Chapter Two

*Candida*:
The Mystery of Language: The Language of Mystery

*Candida* (1894), Shaw’s fifth play, has been described by critics as a ‘counterblast’ to Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. Ibsen has shown how the female self is subjugated as a domestic doll under all male-hegemonic cultures. His play dramatises the emergence of the New Woman through Nora, the heroine of the play, who asserts her identity as an individual by leaving her family or by slamming the door behind. Shaw inverts the Ibsenian ‘slamming of the door’ motif in *Candida*, by making Candida re-invent herself within the family. Here Shaw wants to show that it is the man who is the real doll in the Shavian doll’s house, through an inversion of the woman’s final role. Ibsen’s Nora chooses to break the doll’s house by leaving it, while the Shavian Nora (Candida) chooses the domestic life by adding a poetic dimension to it. Before analysing the theatre idiom used in the play, it will be pertinent to throw some light on its subject matter.

The action of the play is centrally devoted to the conventional love-triangle — a young intruder into an apparently happy marriage, poses his challenge and finally departs, leaving the husband and the wife to renew their relationship on a new basis of understanding. Here Shaw tries to analyse the actual role of woman, his New Woman, in contemporary English society. Reverend James Mavor Morell is a Christian Socialist clergyman in the Church of England, who apparently takes his wife (Candida) for granted, until the young poet Eugene Marchbanks upsets the fixed frame of domestic life.

*Candida* in many respects appears to be concerned with Socialism. Morell’s library — as visually presented on stage — includes Marx’s *Capital* and a dozen other literary landmarks in socialism, including books like *Progress and Poverty*, *Fabian Essays*. At the beginning of the play the Socialist clergyman is seen
going over his lecture schedule which includes addressing the Independent Labour Party, the Fabian Society, a Communist-Anarchist organization etc. The characters in the play comprise a spectrum of classes — a member of the feudal class (Eugene, an Earl’s nephew), a capitalist (Burgess), a Socialist (Morell), two members of the clergy (Morell and Lexy Mill), a worker (Prossy). Burgess used to pay starvation wages to his workers, particularly the women workers (who were thus driven into some sorts of Mrs Warren’s profession). Three years earlier Burgess was driven out of a contract by the County Council on Morell’s instruction. Now, however, he pays respectable wages to his workers to keep up with his contracts under the County Council. But these political-economic questions do not form the intrinsic part of the play’s central theme. The play we know is modelled on a domestic comedy but carries the sub-title ‘A Mystery.’ While the husband Morell does not leave his Socialist sermons at the office (his office is in his home), Eugene’s poetic vision is totally out of touch with the scrubbing brushes. The central question of the drama is about Candida’s place — where is she to be placed? And who is to determine her place? Thus Candida goes far beyond a domestic comedy. We now have to have a brief look at the history of the production of Candida. This will help us see how the stage productions could bring out the deeper thematic nuances of the play.

“I purposely contrived the play in such a way as to make the expenses of production insignificant” (qtd. in Purdom 167), Shaw commented about the production of Candida. The play was first performed in the English provincial cities in 1897 with Janet Achurch in the role of Candida with great success. It was first staged publicly in London on April 26, 1904 under the Vedrenne-Barker management: Granville Barker played Eugene, Kate Rorke, Candida, and Norman McKinnel, Morell. This production and its subsequent revivals at the Court Theatre have been remarkable. But Desmond MacCarthy considered that Stephen Haggard’s Eugene at the Globe Theatre in February 1937 excelled Barker’s. The performance of Candida has also been successful in America, as well as in Germany and France. The Aberdeen Daily Journal called it a ‘risky
business’ (Holroyd 215). Seeing one production by the Charringtons in Eastbourne, Ellen Terry comments:

It comes out on the stage even better than when one reads it. It is absorbingly interesting every second… Even the audience understood it all. (Holroyd 215)

Oliver Elton in *The Manchester Guardian* (15 March 1898) observes about the Royal Court production:

Last evening’s presentation we can only wish to applaud and celebrate. (T.F.Evans 70)

This critic commented on a production at the Independent Theatre Committee in some detail and brought out the fact that Mr Courtenay Thorpe playing the role of Eugene sometimes overacted but understood his part well. “Mr Charles Charrington has worked well with Mr Shaw in making the character of Morell very complete and formidably hopeless” (T.F.Evans 71). He is full of praise for the performance of Janet as Candida. She excels in the Auction Scene in choosing the weaker of the two: “Miss Achurch went through this piquant and abnormal situation with perfect naturalness and with an incisive deliverance of the points” (T.F.Evans 73).

When any director first reads the ‘script’ of the play, he would find that the opening comments of Shaw hardly relate to the stage performances, since they have nothing to do directly with stage business. Here Shaw gives detailed novelistic descriptions of the city of London which may be more convenient for a film than for the theatre to project them all. But the stage-setting is really contrived in a simple manner with minimum stage props to create an impression of a middle class family in the city.

II

The elaborate stage direction with adequate hints about characters at the very opening of the play, not simply establishes Shaw’s interest in meticulous
details about everyday life, but also indicates the fact that the legacy of Shaw the novelist is still very strong. But one finds subtle twists in these details which show his ability to use them symbolically, by turning almost every item of the stage props for metaphoric purposes. The Titian Painting of the Assumption of Virgin Mary is a veritable proof of this, because it has enough symbolic undertone, functioning as a perfect ‘objective correlative’ for Candida’s spiritual beauty and maternal powers. Actually, Shaw wants his Candida to be dramatised as an idealised figure, a Virgin Mother. In a letter to Ellen Terry (April 6, 1896), he has confirmed this:

... Candida, between you and me, is the Virgin Mother and nobody else.
(Collected Letters Vol I 623, henceforth CL I)

Again, the painting may be taken in its religious connotation. Morell’s principles of Christian socialism are professed as real, so is his dependence on Candida:

MORELL... What I am you have made me with the labor of your hands and
the love of your heart. You are my wife, my mother, my sisters: you are the
sum of all loving care to me. (Act III, 151)

This confession comes at the end of the play, but Candida must have been aware of Morell’s basic weakness and also his total dependence on her right from the beginning. This knowledge makes her choose to stay with him, rather than to go in for the possibility of romantic fulfilment offered by Eugene Marchbanks, her young poet-lover.

Shaw shows greater “sensitivity to visual effects, especially those involving irony when they are reflected against the action” (Berst 297). In fact, stage-setting, props and lighting in his plays are very often employed for the creation of unique theatrical effects. These are used not merely for creating the atmosphere or backdrop, but also for heightening the dramatic impact. These non-verbal dramatic components become very much significant in course of the progress of action, with the interaction of the characters. According to Charles A Berst, a director who fails to represent Titian’s painting in Candida, the cannon and dummy soldiers in Major Barbara or the setting of a ship in Heartbreak House would certainly miss one of the main aesthetics of the Shavian theatre (297). This ‘aesthetics’ constitutes the association between the verbal and the
non-verbal. The very setting of *Candida* has become a component of the Shavian theatre. The Titian painting which is an example of Shaw’s ‘visual language’ not simply creates a visual impact upon the audience, but develops other meanings on different levels in course of the movement of the play. Ironically, the painting is a gift from Eugene to Candida and has a symbolic association with the final “Mystery” of the play. Shaw likes to project a “spiritual resemblance,” mentioned in the stage direction, between Candida and the portrait of the Virgin by Titian. He has articulated this in course of the dramatic action by means of her speeches and attitudes. Candida is depicted as a protective mother (to Morell and Eugene). Eugene tells Morell that she has offered him every sort of love and protection (like a mother):

MARCHBANKS. She offered me all I chose to ask for: her shawl, her wings, the wreath of stars on her head, the lilies in her hand, the crescent moon beneath her feet –

Eugene’s rhapsodic eulogy of Candida as the archetypal “Virgin Mother” is immediately undercut by Morell’s matter-of-fact possessiveness over his wife:

MORELL. [seizing him] Out with the truth, man: my wife is my wife: I want no more of your poetic fripperies. I know well that if I have lost her love and you have gained it, no law will bind her. (Act III, 146)

It is a commonplace critical exercise among the critics of Shaw to bracket *A Doll’s House* (1879) with *Candida* in respect of subject-matter and the related, formal ‘Technical Novelty’ of ‘discussion.’ In Ibsen Helmer treats Nora almost like a doll, and Shaw’s Candida treats Morell like a doll too. But in *Candida* we have the essential Shavian twist – Candida’s children are absentee characters, and Morell and Eugene take their place to play the role of the children of the “Virgin Mother.” Candida, the mother figure, repeatedly uses such expressions as “My boy”, “a great baby”, and a “bad boy” in her interactions with the two grown-up male figures. On one occasion, she even fixes Eugene’s collar, tie and hair as she would do with her children.

