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Quest of Socio-Cultural Change: Eliza's Metamorphosis in Shaw's "Pygmalion"

السعي للتغيير الاجتماعي والثقافي: تحول إليزا في مسرحية بجماليون للكاتب جورج برنارد شو

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Abstract

"Pygmalion" is a signifier of socio-cultural change by the social reformer George Bernard Shaw. Social and cultural changes occur with reference to changes in personal and social aspects like customs, values, attitudes, and socio-cultural norms. This study traces the social equality in a capitalist society as well as the sufferings and struggle of Eliza for metamorphosis in a high class dominating society. It explores the role of education and language proficiency for Eliza's mutation and self-realization. The study is a qualitative study and uses the Marxist theory and the Foucauldian concept of knowledge/power for the theoretical analysis. It concludes that Eliza, the central character, goes under tridimensional stages that meet all the factors needed for social-cultural change achieving independency and self-realization. The metamorphosis process of Eliza is, meant by Shaw, to prove that all social distinctions are mere ego and can be overcome by equality of humanitarian rights mainly education..

ملخص

مسرحية "بيجماليون" هي دلالة على التغيير الاجتماعي والثقافي للكاتب المسرحي والمصلح الاجتماعي جورج برنارد شو. تحدث التغييرات الاجتماعية والثقافية استنادا على التغييرات في الجوانب الشخصية والاجتماعية للفرد مثل العادات والقيم والمواقف والأعراف الاجتماعية والثقافية. تتبّع هذه الدراسة المساواة الاجتماعية في المجتمع الرأسمالي وكذلك معاناة ونضال إليزا (بطلة المسرحية) من أجل التغيير في مجتمع تقيمن عليه الطبقة العليا. وتستكشف الدراسة أيضا دور التعليم وإتقان اللغة في طفرة إليزا وإدراكها لذاتها. الدراسة هي دراسة نوعية وتستخدم في التحليل النظري النظرية الماركسية والمفهوم الفوكوي للمعرفة / السلطة. وتخلص إلى أن إليزا، الشخصية المركزية، تمر بمراحل ثلاثية الأبعاد تلي جميع العوامل اللازمة للتغيير الاجتماعي والثقافي لتحقيق الاستقلال وإثبات الذات. تشير عملية التحول في إليزا إلى إثبات أن جميع الفروق الاجتماعية هي مجرد غرور ويمكن التغلب عليها من خلال المساواة في الحقوق الإنسانية وخاصة التعليم.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

المعاناة،
الصراع،
التعليم،
القوة،
التغيير

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1. Introduction

George Bernard Shaw is a socialist reformer, a Nobel Prize for literature and many other awards winner. He establishes drama as serious literary genre. He portrays the struggle of the working class in a capitalist society. He supports those who suffer the social tyranny and injustice through his writings, lectures, critical essays, and literary works attacking the human exploitation brought by industrialism. *Pygmalion* is a play five acts that portrays life conditions of British society and the personal, social, and economical effects of capitalism. (Tuaderu

2017) It is a didactic and a picturisc play that draws the socio-cultural changes that may take place if the human rights are concerned. The play clears the shallowness of capitalist society. Shaw's "*Pygmalion*" might be regarded as a basement for many educational, cultural, and social change theories that emerged afterwards.

Social change takes place when changes occur in various personal and social phenomenon such as customs, traditions, values, conduct, attitudes, and sociocultural norms. (Deeshka. 2020) Social change nature and characteristics influence many aspects of one's life like his conduct and response to the environment around him as well as his reaction towards his social members.

There are some factors lead to social change like social movement and social revolution, common motivation, common need, suffering due to suppression and oppression, impact of communication, and education. All of these factors will be applied to the study case, Eliza, in the analysis section of this study.

Akujobi (2017) defines Social change in society as it may be a result of the expediency needed in providing solutions to specific social problems faced in a society. While Form (2021) in Britannica says that Social change, in sociology, the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure,

characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behavior, social organizations, or value systems.

