CHAPTER 3

THE EARLY PHASE
CHAPTER - THREE

THE EARLY PHASE

Shaw's art is intensely personal and he uses his ideas as the best vehicle of revealing himself. Hence, before studying the various social and political ideas of Shavian dramatics comprehensively, it is necessary to have a the-metical introduction of his dramas. With this view, the present chapter is being devoted to a survey of almost all his dramas under the heads—Social Dramas and Political Dramas. Though social and political ideas are so interwoven in his works, it is difficult to classify them independently in two categories.

The most striking feature, found in his dramatic artistry, is the long preface, dealing with his observations on sociology, politics, history, religion, profession, autobiography etc.

These prefaces are such an important part of his total dramatic genre that Chesterton, in his usual humorous vein, calls him a very prefatory sort of person.1 Joad also asserts that "his prefaces are political tracts and plays are little more than dramatic illustrations of the doctrines of his prefaces,"2 or "his plays are no more than appendages to the thought of the prefaces."3 But as a matter of fact, his prefaces are for the dramas and not the dramas for his prefaces. Although they do not always serve as an introduction to his dramas, they are used not only for the discussion of ideas that happened to dominate
his mind, when he wrote them but also they show the argumentative Shaw at his best. As a very skilful debater, he found the drama incapable of giving full scope to his powers in this direction and he, therefore, exercised his debating powers fully through these prefaces and wrote them to open men's mind to convince and convert them to his own point of view and to punctuate a host of social institutions and beliefs. Thus, he used his prefaces for further elucidation and exposition of his ideas. Accentuating the significance of the prefaces to his dramas, A.C. Ward rightly asserts, "the prefaces were a substitute pulpit from which Shaw, … delivered himself of exposition and of prophesy upon nearly everything that was in the collective mind of the three generation, which his own life time spanned."\(^4\)

Really speaking, his prefaces are an invaluable record of his multifarious ideas and supplementary guide to the dramas and his philosophy. It is true that the Shavian dramas can be understood even without the prefaces, it is also equally true that a study of the prefaces clarifies his ideas and leaves the reader or the spectator in a better position to enjoy and appreciate his dramas.

Moreover, his seemingly contradictory ideas loose their vagueness with their help. Hence, a study of the prefaces along with his dramas is indispensable for having an integral and comprehensive grasp of his store of socio-political ideas. One thing noteworthy is that Shavian dramatics is unanimously called by all as Shavian plays.
Shaw calls his first three plays unpleasant, because "their dramatic power is based to force the spectators to face the unpleasant facts." They carry us to think over the seamy side of social life. Under this group of plays, the economic disparity between different social classes and the resulting villainous abuses that afflict society are the real facts with which Shaw confronts the audience. Therein, we get a strong sense of the wasted vitality of human beings, of the perpetuation of human misery on account of the existing social and economic order and of the avowed aim of redeeming society from economic ills. In the joint preface to plays, unpleasant, Shaw generally likes to say something about the circumstances, in which the plays were written and about their reception by the public and the critics.

Widowers’ Houses is the first unpleasant play, produced by Shaw in 1892. It demonstrates his cherished theme of a problem of conscience in the contemporary society. The play presents "a sharp attack on all those, who draw profits from the rents, paid by the poorest of the poor for their miserable hovels." Through it Shaw reveals that the tentacles of the capitalistic octopus are very deep and penetrating. The preface to this play has much literary, critical and sociological interest. Besides, herein we come across an account of William Archer, how Shaw was placed by him on the road to play writing and how he was engaged in reading Karl Mark and Wagner.
The Philanderer, the second unpleasant play, produced in 1893, exposes Shaw's funning warfare on the institution of marriage as constituted in his life time. The play reveals, how the English marriage laws are responsible for grotesque sexual compacts. The mockery of medical service has also been presented in a captivating manner. This play contains a small preface with no important ideas.

Mrs. Warren's Profession (1894) is the third most unpleasant play, revealing the falsehood of sociological as well as moral pedantry. It presents a powerful attack on the great social evil of prostitution, which Shaw with great skill chooses as the most glaring instance of the exploitation of the poor and of the evils of capitalism, which through under-payment and ill-treatment turns women into prostitutes. The general thesis of the play is that rich men without conviction are more dangerous in modern society than poor women without chastity. In its preface, Shaw reveals the cause of prostitution, growing influence of theatre in England and that society, not any individual, is the villain of this play.

