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‘Portrayal of Women Characters in GB Shaw's play: An Analysis of Characters of Candida and Cleopatra’

Ambika Singh, Adaa Dev

B.A. Honours English, Amity University, Amity School of Languages, Amity University, Lucknow, India

Assistant Professor, Amity University, Amity School of Languages, Amity University, Lucknow, India

ABSTRACT: This paper intends to dive into the works of GB Shaw’s “Candida” and “Caesar and Cleopatra”. The paper also focuses on the representation of Female characters in the play, that is, Candida and Cleopatra by GB Shaw.

KEYWORDS: Drama of Ideas, Family, Marriage, Sex- relations, Historical Drama, Sacrifice, Power, Self -Indulgence

I. INTRODUCTION

Candida, one of Bernard Shaw's most popular plays, is set in modern England's economic and social landscape. It is both harshly critical and wonderfully entertaining. It carries Shaw's protest societal injustice and inhumanity, such as women's oppression in the society in which he lived. He believes that the most fundamental social injustice is done to women since they are underpaid in the industrial sector and are not allowed to earn any independent income for their family work. Candida vividly illustrates the social issues of family, love, marriage, and sex relationships. As a result, Shaw opposes marriage and family because they are founded on incorrect economic and biological premises.

As a biologist, he believes that procreation is the most sacred job of all, and as a socialist, he believes that all work should be compensated equally. Shaw, whose play Candida demonstrates his belief that the concept of family is founded on deception. Since the husband believes he offers security, defence, and livelihood, as well as honour and prestige. However, as we have seen in Candida, it is the wife who provides consolation for the man and keeps away vulgar cares. As a result, to provide additional clarity of the social concerns of a so-called family, marriage, and sex-relations.

Candida is a "drama of ideas," therefore a variety of societal issues are addressed in an innovative and funny manner. The central conflict in the play is whether a woman should stay with her spouse despite their mutual incompatibility or go out with her love, with whom she has far higher compatibility. This is the play's main issue, and it has been explored extensively throughout the Morell-Candida-March banks relationship. It has been rendered solid and real, rather than just an abstract play. Candida is a superb play of action and passion since the main characters are confronted with a serious situation. Candida expresses Shaw's thoughts on love, marriage, and family life in a more realistic and strong manner. The reality of a typical wife's attitude towards a normal husband, an attitude that is neither romantic nor quixotic, crazily unselfish, and yet cynically clear seeing. It involves the wife's sacrifice without involving idolatry, as can be seen on Candida's part for her husband near the end of the play when she chooses to stay with her husband citing the fact that he is the weaker of the two when the other person is her lover March banks. But Candida’s choice of husband is motivated by her class consciousness. She is portrayed as a bold and courageous woman in the play, but she cannot function in society because it is founded on capitalism, to which women have no access, therefore they are obligated not to leave their husbands at any cost.

Caesar and Cleopatra, subtitled "A Historical Drama," is a drama in the style of a sequence of allegedly historical episodes linked primarily by the presence of the main character and the relationship of events over a very short period of time.

The narrative structure is deceptively basic. It represents Caesar's arrival in Egypt in 48 B.C., some of the details of his stay, and his departure at the end of winter. The tensions created by Caesar's great personality's intervention into the difficult scenario posed by Cleopatra's fight with her brother Ptolemy Dionysus for the throne of Egypt are what give it its dramatic impact. Caesar crowns Cleopatra on the throne at the start of the play. Finally, he abandons her to the care of the Romans until Antony arrives. In the meantime, Cleopatra grows from a fearful toddler to a frightening young woman. Cleopatra herself is little more than an abstraction at the start, only the role or "idea" of queenhood, an empty mask whose words, as Belzamor humorously remarks in the Prologue, reflect the will of her counsellors, particularly Ftateeta. Though Caesar does not change, Cleopatra does, and her transformation from an almost fatuous parody of royalty to the actuality of Egypt's ruler, despite Caesar's continual abrasion and hammering, is a crucial structural aspect of the play. The Cleopatra found resting in the arms of the Sphinx lives in a simple world of priests and nurses whom she is obligated to obey, Romans who are "bad" and "barbarian," and easy evasions of magic. Even the elemental fact of power is gone, and when Caesar first endows her with a sense of her own power, she uses it as all those who lack any sense of purpose do: sadistically, to prove to herself her control over others.

