



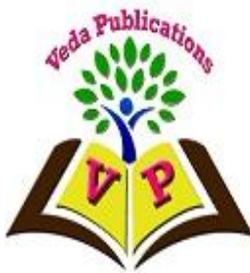
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S HANDLING OF THE THEME OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE

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ABSTRACT



George Bernard Shaw, the greatest British dramatist, next only to Shakespeare, was an Irishman. He was an intellectual and humorist. He was a social reformer as he had a great concern for the welfare of humanity. He was a pragmatist and rationalist. All these qualities were reflected in his plays. Shaw was the founder of the 'drama of ideas'. He was a great playwright, critic, polemicist and a political activist. His dramatic criticism came to be familiar as luminous. He wrote many non-dramatic works also. *Arms and the Man* is an Anti –Romantic Play. It contains three acts only. The present paper presents Shaw's realistic view of love and marriage.

Keywords: *Humorist, Polemicist, Rationalist, Humanity.*

**ANTI-ROMANTIC PLAY**

Arms and the man was a revolutionary play in which the protagonist was an anti-hero. Shaw wrote this play in order to attack what he regarded as false notions of heroism in war and also a false notion about love. The play is anti-romantic in its treatment of heroism in war and also in the treatment of the passion of love. A prosaic professional soldier, by the name of Bluntschli, is introduced into the relationship existing between a typical romantic hero (Sergius) and a typical romantic heroine (Raina) with disastrous consequences to both. On a lower level there is a romantic maidservant in conflict with an ordinary, matter-of-fact man-servant. Shaw's aim was to destroy illusions and to compel his audiences to face realities

THEME OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE

The traditional view of love and marriage had been that love was something romantic and something divine, and that marriage was the union of two hearts pledged to each other in a life-long relationship. Lovers had always felt as if they were natives of a fairyland, and that they were destined to love each other throughout their lives, and not only to love each other but to adore and worship each other. This traditional view of love is here proved to be utterly false. Sergius, the romantic lover, had adored a romantic girl Raina who, in her turn, had been adoring Sergius. The two of them were engaged to each other; and cherished romantic notions about the other. But then a surprising thing happens. Sergius falls in love with Raina's maidservant whose name is Louka and Raina herself transfers her love from Sergius to Bluntschli, the Swiss Soldier who entered her bedroom in a dilapidated and pitiable condition, and whose plight was at that time most wretched and miserable. Such is the reality of love. Love is not necessarily constant. Love can change. Raina finds marriage with Bluntschli to be a more attractive proposition and Sergius feels that he would be happier with Louka.

SHAW'S REALISTIC VIEW OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE

In his plays, Shaw takes a realistic view of love and marriage. A realistic approach to love and marriage is not common. The large majority of young people, who fall in love, live imaginary world and

harbor idealistic notions of love and marriage. In the case of a large majority of people, love belongs to the domain of a fairy land. But this kind of love is only an illusion. Soon these lovers become disillusionment which generally follows marriage when both the partners have to face the harsh facts of real life. Shaw not only wanted to awaken his readers to the realities of love and marriage but also wanted to emphasize the special importance of love and marriage because he regarded marriage as the means of bringing about a new and better generation of the human race. He was greatly interested in eugenics which is the science of improving the quality of human beings by carefully uniting in marriage selected men and women whose offspring would be an improvement on their begetters. However, in the case of the *Arms and the man*, which which was an early play, shaw does not give any indication of his doctrine of race-improvement. This doctrine he later developed fully in his play '*Man and Superman*'. In *Arms and the Man* he was more concerned with exploding the myth of romantic love just as he was also concerned to explode the romantic view of heroism in war in this play.

RAINA'S ROMANTIC VIEW OF THE LOVE BETWEEN HER AND SERGIUS

Raina Petkoff, in this play harbours romantic notions of love. In this respect, she is entirely different from Louka who is a practical kind of girl and whose approach to love and marriage is thoroughly realistic. Raina is engaged to Sergius, and she has been dreaming about the romance of love existing between them, and the romance of the marriage which would follow. Louka, a maidservant in the petkoff family, is engaged to a servant by the name of Nicola. But Louka has no romantic illusions. Louka would like to improve her matrimonial prospects; and this desire of hers is encouraged by her fiancé, Nicola. Louka proceeds with her aim of marrying above her status in a practical and systematic manner; and she succeeds in her purpose, with due encouragement and help from Nicola. Raina, on the contrary, has romantic fancies about love, and these fancies of hers come to a sad end. When the play begins, Raina believes herself to be ardently in love with Sergius. On coming to know of Sergius' victory in war, she feels elated, and



embraces her mother in a mood of rapture. She now feels confirmed in her idea of Sergius as a heroic soldier fighting on battle field fearlessly and distinguishing himself by his bravery and courage. The news of Sergius's cavalry charge upon the Serbians and his triumph over them greatly raises him in her eyes. She tells her mother Catherine that her heroic ideals have been proved by Sergius to be true. She says that she is glad because those ideals of hers have not proved to be illusory or based merely upon the stories written by Byron and Pushkin. She is glad because Sergius has not cut a sorry figure by the side of his Russian officers, and has actually proved himself to be as splendid and noble as she looks. Because of Sergius's victory in the battle, the world now becomes a glorious place for Raina. She says that her happiness at this time is indescribable. When her mother has left, Raina looks at portrait of Sergius and says that she would never be unworthy of him any longer. Addressing the portrait, she describes Sergius as her soul's hero. Her attitude towards Sergius at this time is one of adoration. Even When Bluntschli has told her about the folly of the man who had led a cavalry charge against the Serbians, Raina's view of Sergius does not change much. At this stage, she does not take Bluntschli's remarks about Sergius Seriously. In fact, She takes away Sergius's portrait from Bluntschli's hands, saying that is greatly annoyed with him for talking about her fiancé in a disparaging and derogatory manner. She sternly says to Bluntschli's 'Give me back the portrait, Sir.'

CONCLUSION

In this way, the myth of romantic love has been exploded by Shaw. Romantic love is something constant, something ardent, and something Passionate. But the love in this play has been shown to be inconstant, something practical, and even something materialistic. Raina finds that would be happier with Bluntschli whose approach to life is a common—sense approach, and who is realistic to the core. She can also foresee a Prosperous married life for herself. Louka was ambitious of marrying above her status in life, and her ambition has been fulfilled. Sergius has discovered that Louka can answer the needs of his love more Satisfactorily than Raina could have done. All Raina's talk of love as Something

grand, as something Splendid, and as something uplifting has proved to be false.

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