empire into a confederated commonwealth, these are the things that will, to all time, distinguish the Victorian era. 79

As a matter of fact, “it is the period of the completion of the process, by which political power has been transferred from the few to the many, from an aristocracy to the democracy.” 80 But in reality, this mixed situation or mode of reign was no rule at all. It may well be called the rule of industrial capitalists or of plutocrats.

However, the march towards democratization of the country ushered the Reform Act of 1832, which sought to defranchise the rotten boroughs and to give representation to the large towns and to have a uniform system of franchise. Its bill, introduced by Lord John Russell, the leader of the Whig party, was passed after a great fight between the House of Commons, on the one hand and the House of Lords and the king, on the other. By this act, the political power was transferred from the hands of the landed and old aristocracy to the middle class gentry. It was indeed a great step in the transition from aristocracy to democracy by adding about 500000 new voters to the electoral list and thus it paved the way for future reform acts. But the working class was still unrepresented and to that extent there was no full-fledged democracy in England.

In the history of political parties, there were two parties in Great Britain, namely Tory Party, comprising the old landed gentry and whig
party, consisting of mainly the middle class gentry. In 1834, the Tory Leader, Robert Peel named it Conservative Party. The Whig Party was also changed into liberal Party around the same year. However, they both were constantly in opposition to each other for the sake of opposition and deprived people of the fruits of democracy. Factory Legislation Act of 1833 was to improve the condition of the children, who worked in factories. Under the Emancipation Act of 1833, all children under six were declared free. In the same year, the Reforming Parliament appointed a Commission of Inquiry to unfold the corruption prevalent in the local governments as they were the dens of corruption then. In the worlds of Sir Marriott:

Funds, which had been placed in their hands for charitable purposes, were not properly used and were even used for private purposes. Charities for schools, when in the hands of Corporation, were often abused: salaries would be paid to masters where there were perhaps only one or two pupils. To put an end to their abuses, The Municipal Corporation Act was passed in 1833 and it applied to about two hundred corporate towns.81

Under this act, the people began to elect their representatives, mayor and elderment to the municipal committees. Similarly, Chimney Sweepers Act of 1840 and the Factory Act of 1844 were passed to ease the working conditions for children. The education Act of 1853 set aside an annual grant for the elementary education of the poor. The second reform Act, which tried to remedy the omissions and errors of the First Reform Act, was
passed in 1867. This act increased the number of voters and parliamentary seats. It also shifted the balance in favour of the working classes. The Third Reform Act was passed in 1884 by the Liberal government, headed by Gladstone. It ensured the franchise even to the agricultural labourers and farmers and thus, it filled up the gaps of democracy, left over by the second Reform Act. Thus, these three Reform Acts democratized Britain to a great extent:

The Reform Act of 1832 had added only 455000 votes to the electoral rolls and had in some cases actually operated as a measure of disfranchisement. The act of 1867 and 1884 added more than 3000000 votes, Demos, at last, came into the Kingdom.82

But still, the people of Britain did not enjoy the complete fragrance of democracy. M.Ps. were not paid for their services until 1911. The candidates for Parliament came from the families of the aristocracy and landed gentry, or to an increasing extent as time went on, from the middle classes. “A working class representative, for whom a trade union or other organisation would have to pay money was still a rarity in Parliament right up to the death of Queen Victoria.”83 Along with democratization, the full wave of decentralization, was also on the forefront in the country. After the Municipal Act of 1835, another act, known as The Local Government Act of 1888, was passed. It created new local government authorities the county councils, comparising members, elected by popular votes. In 1894,
another act was passed, setting up a number of lesser elected authorities in urban district councils, rural district councils, Parish councils and the smallest parishes, Another important event in political life of Britain occurred in 1893 with the birth of the third political party, which was named as Independent Labour Party, and was founded under the chairmanship of Keir Hardie, a fervent Scotchman. Now this party is named as Labour Party, and has its sound standing in the country. However, in the conception of the democratic setup, the role of political parties in governmental functioning was not positive and co existent. The ruling party did, what the non ruling parties did not want and vice versa. The main attention, major action and energy of political parties was only to bring about the fall of one by the other. It would be no exaggeration to call the age of democracy as the age of the fight between political parties.

After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, the twentieth century started with the reign of Edward VII, who held the throne upto 1910. This decade saw three prime ministers Belfour as P. M. upto 1906. Campbell upto 1908, and Asquith from 1908 onward, After Edward VII, George VI, whose period is noted for great developments and destructions in England, wore the crown from 1910 to 1936. After his abdication in Dec., 1936 George VI, under whose reign England became a welfare state, held the royal seat upto 1952. In this duration of about fifty years, many remarkable acts were passed, The Education Act of 1902 gave the right of management of schools to county councils. The Irish Land Purchase Act of 1906 encouraged the
tenants to purchase their holdings by advancing loans to them. The working
Women’s Compensation Act of 1906, and The Trade Disputes Act of 1906
paved the way for the enjoyment of many facilities and rights by the
working class people, the old Age Pension Act of 1908 and The National
Insurance Act of 1911 were also mark for the welfare of the people. The
Parliamentary Act of 1911 declined the power of the House of Lords and
limited the term of Parliament for five years. The First World War, the most
devastating for mankind, continued form 1914 to 1918. The Act 1928
extended suffrage to women. Again the devastating II World War continued
from 1939 to 1945. Thenceforth England became a welfare state, founded
on the ideals of democracy after the introduction of the acts of 1929 and
1949, which abolished plural voting and university seats and applied the
principle of one man one vote.

