



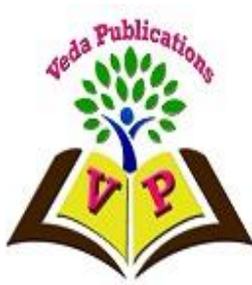
MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION: THE INVETERATE EXPLOITATIVE NATURE OF CAPITALIST CLASS AND IMMINENT DANGER TO THE WOMEN'S FREE EXISTENCE

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[doi:10.333329/joell.7.4.44](https://doi.org/10.333329/joell.7.4.44)

ABSTRACT



Money determines a respectable place of a person in society. So making money by hook or crook is an important task for a person to get an honorable and ideal life. This materialistic outlook makes a person to lead an immoral and unprincipled life who live on the exploiting of the weaker sections of society. In Mrs. Warren's profession this materialistic philosophy is severely criticized through the exploitation of working class and women. Due to the greed and selfishness of capitalists class women are compelled to adopt the profession in question in quest of leading an ideal life and don't care about the immorality of this work. Prostitution is a mere attribute of an exploited society and not a choice but a compulsion in which economically vulnerable women unwillingly pushed into. Social norms are compromised as there is existence secrets which let out would unravel the debauchery and hollowness of social morals.

Keywords: *Capitalist Outlook, Prostitution, Upper Echelon, Poverty, Industrial Revolution, Working Class*

**INTRODUCTION**

Shaw's controversial play *'Mrs Warren's Profession'* was written in 1893, distributed in *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* in 1898, but because of British censorship, its open execution was prohibited until 1926 as being criticized the play to be immoral. In the segment named *Author's Apology*, an introduction Shaw later connected to his play, he states that he didn't like to waste "[his] energies on 'pleasant plays' for the amusement of frivolous people" (Shaw 9). Also, he clarifies that he composed the play to "draw attention the truth that prostitution is caused, not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing, and overworking women so shamefully that the poorest of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together" (Shaw 5).

INITIAL ANALYSIS OF THE PLOT OF THE PLAY

Mrs Warren and her young daughter Vivie are the two main heroines, who in the start of the play have an uncommon meeting. Because of Mrs Warren's profession of owning a brothel, for which she needs to travel regularly, Vivie has not seen her mother regularly during her childhood. Vivie is at first ignorant of her mother's job, furthermore, when she attempts to discover who her dad is, she discovers the fact that her mom was a prostitute. Thinking her mother stop remaining a prostitution she acknowledges her past, as Vivie realises it added to her upper level childhood and education. George Crofts, Mrs Warren's business accomplice, apprised Vivie, after Vivie rejects his proposition in marriage, that her mom is still working in prostitution and claims numerous houses of ill-repute in the continent of Europe. Vivie, who graduated from Cambridge University, doesn't comprehend her mom's purposes behind proceeding to work in prostitution and she chooses to cut off the ties with her mom for good. In her final dialogue she says:

"If I took your money and devoted the rest of my life to spending it fashionably, I might be as worthless and vicious as the silliest woman could possibly want to be".

The two female characters have *'New Woman'* highlights, along with the highlights on the

conventional lady, particularly with respect to profession and marriage. While taking a gander at the title of the play, plainly Mrs. Warren and her profession are a significant core interest. Since she was conceived in a lower class family with her sister and two stepsisters, raised by their single parent, looking for work was a critical need. Mrs Warren asks Vivie, while disclosing her circumstance to her girl:

"Do you think I was brought up like you? Able to pick and choose my own way of life? Do you think I did what I did because I liked it, or thought it right, or wouldn't rather have gone to college and been a lady if I'd had the chance?" (Shaw 114).

To find job opportunities for a young lady was extremely restricted. One of Mrs. Warren's stepsisters worked in a white lead processing plant for low wages and passed on due to the helpless conditions:

"She was only expected to get her hand paralyzed; but she died" (Shaw 116).

Her other stepsister was told to be their good example for she *"married a Government labourer in the Deptford victualling yard, and kept his room and the three children neat and tidy on eighteen shillings every week – until he took to drink"* (Shaw 116). The choices for ladies' work are in this manner introduced as constrained, hazardous and came up short on; and marriage wasn't a cake walk either.