After seeing the cold welcome of his unpleasant plays by the public and accepting the fact that at least as a beginner, he could not make use of the stage successfully as a platform for his social ideas, he completely changed the topics by creating pleasant plays for the amusement of the frivolous people although his goal remained the same. The preface to Plays, Pleasant deals with Shaw's observation on the relationship between the authors,
actors, managers and the public and his comment on the commercial management of the theatre of his age. He further reveals the duty of a great dramatist towards the present generation and states discontent over the cold welcome of the dramas of ideas by the theatre managers. All the four pleasant plays bear no individual prefaces of their own.

*Arms and the Man*, produced in 1894, is the first of the four plays called pleasant, the second volume of the published plays of Shaw. The specific target in this play is to make fun of the way of martial glory and romantic love. Herein, Shaw pricks the bubble of false romanticism by the sword of realism. He further laughs at the snobbery of the high class people.

*In Candida* (1895), Shaw has turned the tables on Ibsen by showing that it is the man and not the woman, who is the doll in the house. Herein, Shaw wishes to infuse the code of free sex in society along with the continuation of the institution of marriage.

*The man of Destiny*, produced in 1895, the one act play, contains the picture of a superman taken from history. Through this play Shaw proves that Napoleon’s military talents issue from his genius, which disregards the conventional moral values. He further proves that woman is the greatest enemy of the genius. But even by the force of his strong will and realistic morality, which is the attribute of every genius, he rarely surpasses woman.

*You Never Can Tell*, produced in 1896 is a drama of sexual attraction and it contains a comic study of family life. Herein, Shaw emphasizes the
biological purpose of procreation in sexual matters rather than romantic
delight. In addition to this, Shaw exposes the unnatural character of the
relationship between parents and children and proves that in this age of
artificiality, children have failed to maintain natural affection and attachment
with their parents. Thus, the family ideal is proved as a broken idol.

Shaw wrote another volume, entitled *Three Plays for Puritans* with the
express intention of permanently ridding the theatre of dramatic
sensuousness. He clarifies the purpose of this volume in the preface to *Three
Plays for Puritans*. Herein, he calls on the puritans "to rescue the English
theatre again as they rescued it before when its foolish pursuit of pleasure
sunk it in profaneness and immorality."\(^7\)

Moreover, he states some facts to compare his *Caesar and Cleopatra*
with Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*. In the last of this preface, he
suggests to the people at large to be away from the craze for reputation. The
plays, forming a group under the title, *Three Plays for Puritans*, have no
individual prefaces.

*The Devil’s Disciple*, produced in 1896-7, is the first of the *Three
Plays for Puritans*. In it, Shaw emphasises the importance of the instinctive
morality, which, according to him is original, real and adaptable. Thus, by
means of a brilliant contrast, Shaw demonstrates the actions, which though
seemingly alike, are essentially dissimilar. He fixes two kinds of morality –
internal and external or original and artificial. In addition he brings us to realise that human nature is based on the principle of equality.

*Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898), the second play for Puritans, is based on the historical background with distorted facts to serve the purpose of the dramatist. It may be taken as the counter-blast to the sexual romanticism of Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*. Herein, Shaw deals with a man, who is the master of his mind, the conceiver of his own ideas, which he manipulated for his own purposes but he has to realise the power of woman over the life and actions of man. Through this play, Shaw presents religion as applied to society so that the play embraces in its theme the entire history of our civilisation and the march of the human race from savage animalism to a biologically advanced state of being almost God-like. He demonstrates, how the teachings of Jesus, when practiced honestly in daily life can end most of our miseries. Through this play Shaw delivers his passionate sermon against the spirit of revenge: “And so, the end of history, murder will breed murder, always in the name of right and honour and peace, until the gods are tired of blood, and create a race that can understand.” The last play of this group of plays, *Captain Brass bound’s Conversion* (1899) deals with one of our important social institutions, - law and justice. Through a female character, Shaw emphasises the necessity of tactfulness, practicability and unconventionality in society. Moreover, we notice here as much as in *Candid’s* Shaw’s lifelong interest in the London cockney dialect.
The Admirable Bashville, written in 1901, is also called by another name as constancy Unrewarded, it is a dramatisation in blank verse of Shaw’s novel, Cashel Byron’s Profession. Shaw herein proves the theory of love at first sight along with the fact that woman falls in love with the strength of man and the man after her beauty. He further lashes out at the feeling of respectability of the Victorian people and opens the climate of free love and marriage irrespective of class, status and profession. In the preface to this play, Shaw tries to convince his critics that he is not the heartless creature, as some of his critics take him for. In addition he throuws a little light on the interest of the theatre audience and on the interest and status of the Bible reading among the common people.