In this way, within a period of about 120 years, the task of democratization
in the country was completed after perennial political struggle. But with
the march of democracy, the evils of capitalism continued side by side to
cripple it to their bitterest, The capitalists still did not allow the common
people to share the burden of administration in the country and fulfilled
their cherished aims by continuing the hold on administration and
bureaucracy with the help of their money. Though with the advent of
democracy, the policy of Laissez faire was discouraged and discarded, and
the state was declared as the welfare state. The control and administration
by the state increased with a view to bring about positive and harmonious
progress of society. As a result, government officials were posted everywhere for the sake of general well being, protection of the weak and the restraint of the strong, for the abolition of the abuses and the provision of amenities. But all this positive good had been purchased at a price by the plutocrats. Moreover, the majority of officials also belonged to the same class.

The outbreaks of two world wars are the events of cardinal importance in the social and political history of Britain. They retarded the human peace, progress and prosperity for a number of years. The main causes of their catastrophe can be traced to alliance, arrogance of militarism, competitive patriotism, economic imperialism, lack of an international government machinery, the principle of identifying victory with morality, the leaders personal feelings of revenge, superiority, religion and dictatorship, conflict of ideologies between the types of government and the weak administration also created the war situation. These devastating wars made the thinkers think out ways and means to remove the clouds of III war as far as possible and forced them to explore the causes and remedies of wars.

No account of the social and political conditions of Great Britain can be complete without adding a few lines about the conditions of Ireland, the native land of Shaw. There, the social and political conditions were very precarious. Most of the people were farmers by profession and catholic by faith, having deep faith in fortune, superstitions and traditions. A small
number of them were Puritans. The farmers had no land of their own. They tilled the land of their English landlords on a rental basis. If they constructed any building on the land, it became the property of the landlord after the lapse of the rent deed, So the farmers lived in poor huts and cottages. The rents were high. They were so poor that they could hardly make both ends meet. Ireland was under the rule of the King of England and Irish were struggling hard to emancipate themselves. The Irish problem also entered the new stage since the fiasco of 1848, It thrust itself into prominence again in 1855 under the guise of Fenianism. The Fenianism Movement inaugurated a period of remedied legislation, both ecclesiastical and agrarian, a period, which culminated in the attempt, foiled by the electorate to alter fundamentally the constitutional relation of Ireland and United Kingdom.

Shaw performed the role of a dissenter for his age. Motivated by the formative influences, that shaped his personality and social philosophy and disgusted with the too smooth and too smug socio political conditions of his time, he described the nineteenth century as the blackest page in history. He had extreme discontent with the existing socio political situations and like the other philanthropists, he considered it his pious duty to break out the constitutional war against the prevailing corrupt view to forming the society of superman, wherein mankind may reach the stage of perfection. It is with this purpose that he produced a lot of literature, particularly plays, pregnant with the socio political problems and their possible solutions.
REFERENCES


5. Ibid., p.658

6. Ibid., p.659


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.


14. *St. John Ervine, Bernard Shaw*, p.16

15. Ibid., p.17.


17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.


22. Ibid., p.659.

23. Ibid.


25. Ibid., pp.661-62.

26. Ibid., pp.666.

27. Ibid., p. 667.

28. Ibid., p.661.


30. Ibid.


32. St. John, Ervine, Bernard Shaw, pp.25-6

33. Ibid., p.27.


42. St. John Ervine, *Bernard Shaw*, p.111


47. Ibid, pp. 113-14.


49. Ibid.


54. Maurice Goldbourne, *The Real Bernard Shaw*, P. 27

55. G.M. Trevelyan, the famous historian, states: “*The condition of England’s happiness in the nineteenth century and the cause of that peculiar belief in progress as a law of history, which cheered the Victorian mind, was the fact that we were not encased in any great war for a hundred years after Waterloo.*” (G.M. O. M. Trevelyn), English Social history (London: Orient Long man (Indian Reorient),, 1974). P. 548. ”

56. Evaluating the material progress and social change, Lord Marriott remarks: “not less impressive were the changes in the economic and social structure: the enlargements of the boards of commerce: the genesis of new forms of industrial activity: the development of the principles of cooperation and combination: the deepening sense of social responsibility and social solidarity, all these things were characteristics of the England of nineteenth century” (Sir J.A.R. Marriott, England Since Waterloo (London : Methuen, 1962) p. 445).


59. Revealing the classes of the English society, Shaw asserts, “Do not talk of the middle class: the expression is meaning of business who stands in the middle between land and capital on the one hand, and labour on the other, and organizes business for both.” (“Preface to Immaturity”, The Complete Bernard Shaw Prefaces, p. 650).


66. Ibid., pp. 122-23.


69. Ibid., pp. 122-23

71. *The Real Bernard Shaw* p. 27.


83. Ibid., P. 175.