

Dr. BRR GOVT DEGREE COLLEGE JADCHERLA

Department of English



A PROJECT REPORT

ON

HOW I BECAME A PUBLIC SPEAKER

-GEORGE BERNARD SHAW (1856-1950)


Submitted By

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DECLARATION

We are hereby declare that the study project: **HOW I BECAME A PUBLIC SPEAKER** is a record of work done by us under the supervision of *Dr.P. Narahari Murthy*, Asst. Prof . in English, Government Degree College, Jadcherla, Mahabubnagar District and that the project has not been previously done by any others in this college and any other college/University.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Study project on **HOW I BECAME A PUBLIC SPEAKER** is a bonafide Project work done by B.A I students listed below,

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HOW I BECAME A PUBLIC SPEAKER

-GEORGE BERNARD SHAW (1856-1950)

Life Early years

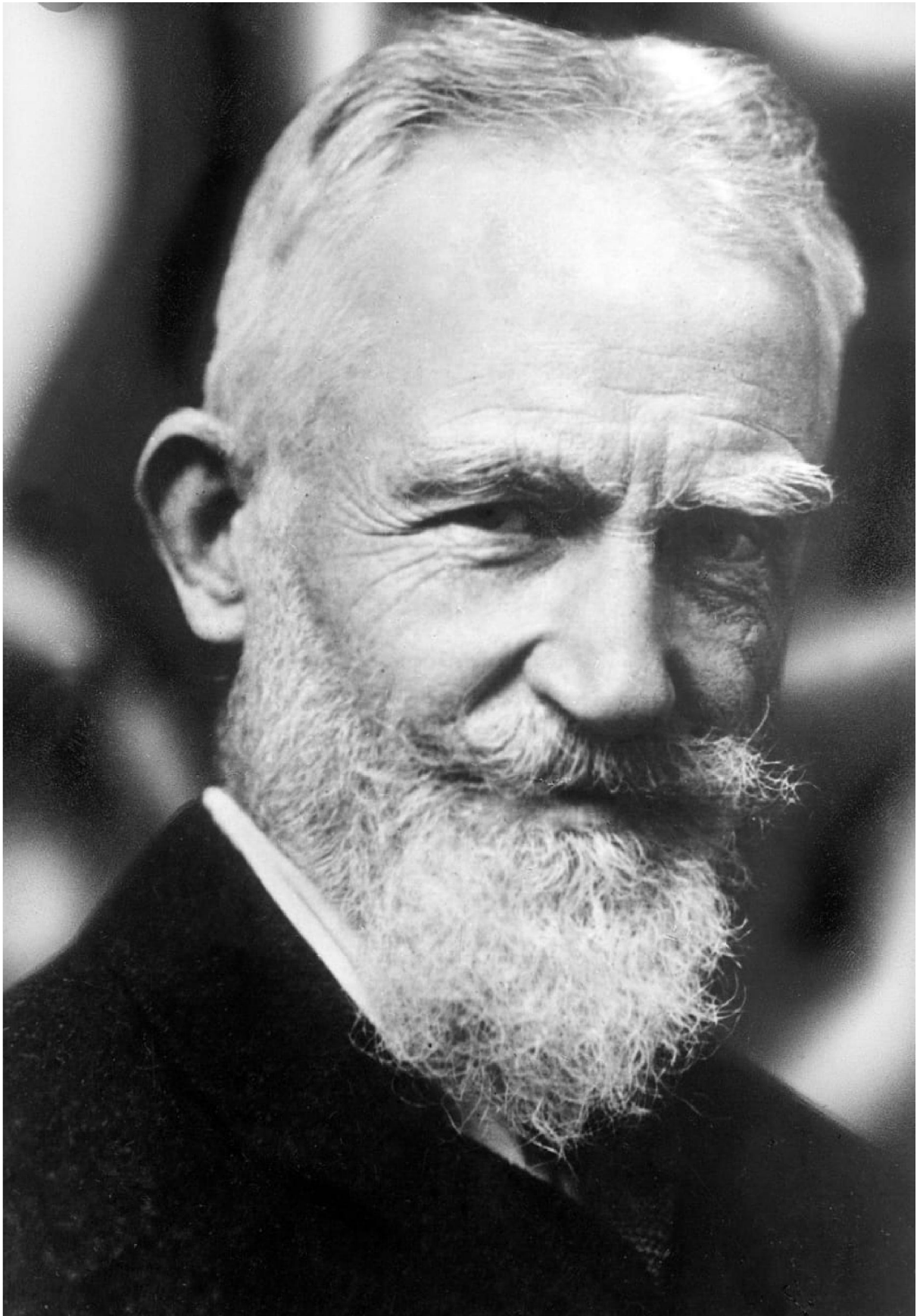
Shaw was born at 3 Upper Synge Street in [Portobello](#), a lower-middle-class part of [Dublin](#). He was the youngest child and only son of George Carr Shaw (1814–1885) and Lucinda Elizabeth (Bessie) Shaw (*née* Gurly; 1830–1913). His elder siblings were Lucinda (Lucy) Frances (1853–1920) and Elinor Agnes (1855–1876). The Shaw family was of [English descent](#) and belonged to the dominant [Protestant Ascendancy](#) in Ireland; George Carr Shaw, an ineffectual alcoholic, was among the family's less successful members. His relatives secured him a [sinecure](#) in the civil service, from which he was pensioned off in the early 1850s; thereafter he worked irregularly as a corn merchant. In 1852 he married Bessie Gurly; in the view of Shaw's biographer [Michael Holroyd](#) she married to escape a tyrannical great-aunt. If, as Holroyd and others surmise, George's motives were mercenary, then he was disappointed, as Bessie brought him little of her family's money. She came to despise her ineffectual and often drunken husband, with whom she shared what their son later described as a life of "shabby-genteel poverty".

