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Mr. Milan Mondal, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Narajole Raj College

## ❖ Character of Bluntschli / Shaw's mouthpiece/ a mixture of intellect and emotion

Shaw's *Arms and the Man* is an anti-romantic comedy. As the subtitle promises, it presents an anti-romantic hero in a comic manner. Captain Bluntschli is a realist who sees through the absurd romanticism of war. He is a professional soldier. Consequently, heroism, patriotism, martyrdom and similar phrases are foreign to his nature. Shaw makes his hero a commercial soldier who fights for money. Being a professional soldier, he adopts a practical and wise view. His name is a combination of Blunt, with the ending, which in Swiss means "sweet" or "endearing" or "lovable".

Practically, Bluntschli knows that a dead professional soldier is of no value to anyone; thus, he saves his life by the most expedient method available. He hides in a lady's bedchamber. Likewise, he chooses to eat rather than to kill; thus, he carries chocolates rather than cartridges, a highly unromantic but very practical thing to do. He tells Raina that "it is our (soldier) duty to live as long as we can". He even snatches Raina's cloak to get saved by her. To die in war may be a moment's glory, but Bluntschli knows like Owen 'What passing bells for these who die as cattle'? (*Anthem for Doomed Youth*)

Bluntschli refuses to view Sergius's cavalry charge as an act of heroism. He mocks at the charge as "Don Quixote" charging the windmills. He also compares Sergius with an "operatic tenor" with handsome appearance. Thus, he gradually disillusiones Raina of the false romance of war and heroism. Later, in reply of Sergius' challenge to a duel, he curtly answers back "I'm a professional soldier. I fight when I have to, and am very glad to get out of it when I haven't to. You're only an amateur; you think fighting is an amusement". When Sergius challenges his spirit of fighting, he instantly replies "If I go, I shall take a machine gun". He also supports Louka for her eavesdropping and praises Nicola for his extreme professionalism in denying Louka's hand. Head must rule over heart, and so only he can quickly send the cavalry regiment to Philippolis.

But Bluntschli is not only a blunt practical thinking man; he has a deep feeling for tender emotion and romance. He ridicules Raina's "noble attitude and thrilling voice", yet declares himself to be her "infatuated admirer". In other words, he disillusiones Raina's romance of war and marriage, but also accepts her beauty and charm. Shaw does not create a dry professional man who is too calculative to be loved. So Bluntschli ultimately confesses

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his "incurably romantic disposition". He candidly confesses that he has joined war by the romance of adventure; he even climbed to Raina's room in sheer romantic dream to meet his dream girl; and now he has reached Petkoff's house not only to return the coat, but to have a look at beautiful Raina whom he saw in candlelight in her bedroom in her ordinary night dress. When Raina disregards his richness, he promptly reminds her "I appealed to you as a fugitive, a beggar and a starving man. You accepted me. You gave me your hand to kiss, your bed to sleep in, your roof to shelter me." Raina similarly takes him not as the emperor of Switzerland, but as her "chocolate cream soldier".

Thus, Shaw very effectively brings to us "The Man" who destroys all rusty customs and notions to establish newer and better ones. In *Major Barbara*, Shaw comments through his hero Undershaft, "That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps its obsolete steam engines and dynamos; but it won't scrap its old prejudices and its old moralities and its old religions and its old political constitutions". Bluntschli also shuns the age-old romantic views of war and patriotism, of higher love and hypocrisy, and proves that the arms of modern man are not the weapons of war but intellect and Only a practical professional attitude to life can elevate a man to the status of superman.

## ❖ Character of Louka / Sergius -Louka relationship in *Arms and the Man*.

In his book *Woman since 1860* Shaw wrote "I do not regard woman as animal of another species .... What woman had to do was not to repudiate their femininity, but to assert its social value; not to ape masculinity, but to demonstrate its insufficiency".

Love is not a favourite theme with Shaw. He ridicules love because it is rooted in emotions, not in the intellect. As from war, so from love and marriage, Shaw has separated the heartbeats of romance. In this play *Arms and the Man* Raina worships Sergius both as a lover-cum-future husband and as a brave fighter. Raina and Sergius enact a scene of "higher love". Raina adores Sergius for his heroic action in the war and calls him "my hero, my king." But his artificial love fades with the entrance of Louka.

As soon as Sergius faces Louka his instinct and nature lead him towards her. While he was artificial to Raina, now he confesses to Louka, Raina's pretty maidservant, that higher love is 'Very fatiguing thing to keep up for any length of time .... One feels the need of some



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relief after it.' The spontaneous attraction to Louka makes him lose the pose of affection for Raina. With a very insincere protest, Louka lets Sergius take her hand. Sergius shows much more warmth in his behaviour with Louka than he showed with Raina. Sergius himself is conscious of this aspect of his many-sided nature.

Louka exposes higher love to ridicule. She shatters noble sentiments and sweet poses of Sergius and Raina. She fills Sergius's heart with jealousy and anger by saying that Miss Raina is making love to someone else behind his back. However, she refuses to tell Sergius who his rival in love is. Her judgment is very right when she says: "Miss Raina will marry him whether he {Bluntschli} likes it or not."

