

I. Introduction

This research work attempts to analyse the preservation of dignity through death. It is a study of the existentially troubled character Joan. Therefore, it has little to do with the style, technique, aesthetics and other qualities of the play. The study tests the tentative hypothesis that the protagonist, Joan, affirms her existence through death. She has been provided alternatives i.e. either recant and save her life or burn at the stake. She can preserve her dignity only through death in this critical situation. Death is not a surrender but a means of achieving some goal.

Dignity is deserving of respect. But it is implicit in meaning. It needs interpretation which leads us to the acceptable conclusion. Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines dignity as "The fact of being given honour and respect by people" (425). Webster's New World College Dictionary defines it as "A degree of worth, repute or honor" (403).

Death in this text, is a deliberate act of killing oneself. In this sense, it is an intentional act. Webster's Dictionary defines it as "An act of dying" (372). Emile Durkheim also defines deliberate death (suicide) as, "An action which a person takes due to the inability to integrate into the large social unit" (86). If an individual fails to become a part of the social system he/she commits suicide (deliberate death).

These definitions give the sense that one surrenders to any situation through death. Failure leads a person to the thought of suicide or death. But this study does not see death in terms of surrender. Rather, it is seen as a purposeful act.

In this play, the female protagonist wills to remain independent. She wants to exist in freedom, so she sets free her country from the English yoke with the call "England for English and France for French" (53). Her individual Judgment comes into conflict with established authority. The major problem is the alternatives i.e.

either recant and save her life or get ready to burn alive as a witch. But she protests by rejecting recantation. Her protest rejects life and at the same time, paradoxically affirms it. She protests against the church power and political authority. It means that Joan accepts death to preserve her dignity. To overcome the problem which obstructs her dignity she chooses death. Accepting death is not a solution. Through death, people end themselves. They get nothing by it. But the protagonist has taken it as a means of protecting her choice. She sees protection in death. The study attempts to see the existential motif behind the death of the female protagonist Joan.

Existentialism is a mode of philosophy which deals with the interpretation of human existence. According to this philosophy, the human being is an isolated existent in an alien universe but he has freedom of choice to determine his life. Especially, existentialism flourished after the World Wars. The wars gave rise to the feelings of despair and separation. These feelings led to the idea that people have to create their own values in a world where traditional values don't work. One has to make choices and create oneself. Individuals are free to make choices. Then, existentialism lays stress on concrete individual existence, freedom and choice.

Existentialism rejects the idea of traditional philosophy which advocates belief in absolute being. Contrary to this philosophy, for existentialists, truths are subjective. Truth may vary person to person. What is truth for one may not be true to others. One creates truths from choice and there is freedom of choice. So, human choice is subjective. Thus, existentialism focuses on freedom, individual existence and choice. This emphasis on freedom is not new among existentialists. Renaissance humanists also focused on freedom. They celebrated freedom in the sense that they extolled the human potentials. Thus, for them, freedom was a boon. But existentialists take

freedom as a curse. Because of freedom, man himself is responsible for what he does. That's why Sartre says, "Man is condemned to be free" (56).

Existentialists oppose the existence of God. Nietzsche's comment "God is dead" has a great impact on existential philosophy. There is no God to determine our existence. First we exist, then create essence ourselves. Existentialism maintains that existence precedes essence. We are in the state of becoming, not in the state of being. It is not possible for us to be without choice. Even when we are not choosing, we are still choosing. Macintyre's remarks, "Even if I don't choose, I have chosen not to choose" (149). Since we make choices, we create meaning ourselves. Then, there is no transcendent absolute to govern our existence.

Although existentialists have many similar ideas they can be divided into two groups; theistic and atheistic. Theistic existentialists believe in religion and see the anxiety of modern man as that which can be relieved when one submits oneself to the will of God. Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, Karl Jasper, Gabriel Marcel are the representative of this group. Atheistic existentialist don't accept the existence of God. So, there is nobody to support human being. He is a free and supportless creature. Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger and Camus represent this group.

Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher, is regarded as the first existentialist. He developed his philosophy as a creation against Hegelian philosophy which stressed on rationalism, which according to Kierkegaard had "obscured the individual's responsibility for his own life" (377). For him, individual counts a lot and there is subjective truth. Search for objective truth is meaningless. It all depends on the individual.

Like Sartre and Camus, Kierkegaard has strong belief in personal choices and decisions. One's existence is really determined by them. He does not agree with the

idea that existence means being alive. Thomas Mounter remarks, "Existence, according to Kierkegaard, is not just being there but living passionately, choosing one's own existence and committing oneself to a certain way of life" (224).

Kierkegaard believes in the existence of God. He takes human being as God's creatures and offers many possibilities of being. He takes religion as a matter of faith and that is also determined by our choice. That is why, subjectivity plays a vital role here, too,

Thus, Kierkegaard believes that in any system, rules and regulation can't determine an individual. But one's choices are responsible for one's life. One is not compelled to follow, rather he is free to rebel or protest according to his/her choice. In this way, he lays emphasis on individual freedom and choice and subjective truth.

Karl Jaspers centers his ideas on the self and choice of decision. He believes that to live a true and perfect life something has to be gained and that is possible only through individual choice not through rationality. Individual freedom is emphasized by Jaspers.

Nietzsche is known as the critic of western philosophical tradition and Christianity. For him, both are corrupt because they teach abstraction. Nietzsche places life at the center. He denounces Christianity as it discourages life. Christianity believes we are the products of sin. Christianity does not serve life.

He also does not believe in the ideas of absolute truth that govern an individual. The individual is the product of his own actions arising from his active choices. Nietzsche denies the existence of God. If there is God, he is dead now. So, God is dead. He called Christianity "a slave morality" and Christianity has become only a shelter for the sick. There is nobody to govern an individual. He is his own master. For Nietzsche, "No moment is more important than the present in which one

has the opportunity to make active choices that influences the character of the whole" (292).

Nietzsche supports the idea of individual freedom and rejects any in position on the individual. An individual should master oneself. He supports master morality against slave morality. The role and position of an individual is supreme. Therefore, the individual is the focal point for him.

Nietzsche is quite positive toward death. He seems aware of the fact that death can be one of the choices that a person makes. For him, death can also be a solution. So, in his *Beyond Good and Evil* he states, "The thought of death is a great comfort: it is a good way of getting through many a bad night" (348).

For Heidegger, the universe is alien and we should face the problem of being as we have to create our own existence making choices. He developed the theory of "Dasein", a particular way of existing. It is different from other ordinary existence of things in the sense that they are determinate and they have their distinctive properties.

Human beings are thrown into the world and have to face the feeling of dread. He is extended in time. That's why, he has to tolerate a lot of problems. Redemption is possible only through freedom. *A Short History of Modern Philosophy* puts forward Heidegger's ideas in the following way, "The final assumption lies in that freedom to make my life what I choose it to be and thereby to change from thrown-ness to resolution. In that change lies the realization, and acceptance of morality" (260). As other existentialist he also talks about freedom and responsibility, individual, choice and so on.

Sartre's philosophy mostly focuses on personal freedom, and personal responsibility. Thomas Mautner says, "At the heart of his philosophy was powerful notice of freedom and an uncompromising sense of personal responsibility" (379).

For Sartre "existence precedes essence" is the central idea of existentialism. There is no predetermining existence but one creates essence from the choices one makes. So, existence is primary, He thinks freedom and existence go together. For him, "Freedom is existence and in it existence precedes essence" (66). As he talks about freedom, he also says that freedom of an individual depends on the freedom of others.

Sartre treats death positively. For him, it is like any other choice. Choice is something which an individual keeps making. And this choice may reach even up to death. Through death, a person can protect his/her choice. S/he can win something and bring fulfillment. He believes that, to make oneself; passive in the world, to refuse to act upon things and upon others is still to choose, and death is one mode among others of being in the world" (57).

Thus, Sartre stresses upon freedom of choice, and personal responsibility saying that there is not any absolute force to govern a man. It is a person who creates his own existence himself. So, subjectivity is the pivot in the view of Sartre.

Albert Camus is basically known for his view on absurdity of human life. For him the condition of man is absurd and his search for any purpose is meaningless and fruitless. The world does not possess any meaning, value or truth.

Camus also believes that man makes himself from his own choices. Such choices lead human being toward repetition as there is no meaning in the universe but man always aspires to achieve it. Such choices create the sense of absurdity in this meaningless and alienated world. But absurdity does not mean for Camus, the loss of happiness rather "Happiness and absurd are two sons of the same earth. They are inseparable" (69). In his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* he represents a character Sisyphus who chooses to reject the command of God. When he has to face the

punishment to roll up a rock, he has the feeling of absurdity. But we can't say that he is unhappy.

To conclude Albert Camus speaks of the individual's freedom of choice and responsibility for his existence.

Analyzing the ideas of these leading existentialists, we can draw a conclusion of the shared views on existentialism.

Issue of freedom is integral to existential philosophy. Although freedom is not celebrated, it is the basic factor to maintain our existence. Freedom and existence go hand in hand and freedom of an individual depends on the freedom of others.

Alienation is another important theme of existentialism. Man feels himself alienated from the universe, as there is nobody to care for him and guide him. Alienation occurs especially when an individual cannot integrate into the social structures and customs.

Boredom/anxiety is another major theme of existentialism. It is the product of one's consciousness of one's existence. When a person realizes that he is thrown into the world, a sense of dissatisfaction and despair arises and anxiety erupts.

Existence is the basic theme of existentialism. "Being alive" does not mean to be in existence. Human beings exist while animals and plants live. One exists only when one is conscious of one's existence.

Protest is another theme of existentialism. One protests against the social system to affirm one's existence. The social mechanism always imposes burden.

Similarly, death is another theme of existentialism. Death is human specific phenomenon. Only those prefer death who are conscious of existence. Animals or non human things don't prefer death. Human beings tend to feel they can use their life the way they like. If they can't do anything through choice, they can do it through death.

