

I. Introduction

The objective of this research is to analyze the cause behind the protagonist John Proctor's acceptance of death in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* though he has been provided an option for life. The research is the testing of the hypothesis that John Proctor affirms his individuality by denouncing the witchcraft in the trial and by being faithful towards his own soul. So, it has little to do with the style, technique, aesthetics and other qualities of the play.

Arthur Miller was born in Manhattan, America on October 17, 1915. He was the second child among the three children of his parents. He has an elder brother in business, a sister on the stage. The Millers were unequivocally middle-class and Jewish. His mother was born in the United States; his father, a manufacturer of women's coats, was born in what before the first World War was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Until the Depression of the 1930s the Millers were moderately well-to-do family. Arthur attended grammar school in Harlem and went to high school in Brooklyn.

By the time he finished high school, his parents could no longer afford to send him to college. His grades were not sufficiently high to qualify him for entry into the campus of his choice, the University of Michigan. He found two ways out of this dilemma. He got himself a job in a warehouse on Tenth Avenue and 60th street as a "loader" and shipping clerk, and saved a sum sufficient to pay for his tuition. He also wrote a letter to the president of the university and asked for a chance to prove his merit within the first year of his studies. If he failed to distinguish himself, he would quit. He did very well and stayed on to take his degree for Bachelor of Arts in 1938. In his boyhood Arthur was neither particularly bright nor very well read. He was a baseball fan. He began to read while working at the warehouse. He is probably the only man who ever read through *War and Peace* entirely on the subway, standing up. At college he also

began to write plays. Several of them were awarded the University of Michigan's Jule and Avery Hopwood prizes. He won a prize of \$ 1250 given by the Theatre Guild's Bureau of New Plays. With money from these prizes and \$227 a week from the Federal Theatre Project, Miller was able to support himself during the early years of his career. He was living at Patchogue, Long Island, at the time and had to check every day at the project office in Manhattan, fifty-seven miles away, to collect his wage. He wrote a play about Montezuma which was submitted to the Group Theatre, as well as to others, no doubt, and which the editor of the present volume, then the Group Theatre's Managing Director, found several years later in his files-unread!

In 1944, a diary Miller had kept while visiting Army camps in the United States, researching for a film, *The Story of G.I. Joe* (the war life of the journalist Ernie Pyle), was published under the title *Situation Normal*. In 1945, as a reaction to the activities of a fascist organization known as the Christian Front, Miller wrote his only novel, *Focus*, which attracted considerable attention. Its subject was anti-Semitism. Also in 1944 came the production of Miller's first play in the professional theatre, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, which had no luck at all; there were only four performances. Still, Miller was launched! One critic, Burton Rascoe, recognized a potentially powerful playwright. More important, several producers got in touch with Miller, requesting him to submit his next play. That was *All My Sons*, which was produced by Harold Clurman, Elia Kazan, and Walter Fried on January 29, 1947. It was a box-office success and was voted the best play of the season by the drama critics' circle.

Some of his published and produced plays are: *The Man Who Had All the Luck* (1944), *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *An Enemy of the People* (1950), *The Crucible* (1953), *After the Fall* (1964), *Incident at Vichy* (1964), *The Price* (1968),

The Archbishop's Ceiling (1984), *Danger: Memory!* (1987), *The Golden Years* (1990)
The Last Yankee (1991), *Broken Glass* (1994) and so on.

Along with his life as a playwright, Miller has been an engaged public figure. He lectured widely, wrote articles on the theatre and its relation to world affairs, and participated in liberal movements of the day. In 1956, when he appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee, he refused to name people who had attended a meeting to which he had been invited as a guest, some of whom he surmised were members of the Communist Party. On this account he was convicted of contempt of Congress in 1957, a conviction which was reserved by the Supreme Court in 1958. In 1965 Miller was elected international president of P.E.N; the world wide society of poets and playwrights, essayists and editors, novelists and nonfiction writes. Though nonpolitical by its charter, P.E.N. was momentarily torn by conflicting national interests. His presidency was so successful in the causes of international understanding through literature and of freedom for writers everywhere that he was unanimously elected for the second term.

Arthur Miller married three times. His first marriage-to Mary Slattery, a sometime social worker took place in 1940. Two children, a boy and a girl, were born of this marriage, which ended in divorce in 1956. His second marriage took place the same year to Marilyn Monroe, the Hollywood actress. They were divorced in 1960. In 1962 he married the photographer Inge Morath, Austrian-born woman who was educated in France and Germany, where she had lived through the Hitler regime and the war. A daughter was born out of this union.

The Crucible is set in the late seventeenth century Salem community. Salem was just barely surviving in the time leading up to the trials. Although only a few miles from

the coast, the settlement was very much an unorganized community, just hanging on by its fingernails, surrounded by the forests.

Bitter disputes over land rose up among the inhabitants of the village, many of whom were poor farmers who were just barely making enough to survive, and any changes in the weather or blights could easily wipe out a year's crop. As the puritans had vowed to create a theocracy in this new land, religious fervor added another tension to the mix: the utterly humorless atmosphere deprived people of levity (as the only things allowed were working and praising the Lord). The religious system of the time was one of endless striving and very uncertain reward; as the puritans believed that one's fate was determined by God before one was born, they constantly searched for hints as to whether they would be chosen for Heaven or condemned for Hell, but God's pleasure and displeasure could not be read. The sexist beliefs that Puritans held for women further stressed the atmosphere: women should be totally subservient to their men (he in public, she at home; he talking, she listening; he preaching, she hearing, and so on.), that by nature a woman was more likely to enlist in the Devil's service than a man was (since women were not allowed to be preachers then they were more likely to sign themselves over to the Devil), and that women were naturally supposed to be lustful. Although this belief was valid in that men were more likely to die early and thus women often outnumbered men, which made women compete fiercely for scarce men.

