

# Cult of Anti-Romanticism in the plays of G.B. Shaw

## Abstract

G.B Shaw is considered a great dramatist of ideas in the modern age , who is purely anti-romantic dramatist and classicist. It was Ibsen , Nietzsche and Fabian society that influenced Shaw and he believed that unless society is reformed , no man can reform himself. He leveled satire on old conventions of society and brought out new sensibility to suit the age and society in which he was living and observing with his microscopic eyes. He leveled satire on old social ethos and taboos. He advocated for new changing social reform and for the betterment of society of that time. He laughs at false romantic feeling , material gain , high corruption and exploitation in politics, in government offices and also in military section . He wants to see women free from old conventions and from all shackles. The book of Ibsen "Doll's House " inspired him and he wrote dramas dealing with the problems of love and marriage , divorce , prostitution , politics , war and many other problem of society he demolished all old and false conventions of his time and he gave new ideas for the progress of men and society.

**Keywords:** Anti-Romanticism, Classicist , Old Convention , Social Ethos , Corruption , Exploitation , Love and Marriage , Satire , New Sensibility and Progress of Society



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## Introduction

G.B Shaw is the greatest dramatist of the 20th century- Known by different titles. Some critics called him a propagandist and iconoclast and some have called him anti-romantic dramatist, problem playwright and social reformer. But a close study of Shaw's plays shows that he is a great classicist, a realist and purely anti-romantic playwright who believed in "Art for life sake" and firmly rejected the thesis of "Art for Art's sake". Shaw being a staunch disciple of Ibsen used drama as a medium for ventilating his ideas as a reformation of society, religion, love and marriage, war and administration of the country. That is why A.C Ward says that his plays are continuous record of the long struggle between artist and moralist.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Prof. A. Nicolle says that the plays of G.B. Shaw are ceaseless dances of thought<sup>2</sup>. Shaw has been called 'father of the theatre of ideas in England'. Because he was a realist and out and out a classicist. As far as his anti-romanticism is concerned, his fundamental aim in his plays was the bettering the lot of humanity and the age in which he was living. scoffing at the romantic views of life, he examined man and his social institution with intellectual courage and shrewd, deep insight. This is the reason G.K. Chesterton has remarked that Shaw was purely anti-romantic dramatist who has shown-how love of the modern age degenerates, how much it is physical, monetary, emotional and sensual, having no reality with life. Shaw laughs at hollow and foolish love of his heroes and heroines and of soldiers, prostitution. Marriage conventions, social prejudices and romantic lovers as well as romantic poets.

## Aim of the Study

When we examine his theory of anti-romanticism, his major plays come as follows-Arms and the Man, Candida, Pygmalion. Mrs. Warren's Profession, Caesar and Cleopatra, Getting Married, The Philanderer, The Widower's House and some others. Shaw wanted to expose the hollowness of love and emotional feeling which has nothing to do with real life in the modern age. He wanted to uproot its long existing follies and frivolities. As Frank Harris has pointed out that Shaw's convictions generate his ideas against romantic black. mailing in life which obstructs the path of progress in life. Being a member of Fabian society and a true socialist, he was dead against false love and romance, strict religious belief, art of worship and old conventions. He wanted to give new ideas to reform society from these practices.

G.B Shaw Satirizes romantic love in 'Arms and the Man' in which he opposes the false romantic love of Sergius for Raina. so, she rejected

him and loved Bluntschli, a Chocolate cream soldier. Here, Shaw attacks all the false ideas of duty, heroism and romantic love. In the play 'Candida', the dramatist has shown the false romantic love and illusion of the poet Marchbank who is rejected by the heroine and she shatters his all false romantic illusion and emotion. she accepts her husband and leads a happy life. Shaw wanted to show in his masterpiece play that life cannot be survived with sentiment and hollow love. on this Sen Gupta has remarked that the Shaw is not only a realist but also an anti-romantic dramatist. In 'Pygmalion' the romantic heroine thinks her love with Prof. Higgins who is a confirmed bachelor but he has no feeling for his disciple like Eliza. So he drives her out from the house after giving her complete training of English language. Here, we see that this play reposes the faith of Shaw for a realist and anti-romantic playwright who brings the reality of life through the character of Prof. Higgins.

In other plays like 'Mrs. Warren's Profession' Shaw has scoffed the woman who is dragged in prostitution where there is no love, nor passion only money minting place by selling her body without any joy or interest. similarly in the play 'The Widower's House' and 'Caesar and Cleopatra', Shaw exposes our romantic conceptions of Caesar-the great Roman hero who takes Cleopatra to his palace, reveals his identity and compels her to make love with him. Here, Shaw laughs at Caesar's hollow love and hollow claim. In 'The widower's house' Shaw ridicules on matrimonial ties in which characters present hypocrisy and humbugs of society. The main purpose of the dramatist to reform society and the people of his age. He wants to bring new sensibility and new idea for the betterment of society.

### Conculusion

In this way, we find that Shaw attacks even on the marriage relation and love between the husband and the wife. He scoffs at the hollow love in which a man pretends to love someone but plays with her emotions and feelings Shaw ridicules those who regard marriage as slavery and who want to get married on the excuse that they have fallen in love- is not fair. So it is clear that G.B Shaw is purely anti-romantic dramatist and classicist. His aim is to give a message to society like Benjonson in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and Galsworthy of the modern age for the betterment of man's life and society.

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