G.B. Shaw's *Saint Joan* has elicited of criticism since its publication in 1923. Its richness is reflected in its criticism from various perspectives. Critics have studied it from their different prospective viewing Shaw's play as imbued with the theme of high tragedy. Tragedy is brought about not by any villainy or by a conspiracy of fate but by pious and innocent persons, acting in good faith and with the best of intentions. The proper tragic emotions-pity and fear- are roused in audiences. The audience might weep at the end of tragedy. Joan is burnt alive as a witch, it may be a heart-rending spectacle as George Sampson notices:

The tragedy of such murders is that they are not committed by murderers. They are judicial murders pious murders, and this contradiction at once brings an element of comedy into the tragedy; the angels may weep at the murder, but the gods laugh at the murderers.

(121)

Normally a tragedy comes to an end with the death of the hero or the heroine, nothing more is added after the final catastrophe so that the tragic effect may not be weakened or dissipated. It is for this reason that critic after critic has considered the "Epilogue" not only a superfluity, but also a serious fault. However, it must be remembered that the tragedy of Joan is not just the tragedy of an individual but a continuing tragedy, a tragedy which is repeated in every age and country. As A.C. Ward remarks, "The tragedy of Joan is not a conclusive but a continuing phenomenon" (89). As Shaw tells us in the "Preface", "The story of Joan didn't end with her burning, rather it began with it" (55). In Joan's case it is not the burning which is significant, but the canonization which is the consequence of it. This aspect of Joan's tragedy is highlighted in the "Epilogue". Through the "Epilogue", it has

shown the remorse which overtook the most determined of her opponents and also that though her body perished, her spirit conquered.

The tragedy of Joan has a universal appeal. It touches a responsive chord in every heart, only because it is a representation of an eternal conflict with an often ever recurring tragic pattern. Thus, the tragedy of Joan is the tragedy of Christ. In the word of George Sampson, "Must then a Christ perish in torment in every age to save those that have no imagination" (20). Critic Louis L. Martz in his admirable essay *The Saint as Tragic Hero* points out "Joan is divinely inspired, her pride is a pride in her own saintless and divine mission, and as she is divinely guided she can not commit any mistake" (45). As a matter of fact, the fault lies not in Joan, but in those who send her to the stake. To quote Martz:

The charters who accuse Joan of pride and error are in these accusations convincing themselves of the pride of self-righteousness and the error of human certitude. The tragedy resides in the failure of Everyman to recognize absolute reality, the secret cause, when it appears in the flesh. (185)

The action in tragedy develops through conflict and the conflict is between hero and villain. However, in *Saint Joan* there is no conflict of villain and hero. Rather, it is between genius and discipline or between authority and private judgment, George Sampson remarks, "Shaw could present intellectual conflict; he could not present Joan's simple faith and she appears as a character carefully through out but never emotionally experienced" (34).

To what extent should the individual be allowed to act according to his own and consciousness, and when, and to what extent, should established authority assert itself, are questions which have been asked since the dawn of human civilization, and

to which no definite answer has so far been given. So, liberty breeds anarchy and authority breeds tyranny. This conflict between authority and individual judgment is an eternal conflict and it has resulted in the tragedy of Christ, Galileo and a host of others. Joan is also not a victim of any conflict with villain but a martyr to the cause of liberty of conscience and individual freedom. To quote A. C. Ward; "Joan represents a menace to the Church, to Warwick menace to the feudal system; both are determined that the menace should be rooted out" (36).

In a nutshell *Saint Joan* is a tragedy with a number of peculiarities of its own. As George Sampson remarks, "His plays seem to be a defence of Joan's death". There is reconciliation between the comedy of impersonal evolution and the tragedy of personal death" (51).

Saint Joan is a play with definite religious atmosphere and there are inductions in the play to show that at this stage of his career, Shaw was inclined to make terms even with institutional Christianity despite all its ritual dogmatism. A.C. Ward takes it as "a protestant pamphlet" (85). Shaw has expressed his view on God and religion through it. As Duffin puts it, *Saint Joan* is not only a great play but essentially a religious play- one whose theme is the compelling force of religious ideas" (21).

The play is essentially religious. We get an impressive array of ecclesiastical characters in the play. The words "God". "God's will" etc. are constantly on the lips of the maid. Referring to Shaw's conception of God, as illustrated in *Saint Joan*, Joad, observes, "Shaw, it is true, makes frequent use of the word "God" but God is for him only the Life Force at its highest level of expression " (78). God, therefore, serves as a goal which has already been realized. She sees "vision" and hears "voices". Angels and Saints constantly speak to her, she acts in obedience to their call, performs

miracles, comes in conflict with established religion, is tried by a religious court, and is ultimately burnt as a heretic who resists authority.

The theme of the play is a compelling force of religious ideas. In the middle ages, religious faith was a living breathing reality. It was the very breath of life. As Sen. Gupta puts it, "Catholicism was an all pervading organization; the men of the middle ages accepted it not only as a divine institution, but also as a natural fact, like the earth moving round the sun" (58). The established church was the supreme authority. It was a unifying force and the entire Christian community was one, subject to some Pope and governed by the same religious laws. The Holy Inquisition had the sole jurisdiction over religion, and nobody could dare to question its judgment.

Joan, with her reliance on individual judgment and inspiration comes into headlong clash with this all-powerful organization. She represents a force greater than herself; everything about her shows that she is guided by a power vaster than her individual self. She has firm faith in her "visions" and "voices" i.e. in her own intuition and inspiration. As Sen-Gupta remarks, "There is an impalpable power which guides her judgment, illuminates her intelligence, fortifies her will, and which triumphs even though its human representative is burnt at the stake" (180).

There is a clash between the protestant Maiden and the all powerful Roman Catholic Church. The result is a poignant and moving tragedy. Emphasizing the point, Desmond McCarthy, writes:

The essence of the theme is the struggle of religious inspiration against established religion. The play can be described as an exceedingly powerful protestant pamphlet, the essence of protestantism being reliance upon an internal authority as against the authority of tradition and a corporate religion which also claims inspiration. (95)

The tragedy results from a conflict between two opposite religious ideas- conformity accepted religious codes, and individual liberty to act according to his/her own light.

Calbourne, a critic remakes, *Saint Joan* as a model for all historical plays (51). Historical play is based on the facts of history. The chief character and events are taken from history. But since it is a drama, a work of art, and not a text book of history, it is not merely a transcript of history, but an imaginative treatment of the facts of history. In this way, the historical play is a curious blend of fact and fiction. The success of a dramatist is measured by his ability to maintain verisimilitude despite his imaginative treatment of the facts at his disposal. Scholars like Robertson and others, complain that Shaw has falsified history. Shaw himself asserts in the "Preface" that he has kept close to history, that he has captured the medieval atmosphere. So, he is true to history. He quotes, "There is not a breath of medieval atmosphere in Shakespeare's histories. I have taken care to let the medieval atmosphere blow through my play freely" (65).

Saint Joan is a great historical play. Shaw accurately and fully records Joan's trial. The central characters and chief events are all transcripts from history. Further, truth to history has been achieved by showing Joan in her peculiar, medieval atmosphere. Shaw tells us in the "Preface", "To understand Joan's history, it is not enough to understand her character; you must understand her environment as well" (53). Medieval atmosphere has been created, by introducing the miracles performed by Joan and by showing the people as credulous and superstitious. The church, the inquisition, feudal system, the executioner, the burning at the stake all help to create the historical veracity of medieval atmosphere. Shaw has succeeded in expounding

lucidly these medieval institutions as well as the dangers with which they were threatened as a result of Joan's heresy.

The story of Joan has been generalized by imparting to the principal figures symbolic significance. So, the Maid is viewed as representing the forces of revolt against the established Church and the feudal order. The Church and the feudal order are shown as engaged in a life and death struggle against the rising tide of nationalism and feudalism.

According to Shaw, there is no cessation in the march of the evolutionary will; it enters into a new phase as one generation succeeds another. Sen-Gupta, a critic says, "The history of Joan will never be complete, because there is no end to the evolution of the creative will" (36).

In a nutshell, *Saint Joan* is diagnosed with historical veracity. To conclude with the words of Colbourne, "The chief art of the historical drama is to make the characters speak more wisely than they really are, without letting the audience suspect as much" (56).

These critical responses demonstrate that the issue of existence needs serious attention. These critics, despite their differences, unanimously agree that Joan prefers death because of her ignorance of academic matter or even her foolishness. But these arguments do not seem completely sound. A group of critics tend to argue that she accepts death due to her immaturity. When Joan first makes her appearance in the play, she is an able bodied girl of about seventeen. She is dressed in red and has uncommon features-eyes very apart, and bulging, her voice is hearty and coaxing. She is mature and self-confident because she is not only one of the first protestant martyrs but also a pioneer of nationalism. When she arrives at the court of the Dauphin, she is dressed like a soldier, with her bobbed hair hanging thickly round her face. At the

trial, she wears a page's dress and, although she is full of vitality, her long imprisonment has left marks of strain on her face. She is always self possessed and cool and confident.

Another side of the argument is her foolishness, lack of understanding and knowledge. Joan does not seem to be a fool. Joan values her nation and nationality more than herself so she prefers death in order to preserve her dignity and to free her country from English slavery. For her, death is not surrender but a means to achieve some goal. Shaw's Joan is a most remarkable character. She embodies his conception of a saint. She is a vital genius. According to R. Williams, "Joan is a genius because she has subordinated the facts of her person in order to become an uncomplicated instrument of the Life Force or Creative Evaluation" (36). She is a saint because she has achieved perfection.

Joan wants to protect her dignity without surrender because she is a conscious being. She is crushed between two mighty forces the law and the church. Her individual judgement is under pressures and comes to exercise authority upon her. So, her life does not give anything except that of making her participant in a losing battle. She wants to assert her existence. She is quite conscious of her existence. She feels she is being abused at the hands of the law or established authority and the church. So, she accepts death. At least, through death, she protects herself from being further abused. After death, she remains independent. She gets victory over the English, and the church and political authority.