Shaw's plays have often been branded as propaganda plays and blamed for deep allegory of Socialistic flavour. However, the play when understood in toto is a problem play which deals with a profession which is ubiquitous but is never talked about. It talks about the root and cause of the existence of the profession and it is hinged on the belief that most of such people don't take up this profession because they are inherently immoral but because they find it hard to labour through the systemic poverty that they are subjected to for which we as a society are responsible and not they. He has his scorn for the rich and the high flying society their elitisms and pretence. Above all the façade of



morality that rich and influential adorn around themselves is all somewhere funded through the misery of the working class.

Croft's proposal to Vivie is one that smells of the ideal of 'money can buy anything' and Vivie is at once disgusted to hear that from him as they are in clear conflict of her ideals of leading an honorable life. Croft's tries to lure Mrs Warren too with the proposal.

"CROFTS. We three could live together quite comfortably. I'd die before her and leave her a bouncing widow with plenty of money. Why not? It's been growing in my mind all the time I've been walking with that fool inside there."

The economic order places women in a precarious state with them becoming mere objects of desire and a price tagged to them

"MRS WARREN. Of course it's worthwhile to a poor girl, if she can resist temptation and is good-looking and well conducted and sensible. It's far better than any other employment open to her.

*I always thought that it oughtn't to be. It can't be right, Vivie, that there shouldn't be better opportunities for women. I stick to that: it's wrong. But it's so, right or wrong; and a girl must make the best of it. But of course it's not worth while for a lady. If you took to it you'd be a fool; but I should have been a fool if I'd taken to anything else."*ACTII(<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.htm>)

Croft's has his own wicked ways and he states that all that Vivie has nourished on stems from the money that she calls evil so she is no different than Croft or Mrs Warren. He says that the scholarship at Newnham was a bursary setup by his brother who is an MP and the education was funded by him for her degree at Girton's College in Oxford. His brother ran a factory with 600 hundred wretched women who were ill paid and he lived on the profit out of it.

"CROFTS. Only that you've always lived on it. It paid for your education and the dress you have on your back. Don't turn up your nose at business, Miss Vivie: where would your Newnhams and Girtons be without it?" ACT III

(<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.htm>)

Mr. Croft is the icon of the depiction of class in Shaw's play 'Mrs. Warren's Profession'. He has his pride that he keeps recounting on numerous occasions but more for others to acknowledge his social elite circle. He tells Vivie in subtle ways how connected he is in the upper echelons of the society, the Duke, The Archbishop of Canterbury, his own brother who is an MP and runs a Scholarship for Girton's Women College. He dissects the human existence between the haves and have not by saying that the ideals of traditional Christian ethos can at best be held close only if you choose to live in poverty as everything that you see honourable and respectable is morally compromised and elitism is mere embodiment of the rich at the cost of the impoverished. He talks of the queer ways of how people have become rich and sustain. In a way Croft is also bold in the face of a youngster twenty five years his junior when he accepts that the trail of money flows from the wretchedness and misery of the poor working classes towards the elite circles in the High University circles like Girton's and the pub and the opera and she has equally been nourished by such bad money. He stops short of telling the real profession in question and he does not bother where his profits are generated from.

Morgan argued :

"Croft himself is the simple instinctual answer to the questions that remain to be reasonably answered: what is horrible about the continuous of the business? And prevailing economic and social structure to which the business in fact conforms translated, Crofts stands for the principle of idleness and waste and callousness, which society not merely tolerate but reward for bullying attitude that feeds on the subjection



of workers and woman and is antithesis of genuine authority”.

On the other hand, the one more character from upper class, Mr. Sam Gardner, born in wealthy family, is the rector and rather an undeserving person inducted in the clergy. He has achieved not on merits but due to his connections in the class of clergy that is itself corrupt.

The working class was already suffering in the Victorian England and industrial revolution had little changed their plight Mrs Warren's account of her sisters gives clear picture of the everyday hardships faced by the working classes especially women.

“MRS WARREN. No, you don't. I do. She called herself a widow and had a fried-fish shop down by the Mint, and kept herself and four daughters out of it.I'll tell you. One of them worked in a white lead factory twelve hours a day for nine shillings a week until she died of lead poisoning. She only expected to get her hands a little paralyzed; but she died. The other was always held up to us as a model because she married a Government laborer in the Deptford victualling yard, and kept his room and the three children neat and tidy on eighteen shillings a week—until he took to drink. That was worth being respectable for, wasn't it?”
ACT II
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.htm>)

There is enormous pretention among the rich classes who rule and they sometimes have their wickedness shrouded in mystery like the legendry freemasons secret society.