Her first act of newfound power is to beat Ftateeta, and she fantasises about the slaves she will torture or the "many young kings, with round, strong arms". Whom she will whip to death after her cravings have been met. Being a queen, she claims, means doing whatever she wants; she is enamoured with a freedom that serves no purpose other than self-indulgence. She loses her dread of Caesar as an idealised divinity, and before she recognises his human stature, she develops an impertinent contempt towards him.

- Comparative study of Candida and Cleopatra

The topics, situations, and characterizations in "Candida" and "Caesar and Cleopatra" are significantly different. However, both plays feature strong and complex female characters, Candida, and Cleopatra, respectively.

One key difference between the two characters is their social status. Candida is a middle-class woman, while Cleopatra is a queen. This difference in social status shapes the way each character interacts with the world around them. Candida's struggles are primarily internal, as she grapples with questions of self-determination and independence. Cleopatra, on the other hand, is constantly navigating complex political and social dynamics, and her struggles are much more external in nature.

Another notable difference between the two characters is their approach to relationships. Candida is a fiercely independent woman who values her own autonomy above all else. She can give love and support to those around her, but she is always mindful of maintaining her own sense of self. Cleopatra, on the other hand, is more willing to sacrifice her own desires and ambitions for the sake of those she loves. Her relationship with Julius Caesar is marked by a complex power dynamic, but ultimately, she is willing to give up her own power and position for the sake of their relationship.

Despite these differences, both Candida and Cleopatra are complex and multi-faceted characters who defy simple categorization. They are both strong and intelligent women who can navigate complex social and political landscapes. They are both flawed, with their own set of strengths and weaknesses, and they both ultimately face challenges that test their resolve and force them to confront difficult truths about themselves and the world around them.

The role of Candida as a woman in the play "Candida" is complex and multi-faceted. On the surface, she appears to be the quintessential Victorian wife, devoted to her husband and her family. However, as the play unfolds, it becomes clear that Candida is much more than just a passive and submissive wife.

One of Candida's defining characteristics is her fierce independence. She is a strong and intelligent woman who is not afraid to speak her mind and assert her own desires and needs. She is not content to simply sit back and let her husband make all the decisions for her, and she is not afraid to challenge the societal norms and expectations that restrict women's roles in Victorian society. At the same time, Candida is also deeply compassionate and nurturing. She has a genuine concern for the welfare of others and is always willing to lend a helping hand to those in need. She takes on the

role of mediator and peacemaker in many of the conflicts that arise throughout the play, and her wisdom and insight are valued by all who know her.

Ultimately, Candida's role as a woman in the play is to challenge the traditional gender roles and expectations of Victorian society. She represents a new kind of woman, one who is strong, independent, and capable of charting her own path in life. By portraying Candida in this way, George Bernard Shaw was able to offer a powerful critique of the limitations placed on women in Victorian society, and to imagine a world where women were free to pursue their own goals and aspirations. The role of Candida in society, as depicted in George Bernard Shaw's play "Candida," is that of a woman who challenges traditional gender roles and expectations. At the time the play was written, in the late 19th century, women were expected to be subservient to men and to devote their lives to serving their families. Candida, however, defies these expectations by asserting her own independence and autonomy. She is a successful businesswoman who manages her husband's publishing firm, and she is not afraid to assert her own opinions and ideas in a male-dominated world.

The role of Cleopatra as a woman in "Caesar and Cleopatra" is also complex and multi-faceted. She is depicted as a strong and intelligent queen who can navigate the complex political and social landscape of ancient Egypt.