The small town atmosphere made secrets very difficult to keep and people's opinions (positive or negative) about their neighbors were generally accepted as fact. Then the fact that it was an age where the philosophy "children should be seen and not heard" reigned supreme, children suffered from their status at the bottom of the social ladder. Toys and games were seen as idle and playing was discouraged, and thus children suffered from not being able to enjoy life and have fun, although girls had particular

cruelties heaped upon them; boys were able to go for hunting, fishing, exploring the forest, and often became apprentices to carpenters and smiths, while girls were trained from a tender age to spin yarn, cook, sew, weave, and generally be servants to their husbands and to their children. All of these pressures proved to be an explosive combination. In such crucial background many people were killed on the accusation of involvement of witchcraft in 1692.

Moreover, the play is taken as the allegory of McCarthy era. Joseph Raymond McCarthy (1908-57) was the U.S senator of Wisconsin from 1947 to 1957. He served with the U.S. marines in the Pacific in World War II, achieving the rank of the captain. In 1946, McCarthy defeated Senator Robert M. La Follette, Jr., for the Republican senatorial nomination and then overwhelmed his Democratic opponent in the election. His career in the Senate was undistinguished and obscure until February 1950, when he won national attention with a speech at Wheeling, in which he charged that the State Department had been infiltrated by Communists. Although a Senate investigation committee under Millard Tydings exonerated the State Department and branded the charges a fraud and a hoax, McCarthy repeated his claims in a series of radio and television appearances. Challenged to produce his evidence, he refused and instead made new accusations. When the Republicans assumed control of Congress in 1953, McCarthy, who had been reelected (Government Operations Committee), a post in which he wielded great power; he used his position to exploit the public's fear of Communism.

Through widely publicized hearings, the use of unidentified informers, and reckless accusation, McCarthy doggedly pursued those whom he classified as Communists and subversives. Careers were ruined on the flimsiest evidence, and his methods came under increasing attack by the press and his colleagues. In April 1954, McCarthy accused Secretary of the Army Robert T. Stevens and his supporters of

attempting to conceal evidence of espionage activities that McCarthy and his staff had allegedly uncovered at Fort Monmouth, N.J. The army, in turn, accused McCarthy, his chief counsel, and a staff member of seeking by improper means to obtain preferential treatment for a former consultant to the subcommittee, then a private in the army. After widely publicized hearings of August 1954 McCarthy and his supporters were cleared of the army's charges. However, in December the senate, acting on a motion of censure against him, voted to 'condemn' McCarthy for contempt of a Senate elections subcommittee that had investigated his conduct and financial affairs in 1952, for abuse of certain senators, and for insults to the Senate itself during the censure proceedings. After this rebuke, and with the Democrats again in control of Congress after the 1954 elections, McCarthy's influence in the Senate and on the national scene steadily diminished until his death. McCarthy's indiscriminate attacks gave rise to the term 'McCarthyism' which denotes similar assaults characterized by sensationalist tactics and unsubstantiated accusations.

While going through the play, it is found that the protagonist wills to remain independent. He does not care for the society. He simply wants to exist as an individual. That is why, he does not run after the society and what it demands. He is expected to act within the prescribed social limits. But he protests against all those limitations by rejecting them. His protest extends up to the extent of rejecting life itself. For this, he has to sacrifice even his life. By doing so, he protests against the social system. It means that John proctor accepts his death to protect his wish. To overcome the problem which obstructs his independence, he chooses death. Death is normally not a solution. It is end of something, not a beginning. People do not gain anything through death. It rather adds further problem but the protagonist has taken it as the weapon to protect his freedom. He sees the protection of the personal dignity in his choice of death. So, here it seems the

paradoxical nature in the motif of John Proctor's acceptance of death since he sees the protection of his personal dignity in his death rather than in being alive.

The Crucible has been analyzed from various perspectives: Feminist, New Historicist, Marxist, and religious among others. There are some critics also who relate the play with Mc Carthyism. Victoria Pope comments on the play, "In Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Salem was an allegory for Mc Carthyism" (19). Likewise, Dennis Welland takes the play as "a more important document of Mc Carthy's America than a partisan piece" (85).

Interpreting the text from historicist perspective Henry Popkin remarks: "*The Crucible* shows us witch-hunts, but the obvious contemporary reference is masked by the historical setting by the very distinctive seventeenth century speech; what remains in the tension between the incalculable malice of private individuals and the conscience of a guilt ridden husband" (59).

Another critic Christopher Bigsby studies the play in association to power and authority in this regard:

It seemed so much a play of its time, indeed, that its reception was clouded by the politics of the age. Today the ages of those passions are cold, and no one now needs to recall that curious and painful era in order to understand *The Crucible*, a play beyond the immediate issue of Mc Carthyism is a study of power and authority. *The Crucible* explores the potentially disabling nature of guilt and the piece of refusing to accept responsibility for one's actions [...]. It has proved Miller's most produced play not because of an abiding interest in anti-communist hysteria but because its concerns remain central. Betrayal, private and public, is

constant. The coercive authority of dogma, ideology, and myth is no less powerful at the end of the second millennium than it was in 1692. (32)

Bigsby analyzes power relation between an individual and the state.

Commenting on the technique of the play, Raymond Williams remarks:

The Crucible is a powerful and successful dramatization of the notorious witch-trials of Salem, but it is technically less interesting than its predecessors just because it is based on a historical event which at the level of action and principled statement is explicit enough to solve, or not to raise the difficult dramatic problems which Miller had previously set himself [...]. The methods explored in the earlier plays are not necessary here, but the problems they offered to solve return immediately, outside the context of this particular historical event. (322)

In this regard, it becomes clear that though the text has been analyzed through various perspectives, it has not been studied from existentialist approach yet. There exists a strong need to carry out research on this play from a new perspective. Without a proper study on this issue, the meaning of the text remains incomplete.