By the time of Shaw's birth, his mother had become close to George John Lee, a flamboyant figure well known in Dublin's musical circles. Shaw retained a lifelong obsession that Lee might have been his biological father; there is no consensus among [Shavian](#) scholars on the likelihood of this. The young Shaw suffered no harshness from his mother, but he later recalled that her indifference and lack of affection hurt him deeply. He found solace in the music that abounded in the house. Lee was a conductor and teacher of singing; Bessie had a fine [mezzo-soprano](#) voice and was much influenced by Lee's unorthodox method of vocal production. The Shaws' house was often filled with music, with frequent gatherings of singers and players.

In 1862, Lee and the Shaws agreed to share a house, No. 1 Hatch Street, in an affluent part of Dublin, and a country cottage on [Dalkey Hill](#), overlooking [Killiney Bay](#). Shaw, a sensitive boy, found the less salubrious parts of Dublin shocking and distressing, and was happier at the cottage. Lee's students often gave him books, which the young Shaw read avidly; thus, as well as gaining a thorough musical knowledge of choral and operatic works, he became familiar with a wide spectrum of literature.

Between 1865 and 1871, Shaw attended four schools, all of which he hated. His experiences as a schoolboy left him disillusioned with formal education: "Schools and schoolmasters", he later wrote, were "prisons and turnkeys in which children are kept to prevent them disturbing and chaperoning their parents." In October 1871 he left school to become a junior clerk in a Dublin firm of land agents, where he worked hard, and quickly rose to become head cashier. During this period, Shaw was known as "George Shaw"; after 1876, he dropped the "George" and styled himself "Bernard Shaw".

In June 1873, Lee left Dublin for London and never returned. A fortnight later, Bessie followed him; the two girls joined her. Shaw's explanation of why his mother followed Lee was that without the latter's financial contribution the joint household had to be broken up. Left in Dublin with his father, Shaw compensated for the absence of music in the house by teaching himself to play the piano.



Political awakening: Marxism, socialism, Fabian Society

On 5 September 1882 Shaw attended a meeting at the Memorial Hall, [Farringdon](#), addressed by the political economist [Henry George](#). Shaw then read George's book [Progress and Poverty](#), which awakened his interest in economics. He

began attending meetings of the [Social Democratic Federation](#) (SDF), where he discovered the writings of [Karl Marx](#), and thereafter spent much of 1883 reading *Das Kapital*. He was not impressed by the SDF's founder, [H. M. Hyndman](#), whom he found autocratic, ill-tempered and lacking leadership qualities. Shaw doubted the ability of the SDF to harness the working classes into an effective radical movement and did not join it—he preferred, he said, to work with his intellectual equals.

After reading a tract, *Why Are The Many Poor?*, issued by the recently formed [Fabian Society](#), Shaw went to the society's next advertised meeting, on 16 May 1884. He became a member in September, and before the year's end had provided the society with its first manifesto, published as Fabian Tract No. 2. He joined the society's executive committee in January 1885, and later that year recruited Webb and also [Annie Besant](#), a fine orator.

From 1885 to 1889 Shaw attended the fortnightly meetings of the [British Economic Association](#); it was, Holroyd observes, "the closest Shaw had ever come to university education." This experience changed his political ideas; he moved away from Marxism and became an apostle of [gradualism](#). When in 1886–87 the Fabians debated whether to embrace [anarchism](#), as advocated by [Charlotte Wilson](#), Besant and others, Shaw joined the majority in rejecting this approach. After a rally in [Trafalgar Square](#) addressed by Besant was violently broken up by the authorities on 13 November 1887 ("[Bloody Sunday](#)"), Shaw became convinced of the folly of attempting to challenge police power. Thereafter he largely accepted the principle of "permeation" as advocated by Webb: the notion whereby socialism could best be achieved by infiltration of people and ideas into existing political parties.

Novelist and critic

The mid-1880s marked a turning point in Shaw's life, both personally and professionally: he lost his virginity, had two novels published, and began a career as a critic. He had been celibate until his twenty-ninth birthday, when his shyness was overcome by Jane (Jenny) Patterson, a widow some years his senior. Their affair continued, not always smoothly, for eight years. Shaw's sex life has caused much speculation and debate among his biographers, but there is a consensus that the relationship with Patterson was one of his few non-platonic romantic liaisons.

