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Contest of Patriarchal Training and Female Sensibility in Vijay Tendulkar's

'Encounter in Umbugland' and Bernard Shaw's 'Pygmalion'

Abstract: Pygmalion is one of the finest creations by G B Shaw. This play has been analyzed by various critics and scholars from different perceptions till now till date. 'Encounter in Umbugland' by Vijay Tendulkar was Published in 1974. While Pygmalion is set in Victorian Era and Encounter in Umbugland belongs to the modern period both the plays have women as protagonist trained by a male teacher. The present paper deals with the female sensibility and transformation in the characters of Eliza and Vijaya after the accomplishment of the teaching. Teaching is not only limited to imparting education only but it is beyond that which is analyzed by comparing teachings of Professor Higgins and Parannarayan

Keywords: sophisticated, diplomatic,teaching

George Bernard Shaw was born on 26 July 1856. He was an Irish playwright. He has a great impact on Western theatre by writing more than sixty plays. He is a political activist,

critic, and polemicist. His prominent works include *Man and Superman* (1902), *Pygmalion* (1912), *Saint John* (1923). He was a socialist who endeavoured to present his ideas of Social Justice and issues of class in his dramas. His dramas are called dramas of ideas. He has the genius to create a wonderful drama from a subject like Phonetics. However, his Dramas are enjoyed more as an entertainment. George Bernard Shaw is famous for his wit. The word Shavian has found its place in the dictionary because of this quality of George Bernard Shaw. He has bagged Oscar as well as Nobel Prize which bear testimony to his stature as a towering personality in literature.

Vijay Tendulkar was born on 6 January 1928. He was one of the greatest Indian playwrights. He is a Marathi dramatist but many of his plays have been translated into English. Besides being a dramatist he was a critic, political journalist, and movie and television writer as well. His notable works include 'silence the Court is in Session', 'Sakharam Binder', 'Ghashiram Kotwal', 'Encounter in Umbugland'. He had won many awards during his literary career in literature. He has been awarded many times for his commendable work in television and cinema for his screenplays.

It is believed that in Greek mythology there was a sculpture who carved a statue of a beautiful woman. After the completion of the statue, he fell in love with the statue. This symbolism is related to Henry Higgins falling in love with his creation Eliza Doolittle. Though Shaw's play is based on the Roman myth, he ends up interrogating the contradictions of myths and romances by comparing them with the mundane aspects of life.

Professor Higgins has dedicated his life to phonetics. He considers language as the gift of God to mankind but people murder the language instead of speaking it. He has the ability to know the place where one hails from by understanding the dialect. People are taken aback by this. He meets Eliza Doolittle who is a flower girl from Cockney. She does not

Speak correct English. Higgins rectifies her pronunciation. He is not happy that people do not pay much attention to speaking correct language. Articulate speech, in his opinion, is the gift of the God to the mankind.

Higgins has a bet with Pickering stating that the latter will convert her to a sophisticated lady of an elite class. The girl is also willing for this transformation from a flower girl to a duchess. The girl comes to Professor Higgins's house to learn the art of articulate speech. Bernard Shaw has depicted the love of the people towards false values. Eliza under the influence of these false values dreams to be a lady like a duchess. Her sole purpose of approaching Higgins is to be like those sophisticated ladies. Through Eliza and Higgins Shaw has depicted the superficiality of the Victorian era which has seriously influenced Higgins and Eliza. Professor Higgins leaves no stone unturned to make her learn the same. Bernard Shaw has the quality to take an idea and convert it into a beautiful work of art. He has transformed Phonetics which is considered as a tough subject into a wonderful literary creation which has social value. What Professor Higgins does in the play is a proof that a teacher can transform the character of the students by giving them the gift of education. However, later on it is up to the students how they use that education in their life. Higgins does not guide them in this context. He feels that his job is to impart education and nothing more than that.

In the play, *Encounter in Umbugland* King Vichitravirya dies after the completion of his portrait. He has a daughter named Vijaya who still is in her childhood. The statesmen know that people will not accept any of them as their ruler. They decide to make Vijaya a puppet queen and take the power in their hands. This play is not less than a political allegory as the characters are indirectly representing the times when Jawaharlal Nehru died and Indira

Gandhi had been given the power. It was expected that she would blindly follow the commands but she did exactly opposite.

Vratsyom. Meet our new leader! [(Vijaya shrinks).] His majesty's heir! This one in front, five of us behind! She'll be the rule, we'll be the rulers! An excellent plan till we agree on a firm decision (293)

Vijaya is new in politics but she has Blue Blood in her veins. She proves herself as a better ruler than her father. She cannot do that alone. It is her teacher Prannarayan who teaches her diplomacy and she defeats the evil designs of the selfish statesmen. Prannarayan's opening speech in the play bears testimony to his mastery in diplomacy and political affairs.