Joan, is conscious of her existence. One exists to the extent one makes choices. The protagonist keeps making choices up to the very end of the play. Joan, Shaw's genius heroine, was born in a peasant family of Domremy, in Lorraine France. She consents to be a soldier and relieves the French from English dominance. She has

a craze for war and soldiering, without fighting life is monotony for her. She leads a masculine life. She insists on wearing a soldier's uniform because she could not possibly move and live freely and easily in the company of soldiers in female dress. She herself remarks, "I will never take a husband [. . .] I am a soldier. I don't want to be thought of as a woman" (75). She couldn't tolerate loose talk, and in her presence the soldiers were more orderly and disciplined. Her virginal purity and essentially feminine nature are seen in the fact that she hides behind a pillar when after the coronation the King appears in undress. She had full faith in her own vision and voices, thought that it was God speaking to her-that had entrusted her with an important mission-that of freeing her country-that she was the chosen instrument of divine purpose.

Similarly, she chooses death instead of recantation. Death is the only way for achieving her goal. By destroying herself, she wants to assert her existence by burning on the stake. Here, choosing recantation, she chooses slavery and dependency. This way, throughout the play, she makes choices. She does the things that she likes to do. She listens to the call of her soul, rather than society. She cares not what other people say. She only cares what she has at heart.

She faces a problem when Blue Beard suggests a tests to know whether Joan is an angel or not. she has to either recant and save her life or get ready to burn on the stake. Both options would obstruct her independence. How to protect herself in this critical stance is her major challenge. Then, she chooses death. Death is like other choices.

II. Existentialism

Existentialism is a school of thought devoted to the interpretation of human existence. It takes the human being as an isolated existent in an alien universe. The world wars gave rise to the feeling of despair and separation from the established order. These feelings led to the idea that people have to create their own values in the world in which traditional values do not work. One has to make choices and create oneself, therefore, one exists to the extent one makes choices. People are free to make choices. Existentialism then lays stress on concrete individual existence, freedom and choice. Rayan gives an explanation of existentialism:

Hence there is no single existential philosophy and no single definition of the world can be given. The problem of man is central and they stress man's concrete existence, his contingent nature, his personal freedom and his consequent responsibility for what he does and makes himself to be. (639)

Existentialism opposes traditional philosophy, which seeks to find out the truth which is objective and universal. According to this philosophy, truths are subjective. What is true for one may be false for another. Whether the thing is true or false, depends on the decisions that individuals make. For making decision, one is free. This philosophy, then, emphasizes freedom. The focus on freedom is not new among existentialists. Renaissance humanists were also supporters of human freedom. They took freedom very positively. Due to freedom, man can expose unlimited potential. But existentialists take freedom as a curse. Sartre says "We are condemned to be free" (56). Due to this freedom, there is no one to dictate to us what to do and what not to do. We have to do ourselves.

Nietzsche's expression "God is dead" has been influential in existential thought. There is no God to determine our existence. First we exist, then create essence ourselves. We are what we make ourselves to be. In that sense we are in the state of becoming, not in the state of being. We do not know what we become after all because we are constantly choosing and creating ourselves. It is not possible for us to be without choice. Even when we are not choosing, we are still choosing. In this context MacIntyre says "Even if I do not choose, I have chosen not to choose" (49). Since we make choices, we create meaning ourselves. Then, there is no transcendent absolute to govern our existence.

It is to be remembered that all existentialists do not reject the existence of God. And there are some existentialists who even believe in the existence of God. In that sense, there are two kinds of existentialists: theistic and atheistic. Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel and Karl Jaspers represent the former kind while Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus and Heidegger represent the latter.

Despite its prominence in the post war years, elements of existentialism can be found in the classical philosophy, especially in the philosophy of Socrates. Though not termed as existentialist, he gave a philosophy, which supports existentialism. Before Socrates, philosophers were concerned with the issue of cosmos. They tried to understand the functioning of the universe. But Socrates marks a shift from nature to man. His philosophy is concerned with the issue of human existence. He laid stress on human existence. Like modern existentialists, Socrates laid stress on individuality. For him, self is prior to everything. Real joy springs from the heart, not from external circumstances, that is reputation, power and wealth. Socrates asked people to understand the need of the self. He made people responsible toward the self. In this context, Richard Tarnas in *The Passion of the Western Mind* comments:

In Socrates's view, any attempt to foster true success and excellence in human life had to take account of the innermost reality of a human being, his soul and psyche. Perhaps on the basis of his own highly developed sense of individual self-hood and self control. Socrates brought to the Greek mind a new awareness of the central significance of the soul, establishing it for the first time as the seat of the individual waking consciousness and of the moral and intellectual character. He affirmed the Delphic motto "know thyself" for he believed that it was only through self knowledge, through an understanding of one's own psyche and its proper condition, that one could find genuine happiness.

(33)

The main ideas of existentialist theory were already part of the religious thought during medieval age. Medieval age was characterized by the belief in God. Everything was seen through the eyes of God. Man was expected to surrender before God for salvation. Yet even in such a period, existential elements can be seen, especially in the philosophy of Saint Augustine. St. Augustine asked man not to go outside himself in the soul. He assigned importance to the individual self.

He possessed an existentialist's self-awareness with his highly developed capacity for introspection and self-confrontation, his psychological perspicacity, his doubt and remorse, his sense of solitary, alienation of human self without God, his intensity of inner conflict, his intellectual skepticism and sophistication. It was Augustine who first wrote that he could doubt everything, but not the fact of soul's own experience, of doubting of knowing, willing, and existing thereby affirming certain existence of human ego in the soul.

Since the renaissance meant revival of classicism, it laid stress on the individual individualism. Renaissance artists tended to believe that anything is, as the viewer views it. For the first time, they gave importance to the subjective perspective. The existential tree can be found in the works of Montaigne as well. Montaigne in his *Essays* reveals what he thinks and what he feels. He does not hide anything. Why does Montaigne write about himself, rather than other issues? The answer is: he assigns importance to the self. In this reference, Charles Van Doren in *A History of Knowledge* remarks:

Montaigne's main aim is to reveal with utter honesty and frankness the author's mind and heart. Montaigne makes no attempt to conceal his faults, but he does not beat his breast, either, and demand forgiveness. He is content to report what he is, what he thinks, what he feels [. . .].

(144)

Having seen this line of development in Montaigne, we can conclude that the development of existentialism begins right from the classical time, though it was not known by this term. It began as a distinct philosophy with the Danish Christian thinker Kierkegaard in the first half the 19th century. He criticized Hegel's philosophical system as being abstract and having nothing to do with human existence. By criticizing Hegel, he gave importance to individual existence, freedom and choice.

The development of modern existentialism proceeded from the works of German phenomenologist Frenz Brento and Edmund Husserl. They were immediately followed by modern existentialists. Phenomenology studies of human consciousness. The world is as it appears to us. It means, phenomenology gives stress on subjectivism. Defining phenomenology Raman Selden states: "A modern

philosophical tendency which stresses the perceiver's central role in determining meaning is known as phenomenology" (48). Likewise Skirbekk and Nils Gilje define phenomenology as a science of describing everyday items that we use. He gives the example of a pencil, he is writing with and says that phenomenology attacks the view that the pencil is only a 'collection of atoms'. Thus, phenomenology aims to reconstruct the universe in all of its diversity and fullness as opposed to a one-dimensional standardization of scientific philosophy (440).

Having observed them, we can conclude that phenomenology give emphasizes individuality. Things are as they appear to our consciousness. So all understandings and perceptions are subjective and the individual plays a central role in this perception.

This idea of individuality influenced existentialists. Existentialism developed in the hands of Martin Heidegger, Sartre, Camus and many others, stressing on human existence. At present, it has become an established theory and is employed in interpreting literary texts.

This chapter attempts to discuss existentialism with reference to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus and others, and bring out the issues that are relevant for the study.

It is necessary to separately discuss some of the philosophers. No doubt, they share many things, but they must come up with significant differences as well. A discussion of some prominent existential philosophers follows.

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55)

Kierkegaard was the first thinker to call himself existentialist. He reacted against the idealism of Hegelian philosophy, which, for him, had obscured the responsibility of the individual towards the self. In other words, this philosophy could

not make people responsible for their actions. Kierkegaard advocates that individual existence is prior to everything. Supporting this concept, Jostein Gaarder in *Sophie's World* remarks: "Kierkegaard had a sharp eye for the significance of the individual. We are more than children of our time. And moreover every single one of us is a unique individual who only lives once" (377).

Like Sartre and Camus, Kierkegaard supports choice. He believes that we are free to make choices. And one exists up to the point of making choices. "For him in acting we make significant choices – and relate to our existence.

Kierkegaard is different from other existential philosophers in the sense that he believes in the existence of the God. But he takes it as a matter of faith. Through faith only, we feel the presence of God. But to keep or not to keep is a matter of choice. Kierkegaard does not dictate anything. For him, religious life is characterized by faith.

Similarly, Kierkegaard believes that truth is subjective and universal. There can't be any truth which is objective and universal. Instead of a single truth, there are many truths which are personal. The concept of 'subjective truth' has influenced by 20th century existentialists. The emphasis on individuality is obviously emphasis on subjectivity. What is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong that depends on the individual's decision and thought. For him, traditional values do not work and can't govern the individual. If values attempt to govern the individual, it is necessary that one should protest. Commenting on this, Jostein Gaarder remarks, "He thus sets the individual, or each and every man, up against the system" (379). For Kierkegaard, one should protest against the prevailing system and affirm existence by making one's own choice.

Karl Jaspers (1883-1969)

Karl Jaspers is one of the first thinkers to use the term "existentialism", like other existential thinkers, he discarded the self-sufficiency of science and empirical observation, and the seclusion of the individual from communication with other beings (The Will 864-67). He was not Christian in the traditional sense, but he believed in transcendence. He uses the term "Transcendence" to designate man's personal devoted and committed attempt to reach the encompassing. By "encompassing" he means the ultimate and indefinite limits of being as we realize it in all its fullness and richness; boundaries which surround, envelope and suffuse all there is, "Transcendence alone" says Jaspers, "is the real being" (878).

Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973)

Gabriel Marcel tries to fill the abyss between subject and object, between what is in us and what is before us. He makes a distinction between primary reflection and secondary reflection. According to Marcel, there are two foci of mysteries: the mystery of existence and mystery of being. The first is related to "concrete philosophy" and the second is related to "concrete ontology". We are, according to Marcel, much more important than I am in the first philosophy. Ontology tells us that only with the participation in being, as keen observers, we can overcome isolation, despair and tragedy. Ontological existence which is an impulse to transcendence, is always present in all authentic human life, according to Marcel. Marcel stressed upon faith in God, which, he considers, can help man overcome anxiety and despair that characterize the modern predicament (795). To terminate, the Religious existentialists recommend that we go to the shelter of God or transcendence to ensure faithful existence.

Martin Buber (1878-1965)

Buber is a Jewish philosopher and religious thinker. He puts forward the concept of relationship between God and the world. Like Jaspers, Buber rejects the idea of separate existence of human beings. He held that our existence is always connected with other men, nature and God. Buber emphasizes the importance of the relation between self and other (I-Thou) and its radical differences from the relation between self and object (I-It). According to him, the relation should be concrete and immediate an "I" to a "Thou" and not an abstract and objective, an "I" to an "It" one ("The Primary Words" 870). He says the world is two fold, in accordance with his two fold attitude. The primary word I-Thou, not I-It, can only be spoken with the whole being (870). The "I-It' relationship is not a genuine relationship because while 'I' regard others as 'It'; 'I' happen to be perfectly alone. Buber says:

The world exists, but the world does not exist alone. And if the world does not exist alone because it exists through God and therefore as having God behind, above and before it, as Him without whom it would not exist, so God does not exist alone, because the world exists through Him. (qtd. in "The One and Only God" 940).

The relationship between 'I-It' has to do with the past because objective knowledge is about one's past. But 'I-Thou' relationship has to do with present because we are prepared for any and every response to our address. Therefore, we must assume our relationship with God as 'I-Thou'. Our 'I-Thou' relationship with God never changes into 'I-It' because God is Absolute and always present with us.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

Nietzsche, a German philosopher, is known as a critique of western philosophical tradition and Christianity. For him, western philosophical tradition and

Christianity were both corrupt, since they taught abstractions. Western education system is corrupt, since it attempts to prepare the historically educated man, knowledge does not do anything except make him live in abstraction. Historical knowledge does not serve life. For him, life should be the center of everything. In an essay *On the Use and Abuse of History*, Nietzsche states,

We need education for life and action, not for a comfortable turning away from life and action or merely for glossing over the egoistic life and the cowardly bad act. We wish to use history only so far as it serves living. (152)

He also does not believe in ideas of absolute truth that govern an individual. The individual is the product of his own actions arising from his active choices. As God is dead, there is nobody to govern an individual. Rather, he is the master of himself. For Nietzsche, as quoted in *Dictionary of Philosophy*. "No moment is more important than the present in which one has the opportunity to make active choices that influence the character of the whole" (292).

Nietzsche places life at the centre. He denounces Christianity on the ground that it discourages life. Christianity keeps reminding us that we are the product of sin. Man can not naturally be active. When this fact is told, Christianity does not serve life.

Nietzsche does not believe in existence of God. There is no authority or God to determine our existence. For him, God is not there. Even if he was there, he is dead. He proclaimed the death of God and went on to reject the entire Judeo-Christian moral tradition in favour of a heroic pagan ideal. He called Christianity "a slave morality" (50), and held that religion provides no truth because God is dead and

Christianity has become the shelter of weak and disable people. In this famous essay *The Death of God and the Antichrist*, he writes:

The Christian conception of God-God as God of the sick, God as a spider, God as a spirit – is one of the most corrupt conceptions of the divine ever attained on earth. It may even represent the low-water mark in the descending development of divine types. God degenerated into the contradiction of life, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal yes/God as the declaration of war against life, against nature and against the will to life ! (912)

Nietzsche supports the idea of individual freedom. He does not accept any sort of imposition laid on an individual. An individual should master oneself. In this context, Roger Scruton comments, "Nietzsche sought for a "life-affirming skepticism" which would transcend all the doctrines that stemmed from the "herd instinct" and so allow the individual to emerge as master, and not as a slave of the experience to which he is condemned (186). In this way, he supports master morality against slave morality. The role and position of an individual is supreme. Individuality is the focal point for Nietzsche.

Nietzsche is quite positive towards deliberate death (suicide). He seems aware of the fact that death can be one of the choices that a person makes. For him, death can also be a solution somewhere. So, in his *Beyond Good and Evil* he states, "The thought of death is a great comfort: it is a good way of getting through many a bad night" (348, qtd. in the dictionary of quotation by Reginald Hill). Death is not a surrender, it is a means to achieve some goal. Death also brings fulfillment. So, Nietzsche does not take death (deliberate death) negatively. An individual may use it as a weapon to win something.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

Despite Heidegger's claim that he was not an existentialist, his influence on Sartre and the entire existentialist movement was inevitable. He is known as a leading existentialist despite his denial of having anything to do with it.

Heidegger was a critic of western metaphysics. For him, western philosophy was obsessed with the problem of knowledge, and less concerned with the issue of being. Heidegger filled the gap, since he was concerned with the issue of existence. Like any other existentialist, existence is his point of departure. He was interested in the study of "Dasein". Likewise, Heidegger believes that we have been living in an incomprehensible, indifferent world. The universe is alien to us. We have to choose a goal with the awareness of certainty of death and meaninglessness of one's life. For Heidegger, being is not realized in normal situation. It does not occur all the time. It is realized in the state of boredom, anxiety or when one is ill-at-ease. So, he states in 'What is Metaphysics?' "It irrupts when one is bored, profound boredom drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence like a muffling fog, removes all things and men and oneself along with it into a remarkable indifference. This boredom reveals being as a whole" (4).

For Heidegger, our obsession should be more with existence than with knowledge. The principal object of investigation is the search for being (Sein) and more particularly man's being (Dasein). As quoted in *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, Heidegger shows the difference between dasein and sein:

Dasein, this particular way of existing, is different from the ordinary existence of things in the world around us. The thing is that things are determinate and have their distinctive properties. That is their kind of

being. But the sort of being that I manifest is not that of a thing with properties. It is a range of possible ways to be. (183)

The human being is thrown into the world and has to face a feeling of dread. He is extended in time. That is why he has to tolerate a lot of problems. The redemption is possible only through freedom. *A Short History of Modern Philosophy* puts forward Heidegger presents his idea in the following ways,

The final assumption lies in that freedom, which time alone provides that freedom to make my life what I choose into be and thereby to change from thrown-ness to resolution. In that change lies the realization, and acceptance of mortality (260).

At this point, Heidegger accepts that one is bound by the historic temporal context when he says he is extended in time. But as other existentialists, he also talks about freedom and responsibility, individualism, choices and so on.

To sum up, Heideggerian existentialism stresses an existence, boredom, goal and choice.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80)

Sartre was the leading advocate of existentialism. He defends existentialism against the charge that it gives a bleak view of humanity. It neglects what is good in human life. And it denies reality and seriousness. Sartre believes that existentialism is humanism since it takes human undertaking as its point of departure. Establishing existentialism as a humanistic philosophy. He states: "By existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity" (10). Thus existentialism gives dignity to man. It encourages human action. In that sense, it is an optimistic philosophy.

For Sartre, "existence precedes essence" is the central idea. According to Sartre, we first exist, appear on the scene, make choices and create ourselves. This means we make what we are only after we exist. It is through our choices that we create meaning in our life. Since our involvement in the world creates essence, there is no predetermined essence to govern our existence. With the manufactured object, essence governs existence. When we publish a book, we first think about what the book will deal with, who the readers will be or what they will get. The production of the book is governed by preconceived notions. Essence governs existence. But the human case is quite opposite. We first exist and plan what to do. So with us, existence governs the essence.

Although Sartre thinks of freedom as condemnation, he also says that an honest man always keeps up the quest for freedom. We use freedom to achieve freedom itself. In this context he says:

Freedom in every concrete circumstance can have no other aim than to want itself. If man has once become aware that in his forlornness he imposes values, he can no longer want but one thing and that is freedom, at the basis of all values. That does not mean that he wants it in abstract. It means simply that the ultimate meaning of the acts of honest man is the quest for freedom as such. (45)

Sartre does not accept the charge against existentialism that it gives a bleak view of humanity for it gives a human setting to every truth and every action. Jostein Gaarder comments, Sartre said, "Existentialism is humanism. By that, he means that existentialists start from nothing but humanity itself" (456).

Like Macintyre, Sartre believes that one cannot be without choice. Even when we do not choose anything, we choose not to choose. Then choice is something an

individual keeps making. And this choice may reach even up to death. He does not take death negatively. He believes that, to make oneself "passive in the world, to refuse to act upon things and upon others is still to choose, and accepting death (sacrifice) is one mode among others of being in the world" (57).

Sartre treats death positively. For him, it is like any other choice. By sacrificing oneself, one can protect one's choice. One can win something and bring fulfillment. In this sense, it is a mode of fulfillment.

Albert Camus (1913-66)

Albert Camus was a famous novelist and philosopher. Absurdity of life is his major concept. His novel *The Stranger* (1960) concentrates on the alienation of the human being in the midst of a silent universe. Camus believes the human being is an isolated existent in an alien universe. The universe does not possess any inherent truth, value or meaning. And it is absurd to seek meaning in this universe. We are simply keeping the illusion that the universe has a meaning. But there is nothingness in the world. So he states in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. He is an irremediable exile [. . .] This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity" (68).

For Camus, the condition of man is absurd and his search for any purpose is meaningless and futile. The world does not possess any meaning, value or truth.

