

CONCLUSION

England was the last country, so to say, in Europe to produce the modern "Drama of Ideas". It was due not so much to the lack of native tradition, but particularly to the failure of the theatre-going public as well as the readers and the critics to appreciate the modern tendency. They were brought up under the tradition of the so called "Well made Play" and the plays of Shakespeare - as Henry Irving interpreted them - and this made it difficult for them to appreciate and accept the "Drama of Ideas" which was struggling to be born. The Victorian people for all their love for truth, could not accept the unpalatable truth, shrinking with pious horror from anything that shocked their traditional beliefs and attitudes. The new ideas which were in the air were most unconventional and so the Victorian votaries of truth and beauty failed to accord welcome to the plays which used these ideas as their themes. It is true, as I have maintained, that the modern "Drama of Ideas" developed in England as much out of Ibsen's influence as of the native source of Robertson, Pinero and Jones. But the pace of development was slow, England falling behind Norway or Sweden. It was not until the publication of The Widowers' Houses that the "Drama of Ideas" as an art form had the real beginning in England.

This point has to be further clarified. Shaw

claimed to have written his first play before he learnt of Ibsen. Still we can hardly deny the fact that the real impetus for the growth and development of the genre came from Ibsen. Shaw's claim in no way minimises the importance of the influence of the Norwegian dramatist. Again, the obvious influence of Ibsen does not materially alter the fact that, as noted already, The Widowers' Houses marks the real beginning of the "Drama of Ideas" in England; neither does it change the fact that in Bernard Shaw the type found its first champion in England. This may be asserted even after granting the deserving credit to Robertson and Pinero, and particularly to Jones. I have discussed quite at length how Shaw had to struggle ceaselessly to banish the "Well-made Play" in order to have the "Drama of Ideas" established with all its unconventional moral attitudes; how he fought, with the same end in view, to break - not successfully, though - the idol that is Shakespeare. From this point of view Shaw is to be regarded not simply as a man and a dramatist but as a phenomenon of historical importance.

Before Bernard Shaw the "Play of Ideas" had received no firm footing in the soil of England. The commendable efforts, of which we cannot be oblivious, of Robertson, Peniro and Jones could not establish this genre as an art form. It was because none of them could dramatize like Ibsen the ideas which were inwardly reverberating all

1. Masters of the Drama- John Gassner. Dover Publications Inc. P 616.

around; they remained, in the ultimate analysis, the followers of the drawing room melodramas. They could not come out of or ignore the influence of Scribe and Sardou. The credit should, therefore, go to Bernard Shaw for establishing the genre in a conservative England and, in so doing, for ransacking almost the whole field of current thoughts. He fought in his capacity both as a dramatist and a dramatic critic. He was, like Ibsen, a man of varied ideas on man and society, on man as he is and as he , according to his notion, ought to be. It would not be correct to claim that Shaw was always ahead of his time; more often than not he dramatized the ideas flowing like an undercurrent in his own time. The difference between Shaw and most of his contemporaries was that while he had the eyes to "see" those ideas, they had not; and even if they had, they did not dare antagonize the popular taste. This comment does not put Shaw and Ibsen, as dramatists, at par. The difference, among the rest, between the two is that while Ibsen is content to pose a question and enunciate his ideas by giving them dramatic body and form, Shaw is prone to giving a solution to the problems according to his own judgement.

Our concern is not, however, with the truth and validity or otherwise of Shaw's ideas, but with the fact that, first, he was a man of ideas some of whose ideas may be antipathetic to us and, secondly, he dramatized these ideas. It is not sufficient to say that the idea itself does not matter if its expression is moving and impressive,

because it is difficult to separate ideas from their expression. In the hands of the great artists ideas are often transformed and may lose their identity; an idea changes into a poetic statement which we can appreciate and even accept whatever our ideas and beliefs may be. Shaw is a playwright with a sense of purpose, but as an artist he does not always allow the purpose to become too obvious. He allows the characters to speak out their opposing views, for he knows that each of them has something worthwhile to say which is at the same time dramatically important. The "idea" that comes out at the end of a Shavian play, the "idea" which is examined and tested by the different characters, appears as a poetic statement before the theatre-goer or the reader. Sometimes the ideas in a Shaw-play lose their identities, for instance, in Saint Joan, Heartbreak House and Candida because neither Joan nor Captain Shotover nor Candida appears only as animated ideas.