Shaw’s Candida, the supposed Shavian Nora, does not leave the house, but stays within, quite assertively, and disillusions both the contesting male figures of the play. Eugene leaves Candida with a “secret” in his heart. He feels that the vast
world outside has more demand upon him than the petty domestic “happiness.” The term “happiness”, like “understand”, is a functional word with its repeated uses in Shaw’s dramatic stylistics. Both these words form a particular pattern and connote different meanings in different dramatic situations. This is one of the aspects of the “Mystery” of the Shavian theatre language. As projected in the first Act, Eugene’s staying at the Morell household is a matter of “happiness” to him, but it is not so to Morell:

MARCHBANKS [offering his arm to Candida] Come and lay the table. [She takes it. They go to the door together. As they pass out he adds] I am the happiest of mortals.

MORELL. So was I – an hour ago. (Act I, 134)

The ‘happiness’ of Eugene at the prospect of gaining Candida’s love is balanced by the unhappiness of Morell because of his fear of losing it. This brief sequence has a great theatrical impact upon the audience also, as it shows how profoundly the two men misunderstand Candida’s attitudes to them. They have to learn a lot to acquire true insight into a woman’s heart, as well as into their own hearts. Candida has to undertake the necessary process of educating them in the matter.

III

In analysing the portrait of Candida, critics are very often enthusiastic in finding some resemblances between Candida and the famous actress of Shaw’s plays, Janet Achurch. Shaw’s emotionally disturbed relationship with Janet in 1890s perhaps formed the basis of the representation of the tangle between Candida and Eugene. Not only that, many aspects of Janet’s personality — her beauty and mental power — can be found reflected in the making of the portrait of Candida. The initial stage direction which introduces Candida is an ample proof of this. Taking cues from Michael Holroyd’s psycho-biological analysis of
Candida it may be said that Shaw got involved in his personal life in an ‘eternal triangle’ with the Charingtons. Holroyd observed:

The rivalry between Marchbanks and Morell over Morell’s wife Candida carries echoes from several of Shaw’s three-cornered affairs, in particular that of May Morris and Sparling, but was intended as an interpretation of the current drama between himself and the Charingtons. (179)

But as drama is not a photographic representation of the author’s life, it is not judicious to say that Candida is Janet Achurch. Holroyd continues:

The ‘pure’ (as her white name indicates) and patronizing Candida is not Janet: she was ‘entirely imagined’. But she shares with Janet a sexual charm that she can use to get her own way – and from which Marchbanks disengages himself. (179)

Morell is portrayed as a man of earthly reality with enough natural bias to matter-of-fact affairs, and Eugene imbibes within himself a sort of ethereal entity and the supersensitivity of a poet. However, David J. Gordon considers Morell to be a poet also (271). Shaw stated that the character of Eugene was based on De Quincey, though the influence of Shelley and Yeats on Shaw might have shaped his portrayal of the poet-lover. Shaw curtly refutes the assumption that he himself is the actual life-like embodiment of his Eugene. In fact, Shaw wanted to rescue Janet, the actress, for whom he created the role of Candida, from the domestic burden and patriarchal codes imposed by her husband Charington. Holroyd further states:

The writing and production of Candida was to be a spell, no less magical than the spells of Yeats and Florence Farr, through which Shaw would manifest his will. (179)

Again, when a prominent critic Beverley Baxter contended that it was an open secret at that time that the principal characters were based on Henry Irving, Ellen Terry and Shaw, Shaw seemed to have been greatly shocked and firmly stated that he had no models for Candida. In 1944, he pointed out the absurdity of Ellen and Irving as Candida and Morell, and more emphatically, the absurdity of Shaw as Marchbanks: “I certainly never thought of myself as a model. Heaven forgive you, Beverley Baxter!” (qtd. in Sally Peters 165). Candida is the creation of Shaw’s imagination formed out of various impressions and not of any particular
model. In this connection we may refer to the observation of Archibald Henderson, the authorised biographer of Shaw. He comments:

*Candida* is an acute psychological observation upon the emotional reverberations in the souls of three clearly imagined, exquisitely realized characters; its connection with pre-Raphaelitism, as Mr Shaw confessed to me, is purely superficial and extrinsic. (346)

Janet Achurch and Ellen Terry had been for Shaw twin attractions. Yet there may be some point in Holroyd’s argument that the plot of the play is a dramatic translation of one phase in Shaw’s own life. In one of his letters to Janet Achurch (14th April 1896), Shaw wrote:

The step up to the plains of heaven was made on your bosom, I know; and it was a higher step than those I had previously taken on other bosoms. But he who mounts does not take the stairs with him, even though he may dream for the moment that each stair, as he touches it, is a plank on which he will float to the end of his journey. I know that the floating plank image is false and the stair image true; for I have left the lower stairs behind me and must in turn leave you unless you too mount along with me. *(CL I 625)*

These words of Shaw meant for Janet have already found dramatic expression in Eugene’s rhapsody about Candida:

No, not a scrubbing brush, but a boat: a tiny shallop to sail away in, far from the world, . . . Or a chariot! To carry us up into the sky . . . . (Act II, 139)

Shaw’s words of ‘farewell’ to Janet in his letter (9 Dec 1897): “farewell, farewell, farewell, farewell, farewell, farewell, farewell, farewell” *(CL I 828)* echo Eugene’s emotionally charged utterance — “Candida, Candida, Candida, Candida, Candida, Candida” — which is balanced by his ultimate realisation at the time of parting, while he chooses to assert his mission as a poet by dissociating himself from Candida. All this background information might have contributed to the making of the Shavian ‘idiom’ of this drama, because the playwright himself said that he has created nothing, perverted nothing, but only presented the drama of real life.
IV

When Shaw finished *Candida*, he read the play to Charles Wyndham at the office of the *Criterion* and was told that it would take at least twenty-five years for the London stage to welcome and appreciate such a play. Maurice Valency refers to it in *The Cart and The Trumpet* (18). What gave a shock to Wyndham is the way Shaw has dealt with the subject-matter of his play, as an intruder into the conventional arena of domestic comedy, like his Eugene who invades the happy married life of Morell and leaves his house, shattering Morell’s old beliefs and ideas about marriage and happiness. But if the play was then new for the late Victorian audience, it is still ‘new’ for the contemporary audience, because of the employment of so many theatrical devices by Shaw who was then of the same age as his Morell.

The three-tier inner structure of *Candida* is based on three main episodes — Eugene’s “poetic horror”, “Prossy’s complaint” and Burgess’s obsessive doubt about everybody’s sanity — which underprop the series of interactions between Candida and Eugene, between Morell and Proserpine (Morell’s typist), and between Burgess (Candida’s father) on one hand, and Morell, Eugene, Candida and Proserpine, on the other. These three episodes hold the entire scaffolding of the comedy, functioning as refrains, unless and until finally the mystery or the “secret in the poet’s heart” is resolved through veiled and subtle clues.