The protagonist of *The Crucible* John Proctor's choice is a great step. John Proctor values himself more than society. He wants to protect his human image. His life does not give any thing except that of making him a participant in a losing battle, therefore, he wants to assert his existence. To exist, he would have to remain independent. He is quite conscious of his existence as he feels that he is being abused by the society. So, he chooses death. At least, through death he protects himself from being further abused. After death, he remains independent. He gets victory over the social and family burdens by preserving his dignity at the cost of his life.

The protagonist John Proctor is conscious of his existence. One exists up to the extent one makes the choices. The protagonist keeps on making choices up to the very end of the play. He would have been offered to save his life if he had confessed for his involvement in the witchcraft. Even his wife releases him from the sin of adultery. But he wants to save his conscience. In order to save his 'name' and his personal dignity he easily accepts his death and there lies his greatness. Though John Proctor is not presented as such a great hero in the beginning of the play, he proves himself to be a great lover of individuality towards the end of the play by accepting his death easily.

The Crucible is a tragic drama that presents a portrait of a self-seeking man, John Proctor. To analyze his motif, the research depends on the theoretical background from existentialism. So, in the second chapter, the present researcher will develop theoretical modality called existentialism with reference to different existentialists and their works. In the third chapter, the text will be analyzed keeping an eye on how Proctor has been able to be an existentialist. And the final chapter will be the outcome of the destiny that is brought by the decision which John Proctor has chosen.

II. Existentialism

Background

Existentialism is a school of thought devoted to the interpretation of human existence. It takes human being as an isolated existent into an alien universe. It is the modern system of belief that started from the latest movement of European thought which has achieved popular success in contemporary France after the devastating effects of the two World Wars, especially after the Second World War. As a result, many thinkers started to oppose the doctrines that viewed human being as manifestation of an absolute value thrown into an incoherent, disordered and chaotic universe in which individual's destiny was obstructed and turned apart by the Second World War. They did not believe in traditional concepts like rationality, morality, unit, value and even in Christianity. The thinkers and writers found the world totally absurd, incoherent and disintegrated. These feelings led to the idea that people had to create their own values in the world in which the traditional values did not work. One has to make choices and create oneself. In other words, one exists up to the extent one makes choices. According to Jonk Ryan, existentialism focuses on individual freedom and responsibility: "Hence there is no single existential philosophy, and no single definition of the word can be given, the problem of man is central and that 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). It shows that an existentialist is responsible for whatever s/he does or whatever decision s/he makes.

Man is free of routines and conventions that are laid bare and face to his/her own destiny. This feeling of utter alleviation was the product of recognition of 'death of God' on the one hand and the catalism of the World War I and II on the other. Not only 'God is dead' as Nietzsche proclaimed, but also all the intermediary values connecting God and

man declined. Man lost even the certainties and values of his own existence, which he had originally received from his belief in God. He is thus a castrated and deserted animal in the overwhelming and the absurd universe.

Existence means to stand out in the universe that is against us. Moreover, existentialism means pertaining to existence. Now the term existentialism is used to describe the vision of the condition and existence of man, his place and function in the world, and his relationship or lack of it with God. It is a "very intense and philosophically specialized form of quest for selfhood" (Ellmann, and Feidelson 803). Jean Paul Sartre defines existentialism as an attempt to make life persist by creating a system in which one realizes human loneliness and "human subjectivity" (*Existentialism* 10). So, the focus of existentialism is on 'being' and 'subjectivity' as opposed to logical reasoning and 'objectivity'. Individual experience rather than abstract thought and knowledge is foregrounded in this philosophy.

On the background of such fragmented and disillusioned situation, many writers and philosophers sought at least to reduce if not to alleviate the present condition of modern man. The writers easily realize that life has become alarmingly insecure. The industrial revolution, the race for ornaments, large-scale manufacture and the great political tycoons and straps have shaken the very foundation of human existence. As it is today Existentialism is probably the most dynamic of appropriate philosophical movement to define and interpret anxiety, absurdity and uncertainties of the human existence.

Atheistic Existentialists oppose the existence of God; Nietzsche's expression "God is dead" has a lasting impact in existential philosophy. There is no god to determine our existence. First we exist and then create 'essence' by ourselves. We are what we make ourselves to be. In this 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" (149). Since we make choices, we create meaning ourselves. Then, there is no transcendent absolute to govern our existence.

Despite its prominence in the post war years, the elements of existentialism can be found in the classical philosophy, especially in the philosophy of Socrates. Though not termed as existentialist, he gave the 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 shifted the issue from nature to man. This 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. The 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 aware about the significance of the self. In this context, Richard Tarnas in *The Passion of the Western Mind* comments:

In Socrates' 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 this 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)

In this regard, Tarnas has pointed out Socrates' concept of individuality as Socrates prioritizes self and individuality.

The main ideas of existentialist theory were already common to the religious thoughts 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 during such period too, existential elements can be seen, especially in the philosophy of Saint Augustine. St. Augustine asked man not to go outside himself in the quest of truth. He affirmed the existence of human ego in the soul. He assigned importance to the individual self. In this regard, Richard Tarnas remarks:

Augustine was the most modern of the ancients: he possessed an existentialist's self-awareness with his highly developed capacity for introspection and self-confrontation, his concern with memory, consciousness and time, 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.

(144)

Likewise, Tarnas also sees the similar concept of valorizing self and individuality in St. Augustine as well.