“FRANK. Viv: theres a freemasonry among thoroughly immoral people that you know nothing of.” ACT III
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.htm>)

Croft is such a vicious man having capitalist outlook to get benefitted in anyways and he doesn't think it immoral of getting money by running

brothels, exploiting young women. But Vivie in the entire play isn't at all impressed by the materialistic life and the arguments given in favour of this improper way of earning she is stunned by thinking how the society is accepting such a wicked people like her mother and Mr. Croft. She says:

“When I think of the society that tolerates you, and the laws that protect you. When I think of how helpless nine out of ten young girls would be in the hands of you and my mother ,the unmentionable women and capitalist bully” ACT III
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.htm>)

Mrs. Warren's Profession sticks the immorality and wistfulness of the values and standards of British society, proposing that the affectation, defilement, and injustice of the British social framework contaminates everybody related with it. Shaw's nuanced delineation of the various manners by which poor people, white collar class, and rich maintain abusive social practices recommends that no one is unadulterated and, thusly, the best way to fix the framework is to be straightforward and honest about how it influences individuals, in both negative and positive ways.

SHAW'S INDICTMENT OF THE TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN

In Mrs. Warren's Profession, discussing the matter of prostitution Shaw's main concern lies with the oppression of women under capitalism. Being a veteran socialist he is of the view that women are headed to prostitution under monetary need thus pointing the material and social conditions that lay behind this vicious social practice. Mrs. Warren puts it,

“The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good her. If she is in his own station of life, let her make him marry her; but if she is far beneath him, she can't expect it” ACT II
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.htm>)



Living in an industrialist society, Mrs. Warren and her sister Liz depended on prostitution since both lived in dire situation of poverty and destitution and experienced troublesome conditions in both private and public life and they had no male in her family to rely upon monetarily.

Besides, the openings left to them as helpless young ladies with little education were a sort of exploitative with which no lady could live respectfully. So they were forced to prostitution; for all they had was

"their appearance and their turn for pleasing men"(ActII,p.249).

Shaw assaults the entrepreneur phallogocentric philosophy the power elements that lay behind prostitution. He shows how the man centric capitalist framework not only drives women to be a sexual object but prompts previous victims to propagate the business in their turn so is the case with Mrs. Warren. Under the trap of capitalistic machinery, Mrs. Warren and Liz didn't just keep on whores themselves later not for monetary need; they accelerated the selling of their own sort also; by setting up a chain of whorehouses all through Europe.

The way Shaw dramatizes the consequences of women's economic dependence in Mrs. Warren's Profession is greatly unconventional. He proclaims his disdain to capitalism, under which he says: "Prostitution was practically compulsory", the other option being starvation. Thus shows the oppressed status of women through the capitalistic mode of production contending from a communist Perspective.

In reality, Shaw as critique of the capitalist economy which produced the act of the sexual division of work, a division which burdened women through work related isolation. Women were given the most low-paying and unfulfilling employments and in this manner remained dependent economically. The play tells about the dedicated states of a significant number of them, including Mrs. Warren's step-sister, who worked in a white lead manufacturing plant twelve hours per day for nine

shillings every week, the 600 factory girls who earned starvation wages and Mrs. Warren who had been misused in various employments, working as a scullery maid in a restaurant, then as a waitress and as a bar servant working fourteen hours per day for four shillings every week.

The play reveals insight into the feeling of estrangement that women laborers experienced in their jobs, which as opposed to bringing them self-worth and financial freedom, were a significant reason for their pain and enslavement. For instance, Mrs. Warren's sister who worked in a white lead manufacturing plant kicked the bucket due to lead poisoning. Because of this sexual orientation based division of work, a large portion of women went to prostitution.

Shaw being socialist thinks about the economic independence and prosperity of women, he recommends that women ought to have equivalent access to good and handsomely paid-job. He believed that *"any society which intended to found itself on high standards of integrity of character should organize itself in such a fashion as to make possible for all men and women to maintain themselves in a reasonable comfort by their industry without selling their expressions of love and convictions."*

In Mrs. Warren's Profession, he denounces the curse of poverty with his reforming attitude and the same is the case with his other plays like, Major Barbara and Widowers' Houses. The point he centers around is that *'poverty is as evil and anti-social as prostitution'*; in this way he dismisses the broadly held view that poverty is associated with moral worth. In his view, the financial freedom of ladies is essential to the practice of morality.