Conflict, According to Coser, is regarded as a creative force that encourages change in society. While Karl Marx has clarified that the injustice and unequal distribution of public material resources resulted in class conflict. (Shah, 2021). The relation between knowledge and power, the Foucauldian concept, leads to conduct modification which refers to social change.

These theories argue that the essence of social change is based on people's activities, therefore any conduct modifications facilitates that change and social development.

A cultural change, surely, involves a social change because of the fact, which indicates that there is a connection between the various elements of culture (beliefs, values, and ideas) and social institutions and relationships. Cultural values affect and create the social systems and determine the limits of social change. (Helmes-Hayes, 1994).

The study also uses the Foucauldian Conception of Power/Knowledge. Foucault believes that the concepts (power and knowledge) are inextricably linked. (Rabinow, 1984) Shaw, in *Pygmalion*, represents the power practiced by Higgins as a teacher over Eliza as a student. Then Eliza, by the end, with the linguistic supremacy and knowledge, learns how to practice power proving her self-realization and independency.

2. Review of literature

There are many studies that go in details through Shaw's literary works in general and *Pygmalion* in specific. An article by Pirnajmuddin (2011) explores the discourse of education and its effects on class with emphasis on Foucault's theories about power, knowledge, and discourse. It concludes that education generates gentility and Shaw points out that Eliza, the flower girl, is a high-class lady by a matter of six months' linguistic learning while money changes a dustman into

a gentle man. This point is proved by the dual transformation of Eliza and Alfred Doolittle.

Zhang Yan (2007) uses the method of stylistic analysis to analyse the discourse in two different acts, Acts I and V of *Pygmalion*, to show the change of power relation between Higgins and Eliza. Higgins's exercise of power is contrasted by Eliza's resistance. Eliza is not submissive and asks Higgins to speak respectfully to her.

A thesis entitled "Class struggle in capitalist society as depicted in George Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion", by Tuaderu (2008) is concluded that the class distinction practices affected the social condition in England by the time "Pygmalion" was written. The class struggle shown in the play is a means to free the working class from poverty as well as the oppression of capitalism. The low class people are suffering in the play to gain dignity like other people in the society.

The study entitled "Why can't women talk like a man?": an investigation of gender in the play *Pygmalion* by Bernard Shaw" by Gallardo (2001) comes to an end that the male characters in the play are powerful more than female due to their financial conditions and status. However, Eliza comes to a point to act on her own and shows power against Higgins.

It is shown through the process of Eliza's metamorphosis that the others respect a person that has money, fashionable appearance, and expensive cloths. This fact leads to the 20th century corruption because of the negligence of moral values while appearance matters, the capitalism principle. In the case of Eliza, people's speech, in the 20th century Britain, signifies one's social class but in the case of Eynsford Hill, money is the signifier; they lose their place in higher society when they lose their wealth. So morality is not significant to one's moral values anymore as it is also materialized. (ISIK, 2016)

Hossein and others (2011) used Foucauldian concept of power/knowledge for analyzing the discourse of the play in relation to power. Higgins's power makes a new self

for Eliza. She then becomes the exerciser of power and reject to submit to his wishes..

3. Methodology

This study is a qualitative study that uses a dual theoretical analysis; one of which is Marxism. The study uses the Marxism to analyse the struggle of the low class people for equality and their rights. Heyman says, "Marxism provides anthropology with fundamental theoretical concepts, especially with regard to deep human history and social change, conflict, social inequality, economics, and labor." (Heyman, 2018).

The Investopedia Team (2021) defines Marxism as a social, political, and economic theory originated by Karl Marx that focuses on the struggle between capitalists and the working class. Marxism lays out the theory of class struggle and revolution.