One of Cleopatra's defining characteristics is her fierce determination to maintain her power and position as queen of Egypt. She is not content to simply sit back and let others make decisions for her or her people, and she is willing to take bold and decisive action when necessary to protect her interests. At the same time, Cleopatra is also a deeply vulnerable and emotional character. She is driven by a strong desire for love and companionship and is willing to sacrifice her own power and position for the sake of those she loves. Through her portrayal of Cleopatra, George Bernard Shaw was able to offer a powerful critique of the limitations placed on women in ancient times. Cleopatra represents a new kind of woman, one who is strong and intelligent, and who can challenge the traditional gender roles and expectations of her time. By presenting Cleopatra as a complex and multi-faceted character, Shaw was able to offer a nuanced portrayal of a woman who defied easy categorization, and who was capable of both great strength and great vulnerability.

The role of Cleopatra in society, as depicted in George Bernard Shaw's play "Caesar and Cleopatra," is that of a powerful and intelligent queen who defies societal expectations and challenges traditional gender roles. Cleopatra is portrayed as a highly capable leader who is deeply committed to her people and her country. She is willing to take bold and decisive action to protect her interests, and she is not afraid to challenge the authority of men who seek to dominate her. Her intelligence and strategic thinking are highly valued, both by her own people and by Julius Caesar, who comes to admire and respect her. Cleopatra is also portrayed as a highly emotional and vulnerable character. She is driven by a desire for love and companionship and is willing to sacrifice her own power and position for the sake of those she loves. This complexity and nuance in her character defies the societal expectations of women at the time, which were limited to traditional roles of wife and mother. Through her portrayal of Cleopatra, George Bernard Shaw was able to offer a powerful critique of the limitations placed on women in ancient times. Cleopatra represents a new kind of woman, one who is strong and intelligent, and who can challenge the traditional gender roles and expectations of her time. Her role in society is that of a powerful and inspiring figure who defies gender norms and serves as a reminder of women's ability to achieve great things.

II. REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE PLAYS "CANDIDA" AND "CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA"

- Representation of Candida

Candida exposes a variety of social issues as well as the exposure of a variety of views and values. The institution of marriage and family, as well as the exploitation of workers by model bosses, are all examined in depth from many perspectives. Harold Pagliaro examines the play from a psychoanalytic standpoint in his review. In the piece, he investigates the heterosexual and complication in inter-sexual relationships. On the surface, we picture Candida as a strong and fearless woman who appears to be capable of challenging the prevalent assumption of male superiority over female since she develops herself as a 'progressive' and 'self-reliant' woman. However, when we delve deeper, we

discover that she accepts male superiority by choosing to stay with her husband rather than go out with her lover. This demonstrates that, while women appear to be strong and courageous, they ultimately find their men to be stronger and more important in their lives. As a result, without her husband, Candida feels insecure in the performance.

Candida is a "drama of ideas," therefore a variety of societal issues are addressed in an innovative and funny manner.

The central conflict in the play is whether a woman should stay with her spouse despite their mutual incompatibility or go out with her love, with whom she has far higher compatibility. This is the play's main issue, and it has been explored extensively throughout the Morell-Candida-Marchbanks relationship. The institution of marriage and family life, one of society's oldest and most revered institutions, has thus been assailed by Bernard Shaw in this play, exposing its inherent hollowness. He has demonstrated that the exploitation of women underlies home life, that the notion of male superiority is a myth created to oppress and exploit women, and that it commits people of the same sex to a life of economic servitude. The play not only addresses and discusses this issue, but it also portrays it as a genuine issue facing women.

Shaw uses the example of Candida to demonstrate that there are strong, self-assured women in society. However, in the end, they succumb to societal standards and beliefs. We have seen that it also affects Candida, who is ultimately obliged to remain with her husband Morell rather than leave with her lover Marchbanks. The fact that she is afraid of the repercussions of breaking the social norms, or what we refer to as the hegemony of patriarchy, shows that she is likewise obedient to her husband like other ordinary women are. This means that, despite the fact that some women may work hard to achieve equality in their intimate relationships, sexual inequality will always exist as a part of capitalism since it impacts women regardless of their personal arrangements.

