

**FEMALE SENSIBILITY AND SELF-DIGNITY: STUDY OF NEW  
WOMAN IN BERNARD SHAW'S *ARMS AND THE MAN* AND *CANDIDA***

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**Abstract**

Shaw was a socialist, so he supported the principle of equality of the sexes. He wished to give the women a self-assertive role in the community who were known as the 'New Woman'. In his plays, Shaw alters the traditional concepts of women who were depicted as inferior to men physically, economically, morally, socially, and politically and also challenges the traditional notions of 'Angel' in the house and sexually voracious image. Shaw has reversed the qualities of a man and a woman which come traditionally from one generation to another generation and has presented woman having her own desires, passions, position, identity, and liberty in the society. So being influenced by the realistic and socialistic values of Henrik Ibsen, Bernard Shaw, in his plays, projects the female sensibility and emancipation of women through the concept of 'New Woman'. In this paper, I throw light on the female world – their desires, self dignity, evolution, challenges through the concept of New Woman and their independent role in the society.

**Keywords:** New Woman, female sensibility, emancipation, challenge, self dignity, evolution, independent.

In 'Toward a Feminist Poetics', Elaine Showalter talks about the female sensibility and views that female images, the feminine experience and ideology, and the history and development of the female literary tradition should be reflected in the works of literature which should be written by the female writers. Woolf was of the opinion that "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." (Woolf, 7) In the present age, woman must have money and a room of her own in order to get self dignity and respite in the society. So both Showalter and Virginia Woolf talk about the female sensibility and emancipation of women that led them to become the mouthpieces of Feminist Criticism. Like them, Bernard Shaw also exhibits the female sensibility and emancipation of women in his plays 'Candida' and 'Arms and the Man' in which he projects the concept of 'New Woman' who is not like a traditional woman - meek, mild, spiritual, inactive, obedient; and god loving, husband, children and parents'

loving woman and is not aware of her own rights, but bold, ingenuous, coquettish, active, imaginative, brave and aware of her own rights. 'New Woman' does not mean a new kind of woman who comes from different world or planet, but 'new woman' in the sense of new qualities of a woman which make her the best or the perfect woman having her own desires, passions, position, identity, liberty in the society. The 'new woman' is essentially a woman of awareness and consciousness of her position in the family as well as in the society. The modern 'New Woman' is against the marriage life and remains spinster to identify their own identity. 'New Woman' is said to have been coined by Ouida when responding to Sarah Grand's article "The New Aspects of the Woman Question, 1894. In Grand's own novels like 'The Heavenly Twins' and 'The Beth Book' we find many new qualities of a woman. In these novels, he attacks on sexual double standards; demands for better employment and educational opportunities for woman; frankness about matters like venereal disease, contraception and sex education and questions of traditional attitudes towards marriage and woman's place in the family and in relation to motherhood" (Drabble, 714). But the term "New Woman" was popularized by American writer Henry James who described the growth of numbers of feminist, educated, and independent women in Europe as well as in United States. Later this term gets full impetus and vitality in the hands of Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen. Shaw gets the concept of 'new woman' from the writings of Ibsen and later he projects this concept in his writings. "It was Shaw, who imported the real Ibsen spirit into English drama. Highly original and independent in many ways, Shaw was immensely influenced by the plays of Ibsen and, like him; he became a champion of conferring the new freedom of subject-matter and technique on English drama. Among modern English dramatists, he proved the most zealous advocate of rationalism and realism, brushing aside Victorian cobwebs, creating a proper climate for a drama of ideas, enlarging the dramatist's vision and, above all, slowly forging an appreciative and responsive intellectual audience for his problem plays" (Banerjee, 520). The feminist literary critic had developed as a component of women's movement and its impact has brought about a revolution in literary studies.