According to M.H. Abrams:

Albert Camus, views a human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent truth, value or meaning and to represent human life in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning, as it moves from nothingness

when it comes toward the nothingness where it must end as an existence which is both anguished and absurd. (10)

Like Sartre, Camus supports choices. Choices may lead to repetition and repetition leads us to a sense of absurdity. But there exists man then. Sisyphus is given the choices. He does not surrender to God and thus makes a choice, though he chooses the tough work, yet he exists through this choice. He chooses to face punishment, rather than bow before God. Camus' essay is the meditation on death. He does not take death as a solution. He believes that one has to take the challenge, but not accept death. Anyway man makes his own fate from his own plan or choice. Camus believes the choice leads us to absurdity but joy comes out of that absurdity.

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain, one always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the Gods and raises rocks. He, too, concludes that all is well. The universe henceforth, without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a master's heart. One must imagine in Sisyphus happy. (70)

To sum up, Camus advocates freedom, individuality, choices and human existence. But he does not support death as the mode of existence. Death is not a solution. We should become bold, face the challenge and assert our existence like Sisyphus. Camus never advocates surrender. Sisyphus does not surrender. He undergoes a challenging task and upholds heroism.

Having viewed the ideas given by the philosophers, we can still discuss the basic existentialist standpoint. Here an attempt has been made to summarize the views that existentialists generally share in common.

The issue of freedom is integral to existential philosophy. Although freedom is not celebrated, it is a basic factor to maintain our existence. In other words, freedom and existence go hand in hand and freedom of an individual depends on the freedom of others. This freedom is also the freedom of choice that determines an individual. So, an individual is totally responsible for what he/she is. Thus, individualism is also a matter of emphasis as there is no determining factor for an individual except oneself.

Alienation is a major theme of existentialism. We are beings in this alien universe. Man is basically alone. An individual may find oneself alone even among relatives. Therefore, the sense of alienation is a common phenomenon that man experiences. This sense of alienation poisons human relationship, that is, the relationship between parents and children, husband and wife, friends and relatives. Alienation occurs especially when an individual can't integrate into the social structures and customs.

Existence is the basic theme of existentialism. But all things and beings do not exist. "Being alive" does not mean to be in existence. Human beings exist while the animals and plants live. One exists only when one is conscious of one's existence. We are conscious of our existence, but animals are not conscious. This existence is prior to essence. We are what we make ourselves to be. So, we should not seek meaning, we should rather create meaning through our actions.

Protest is another theme of existentialism. One protests against the social system to affirm one's existence. The social mechanism always imposes a burden. It

expects human beings to act within social norms. Man is stereotyped and does not do any things new, if he continues the tradition of society. The existential man is not governed by the laws society has formulated. Rather, one governs himself with the laws that one has made. In that sense, s/he is law maker who sets example for the whole of humanity.

Boredom/anxiety is another phenomenon that existentialism talks about. When one becomes conscious of one's existence, he shows radical dissatisfaction with the prevailing systems and norms of society. Due to this dissatisfaction, one feels boredom. One becomes tragic only when one is conscious. Consciousness makes people tragic. Being bored means we are conscious of our existence. But the same consciousness is a block on the way to human happiness. In this context, Albert Camus says that the myth of Sisyphus is "tragic, because its hero is conscious. Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope of succeeding upheld him? The workman of today works everyday in his life at the same task and his fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at rare moments when he becomes conscious" (68).

Likewise, death is another theme of existentialism. Death is human specific phenomenon. Only those prefer death who are conscious of existence. Animals or non-human things do not prefer death. They never sacrifice their lives for the welfare of others. Human beings tend to feel that they can use their lives in the way they like. If they cannot win anything through the choice they make in life, then they can do it through death. People can use it as a means of existence. Existentialism takes even death as a mode of existence. Death is not surrender. It is a means of avoiding surrender.

In *Saint Joan*, we find certain qualities of extreme experience of existentialism. It is because drama explores the theme of protest, existence,

boredom/anxiety, choices, sacrifice, suffering anguish and alienation. The female protagonist, Joan of Arc seems to have gone through the extreme experiences of life and being crushed between two mighty forces – the law and the church. Even as a child, she saw "vision," and heard "voices" telling her to free her country from the rule of the English. This was her mission in life and the play shows how this brave girl struggled to fulfill it, and how in the process she perished at the stake, while still in her teens. Her individual judgement came into conflict with established authority, especially the church, and the result was disastrous for her. Political authority was also alarmed as it thought that it too was in danger. She did not fear death and sacrificed herself to preserve her dignity rather than recant or surrender.

The dread of death leads her to violate the church and political authority. She realizes her self and identity. So, she prefers death without having the least remorse for her past deeds. She accepts death and prefers to be burned burn alive as a witch to establish her dignity, which is common to existentialists.

III. Textual Analysis

Critical Synopsis of the Play

The play opens dramatically with the arrival of Joan at the castle of Van Couleurs. She is a girl with extraordinary self-confidence. She goes to Captain Baudricourt's table fearlessly, and, without wasting many words, tells him that she has come to him because she has had orders from the Lord to get a horse and armour and some soldiers from him. Therefore, she may reach the Dauphin, raise the siege of Orleans, and then crown him king at Rheims Cathedral. She is so "positive" and has such "confidence" that the captain is impressed and extends to her the help she needs.

The central figure, a vital genius and saint, popularly known as the Maid by soldiers. The entire action centers round her life and career. She was of humble origin, born as she was in a peasant family of Domremy, in Lorraine, France. Even as a child she saw "Vision," and heard "Voices" telling her to free her country from the rule of the English. Her opinion is that the English have no right to be in France, for God has given them their own country to live in and their own language to speak. They should go back to their own country, and God will help the French to drive the English back. This was her mission in life and the play shows how this brave, inspired girl struggled to fulfill it, and how the process she perished at the stake.

Shaw notes two abnormalities about Joan- a visualier who saw saints and heard voices and the craze for war and soldering. She insists on wearing a solder's uniform and leads a masculine life. She does not want to be thought of as a woman and without fighting, life is a monotony for her. Her individual Judgment came into conflict with established authority, more especially the Church, and the result was disastrous for her. Political authority was also alarmed as it thought that it, too, was in danger. Joan with her call "England for the English and France for the French"

frightened the feudal barons or landlords who saw in her a danger to their own authority. Hence, Joan is a pioneer of Protestantism in and nationalism. Her aim is to be a martyr for God's sake and for conscience's sake. Purdom remarks, "*Saint Joan* is a record of what mankind does to its geniuses and saints" (35).

The English continued their war on the Dauphin. They began the siege of Orleans, and Dunois would not have been able to hold it for long, hadn't help come for an unexpected quarter. It is at this juncture at Joan appears on the scene. She was an obscure and illiterate country girl but she honestly believed that God had spoken to her through his saints, Margaret and Catherine and his archangel Michael, and had called to deliver France from the English yoke. Her intense and sincere faith in her mission, her devotion, her courage, her persistence and self-confidence were infectious and won for her wide popularity. Dauphin is impressed by her sound common-sense, her resourcefulness and her self-confidence. He makes her the commander of his army and sends her to Orleans which has been for some time under siege from the English army. Dunois, the commander of the French army, is also impressed by the maid because as soon as she arrives, a miracle happens. The wind which has been unfavorable to them now all at once become favorable. John inspires men and officers alike, puts pluck into them, and the upshot is that defeat after defeat is inflicted on the enemy. Orleans is regained and the Dauphin is crowned Charles VII, the King of France at Rheims Cathedral.

After the Dauphin has been crowned, Joan wants to march forward and take Paris as well. However the king is not prepared for this. The English, who are naturally her enemies have put a heavy prize on her head, and it is certain that, if she is captured, she will be burnt as a witch. She is frankly told by all her friends, including the King and Dunois, that if she is captured, they will not be able to help

her. She thus stands alone in a hostile world. However, quite undaunted, she goes ahead, and is at last captured by the English. In the very beginning, the Canon protests that many of the sixty-four charges that they had drawn against the maid were dropped. However, Cauchon makes it plain that Joan should be tried only on the ground of heresy and that all other considerations were unimportant.

There are visible marks of strain on Joan's face due to her long imprisonment. But she is vitally the same as before. She is asked to explain why she had attempted to commit suicide by jumping from the top of the prison wall. She explains that it is natural for her to try to escape from prison as it is for a bird to fly away as soon as the door of the cage opens. She tells them frankly that if she is tortured, she will confess anything to avoid pain and then she will take back her words. The stake is ready in the market place. She is afraid of death, therefore, she agrees to recant. It makes the Chaplain very worried and anxious, for he feels that the Maid may slip through the fingers of the English. In his rage, he wildly boasts that they will burn her as a witch in spite of the Church. The Inquisitor proclaims that she has been set free from the danger of excommunication. He says that she is sentenced to solitary confinement for the rest of her life. She is bitterly shocked to learn that she will not be set free. It is impossible for her to live away from the sun and the wind and to be denied access to the elements of Nature that are the sources of joy in her life. Thus, she tears the recantation paper up and prefers death by burning at the stake.

The trial-scene is a masterpiece, for Shaw has succeeded in it in giving a clear and just exposition of the different and opposite points of view. She is burnt at the stake as a heretic. But Joan's story does not end with the burning, rather it begins. Twenty-five years later she is rehabilitated and canonised. She struggles for freedom, truth and identity throughout her life. In each episode, there are many choices which

make her existence possible. She has a distinct doctrine and her behaviour proves that she is a self-centred heroine. Her alienation and high ambition bring failure. She also doesn't get support in crisis which brings frustration and ultimately she accepts death in order to preserve her dignity.

Joan's Quest for Existence

Existence refers to the state or fact of existing; but all things and beings do not exist. 'Being alive' does not mean to be in existence. Individuals are unique in that they are able to think about themselves and the world in which they find themselves and make choices. They can choose because they are free, and the choices they make establish the future into which they project themselves. Human beings exist in different ways while animals and plants live. One exists only when one is conscious of one's existence and existence is possible only through choices. We are conscious of our existence so existence is prior to essence. We should not seek meaning, we should rather create meaning through our action.