This theory is suitable to analyse most of Shaw's literary works specially "Pygmalion" because Shaw himself is a socialist reformer who deals with human rights, equality and injustice, freedom, and democracy. Shaw in "Pygmalion" criticizes the hierarchal structure of society, the high class bad treatment of low class, the sufferings of low class, and their quest for their rights. These conditions caused more poverty and fragmentation of social and familial relations, which in turn lead to class conflict that pushed the low class to free themselves from capitalists' tyranny and oppression .

The study also uses the Foucauldian Conception of Power/Knowledge. Foucault believes that the concepts (power and knowledge) are inextricably linked. (Rabinow, 1984) Shaw, in *Pygmalion*, represents the power practiced by Higgins as a teacher over Eliza as a student. Then Eliza, by the end, with the linguistic supremacy and knowledge, learns how to practice power proving her self-realization and independency.

4. Analysis

Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion" addresses the education system as the basis of socio-cultural change, as the real factor behind self-cultivation and productive character creation in the society. It also leads to better and successful life, independency, and getting rid of humiliation by the advantaged upper class. Eliza, the working class individual, undergoes a sever class conflict and struggle in the way she maintains self-realization and metamorphosis. This struggle for gaining humanitarian rights in a capitalist society can be analysed based on Marxist criticism theory.

Pygmalion deals with different relationships such as man/woman, father/daughter, individual/society, high class/low class, teacher/student, educated/uneducated, power/weak, son/mother, rich/poor, and so on and so forth. It also deals with the interrelationship of some discourses such as the discourse of education with class and the individual transformation on the basis of Foucault's theories about power, it explores the effects of the discourse of education on the knowledge and the power it generates. (Griffith, 1993, pp.25-6).

Shaw criticizes the social views that consider wealth and linguistic proficiency as criteria for determining highness and gentility. These views push Eliza into the metamorphosis and social mutation from low class flower seller into an educated stylish lady. (Saleh, 2010)

4.1 Eliza's struggle for metamorphosis

G. B. Shaw sheds the light on some social distinctions through the tridimensional character of Eliza such as class barriers between the teacher and the student, language accent between the educated and the uneducated, and the gender between male and female. The transformation process of Eliza proves that all of these distinctions can be overcome by education and language learning. (Prasad, 2013).

This section will trace the metamorphosis by analyzing the conflict in the play based on

Marxist theory. Eliza struggles terribly on behalf of the community she represents, the Proletariat. She endures the cruel treatment by her father, stepmother, Higgins, and even by Mrs. Pearce. Even though, she does not lose the hope to improve and her soul has not been crushed as well. The play shows the conflict and the tension between high and low classes during Victorian Era, which based on the belief that no one can change his birth class into another. (Ganz. 1983- 45)

4.2 Class conflict

Karl Marx thought that class conflict particularly stimulates change. As Bernard Shaw was deeply affected by Marx, he presents the conflict in the play as class conflict to portray his thoughts of necessary change and development. One of the idealistic factors that shape the change in the society is capitalism. Shaw criticizes capitalism and its faults specially the economic system that strongly prevents pursuing man's economic interests and free markets. Shaw regards art as a liberation means from materialism and not for art's sake. (John Gassner, 1970 – p 298)

In that time, the famous British Universities like Cambridge and Oxford were engaged in phonetic analysis as a new branch of language sciences. So in such scientific development in language, Shaw drew the borders of Higgins's character. These scientific movements in addition to Freud and Darwin theories shattered the class distinctions of the Victorian age.

Shaw shapes the conflict relationship between Higgins and Eliza on the basis of economic and social differences such as (man/woman. High class/low class, rich/poor, educated/uneducated, teacher/student, and powerful/weak). Eliza faces a conflict of two dimensions. One of them is being a lady in a masculine society. It is clearly shown through the discourse over all the play by either Higgins, Pickering, or Alfred Doolittle. The other dimension is the conflict between high

and low classes. It is through the conflict between Higgins, the representation of the high class, and Eliza, the representation of the working class, Proletariat. This is with relation to Marxist theory. Shaw presents the concept of relationships through the dimensions of the conflict practiced throughout the play.