In a letter to Richard Mansfield (22nd Feb 1895) Shaw labelled *Candida* as ‘the most fascinating work in the world.’ His comment is worth quoting:

> The play, which is called *Candida*, is the most fascinating work in the world — my latest — in three acts, one cheap scene, and with six characters. *(CL 1 486)*

In the same letter he wanted to know whether he would be able to play “a boy of eighteen — a strange creature — a poet — a bundle of nerves — a genius — and a rattling good part” (486). But when Mansfield read the play, he refused to perform it as he only found it replete with long talks. A closer scrutiny of the
play reveals that it is not simply ‘all talk.’ There are enough materials for the actors to stir and thrill the audience.

The play opens with a conversation between Morell and Proserpine — all about the former’s teaching and preaching, his busy schedule of programmes, his commitment and responsibility to society. But at the very opening, Proserpine’s question “Another lecture?” not only speaks of Morell’s socio-religious preoccupation, but also, in an indirect fashion, leads to the very core of the central problem of the play — a problem that puzzles and baffles the audience until it is resolved. Before that, we should have a glance at Shaw’s portrayal of Morell as a dramatic character. Shaw very clearly describes this Christian Socialist and leaves less to the imagination of the audience:

A vigorous, genial, popular man of forty, robust and goodlooking, full of energy, with pleasant, hearty, considerate manners, and a sound unaffected voice, which he uses with the clean athletic articulation of a practised orator, and with a wide range and perfect command of expression. (Act I, 124)

This description of Morell in the stage direction is helpful for the actor performing the role. This also happens with other characters forming a special idiom of Shaw’s theatre which he maintains throughout. Morell is, Shaw does not forget to remind us, also a “great baby” who is pleased with himself. Here Shaw’s own stage vocabulary is antithetically balanced to offer us a foretaste of Morell as a preacher and husband. But this professional orator gets upset and speechless by his wife’s sudden decision: “I am up for auction,” and an equally smart query: “What do you bid James?” In this context Morell becomes a pathetic figure, and Shaw’s language with its ironic twist, perfectly captures the helplessness of the man who was earlier so assertive and resourceful. We can see how the authorial comment marks the deflation in the character: “He breaks down: his eyes and throat fill with tears: the orator becomes a wounded animal” (Act III, 150). This whets the imagination of the reader to visualise the anti-climactic fall Morell suffers on the stage. This has been done by Shaw on several occasions.
The main action of the play starts with Morell’s announcement of Candida’s return home after three weeks: “My wife’s coming back” (Act I, 125). With this announcement we observe the working out of the ‘mystery’ of Shaw’s language, which is further strengthened by the plain but highly significant comment of Lexy (Morell’s curate): “It’s so hard to understand you about Mrs Morell.” It is pertinent to note that Shaw makes Lexy, a minor character, utter such a significant word in the drama, “understand”, and makes us hauntingly aware of the fact that there is little inward understanding between the husband and the wife. Here, Lexy’s “uneasily” uttered words are finely balanced by Morell’s “tenderly”, but assured remark: “Ah, my boy, get married: get married to a good woman; and then you'll understand” (Act I, 125). According to Morell, marriage to a good woman is “a foretaste to what will be best in the Kingdom of Heaven we are trying to establish on earth.” There is little substance in Morell’s pride. Rather, it offers us “a foretaste” of what is going to take place in the Morell family. This is how Shaw creates mystery, tension, and, of course, dramatic suspense by virtue of his employment of a carefully chosen vocabulary – words and expressions which are very often contrasting and recurrent. Expressions like “all to myself,” marked by a sense of possessiveness like “my boy”, “my Candida” used by Morell at this opening section of the drama, establish him as the sole ruler of the house, who is now in a rather joyous mood, happy and apparently self-reliant. But Morell is not happy at the news of Burgess’s arrival. Suddenly he becomes thoughtful: “Time for him to take another look at Candida before she grows out of his knowledge.” Here again Shaw’s authorial voice nicely captures the essential mental condition of Morell: “He resigns himself to the inevitable, and goes out.”

Morell leaves the stage, allowing Lexy and Proserpine to exchange words between them. The conversation between these two minor characters evolves round the two major ones – Candida and Morell. Their words now have a cinematographic effect upon the audience, for they highlight the conjugal relationship of Morell and Candida and the domestic world of the entire Morell household by means of some bits of their conversation. Morell’s typist-secretary
Proserpine (Prossy) is secretly in love with him. Proserpine’s jealous comment: “Candida here, and Candida there, and Candida everywhere,” denotes Shaw’s power of playing with words implying a psychological complex in Proserpine—a pattern of “here”, “there”, and “everywhere” which culminates in “everywhere.” But this comment has some symbolic undertone also. It offers a glimpse of Candida occupying a great place in the domestic environment of the family, and shrouds the Candida-Morell relationship in mystery. The earlier comment of Proserpine is dramatically more significant: “Oh, a man ought to be able to be fond of his wife without making a fool of himself about her.” It is charged with a great ironic implication, for Morell at the end of the play appears to have truly made himself “a fool of himself about her.” If Proserpine’s remark foreshadows the final phase in Morell’s condition, it is Lexy, who unconsciously supplies a critical caption for the portrait of Candida: “Ah, if you women only had the same clue to Man’s strength that you have to his weakness, Miss Prossy, there would be no Woman Question.” This comment on the inadequacy of women in general betrays Lexy’s own bias against women which is part of his upbringing. But Candida eludes them both. Thus, these two minor figures set the dramatic background and offer us necessary information. Proserpine, of lower middle class origin, is not very civil in her manner but sensitive and affectionate, while Lexy (Reverend Alexander Mill) is snobbish with his university background and carefully cultivated style of pronunciation. In a sense they show two opposite aspects of personality.

The Shavian language system offers us some scope to understand Shaw’s ability to relate the microeconomy of a household to the macroeconomic concerns of capitalism, the problems of gender discrimination and ideology. His employment of dramatic dialogues provides a sort of “betweenness” among his characters (Davis 219). The complexity of human relationship is initiated in the play in Proserpine’s remark “We’re all jealous of one another” (Act I, 126). This generalised expression reveals her own hollowness when we look at her earlier comment about Candida, which is indicative of her particular jealousy: “Candida here, and Candida there, and Candida everywhere.”
Morell believes that he is a responsible socialist, acting or working on the principle that “We have no more right to consume happiness without producing it than to consume wealth without producing it” (Act I, 125). Within the span of a single expression Shaw repeats some functional words to make his argument more emphatic, and to establish the real nature of his character. That Morell is an eminent orator is thus made explicit here. However, he is kind and equitable to his subordinates, asking them to bear no extra hardships. But he misses the fundamental relationship between the exploitation of women and their dispensability from the economic equation. The fact that Morell, consciously or unconsciously, exploits Prossy — that is to say, he allows his stenographer to work on low wages and even to do household labour — is merely a parallel version of Burgess’s conscious methods of exploitation of his workers, mostly women. Lexy is overpowered by Morell’s way of living and preaching: “I try to follow his example, not to imitate him” (Act I, 126) — he says to Proserpine. Proserpine here is a Shavian reversal of the Greek mythological figure, whose irresistible beauty made Pluto carry her away to the Underworld, while here she fails to attract Morell. Again, Lexy Mill, with his complete devotion to Morell is also a comic counterpart to John Stuart Mill, the noted philosopher and economist of Utilitarianism.

The brief episode between Morell and Burgess ends with the latter’s earnest desire to make up their prolonged rift: “Our quarrels made up now, aint it?” (Act I, 129) — this is the enthusiastic declaration of Burgess. Their “quarrel” is made up, but the dramatic action gets its momentum with a sort of new quarrel — that is the subsequent but temporary rift between Candida and Morell. Burgess’s query is answered by “A woman’s voice,” instructing Morell to “Say yes, James.” Shaw employs a nice linguistic trick by making Candida utter these words off the stage, startling both Morell and Burgess before her actual appearance. Now, the audience witnesses a fine comic situation on the stage by the mode of action of these two male figures who enjoy the “maternal indulgence” of Candida.
With the entry of Candida the play gets its necessary acceleration. She informs Morell that she was not “alone”, because Eugene had been with her, and they “travelled together.” This bit of information creates a sort of agitation and mystery in Morell’s mind: “Eugene!” And when Candida frankly says to Burgess that her “poor boy” Eugene is actually “one of James’s discoveries,” the audience can realise how fatal that discovery is! (Act I, 130).