Shaw's Joan is a most remarkable character who combines vitality and spirituality. She is in love with religion but she has a craze for war, too. Like a conscious being, she chooses to be a soldier and wears a soldier's uniform. She does not want to be a woman and cares nothing for love or for money. Joan says:

JOAN [not at all embarrassed]: I wear it like this because I am a soldier (90). She is an able-bodied girl with soldier's dress. She could not possibly move and live freely and easily in the company of soldiers in female dress. She says that she will continue to wear it until she is given permission by St. Catherine. Her "Voices" tell her to dress as soldier. Joan remarks in this regard:

JOAN [distressed]: But my voices tell me I must dress as a soldier. (155)

Joan is an existentially troubled character who has many choices throughout her life. She exists only as a series of active choices. Sartre emphasizes the choice and says, "Choice is possible but what is not possible is not to choose. I can always choose but I ought to know that if I don't choose, I am still choosing" (qtd. in Bares 55). A veil of choice appears to Joan when she is captured and imprisoned by the English. She determines to escape by jumping the prison wall. It is her truth to be free rather than imprisoned.

D'ESTIVET: You tried to escape?

JOAN: Of course I did: and not for the first time either. If you leave the door of the cage open the bird will fly out. (148)

The conversation reveals that Joan attempts to commit suicide by jumping from the top of the prison wall. She doesn't want to be more abused by the English. She wants to get her freedom through death. She explains that it is a natural process for her to try to escape from prison as it is for a bird to fly away as soon as the door of the cage opens.

On the verge of death, Joan struggles for existence. By her recantation, she has been freed from the danger of excommunication. But she is sentenced to solitary confinement for the rest of her life. Choices come from God's will but dependency is not his Will. Therefore, she prefers death for the sake of identity, truth and freedom. Death becomes the essence for her life. Joan says:

JOAN: Give me that writing. [she rushed to the table, snatches up the paper: and tears into fragments]. Light your fire; do you think I dread it as much as the life of a rat in a hole? My Voices were right (161).

The dialogue clears an apt choice of Joan for her identity and emancipation. She prefers death to burn at the stake rather than to recant and accept slavery. Her "voices" are true because they are from God. Death is a means to achieve some goal.

Joan's central problem is the problem of existence in feudal society. Waging war against the English, invites existential crisis for Joan which later pushes her into the mouth of death. She escapes from the crisis by her choice and truth. Finally, she prefers death in order to preserve her dignity in a hostile and alien universe. She can preserve her dignity only through death in a very critical situation. Death is not a surrender, it is a means to achieve some goal.

Joan's Struggle for Freedom

Freedom is defined as the state of not being a prisoner or a slave. It is integral to the conscious human being. It encourages the struggle for existence. So, freedom and existence go hand in hand. Freedom of an individual depends on the freedom of others. This freedom is also the freedom of choice that determines an individual. So, an individual is totally responsible for what she is. Joan, from the beginning to the end of the play, struggles against the English for freedom.

Joan struggles for freedom since her childhood. She wants to relieve her country from the rule of English. Joan is a girl with extraordinary self-confidence and vision, goes to the captain's table fearlessly. She tells him that she was sent by God to get a horse and armour and some soldiers from him and then go to the Dauphin. It is necessary for her to get a command of soldiers first in order to fight against the English. She says to Robert:

ROBERT: No fear! [To John] So God says you are to raise the siege of
Orleans?

JOAN: And to crown the Dauphin in Rheims Cathedral.

ROBERT [gasping]: Crown the D-! Gosh!

JOAN: And to make the English leave France.

ROBERT [sarcastic]: Anything else?

JOAN [charming]: Not just at present, thank you, squire. (74)

The conversation reveals the motif behind her craze for war and soldiering. Her only destiny is to fight for freedom. She is bidden by God to raise the seize of Orleans to Crown the Dauphin at Rheims Cathedral and to make the English leave France. Existence flourishes only through freedom and one can get identity only through freedom. So, Joan fights against English.

After Dauphin has been crowned, Joan wants to march forward and take Paris as well. However Dauphin tells her that the French would lose what they had gained, If they fought again and it was best to reach a treaty with the Burgundians and if possible with the English as well. But Joan has unquenchable thirst for freedom so she continuously goes ahead and is finally captured by the English. She is charged of heresy by the Inquisitor. Joan is kept in a solitary prison where she tries to escape for freedom. She makes an unsuccessful effort to jump from the sixty feet high prison wall. She remarks:

JOAN: Heresy, he calls it ! Am I a heretic because I try to escape from prison.

(194)

Joan's true struggle for freedom can be visualized when she refuses to take the oath and to follow the instruction of the church if she is a true daughter of church. She says, "I am a faithful child of the church" (151). Her 'voices' come from God's will. If it is contrary to God's will, it will be impossible for her to do it. Joan clarifies to Cauchon saying, "Oh no: that it's impossible" (157). She never agrees to do any thing which is against God's will. This makes her captive. She tells them that if she is

tortured, she will confess anything to avoid pain and then will take back her words. At first, she accepts the recantation for freedom.

JOAN: What must I do?

CAUCHON: You must sign a solemn recantation of your heresy.

JOAN: Sign? That means to write my name? I cannot write.

CAUCHON: You have signed many letter before.

JOAN: But someone held my hand and guided the pen. I can make my mark (157-58).

The conversation clears that Joan accepts the recantation for freedom. She is a afraid of death. She expresses that her voice had told her that she would not be burnt. She wants to be free .

Inquisitor declares that she has been set free from the danger of excommunication, but she is sentenced to solitary confinement for the rest of her life. She is bitterly shocked at this. Then she determines to tear up the recantation accepting death. She prefers death rather than life of imprisonment.

JOAN: . . . I am not afraid of passing the rest of my days on water and bread and no other food, but it is impossible for me to live away from the sun and the wind and to be denied access to the elements of Nature which are a source of joy in my life. You want me to breathe foul damp darkness, and keep from me every thing that bring me back to the love of God but such life is worse than burning in a blazing furnace. (161)

The dialogue reveals that she isn't afraid of passing the rest of her days on water and bread and no other food, but it is impossible for her to live away form the sun and the

wind and to be denied access to the elements of Nature that are sources of joy in her life.

Wesley Barnes says, "An individual himself is the source for his freedom. Man is free because he is the only source of his own action" (53). Joan is free to decide, will and choose her action. Her quest of freedom is the struggle against the English. Therefore, she struggles against them. She sacrifices her life to breathe freedom. She achieves emancipation only through death.

Question of Identity

Identity refers to who or what sb/sth is. People can identify themselves on the basis of their gender, colour, ethnicity and nationality. For Joan, the question of identity is central basic. Sartre says, "We are free to define our identity and we all bear the responsibility to find the answer to this existential riddle" (71), Joan questions for her identity and struggles against the English to gain her lost identity.

When two subjects meet, a struggle for recognition arises. By birth, Joan is a French but the sovereignty of France is captured by the English. French identity is under erasure, so Joan wills to struggle for her identity. Her slogan is "England for the English and France for the French". She inspires and teaches them to fight for identity. She tells them that God has sent her to fight against the English and drive them out from France. Joan remarks "that is what God is sending me to do" (68). She further says to Robert.

JOAN: They are only men. God made them just like us; but He gave them their own country and their own language: and it is not his will that they should come into our country and try to speak our language. (75)

The dialogue reveals that she is compelled to struggle for identity. The English have no right to be in France, for God has given them their own country to live in and their own language to speak. God is not on their side so it will be easy for them to defeat the enemy.

Joan is identified not only as one of the first Protestant martyrs, but also a pioneer of nationalism and realistic warfare. Joan was the first protestant because she asserted the right of the individual to live and act according to her own conscience and judgment, as against the authority of the established church. She kneels before the Archbishop and feels strengthened by his blessing. she prays regularly and fervently. But she is not ready to yield to the church where her "voices" and "vision" are concerned. She must obey her "voice" as against the church, for it is in this way that God speaks to her.

JOAN: If you command me to declare that all that I have done and said, and all the visions and revelations I have had, were not from God, then that is impossible: I will not declare it for anything in the world. What God made me do I will never go back on; and what he has commanded or shall command I will not fail to do in spite of any man alive. That is what I mean by impossible. And in case the Church should bid me do anything contrary to the command I have from God, I will not do it, no matter what it may be. (152)

The dialogue reveals that Joan is a true daughter of the church and would be guided by it, unless the Church asks her to do anything that is impossible. Her "voices" come to her from God and God has set her a task. If the church commands her to do anything contrary to the will of God, it would be impossible for her to do it. She says

that she will not care for anything a churchman may say, " if it is against the commands given to her by- God" (152) for "God must be served first" (153). She scandalizes them by adding that she will ultimately be guided by her own judgment.

Joan's identity is blurred when she is captured and imprisoned by the English. They accuse her of heresy and will burn her at the stake in the market place. They charge her that she is in communication with the devil and that she is wearing a man's dress. Her individual judgment comes into crisis with two mighty forces-the church and political authority. She has been provided alternatives, i.e. either recant and save her life or get ready for burning at the stake. She prefers death to life because she can get her identity and achieve her goal only through death in such critical situation. If she recants and save her life, she has to be imprisoned in solitude forever. In this case, her dignity will be shadowed and identity lost. Therefore, she tears up her recantation paper and accepts death. Joan says, " Give me that writing; light your fire [. . .] my voices were right" (161).

Joan's question of identity is close to her freedom and existence. She always raises the question of identity in the hostile world and struggles for its achievement. Her dignity won't be preserved unless she explores her identity. Only through death, she can secure her identity and preserve her dignity.

