

Candida

Candida is a romantic play by George Bernard Shaw published in the year 1894. It examines the relationship between husband and wife in the late victorian era. The story pivots around three major characters, Candida, James Morell and Eugene Marchbanks.

The plot is the love triangle between Candida, James Morell (wife and husband) and Eugene Marchbanks, an eighteen years old young poet. Marchbanks declares her love for Candida as he believed that she deserved much more than the domestic complacency her life warrants. The plot revolves around Candida's decision to choose between Mr Morell, her husband and Marchbanks, her lover. She chooses Mr Morell for what she believed was the weaker of the two and needed her care.

Through Candida's choosing of Mr Morell, Shaw makes his critique of overly sentimental romances besides making the point that the wife goes for happy conjugal domesticity and financial security by rejecting the poet-lover Marchbanks. Morell views himself as the head of the family and an authoritative figure to his wife who could provide for his wife with his "honesty of purpose" and "ability" and "industry". Marchbanks, on the other hand, offers his "weakness", "desolation" and "heart's need". However, Shaw upturns the conventional idea that portrays the woman as the weaker sex. Candida hasn't been described as a traditional wife who is dependant on her husband. Candida reveals towards the end that she is choosing her husband because she is already in a relationship where her husband is dependent on her. Mr Morell is humbled by this

as he exclaims, “What I am you have made me with the labour of your hands and the love of your heart!”

The play is remarkable for Shaw’s forthright attack on worn-out conventions so that people may become sane and wise in an analytical way. Contrary to the conventional portrayal of the husband, Morell never appears to be jealous. He does not feel any hostility towards Marchbanks when he declares his love for Candida. No momentary spurt of anger unsettles his calmness. Morell is unconventional also in the sense that he didn’t dispute his wife’s right to choose between him and his rival. Candida embodies the character of the newly emancipated modern woman while Marchbanks is the fierce romantic full of passion for Candida.