“In some ways Candida is a bad play, with excruciatingly written passages” (64) — this sort of observation by Margery M. Morgan (The Shavian Playground) seems to be one-sided, for she certainly overlooks the underlying poetic beauty and resonance in the play’s “excruciatingly written passages,” articulated and dramatised throughout by such characters who are inextricably strung with each other within its close-knit structure. Shaw has fashioned a structure of an equilateral triangle of a domestic comedy — with Candida on top, and Morell and Eugene on both sides. Candida is the centripetal force drawing the two male figures towards her centre of attraction. And the action and interaction among these three main characters progress along the pattern of Shaw’s use of some such words and expressions which recur in varied contexts throughout the play. One such word is “understand” which is repeated again and again as it is uttered by different characters on different occasions with distinctive connotations. Initially, Morell can trifle away Burgess’s cockney “nunners tannin” by saying “O bother your understanding” (Act I, 129). But he is really bothered at the climactic scene with Candida who brings him face to face with the hollowness of his own “understanding” of his wife. Morell now cannot “understand” what has given Candida that amount of strength and confidence to ignore her husband’s usual patriarchal notions, which she mocks: “Your confidence in my goodness and purity!” (141). She even goes farther to say that she would “care” very little for his sermons which help him to cheat himself and others everyday. Morell is now shattered as he finds his wife repeating almost the same words that Eugene has earlier uttered to him. That is why the helpless husband exclaims: “His words!” Candida boldly announces that Eugene is always right, because he “understands” everybody:
CANDIDA. [delighted] He is always right. He understands you; he understands me; he understands Prossy; and you, darling, you understand nothing. [She laughs, and kisses him to console him. He recoils as if stabbed, and springs up].

MORELL. How can you bear to do that when — Oh, Candida [with anguish in his voice] I had rather you had plunged a grappling iron into my heart than given me that kiss.

CANDIDA [amazed] My dear: what's the matter?

MORELL [frantically waving her off] don't touch me.

CANDIDA. James!!! (Act II, 141-42)

Candida also comes to a new "understanding" of her husband — a man solely guided by the concept of the 'purity' of a woman. This is reflected in his imperative command, "Dont touch me." The audience can feel that the first phase of Morell's "understanding" of his wife is complete.

The final section of the second Act is charged with dramatic irony. In the verbal combat among Morell, Eugene and Candida, we find the first one defeated. Morell has now a suspicion that something very potent has taken place between Candida and Eugene in his absence. Shaw here uses the word "understand" in a dramatically tense situation to reveal the inner world of his characters. Thus, when Morell confesses that he is worried about leaving Eugene in Candida's "custody", Eugene is deliberately ambiguous: "That's brave. That's beautiful." To this Candida's "I can't understand" makes her husband conclude: "I thought it was I who couldn't understand, dear." Here Candida's use of the word elicits a very different sort of response from Morell. Thus Shaw is able to bring out divergent modes of expressions, attitudes and responses by means of using the same word in different contexts. We can illustrate the point with an example from the early part of Act II:

MARCHBANKS. I can't understand you.

MISS GARNETT. What am I to talk about?

A little later, Eugene says that he understands "Prossy's Complaint":

MARCHBANKS. Ah! I understand now.

PROSERPINE [reddening] What do you understand?
MARCHBANKS. Your secret. Tell me is it really and truly possible for a 
woman to love him?

Eugene hints at Prossy’s secret love for Morell, but his question implies that no 
woman (even Candida) can love Morell. Eugene ‘understands’ Prossy’s secret, 
but fails to understand Candida’s ‘secret.’ The second Act is concluded with a 
new twist to the problem of understanding between Candida and Morell:

CANDIDA [with anxious misgiving] But – but – Is anything the matter, James?

[Greatly troubled] I cant understand –

MORELL [taking her tenderly in his arms and kissing her on the forehead] 
Ah, I thought it was I who couldnt understand, dear. (Act II, 144)

In the famous auction scene, Eugene tries to make Morell understand that 
Candida means to tell them that she belongs to herself only, neither to him nor to 
Morell. This realisation of Eugene, the poet, has some spiritual value. But it is 
immediately negated by Candida’s own assertion that she would give herself to 
“the weaker of the two” (Act III, 151). By this expression Candida means 
Morell, but the audience is kept in mystery about her choice of the “weaker of 
the two,” until the auction ends. Apparently, Candida keeps her words. She asks 
Eugene, “Do you understand, Eugene?” (Act III, 151). There is sufficient hint 
that Eugene by virtue of his supersensitive imagination can truly “understand” 
Candida.

Another important expression that does not recur so frequently like the word 
“understand” but has a tremendous dramatic impact, is “Dont touch me” (Act I, 
134), which is first used by Eugene and then by Morell. Eugene gradually 
reveals the fact that it is impossible for Morell to keep Candida in his “custody” 
just by his power of preaching. The way he attacks Morell shows his own power 
of oration also. The two male figures are “professional men of words” (Margery 
Morgan 69). Morell is the professional orator and Eugene the poet. At this 
Morell is extremely upset and angrily snubs him: “Marchbanks: you make it 
hard for me to control myself” (Act I, 133). Really, he fails to “control” himself 
and tells Eugene to leave his house, while he “advances on him threateningly.” 
This is too much for Eugene who possesses a delicate frame of mind and a 
poetic temperament. He cannot endure brute force or physical violence and so
warns Morell: “Dont touch me” (134). In the second Act, again, when Candida perplexes Morell by saying that he is inferior to Eugene in the matter of “understanding”, and advances towards her husband, laughs ironically, and “kisses him to console him” (Act II, 141), Morell recoils immediately. Here the stage direction is dramatically significant: “He recoils as if stabbed and springs up” (Act II, 141-42). Theatrically, Morell’s gesture is highly amusing. But what is most strikingly innovative is the impact of the repetition of the expression “Dont touch me,” which is now used by Morell not to save himself from any physical violence like Eugene, but to keep up his patriarchal pride, which he thinks will be violated by the “touch” of Candida at this stage. Just a little earlier he has pleaded:

MORELL. No evil, Candida. I hope and trust, no evil.
CANDIDA. [dubiously] That will depend.
MORREL [bewildered] Depend! (141)

But now his words ring with suspicion about the possibility that some “evil” has taken place between Candida and Eugene. Earlier he could boast of his confidence in his wife’s “goodness and purity,” but now he doubts both. The repetition of the word “depend” uttered by both, makes their understanding verge on a new crisis in marital fidelity, which Morell values so rigorously, but Candida is to expose its hollowness. A resourceful Candida is not at all afraid of Morell’s patriarchal notion:

CANDIDA [looking at him] Yes: it will depend on what happens to him [He looks vacantly at her]. Dont you see? It will depend on how he comes to learn what love really is. I mean on the sort of woman who will teach it to him. (Act II, 141)

In the second Act Candida deliberately uses the expression “Prossy’s Complaint” to make her husband see through the reality. She punctures Morell’s confidence that even women gather at his meetings to hear his lectures on Socialism and religion. They do the same because “They all have Prossy’s Complaint,” meaning “They are all in love” with him, as she explains to him:
They're all in love with you. And you are in love with preaching because you do it so beautifully. And you think it's all enthusiasm for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth; and so do they. You dear silly! (141)

While speaking of love Candida now feels "jealous" not of Prossy (which Morell wrongly thinks) but of "somebody else" (meaning Eugene), and wonders why Morell should be spoiled with excess of "love" which he does not deserve, and Eugene should suffer from lovelessness. She says to Morell:

It seems unfair that all the love should go to you, and none to him; although he needs it so much more than you do. (Act II, 141)

The Shavian stage vocabulary indicates how Candida gradually emerges as a prototype of the New Woman.