Eliza declares that Higgins causes her all the misery and disappointment. She says, *"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"*. (IV. P.64) She feels stray because previously she used to sell flowers but not herself. Now she has no place in high class neither can return to the gutter to sell flowers. Tracy C. Davis states that Higgins enslaves Eliza, the flower seller, by teaching her the language. (Davis, 1998, p. 225)

After the great success she achieves in the Ambassadors' party and the language competence she has, she undergoes traumatic situation. She runs away to Mrs. Higgins's house then she feels self-realization and inner power that puts her in a case of post-traumatic growth, kind of psychological relief and positive growth, by which she feels self-confidence and satisfaction. Despite the power she shows and the way they have continuous conflict, Higgins continues dominating her saying that he bought her by 5 bounds and she can not go back with her father. He uses a verbal tyranny over her throughout the play by calling her, *"bilious pigeon, cabbage leaf, baggage, draggletailed guttersnipe, ungrateful wicked girl, unfortunate animal, presumptuous insect, the creature, and cat"*. She stands defending herself from the very beginning but finally in a different way of showing Knowledge and logic. She, in the same time, refuses to go with neither Higgins nor her father.

4.3 Eliza as a power exerciser

Eliza, to gain the power, goes through self-development stages the most important of which is education that leads to her social and

cultural mutations. Eliza starts as a flower seller, then a learner, and finally pass as a high stylish lady. These character triple phases indicate the over all process of Eliza's metamorphosis and acquiring logic and power, from one side, and, from the other, the shallowness of Victorian social structure and the belief that no one can move from one class to another. (Ganz: 1983-45)

Higgins practices his power over Eliza who shows resistance by defending herself, *"I won't be called a baggage when I've offered to pay like any lady"*. (II. P. 22) She repeatedly says, *"I am a good girl, I am"* (I. Ps. 13, 25, 27, 29, 30, and 41) and asks Higgins to respect her. Even though, they are not equal from many perspectives according to Foucauldian concept of power relations. As the play continues, Higgins commanding language and cruel manner limit Eliza and deprive her all the rights as in the opening scene when he claims that she does not deserve even to live; he says:

"A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere—no right to live." (I. P. 16).

Higgins considers Eliza as senseless creature who deserves nothing more than a broomstick. The discourse throughout the play shows that Higgins, the wealthy and educated man, stands higher than Eliza, the flower seller from the working class. He practices power in a kind of abusive language and forcing her to keep silent repeatedly. One can say that power in such a case proves Foucault's view that, *"power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised, and that it only exists in action"*. (Foucault, 1980. P. 89) By the end, Eliza acquires the power to state and declare her refusal to Higgins's offensive treatment. She finally gains power through articulation.

Pickering treats Eliza like a lady, for instance calling her "Miss Doolittle". He teaches her the manners, the attitudes, and conduct and creates a sense of self-respect in her. This treatment changes her and no longer be a

street girl until she mastered a new tongue and new cultural codes. She declares:

"The difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because o always treat me as a lady and always will". (V. P. 77)

Eliza, in the last conversation with Higgins, declares that she does not care and no longer afraid of his cruel manner because he cannot take away her power and knowledge. Instead, his power creates a new self of Eliza. Even though, he tries to push her to submission and blind obedience to his rules and wishes but Eliza, by the end, practices the power with knowledge and starts a new social identity refusing to live her life according to others' wishes but to hers.

4.4 Eliza's social and cultural change

Any successful social movement uses three kinds of frames to achieve its purpose and they are diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational. (Snow et. al. 1988) Shaw, through Eliza's social change, founds a successful social movement that uses the three kinds of frames. The first is the diagnostic frame, which indicates the social problem clearly. Here Eliza's problem is classicism that is portrayed very clearly. The second is prognostic frame, which offers solutions. The solution offered, as Eliza's case is concerned, is education and language learning. While the third one is motivational frame which devoted to action. Here the action is the process of Eliza's manners promotion and linguistic education.