Shaw's ideas on love, marriage, and family life are more genuinely and passionately expressed in Candida. In this play, he depicts certain thought-provoking facts, particularly the reality of a typical wife's attitude towards a normal husband, an attitude that is not romantic but rather submissive in character. It entails the wife's sacrifice because she is afraid of the consequences of breaking society's standards and regulations, as well as the women being made to believe that they are weak and reliant. As a result, Candida, while being a strong woman, has been viewed as conforming to social convention. Traditionally, the wife abandons her husband and marries her lover. Candida, on the other hand, is forced to stay and the lover goes away alone. This demonstrates that she is not unfaithful but loyal and committed to her husband, indicating that Candida feels safe under her husband's protection, and such an act by Candida merely reflects the patriarchal authority over her.

- Representation of Cleopatra

The character of Cleopatra mixes fun, flirtatiousness, sensuality, and passion. Even though she is a queen, she does not appear to be able to control her passion. She resembles a lady who plays acts (improvises), is emotionally unstable, and prefers relationships to politics. Her victory reduced fighting and the conquest of entire kingdoms to routine daily tasks. The image of Cleopatra as a seductive beauty who can seduce men stems from her attractiveness and skill at seduction. However, underlying Cleopatra's whims and her exaggerated sensuality and love, there is a clue that her actions are influenced by the intensity of her feelings.

The image of Cleopatra as a young, inexperienced leader who is still learning how to rule her people is one that is negative. She is initially depicted in the play as someone who is easily swayed by her courtiers and who is more concerned with the flimsy trappings of authority than the actual duties of rule. Cleopatra is introduced in the drama as a young, secluded princess who is mesmerised by Julius Caesar's majesty and authority. She coaxes Caesar into supporting her in keeping her title as Queen of Egypt using her wit and charm. But as the play goes on, Cleopatra's character grows and matures, and she gradually acquires the self-assurance and knowledge required to rule her nation on her own. Cleopatra is portrayed as being smart and resourceful throughout the play, utilising her wit and skill to outwit her foes and defend her people. She is also shown to be an emotional, passionate lady who can love deeply and be devoted to those she cares about. She can occasionally become impulsive and irresponsible due to her emotions, which might cause her to make bad choices. Overall, Cleopatra is portrayed in "Caesar and Cleopatra" in a nuanced and complex way by Shaw that highlights both her prowess as a leader and her flaws as a woman. Cleopatra learns and matures from her encounters with Caesar and other characters, finally becoming a strong and competent ruler in her own right.

Cleopatra shares Caesar's ambition for power. She wants nothing more than the freedom to act as she pleases and to be herself, especially given that she has been raised in a household with discipline. Inherent inclinations, however, are unreliable. She is vicious, wilful, vindictive, and conceited by nature; it takes fear to get her to behave appropriately. Cleopatra in Shaw's work is young. Shakespeare's heroine, whom Shaw claimed to strongly respect, is shown as a mature and gorgeously sensuous lady who has been destroyed by passion, she has no desire to control. She is a perfect example of the kind of lady the Renaissance identified with Eve, the temptress, and it's likely that Shakespeare was attracted by the grandeur with which she played the femme fatale. Shaw's Cleopatra pales in comparison. She is torn between want and passion, but neither has made a firm claim on her yet. The hilarious action is set against a backdrop of contrast between her small-minded concerns and Caesar's grand plans.