The overall picture of Bernard Shaw that emerges from his plays, as discussed earlier under different heads, is that of a revolting son of the middle class attacking the moralities and conventions of that class - a quality which was rather absent in Pinero and Jones, but was conspicuously present in Ibsen. Thus inspite of the differences between Ibsen and Shaw, the latter obviously discovered his soul's mate in the former and so championed him as the pioneer of the modern "Drama of Ideas". While this is essentially true, we must not, however, let pass by what Shaw must have learnt

from the questioning and doubting spirit of Charles Dickens, who, after passing through the various stages of mental growth, finally came to reject the past and never hesitated to use the novel as the vehicle of ideas.

It is essential to put Shaw in the correct place through a more clear understanding of his connection or relation with Ibsen. Bernard Shaw recognized and even enjoyed the relation between Ibsen and the aesthetic ideals of the "Well-made Play" and its surface which is claimed to be true-to-life. It is Ibsen, so found Shaw, who converted these ideals to the purposes of a drama that is essentially critical of the social and moral conventions. This recognition and finding of Shaw made him a staunch champion of Ibsen; it helped him to discover in Ibsen the greatest exponent of the "Play of Ideas" and a dramatist of tremendous power.

In Ibsen's A Doll's House the tension depends on the attitudes of the audience and the characters; in this play these attitudes are the very things that are brought under searching questions. In the construction of the play Ibsen deliberately uses the machinery of the "Well-made Play". This he does cleverly to implicate the audience and then exploits the expectations of this conventionally tutored audience in the shock of the last scene when Nora goes out with a bang, not with a whimper. The audience then finds itself at a loss discovering that there can be no reconciliation between the husband and the wife - sentimental reconciliation generally found in the denouement

of the "Well-made Play" -- though there is nothing in the construction of the plot to work as a hindrance to such an end. Thus in A Doll's House the machinery of the "Well-made Play" breaks down with all its artificiality of plot and conventional morality. Conventional morality in particular stands fully exposed; the audience recognizes it to be sentimental and unnatural. A Doll's House offended its first audience. But the offence it gave was not simply moral; the aesthetic offence it gave to the theatre-goers and critics was of equal importance and was not less deep. In his earlier plays Bernard Shaw also gave similar offence and it may legitimately be asserted that the effectiveness of the shock achieved in A Doll's House gave Shaw the cue. These plays of Shaw -- with the possible exception of The Widowers' Houses -- may be looked upon as direct imitations of the technique of the Norwegian dramatist. Take, for instance, Arms and the Man. Technically it imitates the machinery of the "Well-made Play", but the play is a continuous exploitation and exposure of the conventions of romance. The man who seems to be the hero from the conventional point of view is ultimately only laughed at; the grandeur of the hero of Slivnitza is paled into insignificance and is rendered ridiculous and he is likened to Don Quixote. That Raina and Sergius are not reconciled and united through some sentimental scene is almost as shocking as the failure of Nora and her husband to embrace each other in sentimental reconciliation at the end. The

audience, here too, recognizes that there could be no reconciliation between Raina and Sergius though the construction of the play was not an obstacle. The union between Sergius and Louka is also not less shocking to the conventionally educated audience.

William Archer wrote, "If I were asked to lay my hand on a single English play which was obviously imitated from or directly influenced by Ibsen, I should not know where to turn. Mr. Bernard Shaw was, of course, his doughtiest champion and in some sense his disciple; but as for imitating him - well, I can only say I wish he had¹". The relation between Ibsen and Shaw is not readily apparent, as this comment of William Archer demonstrates. In general methods no less in particular qualities the two dramatists seem to be very much distinct. In the dramatic method of Shaw we can see the influence of Aristophanes, Moliere, and Dickens; it would be completely wrong to maintain that Bernard Shaw was an exact replica of Henrich Ibsen, inspite of the former's unbounded praise for the latter. And yet the relationship between Ibsen and Shaw seems to be fundamental. It is not in the question of dramaturgy simply that this kinship is seen. The drama which was current in the late nineteenth century - drama written in the naturalistic tradition, and in line of the so called "Well-made Play" - was the conventional drama in Shaw's definition. This type of drama was written with popularly accepted, conventional

1. Old Drama and the New - William Archer. P 307

attitudes about man and society and man in society as its background. However, in some of the "new plays" which were inspired by Ibsen, "the drama arises", as Bernard Shaw noted, "through a conflict of unsettled ideals rather than through vulgar attachments, rapacities, generosities, resentments, ambitions, misunderstandings, oddities and so forth as to which no moral question is raised. The conflict is not between clear right and wrong; the villain is as conscientious as the hero, if not more so; in fact, the question which makes the play interesting (when it is interesting) is which is the villain and which the hero. Or, to put it in another way, there are no villains and no heroes".¹ This is Shaw's characterisation of the essential quality of the "new play", of the plays of Ibsen; and this characterisation suits his own plays not the less.