Joan's Achievement

The burning of Joan is not the end of the story, but merely the beginning. She is in truth victorious, for her ideas conquered all Europe. The motif behind her death is to achieve freedom, identity and truth. She prefers death and wills to burn at the stake rather than to recant and save her life. Death is not a surrender, but a means to achieve some goal. So, she is canonized at Rheims and referred as St. Joan.

Gentleman announces:

THE GENTLEMAN: . . . has finally declared her to have been
 endowed with heroic virtues and favored with private relations,
 and calls the said Venerable and Blessed Joan to the communion
 of the Church Triumphant as Saint Joan (181).

The dialogue reveals her perfectness. It is her great achievement. It is a record of what mankind does to its saints and geniuses. She stands for liberty of conscience.

Shaw has achieved reconciliation between the comedy of personal evaluation and the tragedy of personal death. The tragedy of Joan is a continuing human tragedy. The burning of Joan as a heretic is a pious murder, an innocent murder, a murder committed not out of malice or personal reason, but because it is sincerely felt that the authority of the church is in danger. Joan's achievement can be seen after her rehabilitation, twenty-five years later. It is clear that the charge of heretic was unjust. Ladvenu is glad for the sake of poor Joan who had been unjustly condemned. Charles says that her sentence has been annulled and a beautiful cross would adorn the place where she was burnt.

Joan's aim is to win the war and set her country free from English rule. She wants to drive the English away from the land of France. She encourages and teaches them to fight for the sake of the nation. Dunois says he won his victories by fighting in her way and succeeded in driving the English out from France. This pleases Joan. She comments:

DUNOIS [coming through the tapestry on Joan's left]: I have kept my
 word: the English are gone.

JOAN: Praised be God! now is fair France a province in heaven. Tell
 me all about the fighting, Jack. Was it thou that led them? Wert
 thou God's captain to thy death? (174-75)

This conversation reveals that France gets victory against English rule and breathes a sigh of liberty. France is a province of heaven because it is holy and God helps in attaining its freedom.

Joan's achievement can be highlighted by the remorse in evils characters. They were terribly cruel to Joan and pushed her at the stake. Stogumber tells that had been very cruel because he did not know what cruelty really was. He had to see real suffering with his own eyes, before he could realise what real suffering meant. He remarks, "I did a very cruel things once because I did not know what cruelty was like" (178). Similarly the Earl of Warwick owes Joan an apology "Madam ! my congratulation on your rehabilitation. I feel that I owe you an apology (179). Cauchon who is cruel to Joan at the time of the trial, feels regret at her burning. He tells her that she owes her halo to him and he will be remembered in history because of her.

The declaration of the executioner furnishes her achievement . He expresses her immortality and sainthood.

THE EXECUTIONER [stepping from behind the bed curtains on Charles's right]: She is more alive than you: old man. Her heart would not burn: and it would not drown. I was a master at my craft: better than the master of Paris, better than the master of Toulouse: She is up and alive everywhere. (179)

The dialogue reveals that Joan is a true daughter of the Church so she is immortal. She is not dead. Her heart would not burn, nor would it drown, so she must be living. Thus, Joan achieves her goal. She gets freedom, identity, and dignity by accepting death.

Self-Centrism

Self-centrism refers to that sort of behaviour which is oriented towards the self. A self-centred man does not care for others pains and pleasures and only thinks of what pleases and pains him/her. Joan gives priority to her individual judgment. Her concern is not related to political authority and power of the church or even society. She is very rigid in her desire to free her country from English rule. Therefore, she is a self-centred maid.

Her individual judgment is crushed between two mighty forces-the law and the church. The Earl of Warwick is a bitter enemy of Joan's doctrine of kingship. It is her self-centrism that makes her lead a masculine life soldier's uniform. She says "my voices tell me I must dress as a soldier" (155). She further says:

JOAN: Why, yes: what can be plainer commonsense? I was a soldier living among soldiers. If I were to dress as a woman they would think of me as a woman; and then what would become of me? If I dress as a soldier, they think of me as a soldier, and I can live with them as I do at home with my brothers. That is why St. Catherine tells me I must not dress as a woman until she gives me leave. (155)

This dialogue expresses the motif behind her wearing soldiers dress. She wills to wear uniform because it gives her identity, she will wear it until she is given permission by St. Catherine not to do so St. Catherine may give the necessary permission but she also gives practical reasons for wearing a masculine dress.

Joan's self-centrism can be examined in her behaviour. She says that she is a true daughter of the church and would be guided by it. So, she refuses to take oath and principles of church. She won't care for anything that churchmen and others may

say. Her ego is to drive out the English from the land of France. She confidently tells the Dauphin that she has been sent by the Lord to crown him king at Rheims, Cathedral.

JOAN [Releasing him and bobbing him a little curtsey]: Gentle little Dauphin, I am sent to you to drive the English away from Orleans and from France and to crown you king in the cathedral at Rheims, where all true kings of France are crowned. (90)

Joan's strong determination is to drive away the English from France and bring liberty. Her aim is to crown the Dauphin, the future king Charles VII of France at Rheims, Cathedral where other kings of France were crowned.

Joan is very rigid in her principle so she rejects the advice of the captain. Fighting is not a simple thing and raising a siege is not easy. He says that ten thousand like Joan can do nothing about the English. She proudly replies that if God is on their side it will be easy for them to defeat the enemy. She inspires and instructs the French to fight for the sake of nationality, freedom, truth, and identity and win the war. A few like her can easily throw the English out. She says, "Ten like me can stop them with God on our side" (76). Dauphin is pleased with her and proclaims that the command of the army has been given to Joan and that she has been permitted to do as she likes with it. She also wins the heart of Dunois. She is confident that she can lead her army and take English forts.

Joan's self-centrism is goal directed. She achieves her goal through death. Ladvenu and the churchman want to save her life through recantation. But Joan does not accept recantation which is beyond her judgment. She prefers death because of her self-centrism. Her achievement is possible only through self-centrism. Hence, she succeeds to preserve her dignity through self-centrism.

Maladjustment, Alienation, Failure and Frustration

Adjustment usually refers to social, psychological and any other adjustment. It is a point of balance between a person and the environment in which the person is. The state of adjustment exists when a person's needs and wishes are fulfilled. When they are not fulfilled maladjustment exists. When we talk about maladjustment, we are referring to the state of imbalance between a person and the environment. Joan can be seen as a maladjusted heroine.

Her strong determination to be a soldier is an important factor of maladjustment. Therefore, the study emphasizes her condition, especially soldiering and the craze for war. Joan is "vital genius" but she is crushed between two mighty forces, the feudal system and the Catholic Church. An eternal struggle between individual judgment and established authority; in her case the established church and the medieval socio-economic organization, the feudal order, make her maladjusted. Cauchon is the spokesman of the church, the Earl of Warwick that of the feudal order and Joan stands for liberty of the conscience for the freedom of the individual to act according to her light. All these three represent forces much vaster and greater than themselves. So the environment is not suitable for her. She comments about the unfavorable environment "the world is too wicked for me" (122).

Since Joan is a maladjusted heroine, alienation, failure and frustration are necessary consequences. They are responsible for her death finally. Maladjusted person cannot integrate into the larger social unity, due to which S/he is lonely and frustrated.

Man is basically alone in this alien universe. An individual finds oneself even among relatives. Therefore the sense of alienation is a common phenomenon to man.

Alienation occurs especially when an individual cannot integrate into the social structure and laws made by society. Joan is the alien heroine all the time.

Joan struggles for freedom and identity in a maladjusted society. She is eager to drive the English from France and save its sovereignty. After Dunois who was crowned as Charles VII of France, Joan is disliked by many people though she has served her country and her people "Why all these courtiers and knights and churchmen hate me?" (122) Her doctrine, supremacy and unquenchable hunger for war are the causes of alienation. She determines to go back to her village after taking Paris but she is not allowed to take Paris "they will not allow to take Paris" (123). Dunois warns her to be careful otherwise she will be captured by the English who would burn her as a witch "be careful otherwise instead of winning Paris you will be taken" (123).

Joan realizes that she is all alone and friendless. She feels that her life is in danger not only from the English and Burgundians but also from the French "My life is in danger not only from the English and the Burgundians but also from the French" (123). They cannot rescue her from danger.

The alienation increases when the Dauphin washes his hands from further thought of war. She does not like to stop fighting as long as the English are in France. She is sure they can drive out the English but she is interrupted by the king who prefers a treaty with his enemies. He tells her that the French would lose what they had gained if they fought once again and it was better to reach a treaty.

JOAN: Treaty [she stamps with impatience]

CHARLES: The maid wants to start fighting again.

CHARLES: No: I suppose not; but let us be content with what we have done. Let us make a treaty. Our luck is too good to last; and now is our chance to stop before it turns. (125-26)

This conversation reveals Joan is alone and supportless. It is Joan who crowns Dauphin as the king Charles VII of France, but he obstructs her mission. Thus, she is maladjusted in society.

Frustration is generally defined as an emotional state which results from the disturbance in behaviour that is directed towards some goal. When we speak of frustration, we are referring to a situation in which a person's organized plan of action is temporarily or permanently prevented. Frustration is arising from failure, conflict and delay. In the case of Joan, failure causes frustration.

Joan fails to integrate into the social mechanism where she is in. She wants to drive the English from France and breathe liberty. She wants to get identity. She fails to get support. After her imprisonment by the English, very few efforts were made for her rescue. After her recantation, also she is not set free. She wants to get freedom so she accepts recantation but it is in vain. She is sentenced to confinement in a dark and solitary prison. She protests against the social system to affirm her existence and is successful. The social mechanism always imposes the burden over her and efforts to solve them. She does not like to be governed by the laws that the society, political authority and church have formulated. Rather, she wants to govern herself with the laws that she has made. But she fails to do this and accepts death. At least, she gets freedom from further torture and abuse. Hence, she succeeds in preserving her dignity.

