

ABSTRACT

G. B. Shaw being the most popular playwright of the modern dramatic tradition enchanted the audience and readers with the simplicity and abruptness of his poetic style. Besides onstage performances, he also wanted his plays to be read in printed form. What could be the motives behind such an uncommon desire?

Most of his plays have prefaces to them; which in one way are linked with the dialogue and also bear a separate identity as essays, manifestoes, or commentaries. Why did the great dramatist need to introduce his plays with the prefaces? Was he doubtful of himself as a dramatist communicating his ideas successfully through his characters and dialogue, so needing to elaborate his philosophy in his prose essays? Was he writing for a readership more interested in reading prose works than plays?

Further what is the essential nature of his prefaces; are these just 'sober essays on facts' or 'drama in prose', 'a bait to catch readers', or a technique for propaganda to justify his own over-confident revolutionary ideas? To what extent does his drama speak out the philosophy which he projects in the prefaces?

All these questions form the subject matter of this dissertation with the objectives to study the nature of the prefaces, Shaw's motives behind writing these prefaces, to evaluate relevance between prefaces and plays, to judge the significance of the prefaces in better comprehension of the plays by critically analyzing them.

To undertake this research project a blend of document study (complete plays, prefaces and other prose writings by Shaw), internet resources and discussions with supervisor and other readers of Shaw is utilized.