But the plays of Ibsen, which were very much unpopular and yet widely publicized, were not the only things which could be drawn upon in the interests, in the English theatre, of a drama that was so much critical of the conventional attitudes. Much of what is there in the conventionality of the drawing-room melodrama and the "Well-made Play" of the nineties of the last century, stemmed from the simplicity of its desire to amuse and entertain the audience. But as Shaw observed in the Preface to The Plays for Puritans, "the rich purchasing-powerful Englishman

1. The Quintessence of Ibsenism - Bernard Shaw. Constable & Co. Ltd. 1913, P 194.

prefers politics and church-going¹. It may be said, therefore, that such a spectator will scarcely support a drama which is merely voluptuous precisely because pleasures derived from voluptuousness is not enough for this man. "From the plays of ideas - and the drama can never be anything more - he demands edification and will not pay for anything else in that arena"². While the assertion made in this line is characteristically Shavian, the fact behind it cannot be just overlooked. The fact is long before the impact of Ibsen made itself felt and distinct, there was an almost latent strain of edification and didacticism in the English drama. Comedy and melodrama of the nineteenth century were likely to give vent to didactic tendencies, and this too, openly. The simple formulae of innocence which is unjustly burdened with calumny and the ultimate vindication and triumph of this innocence; virtue which is thrown overboard by wickedness, but wickedness which is at long last defeated and exposed brought the conventional drawing-room melodrama quite close to the old morality play. But a play which only dramatized the eternal fight between right and wrong, good and evil or a play which urged a spectator to reform himself, could not make itself endeared. Edification might be there, but it had to be only in the second place; the seal of success with the audience and the acceptability of the play depended primarily on whether the play upheld

1. Preface to The Plays for Puritans - The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw'. Paul Hamlyn Ltd. 1965. P 737.

2. Ibid. p 737.

conventional morality. The surest guarantee of popular success was to accept the popular canons of the society. Something about what Shaw called the "blue-book play" needs also be said here. In these plays the edifying, didactic strain is mixed up with critical analysis. These plays dealt with social conditions and established convictions. But in these plays, too, it is evident that the dramatic value is not dependent on the depth or otherwise of the critical analysis of social problems; rather it depended on their compatibility with conventional outlook. There was surely an audience who might come to the theatre to be edified and taught. But the fact remains that the ordinary play-goers liked - and still like - the play which was unnatural and morally fraudulent. Shaw says, "This, however, produces the happy result that the dramatic poets, who are all incorrigible moralists and preachers, are forced to produce plays of extra-ordinary interest in order to induce our audiences of shirkers, and dreamers to swallow the pill" .¹ Shaw's own practice is to combine edification with a comedy in which the conventional institutions and attitudes are the butt of the joke. The result is a play "in which the fun relieves the spectator of an immediate obligation to damn or say 'Amen'".²

1. Music in London III - Bernard Shaw P 139 (as in George Bernard Shaw ; Man of the Century Vol I- A. Henderson. Appleton- Century-Crofts Inc. 1956.)

2. Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theatre - Martin Meisel. Oxford University Press, 1963. P 91.

It is to be borne in mind, however, that the arrival of G.B.S., as he is popularly known, in the field of drama would have become difficult and even almost impossible had the condition of the then English society been different. All the influences of Ibsen and Dickens would have gone unused and unrealized if Shaw had not been taught in the school of the then society with all its disturbing and uncomfortable currents of thoughts. It would not indeed be impossible to ape Ibsen, but to create anything great by aping the methods and attitudes of another writer without experiencing personally the like feelings and without knowing the truth about the society is an impossibility. Shaw did not have what Jacques Barzun calls the "routine mind"¹. He was, at bottom, an observer always looking askance at the established canons of the society with which was happily coupled his highly imaginative mind. He understood correctly that Pinero and Jones, whatever their merits as dramatists might be, were not essentially men of ideas and neither of them could stand up to dramatize the ideas current in the society; neither could they reject the moral standard of the Victorian Period. Shaw was in the midst of the intellectual whirlpool of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, always responding to the ideas current among the intellectual few. While Pinero and Jones always belonged to