The end of Medieval age was the birth of Renaissance. Since Renaissance was the revival of classicism, it laid stress on individual like the classical philosophers.

Renaissance artists tended to believe that anything is as the viewer views it. For the first time, they gave importance to the perspective, that is, subjectivity. The existential trace can be found in the works of French essayist Montaigne as well. Montaigne in his *Essays* reveals what he thinks and what he feels. He does not hide anything. He makes the exploration of his self. Now a question arises: why does Montaigne write about himself, rather than handling any 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 the line of development up to Montaigne, we can conclude that the development of existentialism begins right from the classical time though it did not get same title or name. It began as a distinct philosophy with Danish Christian thinker. Soren Kierkegaard in the first half of the nineteenth century. He criticizes Hegel's philosophical system as being abstract and having nothing to do with human existence. By criticizing Hegel, he gives importance to individual existence, freedom and choice.

Phenomenology and ontology are at the background of existentialism. The phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger focus on the internal role and activities of the individual in the production of emotion or belief rather than external world. The doctrine of intentionality holds that everything depends upon the consciousness of an individual who perceives things other than himself as objects. Making others as 'intentional objects', in phenomenological terms, does signify that other people in the perceptions of individual appear different from what they think of themselves. So, the existential notion of individual can be considered as the systematic growth of phenomenological concept of intentionality. Similar to this, the ontological

distinction between beings who live for themselves and the beings who live in themselves is essential in forming the ideas of existentialism. Beings, who exist for themselves, do have consciousness and freedom which they utilize for the full existence. On the other hand, beings that live in themselves are not conscious of their existence and do not undertake any freedom and become mere things or objects. For Existentialism, the most important thing is the knowledge of absurd existence, which awakens us to freedom and choice, and therefore, prevents us from being simply things.

The development of modern existentialism was preceded by the works of German Phenomenologist Frenz Brento and Edumund Husserl. They were immediately followed by modern existentialists. Phenomenology does the study of human consciousness. The world is as it appears to us. It means phenomenology stresses 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 Gunnar Skirbekk and Nils Gilje define phenomenology in this way:

Phenomenology aims to describe the everyday items that we use, as they appear to us; the pencil with, which I am now writing is described as it is in this context. Phenomenology attacks the view that the pencil is only a collection of atoms. In this sense, we can say that this school aims to reconstruct the universe in all of its diversity and fullness, with all of its qualities, as opposed to a one-dimensional standardization based on scientific philosophy. (440)

Having observed them, we come to the conclusion that phenomenology gives emphasis on individuality. Things are as they make appearance to our consciousness. So, all understandings and perceptions are subjective. An individual plays a central role in perception.

This idea of individuality influenced existentialists. Existentialism was developed at the hand of Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and many others, stressing on the human existence. At present, it has become an established theory and is implemented in interpreting literary texts. The remaining part of the present chapter attempts to discuss existentialism with reference to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus and others, and bring out the issues that are relevant for study.

Division of Existentialists: Theistic and Atheistic Existentialists

Jean Paul Sartre divides existentialist thinkers into two groups: theistic and atheistic (*Existentialism and Human Emotions* 13). He divides them into 'believer of Christian faith' and 'anti-Christian' or 'non believer in God'. Theistic existentialists believe in God and his existence. They say that 'God exists first, then the man exists' but, atheistic existentialists say that 'God, trees, rocks, mountains, and so on do not exist but only the man exists'. The theistic or Christian group includes Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel and Martin Buber.

Nietzsche is the forerunner and chief source of inspiration for atheistic existentialists who do not believe in the existence of God but believe in the continuous struggle of anti-Christianity. The theistic existentialists believe in religious mysticism and spiritual re-birth. The anxiety of modern man, they argue, can be entertained when one submits oneself to the will of God as an authentic shelter. They regard human beings as optimistically forlorn, free and supportless creatures (Macintyre, "*Existentialism*"). In the division of such existential condition the atheistic existentialists continue to create a system in which the individual is paradoxically free and charged to choose rugged path in life. If an individual chooses to come face to face and side by side with dread, he comes very close to 'angst' that is a feeling anxiety or worry. When angst passes through the

human soul, he chooses authentic existence. After that an individual may also run away from these burdens and choose inauthentic existence.

For Kierkegaard, 'God is truth'. To him, God is infinite subjectivity and "subjectivity is truth" (*History of Philosophy* 425). For him, the individual is quite unique in nature and cannot properly be known or understood in general terms. The individual is never a finished product, but he is always becoming or making himself. On the other hand, for Hegel the world is a necessary unfolding of the absolute idea and freedom is another name for the rational necessity or necessity as seen or understood (426). Marcel tries to make a distinction between a mystery and a problem and he says that both hope and love can exist only on the basis of faith (*Existentialism* 437). He distinguishes between having and being, linking greater consequence to being than to having. Having signifies ownership, which is a burden and an obstacle. Being means freedom from obstacle. Heidegger declares that the individual has to face the absolute problem of being, i.e. one has to decide one's own existence, create one's own potentiality, make choice.

Jaspers speaks of the exposition or revelation of existence. He takes self and freedom as mere illusion. He is in delusion about the totality of objects as quoted in *History of Philosophy*:

As being I am radically different from all being of things, because I can say 'I am', says Jaspers. I no doubt know about my being, but I cannot make myself an object of my consciousness. The "I" which is treated as objective and is studied in ordinary psychology means no more than the totality of mental facts which make up the contents of my consciousness. (431)

He knows his own self and will as creative, free and original. The existential self is thus associated with consciousness in which it twinkles or emerges. Existence constitutes the depth of consciousness.