Caesar and Cleopatra stand in stark contrast. She is immature; in contrast to Caesar, she develops throughout the play. She starts out as a superstitious 16-year-old who is terrified of her nurse, the Romans, and Caesar. She learns the first lesson from Caesar in Act I: don't display fear. She still has a lot to learn before she can become a queen based on her impulsive, juvenile behaviour towards her servants. She needs to develop not just pride and majesty but also courage to overcome her attractiveness. Cleopatra is a volatile adolescent whom Caesar aspires to transform into a woman by the conclusion of Act I. She is girlish, kind, cruel, superstitious, eager to learn, weak terrified, gaily impetuous, honest, and naive. Caesar's humiliation of Ftateeta shows Cleopatra how a ruler may use their personal authority and authority to issue orders to dominate others. At this point, Cleopatra is just concerned with how swiftly she can break free from the previous authority of her nurse. She is still learning how to wield her power and how to act like a queen.

Ftateeta makes her entrance in Act II as if she were a queen. The girl hiding behind her nanny is still Cleopatra. She is perplexed by Caesar's calm listening as she confronts him about his conversation with the mutinous Achilles and Pothinus. They are telling the truth, he says, as they do. After observing Caesar's actions, Cleopatra threatens to cast Ftateeta to the crocodiles. Additionally, she demonstrates that she is still in the dark about Caesar's obligation to serve his people. Caesar's baldness is the one thing Cleopatra makes fun of during a period of conflict. Act III demonstrates Cleopatra's newly acquired control over Ftateeta. She even gives the nurse the order to strangle the guard, a command that alludes to Pothinus's murder in Act V. She is still foolish and careless, as the carpet trick shows, even though her strength and courage are improving. Caesar demonstrates to her that in a war, a soldier's hand is more valuable than her head. She finds out that Caesar won't flirt with her or play with her. He won't let her see his deceptions. She must be more practical if she wants to stay close to Caesar. Fun quickly turns into a survival fight when she is tossed into the water. Cleopatra picks up a lot of knowledge during Act III and Act IV, which spans six months. She demonstrates her capacity for judgement in her interactions with the musician by demonstrating that she can spot a fraud when she sees one. She learnt how to listen to people to get to know them from Caesar, as seen by her scene with the court women. She now has full control of Ftateeta. Her conversation with Pothnus demonstrates that she is the Queen: she is poised, knowledgeable, and tries to emulate Caesar. She feels more assured now. She has begun speaking authoritatively. She has evolved into a woman. Caesar, though, has more to teach her.

When Pothinus accuses her of betraying Caesar, she becomes so enraged that she decides to have Pothinus killed. This demonstrates that she hasn't yet mastered the art of mercy. Caesar is adept at using it only for his own benefit. She refuses. Her rash conduct nearly results in Caesar's demise. She is still in need of his insight and cunning. Cleopatra makes an appearance in Act V while mourning Ftateeta. She is quite upset over how Rufio killed her. Caesar's final lesson is that sometimes it takes killing to be in power. However, it must only be done out of necessity and not maliciously. If Cleopatra hasn't yet learned how to lead, at least she's made to understand the importance of Caesar's laws.

III. CONCLUSION

Among George Bernard Shaw's most renowned plays, "Candida" and "Caesar and Cleopatra" both exhibit his distinctive style of dramatic fiction.

A clever, thought-provoking play from the late 19th century, "Candida" questions gender roles and social conventions. The idea of love, marriage, and the distribution of power between men and women are the play's main themes. Shaw challenges the stereotype of women as reliant and submissive by presenting Candida as a strong, independent woman who can make her own decisions. The play serves as a commentary on the current social and political landscape, highlighting the value of self-realization and the necessity of individual freedom.

In contrast, the historical play "Caesar and Cleopatra" depicts the romance between the fabled Egyptian queen and the Roman emperor. The famed love affair is reinterpreted in Shaw's play, where Cleopatra is portrayed as a cunning and politically astute queen who can use her feminine appeal to influence Caesar. The drama offers a thorough examination of the worlds of ancient Rome and Egypt as well as the nuanced dynamics that existed between the two superpowers.

In conclusion, "Candida" and "Caesar and Cleopatra" are important pieces of literature that exhibit Shaw's distinctive style and his opinions on gender, politics, love, and marriage. The plays are still well-liked by audiences, frequently presented on stage, and have had cinema adaptations, demonstrating their lasting importance in modern culture.

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