There are several factors that influence the social change (Deeshka, 2020) and will be discussed here taking the case of Eliza as a topic case. Social movement based on dissatisfaction with the life system and when people look for new style of living. Eliza suffers with the existing social order so she

goes to Higgins's house to learn the language to get a job in a flower shop. Thus, she is looking for a new style of life.

Shaw's common motivation of Eliza's social movement is the condition of unrest over the deprived human rights and the humiliation practiced over the working class community. Eliza defends her rights, in the opening scene, to sell flowers and to set where she wants like any other lady. Moreover, in the last scene, as well, when she proves that there is no difference between social classes if all get their rights.

The common need of Eliza is economic. She wants to improve her life conditions instead of selling flowers in streets. She, hence, needs to learn the language for the sake of getting a job in a flower shop.

Suffering and oppression also are shown clearly. Eliza suffers the cruel treatment of Higgins who practices the sever oppression over the low class represented by Eliza and her father in the II act. From the opening scene to the last, Higgins looks at Eliza as a woman belongs to the low class.

The impact of communication between Eliza and Pickering is a driven force leads to her self-recognition. She, in the last scene, declares that she learns self-respect from Pickering that leads to her self-realization.

Education is regarded as a powerful force of social change. Through the education and language learning, Eliza acquires the power to stand by herself and achieve independency. She becomes by the end, more rationale and powerful in rejecting the humiliated life with Higgins and the irresponsibility of her father.

Therefore, all the factors influencing the social change can be applied to Eliza's case with reference to the core of Marxist theory that portrays and criticizes the social structure and encourages the working class for better life.

People, from other cultures all over the world, also bring about Socio-cultural changes. (Pirnajmuddin, et al. 2011). Bernard Shaw represents this issue in the play. He brings various characters from national and

international cultural backgrounds as well as different social classes. Higgins in this case is superior because of his linguistic proficiency and declares that the English language "is the language of Shakespeare, Milton, and the Bible" and Eliza should speak properly. Higgins wants to make a show to Pickering that he will make Eliza "*with her kerbstone English*" (I. P. 17) pass like a duchess if he teaches her the language. This is the first step of her socio-cultural change.

Eliza, first self, has been grown in a working class conditions so she does not get the formal education. She is the product of a low class culture and this is demonstrated by her comments on bathing in the second act:

...it's easy to clean up here. Hot and cold water on tap... Woolly towels, there is... Soft brushes to scrub yourself, and a wooden bowl of soap smelling like primroses. Now I know why ladies is so clean. Washing's a treat for them. Wish they saw what it is for the like of me. (II. P. 41)

Eliza conveys that if the working class people have such facilities, they will be as clean as high class people. She proves the depriving rights and the cultural differences between social classes. Her and her father's dirty appearance is an evidence of discrimination.

Foucauldian concept of discourse maintains that discourse affects the construction of social subjects. (Pirnajmuddin, et al. 2011).

Eliza's linguistic incompetence and grammatical mistakes demonstrate the Foucauldian concept in comparison to educated and cultivated characters of high class. She, for instance, says:

"Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd dan y' deooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than ran awy athaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f' them?" (I. P. 10).

In addition to that, the mistakes she makes when she talks about health in her first trial at Mrs Higgins's house.

Eliza's second self takes place while she goes under cultural training and linguistic tuitions.

Eliza is taken to Shakespeare exhibition, listens to Beethoven music, and learns to play piano. She acquires new cultural codes which in turn gives her power.

4.5 Education and Language Proficiency

If culture is defined as customs, traditions, attitudes, style of life, and other cultural aspects then educational ideologies are pillars in either cultural promotion or even cultural change. Here, it is found that Shaw wants to effect the actions of institutions and people towards change of traditions in order to spread human rights doctrines. (Spring, 2004).

