

Problems and Emotions in Pygmalion by Bernard Shaw

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Abstract- Pygmalion is one of the well-known plays of George Bernard Shaw. The Cockney vernacular of Eliza creates crisis in her life. Shaw's Pygmalion is which deals with throes and sufferings of Eliza's enunciation and mostly the love of Eliza was not familiar by Higgins. Pygmalion is essentially a feel of love but the major part revolves around problems, which discusses about love then class prejudice and finally leads to a unhappy ending. The love of a flower girl Eliza had been devastated by the rude Higgins. Although Shaw called this play as 'romance' it is actually a trouble play. It presents two problems. The first is the problem of education, and the second is the problem of the sounds of the English Literature.

Index Terms- Cockney, throes, prejudice.

PYGMALION PROBLEMS

As A.C. Ward has pointed out, the problem of education is a world problem.

Education widens the horizon of a student and gives him scholar, ethical and devout enlightenment. He is taken to a higher level of thinking and feeling. And then the teacher leaves him free to experience has become sophisticated and he has higher opportunity from life. He cannot go back to his old life and remain happy. He develops needs and ambitions which cannot be fulfilled. The result is irritation and restlessness.

This is just what happens to Eliza. Higgins teaches her how to speak correctly; and Pickering trains her to move and perform in a refined manner. The result is that her mind advances and her taste become refined. And after the path is over, the teachers tell her that now she is free to chase her path of life herself. She is confused and unhappy. She cannot go back to her old life, and she is not established in the higher society for which her teachers have trained her. "What have you made me fit for?" She asks. She was happy in her unawareness and dirt. Education and improvement have made her dissatisfied. She

tells her teacher, "You never thought of the nuisance it would make for me." To this Higgins replies, "Would the world ever have been made if its Maker had been afraid of making trouble?" This problem is predominantly faced by teachers who teach students from the lower stratum of society.

The second problem that is accessible in this play is that of the sounds of the English language. Shaw had great love and esteem for English—the language of Shakespeare and Milton. He was dismayed with the harsh manner in which many Englishmen spoke the language. The inexperienced people of London, for example, do not open their mouths and mispronounce all the words. This was the cockney language of Eliza.

But why do people mispronounce English words? It is because of the substandard English alphabet in which the letters do not stand for explicit sounds. The same letter produces dissimilar sounds in different words. The English spellings are also very perplexing. The result is that only men and women of the higher classes, who have been learned in good Schools and universities, are able to speak and write correct English. If a person speaks a word as it is written he often goes wrong. For instance, if a person tries to speak 'but' and 'put' in the same way, he would commit a big blunder.

The English people are very accessible to the way in which a person speaks the language. If a person speaks with the correct intonation and elocution he is considered 'high classes. Thus Shaw found that a person is hypothetical to belong to the higher classes not because of any essential merit or worth but only because of his accent and intonation.

Eliza was consider 'low class' because she spoke the cockney dialect. The designer flower-shops were not prepared to employ her. But after she has been trained to speak correctly, this illegitimate low class girl is regarded as a princess. If, therefore, the

problem of words is solved, the glaring disparities between different classes will fade away.

Shaw says that the English alphabet should be made phonetic. Each letter or symbol should stand for a specific sound. If that happens everyone will be able to pronounce English words appropriately and class distinctions based on language will disappear. Shaw also advocated spelling reform. Thus the two problems accessible in *Pygmalion* are: the world problem of education which leads to dissatisfaction, and the British problem of the sounds of English which leads to class distinctions.

HANDLING OF EMOTIONS IN PYGMALION

Shaw made the conversation of emotion, the main theme of *Pygmalion*. He chose the story in which *Pygmalion* finally marries his creation, *Galatea*. He wanted to show that this was a wrong understanding of human emotions. A creator cannot love and marry his own establishment. His *Pygmalion* will live in close companionship with his *Galatea* but will have no sexual feeling for her.

Shaw's own story has incredible romantic possibilities. *Higgins* picks up a flower-girl and undertakes with all his labour and art to alter her into a duchess. He is a bachelor. She is youthful, good-looking, intellectual and hard-working. He is a phonetician. She responds wonderfully to his teaching. In fact she has a better ear for sounds than he. He admires her accessibility and her talent. They live in terms of understanding and within six months he becomes wholly reliant on her for his clothes and his activities. Taking human nature as it is, the probability was that he should have fallen in love with her. When she leaves the house, he is awfully upset; and he and *Pickering* run about in search of her and even ring up the police. At his mother's place he wanders about frantically and says, "I cannot find anything. I do not know what arrangements I have." And then he says vigorously, "But we want to find her."

