Chapter V:

Conclusion
The existence of evil is very old and can be traced back to the beginning of time. It exists in both the worlds -- this world and the other one -- heavenly world. In the earthly world, evil came into existence with the first murder of Abel by Cain; whereas in the other world, it began when Satan encouraged Adam and Eve to defy the God. Evil, like God, is ubiquitous; it persists in some form or the other. And, its basic objective is to disrupt human life, to create chaos and disorder, to aggrandize, appropriate and exploit the innocent, to exercise power, literally and metaphorically.

George Bernard Shaw is against both capitalism and imperialism as they are responsible for creating disorder and imbalance; it creates wars. As a civilized man, Shaw detests cruelty and killing, whether in war or sport. He believes in equality as the only possible means to accomplish the good, to strengthen social association and discipline. Equality, in the real sense of the word, alone brings peace and prosperity on this earth. Shaw belongs to the late Victorian age, but his period is named as Shavian age because he was one of those writers of English who could influence the audience with his powerful writing. Shaw used art as a means to transmit his ideas into word. He described very serious things in a comic manner. According to him, comedy is the best way to deliver the harsh realities of the society and to reveal the different facets truths concerning the problem of society. He was a social reformer and his philosophy lied in his comic art. His was a distinguished voice. In 1952 he won the Nobel Prize for literature for his work which is marked by both idealism and humanism. Shaw is a profound thinker. He sees the truth and reveals it through art which in his opinion is the best vehicle for teaching. He often includes long prefaces and epilogues that explain his views and
strong beliefs. He regards social criticism as the most important function of all arts. Shaw wants to educate his audience and to persuade them that all the problems in society should be seriously viewed and sincere efforts should be made to resolve all the personal and social crises.

His preface and plays, therefore, show his intellectual intensity to trace out the root cause of personal and social evil which finally creates imbalance in the society and causes personal and social disorder. His plays, naturally, therefore, betray his intellectual anguish -- guised in comic vein -- to reform the individual and the society simultaneously. He, thus, believes that artist has to play the role of a reformer. As a reformer, he thinks, a man must work hard to bring about a social change and struggle for a better life. According to him the dramatist has to perform the role of the artist and the preacher as well, using his writings to attack the different kinds of evils prevalent in the society such as economic, political, and social. In his plays, we find that his outlook towards life is different from others. As a social reformer, Shaw dissected slum landlordism, prostitution, marriage, free love, politics, militarism, nationalism, capitalism, and other isms steeped in hypocrisy and deceit. He was a lifelong socialist, vegetarian, and pacifist. His vegetarianism was actuated by a democratic view of species and concern for humanity. He is an important figure in the history of modern socialism. He was a moral revolutionary; his socialism was aimed at transforming the world.

As an artist and also as a social thinker, Shaw envisioned a world in which man, irrespective of class, gender or race, could enjoy absolute freedom, independence and equanimity. He had very sharp and
penetrating vision and could tolerate no evil either in an individual, or social institution. His writing, therefore, is characterized by satire, irony and humor. He unsparingly satirized whenever he discovered or he came across any evil or imbalance. To specify the socio-political problems of his own days, Shaw concludes that there are three categories of men: the immoral men, whose greed drives them to enslave others; the industrious who provide to work force; and the administrators, who because of their exploitative predilections use punishment and not reason. Eventually, one can realize that to create a better form of government, the world needs not new laws but new men, not one hero but many heroes.

Shaw is one of the major playwrights of the world who have addressed themselves to the issues of evil existing in multifarious forms. Sometimes openly and at times acting in unknown and unseen ways. Shaw’s art is distinguished by his highly sensitive intellectual concerns. He has very often asserted the intellectual and social commitment of his art. Each one of his plays, therefore, is linked with certain ideas, ideology and social problems. As an intellectual playwright, Shaw ransacks every nook and corner of the society. He invariably concentrates his creative focus on social, cultural, political and religious institutions.

His plays indicate critical attempts to explore, analyze and even satirize the weakness and short comings of these institutions which finally cause social, economic and even moral problems in society. One can, for sure point out that these flaws, both, on the institutional as well as individual level, can be looked upon as evil. And, evil in any form aims at devastations and disruptions. Evil may have theosophical and theological associations. But for an evil
to be an evil does not need to be seen in theosophical perspective. Evil in the modern era, as Shaw projects it, does exists in the forms of ideologies, industrialization, mechanization of human life and relationships, capitalism, war and war industries and also in exploitative systems which he consistently presented in plays after plays.