1. Bernard Shaw in Twilight - Jacques Barzun. G.B.S. : A Critical Survey. Ed. Louis Kronenberger. The World Publishing Co. 1953. P 161.

the majority, Shaw always belonged to the minority. He read Ibsen with a spirit of rejection of the Victorian moral world and naturally found in Ibsen a near kin. He had his ideas about the society - and this is affirmed by his novels - even before he had been formally introduced to Ibsen. The protesting and doubting spirit of Ibsen of course strengthened Shaw's own spirit of protesting and doubting. He upheld admiringly what he thought to be the views of Ibsen, and in so doing upheld his own views.

That Shaw did not have a "routine mind" is at once vindicated by his method of work and rich imaginative faculty. Shaw's plays give the impression of his great creative powers working in a spontaneous unity. We can well believe that when he told Ellen Terry that "Art is one and indivisible"¹ he was expressing a general truth about the method of his work. The component elements of a Shavian play viz. the theme, characterisation, stagecraft, dialogue etc. grew into one natural whole which has no mark upon it of being created deliberately. Shaw himself declared, "A play grows in my mind and I put it on paper. I do not know how or why. The funny thing is that it sometimes strikes me, when I see an early play of my own, that it looks as if I had elaborately constructed it."² This observation of Shaw

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1. George Bernard Shaw : Man of the Century, Vol II - A Henderson Appleton Century Croft. 1956, P 682
 2. "How Shaw Writes his Plays", Sheffield Daily Telegraph, August 15, 1934. (As in G.B.S.: Man of the Century -- A Henderson Vol II. Appleton Century Croft. 1956, P 748).

counters his declared intention of deliberately writing to make the people accept his opinions. This intention, if put to real practice, would only retard and adversely affect his creative mind and would not allow him to let the plays shape themselves. True it is that his opinions about politics, economics, religion etc., that is, his ideas never cease to form an important part of his dramatic works; true it is, also, that in a "Play of Ideas" the ideas are used chiefly for their own sakes, but they in no way distract our attention from the dramatic artist that is Bernard Shaw.

The plays of Shaw, like those of Ibsen, but unlike those of Pinero and Jones, are works of highly developed imagination. But the early critics of Shaw tried to persuade themselves that Shaw was merely a realist taking raw slices of life for his dramas, and so they failed to discover any "imagination" in his dramatic works. By and large the "realists" of the time were obsessed with the sordid and painful aspects of life. They were not creative artists; the "real life" did not serve the realists of the nineties of the last century as the starting point for "imagination". In the Preface to Plays Unpleasant Shaw says, "Not that I lacked the dramatist's gift. As far as that is concerned I have encountered no limit but my laziness to my power of conjuring up imaginary people in imaginary places and finding pretexts for theatrical scenes between them. But to obtain a livelihood by this insane gift, I must have conjured so as to interest not only my

imagination but that of at least seventy or a hundred thousand contemporary London playgoers¹". The difficulty in doing this was great, but Shaw overcame it by stimulating the imagination of the public to enjoy what he gave them in terms of his own imagination. His method was not the "schooling his imagination"² to supply the public what they demanded. The result of the efforts of Shaw was that within a matter of years he got a public with an enlarged mind and improved taste, not satisfied only with the conventional artificiality of construction and morality. A Bernard Shaw who would put together serious stuff and laughter and fun did not appear repugnant to the new theatre-goers.

Right from the beginning of his literary career Shaw started attacking the popular "Well-made Play" and Shakespeare simultaneously and in both the cases the attack, though ruthless, was well-thought out and loaded with ore. This attack was directed, neither against the former nor against the latter, with malice or without calculation. The sole aim in both the cases as I have shown was to have the ground prepared for the "Play of Ideas" to be accepted by the public. Both the "Well-made Play" and Shakespeare - particularly Shakespeare - were two very powerful institutions; bardolatry was almost the run of the day. These two institutions had to be demolished in order to