Camus feels that anxiety, despair and crime have emerged from World-Wars I and II. The eternal supports in which the public belief rested in the past were religious in character. Camus, like many other existentialists, believes that the decline of religious belief in modern period forces people to realize the dilemma of Sisyphus.

Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher and religious thinker, is accepted as the precursor of existentialism. He reacted against the idealism of Hegelian philosophy, which, for him, had obscured the responsibility of individual towards the self. In other words, this philosophy could not make the people responsible towards 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 the 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 the choices. He believes that we are free to make choices and one exists up to the point of making choices: "It is only when we act especially we make significant choices-that we relate to our own existence" (qtd. in Gaarder 380).

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

Similarly, Kierkegaard believes that truth is subjective. There cannot be any truth which is objective and universal. Instead of one single truth, there are many truths which

are personal. The concept of 'subjective truth' has influenced the twentieth century existentialists. Now, they emphasize on individuality, i.e. subjectivity. What is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong, that depends on the individual's decision and thought. Then for him, traditional values do not work. They cannot govern the individual. If the 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.

Nietzsche, a German philosopher, is known as the critic of western philosophical tradition and Christianity. For him, both western philosophical tradition and Christianity were corrupt, since they taught abstraction. Western education system is corrupt, since it attempts to prepare historically educated man. Knowledge does not do anything except making him live in abstraction. The 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 that we need education "for life and action, not for a comfortable turning away from life and action or merely for glossing over the egoistical life and the cowardly bad act. We wish to use historical only so far as it serves living" (152).

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

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

Christianity has become the shelter of weak and disabled people. In his 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 degenerates into the contradiction of life, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal God as the declaration of war against life, against nature and against the will to life! (912)

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

Despite Heidegger's claim that he was not an existentialist, his influence on Sartre and the whole existentialist movement was unavoidable. He is known as a leading existentialist, despite denying having anything to do with existentialism.

Heidegger was the critic of western metaphysics. For him, western philosophy was obsessed with the problem of knowledge. And it was concerned with the issue of being. But Heidegger fulfilled the gap, since he was concerned with the issue of existence. 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 ill-at-ease. So he states in "What Is Metaphysics?" that "it irrupts when one is bored, profound boredom drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence like 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 of the being (Sein) and more particularly man's being (Dasein). Thomas Maunter further explains:

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, that is a range of possible ways to be. (183)

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

Sartre was the leading advocate of existentialism and French philosopher who was offered the Nobel Prize for literature in 1964, but he made the existentialist choice of refusing it. Sartre defends existentialism against the charges that it gives bleaker view of humanity: it neglects what is good in human life; and it denies the reality and seriousness. Sartre believes that existentialism is humanism since it takes human undertaking as the point of departure. Establishing existentialism as the 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" (*Existentialism and Human Emotion* 10). Then existentialism gives dignity to man. It encourages human action. In that sense, it is quite an optimistic philosophy.

For Sartre "existence precedes essence" is the central idea of existentialism. According to Sartre, we first exist, appear on the scene, make choices and create ourselves. 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. For instance, 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 notion. Essence governs existence in such case. But human case is quite opposite. We first exist and plan on what to do. So with us existence governs the essence.

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, which an individual keeps on making. And this choice may reach even up to suicide. He does not take suicide 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 suicide is not mode among others of being in the world" (57).

Sartre treats suicide positively. For him, it is like any other choices. By committing suicide, people can protect their choice. They can win something and bring fulfillment. In that sense, it is a mode of fulfillment.

For Albert Camus absurdity of life is his major concept. His famous novel *The Stranger* (1960) concentrates on the alienation of the human being in the midst of silent universe. Camus believes that 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 into 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. His is an irremediable exile [...]. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity" (68).

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 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's essay is the meditation on suicide. However, he does not take suicide as the solution. He believes that one has to take the challenge, but not commit suicide. Camus believes that 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 towards the height is enough to fill a master's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (70)

To sum up, Camus advocates freedom, individuality, choices and consequently the human existence. We should become bold, face the challenge and assert existence as Sisyphus does. Camus never advocates surrender. Sisyphus does not surrender. He undergoes a challenging task and upholds heroism.

Existentialist Standpoint

Based on the study of above-mentioned existentialist thinkers, the researcher has come to know some of the existentialist standpoints. Existentialism is a movement with

varied characteristics. But it can be understood by means of observing recurrent themes that are independent of or relative to one another.

Existence is one of the major themes of existentialism. 'Being alive' does not mean to be in existence. One exists only when one is conscious of one's existence. People are conscious of their existence but the animals are not and this existence is prior to the essence. People are what they make themselves. So people should not seek meaning, rather they have to give meaning to their existence by themselves.

Alienation is also one of the major themes of existentialism. Human beings feel alienated from the alien universe for many reasons. Man is basically alone. He cannot assimilate with the norms and values of society because he finds the society empty and meaningless. Therefore, the sense of alienation is a common phenomenon to man. This sense of alienation poisons the human relationship.

Freedom and choice are other two major themes of existentialism. Man is essentially free; therefore, free to choose the way of the life he wants to lead. There are no rational grounds for his choice. Thus, man's choice is man's fate. He becomes responsible for his fate.

Protest is another theme of existentialism. An individual protests the social system to affirm one's existence. The society always imposes the restrictions on the human beings. It expects human being to act within those social restrictions. If man surrenders to those restrictions, he becomes stereotypical. But if he defies them he becomes an existentialist. He is not governed by the laws formulated by that society. He makes laws for himself and asserts his existence.