Widowers' Houses, for instance, reveals Shaw’s bitter criticism of landlordism. The one who gets benefit from the scientific progress are the capitalists and the owners of the factories whose money and interests increase on account of the wretchedness and miseries of the poor. It is because of this rapid scientific development many social evils appeared and attracted a huge number of social, political and religious organizations. As a result, many political and social vices increased which can be easily observed in the unhealthy slums, workhouses, filthy mines, and dangerous factories. The owners of industries used the individuals to work for their own advancement. They do evil in damaging the society, and exploiting the powerless. The financial circumstances affect man's personality and behavior, as in the case of Sartorius, who changes because of his difficult conditions. We also witness Lickcheese that has to give up his beliefs in order to gain money after he was fired from his job. Finally, we also find him completely changed after becoming rich.

Shaw reveals a remarkable insight into the surreptitious operations of evil that gain control over human psyche, over his sense of discrimination between good and evil. Driven by selfishness, man simply tramples down his own conscience and looks upon his act of exploitation as absolutely right and justified.
Both, Sartorius and his daughter, Blanche, represent this kind of human beings who do not see beyond themselves. Shaw’s exploration of evil, however, does not remain confined to the individuals. His critique explicitly reveals the root cause of social imbalance and proliferation of evil. The men who operate as agents of evil are the characters who oppress and exploit are ultimately the product of the same society. Those who allow themselves to be exploited are equally responsible for their plight. And the reason for their meek submission as Shaw projects, is their acute poverty that renders them helplessly subservient.

In Philanderer we can easily discern Shaw’s attacks on the character of Dr. Paramore, as he is devoid of any kindness towards his patients. He only focuses on disease and his fame, neglecting the humanity which, in fact, deserves more attention. The doctors should take care of their patients more than anything else. It is obvious that in the capitalistic society, the people sacrifice their principals for the sake of achieving their interests. In such corrupt society, there are no idealisms and the people are victims of their financial circumstances.

Moreover, this play attempts a critical analysis of the reality of marriage. It is a very intelligent exposition of women’s dilemma created by the conventions of marriage and married life. This play also displays the tension between the new and conventional notions of life and marriage. The issues of dependency of women and inflated conception of security in marriage are intelligently addressed here. At the same time the outer side of the marriage is also taken into account and that issue is the issue of the woman’s independence and her identity as was taken up by Ibsen in Doll’s
House. The marriage surely grants security to a woman but takes way her absolute independence and freedom.

Left to herself without man, woman is also a victim of the male dominated socially. In order to meet both her ends, she is helplessly thrown to trade her own flesh. Prostitution, therefore, is one of the most obnoxious dimension of society that Shaw attacks in his play Mrs. Warren’s Profession. There is one more aspects of this evil Shaw takes up in this play. And it is woman’s desire for comfort and coziness that drives her to this shameful act. In this play Shaw discusses the problem of prostitution from a socialist and feminist perspective, pointing out that most women in capitalist society prefer to be prostitutes, than to work in a factory which exert strain due to long hours of working. It also grants them an opportunity to avoid bad treatment. Furthermore, unless class oppression ends, it is unlikely that poor women will resist the temptation to become prostitutes. This play does not solve all the problems and leaves the choice to the audience and the readers. Shaw's plays satirically expose the capitalistic society in which dreadful evils such as prostitution and exploitation exists. It is world where morality is simply abandoned. These horrifying evils create misery, sadness, suffering and even death; thus its basic goal is to annihilate humanity. So it is very necessary to reform society in a way that all its individuals live a joyful life. Though this is impossible but one should and must use all the legal and possible means to achieve this noble aim.

Shaw continues his critical and realistic stance in The Doctor’s Dilemma. This play on the one hand reveals the precarious medical conditions against, ironically, British drive for health and hygiene. On the other hand, the play also reveals Shaw’s bitter attack on the
degradation of the noble profession of medicine. Ridgeon’s killing of Jennifer’s husband, Dubechat, one can easily say, exhibits the height of corruption, selfishness, lust and lasciviousness. The social solution of the medical problem depends on socialism. Until the medical profession becomes a body of men trained and paid by the country to keep it in health, it will remain a conspiracy to exploit popular credulity and human suffering.

Shaw also discovers evil that has entered even the sacred institutions like religion. He focuses critical attention on how corruption prevails in the institution of religion. In *Saint Joan*, for instance, he satirically brings out how greed for power and position has gravely damaged human dignity and the sacred domains of the church.

Greed, lust for power and political manipulations are yet other social evils that give ways to conflicts, confrontations and finally wars. Shaw, therefore, has written series of plays that deal with the designs of wars, evils of wars like death, destruction and annihilation. For Shaw war is not a gruesome reality that exists alone or in isolation. It is, in fact, linked with several social, political and economic issues that provide soil for war. Victorian era, for instance, had witnessed many scientific inventions which finally led to the production of deadly weapons used and utilized in wars. War has also been an industry, which leads to proliferation of other allied industries. Producing and providing defective and second rate material during the war and minting money out of such a situation is a matter that should, in fact, put entire humanity to shame. In *Major Barbara*, Undershft, the protagonist’s father himself is a capitalist who makes money out of
war. Major Barbara though tries to save the souls of the people, her sincere efforts and moral strivings end in smoke against the over shadowing capitalist skies.