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1. Preface to Plays Unpleasant. The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw. Paul Hamlyn Ltd. 1965. P. 716
 2. Bernard Shaw - A.C.Ward. Longmans, Greene & Co. Ltd. 1951. P 53

usher in the era of the "Play of Ideas". This attack directed against the "Well-made Play" and Shakespeare naturally faced strong opposition from the critics and the practising playwrights alike, but the opposition could scarcely dampen the zeal of Shaw. Almost single handed, in the figure of a dramatic critic and a playwright, he carried on the fight for the "Drama of Ideas". It is to be borne in mind, however, that he himself sometimes used the tricks - I have shown it in the chapter on Shaw's dramatic technique and treatment of theme - of the "Well-made Play" with the difference that his aim was not to construct a play skilfully. The plays of Shaw save for a few exceptions, are, nevertheless, nicely constructed; there is the sign of an effortlessness in the construction. Again, despite his attempt to demolish the idol that was Shakespeare, Shaw was not all against Shakespeare. There was none in his own time who had a better ear for Shakespeare's word-music, the influence of which is all too obvious in the dramatic works of Shaw himself. Shaw was well aware of the dramatic genius of Shakespeare and was all against any "cut" in Shakespeare-production.

Whatever the depth of his ideas may be, Bernard Shaw is always serious. But being a comic artist in the first place, he does not fight shy of making jokes even with his serious stuff. This is evident from his technique of putting the anti-climax almost on the head of the climax as in that famous scene in Man and Superman where Tanner congratulates Violet for having responded to the call of

the Life Force to bear child without being legitimately wedded only to be told that Violet is already lawfully married to Victor Malone according to the notions of middle-class respectability. Shaw puts the serious and the ordinary not alternately but simultaneously, mixing the two and leading the public to doubt whether he is serious at all. This difficulty we face in Aristophanes too. The techniques of the two playwrights, who are separated from each other by over two thousand years, seem to be quite close to each other's - it is the technique of writing comedy with a spirit of protesting and attacking, always with a serious purpose. But both the playwrights are witty and their tremendous wit often stood as obstacles on their way to reaching poetic heights. The lengthy discussion in which the "action" in a Shavian play lies remind us of the primitive dramaturgy and the debates in the plays of Euripides. The plays of Euripides, more than those of his contemporaries and rivals, Sophocles and Aeschylus, abound in debates which tend to turn the stage into a debating room. The same thing is said of the plays of Bernard Shaw in which two or more characters discuss various problems and express conflicting ideas, sometimes endlessly. Here we may remind ourselves of the dialogues of Plato.

Bernard Shaw was serious about the social problems and philosophical speculations current in his own days and he found them good subjects to write his plays with. Though

highly imaginative, his imagination did not dwindle into sentimentalism. His plays only have a semblance of reality; the situations are rather fantastic. The aim of the playwright, it seems to me, was not to expound a body of systematic thought, but to create plays with ideas rather than with characters and situations. It is for this that his plays appeared to be "not plays" to the critics and readers who were brought up under the influence of Shakespeare and the "Well-made Play". The solutions Shaw has given to various problems, social, political, or philosophical, are, more often than not, untenable; his ideas about Creative Evolution cannot stand the test of scientific queries or analyses. This at once blasts the popularly held view that Shaw is primarily a philosopher. But the credit of Shaw lies in the fact that he dramatized almost all sorts of ideas current in his day without taking any theory or body of thought to be the final and infallible answer to social, political, or philosophical problems. It is true that in play after play he dealt with the concept of Creative Evolution, but it was primarily because he found it to be an enchanting "idea", worthy to be dramatized. Further, his own faith - if at all it is admitted that he has such a faith - in Creative Evolution may also have seen a decline as it becomes evident from what he put in the mouth of the preacher-burglar at the end of Too True to be Good. Shaw, who knew that there was always a "beyond" (the last speech of Lilith at the end of Back to Methuselah) could not have accepted any particular system of thought as infallible.

Though as a young man Shaw was enchanted by Karl Marx, he never actually became a Marxist or a Scientific Socialist. Though he was all praise for the Soviet Union and Lenin, he did not cut himself off from the fold of the Fabian Socialists. His praise for the great Soviet leader as well as for the fascist leaders like Hitler and Mussolini may be interpreted as a unique expression of his praise for the "great man" on whom, he thought, the hope for mankind depended. It may be said that if Shaw had written a play on Stalin or Hitler he would have turned him into another Caesar - strong because free from human passions and sentiments. Shaw had little faith in Democracy as it is practised in the West. But the greatest enemy of man, the greatest obstacle on his way to happiness and peace, according to Shaw, is Capitalism which makes some people grow from rich to richer condemning the vast majority to a life of poverty and degradation. But he was never sentimental about poverty and the poor and considered poverty as the supreme crime because it fathers forth all other crimes; and so poverty has to be eradicated. But we may legitimately say, even after discovering the socialist bent of Shaw's mind, that his mental development was not caused by his reading of Marx only, but by his reading of Wagner, Shakespeare, and Dickens. He was at bottom a mixture of Moliere, Dickens, and Euripedes with Marx colouring his intellect and Wagner and William Butler his imagination.