Shaw does not recognize the feelings of his own characters, otherwise he should have tacit that *Higgins* was in love with *Eliza* and the play should have ruined with their marriage. That would have been the correct culmination of the play. But Shaw suspected the emotions and had a horror of happy

endings. So he ends the play in an doubtful anticlimax.

Eliza, after the Ambassador's Party residential a personality of her own, and did not act as an unresponsive plaything of Shaw. Her designer did not understand her feelings at all. Why was she in aggressive revolt against the unemotional, dehumanized position of *Higgins*? Shaw's enlightenment that she wanted gentleness petting and esteem is wholly wrong. She was in love with *Higgins*. She marries *Freddy* only because Shaw forces *Higgins* not to marry her. Shaw makes much of her declaration to *Higgins*, "I would not marry you if you asked me." It must be remembered that she said this furiously after he had made the insulting proposal that she should marry *Pickering*.

The Life Force in her was impelling her to marry *Higgins*. But since she could not have him, she married *Freddy* who was weak and helpless and had hardly any temperament.

In his 'Sequel' Shaw explained why *Higgins* was not paying attention by young girls and why *Eliza* decided that *Higgins* would not do as a husband. But why did he have to explain this? Perhaps he realized himself that the readers and audiences would regard the end of the play as implausible and so he had to explain to them why the events took this turn. We cannot help feeling that the anti-sentimental theories of Shaw got the better of the dramatist in him and forced him to end the plays in an unromantic anxious atmosphere.

As A.C. Ward has said, "In his determination to make the romance unromantic, Shaw has twisted *Pygmalion* from what would have been, by the principles of drama, its natural end."

THE PROBLEMATIC PLAY

Shaw was by nature apprehensive of the emotions. He called this Play *Pygmalion* but he determined that his play must not end according to the *Pygmalion-Galatea* story. The play must not end with the marriage of *Higgins* and *Eliza*.

But the characters that he shaped started behaving in a way different from what he had planned. The creations of great dramatists develop a life and individuality of their own. They sometimes decline to act in the way the dramatist wishes them to behave;

and if he forces an action on them, the readers start sensation that it is improbable.

This is what happens to Eliza after the Ambassador's Party. She had lived in great familiarity with Higgins for six months. He had given his best training to her and was very conceited of her achievements. Eliza predicts that after she had won his bet, he would propose to her. But after the party he only thanked God that it was every one over. For him it had been only an 'experiment'. Her feelings and her future did not matter to him at all. That is why she appalled most aggressively and threw his slippers on his face, shocked him by returning the jewels and even the ring and left the house. If she had not met Freddy she would have jumped into the river and killed herself. Why was she moved so tremendously? Had anyone misbehaved towards her? No. Then why was she so much anxious? Shaw's illumination which he puts in the mouth of Mrs. Higgins is that she would have been happy if Higgins and Pickering had thanked her, petted her and told her how impressive she was at the party. But this is most doubtful. It is love that she anticipated and not kindness. But Shaw, the anti-sentimentalist, would not confess this.

It is true that Eliza tells Higgins, "I would not marry you even if you proposed to me." But it must be remembered that she says that when she is surprised at his audacity in suggesting that she should marry Pickering. Shaw's considerate that she felt instinctively that she should not marry Higgins, does not appear probable in the play.

It is seen in the play that she does not think of marrying Freddy till that incurable night. When she becomes sure that Higgins would never marry her, she thinks of Freddy who had been in love with her for a long time. About Freddy she says, "And if he is feeble and unfortunate and wants me, maybe he would make me happier than my betters that bully me and do not want me."

So it is obvious that she wants to marry Freddy only because Higgins bullies her and does not want her. By forcing his anti-sentimental theory on Higgins Shaw has made his character unlikely. It is absurd that a young professor should not fall in love with a guiltless, brilliant and good-looking young girl with whom he has lived on terms of familiarity for six months. Shaw calls him a life-giving professor of phonetics but because of his attitude he makes him a lifeless statue.

Moreover, there is a storm in Wimpole Street when it is exposed that Eliza has bolted. It is clear that Higgins would have confirmed his love for Eliza when she was found, if Shaw had not prohibited him.

CONCLUSION

Thus judging from the situations and the nature of the characters the natural end of this play should have been an Eliza- Higgins romance. That would have been a better match than that between Eliza and Freddy. But in his purpose to make the romance unromantic he has perverted the play and spoilt it. The problems and emotions in Pygmalion made this play romantic and unromantic tragic end.

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