Man and Superman, written in 1903, one of the finest plays of Shaw, establishes him as the leader of the new drama. It is the comedy about the Shavian philosophy of Life Force and creative Evolution. Herein, the dramatist gives a prophetic message that Life Force drives man from the stage of imperfection to the stage of perfection i.e. superman. In it, the diverse nature and function of man and woman in life have been demarcated. Thus, this play is central to Shaw’s philosophy and philosophy is always central to his plays. It reveals a vision of a new society, coloured with optimism. The preface of this play begins with a long letter to a critic and friend, stating about its situations and its success. In the preface he further reveals Nature’s impositions on man and woman and diverse functions of man and woman. Besides Shaw again reveals his theory of Life-force with a
clear and detailed explanation. With this, Shaw adds another work also, entitled ‘The Revolutionist’s Handbook.’ This is an important document containing his stray ideas on various subjects.

*John Bull’s Other Island* (1904) presents a very realistic picture of Ireland, the land of humour, delicacy, dreams and romance along with suffering, hardship and exploitation. Outwardly, politics, particularly Home Rule, seems to be its main theme but the real issue in the play is not what politics can make of man but what man has made of politics. However, this play now does not deserve to be called a political play as the Anglo-Irish political scene has altogether changed since then. Therefore, the play, as such, has grown state by now but it will never cease to be fresh so long as there is human interest beyond mere politics. This play will continue to be interesting so long as there are men like Broadbent, who combines sentimentality and cupidity like Keegan, to whom the life to come seems more important than this world of getting and spending. It will continue to be interesting also so long as the climate of Ireland produces men like Larry Doyle’s, who both loves and dreads his country. Thus, the play contains more emphatically the picture of Irish people and their particular manners and modes of living. However through it, Shaw reveals the English men to the Irishmen and the Irishmen to the Englishmen, the Protestants to the Catholics and the Catholics to the Protestants. So far as its preface is concerned, it contains a very powerful plea for Home Rule in Ireland in particular and in
other countries in general. Besides Shaw exposes his anti-views on the spirit of nationalism. On the whole, the play is an interesting social study.

*How He Lied to Her Husband* (1904) is a play-let which reflects Shaw’s hackneyed theme of husband, wife and lover. He tries to show that the point of honour, on which Othello’s love and jealousy were based, is a romantic assumption, and has nothing noble or tragic in it. In this preface, Shaw explains the causes and situations leading to its creation.

*Major Barbara*, written in 1905, is a sermon in drama. Shaw’s message through this drama is completely opposed to the lesson taught by Christian ethics. He believes that the poor are unblessed since poverty is the source of sin. No poor man can possibly hope to enter the Kingdom of heaven. Moreover, poverty leads to all sorts of crime. Hence, to eliminate poverty is a social and moral imperative. The drama focuses also on the conflict between the forces of conventionality and the power of a superior being – the Shavian hero. Realising that poverty breeds social discontent and thus constitutes a threat to socialism; Shaw makes us resolve to eliminate poverty from society by a combined attack of force, morality and intelligence. Shaw finally brings us to the conclusion that the capitalists have captured everything – the individual, public, State, morality and religion. There is nothing outside their reach. That is why the abolition of Capitalism and the flourishing of socialism are worthy efforts. In the preface, Shaw reveals the sources of inspiration in dealing with the tragicomic irony at the conflict between real
life and the romantic imagination and he further tells how butler lent him the belief that poverty is the greatest evil and the worst crime. He herein tells in details how society can be reformed.

