Women And Society In Pygmalion By George Bernard Shaw

Pygmalion is a representative play written by writer Shaw. In 1912 Bernard Shaw wrote Pygmalion. Pygmalion, which took place in the Victorian era. Back when Shaw wrote Pygmalion, women couldn't vote in the United Kingdom; in 1918 women over the age of thirty were given the right, and it almost took another ten years for all women to be given a voice and their basic rights. The setting of the play takes place in London in the early 1990s. Bernard was born in 1856 and died in 1950 Bernard Shaw was a defender of women’s rights

There are three main characters in the play: Professor Henry Higgins, Eliza Doolittle and Colonel Pickering. Henry Higgins, a linguistics professor, makes a bet with Colonel Pickering that within six months he can transform a cockney flower seller, Eliza Doolittle, into a lady who can take her own place in high society. Eliza Doolittle is the main character and the protagonist in the story. She is first introduced as an unpolished, rude girl who was a flower girl but later she is transformed into a beautiful woman who is moulded by henry Higgin. Colonel Pickering decides to pay the cost for Professor Higgins to teach Eliza and challenges Professor Higgins to present Eliza as a duchess for the ambassador's garden party. Professor Higgins believes he can make Eliza a duchess in six months. For a few months, Higgins trains Eliza to speak properly. From the terrible starting of the play, we can see the unequal relationship between man and woman, where Man is seen as superior, woman is inferior.

The act of transforming Eliza into a beautiful woman who can speak with good English and ascent henceforth Higgin trying really hard to transform Eliza identity. Through these instances we can trace how Eliza is under the control of a man of some sort. Eliza tells Higgins that she desires independence, but although she is a strong character where we never see her actually obtain her independence in the play. Eliza is greatly transformed over the end of the play, hence its very difficult to attain real Independence where there is male dominance throughout. In Pygmalion where Eliza gets the chance to rebel and to become free and she grabs that opportunity. As Eliza transforms from flower girl to duchess, it can be viewed that how she was in many was as an individual was dehumanised through the socialisation process. Issues such as class and gender that arose the tension that was going on between through the interaction between Higgins and Eliza. For example, in one instance where Higgins' attitude to Eliza is very rude and abusive. He orders her to sit down, and when she does not do it immediately, he repeats and shouts at her. This shows how woman character is seen only as an object for experiment throughout the play. Higgins even ignores her gender. Pygmalion also explores gender roles with other female characters. Pygmalion begin in the early twentieth century, before women gained many basic rights and privileges, the play's other female characters Mrs Pearce and Mrs Higgins are narrowed or limited to their respective households. However, they both play important roles. Mrs. Pearce ensures the functioning of Higgins' household and reminds him of his own manners and way of lifestyle. These 2 characters demonstrate how women still exert some power inside or within the oppressive Victorian society. Theme that can be identified through the narration and few instances from the play is that social division existed throughout. In the play we can see how Eliza grows from confusion, ignorance, and illusion to knowledge and reality under the help and guidance of the male professor Higgin.

Eliza feels that by learning the language and etiquette of the upper class, she has lost her own identity and cannot “unlearn” or “relearn” what she knows now. She must accept her new identity and hold a new way of life. According to Higgin in order to be a lady, a woman must be fair and attractive. During that period women are supposed to remain in the private space, they have no place invading the public space where men dominate. One of the major aspect or themes in Pygmalion is class, in Britain you are very much judged by your social class. Your class is marked by your clothing, your manners, way of living, lifestyle, status and your accent.

Liberal feminism supports the theoretical framework in Pygmalion, where they consider freedom as personal independence where the individual is living a life of one’s own choice and have independence. Liberal Feminism began in the 18th and 19th centuries and has continued through to the present day. Liberal feminism focuses on achieving equality between men and women that emphasizes on the discriminatory practices against women. Liberal Feminism concentrates more on issues such as equality in the workplace, in education. Liberal feminism looks at different factors contributing to inequalities, for example discrimination in workplace, educational institutions and political sphere. They tend to establish and protect equal rights through democratic means and legal rights. liberal feminism view women as Autonomous individual.

One instance in the play Higging and Pickering are now bored with the project which hurts Eliza , this shows how both the male characters in the play used Eliza merely as an object for experiment , instance in the play where Eliza throws slipper where the slippers become a powerful motif and a metaphor where she regains some power by throwing the slippers back at Higgin. Accordingly, this signifies how Eliza throws Higgin patriarchal ideologies back in his face. Thus, the underlying theme of Pygmalion the play is that social pressure that force one to adopt a false front and to become the ideal Other, while denying one’s true self and losing one’s own identity. Eliza wants independence but finds herself under the control of men like Pickering, Higgins, and her father.

Eliza surrenders to Higgings brutality and works with him very hard to learn phenetic and manners until she realizes that she is still a flower girl no matter how perfect she speaks English. At the end of the play she gained her own concept of life and morality. Eliza fought for her own rights and realizes her true identity and transforms into much stronger and independent girl who is no longer under male dominance. Pygmalion shows how oppressive unrealistic standards that a woman can be, to attain these standards Eliza has to be moulded, coached, disciplined and taught by Higgin. Eliza has to pretend to be someone other than who she really was, Eliza undergoes physical and an external transformation throughout the play. social stratification based on gender was carved in the minds. Pygmalion portrays how position of women in society is forced to be the lowest. At the end of the play, she stands up to Higgins fight for her rights and independence. Eliza fought for her own independence and rights, the real transformation in Eliza comes with being treated like a lady and from there she started gaining self-respect. By the end of the play Eliza emerges as a dignified, independent woman who knows her own worth and aims to make her own way in the world. Shaw addresses a lot of problems regarding women, and allows us to get a number of different opinions and views on them.