Angst, anxiety and dread are also the essential parts of existentialism. Angst is the state of mind. It arises when one becomes aware of the fact that he exists and the framework he has taken for granted is not given once and for all. Anxiety arises from the

thought that the framework we use to make sense of ourselves and of the world in which we see ourselves placed is not the possible one. Dread is also a state of mind. It arises when a person comes to realize that he can use his freedom but the path he has chosen is not understood and yet exercises an attraction. All these three existential elements are common to an existentialist:

Existential Anguish

Ellmann and Feidelson write, "As Sartre's allusion to Kierkegaard indicates his use of the term "anguish" derived from the angst or "dread" about which Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger before him, have written. They use the term to explain: "The mental state of person who departs from routine pattern of human observation and comes to realize that he can use his freedom; when the path that may be chosen is not understood and yet exercises an attraction to comprehend his essential condition" (805).

The term 'angst' is a state of mind of an individual who wants to escape from the pre-determined ethics and notions of society in search of his authentic existence. Sartre explains in detail about anguish. He declares that "man is in anguish" (*Existentialism* 15). The man who feels his total and deep responsibility for himself and for all men cannot escape anguish. It is an inescapable sense of deep and total responsibility for one's choice and deeds: "Anguish is evident [...] even when it conceals itself" (19). In anguish, the individual's relationship with the world seems to be 'uncanny' and fateful, though the true existence requires that the situation be faced through a commitment to the decision that brought him face to face with it. The anguish of existential man is like the anguish of a military officer on whom depends the lives of several men, but he has to give order for attack, send certain number of men to death. He should decide and in making decision he

feels the anguish. Although the order for attack comes from above, it is he himself, who has to interpret the order and be responsible for his commitment, and for the lives of other men. If anyone says that he does not feel anguish he is rather masking it. "It is a matter of simple sort of anguish," clarifies Sartre, "that anybody who has had responsibility is familiar with" (20).

'Forlornness' was the favorite term of Heidegger which, Sartre explains, means "only that God does not exist and that we have to face all the consequences of this" (*Existentialism* 21). Thus, from among abundant of possibilities, it is the individual himself, who has to choose one. One is free to choose and 'invent' and by choosing only he can face the consequences of Godless universe. After all, we ourselves choose our being. "Forlornness and anguish", writes Sartre, "go together" (29).

"Existentialism" according to Sartre, "is humanism." It is "optimistic, a doctrine of action" and not a doctrine of despair (51). Authenticity demands from life a free choice without excuse and without help that presupposes the full responsibility. The adaptation of responsibility, in consequence, causes certain uneasiness, of which no one can save oneself. This uneasiness or the anguish is the heart of human existence. Thus, existential anguish presents a reality of human life, which has to be faced heroically and optimistically.

In Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* we find certain qualities of extreme experiences of existentialism. It is because the play explores the theme of human suffering and solitude, dread and despair, anguish and alienation. John Proctor is undergoing through existential crisis. He is alienated in the society. What John Proctor's conscience tells is against the expectation of the society. His adultery with Abigail Williams shows his solitude within his family and his life.

The extreme existential problem that John Proctor has to face comes towards the end of the play wherein either he has to confess to be involved in witchcraft or has to be hanged at the cost of denying it. He is in between these two choices. But he chooses the latter one because his 'angst' tells him to escape from the stereotypical notions of the society in search of his authentic existence.

III Search for Personal Dignity in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

The Crucible opens with the prayer of Reverend Parris, Salim's minister, at his sick daughter's bedside. The night before he was surprised by her and some other girls including his beautiful young niece Abigail Williams' dancing like heathen in the forest. Now he is frightened as people are talking about witchcraft. He urges Abigail to tell him whether they had done unnatural things. To escape from being whipped for her dancing Abigail soon confesses that the girls were enchanted with spirits. She then tries to entice John Proctor, a young farmer at whose house she had lived as a servant girl until his wife, Elizabeth Proctor, discovered affair between her husband and Abigail. But Proctor deeply penitent, rejects her once and for all. Next appears the neighboring minister summoned for his knowledge of demonology. Proctor's protests are discounted, for he rarely attends the church. The demonologist examines the children and the terrified Negro slave Tituba, who, to save her life, confesses to conjuring. Then Abigail cries out a confession and names those she saw with the devil. The sick child ecstatically participates in the accusations, as the minister shouts the prayer of thanksgiving and the town Marshall is summoned.

Elizabeth Proctor tells her husband that their new servant girl has spent another day in the town court, which is now trying witches. To check the growing madness, she urges her husband to report Abigail's statement that the girls were dancing innocently that night. His hesitation proves that he is still attracted to Abigail. Angrily John castigates the puritanical Elizabeth for not forgiving his lapse. Their servant returns with a rag doll she sewed in the court and with news of many new convictions. When John chides her for aiding hysteria to the girls that she has saved Elizabeth from anonymous accuser, the demonologist, who has come to question, is shaken by John's remark about the many witchcraft confessions. All are much appalled by the news of further arrests, the wife of

an irascible old-timer, and the much respected old grandmother. Then the court clerk comes to arrest Elizabeth; the evidence of her witchcraft is the rag doll, which has a needle in it. Abigail who watched the servant girl sewing it, has had a fit and pulled a needle out of her own flesh claiming that Elizabeth's familiar spirit pushed it in.

Frantically Proctor tears up the warrant and tries to resist against his wife's arrest. After she is chained and taken away, Proctor tells the servant girl that she must tell the court the truth about the doll. But she is afraid of Abigail and she further says that Abigail charges lechery on John Proctor. Realizing that Abigail schemes to supplant, John Proctor vows that his wife will never die for him. He forces the servant girl to testify but she refuses by sobbing.