Shaw, a socialist, supported the principle of the equality of the sexes. He wanted to give the women an independent role in the community who were known as the 'New Woman'. Shaw in his plays changes the traditional concepts of women who were depicted as inferior to men physically, economically, morally, socially, and politically and also challenges the traditional notions of 'Angel' in the house and sexually voracious image. Shaw has reversed the qualities of a man and a woman which come traditionally from one generation to another generation and has presented woman having her own desires, passions, position, identity, and liberty in the society. "Most of his heroines have the characteristics of the New Woman: they are independent in spirit, self-confident, clear-headed, morally courageous, and emotionally well-controlled." (Shaw, *Candida*, 93). Shaw in his preface to "Major Barbara" writes: "I violate the romantic convention that all women are angels when they are not devils; they are better looking than man; their part in courtship is entirely passive, and human female form is the most beautiful object in nature". Shaw has presented her heroines as a beautiful, intelligent, bold, courageous, self-assertive, and self-contained as contrary to his heroes who are weak, feeble, gentle, lacking common sense and dependent on women to get happiness in life. In his personal life Shaw had a good relationship with the women. He loved them, respected them, and also honoured them. For this reason in his plays, he had a great place and respect for the women. Shaw has broken all the conventions of the Victorian age in which women were seen as passive, gentle, meek, and husband loving. He has substituted the lady like meek, passive, gentle, spiritual, and delicate heroine of Victorian

drama with the woman of sterner stuff striving for independence. He believes that women are not only to be loved; they should also be equally treated in every field, respected, and even feared. He has supported the physical relationship between the lovers, not the spiritual relationship which leads to frustration, disappointment, despair, and even the breaking of the relationship. “Whereas the common conventional belief is that the man seeks and pursues and masters the woman he desires to marry, in Shaw’s plays it is the woman who seeks out and masters the man she has selected to be the father of her Children” (Shaw, *Candida*, 94). His heroines are not spiritual, but materialistic. They are not very much obedient to their husbands, to their parents, and to their Gods. Shaw has depicted the heroines who are different from the traditional ones in their love affairs also. The traditional heroines were seen as passive, waiting their destinies to be settled by men. But Shaw’s heroines have active roles in their love affairs and their destinies are settled by themselves, not by the men. In his plays, women have active and dominant role in their houses and also other affairs. A mother woman of Shaw shows the great care and responsibility for a work, for a cause, for family members and for God. In this regard Eric Bentley rightly remarks: “Of all the reversals in Shavian drama this is inevitably the most famous reversal in the roles of the sexes. In his comedies, most often the woman is active and the man is passive.” In his plays all good women are presented as more energetic and superior to men. “All Shaw’s heroes and heroines-Lady Cicely in *Captain Brassbound’s Conversion*, Valentine in *You Never Can Tell*, Caesar in *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *Candida*, Major Barbara-stand in their own way for vitality” (Daiches, 1106).

*Arms and the Man* is one of the important plays of Shaw not on account of theme, but for the new ideas which he projected in this play. In this play, he criticizes the romantic notion of love and war and depicts the concept of ‘New Woman’. He projects the women characters as very active, independent, and interesting beings. There are two major women characters in the play – Raina and Louka.

“Shaw characterizes Raina not only as a New Woman but also as possessing an “Eve” complex. Raina mirrors Eve in her impulsiveness, and her falseness. Shaw’s characterization of Raina is neither accidental nor incidental. Shaw’s feministic attitudes toward women in his own life allow us to interpret his representation of Raina as purposeful and self-aware. Many biographers take special note of Shaw’s relationships with women: “the women in Shaw’s family . . . were much stronger than the men” and thus “Shaw was attracted to strong women”.<sup>1</sup> Raina Petkoff is the heroine in the play. She is proud, beautiful, and intelligent. In the very opening, the dramatist gives the description of Raina’s nature.

“On the balcony a young lady, intensely conscious of the romantic beauty of the night, and of the fact that her own youth and beauty are part of it, is gazing at the snowy Balkans” (Shaw, I).

Here, the dramatist shows the sensibility power of Raina. She is not mere the realistic girl. She has the power to think, to feel, and to dream.

In the play, Shaw shows that there must be a physical relationship between lovers. Without physical affection, no relationship will last long. Sexual urge is a basic instinct or natural phenomena of human beings. So to keep relationship long, lovers must have a sexual relationship. Spiritual relationship is the false relationship which only gives upset, sorrow, disappointment and it ends at the breaking of the relationship. So the relationship between Sergius and Raina did not last long because their relationship was based on the spiritual platform. When Raina holds a portrait of Sergius, Shaw writes ironically:

“She does not kiss it or press it to her breast, or shew it any mark of bodily affection; but she takes it in her hand and elevates it like a priestess” (Shaw, I).

Raina is also very bold, brave, and a girl of spirit. She does not get nervous when a stranger enters into her room with a revolver. She says:

“RAINA [cutting him short] you will shoot me. How do you know that I am afraid to die?” (Shaw, I).

