

Lecture 13

NATURALISM

Modern Drama

Prof. Abdul-Settar Mal-Allah Channel



Arms and the Man: Act II



Episode Six: The Meeting between Louka and Sergius

The moment Sergius meets Louka, his eyes gleams at once and he takes a stealthy look at her then he asks her about the meaning of 'the higher love'. She replies, she does not know. Yet he gives his understanding of it- "it is a very fatiguing thing". And "one feels the need of some relief after it". The Sergius tries to flirt with the maid Louka, as she comes to pour some coffee to him. He stretches his hand and taking it, while she pretends to pull it. Later he insists on flirting with her as he lets his hand slip dexterously round her waist asking her if she finds him a handsman! She attempts to go out fearing that she would be disgraced, but he insists further. Hence, she demands him to find another place away from any one lest she could be seen by somebody- "Then stand back where we can't be seen". She even dares to insult him: "Have you no common sense?". Again and again, he keeps on his trials of playing with and putting his arm



Episode Six: The Meeting between Louka and Sergius

round her. He understands that she really wants him to flirt with her despite her ostensible denial and reject. He describes her as a "provoking little witch" and discloses that she keeps following him out of the window with her eyes. Even he praises her as "pretty , witty"; then attempts to kiss her but she avoids his kiss demurely. And she shocks us with two strange news that he made love to her behind Miss Raina's back and that his Fiance makes love with another man behind Sergius's back. She attempts to find excuses for a gentleman like him for not knowing the reality of the girl he has been engaged to- she means Raina as she charges Raina of disloyalty to him- "it is hard to know what a gentleman considers right". Then she reveals that she wants him for her also- she asks him not to be particular for just one woman! Unconsciously, he immediately shouts calling her – "Devil! Devil!". The dialogue uncovers that she is tricky and witty as



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she is planning to attract the attention of this man for her, despite her seeming denial and refusal his appeals. She reveals that she has a deep understanding to the nature of men, all men as she says "one of six of men is like me". Sergius understands the reference to men and gives the categories of theses six types of men- one could be a hero, one buffoon, one humbug, one blackguard, one coward and one jealous! Then he asks her to let him know the name of his rival whom Raina is fascinated by. She replies she has seen him but has listened to his voice as that man was in Raina's bedroom and if he comes again, he will marry her. So she gives her anticipations. Fortunately, her anticipation will come true despite Sergius's association of her with the devil and witch, reminiscent of the Biblical reference to woman as a devil or a witch.



Episode Six: The Meeting between Louka and Sergius

He regards her as "abominable little clod of common clay with a soul of a servant". Also, he despises a great deal as he looks to her as "an unclean thing" and he intentionally dusts his hands of her. Moreover, her dialogue with Sergius uncovers her snobbish character. She aspires to change her social status; she aspires not to remain a maid for ever; she refuses to have a soul of being a servant like Nicola who holds much pressure on her to be a servant in soul, not only as a mere career or work. This snobbish nature and wish to change uncover her ability to change her destiny and future and this will come true at the end of the play.



Episode Seven : Mother and Her Daughter In a Private Talk

As Louka leaves, Raina comes again to escort her Fiancee Sergius in their outing. She asks Sergius if he was flirting with Louka while she was away. Of course, he denies that. She says she was joking. Her question implies that either she knows that her Fiancee flirts with the maid, or she doubts. But earlier, her father reveals a certain fact concerning her habit to listen to the talks of others without their knowledge. This means she eavesdrops as usual. Her father describes her habit as "" abominable" just to emphasize such a behavior or nature in her character. This means that she follows the events, she follows the characters and knows their secrets just like what Louka does. Louka keeps listening and spy on others. She admits she spies and eavesdrops. She tells Nikola at the beginning of Act II, that she knows a lot of the family secrets. In reply, Nikola



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her that he himself learns a lot of the family secrets- secrets about Lady Catherine; secrets about Major Petkoff, and secrets about Raina's intention or plan to leave her Fiancee Sergius and gets married to Captain Bluntscheli- such disclosure amazes Louka and she denies that she herself has already tells Nikola about it. "How do you know? I never told you!" and this is why Nikola offers a series of advices- to be respectful and to hold her tongue and to serve the family faithfully. So eavesdropping in this play is among the features of the plot. In addition to Louka's Hhabit of listening to others she proves herself of good knowledge of people the moment she knows their names- she can identify a person's nationality or identity through the name- this happens when she brings a title-card, to her Lady Catherine with the name of Captain Bluntscheli. The lady wonders if the man is a German, but Louka tells her that the name denotes a Swiss man. Then the



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man appears nothing but the Swiss Officer Captain Bluntcheli. And we will see this actually at the end of Act II.

Later, Lady Catherine calls Sergius because he is needed by her husband in the library. So the mother finds it a proper opportunity to ask Raina about Captain Bluntscheli and how long he stayed in her bedroom before Raina came to tell her mother about his presence that night. Raina says she cannot remember how long he remained with her. The mother is afraid that her daughter's would-marriage to Sergius would be ruined if her fiancée heard about this story of a strange man hiding in her bedroom, the man whom Major Petkoff and Sergius told the family his funny story earlier. And that man was the Swiss officer himself, a fact that is not known by



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either the Father nor the Fiancee. The mother anticipates if the Swiss Officer would come to bring back the coat, and she wonders what she would do and how to behave. The first thing the mother was afraid of is the match of the proposed marriage would be broken. To this, Raina replies that she would not care for Sergius the way her mother cares for him. Even she reveals another fact concerning a certain relationship between her mother and Sergius regarding him as "your pet, mother", and she sometimes wishes that Sergius could marry her mother instead of taking her as a wife. She tells her mother that he "just suit you, you spoiled him; you mother him to perfection". Raina does not care much to Sergius. On the contrary she wants to "shock his propriety and scandalize his five senses. I don't care whether he finds out about the chocolate cream soldier or not. I half hope he may!". Yet, for a moment she calls the Chocolate cream



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soldier "a little beast", perhaps because he has left and never asks about her again as she thinks. She feels she is totally attracted to his person, but he is away, he is a man dreamt of, while Sergius is real and in hand. Hence, she is fluctuated between the two, she is confused between the two men - one is a mere illusion, the other, a fact within her reach. A bird in hand is better than many birds on the tree as the proverb goes. Thus, logically speaking, she will go with Sergius for the time being as her interests lie with him now- a rich man having horses and intends to work as a tradesman in future. Of course, things will be changed if the circumstances change. Consequently she will change and turns to the Swiss Officer if he only appears again- she will behave in another way, she will deal with the matter in a different way. And this what will occur



Episode Seven : Mother and Her Daughters In a Private Talk

nearly at the end of Act III. But now she lives on her own expectations, hopes and dreams. And perhaps, this accounts for her long seemingly pensiveness and dreaming while she is reading a novel for instance

Episode Eight : The Arrival of Captain Bluntschli and the Confusion of the Coat :

Captain Bluntschli would return to the Bulgarian palace bringing back the black coat of the owner of the house where he hid himself as he climbed the drainpipe at that night when he was aided by Raina and then by her mother.

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