

# George Bernard Shaw

(1856-1950)

G. B shaw was one of the most famous men of letters of the 20th century. He was a playwright, literary critic and social activist. For his remarkable body of work, he was awarded Nobel prize in 1925.

His initial career as a novelist failed miserably. Subsequently, he became a vegetarian, a socialist, a polemicist and above all a playwright. He became the force behind the newly founded Fabian Society (1884) - the middle-class socialist group that aimed at the transformation of English society, not through revolutions but 'permeation' of the country's intellectual and political life. In 1895, he was appointed at the theatre critics for the Saturday Review. Working as a theatre critic, Shaw turned his hand to writing plays and finally became a published writer. His first plays were published in two volumes interestingly titled, plays *Unpleasant* and plays *Pleasant*.

Shaw's first play that brought him some financial success was *Arms and the Man* (1894) which satirises conventions of love, military, honour and class. In 1912, Shaw published *Pygmalion*, his comic masterpiece about love and English class system. It won him an oscar as the play was made into a movie which was a huge success. At the outbreak of world war I, Shaw published an essay titled "Common Sense About the War" describing the war as a tragic waste of young lives under the guise of patriotism. The essay led to a considerable decline in his popularity and

social stature. Shaw also supported the Indian independence movement and met Mahatma Gandhi in 1931 in London.

Some of his famous plays are *Arms and the Man* (1894), *The Devil's Disciple* (1897), *Man and Superman*, (1903) *Candida* (1894), etc.