Death

Death is a most authentic and significant moment. However, one who prefers death is conscious of existence. Animals or non-human things do not prefer death. Joan prefers death because she wills to spend her life the way she likes. Joan fails to achieve her goal so she achieves the goal through death her will, her choice. Nietzsche is positive towards death. For him, accepting death can also be a solution. Death is not a surrender, it is a means to achieve some goal. Death also brings fulfillment. So, Nietzsche does not take death negatively. In the case of Joan, she uses death as a weapon to win her goal. She achieves identity, preserves dignity, avoids anxiety and protests freedom through death. Similarly, Sartre is also in favour of death. He takes it like any other choice. By accepting death, Joan protects her identity and preserves her dignity. She wins and brings fulfillment. In this sense, it is a mode of fulfillment.

Death liberates Joan from the darkness. She takes it positively. She shows her radical dissatisfaction with the prevailing system and norms of the Church. So she is captured and imprisoned. She protests by recanting to be free and to preserve her identity, but fails. Therefore, she accepts death.

Joan is canonized and referred as Saint after burning at stake "and calls the said Venerable and Blessed Joan to the communion of the Church Triumphant as Saint Joan" (181). She is established as the first protestant martyr and pioneer of nationalism. Joan of Arc has been canonized at Rheims and there will be commemoration service in her honour in every Catholic Church.

JOAN [urpt]: Saint Joan!

THE GENTLEMAN: On every thirtieth day of May, being the anniversary of the death of the said most blessed daughter of God, there shall in every Catholic Church to the end of time be

celebrated a special office in commemoration of her and it shall be lawful to dedicate a special chapel to her, and to place her image on its altar in every such church. And it shall be lawful and laudable for the faithful to kneel and address their prayers through her to the Mercy Seat. (181)

This conversation reveals her great achievement after death. She gets great honour from everywhere and every side. Stogumber inquires they will erect a statue of Joan. They get a glimpse of the Cathedral of Rheims and side by side with it is seen the statue of Joan " It would be a great comfort to me and to my master to see a fair statue to The Maid in Winchester Cathedral (180).

Joan brings fulfillment through her death. She creates a meanings and secures goal. Such a person is holy and immortal. Joan is immortal because she is not dead. The executioner declares that her heart would not burn nor it drown so she must be living "She is not dead" (179). Although Heidegger comments on death negatively "Death is Absurd" (153). In case of Joan, death becomes meaningful but not absurd. It brings fulfillment and succeeds in preserving her dignity. Therefore death is not a surrender rather a weapon to achieve the goal.

Joan as a Tragic Heroine

According to Aristotle, a tragic hero is a distinguished person occupying a high position or having a high status in life and in very prosperous circumstances falling into misfortune on account of a hamartia or some defect of character. In this regard, Joan is not away from a tragic heroine because of a high social standing, moral excellence or goodness and some error committed by the heroine in ignorance of the circumstances.

Joan is a vital genius and saint. Her aim is to win the war and set her country free from English rule. She wants to drive the English away from the land of France. She becomes a commander of soldiers and regains Orleans. Dauphin is crowned Charles VII, the king of France at Rheims Cathedral. She is thus a person of social eminence. She is also a person possessing excellent qualities of character.

Joan is hasty in her judgement and excessively proud of her intelligence which drag her towards tragic doom. After the Dauphin has been crowned, Joan wants to march forward and take Paris as well. However, the king is not prepared for this. The English, who are naturally her enemies have put a heavy prize on her head, and it is certain that, if she is captured, she will be burnt as a witch. She struggles against English yoke for freedom, identity and existence.

An outstanding feature of Joan's character is a feeling of hubris in her own wisdom. This feeling of pride seems to have been considerably nourished and inflated by her achievement. Because of this hubris, Joan certainly alienates some of our sympathy. Self-confidence is a good quality, but when it takes the form of pride, haughtiness, arrogance or insolence, it becomes disgusting and obnoxious. In the case of Joan, critics have pointed out that she has fault of character, and she commits error of judgement. She is vain, conceited, presumptuous and that she is too impetuous and hasty. So, her fall is brought about by her own actions. She never recants and saves her life. She never does treaty with English and Burgundians. Martz points out that Joan is divinely inspired, her pride is a pride in her own saintless and divine mission. As a matter of fact, the fault lies not in Joan, but in those who sent her at the stake. To quote Martz, "The characters who accuse Joan of pride and error are in these accusations convicting themselves of pride of self-righteousness and the error of human certitude" (185).

In a nutshell, Joan is an authentic tragic heroine. The tragedy of Joan has a universal appeal. It touches a responsive chord in every heart, only because it is representation of an eternal conflict with an often ever recurring tragic pattern. Thus, the tragedy of Joan is the tragedy of Christ. She prefers death in a hostile and alien universe for the preservation of dignity, question for identity and existence.

IV. Conclusion

The struggle to exist is the central issue in this play. However, a piece of literary composition requires no explain; it stands on its own worth as it reveals about the human condition .The character, not plot, becomes the driving force. The study presents itself as a case study of Joan's motif behind her death. Therefore, it exposes her development from adulthood to death and beyond the rehabilitation of her reputation twenty-five years after her martyrdom. The affirmation of existence is the central issue in the play. The study examines the different incidents in which Joan attempts to affirm her existence and why she does what she does is the central question.

Here Shaw seems to stress on the conflict between individual judgment and established authority. Two mighty forces-the law and the Church and social condition attempt to constrain Joan in her action. The environment in which Joan grew up, dominance of the English and power of Catholic Church, all stand against her doctrine. Joan, deep down into the heart, questions identity, loves independence and searches for truth. But the prevailing circumstances affect her and make the demand that Joan should protest, struggle and affirm her existence.

Joan is a vital genius and saint. She saw "Vision" and heard "Voices" telling her to free her country from the rule of English. Her slogan is "England for English and France for French" This is her mission in life so she leads a masculine life and insists on wearing a soldier's uniform. She doesn't want to be a woman and take a husband. She teaches knights and soldiers to fight with a will to win. She gets a horse and armour from the captain because she has orders from the Lord. Dauphin makes her a commander of the French army. Dunois, too, is impressed with her because she is made of firm mettle and she has the makings of a true soldier. Joan is a true

daughter of the church and would be guided by it. Her "voices" come from God and God has set her a task that is to struggle for independence and identity to fulfill the will of God.

Joan is selfless and rigid in her doctrine. But every individual has a selfish gene. It is Joan who crowns the Dauphin at the Cathedral of Rheims as King Charles VII of France who, however, obstructs her aim of winning Paris. Moreover, he makes no effort at all to save her from the stake. He stops the thought of fighting and thinks of treaty with enemies. But Joan struggles for the identity and liberty of France. Those who run and act according to circumstances are socially acceptable and those who do not adapt to the situation are socially unacceptable. In spite of social unacceptability, Joan affirms her existence through self-centrism. She never cares what other say about her "I will not look back to see whatever anyone is following me" (101). Her responsibility towards the nation and self is more important than towards the Church and political authority. Despite others' disagreement, Joan is continuously fights against the English until she is captured. Her 'voices' do not allow her to recant and save her life through confinement in a solitary prison for the rest of her life. So, she tears up her recantation into fragments and accepts death by burning at the stake for achieving goal.

Likewise, Joan depends on her own laws and principles for her activities. She isolates herself from the social system, church rules and regulations and political laws. Her superiority and self centred nature make her socially unacceptable.

Since Joan values herself, she is a maladjusted heroine. she does not adjust to the feudal system and the domination of the catholic church. Her struggle against the English for independence converts Joan from adjustment to maladjustment. She fails to integrate into the social mechanism. So, Joan is isolated in an alien universe. She is

not able to see any element of affinity with the king, churchman and others when she is imprisoned by the English. She tries to escape from the prison by jumping over the wall as a protest but she fails. Due to anxiety and hope of freedom, she accepts the recantation. She saves herself from being burnt alive but she is sentenced to life imprisonment in dark and solitary confinement "Thou mayst repent thy errors in solitary contemplation" (160). As a result, she does not get the sense of relief. Her identity, freedom and existence are still blurred.

Joan believes that one can expose the mastery over life and death through accepting death. One should be able to use one's life in accordance with his/her wish. She feels a sense of relief to know that there is way out of all the pressures and suffocations. Her finding at the critical juncture of domination functions as a feedback to develop the thought of death. Accepting death refers to an act of sacrificing oneself at one's own choice. Joan tears the recantation and prefers death to assert herself. Normally, everything ends through death. Heidegger does not support death. Death is total non existence. Death is only another witness to the absurdity of human existence. Camus never advocates surrender. Death is not a solution rather it is a cowardly act. However, death of Joan is not a surrender. It is not the end, rather beginning of her story. It is not absurd. Rather it is a means to achieve some goal. Joan is canonized and referred to as Saint after her death. If she recants and saves her quest for identity, quest for existence, struggle for freedom all are blurred and under erasure. Shaw clarifies about her death, "the story of Joan does not end from her death rather it begins" (36).

Joan's achievement can be flower after her rehabilitation twenty five years later. A beautiful cross will adorn the place where she was burnt. Dunois had won the battle according to her way. The executioner says Joan I not dead. Her heart would

not burn nor would it drown, so she must be living some where. Archbishop, Inquisitor and others kneel before her and call blessings on her name. Gentleman announces that Joan of Arc has been canonized at Rheims and she would be referred to as Saint Joan. Ultimately, Joan is presented as the first Protestant martyr and pioneer of nationalism. Therefore, Joan succeeds in preserving her dignity through death.

Sartre treats death positively. For him, it is like any other choice. Through death one can protect one's choice. One can win something and bring fulfillment. In that sense, it is a mode of fulfillment. In the case of Joan, she protects her dignity and gets her identify only through death. Nietzsche comments about death, "The thought of death is a great comfort: it is a good way of getting through many a bad night" (384 qtd. in the Dictionary of Question by Reginald Hall). Death is not a surrender, it is a means to achieve some goal. An individual may use it as a weapon to win something. And, Shaw shows Joan achieving this. Her life thus reads as a tragedy of an absurd hero.

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