Her bold step to hide the stranger and tackling the whole incidents shows her spirited heart and brave nature. She does not get upset when the Russian officer comes to search her room.

On the contrary, Shaw shows the nervous nature of the stranger. He is scared and makes used Raina to save his life. He has used Raina’s cloak to save himself. He says that this is the better weapon than the revolver. A little later he considers himself as a little boy and Raina, a nurse. He considers himself very helpless and feels scared. He gets solace and comfort in the company of Raina. He voices:

“THE MAN If you would, all you have to do is to scold me just as if I were a little boy and my nurse” (Shaw, I).

The man is considered by Raina as a poor soldier who needs courage. She nurses him like his mother and she puts courage in him. A little later she asks her mother not to disturb the poor soldier as he is exhausted and he needs sleep.

She is also very courageous and independent girl. She does not fear anybody. She does not fear of thinking the breaking of relationship of her and Sergius. She is self-assertive, self-assured, and self-contained. When Catherine knows the encounter of Bluntschli with Raina, she fears if it is known by Sergius, what will happen. But Raina utters:

“RAINA I always feel a longing to do or say something dreadful to him – to shock his propriety – to scandalize the five senses out of him.[To Catherine, perversely] I don’t care whether he finds out about the chocolate cream soldier or not. I half hope he may” (Shaw, II).

She is admired and respected by Bluntschli and Sergius for her commonsense, beauty, noble attitude, and manner of behaving with them.

She is a girl of high intellect and high commonsense. She knows in what situation what words should use and what words should not use. She also knows how to manage the problematic situation. She tackles all the problems very tactfully and easily. Her managing to bring photographs from the pocket of her father really puzzles us.

But, at the end of the play, she has chosen Bluntschli and rejected Sergius as her suitor. This incident puzzles us more. She has chosen Bluntschli not because of his money, but because of his helpless and scared nature. She does not want money. But it shows indirectly that she was economically secured by marrying him. She wants to be independent and free which she will get in the house of Bluntschli. She wants to nurse him as a boy and feels superior to him. She convinces that she does not want to be sold like an object. She wants to get married with dignity and respect. She says:

“RAINA [pretending to sulk] The lady says that he can keep his tablecloths and his omnibus. I am not here to be sold to the highest bidder. [She turns her back on him]” (Shaw, III).

Throughout the play, Bluntschli is presented as a helpless and poor fellow like a boy who needs care and nursing. He stoops to a very low position to get the hand of Raina.

“BLUNTSCHLI I won’t take that answer. I appealed to you as a fugitive a beggar, and a starving man” (Shaw, III).

Thus, throughout the play, Raina is presented as a ‘New Woman’. She is depicted as a beautiful, bold, brave, intelligent, active, self-contained, self-assertive, self-assured, and respected girl. She is presented as a superior to Sergius and Bluntschli.

Louka is the most important and interesting woman character in the play. Though she is a maid servant in the Petkoff’s family, her attitude and behaviour do not show her servile nature. She is beautiful, proud, ambitious, shrewd, and a woman of common sense. She is quite realistic and practical in her attitude towards life.

When the play opens, her personality is depicted explicitly and vividly.

“...Louka, a handsome proud girl in a pretty Bulgarian peasant’s dress with double apron, so defiant that her servility to Raina is almost intolerant. She is afraid of Catherine, but even with her goes as far as she dares” (Shaw, I).

She is not a subdued maid. She always has a look of defiance on her face. She is slightly afraid of Catherine, towards Raina; her attitude is insolent and impertinence. She is not afraid of anyone in the house. She is very bold, courageous and a woman of spirit.

Louka is not subjugated by men as well as by women. She is totally independent character. She behaves like her masters. She has no servile nature. She is not like Nicola; a male servant has a timid nature and is afraid of his masters. He warns Louka by saying that she should improve her manners. Otherwise, she will be dismissed from her duty because Catherine is so noble and superior that she never dreams that any servant of her could dare to be disrespected to her. But Louka says:

“LOUKA I do defy her. I will defy her. What do I care for her?” (Shaw, II).

Later she says that she is not like Nicola who has no spirit and has a servile nature. She feels superior to Nicola and equal to other members of the family. She knows that she will not be harmed by anyone because she knows some secrets of the family.