Shaw is a satirist, possibly the greatest satirist

of the twentieth century, always attacking the sham and the low and the ugly without compromise. The spirit of his satire is intellectual slum-clearance. In almost all his plays he launches attacks on and exposes hypocrisy of the so-called moral people who fight shy of discomforting and inconvenient truth. But the prime subject of his satire is Capitalism which makes truly moral life impossible. According to him, even religion, which he takes to be one of the most essential things in life, becomes impossible under the heavy weight of Capitalism, in as much as religious institutions, as shown in Major Barbara also have to depend for their very existence on the money of the have-and-holders. Capitalism condemns the larger section of the society to live in abject poverty, which, in its turn, begets all sorts of corruption and ugliness. This means that, according to Shaw, poverty has to be eradicated, that is, Capitalism as a system has to go to make life worth living. When Shaw found that the Soviet Union under the communist leaders was taking positive steps towards eradication of poverty and exploitation, he became very enthusiastic about the Soviet system.

It does not need explanation that Shaw had a clear knowledge of the degraded condition of modern life; all his dramas testify to this. The condition of man in the modern world with all his hypocrisies is most beautifully discussed by the Devil in the famous hell-scene in Man and Superman. Whether it is The Widowers' Houses or On the

Rocks or Too True to be Good - all the plays of Shaw draw our attention pointedly to what man and his environment have come to be, and how man, through his folly and ignorance, has brought the human race to the edge of a precipice. But this knowledge of the facts of life has not turned Shaw into a hater of Life. Shaw is not a shirker; he faced life, like Shakespeare, squarely, and instead of rejecting it, he glorified it with the hope that only man could change the present killing condition. Shaw pinned his faith in the power of the will, not in the power of some supernatural and external being to bring about desired changes in human life. Through the pictures of the "great man" of his conception, he voiced the hope for the whole mankind - what man could well become if he would only will and will hard. The Ancients of the last play of the pentateuch Back to Methuselah are the developed and matured versions of his Caesar. In spite of his acute sense of the horrors of the present condition of human life, rejection of life remains a thing entirely out of the mental ken of Shaw who would never put "Out, out. brief Candle" or any such utterance in the mouth of any of his characters which might signify rejection of life. Barbara's "My God, why hast thou forsaken me" has been turned ultimately into an acceptance of life when she finds a new faith; Joan's agonised last cry only speaks of her anguish, but she also obliquely expresses her faith that the earth shall one day be ready to receive God's saints, Shaw tries to find whatever hope he can even in the present condition. All his

chief characters pin their faith in acceptance of Life and in the upward struggle of Life to reach higher levels of existence and consciousness.

Shaw has come to look at man as he is - a miserable failure and a pot-boiler, but he never gives the impression of hating man. Being a man of ideas, Shaw used various themes in his plays - political, social, and philosophical - all important to man under the background of his present situation. This shows that man was never out of his mind though he did not write dramas with characters and situations. While attacking the established institutions he particularly pointed out that these institutions do not allow a man to understand his real self; rather condemn him to conventional do's and dont's. While attacking the social customs he laid emphasis on human conscience which is the theme of many of his plays of both the earlier and the later phases. The theme of conscience is seen in the "social", "political" as well as "philosophical" plays of Shaw. In the plays like The Widowers' Houses, Major Barbara, and Too True to be Good it is Conscience which is the guiding force. This is even more so in the case of Saint Joan in which the voices and visions are nothing but the Conscience of Joan speaking to her and directing her actions; it gives her an inner strength with which she can defy the power of the churchmen'. Shaw's concern for Socialism is yet another illustration of his love and concern for man. For Shaw, the end of all endeavour is "good life", a perfectly humane

way of living, thinking and behaving which Capitalism can only thwart.