*The Doctor’s Dilemma* (1906) is described as the tragedy, which centers on the question which life is more valuable – that of an amoral artist of great quality or that of a mediocre doctor, who is decent and honest. This, however, has been left unsolved in the play because the doctor decided to sacrifice the artist for an extraneous reason i.e. his love for his wife. We, thus, find in it, a profound attack on the medical profession. He draws the character of doctors realistically in spite of his personal prejudice against the medical science. He also exposes the manners and bad motives of the doctors. He further reveals that they have no honour or conscience and he suggests that there should be a national staff of doctors. In its preface, Shaw challenges the infallibility of the medical profession and also expresses his views on vivisection and vaccination.

*Getting Married* (1908) is a lively dramatic discourse on English marriage laws, customs, their ramifications, their absurdities, illogicalities, injustices and even their immoralities. Under the garb of discussion about marriage, various points of view – conventional and unconventional, religious and secular – are stated. Through this play Shaw denounces the prevailing middle class conception of marriage as boiling down in essence to ‘one room for two people’. It is one of the cardinal doctrines of Shavianism
that marriage as an institution will be tolerable if only men and women are made economically independent of each other and divorce is made cheap, easy and honourable. In this drama, of the two women, one has to face the problem of marriage and the other of divorce. In its preface, Shaw gives his views on marriage, divorce and the sex slavery of wives.

*The Shewing – Up of bianco Posnet* (1909) is sub entitled also as ‘A Sermon in Crude Melodramas’, The play is definitely a religious sermon, irrespective of the Christianity and the conventional principles of religion, which Shaw regards false and stale. Herein, Shaw exposes that the Divine will or the Life Force must be served and that mankind has been created to serve that Divine will. He further goes to prove that God’s work must be done as god’s work. Its preface mainly hits the role of censorship, the defects of Christianity, his aim of writing the plays and the importance of toleration.

*A Glimpse of Reality* (1909) has also a sub-title, called ‘A Tragedietta’. This play spotlights the problem of dowry, prevailing particularly among the people of low status. It encourages one to face such a problem boldly. This play is without preface.

*Misalliance* (1910) contains in a long debate about the relations between parents and children along with many other subjects such as love, marriage, morals, government, religion, economics and the predatory female. In its preface, Shaw talks about the care of children by their parents. He believes that every child is a new pot of Life Fore, Which the parents and the
teachers can either build up and strengthen or completely destroy, according to their wisdom or folly.

*The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* (1910) is a trivial play. Herein, Shaw does not merely condemn individuals and institutions but also makes an attempt at an examination of the fundamental basis of individual and social ideals, the relation of the sexes, and the distribution of wealth. He, as usual, draws portraits of instinctive conduct. In its preface he explains us the circumstances, attendant to the writing of this play. The introduction of Frank Harris, Shakespeare, Jupiter and Semele as well as the new prologue to the play are also important parts worth mentioning.

*Fanny's First Play* (1911) is a domestic comedy, where the dramatist tries to expose the hollowness of respectability, sentimentality and false morality. In addition he reveals that a true religion is to have a more abundant life. He rejuvenates the old material which is stale and exhausted. This play contains a short preface which reveals the history and importance of morality along with the roles of custom and conscience in the age of Shaw.

*Androcles and the Lion* (1912) is a fable play. Here, the dramatist presents in brief an account of the humble henpecked husband who has become a sincere devotee of Christianity which in the time of Roman persecution became the religion loaded with dogmas and all sorts of religious formalities. Its central theme is that man must have something worth dying for to make life worth living because an end outside himself – in other words,
a religious aim – is necessary for decent human existence. The dramatist brings us to realize that to obey God (Life Force) is the first and foremost duty of a man. Finding no inherent cause of conflict in religious partialities, Shaw exposes that in society there is no struggle between Heathenism and Christianity but between aristocratic respectability and anarchical lowliness. The dramatist further tells us the spiritual essence of jesses Christ’s teaching, ‘The Kingdom of God is within you’. This concedes with Shaw’s concept of Life Force. The preface to this drama deals with the prospects of Christianity and the tenets of Christ. He further asserts that equality of income for everybody, responsibility of the Society to keep up everybody alive and to allocate work for all and idleness for none are the necessary measures for redeeming the sufferings of human beings.

