

Candida : Character analysis

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Candida is a symbolic name suggestive of candidness in her. By virtue of her name, as intended by the play-wright, she is candid. Candour displayed in the play is her prominent trait. The essentials of a woman, of the natural order, certainly disqualify her for being the wife of a mere Parson who goes about lecturing to the cod's heads, as we may call them. But since she is of practical nature she admirably adapts herself to the fidelity which must at any rate be shown to the husband. Her admiration for Marchbanks is not just pretension, but real appreciation of his poetic talent as well as a person of robust understanding. She is not a low woman to be just attracted by the physical attraction in the male. She has an acute insight into a human character of the nature of Marchbanks. She has that romantic touch in her which is obviously missing in her husband. Morell, in her comparison, pales in to insignificance in spite of his big popularity. This character is one of the most wonderful characters of Shaw, who exists on her own right, displays so much liveliness in life that she is easily believed to be one really existing and not merely described in a formal manner. She has been painted with a certain courage, but at the end dismissed with the most conservative design; for Shaw is Shaw, an antiromantic by temperament, and not the romanticist like Maugham or realist like D.H. Lawrence.

• Candida's Candour —

She is an outspoken woman, who does not mince matters and utters facts brazenfacedly. It shows her clarity of thought. By virtue of her being frank she can be called ultra modern. It is not so much her physical charm, as her candour which lends enchantment of her personality. She does not criticise her husband telling him that he does not understand anything, but Marchbanks understands much. Her critical

attitude towards Morell is the result of her outspokenness.

The Essential Personality -

Candida possesses the essential personality in the sense that she shows a great insight into the real character, having greater worth than what it is found in Morell. She is sober. She has an understanding which is worth emulating. She has an awareness of her personal charm, though there is hardly anything which could make her look a paragon. She is just solid. She is compact, and her thoughts are compact. She can rise to the occasion. D.H. Lawrence says at a place that a woman having something of harlot in her happens to be a charming woman. There is something of 'harlot' in her, and it is this factor which blends something fine as a woman in her. In ideas she is pious and pure; had it not been the fact that brass poker in the left alone scene would not have occurred as the 'flaming sword' as described by Marchbanks in that flamboyant manner. No doubt she has essential personality in her being an attractive woman, her robust understanding of characters and her aplomb she maintains as a woman.

A True Mistress of Her Home :-

Candida is the true mistress of her home. She bustles about the house managing things like an ideal house wife. It does not matter that she responds to the love of the poet, in her own manner, she thinks of her home; for it is her first concern. She scrubs the house, fills the paraffin lamps and does other odd chores of the domestic life which becomes any house wife splendidly. They are only bad women who get engrossed with the other men forgetting their sense of duty and home. She makes a great sacrifice in choosing her husband, and not the poet which is only from the point

of view of maintaining the order of her home. Though from the point of view of literary consideration, this gesture may be considered weak, as why she chooses the 'weaker of the two' when she has full power to choose the stronger of the two persons. She perhaps would not like to see her home broken, or it may be from the practical point, that being of 33 years of age she would not be able to go that far in the estimation of the new love in Marchbanks. I think this point should strike a valid note than any other consideration. However, on the surface we see her one who prefers home better than an irresponsible escapade howsoever romantic it might be to her.

• A Responsive Young woman : -

As a dignified married woman she shows enough boldness in responding to the love of Marchbanks. It comes only from a pious feminine soul. She is warmly responsive but not ignobly sensuous. She is bold, but not brazen like a strumpet crossing all boundaries of social restriction. As a woman she for a while remains torn between the duty as a husband and the devotion of a lover. But she is not undecided on the issue. I find the Victorian blood in her, the blood which recognizes the virtue of a wife. But there is a certain warmth in which fairly responds to the love of the poet, it is a different story altogether that she does not succumb to it. She has sane mind screwed upon his shoulders. This warmth is seen in her gestures towards the poet, and never expressed in a brazen manner. How so ever candid she might be, but she carries a secret in her heart which must never be out. Her sacrifice does her great honour.

• The Maternal Trait in Candida :-

There is a strong maternal trait in Candida. She treats Morell and Marchbanks both as a mother would treat her children. She knows as how to chide them and at the same time

remains affectionately bound to them. This maternal instinct in her is a predominant feature of her personality.

A Clever Woman —

She is so much clever in handling the various situations. She saves her home from the impending catastrophe, by resuming her role as a wife, submitting herself to her husband. As a clever woman she feels no 'scruple' in engaging the affection of the people about her. The playwright considers her clever enough or he must not have written: "She is like any other pretty woman is just clever enough to make the most of her sexual attractions for trivially selfish ends."

Candida's Courage of Conviction!

She has an ample courage of conviction which she displays in pushing and pulling her husband and her lover. She is unafraid of her husband for she knows that there is no guile in her. She is bold because of this quality in her, she pins her affection upon Marchbanks and can square her husband in the same glance. She knows it is not sin. Her courage of conviction gives a certain power to her. The character gains the prize emerging from it.

On the whole the character of Candida has been drawn with a certain power, and a certain balance on the part of the playwright. Though Raina in *Arms and The Man* might look much more elegant than her, but she does not possess the qualities residing in Candida.