Nicola having understood the matters, he has given more advices to her. He says to Louka that she must be respectful; otherwise it will bring her doom. But Louka possesses the indomitable spirit and exasperates Nicola for possessing servant spirit.

“LOUKA [with searching scorn] You have the soul of a servant, Nicola” (Shaw, II).

A little later she makes more bold statement. She says:

“LOUKA ... Youll never put the soul of a servant into me.” (Shaw, II).

Louka is a woman of good sense and intellect. She knows in what situation which words would be right to say and what would be right to do. When Sergius flirts with her in the open space, she tactfully manages the situation by proving suggestion to Sergius not to flirt in the public place.

She is also a very cunning girl. For her cunningness, she is able to break the relationship of Sergius and Raina and gets Sergius as her suitor. Louka makes Sergius to believe that Raina has an affair with another man. After hearing the words, Sergius gets surprised and angry. Then he says to Louka that she is very detestable woman and has no sense of honour. But Louka defends herself on her own way.

Louka is a defiant girl. She is not a passive and submissive girl. When Nicola tries to subjugate her inducing by money, she replies:

“LOUKA Keep your money. You were born to be a servant. I was not” (Shaw, III).



Later she says to Nicola that he will never be her master. But she wishes that he would rather be her servant than her husband. She says that she behave in her own way, not be regulated by anyone.

“LOUKA [rising impatiently] Oh, I must behave in my own way. You take all the courage out of me with your cold-blooded wisdom” (Shaw, III).

She is very brave and courageous. She says to Sergius that she is not less brave than any rich man. She also says that women have more brave than men.

“LOUKA How easy it is to talk! Men never seem to me to grow up: they all have schoolboy’s ideas” (Shaw, III).

She then tells Sergius that she would marry the man she loved, which other queen in Europe has no courage to do. She will marry Sergius if he marries her now. But if he later comes to her with the proposal of marriage, she will refuse him. These remarks show that she is very defiant, courageous, and self-contained.

Nicola accepts before everybody that Louka is superior to him. She is more ambitious and more courageous than him. She is defiant, independent, and has a large soul. She has a soul above her station, and he has been more than her confidential servant. Though she is a maid servant, Sergius bends before her to apologize.

Louka is not inferior to anyone. When she calls Raina by her name, everyone gets astonished. But she utters:

“LOUKA I have a right to call her Raina; she calls me Louka” (Shaw, III).

At the end of the play, she gets married to Sergius because of her cunningness, brevity, and ambition. Though she is a maid servant, she has a high ambition. At last, her ambition gets fulfilled. She thinks never herself to be inferior to anyone. She does not have a servile nature. Throughout the play, she has been struggling with her position and identity. But at the end, she gets her identity and position by marrying Sergius.

So, it is observed that in ‘Arms and the Man’ women are presented as more active, more powerful, and more intellectual than men. Louka and Nicola are two servants in the Petkoff’s house. Louka is a maid servant and Nicola is a male servant. Louka is presented as an active, independent, intelligent, bold, and courageous woman. She is not afraid of anyone. She is not a subdued maid. She always has a look of defiance on her face. She is slightly afraid of Catherine, but towards Raina, her attitude is insolent and impertinence. She is not passive and submissive woman. Nicola has tried to subjugate her by talking of moral behaviour and by inducing her by money. But she is adamant and not is subjugated by his words. She has considered Nicola as mere servant who is born with servile nature having no power. She has said Nicola that he will never be her husband in future, but will be her servant. Nicola is afraid of Catherine, Raina, Petkoff and everyone in the family. But Louka is afraid of nobody. She has done everything which she thought to be right. She speaks as she wishes. At the end of the play, she has called Raina by her name, not by madam. Sergius, at last, kneels before her to apologize and request her to accept him as her husband. Louka has chosen Sergius as her husband, not Sergius as his wife. All the qualities make her a different from the traditional woman i.e. ‘New woman’.