**Overruled** (1912) is a farcical comedy in one act on the theme of polygamy. Herein, the dramatist ridicules the false matrimonial tie between husband and wife and proves that Nature does not confine its love and passion only to them but makes it open to all human beings. In this preface, Shaw exposes the aim of this play, “It is a clinical study of how the thing actually occurs among quite ordinary people, innocent of all unconventional views concerning it (polygamy).” The natural history of marriage, art and morality, theatrical stage and comedy are the main topics discussed.

**Pygmalion** (1913) ought to be termed as an intellectual comedy though it is labeled as a romantic comedy. Its theme is a creative element. It deals
with phonetics as its main subject and makes us aware how speech is a great barrier between social classes. Moreover, the dramatist makes us realize that making life means trouble but the trouble will remain no trouble, if we do not realise it as trouble. Moreover, to create is the duty of God and we are to abide by it without pondering over its result. It contains a remarkable sexual encounter, in which those who complain that Shaw has no conception of human feelings, are confounded. This drama has no long preface which Shaw treats as a sequel rather than a preface. In it, he throws light on the professor of phonetics, Mr. Higgins and on the history and importance of the Science of Phonetics.

*Great Catherine* (1913) also has its subtitle as ‘Whom Glory Still Adores’. It is the one act play in four scenes with a peculiar perversity which is partly puritanical and partly hedonistic. Through a lady Character, the dramatist proves that the bond of love is temporary and deep. He also exposes that philandering is a biological food of man and woman. Its preface only comprises history of Great Catherine.

*The Music Cure* (1913) is a farce. Its theme proves the Shavian view that woman is no less strong but is superior to man: and that she may also like to choose a domesticated husband who will look after the domestic affairs and will not oppose his wife for attending outdoor functions and festivities. This play is without any preface.
Back to Mathuselah, written in 1920, is Shaw’s masterpiece, properly speaking, it is not a play at all. That is why Shaw assigns a far more appropriate title to it as “a Meta-biological Pentateuch”. It is a Pentateuch because it consists of five separate plays, which add new information to the Bible. It is meta-biological because the concept of evolution, expounded in the plays transcends the conventional theory of Darwin. In short, this play is an attempt by Shaw to explain the theory of Creative Evolution to the public unwilling or unable to read biological treatises. It also contains the core of Shaw’s philosophy. It is considered a contribution to the modern age, calling for the genuinely scientific religion to which all wise men have been eagerly looking for now. In the first part, which is named In the Beginning, Shaw predicts the death of man that it will occur accidently sooner or later. Then, the teaching of serpent to Eve is revealed because it contains the seeds of Shaw’s theory of creative evolution. He further suggests that all lining creatures must desire to develop, must imagine what they desire, must have the will to shape what they imagine and finally, must create what they will. The second part of the play is named The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas. In which three hundred years is determined the lease of human life on earth. The third part, which is named as The Thing Happens, deals with the year A.D. 2170 and reveals that after two hundred and fifty years, two persons a clergyman and a parlour main – are still alive and active in religion and politics. The fourth part of the play is named as The Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman, in which we find a few long speeches and are also introduced to
a race of people, who, possessing extraordinary powers over Nature, may survive as long as they will. In the fifth part of the play, which has been named As far as thought can Reach, the dramatist reveals through the character of She-Ancient, “The day will come when there will be no people, only thought” and through the He-Ancient, “And that will be life eternal.”

This part of the play contains much of the discussion on art, love, beauty and various other matters so much so that it often becomes cumbersome and monotonous. In the end, the words of Lilith reveal the Shavian philosophy:

Of Life only is there no end; and though of its million starry mansion many are empty and many still inbuilt, and though its vast domain is as yet unbearably desert, my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to its uttermost confines. And for what may be beyond, the eyesight of Lilith is too short. It is enough that there is a beyond.

In its preface also, Shaw says that if human beings could learn how to live for a longer period and also how to concentrate themselves on the art of living, they could surely tide over all their difficulties, all their miseries and all their wretchedness of living. Moreover, he emphasizes the role of will in evolution. The postscript, written in 1944 for the Oxford University Press’s World’s Classics edition of Back to Mathuselah, Is in effect a supplementary preface, where Shaw speaks of the physical disabilities which age has forced upon him in his eighty ninth year but he still continues doing the duty of God.
*Jitta’s Atonement* (1922) is called a tomfoolery, in which the wife of a professor has another lover, while her husband is not only very faithful and kindly to her but also holds full faith in her sincerity. But after his death, she forgets him and his affections within no time, marries her lover and does not try to remember her former husband. Thus, through it, the dramatist laughs at the sentimentalism and the romance on the one hand and paves a way for a free game of sex fulfillment on the other. This play has no preface.