V

Shaw took much care in his portrayal of Burgess as a comic figure and moulded the stage speeches for him accordingly. Even he interfered with the rehearsal of Candida and instructed the actor playing the role of Burgess how to achieve perfection in performance. It is tempting to quote elaborately what he said in his article "An Aside" (1933):

No wonder I often found actors and actresses nervously taking the utmost care to avoid acting, the climax being reached by an actor engaged for the broadly comic part of Burgess in Candida, . . . who solemnly put up his hand as I vengefully approached him, and said: "Mr. Shaw: I know what you are going to say. But you may depend on me. In the intellectual drama I never clown."

(221)

Shaw's use of comic relief within the structuration of the play is superbly dramatised through Burgess, a man who is always concerned about the "selfishness of petty commerce." Completely unintellectual, Burgess is unable to understand either Morell or Eugene, and his reaction to them is very often amusing. This provides the audience with some sort of comic relief. He suffers
from a deep-rooted obsession that everyone apart from himself, who is not interested in money-making, is more or less, mad; he or she has some inadequacy of character. To him, index to success is money. Thus, Burgess, overtly obsessive with money, stands in sharp contrast to Morell, whose obsession with preaching and professional success makes him egoistic, and also to Eugene, whose poetic sensitivity makes him unable to outgrow romantic love.

In the second Act, in a brief interaction between Burgess and Eugene, the former tells the latter that Morell is mad: “Well, he’s mad.” This is a somewhat sudden revelation to Eugene who exclaims “Mad!” But Burgess, the pragmatic capitalist, unhesitatingly concludes: “Mad as a Morch’ are. You take notice on him and youll see” (137). In order to justify his point Burgess tries to draw Eugene to his own side, and uses the word “fool” which has already been used by so many other characters with different connotations:

BURGESS. He sez to me – this is as sure as we’re settin here now – he sez “I’m a fool,” he sez; “and yore a scoundrel.” Me a scoundrel, mind you!
And then shook ands with me on it, as if it was to my credit! Do you mean to tell me as that man’s sane? (Act II, 137)

This assertion of Burgess is further confirmed when Morell is reluctant to pay any heed to his complaint that Proserpine has dared to call him “a silly ole fat’ead.” Now in an aside, Burgess tells Eugene “What did I tell you? Mad as a etter.” The Shavian comic mode is here perfectly attuned to an equally well-manipulated dialogue. Shaw uses the ‘aside’ as a mode of conversation, though it is somewhat unusual for a modern dramatist. He relies on this old device again to create a comic situation.

Morell’s matter-of-fact statement that Candida is “filling the lamps” is a terrible blow to pierce the sensitive heart of Eugene who starts up “in the wildest consternation,” and is too eager to “fill them” himself, for he cannot imagine Candida to “soil” her hands by doing such an unworthy domestic work. Here, Eugene’s reaction and behaviour stamp him as an eccentric who lives in a utopia and thinks that Candida is far above the level of petty domestic duties. The domestic object “lamp” is invested with a higher significance. It does not only bring out the emotion of Eugene towards Candida, but also qualifies the
associative value of Shaw’s language. With his highly imaginative bent of mind, Eugene transfigures the lamps of Candida’s house into the “stars” of the sky which need not be filled with paraffin oil everyday, so that Candida would no more be burdened with such drudgery:

MARCHBANKS [softly and musically, but sadly and longingly] No, not a scrubbing brush, but a boat: a tiny shallop to sail away in, far from the world, where the marble floors are washed by the rain and dried by the sun; where the south wind dusts the beautiful green and purple carpets. Or a chariot! To carry us up into the sky, where the lamps are stars, and don't need to be filled with paraffin oil every day. (Act II, 139)

Here the theatre language is both poetic and evocative. Shaw thus emphasizes that the real tension in the play is not so much between the two rivals in love (Morell and Eugene), as between Candida’s commonsense world and Eugene’s poetic world. Margery Morgan, among other critics, has traced some of the elements of the pre-Raphaelite poetry in Shaw’s representation of affinities between human beings and phenomenal nature. That is why the description acquires a mystical quality. But the irony, or what may be called a superb dramatic schematisation of Shaw, is that it is Eugene, not Candida, who finally responds to the call of the “starry nights” and leaves her. Eugene wants to see Candida “beautiful and free and happy,” unrestricted by the chores of domestic life, but he is ultimately disillusioned and searches his happiness and true vocation of an artist in the large world outside.

Idealisation of Candida is attempted again and again through Eugene’s imaginative language used to reveal the intensity of his emotions and feelings. But nowhere in the play it is better exemplified than in such an exclamation as “only horror! horror! horror!” (Act II, 139). Shaw uses all the sordid chores of domestic life to create a realistic dramatic situation. For example, like the lamp and the scrubbing brush, onions also make Eugene convulse in a frenzy, again only to be scolded by Candida: “Yes, onions. Not even Spanish ones: nasty little red onions” (Act II, 139). Here Shaw’s stage direction shows how Candida clings to Eugene and takes him into the kitchen, exercising a complete authority over him. Shaw is the pioneer in foregrounding the kitchen. He has utilized it to
show the condition of the Victorian women. Women were oppressed, though they were called angels of the house. Eugene's expressions very often elevate Candida as an angel which the Shavian heroine brushes aside. Eugene's Rossettian heroine takes much pain to shatter the mist of illusion about herself. But Burgess's judgement of Eugene's poetic sensibility heightens the comic situation, when he says that "He talks very pretty. I awls had a turn for a bit of poetry." It is Proserpine, again, who makes Burgess think of Eugene as a boy of romantic temperament and forbids him to take "such a fancy to Mr Marchbanks,"— "He's mad." Burgess sees people through his own spectacles and considers them mad as they fall short of his parameter of material value-judgement. He is even surprised and exclaims: "Mad! What! Im too!" It is interesting to note that just a little earlier Burgess has told Eugene that Morell is mad: "Mad as a Morch'are," and now Proserpine tells him that Eugene is "Mad as a March hare." Proserpine echoes the words of Burgess who now understands the real meaning of poetic horror as it occurs to Eugene: "So thats what the poetic orrors means" (Act II, 139).

If Burgess has doubts about the sanity of other people in respect of material things, Morell has also formed a sort of doubt about Candida's sanity and integrity. He also echoes the same sentiment of Burgess or Proserpine when he declares in a hypothesis: "Candida is mad." The dramatic language has a boomerang effect on Burgess who cannot imagine his daughter to be a victim of insanity. Hence his utter surprise and protest, "What! Candy mad too!" (Act II, 142). Burgess is puzzled about the conversation of Candida and Morell regarding "Prossy's Complaint" and wants to know the real meaning of the expression from Lexy, who informs him of the secret that Candida is "a little out of her mind sometimes" (143). This is enough to create a sort of cathartic effect on Burgess, and he is completely baffled to conclude "Four in the same ouse!" (143), in the Morell "asylum."

The criticism that Shaw's plays are all talk and only talk, is not well founded. In his best plays the dramatic potency of language is qualified by the more potent Life Force. In the words of Candida, as in those of Ann (Man and Superman),
we feel the potency and vitality of the Shavian language that establishes her authority over Morell and Eugene. She can command her husband, as we find in her words—"Yes, I must be talked to." When Morell feels reluctant to spend a little time with Candida, as he is tired and hardpressed with his work, Candida insists on her need of communication with him:

Yes, I must be talked to. . . . Why must you go out every night lecturing and talking? I hardly have one evening a week with you. (140)

But after placing herself comfortably "beside his knee" while "patting his hand," what Candida talks about ironically heightens Morell’s agony of doubt and jealousy. What is comical is that Candida remains unaware of the unintentional shock she causes to Morell, thus by disclosing the secret of "Prossy’s complaint." Morell can hardly overcome the shock, as he says:

MORELL. Candida: What dreadful! What soul-destroying cynicism! Are you jesting? Or—can it be?—are you jealous? (141)

Judging from the patterns of the uses of words of the play it may be said that the subject-matter of Candida is worked out from the perspective of the lover. The somewhat happy ending of the play does not result from the reunion of husband and wife, preservation of social norms, but from innovations within the comic structure. Eugene’s last words ("But I have a better secret than that in my heart") reflect that what he feels in the loss of the desired object is more like exhilaration than disappointment. Candida’s rejection of Eugene leads to his discovery of reality and his acceptance of the true vocation of a poet. His comment “Out, then, into the night with me,” is his own rejection of the commonplace domestic life in order to be under the stars, where he actually belongs as a poet. Eugene has been able to withdraw himself from the confinements of domestic existence to redirect his energies into other still undisclosed areas. In any case, the escape from the impossible Candida-type of love into an indeterminate reality opens new developmental phases for Eugene. Candida now understands that Eugene has "learnt to live without happiness." He bids goodbye to Candida and Morell, and goes out into the night with “a better secret” in his heart—a secret, never known to people immersed in domestic happiness, but only to a poet inspired by the spirit of exploration of the
unknown. This is what Shaw reveals through his “visual language” at the end – “They embrace. But they do not know the secret in the poet’s heart.”

