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REG NO- 2015/200253

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Gender and Sexuality

Gender refers to the social identities, expectations and privileges different cultures construct for members of the different biological sexes. Gender expectations, which vary greatly between cultures, establish the boundaries of acceptable individual social behaviour such as dress, marriage, property rights, household duties and "sexuality," one's self-expression as a sexual being. Unlike biological sex, cultures may accept or assign many more than two genders, women in some communities who take on a male identity in order to follow traditionally male household roles. This gender and sexuality can be seen in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and The Man* and Oscar Wilde's *Importance of Being Ernest*. Below is shown, some instances where the issue of gender and sexuality occur in the two plays

In reading a George Bernard Shaw's play, *Arms and the Man*, one should pay attention to difference between characters of social class and gender or sexes. George Bernard Shaw pictures gender role in characters, Louka, Catherine, Sergius, and others. There is masculinity in Louka's character while annoying Nicola, where she states the obvious that she cannot marry a man of the same class with her. She reveals her control through her interaction with Sergius. She has a sexual relationship with him despite her knowledge of his relationship with her mistress Raina. Mrs Petkoff also shows masculinity in controlling house hold works in absence of her husband Mr Petkoff. In first act of the play, Raina is threaded by Bluntschli who runs and escapes form soldiers. He threatens a defenseless woman with his gun and allows her to hide him behind the curtain. Shaw illustrates the condition of women in society and the way they are handled by men. Nicola is satisfied for achieving a customer like Louka in his business when she gets married to a rich suitor rather than worrying about his feelings that she has trampled on. He is ready to separate from Louka and encourage her to do it only for his ambitions.

In Oscar Wilde's *Importance of Being Ernest*, illusions are created by appearances and mocks the expressive model of gender and the notion of true gender identity. For example, Cecily's outside appearance is "feminine" but her attitude may be considered as "masculine" since she "has got a capital appetite" and "goes on long walks" in Victorian times women were not supposed to have body functions or practise sport. Jack and Algernon are men, but they are effeminate dandies. Algernon spends money extravagantly on clothes and is greedy, qualities often associated with women. Lady bracknell, being a perfect figure to be played by a man, in the play, the husband is not shown but was talked of once. She decides the type of man her daughter will get married to and controls the activites of both her daughter and her nephew Algernon. She takes the role of a father when she interrogates jack on his background

and wealth. This means that the voice of her husband is not heard in the family and whatever she says stands.

In our world of equity and equality, both men and women have their own private imagination. Both are born equal. It is completely natural that people have positive and negative qualities. People are equal and there should be no class discrimination in society.