*Saint Joan*, written in 1923, is one of the masterpieces of Shavian artistry. It is beautifully coloured with historical and religious elements. Through it, the dramatist shows surprisingly masculine features in a girl so as to uphold his point that bravery is to be found even in a woman. Moreover, the dramatist emphasizes that it is not enough to do what is right but that it is also necessary to be powerful. The preface to *Saint Joan* is quite long. It discusses varied matters and well represents Shavian views and techniques. First, Shaw speaks of Joan’s history, her character, appearance, social position and her voices and visions. Thereafter, he introduces a study of the religious as well as moral aspects of the middle ages.

*Village Wooing* (1933) is an unperfected play-let in the form of three conversations. Its theme is the “ever pleasing one of the relations between a man and a woman and the pursuit of one by the other.”

*The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1934), subtitled ‘A Vision of Judgment’, reveals the problem of social values and shows how it will
influence the Day of Judgment which is, in fact, being enacted every moment in our lives. The problem is ‘whether you are a social asset or a social nuisance.’ Moreover, through a character, the dramatist exposes his pint of view that “The lives, which have no use, no meaning, no purpose, will fade out. You will have to justify your existence or perish. The Day of Judgment is not the end of the world, but the end of its childhood.”15 Similarly, through another character, he reveals the fact that we are here to wrestle with life as it comes and in this world, the future is with those who prefer surprise and wonder to security. Thus, its theme is that nothing matters except life as it is, and making the most of it. Is, and making the most of it. Its comparatively short preface is also on ‘Days of Judgment’, in which the author explains that “in a living society, every day is a day of judgment and its recognition as such is not the end of all things but the beginning of a real civilization,”16 which is the fable of the play.

*Buoyant Billions* (1947) also has a subtitle ‘A comedy of No Manners’. The dramatist calls it a trivial comedy but the speeches in it are the marks of his old dramatic genius and philosophic mind. Its optimism is the most refreshing thing in the midst of moral and spiritual gloominess. In the preface of this drama, the old message of the dramatist again sounds. ‘I don’t want to be happy. I want to be alive and active.’ He seems, emphasizing his personal interest in doing something continuously throughout his life.
Farfetched Fables (1948) is a satirical play upon science and its fable arises from the talk and behavior of scientists. Shaw adds to it a preface which is six pages longer than the play. In it, he takes up various subjects for discussion particularly the new psychobiology, divine providence (Critical Essay on life Force), problem of Evil, State-craft, parental dilemmas, impracticality of Catholicism, the thirty articles, Marxian theory, democracy with its merits and demerits, political mathematics, examination and school masters, capital accumulation and the threatening future. Thus, unlike the play, the preface is more prone to political discussion.

Shakes Versus Shav (1949) is a ten minute puppet play, which Shaw describes as the climax of his eminence and he declares that it is a knock-about in blank verse. Here, he reveals that he is no less than Shakespeare in the field of dramaturgy. In its preface, Shaw asserts that both Shakespeare and he are the professional fellows of the same rank.

(b) Political Plays

Though Shaw’s thought was always concerned with the great problems of the fate and future of mankind yet he never ceased to be interested in politics because that politics was inevitably integrated with the human lot as it’s most essential means. That is why all his plays including social plays are not devoid of political ideas. Moreover, the condition of the world between the two world wars naturally increased his interesting political problems. The means seemed to dominate the end. Therefore, with the exception of one play
– *Press Cutting* – which is social in nature and political in practice, Shaw’s contribution in the field of political plays and other political works began near about the First World war and ended with the close of the Second World War. Similarly, in this duration of two world wars, he wrote a few social plays, but directly or indirectly they also carry us towards politics.

Shaw’s first political play-let, *Press Cuttings* (1909) is a farce about the women’s suffrage and is on their side. Through it, the dramatist not only emphasizes the proper fight of women for the right to vote but also proves that the women are no less brave than man even in war. They are also fully willing to share in war like men. This play-let is without any preface.