Shaw has presented Louka's wit in another way. Shaw believes that woman is not the pursued but the pursuer; it is the man who is wooed and won. In this play, Louka is the first to be successful in winning her man. Though Louka is engaged to Nicola, she always mocks at his servitude: "You are born to be a servant. I was not". It is her pride that makes Nicola comment later "She had a soul above her station". Nicola also prepares her mind to the status of Sergius.

Louka's most ingenuous mind is revealed in her conversation with Sergius. She weaves a plot where Sergius becomes just a text book hero with no real courage in him. Sergius himself admits that "the courage to rage and kill is cheap". Louka explains him that a servant, even in domestic world has much courage, but it is not recognized. "how much am I allowed to have my own will?". She proudly and cunningly teases Sergius' manhood by saying a hypothesis "If I were Empress of Russia .. ", "If I loved you ... I would dare to be the equal of my inferior. Would you dare as much if you loved me?" At last she even discloses the secret lover of Raina, the Swiss and remarks "He has beaten you in love ... " Franticf Sergius has no other option but to possess her and then declare "If these hands ever touch you again, they shall touch my affianced bride." And a little later, she makes Sergius apologize to her by taking her hand and kissing it in the manner of a knight. And as soon as he does it, he is entrapped. Louka declares: "That touch makes me your affianced wife." She allows him to withdraw but Sergius is caught in his own web and has to accept Louka as his wife. The dice had been heavily loaded against Sergius and he loses Raina in the game of love.

The marriage of Louka with Sergius has the practical side. The romantic Sergius with his flirting mind now has to follow the practical wit of Louka. She can even spy on Sergius

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and follow his manhood only to direct him to a more practical world. Shaw only implies that if Raina is disillusioned of her false romances, Sergius is also cured of his false ideals. But if Raina achieves her chocolate cream soldier, Louka too gets her promotion in life, unlike Nicola who still has to follow his servitude for freedom.

❖ ***Arms and the Man* may be called the education of Raina. Discuss the gradual development of Raina's character from sentimentalism to realism.**

*Arms and the Man*, like many other Shawian plays tells the story of realism and disillusionment. His characters are witty and pretty like *Candida*, robust and bold like Barbara, and sometimes elevated like Saint Joan. Each character passes through various experiences until she attains a sublimity. In this play Shaw presents his heroine in a different angle — a romantic girl trapped in a world of illusion and dream. The plot of *Arms and the Man* revolves round Raina and Bluntschli and the education of Raina of war and marriage.

The plot of *Arms and the Man* opens at a lady's bed chamber. Shaw comments about Raina, 'a young lady, intensively conscious of the romantic beauty of the night ..... ". She is enchanted no by a glorious world in which she lives. But news suddenly come to her that her betrothed lover Sergius won a battle and became a hero. Her instant ecstasy is " ..... the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance". This is a romantic girl's romantic view of life. But then reality dawns on her in an unexpected shape.

A defeated enemy officer rushes into her bedroom to take refuge. Though Raina at first scoffs at his cowardly and fearful nature, she saves him from the Russian officer. Raina is taken aback by the casual and professional behaviour of the fugitive. The man, Bluntschli tells her that he carries chocolate instead of bullets in the battlefield. Raina becomes irritated when the man shatters the romance of war- "nine soldiers out of ten are born fools" and "the young ones (soldiers) carry pistols and cartridges; the old ones grub".

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But the most shocking realization comes to Raina when Bluntschli describes the very cavalry charge of Sergius. Bluntschli humorously compares him with Don Quixote, an operatic tenor and a drum major to suggest that Sergius is a romantic idiot. Raina tries to keep her faith in the romance of war. But she also feels the strength of the man's logic. So, at the end of Act I she accepts that the 'poor darling' Bluntschli needs sound sleep like an exhausted child.

Yet Raina worships Sergius when he comes back from war. She is stimulated by the higher romantic ideals of Sergius. She is ecstatic about their love: "Sergius, I think we two have found the higher love". Meanwhile Bluntschli comes to return the coat and once again he punctures Raina's illusion. He boldly tells her "When you strike that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say". Raina ultimately confesses that she has been so long using the very sentimental and false manner: "I did it when I was a tiny child to my nurse. She believed in it. I do it before my parents. They believe in it. I do it before Sergius. He believes in it".

But the Swiss visitor does not believe in it. Unlike Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* who had no Bluntschli to support her, Raina suddenly realizes that like war, love and marriage are not an impulsive thoughtless act, but a calculation of practical consideration.

At the last part of the play the secret becomes out that Raina's 'chocolate cream soldier' Bluntschli has replaced Sergius. But snobbish Catherine begins to weigh the social position between the two suitors to Raina. Immediately Raina flares up: "I am not here to be sold to the highest bidder". Raina's education is complete. She no longer thinks of marriage as the union of a beautiful girl with a handsome hero in a lifelong romantic dream. She is already disillusioned about Sergius whose faithless nature denies the promise of higher love. Sergius too has found in the maid servant Louka a remarkable animal spirit and warmth. So, Raina, instead of ornamental and fickle Sergius takes the plain Bluntschli as her husband, whose common sense and six hotels in Switzerland will give her stability and comfort.

If in *Candida* it is the wife that disillusiones the husband of his supposed strength and courage, here it is the man who does it to his beloved, Raina. Shaw here implies that everyone, both man and wife, should accept marriage as a solemn contract, a promise for better civilization and culture. Hence the education of Raina, and also of Sergius is the Shavian theory of Life Force for a stronger Man and a better life.

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