The published novels, neither commercially successful, were his two final efforts in this genre: *Cashel Byron's Profession* written in 1882–83, and *An Unsocial Socialist*, begun and finished in 1883. The latter was published as a serial in *ToDay* magazine in 1884, although it did not appear in book form until 1887. *Cashel Byron* appeared in magazine and book form in 1886.

In 1884 and 1885, through the influence of Archer, Shaw was engaged to write book and music criticism for London papers. When Archer resigned as art critic of *The World* in 1886 he secured the succession for Shaw. The two figures in the contemporary art world whose views Shaw most admired were [William Morris](#) and [John Ruskin](#), and he sought to follow their precepts in his criticisms. Their emphasis on morality appealed to Shaw, who rejected the idea of [art for art's sake](#), and insisted that all great art must be [didactic](#).

Of Shaw's various reviewing activities in the 1880s and 1890s it was as a music critic that he was best known. After serving as deputy in 1888, he became musical critic of *The Star* in February 1889, writing under the pen-name Corno di Bassetto. In May 1890 he moved back to *The World*, where he wrote a weekly column as "G.B.S." for more than four years. In the 2016 version of the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Robert Anderson writes, "Shaw's collected writings on music stand alone in their mastery of English and compulsive readability." Shaw ceased to be a salaried music critic in August 1894, but published occasional articles on the subject throughout his career, his last in 1950.

From 1895 to 1898, Shaw was the theatre critic for *The Saturday Review*, edited by his friend [Frank Harris](#). As at *The World*, he used the by-line "G.B.S." He campaigned against the artificial conventions and hypocrisies of the [Victorian theatre](#) and called for plays of real ideas and true characters. By this time he had embarked in earnest on a career as a playwright: "I had rashly taken up the case; and rather than let it collapse I manufactured the evidence".

HOW I BECAME A PUBLIC SPEAKER

Introduction :

George Bernard Shaw was a very bad public speaker and he seriously wanted to make his career in public speaking, but he knew nothing about the nuances of the public speaking and oration at the very beginning of his career. His hard work and sheer perseverance shaped him to be a famous public speaker, orator and debater. He learned public speaking from his own experiences. He failed at his early attempts, slowly he progressed towards perfection and reached the height of excellence.

Explanation:

Shaw and his friend Lecky attended the Zetetical conference. He had never spoken in public before, and he had no idea how to speak in public meetings. There was a debate going on. He stood up and chattered something towards the speaker. He was able to estimate his reply as a meaningless one. He felt ashamed of it. So, he joined the society and attended every meeting. At the starting, his speeches were ignored by the members of the society. But, the members gradually started to hear his speeches. He perfected his oration techniques progressively by hard work.

Shaw was chaired at the third meeting, and he agreed. He read a lot of works by notable authors including Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, and George Eliot. He had made some notes. He was present at every meeting. He talked on the streets, in parks, and everywhere else he could. He also attended all of University College's meetings and debate organisations. Shaw took part in arguments at all of these sessions, and his nervousness vanished.

He continued as public speaker. **"Thieves" was the title of his first lecture** spoke for an hour. He spoke on the spur of the moment. Whenever and wherever he was questioned, he spoke up. With him, it was first come, first served. He provided the applicant the first day he had available when he received an application for a lecture. In the pouring downpour in Hyde Park in London, he gave one of his best addresses. His presentation was only attended by six cops. They, along with the secretary of the Society who held an umbrella over Shaw, were on duty to listen to his address. He spoke for more than an hour.

Shaw was not paid for his orations. But he was given ten guineas by the Sunday Societies on the condition that he not talk on sensitive political or religious topics. Shaw, on the other hand, stated that he would only speak on contentious political and religious issues and that he would not accept any payment other than his third class train ticket. Shaw was permitted to speak about contentious politics and religion on this condition. Shaw was able to use his right to free speech as a result of his actions.

His public meetings made him a good speaker. They are the committee habit and platform technique. **Once in St. James' Hall, London** at a meeting, Shaw's opponent tried to defeat him. Shaw used his platform technique to defeat his opponent. Shaw made a speech. In the speech Shaw laughed at his opponent. Suddenly the opponent rushed to the platform to answer Shaw. But his followers had thought that their leader was going to attack Shaw. So they all rushed to the platform and they broke up the meeting. Again the meeting was reorganized and the opponent was made the chairman and Shaw became the speaker again. Thus Shaw succeeded in defeating his opponents. On another occasion Shaw defeated H.G.Wells in a famous debate. Here also Shaw very skilfully used the committee training and platform technique to defeat the great writer H. G. Wells.

Conclusion:

Shaw says that practice only cured his nervousness and got him used to speak to multitudes or to private persons. It was a regular practice in a gradual manner. All of his speeches were highly commanding and appeal to everyone who hears them.