Raina Petkoff is presented as superior than Sergius and Bluntschli. She has been depicted as a bold, intelligent, active, and independent woman. She has more common sense than Bluntschli who is presented, at the end, as a man of blunt sense. She has considered Bluntschli as a poor darling who has been helpless and tired when entered her room. Bluntschli has his life by using Raina. By showing her bold and courageous nature, Raina has saved his life from the

Russians officers. She has supplied Bluntschli bed for rest, and food to eat and allowed him to sleep without any disturbance like a mother who gives her child food and allows her to sleep. Throughout the play, she has been depicted as an active, bold, and independent. It is Raina who has chosen Bluntschli as her husband, not Bluntschli as his wife. Bluntschli has stooped to a very lower level to get her hand. He has considered himself as a beggar and starving man, not as a rich and intellectual man to get her consent. This shows her self-contained and self-assertive nature. She has married Bluntschli who is her choice, not Sergius who is her parents' choice. In the play, Shaw has depicted Raina as a 'New Woman' who has her own feelings, passions, desires, emotions, and dreams. She has not been subjugated by the men and the family. She is an active and independent figure.

All the male characters are presented as submissive, and dullard. Bluntschli has been presented as helpless and passive figure. Though in the beginning, he has been presented as a man of common sense and intellect, but at the end, he has been proved as a man of blunt sense and intellect. He has thought Raina to be a woman of seventeen, though in reality she is 23. Sergius has been befooled by the cunningness of Louka. At the end, Sergius has no option but to marry Louka. She has played a trick in such a way that Sergius has found no way to come from this trick, but to entangle in the trap. Petkoff is seen as a mere fool. He has been befooled not only by Catherine, but also by Raina. All the male characters such as Bluntschli, Sergius, Petkoff, and Nicola have been depicted as inferior and unintelligent to the women characters.

The marriage of Raina and Bluntschli; Louka and Sergius are not like the traditional marriage. In the traditional plays, a girl marries that man who is chosen by her parents or family. She does not have any option to choose her suitor in such play. She is totally passive in this matter. She does not have any option but to marry that man. But in this play, the traditional rules have been rejected regarding the choice of woman's suitor. Raina has married Bluntschli who has been chosen by her, not by her parents or family. Louka has married Sergius who has been chosen by her, not by her parents or society. Everyone has known that Nicola would be Louka's future husband. But she has rejected Nicola and married Sergius. In this play, the women have not been chosen by the men as their future wives, but the men have been chosen by the women as their husbands.

The relationship between Sergius and Louka is based on the physical affection, not on spiritual. Shaw shows that to make an eternal relationship, there must be physical affections, not spiritual. Without physical affections, no relationship will last long. Sexual urges is a basic instinct or natural phenomena to human beings. Spiritual relationship is a false relationship which only gives upset, sorrow, and disappointment which ends at the breaking of a relationship. So, according to Shaw, there must have a physical relationship between lovers. The relationship between Sergius and Raina has been broken because their relationship is based not on the physical affection, but spiritual. Louka has Sergius because of her sexual impulses. This idea is new in this play, projected by Shaw. Physical relationship has been considered as a sin by the traditional writers. But Shaw wants to show it as a natural phenomena or basic instinct of human beings.

"Candida (1895) has been studied variously by the critics of Shaw. G E Brown argues that in Candida Shaw depicts a triangular relationship among Candida, Morell and Marchbanks. Martin Meisel reads Candida as a domestic comedy in which Shaw dramatizes family life. Maurice Colbourne opines that the play is a comedy of simple conflict of ordinary life. J L Styan holds that Candida is a play of mothering in which Candida chose to mother rather than do anything else. Bernard F Dukore opines

that *Candida* is a parody of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Louis Crompton views *Candida* as a naturalistic play in which Shaw discusses domestic life of the Victorian society of England."<sup>2</sup> '*Candida*' can be studied as a feminist play also in which *Candida* is presented as a 'New Woman'. The protagonist of the play is *Candida*. The title of the play is given after the name of the protagonist. *Candida* is the main and attracting figure in this play. She has very active role, not passive.

Before *Candida* appears on stage, she is enthusiastically described by her husband as an angel. Marriage to *Candida*, Morell declares, is a foretaste of what Heaven will be like. Lexy Mill describes her as a very beautiful woman and Marchbanks, throughout most of the play, sees her as an ideal woman, divinely superior to ordinary mortals. In that character portrait of *Candida*, Shaw describes her-

"She is a woman of 33, well built, well nourished, likely one guesses, to become matronly later on but now quite at her best, with the double charm of the youth and motherhood. Her ways are those engaging their affection, and who does so frankly and instinctively without the smallest scruple. So far, she is like another pretty woman who is just clever enough to make the most of her sexual attractions for trivially selfish ends; but *Candida's* serene brow, courageous eyes, and well-shaped mouth and chin signify largeness of mind and dignity of character to ennoble her cunning in the affections. A wise hearted observer, looking her, would at once guess that whoever had placed the *Virgin of the Assumption* over her hearth did so because he fancied some spiritual resemblance between them and yet would not suspect either her husband or herself of any such idea, or indeed of any concern with the art of Titian"(Shaw, I).