VI

The third and final Act of Candida not simply shows the gradual progress of time – from “A fine morning” of the first Act to the late hours of the evening of the same day – but also a great psychological progress of the trio – Candida, Eugene and Morell. The stage setting perfectly captures the mood of the actors. As the curtains are drawn, we find Candida and Eugene sitting by the fire. It is an ideal situation for a typical domestic comedy where the heroine and the intruder are found to be busy in a tête-à-tête. Here we find Eugene engaged in reading his own poems to Candida. But Candida, holding a brass poker in her hand, is in “a waking dream, miles away from her surroundings and completely oblivious of Eugene” (Act III, 144). Shaw depicts Candida as if absorbed in a trance under the spell of the incantation of Eugene’s verse. But Shaw’s main purpose is to shatter the conventional pattern of a typical domestic comedy. That is why he utilises the poker as symptomatic of a harsh reality which stands in sharp opposition to Eugene’s poetic or rather a phantasmagoric world. Thus, there is little substance in Candida’s assurance to Eugene that “she is longing to hear what happens to the angel.” Candida is actually unmindful, and yet encourages Eugene to read on, though she knows that Eugene is idealising her, of which she is not so worthy, but she does not want to shatter his idealism so drastically. So, when Eugene tells her that the poker has made him “horribly uneasy,” Candida even wants to put it down at once. However, in using the poker, a non-verbal dramatic component, Shaw has served some profound dramatic purpose. Eugene’s uneasiness at Candida’s absorption with “a poker in hand” links it to a weapon and he visualises the scene as one of the most
romantic episodes in which the integrity and honesty of a knight is glorified. Eugene's power of imagination transforms the situation:

MARCHBANKS. . . . If I were a hero of old I should have laid my drawn sword between us. If Morell had come in he would have thought you had taken up the poker because there was no sword between us.


The unpleasant poker has been changed into a favourable object, a sword, which acquires many qualifications or a cluster of associations as a symbol. The sword stands for courage, integrity and honesty. With the transformation of the poker into the sword of a medieval Knight the poet Eugene transforms himself into a Knight-at-arms defending his ladylove. Again, the sword becomes in Eugene's vision the "flaming sword that turned everyway" on the gateway to heaven, and Eugene fails to go in, though he discovers Candida transformed as an angel, an inmate of that heaven. She has "divine insight," because she loves Eugene's or Morell's souls and not their follies or virtues or dresses, Eugene infers. The "poker", an implied phallic symbol, is a means to delve deeper into the inner recesses of Candida to denote the emptiness in her conjugal life. As the poker enkindles the fire to create flame, Candida inspires Eugene the artist to rouse into new creativity. Eugene's final quest for truth starts from here. It is a journey from the domestic to the wider world.

In this final Act, Candida emerges as the real prototype of a Shavian heroine—a predecessor of Ann—who could well manage her dramatic speeches to drive her point home. Here is the caustic satire on any pretension or the Victorian prudery when Candida firmly asks Eugene to say anything he "really and truly" feels. She attacks Morell, the windbag, for what he says is not the honest expression of his real self, but a mere attitude. Candida perhaps points out that both Morell and Eugene are slaves of some attitude. Again, in her urging of Eugene—"But you may say anything you really and truly feel," we find the necessary impetus for a poet to discover his own self, and not to remain engrossed in private fantasies:

CANDIDA. [without the least fear or coldness, and with perfect respect for his passion, but with a touch of her wise-hearted maternal humor] No. But
you may say anything you really and truly feel. Anything at all, no matter what it is. I am not afraid, so long as it is your real self that speaks, and not a mere attitude: a gallant attitude, or a wicked attitude, or even a poetic attitude. I put you on your honor and truth. Now say whatever you want to.

MARCHBANKS. [the eager expression vanishing utterly from his lips and nostrils as his eyes light up with pathetic spirituality] Oh, now I can't say anything: all the words I know belong to some attitude or other — ... (Act III)

Thus, speech as a mode of communication should be a statement of truth and feeling, and not of any made-up attitudes.

But the interesting fact is that this early Shavian heroine is impervious to either of the contenders who struggle to win her love and confidence. In her role on the stage she maintains a singular neutrality between the two. She, so to say, "mothers everyone and loves no one" (Valency 126). Candida is completely self-sufficient. This sort of neutrality is also maintained even in a highly emotional dramatic situation when Eugene tells her that there is only one word in his vocabulary, uncontaminated or untainted by any stain of attitude, and that very word is "Candida." The young poet repeats that word five times with the intonation of a prayer — only to receive a prosaic query from Candida: "And what have you to say to Candida?" Eugene's "prayer" to his "angel" or goddess brings him "happiness." Eugene is transported to the realm of imagination with a mystic vision of his Candida to articulate his prayer of love in an equally mystic language:

MARCHBANKS [Softly, losing himself in the music of the name] Candida, Candida, Candida, Candida, Candida. I must say that now, because you have put me on my honor and truth; and I never think or feel Mrs Morell: it is always Candida.

CANDIDA. Of course. And what have you to say to Candida?

MARCHBANKS. Nothing but to repeat your name a thousand times. Don't you feel that every time is a prayer to you?

CANDIDA. Doesn't it make you happy to be able to pray?

MARCHBANKS. Yes, very happy.

CANDIDA. Well, that happiness is the answer to your prayer. Do you want anything more?
MARCHBANKS. No: I have come into heaven, where want is unknown. (Act III, 145)

Shaw concludes the opening episode of this Act with a reference to happiness with which he closed the first Act. But there is a significant difference between Morell’s and Eugene’s experience of happiness. Morell always boasts of his happiness. But his happiness depends on Candida, whereas Eugene’s depends on nobody. Morell holds on to an unstable compromise in getting happiness. He has chosen happiness without relinquishing his hope of blessedness. He seeks his happiness in his married life, in a life of domesticity, and his blessedness in his priestly work, in the larger outside world. Eugene hankers after blessedness not in the warmth and comfort of a domestic life, not even in association with Candida, but in the vast expanse of the world. Here we can well refer to his parting words to Morell, which reveal the essential contrast between their visions of life and happiness:

I no longer desire happiness: life is nobler than that. Parson James: I give you my happiness with both hands: I love you because you have filled the heart of the woman I loved. Goodbye. (Act III, 152)

Shaw has invested the word “happiness” with deeper connotations in *Man and Superman*. Tanner’s assurance that a life-time of “happiness” is only an illusion seems to carry a potent connotation. Shaw’s childhood unhappiness gets dramatic expression through the recurrent use of the word “happiness”, almost always mentioned in connection with “blessedness.” Shaw did never receive the necessary parental affection in his childhood. His father was indifferent to him. But what gave him much shock was his mother’s negligence. In *Sixteen Self Sketches* he reveals his mother’s paradoxical nature: “She did not hate anybody, nor love anybody” (13). He again expresses his dissatisfaction:

In short, my mother was, from the technical point of view of a modern welfare worker, neither a mother nor a wife, and could be classed only as a Bohemian anarchist with ladylike habits. (14)