*O’ Flaherty, V.C.* (1915) also has a subtitle –‘A Recruiting Pamphlet’. This play is a comic presentation of common Irish soldier’s attitude to the First World War. In this play, Shaw shows us how O’ Flaherty, the Irish soldier, joins the army because peaceful life at home has no charm for him. His mother and wife send him to war out of greed for pension and allowance but not out of feelings of patriotism or nationalism. This is the reality which the dramatist wants to emphasise by exposing that the so-called romance and glory of war exists nowhere. Some of the remarks of the soldier reflect clearly Shaw’s attitude towards war. In its preface, the dramatist reveals the attitude of the Irish people towards England, her King and the War.

*Augustus Does His Bit* (1916) is a true-to-life farce, full of easy fun about life. The play seems truer now than it was in 1917, when bureaucracy
ruled England. This play reveals the bureaucratic impact on each department of British government even in war time and makes a bitter fun of the English governing class. In its preface, the dramatist explains what has gone into its making and shows his gratitude for Augustus who invited him to visit war front in Flanders.

*The Inca of Jerusalem* (1916) with a subtitle ‘An Almost Historical Comedietta’, contains Shaw’s ridicule of war and warmongers. In its preface, Shaw reveals about the cause and situation under which he wrote this play.

*Annajanks, The Boishevik Empress* (1917), a farce, also has its subtitle ‘A Revolutionary Romance let’. It is one of the very earthiest dramatic offshoots of the Russian Revolution. The characters reflect Shaw’s own ideas about revolution and war and make the common men aware of the wrong slogans and notions of the war-mongers and the revolution. In its short preface, the dramatist tells us about the nature of this drama and its actress, Miss Lillah Mc Carthy.

*Heartbreak House* (1913-16), a pure comedy, is also sub-titled ‘A Fantasia In the Russian manner on English Themes’. “It is a play of democracy, addressed to those, who consider themselves to be self-rulers.’17 The notable creature of this play is the comic treatment of the English nationalism against the internationalism. Here the dramatist does not merely attack idle people or the people of wealth, but also lashes at cruelty, inhumanity, callous financial competition and political destructiveness,
endangered by nineteenth century science and economics. He also attacks lack of religious fervor, which pushed the entire world into the First World War. The dramatist expresses hatred for war and war-mongers and a craze for blissful life through peaceful means. In the preface to this play, he tries to find out the maladies of European Society which brought about the war of 1914. According to him, cultured people were mainly responsible for the social deterioration because they idled away their time and indulged in bodily pleasures and comforts.

_The Apple Cart_ (1929), subtitled ‘A Political Extravaganza’, is an important play as it reveals Shaw’s political faith and principles more plainly and vehemently than any other play, he ever wrote. Here, he upsets the apple cart not only of democracy but of royalty also, exposing the unreality of both. He further expresses his ideas regarding dictatorship and finally suggests a positive role for democracy, nourished by the politically trained citizens who will be self-controlled by their consciences. Abolition of nationalism and decentralization of political powers is called for. A full-fledged welfare state is the need of the future. The labour Government is also criticizes as unreal. The dominance of Breakage Ltd (Plutocracy) over government is clearly brought out. Thus, in this play, Shaw criticizes many forms of government and finally declares democratic form as the best one, provided its citizens are politically trained and intellectually advanced. In its preface, the dramatist explains the cause and circumstances, under which he wrote it. Here he discusses in detail the futility of constitutional monarchy, democracy,
dictatorship, bureaucracy and plutocracy. He analyses the definition of democracy and suggests the use of anthropometre in the election of the rulers. This is in addition to some other suitable measures to reform democracy.

Too True to be Good (1931), subtitled ‘A Political Extra-vaganza’ presents a somewhat pessimistic attitude of the dramatist which we note nowhere in any other play. Her dramatist shows the bad effects of capitalistic system not only upon poor persons but also upon the rich people. Moreover, he expresses his views on health, riches, idleness, the army and the meaning of life. He regress that we have outgrown our religion, political system, our own strength of mind and character, Its short preface unfolds a broadcast address, given in 1929 and some of the articles, written by him on democracy.