In the court's anteroom, accusations and denials of witchcraft are heard. The old-timer, after disrupting his wife's trial is brought in, and deputy governor Danforth comes to examine John Proctor and his servant girl. Danforth announces that as Elizabeth is pregnant she cannot be sentenced and urges John Proctor to drop his fraud charges against the court. But backed by ninety-one signature testifying to the other accused women's character, John Proctor refuses to recant Danforth's orders about the arrest. Abigail comes in with the girls and denies John Proctor's maid's account as only a sport. When Abigail pretends to be bewitched, John Proctor, deeply ashamed of blackening his own name, pulls her by the hair and discloses their affair. To test the truth of Proctor's statement, Elizabeth, who has never been known to lie, is brought in. But to protect her husband's name, she denies his adultery with Abigail. Now Abigail pretends to fend off an attacking bird. As if transfixed, she begs Proctor's maid in the form of the bird, not to attack her. As the maid cries for her to stop, Abigail and the others mimic her cries until, whimpering hysterically the servant girl starts screaming with them. She accuses Proctor of being the devil's agent who made her sign a lie. Danforth demands Proctor to confess by

threatening to hang him but Proctor rejects to confess. He is arrested, but the disillusioned demonologist resigns.

It is just before the hanging of Proctor and the other accuseds Salim's Minister is now full of doubts and horror as his daughter and Abigail have stolen his money and run off. The demonologist urges Danforth to pardon the doomed, who refuse to confess. But Danforth remains adamant, eager only for Proctor's confession. He has Elizabeth talk to Proctor. In a touching interview, when Proctor asks for his wife's forgiveness, Elizabeth admits her own guilt but refuses to counsel him. Though it humiliates Proctor, he decides to confess, and the old grandmother, doomed to hang, is brought in to witness his confession. But he refuses to give up his good name. When he realizes that his signed confession will be exhibited, he tears it up. After Elizabeth embraces him passionately, he goes out to be hanged. Frantically the Minister begs her to run and save Proctor but she keeps on weeping thinking that Proctor has left his good name.

Hostile Society in *The Crucible*

Arthur Miller portrays a hostile society in *The Crucible* where goodness is no more measured. The greedy public forces try to destroy the integrity of private lives, particularly those of the independent individuals. Most of the characters are hysterically infected. Misguided or malicious town's folk in Salem claim, falsely, to have seen the devil with certain neighbors. Hysteria multiplies these allegations and the authorities execute any one accused unless they confess to witchcraft and accuse their fellow townsmen.

John Proctor is the upright and moral character at the center of *The Crucible*. The lapse is a brief infidelity with his wife's servant girl, Abigail. When she, in jealousy, accuses the Proctors of witchcraft, his shame prevents himself from exposing the malice behind the accusation. As a result, Proctor and his wife are condemned by the village

court. Abigail, who corrupts John Proctor and now accuses his wife of witchcraft, could have been no more than seventeen when Proctor was her lover. She tells him that he “put knowledge in her heart” (*The Crucible* 151). And she continues to protect her love for him. But she is totally vile, she seduces him; he feels no obligation toward her and evidently we are to regard her becoming a prostitute as a fitting result of her total depravity. It is revealed in the earlier conversation between Proctor and Abigail in Act I:

Proctor: Abby, I may think of you softly from time to time. But I will cut off my hand before I will ever reach for you again. Wipe it out of mind.

We never touched, Abby.

Abigail: Aye, but we did.

Proctor: Aye, but we did not.

Abigail (with a bitter anger): Oh, I marvel how such a strong man may let such a sickly wife be [...]. (151)

Here John Proctor tries to forget his bitter past, his affair with Abigail and tries to detach himself from her but she insists on to keep on their relation and appears critical towards Elizabeth.

But Proctor cannot hear any words against his wife, Elizabeth. So, he gets angry with Abigail when she speaks against Elizabeth. So, he threatens her for whipping:

Proctor (angered – at himself as well): You will speak nothing of Elizabeth!

Abigail: She is blackening my name in the village! She is telling lies about me! She is a cold, sniveling woman and you bend to her! Let her turn you like –

Proctor (shaking her): Do you look for whipping? (151)

In this regard Proctor shows his love and dedication towards his wife by looking down at Abigail.

Even the minister of Salem, Reverend Parris, has hostile attitude towards the Proctors. From the very beginning to the end, he wishes that John should confess so that he can be morally down. He hears the hysterical girls but pays no attention toward the pitiful condition of the Proctors. Parris says to Elizabeth, "Go to him, Goody Proctor! There is yet time!" (251). He tells her to stop him not to see the happy union between the Proctors but to win himself.

The good characters are no more counted in the community when the demonologist, Reverend Hale, realizes that John Proctor is true, he is disillusioned and quits his job for the court will no more listen to him as he says towards the end of act III: "I denounce these proceedings, I quit this court!" (231).

Moreover, the authority stands as a hostile society against goodness. In other words it is on the favour of badness or evil and against goodness. The authority has the false conception that the accusers are always holy and the accuseds are always evil. So, goodness is always entrapped in the hostile authority.

The Crucible is set in a theocratic society in which the church and the state are one, and the religion is strict, austere form of Protestantism known as Puritanism. Because of the theocratic nature of society, moral laws and state laws are one and the same sin and the status of an individual's soul are the matters of public concerns. There is no room for deviation from social norms since any individual, whose private life does not conform to the established moral laws represents a threat not only to the public good but also to the rule of god and true religion. In Salem, everything and everyone belongs either to God or to devil; dissent is not merely unlawful it is associated with satanic activity. This dichotomy functions as the underlying logic behind the witch trials. As Danforth

says in act III, "[A] person is either with this court or he must be counted against it"(209). The witch trial is the ultimate expression of intolerance, and hanging witches is the ultimate means of restoring the community's purity; the trials brand all social deviants with the taint of devil worship and thus necessitate their elimination from the community.

Danforth, the deputy governor, promises to hang those all who do not confess.