The highly-charged emotional interaction between Eugene and Candida in the third Act is interrupted by the sudden entry of Morell. Seeing them together Morell is baffled, but maintains a sort of patriarchal boastfulness in mocking
Candida by saying: “I hope I don’t disturb you.” The word “disturb” which Morell now utters with a great disdain will overpower him like a boomerang a little later, when he would be extremely disturbed with the revelation of the fact that the intruder-poet is on the way to displace him in the realm of love. Morell makes a frantic bid to get at the truth and is greatly shocked to learn that Eugene has been able to enter his world of love. Eugene now calls his wife by her name. This is a heartbreaking blow to Morell, who now pathetically realises that Eugene has “got that far.” The sheer comicality of Eugene’s paradoxical words—“I was standing outside the gate of heaven, and refusing to go in”—is essentially poignant to Morell who has now been deflated into a frenzied, jealous husband to surrender to Eugene’s relentless and ruthless word-play in this manner: “Speak, man: have you no feeling for me?” This dramatic speech telescopes the reality that Morell has hardly had any real trust in Candida as his wife in the matter of their conjugal relation. Then Eugene goes on speaking in a mood of trance, as it were, to drain off all the confidence and pride of Morell as a husband. When Eugene says that the gate of love was really the gate of Hell, it makes Morell triumphantly conclude that then Candida might have rejected him: “She repulsed you!”—at which his hope is raised, but only to be deflated by Eugene’s negation: “No, you fool: if she had done that I should never have seen that I was in Heaven already.”

Shaw has managed his dramatic language so effectively that we feel a ring of symphony between what Candida says to Eugene and what now Eugene says to Morell. Candida asks Eugene to speak from the depth of his feeling, and now we are really surprised to witness that it is Eugene who asks Morell to shake off the camouflage of a professional preacher and love Candida as a real man, to exhibit to her the genuine self of Morell, the man, not Morell, the moralist. Shaw’s dramaturgic twist of language now indicates that Eugene’s education under the guidance of Candida has been complete. By virtue of his penetrating insight Eugene has been able to realise that Morell loves Candida. In fact, he is a “beggar” for Candida’s love, but Eugene is not. In this context, we may note the undertone of the contrast between the same man’s begging of love and offering
“protection” to his wife. Like so many other words, “beggar” and “protect” are also repeated to carry on multi-dimensional layers of meanings of the Shavian language-pattern in the play and thus to heighten comic humour and entertainment through inversion and repetition.

A closer analysis of the play shows that Shaw has created brief, episodic scenes which are interrelated to each other by means of the use of correlated words and ideas. For example, in the first Act, Candida has to tidy up Eugene when he was roughed up by Morell physically, though she was unaware of it. She continues to extend her motherly protection to both Eugene and Morell. Even in Act III Morell’s offer of manly protection is belied, and it is Candida who consoles her emotionally shattered husband, by saying: “My boy shall not be worried: I will protect him” (147). She is bold enough to say this. The very sound of the word “protect” turns Morell upside down, for just a little earlier, in the absence of Candida, he has boasted to Eugene that he will have to “protect” her, but now in Eugene’s presence Candida offers her husband a gesture of protection. The very word used in a perfectly congenial context is enough to offer us a foretaste of a modern feministic assertion. This sort of a dramatic interaction teases the audience “out of thought.” Again, Morell’s egoistic complacence that he is the strongest of the three is given a great jolt by Candida when she chooses to remain with “the weaker of the two,” ignoring Eugene’s romantic provocation.

VII

The auction scene in *Candida* (Act III) is the very Shavian dramatic schematisation of the power of the female self articulated through Candida’s enigmatic language which expresses her personality. It has a tremendous theatrical value in point of performance. The dialectic relationship between the trio is nowhere better theatricalised than in this auction scene. Here Shaw’s view
that Candida is the prototype of the Virgin Mother, particularly to Eugene and Morell, is dramatically exemplified. While considering her role in the play one may be reminded of the common maxim that glorifies motherhood—'the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.' Shaw depicts Candida as a visionary creature with a profound power to establish her own right both in the world of love and domesticity. Candida at once breaks the citadel of male power in declaring that she is ready for auction. Earlier she has shattered Morell’s prejudiced notions regarding chastity and marital fidelity, and now her very choice of being put on ‘auction’, to be put on sale as a commodity in a commercial transaction, is enough to give the Victorian audience a great shock. The utilisation of speech for shock therapy is well exhibited in this scene. Candida, playing the role of an anchor, initiates the process of auction by asking Morell, "What do you bid, James?"

This brief episode becomes a replica of theatre-within-the-theatre, as it creates an atmosphere of tension and suspense in the minds of the bidders as well as the audience. It also provides Candida an opportunity to unburden her pent-up feelings, but she never breaks down; her language is the very source of her strength. When she says that she was waiting to know Morell’s ‘bid’, the audience might infer that she offered herself as a commodity. But Candida knows it very well that in the domestic sphere most of the women have the same fate, but she is exceptional in the sense that she will never allow the male contenders to subjugate her. Again when Morell says that it is not out of pity that he is offering his bid, Candida quickly understands his condition and curtly retorts, that she did not mean to “touch” him. This balances Morell’s angry retort to Candida “Don’t touch me,” a little while ago. Shaw’s repetition of words and almost the same dramatic dialogue adds much to the structural coherence of the play and heightens the underlying mystery and tension in the dramatic world. A heartbroken Morell now wants to retain Candida in his own custody, and so offers every sort of material possession to her:

MORELL.[with proud humility] I have nothing to offer you but my strength for your defence, my honesty for your surety, my ability and industry for your
livelihood, and my authority and position for your dignity. That is all it becomes a man to offer to a woman.

CANDIDA. [quite quietly] And you, Eugene? What do you offer?
MARCHBANKS. My weakness. My desolation. My heart’s need.

Candida’s appreciation of Eugene’s impressively articulated mode of biding heightens Morel’s dread of losing Candida. Here Shaw’s directional descriptions of Candida’s reactions produce a wonderful dramatic effect:

She pauses and looks curiously from one to the other, as if weighing them. Morell, whose lofty confidence has changed into heartbreaking dread at Eugene’s bid, loses all power of concealing his anxiety. Eugene, strung to the highest tension, does not move a muscle.

Now it is time for Candida to make her own ‘choice.’ She herself would judge who the highest bidder is. This is essentially an inversion of the Victorian concept of the role of a woman in the domestic world. But Candida is to invert it in her own way. Shaw’s stage direction here serves to create maximum amount of tension. Candida looks at the male fighters, weighs them and tries to feel their tension. The audience can see the gesture of Candida showing her tremendous will power. Morell’s confidence is shattered, he loses all his power of patriarchy and Eugene remains unruffled. Morell, out of sheer anguish, is able just to utter “Candida!” and Eugene immediately snubs him by calling him a coward. Candida comes out as a successful manipulator of the entire dramatic situation; the two male characters seem to become puppets before her who wields much power over them.

Candida’s expression “weaker of the two” heightens the mystery of the situation. The audience feels that it is Eugene who is the weaker one, because he has just his weakness to offer to Candida. She knows that Eugene’s ‘weakness’ is his real strength. She also infers that Morell’s existence is impossible without hers, but Eugene has the entire world before him. This is made quite clear in her long solo speeches. Now, she would like to take Morell and Eugene as her friends. Candida shows that their marital relationship has continued because of her own
sacrifice. She has always looked upon Morell as her child (symbolically enough, Morell sits in the children’s chair). It is she who has managed the entire domestic chores, giving every sort of comfort and happiness to her husband. In one sense, Shaw has inverted the patriarchal master-slave relationship by making Candida utter the real truth: “I make him master here, though he does not know it.” She has very wittily shattered the pride of patriarchy: “When there is money to give, he gives: when there is money to refuse, I refuse it.”

