

## **How Wealth accumulates and Men Decay by G B Shaw**

‘How Wealth accumulates and Men Decay’ is a short essay by George Bernard Shaw from his book *The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*.

In the essay Shaw exemplifies the disastrous nature of Capitalism on the human mind. Shaw begins the essay with the example of pinmakers – their complete knowledge of making, buying and selling the product door to door in earlier times. Shaw praises the knowledge of the pinmakers and the skill that was required of them in order to sell their product. This overall nature of their work from its very inception to selling it to the customers was something that was unique to the makers of the product.

However, with the coming of Capitalism on the scene Shaw writes, the workforce of something as small as pinmaking was distributed among eighteen men, with everyone doing little bit of a job without any knowledge of what the unique features of the finished product. Although this system made the society affluent with its production, it however turned ‘men into mere machines doing their work without intelligence’. This accumulation of wealth with the help of capitalist market where progress, development and advancement seem to be the catchphrases, has actually led humankind to lose its skill and knowledge of the work they are performing. The same Shaw holds true for the cloth makers. While as earlier they had the knowledge of how clothes could be made from shearing the sheep to the finished product, the modern man/woman (read consumer) is

unable to even make a connection between the animal and the finished product. The replacement of the knowledge on the part of the makers with machines has led towards a disastrous unmaking for the humankind.

The capitalist system, for Shaw, apart from producing products at a huge scale has nonetheless produced a 'universal ignorance of how things are made and done' for the humans. The humans have thus been reduced to thoughtless beings fed on nothing but 'romantic nonsense out of illustrated newspapers and novels and plays and films.' With its astonishing spread of ignorance, Shaw ridicules the world of Capitalism which boasts of the spread of education and enlightenments.