PRANNARAYAN [to the audience]. On behalf of the kingdom of Umbugland, I welcome you all. It is our good fortune that you have shown respect for our invitation, have come to our small and not very well-known island, and have shaken the dust off your feet upon this little isle. [Pausing] All that I said just now was, of course, conventional and diplomatic. But much of it was the truth. I mean, we too have three kinds of truth: conventional truth, diplomatic truth, and the real truth. The truth I spoke just now was of all three kinds. Conventional it certainly was. For to play the host and welcome you who have come here as our guest may be a convention accepted with pleasure. But it is, never the less, a convention. Similarly, this truth is diplomatic. For we in Umbugland behave most submissively and diplomatically towards all powerful countries. But the fact is as well as these two, it is also the real truth that should not be forgotten. It is a matter for rejoicing that you have presented yourselves here as spectators of a historic encounter in Umbugland. No encounter has any meaning without an audience. With no one to watch them, fighters don't battle with vigour. I am not a fighter. Since I reached the years of discretion, I have lived in

the palace of the ruler of this island, the protector of the Ubugite Nation, His Majesty King Vichitravirya. Today is the sixtieth anniversary of his coronation. (E I U 269)

If we analyse the role of woman in both the plays we will find that role of the teacher is very important in their lives. Eliza cannot become a sophisticated lady without the guidance of Henry Higgins. On the other side, Vijaya cannot accomplish her plans without the guidance of a teacher. In both the plays women take a pro-active approach to fight with the adverse circumstances. The play *Pygmalion* is set in a time when women did not have a right to vote. However, the play 'Encounter in Ubugland' signifies the time after India got independence from British rule that is modern period.

Role of the women in *Pygmalion* is more like a Cinderella story where the girl is poor but she achieves a high status after marrying the prince. In this play, Eliza Doolittle is a simple flower girl happens to reach Professor Higgins house which is not less than a palace. She enjoys dainty dinner with the higher class people of the society. It is not less than a huge transformation from rags to riches. However, in the case of Vijaya, she is the daughter of a king. The struggle is one common thing that unites both the characters. Being women they need to struggle hard and their gender becomes the cause of complication in both the plays. Eliza's father comes to inquire about her during her stay at Professor Higgins house. Even the staff working there are concerned whether she is married or unmarried. The reason is simple; she is a woman and they are more worried about the consequences of her stay in the house. Eliza Doolittle is adamant to change herself from flower girl to a sophisticated lady of the flower shop. However, in her case, the fulfillment of the dream turns out to be a nightmare. She realizes at the end that she is fit for nothing. She can neither be a flower girl not a sophisticated lady. The following speech shows her utter confusion after being educated by Higgins

HIGGINS [a genial afterthought occurring to him] I daresay my mother could find some chap or other who would do very well—

LIZA. We were above that at the corner of Tottenham Court Road.

HIGGINS [waking up] what do you mean?

LIZA. I sold flowers. I didn't sell myself. Now you've made a lady of me I'm not fit to sell anything else. I wish you'd left me where you found me. (4.63-66)

The knowledge that she has gained takes her to the path of ignorance she is in a fix to give any direction to her life. Higgins feels that his job is over. But Eliza is unable to find the way with the help of the torch of education given to her by Higgins.

In the case of Vijaya Prannarayan is her guide at every step in her journey of becoming a queen from a little girl who is more interested in hopscotch than power. The following lines are noteworthy.

Vijaya. How relaxed I feel now! Come on, Prannarayan. Come and play hopscotch with me in the park Prannarayan. [Embarrassed]. Your Majesty, it won't look fitting to play those games now.

Vijaya. Why?

Prannarayan. Power games are rather different.

Vijaya. Power!Power! Power! For the last eight days, that's all I've been hearing. This 'Power' can go to h-e- double-I!

[Prannarayan is very embarrassed.]

What else! I don't want to play power games! I want to play on my own. What has the Power to do with the games I play? Prannarayan, I am not as old as my father. How is it

You keep forgetting?

Prannarayan. No princess Vijaya I haven't forgotten it but the queen of

Umbugland can't play hopscotch, and least of all with a humble attendant (pp 296-97)

Talluri Mathew Bhaskar in this context gives an apt description of Vijaya's character

Vijaya, the king's daughter is portrayed with utmost care. Tendulkar minutely depicts the changes in her character from a self-willed and politically inexperienced princess into an intelligent, victorious ruler. Vijaya receives training from the eunuch. He tells her several times about diplomatic strategies in handling ministers in various situations.