The language differences between Higgins and Eliza is due to two reasons. The first is the social class difference between them and the second is the different educational background. (Gallardo, 2001). Language and social stratification is a main theme in the play. Higgins considers the language as a means of classifying people. However, when Eliza achieves linguistic competence, he still treats her as socially inferior. G. B. Shaw, hence, wants to prove that the gentility is a matter of education and wealth but education is the center. Education leads Eliza to complete and satisfactory transformation while wealth (without education) leads Alfred Doolittle to partial, superficial, and unsatisfactory transformation. Here is the supremacy of education in the social mutation process.

Shaw links education to craftsmanship that leads to breaking down the class barriers and distinctions. (Tuaderu, 2017). Education is the most effective way of Eliza's metamorphosis in its two dimensions language learning and manner reforming. Eliza clarifies it clearly in the last act in a high philosophical and logical articulation:

It's not because you paid for my dresses. I know you are generous to everybody with money. But it was from you that I learnt really nice manners; and that is what makes one a lady, isn't it? You see it was so very difficult for me with the example of Professor Higgins

always before me. I was brought up to be just like him, unable to control myself, and using bad language on the slightest provocation. And I should never have known that ladies and gentlemen didn't behave like that if you hadn't been there. (V. P. 76)

Eliza indicates that now she is better than Higgins is because of Pickering's treat for her. Eliza says that she brought up like Higgins despite the class differences between them. It means that without Pickering, she would have been like Higgins in her expressions without paying any attention to people's feelings around her. In the last scene of the play, Eliza's character framework shows that the big gap between them lies in their goals of life. Higgins's intention is to better the world through himself, personal and narrow perspective, while Eliza's goal is to better herself through the world, public and wide perspective.

5. Results and discussion

Eliza's quest for metamorphosis goes through stages that draw the borderlines of her tridimensional character. She was a flower girl, a language learner who seeks liberation, and finally a matured lady characterized by self-respect and independency. She is subjected, in one way or another, to social and cultural changes intentionally and gradually, internally and externally as well as she becomes a power exerciser.

The analysis of the conflict is based on Marxist theory as it leads to social change and the liberation of working class as well while the broken down familial and social relations shown in the play are analyzed on the basis of Foucauldian theory of knowledge/power. Eliza maintains all the factors lead to social change. So she is an icon of social movement in all its frames – diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frame.

The real change and self-development are based on education. Education is considered

the main factor of socio-cultural change. It is proved if Eliza's metamorphosis is compared to her father's change. Eliza goes through many steps leading to acquiring knowledge, which supports her the power she needs for self-realization. By the end, Eliza becomes a power exerciser.

Pygmalion is a claim of social equality by the socialist G. B. Shaw. If all people are getting their rights equally, there will be no differences between social classes. Eliza, when gets the right of education, performs better and appears as a duchess. The conflict for equality, throughout the play, between Eliza and Higgins represents the conflict between low and high classes they represent respectively.

Eliza endures all the cruel treatment and domination practiced by Higgins. She does so for the sake of her dreams to get a job in a flower shop to free herself of the degradation, to prove that a low class female in a masculine structural society can do better with liberation and attaining human rights, and to change the social view towards working class people. The Victorian belief that birth class cannot be changed goes wrong as Eliza, the flower girl, is a lady by means of education and her father, a dust man, by wealth is a gentle man regardless their satisfaction of the mutation happened to both of them.

6. Conclusion

In the last Act, Eliza's self-formation is complete. The play ends with Eliza's feeling of triumphant with wide smile. It is the celebration of Eliza's metamorphosis and power. The metamorphosis process of Eliza is, meant by Shaw, to prove that all social distinctions are mere ego and can be overcome by equality of humanitarian rights mainly education. So Eliza's maturity is a call to all workers who work in inhumane conditions to better their life by conducting the struggle in the way more or less as she has done. George

Bernard Shaw and other social reformers of his time paved the way for various social movements afterwards overall the world. This criteria is a good suggestion for further studies.

Conflict of Interest

The author whose name is mentioned immediately below declares that he has no conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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