Mrs. Warren's Profession is likewise an example of the hypocrisy of capitalist society and its false system of morality.

Marker points out that,

"Assuredly, Mrs. Warren's profession is an "unpleasant" play and hence also a "problem" play, in the sense that it is serious rather than frivolous in intent, is again



concerned with social corruption (in this case prostitution), and is determined to fasten the blame for such vice not on the individual (the brothel madam) but on a (male, capitalistic) social system that fosters it. (1998:11)

When the opportunities for the advancement in life are given equally to both men and women then there can never be question of exploitation of women in any way. But we find the gender- discrimination everywhere in terms of job opportunities and the salary paid to them, for doing the same work. In such a condition communism or socialism can't be discussed or established that's the main issue discussed in the play. Telling her daughter the condition why she pushed herself in such a dirty profession Mrs. Warren says: *the predetermined number of jobs open to women and the miserable conditions in those occupation. Though the whores earn more cash than women working in different professions in such a dying situation for their wellbeing.* Before adopting the present profession Mrs Warren too worked as a maid, or bar tender and so on. She further tells that she is not educated much and being young she had to earn a living and there were not so many professions open to such women. Only certain occupations were open just to ladies with ability, such as acting, singing, or composing for papers. Different occupations were open just to pretty ladies, such as filling in as shop-girls or barmaids. In any case, in these jobs, the ladies gain almost no cash while permitting another person to benefit from their excellence. Ladies who are neither gifted nor beautiful must choose the option to work in manufacturing plants, where they ruin their wellbeing and procure scanty salary.

The play pinpoints the facts that lead to abuse of women and draws the attention of audience to the fact that *the immorality is not there in being prostitute but in the circumstances which compel a person to adopt such an immoral profession to lead an ideal life in the society.* It is because that society is indecent in light of the fact that it limits open doors for ladies, regularly making prostitution the most secure and most rewarding work accessible to them. The play proposes that so many people are thoroughly responsible for ladies' abuse, such as

those who are investors and supporters of running brothels and those who are factory owners and exploiting women by underpaying and not giving them ideal working conditions and those who indiscreetly treating ladies and earning enormous profits at their cost.

Shaw through the play recommends that British society can find a way to stop misusing ladies. In the first place, the untouchability on discussing prostitution ought to be lifted, and people ought to be compelled to consider the social and monetary conditions that settle on prostitution the most ideal decision for some ladies. Second, work conditions for ladies ought to be improved, with ladies paid higher wages to work in more secure conditions. At last, the valuable education should open doors like those managed for Vivie ought to be made all the more generally accessible to all the women.

As it is a well known truth of this world that family heritage, occupation, income, gender and others, are determining factors rather than one's talent or hard work to establish a status of a person in high class society. Shaw strikes this very idea by showing the corrupt side of such high class, reverend people through the two characters Mr. Croft, and Mr. Samuel. On the contrary Mrs. Warren, despite being a hard worker finds herself unable to overcome the stigma attached with her because of her profession. While Mr Croft and Reverend Samuel enjoy good reputation and respectable position in the society being born in a wealthy family, as their social standing relies on the secrecy of their immoral nature and corrupt behaviour.

The play shows how the decency ensured by a high social station permits the privileged to evade scrutiny and advantage at the cost of others suffering. Sir George Crofts embodies a degenerate high society that benefits from immoral practices. He brings in cash by investing into brothels, while other individuals from the high society put resources into perilous manufacturing plants or own slums even than restore their high position and secure respect in the society.

Mr. Samuel, who being a fool, pompous, corrupt, uninformed, and an undeserving clergyman,



susceptible to temptation, got this position due to his high social class as his family doesn't find him deserving to any other job.

Thus through both high class position assuming men, Shaw throws light on the real fact that wealth can put an undeserving person in a respectable class who enjoy high social standing hiding their corrupt activities.

By composing '*Mrs. Warren's Profession*', Shaw himself is trying to expose his audience and readers to their complicity in an indecent framework and to impel them to be mindful for such a corrupt people and their corrupt, immoral practices which are under cover due to their high social standing.

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