A woman like *Candida* naturally is not to be disposed of by two men. In the traditional plays dealing with the eternal triangle, the woman was passive, waiting her destiny to be settled by men. But Shaw could never do that. In this play, *Candida* is an independent figure having her own feeling, desire, decision, and liberty. *Candida* as soon as she understands, what has passed between Morell and Marchbanks, decides to end the matter in her own way. She turns to the two men and asks:

CANDIDA Oh! I am to choose, am I? I suppose it is quite settled that I must belong to one or the other. ...

CANDIDA .....And pray, my lords and master, what have you to offer for my choice? I am up for auction, it seems. What do you bid, James?...

MORELL [ with proud humility] I have nothing to offer you but my strength for your defence, my honesty for your surety, my ability and industry for your livelihood, and my authority and position for your dignity. That is all it becomes a man to offer to a woman.

CANDIDA [quite quietly] And you, Eugene? What do you offer?

MARCHBANKS: My weakness. My desolation. My heart's need.

CANDIDA [significantly] I give myself to the weaker of the two" (Shaw, III).

She considers James as a baby who needs love, care and affections. She tells Eugene to ask Morell's mother and three sisters what it cost to save James the trouble of doing anything but to be strong and clever and happy. Now she has replaced them all, built him a castle of comfort and indulgence and love, and made him master of it. Eugene is a rejected child who had



learned to live without love. James, on the other hand, would collapse without it, and is therefore the weaker of the two. She has chosen James. Later Morel has accepted what Candida said and says that she is his wife, mother, and sister- all in one. Here we see the independent, intellectual nature of Candida.

Candida is depicted as an intellectual and active woman. She is not passive and mere fool. She is never satisfied unless she takes the initiative in things. In a crisis, she takes the decision, for hers is the sharper wit and the keener intellect. Along with her very feminine qualities like maternal charm, capacity for affection, and tenderness, she combines a very clever brain and extraordinary commonsense. She runs the house efficiently, and builds a castle of comfort around her big baby of her husband but her true intellect is shown when she is confronted with the idea of choosing between Morell and Marchbanks. During the auction scene while both men are plunged in pathetic dread and unbearable suspense, Candida remains absolutely calm and collected. The ease with which she handles a situation which would have been given acute embarrassment to lesser woman is indeed superb.

That Candida is a child of commonsense is evident from the way in which she puts up with Prossy and her adoration of Morell for the simple reason that is something very convenient for her. In spite of her liking for poetry, she is down to earth in her conduct. She manages the household efficiently and even scrubs the floor much to the horror of the young poet. Candida shows herself as an exceptional woman in her lack of jealousy. It is her commonsense which leads her realizing the love of Prossy to Morell. But she does not mind it and she is shrewd enough to find its practical value. She asks Morell:

“CANDIDA Yes, Prossy, and all the other secretaries you ever had. Why does Prossy Condescend to wash up the things, and to peel potatoes and abase herself in a manner of ways for six shillings a week less than she used to get in a city office? She is in love with you, James: that’s the reason. Theyre all in love with you. And you are in love with preaching because you do it so beautifully. And you think its all enthusiasm for the kingdom of Heaven on earth; and so do they. You dear silly!” (Shaw, II).

Her decision to stay with Morell is also prompted by sheer commonsense. She knows that without her, Morell is like a pearl less snake. He is like a baby who needs love, mate, and affection. Eugene can live without her as he was growing up lonely and desolately. But James would collapse without her love. She also thinks about her age and Marchbanks. The gap of age so much that it would not match. At last she asks Marchbanks to write a poem regarding them. She then says the words to him:

“CANDIDA When I am thirty, she will be forty five. When. I am sixty; she will be seventy-five” (Shaw, III).