Comparing Higgins and Eliza, the character of Eliza, in spite of the rib-tickling portrayal of her unawareness and lack of manner, is much more human than her teacher Higgins. She is inexperienced and guiltless. She comprehends her condition very well. Although she has a father whose sole purpose is to get some money for drinks. Higgins is a father who tries to transform her into a duchess, she is sure that neither Higgins nor her father is concerned about her feelings.

Doing a comparative analysis of both the plays leads to the fact that Eliza and Vijaya are trained by a teacher of a different gender and at the end, both of them are able to transform their personalities. Mark the following lines from Vijaya which shows a transformation in her character. She knows how to behave like a queen.

Vijaya. It is the custom that people of royal station should remember the value of their high rank. Three generations of my ancestors have kept that custom. This is the history. This was made by my ancestors.

[The cabinet is dumbfounded. Prannarayan is dumb] [301]

Eliza is not less than Higgins after the completion of the language training. Professor Higgins does not consider her more than a language robot which he has used for experimentation. Shaw is anti-romantic so one cannot expect a happy ending of the story like the story of Cinderella. His views about women are very negative. He does not consider them as wise as a male. Mark the following lines from the text.

MRS. HIGGINS. Well, you never fall in love with anyone under forty-five. When will you discover that there are some rather nice-looking young women about?

HIGGINS. Oh, I can't be bothered with young women. My idea of a loveable woman is something as like you as possible. I shall never get into the way of seriously liking young

Women: some habits lie too deep to be changed. [Rising abruptly and walking about, Jangling his money and his keys in his trouser pockets] besides, they're all idiots. (3.22-23)

He plainly tells Eliza Doolittle that his job is over as her training is accomplished. Symbolically George Bernard Shaw wants to press home the idea that a teacher can only educate the students. Once a student finishes the education then they have to struggle to find their place in society. They consider that they are not fit for the petty jobs. They don't want to be a fetch and carry person which sometimes creates an obstacle in selecting their profession or job. George Bernard Shaw has presented this idea beautifully with the help of this play. He has portrayed an international problem of employment for the educated strata of the society. Hossein Pirnajmuddin, and Fatemeh Shahpoori Arani observe that Shaw's play, it is argued, intimates that an education incommensurate with socio-cultural factors could probably empower the marginal social subjects but it would also displace them, rather than truly promote them, socially. (Hossein and Arani 146)

Eliza Doolittle is confused after the completion of her education. She finds herself fit for nothing she is neither a flower girl nor a sophisticated lady. So the completion of the teaching by Henry Higgins does not help Eliza and play ends in a chaotic note where a reader thinks if

she comes back or not. GB Shaw is anti-romantic playwright so this type of ending can be expected from him. Though he calls this play a romance but it is out an out an anti-romantic play.

In the Play Encounter in Umbugland Vijaya wants to follow the Kadamba plan in spite of the scathing criticism by the statesmen. Queen Vijaya has to face a revolt like situation but she has a wonderful teacher who teaches her diplomacy from time to time. Training by Prannarayan ignites the spark in Vijaya and she turns the tables against the statesmen. Diplomacy taught by Prannarayan takes her towards the path of victory. There lies the contrast between both the plays. Queen Vijaya uses her education for her success but Eliza Doolittle finally realizes that her dreams are not less than nightmares. She is unable to give any direction to her life. Higgins also leaves her as he feels his job is to teach only.

On analyzing the characteristic traits of queen Vijaya and Eliza Doolittle it is observed that both are quick learners. They follow the advice of their teacher in letter and spirit. Vijaya's father dies and the responsibility of the nation is now on her. In the case of Eliza Doolittle, her father is a drunkard and her father is her responsibility. Both of them are devoted to complete the task in their hands. Both Eliza and Vijaya want to prove their worth that they are not less than anybody in caliber. A female has to show her worth to the world from time to time in this patriarchal society so that nobody considers her inferior to her male counterpart. Vijaya's character from an obstinate, quirky, impish and lively girl into a brainy and determined authoritarian ruler is the success of teaching skills of Prannarayan. In the case of Eliza the teaching skills of Higgins are quite effective but he is not able to provide her solutions to her problems after her transformation.

Conclusion: Eliza and Vijaya, though one is from a European background in the Victorian era and the other is from a third world country, attain competency after acquiring perfection in

the desired skills. The one from European background is still confused and the other is able to achieve her target. Professor Higgins gives importance to the ostentatious side of presenting the knowledge in the form of articulate speech. However Prannarayan helps Vijaya to use the education in solving the problems with a pragmatic approach.

In this contest of teaching Prannarayan seems to be winning as his teachings lead Vijaya towards accomplishment of her plans. However Higgins only succeeds in making the life of his student Eliza more directionless as she is clueless to take any decision.

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