Arms and the Man establishes that Shaw dislikes glorifying war and he wants people to be aware of the terrible aftermath of war. He employs irony as a very effective weapon to devastate the romantic notions of war. Raina in this play adores her fiancé Sergius because he emerges as a hero from the war. Heroes are adored for their bravery, courage and their ability to defy death, that is, however, ultimately discovered by Raina that it is not bravery and courage that have won the war for Sergius and others, it is the second rate arms and ammunitions of the enemy which had brought defeat upon them. It is in fact a double edged attack of Shaw, both on those who glorify war and also on those who appear to be victorious. Annihilation is the final outcome of any war.

The evils of war keep igniting Shaw’s creative vision and he further takes up this disconcerting evil in the other plays like The Heartbreak House. Captain Shotover after his retirement does not seem to have come out of the illusion of war. For him war still continues to be a source of making money. The issues of war, however are intermingled with the problems of a woman’s dream, her desire and expectations, which are continually thwarted by the male dominated world infected with evils of domination and corruption. In this play, Shaw wants to wake up the people from their disinterested dream in order to see the stupidity of war and change the wrong way of their life; as for him war is a tragedy that will ruin the world. He also discloses his view about marriage which he regards as a trade choice, like Ellie who wants to marry Boss Mangan just to escape
from her poverty. Both Hasting Utterword and Boss Mangan are not
good to rule as they are obsessed with their personal benefits which can
be achieved through war only. In this play Shaw also exposes spiritual
bankruptcy of the entire generation. Though he diagnoses the social
evils that harm human being and his society, he never offers any
solution as he needs the people to think about it.

The evils pertaining to hypocrisy, shrewdness and false
display of faith are taken up in *The Devil’s Disciple* as he had also
dramatized in *Saint Joan*. False display of goodness is no assurance
of one’s religiosity. It is absolute faith, disinterested love and
concern for well being of fellow being that makes one a true human
being.

So far as the projection of social evil in *Pygmalion* is
concerned, it can be said that this theme is continued in this play at
a subterranean level. On the obvious level, it is a transformation
play. That one can transform oneself into a very noble and
noticeable person from the position of an ignoble and ignored.
Poverty and illiteracy as in many other plays of Shaw, continues to
be a dominant theme of evil in this play also. The play pokes fun at
the morality and superficiality of upper class. It reflects the social ills of
nineteenth century England, and attests that all people are worthy of
respect and dignity. This play discusses the importance of education
especially for woman in order to be independent from man. Also it
shows how the people are attracted easily towards false
appearances. At the end of the play Eliza does not return to Higgins,
for Shaw this end symbolized women’s refusal to serve merely as a tool
to men.
Shaw’s entire body of dramatic and non-dramatic discourses reveal that as an intellectual playwright, Shaw is invariably committed to amelioration and betterment of human life. He believes in absolute freedom of man and envisages a society in which justice, equality, peace and love prevails. His devastating attack on capitalism and its pervasiveness working in different shapes and forms in human society and psyche attributes him certain intellectual qualities that define social transformative philosophies and ideologies. The subject, that is the subject of social evil, with which he is intensely concerned, is highly tragic and saddening. Shaw however takes a recourse to irony, humor and satire to dramatize the central issues of social and personal evil. Wit, humor and irony, in fact, are the most important aspects of his plays and also of his intellectual writings. It is because of these devices, his realistic presentation of acute poverty, sufferings and social issues do not get lapsed into drab naturalistic kind of presentation. His dialogues are written in very simple, direct and lucid prose. The simplicity, lucidity and directness of his language attribute a musical cadence to his dialogues.

Shaw is not a political theorist of note. Though his work is usually associated with political theory, this natural domain was more that of an argument. Controversy more than contemplation excited him for reform. The range and variety of his work, its multiplicity of interests and colours, and his memorable characters entitle him as a preacher and finds a definite and permanent place in the English drama. His plays will always hold a prominent place in literature. Shaw’s plays very clearly show his position against social Darwinism that is often justified by a brutal struggle for
domination. We can also very clearly understand that Shaw firmly
stands against war, especially the wars waged for supremacy and
control over power and people. He has, as we have already seen,
microscopically delineated not only the after effects of wars, but
also the basic motives behind the wars. He has also masterfully
delineated the evils of war in terms of interpersonal and social
relationships. Shaw’s anti-capitalistic and anti-imperialistic stance
brings him much closer to the literary and intellectual discourses
produced all over the globe.
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