In ‘Candida’ Candida is presented as superior to Morell. She has equal, sometimes more power in her home. She is the one who makes Morell master of her home. She is the one who builds a castle of comfort, indulgence, and love. She has also an active role, not passive in the play. In the crisis, she has taken an active role. It is she who has decided who will be her perfect and suitable husband. In the traditional plays dealing with the eternal triangle love, the woman was seen as passive, waiting her destiny to be settled by man. But in this play, reverse thing happens. But in this play, reverse thing happens. It is Candida, not Morell or Eugene, settles herself her own destiny. She also settles the destiny of Morell and Eugene. Here, Morell and Eugene are seen as passive figures. Candida is also a woman of common sense. By applying her common sense, she has accepted Morell and rejected Eugene as her husband. She has considered

Morell as a baby who needs love, care, and affection. For this reason, she has thought that Morell needs her more than Eugene. It is Candida who provides happiness to Morell. Here, Morell is presented as a weak, helpless, and passive figure.

Thus, it is seen that Shaw has seen the women differently unlike the traditional writers who has seen the world as it is. Shaw has thought about the established beliefs and concepts and found that it would be wrong to write on the woman issues giving them the traditional qualities. At that time, society was patriarchal society. Women were suppressed, repressed, oppressed, and subjugated by men. Women were deprived of their basic needs and basic rights. They were maltreated and shown to be inferior to men. Shaw was a socialist and reformist. He thought that it would be unjust to his part to write like the traditional writers. On the other hand, suppression, repression, and subjugation of the women were not only unjust legally and socially, but also these prevent the growth of a nation. These prevent to build a higher and higher form of life which is the main purpose of the Life Force. So he wrote about the women giving them the new qualities. He thought that these kinds of writing will help to change the society as well as the traditional beliefs and concepts about man and woman. It will also help the women to know of their perfect behaviour or right qualities and how to behave and how to live in the society.

In these two plays, Shaw has projected the female's sensibility and self-dignity of women through the concept of 'New Woman'. These two plays are centred on the women's world and their bravery, wishes, desires and emotions. He has rejected the traditional qualities of a man and a woman and presented the new qualities reversely. Women characters such as Candida, Raina Petkoff, and Louka are seen as an active, bold, intelligent, independent, liberal, self-assertive, and courageous. They are not passive and submissive figures like the traditional women characters. Through the critical study of these two plays, it is explored that Candida, Raina and Louka are not the traditional women but are new women having different qualities.

Though the two plays deal with the social problems and woman issues, they deal with the women differently. At first we see that Shaw has projected the heroines of both the plays as beautiful, independent, active, bold, and the women of common sense and intellect. We see that the heroines—Raina, Louka, Candida—of both the plays are beautiful and attractive. Whereas the common conventional belief that the man seeks and pursues and masters the woman he desires to marry, in Shaw's plays it is the woman who seeks out and masters the man she has selected to be the father of her children. In both the plays, we see that the heroines chose their suitors as their future husbands. In 'Candida' it is Candida, not Morell or Eugene, settles herself her own destiny. She also settles the destiny of Morell and Eugene. Here, Morell and Eugene are seen as passive figures. Candida is also a woman of common sense. By applying her common sense, she has accepted Morell and rejected Eugene as her husband. In 'Arms and the Man' Raina has married Bluntschli who has been chosen by her, not by her parents or family. Louka has married Sergius who has been chosen by her, not by her parents or society. Everyone has known that Nicola would be Louka's future husband. But she has rejected Nicola and married Sergius. In this play, the women have not been chosen by the men as their future wives, but the men have been chosen by the women as their husbands. All the male characters of both the plays are presented as weak, helpless, submissive, and dullard. In 'Arms and the Man' Bluntschli has been presented as helpless and passive figure. Though in the beginning, he has been presented as a man of common sense and intellect, but at the end, he has been proved as a man of blunt sense and intellect. He has thought Raina to be a woman of seventeen, though in reality she is 23. Sergius has been befooled by the cunningness of Louka. At the end, Sergius has no option but to marry Louka. She has played a trick in such a way that Sergius has found no way to come from

this trick, but to entangle in the trap. Petkoff is seen as a mere fool. He has been befooled not only by Catherine, but also by Raina. All the male characters such as Bluntschli, Sergius, Petkoff, and Nicola have been depicted as inferior and unintelligent to the women characters. In ‘Candida’ Morell and Marchbanks are presented as Candida’s children as they are helpless and afraid like a child who gets solace in the lap of his mother. Candida considers James as a baby who needs love, care and affections. She tells Eugene to ask Morell’s mother and three sisters what it cost to saves James the trouble of doing anything but to be strong and clever and happy.

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