Shaw is primarily and essentially a religious man, if religion means to carry on the war against ugliness, injustice, and sham, and to sing the glory of life - precisely the works of Jesus Christ. Shaw had little faith in conventional religious practices and would fain attack, as he actually did, the established religious institutions. He painfully realized that the wave of religion was often thwarted by the established religious institutions headed by conventionally tutored priests. But as an artist Shaw was objective enough to understand that the priests also might have their own say and they could not go against the accepted beliefs and canons. Cauchon in Saint Joan is not a villain because he acted according to his own light and the bidding of the faith of his own Church which could not tolerate an individual's direct relation with God. The mind of Shaw was surprisingly free from the popular delusions, superstitions, and prejudices. It is for this that none of his characters is loathsome; there is no villain in the plays of Shaw. We laugh at the weaknesses and follies of the characters, but we do not look down upon them with contempt. It is because Shaw believes in the essential goodness of man that he does not portray the character of a villain. Being essentially a religious man Shaw understands the religious characters well and his portrayal of religious characters is unrivalled in the twentieth century literature.

It would be wrong to presume that there is no excitement in a Shavian 'Play of Ideas'. While judging a Shaw-play we would do well to notice that the dramatist transferred the conflict in the play from the physical to the mental level. If conflict necessarily implies a clash involving violent physical action, it cannot certainly be found in a Shavian play. But the mental action, which is the life-breath of a Shavian play- and also of the "Play of Ideas" - may be intensely exciting. The discovery of the way to happiness made by Marchbanks in Candida and the loss of faith and the eventual return of faith of Barbara in Major Barbara are the striking illustrations of mental excitement. It is to be borne in mind that in a "Play of Ideas" there is an inwardness wherein there is little room for physical conflict. There is moral passion in Shaw's plays - moral passion which is a substitute for physical and sensual passion. A Tanner or a Father Kegaan is quite passionate, but this passion is moral and intellectual and spiritual having nothing to do with physical and sensual passions.

William Archer is reported to have said to Archibald Henderson that Shaw's "method is individual and unique, and will die with him His influence on the drama has been nil".¹ Though we have noted that Shaw's] methods are not entirely original, the overall impression is of a uniqueness which cannot be achieved by simply putting

1. As in George Bernard Shaw : Man of the Century . Vol II. Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc. N.Y.1956. P 854.

the serious and the ludicrous simultaneously or by being⁵ brilliantly witty. It is for this that Shaw, like Shakespeare, is an unsafe model¹. The comic bent of Shaw's mind, which is rich with ideas, coupled with his capacity for cool calculation begot a form of drama the exact like of which has not been seen before or since. All his plays are delightful and this delight issues forth from intellectual passion as well as slapstick fun. But it is not possible to create the same effect of delight by merely putting some funny incidents in a play dealing with social, political, or philosophical ideas. It is natural, therefore, that though dramas of the particular genre have been written after Shaw, there is no real follower of Shaw; there is no Shavian school of dramatists. Only Granville-Barker and St. John Hankin tried their hands in the "Play of Ideas" in the Shavian manner, but the result is not always very Shavian. It is true that St. John Hankin has a mind which is quite akin to Shaw's and he has been able to make a nearer approach to a Shavian play than any one else in The Last of the De Mullins. In this play the mother of an illegitimate child refuses to marry its father because he wants to live up to the code of "honour"; it reminds us of the case of Alfred Doolittle in Pygmalion who, much against his will, has to marry the woman he lives with to live up to the standard of middle class morality. But The Last of the De Mullins does not have the same delight and the same solidity

1. The view that Shakespeare is an unsafe model has been held by Matthew Arnold.

of thought that sustain a typical Shavian play. More, St. John Hankin has a cynicism which is absent in Shaw. He, like Granville-Barker, fails in the qualities which go together to give life to a Shavian play: artistic temperament and classical execution. When all their dramatic works are taken together, it seems, however, that not St. John Hankin but Granville-Barker who is the most devoted disciple of Shaw. This view is vindicated by what he has accomplished in Waste and The Madras House. All these plays are Shavian; particularly the last named one with its lightness of treatment and weight of thought is an important play of ideas written in the Shavian manner. But it seems that Barker's appeal to the intellect is quite cool and that the plots of his plays are contrived rather than natural growth. Other than Barker and St. John Hankin we do not have any other dramatist in England who might be called 'Shavian' and the simple reason is that Shaw as a model is unsafe. The Shavian "Play of Ideas" began with Bernard Shaw and virtually ended with him.