Candida’s secret strength with which she manipulates the entire auction episode and wins over the male-contenders is no less important than that of the poetic secret of Eugene with which he can search for a real life of happiness and fulfilment in the vast larger world. Eugene’s search is to be contrasted with Candida’s endeavour to form a new life with a transformed, more self-conscious Morell, who now accepts her as his wife, mother and sister — “the sum of all loving care to me.” Shaw has shown that Eugene leaves the Morell household with a ‘secret’ in his heart, but we know that Candida stays with Morell also with a secret — this secret is left for the audience to explore. Candida’s understanding of Morell and Eugene is complete. The auction scene of Candida has some affinity with the Proviso scene in Congreve’s The way of the World, in which marriage as an institution has been thoroughly criticised by the heroine Millamant who agrees to marry her lover on her own terms.

The underlying note of mystery in Shaw’s theatre language here is best revealed in the dramatic dialogues of Candida — particularly in her interaction with Morell and Eugene. Besides the word “understand” which functions as the main thread of structural coherence, Candida utilises the word “love” with diverse connotations to give the audience a multiplicity of meanings. Her understanding of love is really different from that of Morell or Eugene; she disillusions both in the realm of love. Morell, a champion in the outside world of Socialism, is a pathetic failure in the conjugal world of Candida. She unhesitatingly informs Morell that it is her sacred duty to make Eugene learn the real type of love, so that he is not taught it by a bad woman. To Morell, Candida now appears somewhat unknown and mysterious, because he fails to understand her. Shaw’s
language shows that Morell’s masculinity is in crisis now: “No evil, Candida. I hope and trust, no evil.” Candida is not to shake off her belief. So she reminds her husband that it will ‘depend’ on how Eugene behaves with her, for to her such orthodox ideas of goodness, chastity and purity have no real significance at all. She is ready to sacrifice them as willingly as she would give her shawl to a beggar.

In this scene the dramatic language has been perfectly constructed to evoke in the reader/audience a complex response to the episode. While putting herself on ‘sale’, Candida ‘buys’ her husband on new terms and conditions which are not dramatised but left to the understanding of the audience. Eugene’s secret is really mystical, which Shaw himself explained by writing on several postcards, (dated 8 March 1920) to the queries of a play-reading society at Rugby:

The secret is very obvious, after all—provided you know what a poet is. What business has a man with the great destiny of a poet with the small beer of domestic conflict and cuddling and petting at the apron strings of some dear nice woman? Morel cannot do without it; it is the making of him; without it he would be utterly miserable and perhaps go to the devil. To Eugene, the stronger of the two, the daily routine of it is nursery slavery, swaddling clothes, mere happiness instead of exaltation—an atmosphere in which great poetry dies. . . . When Candida brings him squarely face to face with it, his heart rolls up like a scroll; and he goes proudly into the majestic and beautiful kingdom of the starry night. (qtd. in Meisel 232)

The play dramatises the ‘growth of a poet’s mind.’ Candida performs the role of a catalyst here in making Eugene grow as a poet, and when she finally enquires him of his age, Eugene’s reply, “as old as the world”, indicates his awareness about his growth and education. Candida’s love is not marked by possessiveness, it is liberating. It liberates Eugene to choose his own path. Raymond Williams thinks that “The famous scene of Candida’s choice is not reassuring; the emotional discrimination is again mechanical” (284). This type of observation is somewhat misleading and inappropriate, because Candida undoubtedly appears to be an assured woman in choosing Morell and allowing Eugene to set out in
search of his destiny in the starry night. This is the real mystery of the auction scene in *Candida*.

VIII

At the end of the play after the ‘auction’ of Candida, the dark night inflames Eugene’s mind to set out in the exploration of his uncircumscribed destiny. Eugene shows a sort of never-ending spirit of quest by rejecting married life and domestic environment. Shaw has referred in his writings to the limitations of marriage on the score that marriage or responsibility of wife and children often hampers or harms an artist’s creativity. This bias against domesticity he probably derived from his own experience of his mother’s sufferings as a music teacher and living away from her husband with her daughters in London. Candida appears at the end of the play, to Eugene to be the very embodiment of domestic happiness, one who disturbs the artistic world-view of Eugene. Paradoxically enough, Eugene at first seems to be an intruder into the domestic world of Candida, exposing its utter hollowness. But now when Candida wants to have an access into the poetic world of Eugene, he closes it, leaves the stage, without singing his love-song. He has a glorious destiny — the destiny of a poet in the lap of Nature. Candida’s last words “How old are you, Eugene?” are adequately matched by the answer from a more mature and confident Eugene: “As old as the world now” (Act III, 152). The artist is now free from his private desires. The society does not allow the artist to have his true vocation fulfilled. The final paradox of the play lies in the fact that it is darkness, not light, that shows Eugene the actual way to self-realisation. This darkness of the phenomenal world becomes an ‘idiom’ of theatre, heightening the emblem of the mystery of creativity which illumines the world. Morell’s language in the play is prompted by his patriarchal worldview. In the auction scene, Candida has to satisfy the desire of the male egos of both Morell
and Eugene. Morell tries to establish his superiority by relying on “men’s language.” Candida has long ago proved her ability to utilise language to “elaborate women’s ways of talking” to establish her own authority and power. Again and again, she has employed “linguistic strategies” to defeat Morell. Morell’s male voice relies on androgynous vocabulary: “It is a matter between two men; and I am the right person to settle it.” He tries his best to belittle Candida as a feminine self. But Candida’s voice of protest is also formidable enough to articulate: “Two men! Do you call that a man? [to Eugene] you bad boy!” Candida has the courage in using the same vocabulary as Morell: “I suppose it is quite settled that I must belong to one or the other.” She ignores the linguistic “difference” of male and female as put forward by the sociolinguists, and, as it were, leaves the subject for Eliza to develop further in *Pygmalion*. In the patriarchal system, Candida is supposed to belong either to Morell or to Eugene. But metaphorically she belongs to both, as she feels the necessity to educate both. Therein lies the “mystery” in her language.

The final authorial voice in stage direction is cryptic, related to the central motif of the “secret” and “mystery” of the Shavian pattern of language: “They embrace. But they do not know the secret in the poet’s heart.” The first half “They embrace” is performative, and this is undercut in the second, “But they do not know the secret in the poet’s heart.” Shaw here applies a double-edged dramatic trick, both for the audience in visual form and for readers in verbal form. Even Candida fails to know the “secret” of Eugene’s heart, which is the reservoir of creativity, where she is displaced. Theatrically (which is visual), Candida displaces Eugene, but metaphorically (which is not visual) she is displaced by Eugene, and this is done by his profound “secret” which builds up the universal appeal of the play.

In conclusion, we may say that the Shavian ‘idiom’ of theatre is perfectly utilised in *Candida*. The patterning of words and expressions forming a web of meaning and message is superbly achieved which creates a haunting effect on the audience. The actors are to realise the technicalities of such word patterns to perform their roles well, so that the intended impact on the audience is created.
By the time Shaw came to write *Man and Superman*, he has explored and evolved a more complex and powerful theatre language, capable of embodying philosophical ideas of Creative Evolution as well the spirit of comedy and romance.

Notes and References: Chapter Two

Notes

1. Shaw initiated his literary career as a novelist and wrote five novels. The first one *Immaturity* along with its Preface is a storehouse of information about the author’s inner life. However, in almost all his plays he adopts the novelistic mode of characterisation and scene-setting. He says, “Write nothing in a play that you would not write in a novel” (“How to Make Plays Readable” 95). Shavian stage directions are usually long and elaborate. Shaw’s own article “How to Make Plays Readable” substantiates this point:

   The fact is, the actor and the reader want exactly the same thing, vivid strokes of description, not stage manager’s memoranda of impertinent instructions in the art of acting from literary people who cannot act (94).

2. The actual name of Titian was Tiziano Vecelli. He was one of the greatest Italian painters who lived from 1477 to 1576. Here his great painting “Assumption of the Virgin” showing the reception of the Virgin Mary into heaven has been referred to by Shaw to signify the spiritual beauty of Candida.
Works Cited


