

## Candida : as a Comedy

classmate

Date

Page

Candida is not a romantic comedy at all in spite of some romantic element in it. The inclusion of Marchbanks, the poet with romantic habits, no doubt tends to make the play a romantic one. But the total spirit of the play tells a different tale altogether. It is a moral play with a passion worthy of classical playwright. The aesthetic colouring only admits of that shape of argument which tends to make the play classical in spirit. The romantic element is just nominal in it. Though the play tends to veer from the classical keel, yet it reverts to the same ultimately. The moral fervour in the playwright is, certainly, stronger than the romantic waywardness in it. It, no doubt, begins with the romantic note in the announcement of Marchbanks declaring his love for Candida in presence of her husband. It appears that onward the play would move on the romantic lines, and no doubt it does, but the end has a different note which gives a sharp curve to it. It resets the classical position of the play.

Shaw makes a socialistic approach to the marital tie in the play. He revolts against the concept of the domestic slavery, and seems to have suggested the socialization of the marital tie. It means that there should be a kind of social pact between the husband and the wife for sharing the drudgery of the home. In short, the play is a long and a intensely debated argument in favour of the socialistic approach in the sphere of marriage.

At the end of the play, in the auction scene, Candida chooses her husband, and not the poet. Is she justified in choosing him? Some critics do not believe the 'instinct' theory propounded by Compton Rickett. The instinct of a woman is a jig-saw puzzle. A woman of the age of Candida should have the instinct to recognize the glamour of romanticism in Marchbanks, a third dimension barging in between the couple. It is also not surprising that she casts the poet aside. It is because of the fact that she fears the social

criticism, which might have arisen in the choice of Marchbanks. The fear of tradition prompts her to make the compulsory choice, which can not be called a sacrifice for the sake of society. There is hardly an instance to show the dislike for Marchbanks. She expresses herself in the play in such a manner as to suggest a sneaking love for Marchbanks, which she does not openly declare, for she dare not. The psychological truth behind the act of rejection of Marchbanks has not been manifested by Shaw. It might be a prudential act on the part of Candida for reverting to the original position in accepting her husband, but not wise. She remains as timid a person one finds usually in the homes. She does not have the guts to defy society. In theory we may say, as I have pointed out before in the relevant context, that Shaw exercises his usual habit of the moral order, rejecting the romantic possibility. Though the end silences the play laying to rest its possible expansion, yet it screeches as it does in the case of a speeding vehicle when suddenly the brakes are applied. It may be socially logical a case but not the psychological reality which he applies in the closure of the play.

Thus the play reveals the hollowness of conventional respectability and its ideal of happiness. The ending of the play is also very helpful to the purpose of the dramatist. If Candida had gone away with Eugene in the end of the play, the ending would have been sensational and melodramatic. The dramatist aims at the problems of domestic life. He attacks the domestic life through Eugene. The writer opines that their married life might show the happiness but there is no glimpse of nobility in it. At the end of the play Eugene declares that he has learnt to lead his life without happiness because life is nobler than that.

Shaw tries present a difference between the happiness without nobility and the nobility without happiness. Candida chooses the former while Eugene is received by the latter. Such a serious theme has been presented through the comic atmosphere. Undoubtedly, the play is neither a comedy nor a tragedy because it deals with the characteristics of both.