On The Rocks (1933) is also called by another sub-title as ‘A Political Comedy’. This play spotlights on the mass unemployment, street demonstrations by the unemployed, failure of labour Government in England, opposition by the mass of the people to the centralization of powers, threat of revolt by the people of England, lack of proper leadership, discipline and order. He laughs at the false show, empty promises and order. He laughs at the false show empty promises and actions of the rulers. In the preface, extermination, Christ, penal codes, morality, need of standard religion, toleration, freedom of thought Etc. have been dealt with elaborately. Thus,
the atmosphere of the play as well as of the preface remains concerned in the
main with political thinking.

*The Six of Calais* (1933), having another title ‘A Medieval War Story’, is an anti-romantic farcical play-let. The dramatist laughs at and brings down the king and Queen from their thrones, proving how they are like any other ordinary foolish man and his wife. In its preface, the dramatist states the situation, in which he wrote the drama. Besides, he explains the good qualities of a drama.

In *The Millionaire*ess (1935-36), the dramatist returns to the theme of inequality which issues from poverty and riches and asks what it is that enables an individual to rise from poverty to riches or from obscurity to fame. The last part of the play reveals domestic discussion in which a great variety of subjects from divorce law to international politics etc. is talked about. Its preface is full of political discussion. It is occupied with the discussion of the questions like what we are to do with the bosses, with those people of commanding ability in money making, in politics, in the church and in everything else i.e. the talented individuals. They cannot be liquidated because without them civilization would go to pieces. Even the abolition of private property does not make us free from the tyranny of the talented.

The remedy, suggested by Shaw, lies in the multiplication of talented persons. Besides this, we must also abolish the mass of ignorance, weakness and timidity. In other words, men and women should be sufficiently
educated, intelligent and powerful to check off their rulers, if they are inefficient. For this, Shaw recommends the theory of Creative Evolution.

*Geneva* (1938), renamed as ‘Another political Extravaganzas’, may be treated as farce on an intellectual level. It was originally called as ‘A Fancied Page of History.’ In it, the three dictators are called to the bar of human justice to answer the charges against them at the instance of the international committee for Intellectual Cooperation. The dictators appear before the court and this brings surprise to all. In this play, the different characters represent various principles and attitudes, thrown up by the political upheaval of the 1920’s. Here he finds an opportunity to discuss the functions of the International Court and of the League of Nations. This play contains a lengthy preface, in which war situation has been daily with comprehensively. Statecraft, atom, civilization and democracy, incompetent governments, Hitler, suggestions for the improvements of democracy and the next dangerous discovery etc. are the main topics of discussion in the preface.

In *Good King Charles’s Golden Days* (1939), or ‘A True History That Never Happened’, is a historically high comedy. It was the last political flicker of Shaw’s dying talent. The main purpose of this play was to Reinstate Charles as an intelligent and worthy person. The play is full of sparkling discussion on science, art, religion, kingscraft and the duties of wives and mistresses. Through various characters, the dramatist throws light on the evolutionary instinct, scientific environment, mystical inner light and
unerring insight. Here he forces the reader or audience to think on the problem of leadership and criticizes the systems of government as unsuitable and improper. In the preface, he discusses the stage, chapters of history, Newton’s theory of universe, Charles’ golden days, the future of women in politics and the theory of coupled votes etc.

Thus, in the course of this long life, G.B. Shaw made a great name for himself as a prolific dramatist, by producing various plays, play-lets and puppet plays. Though he was a versatile genius who could excel in many fields, his claim to lasting fame rests mainly on his plays, which are about fifty\textsuperscript{19} in number and are charged with astoundingly multifarious Views and vision. To him, ideas, particularly immoral and heretical\textsuperscript{20} are the effectual incentive to write plays\textsuperscript{21} which reveal a well thought out sociology.\textsuperscript{22} He was the first to treat theatre as the platform and the dramas as a socially influential force for the propagation of his ideas. In the words of A.C. Ward: “Until Bernard Shaw began to write for the theatre, there had been no modern British dramatist who took current social, political and religious problems as subjects for plays,”\textsuperscript{23} which may be taken as classics of English dramas of idea. They are essentially concerned with some burning issues of human life and values.
REFERENCES


4. A.C. Ward, *Barnard Shaw*, p. 188.


13. Ibid. p. 962.


15. The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles; *The Complete Bernard Shaw Plays*, P. 1241.