Elizabeth Proctor reveals it in the following conversation with John Proctor:

Elizabeth: The deputy governor promises hanging if they will not confess, John. The town's gone wild, I think. She speaks of Abigail and I thought she were a saint to hear her. Abigail brings the other girls into the court, and where she walks the crowd will part like the sea for Israel. And folks are brought before them, and if they scream and haul and fall to the floor the person's clapped in the jail for bewitching them. (176)

Another prominent element in *The Crucible* is the role that hysteria can play in tearing apart a community. Hysteria supplants logic and enables people to believe that their neighbors, whom they have always considered upstanding people, are committing absurd and unbelievable crimes-- communing with the devil, killing babies, and so on.

In *The Crucible*, the townsfolk accept and become active in the hysterical climate not only out of genuine religious piety but also because it gives them a chance to express repressed sentiments and to act on long- held grudges. The most obvious case is Abigail, who uses the situation to accuse Elizabeth Proctor of witchcraft and have her sent to jail. As Ezekiel Cheever discloses this fact:

Cheever: I am given sixteen warrants tonight, sir, and [Elizabeth] is one.

Proctor: who charged her?

Cheever: Why, Abigail Williams charge her.

Proctor: On what proof, what proof?

Cheever (looking about the room): Mr. Proctor, I have little time. The court bid me search your house, but I like not to search a house. So will you hand me any puppet that your wife may keep here? (193)

Actually Abigail has charged Elizabeth that she plays with devil with the doll in which she has put needle.

But others thrive on the hysteria as well. Reverend Parris strengthens his position within the village, albeit temporarily, by making scapegoats of people like Proctor who question his authority. The wealthy, ambitious Thomas Putnam gains revenge on Francis Nurse by getting Rebecca, Francis's virtuous wife, convicted of the supernatural murders of Ann Putnam's babies. In the end, hysteria can thrive only because people benefit from it. It suspends the rules of daily life and allows the acting out of every dark desire and hateful urge under the cover of righteousness.

The witch trials are central to the action of *The Crucible*, and dramatic accusations and confessions fill the play even beyond the confines of the courtroom. In the first act, even before the hysteria begins, we see Parris accuse Abigail of dishonoring him, and he then makes a series of accusations against his parishioners. Parris says, "Now look you child, your punishment will come in its time. But if you trafficked with spirits in the forest I must know it now, for surely my enemies will, and they will ruin me with it" (140). Giles Corey and Proctor respond in kind, and Putnam soon joins in, creating a chorus of indictments even before Hale arrives. The entire witch trial system thrives on accusations, the only way that witches can be identified and confessions, which provide the proof of the justice of the court proceedings. Proctor attempts to break this cycle with a confession of his own when he admits to the affair with Abigail. Actually he confesses

this when Danforth asks him when and where he had affair with Abigail Williams.

Proctor says:

Proctor (his voice about to break and, his shame great): In the proper place where my beasts are bedded. On the last night of my joy, some eight months past. She used to serve me in my house, sir [...]. She wants to dance with me on my wife's grave! And well she might, for I thought of her softly. God help me I lusted. (223)

But this confession is trumped by the accusation of witchcraft against him which in turn demands a confession. Proctor's courageous decision at the end of the play, to die rather than to confess a sin that he did not commit, finally breaks the cycle. The court collapses shortly afterward, undone by the refusal of its victims to propagate lies.

Sense of Alienation

John Proctor, the protagonist of *The Crucible*, is alienated in the society. His adultery with Abigail Williams alienates him from his wife and his family, and his love and dedication towards his wife alienates him to continue his affair with Abigail. In this way, he undergoes through the sense of alienation. In the early conversation between John Proctor and Abigail, we come to know that Abigail still likes Proctor, and she thinks that John Proctor still loves him. As she says, "You loved me then and you do now!" (150). But John Proctor is afraid of approaching her. So he says:

Proctor: Abby that's a wild thing to say.

Abigail: A wild thing may say wild things. But not so wild, I think I have seen you since she put me out; I have seen you nights.

Proctor: I have hardly stepped off my farm this seven month.

Abigail: I have a sense for heat. John, and yours has drawn me to my window; and I have seen you looking up, burning in your loneliness. Do you tell me you've never looked up at my window? (150)

In this way, Abigail wants to come closer to him but he wants to be detached from her because he, according to Abigail, is burning in his loneliness.

Though John Proctor has love and dedication to his wife, Elizabeth is full of suspicions. She does not have good relationship with her husband now because his adultery with Abigail has pinched her very hard and she still doubts him. As Proctor tells her in a violent undertone, "you doubt me yet?" (177). Because of her doubt, he does not find his rest under Elizabeth's shadow as well. It is revealed in act II:

Proctor: I am wondering how I may prove what [Abigail] told me, Elizabeth. If the girl's saint now, I think it is not easy to prove she's fraud, and the town gone go so silly. She told it to me in a room alone. I have no proof for it.

Elizabeth: you were alone with her?

Proctor (stubbornly): for a moment alone aye

Elizabeth: Why, then, it is not as you told me. (177)

Proctor wants to share his feelings with Elizabeth about why he can not charge fraud on Abigail as he was alone with her when she told him the truth. So, he does not have any proof to charge her as a fraud. But Elizabeth takes him negatively. She can't tolerate Proctor's presence with Abigail alone in a room. So, she appears aggressively in front of John.

On the other hand, John Proctor feels that Elizabeth is judging him. He tries to convince Elizabeth that he has forgotten Abigail. But Elizabeth thinks that he has even forgotten her. So, the misunderstanding exists there which we find in the following lines:

Proctor: Spare me: you forget nothing and forgive nothing. Learn charity, woman. I have gone tiptoe in this house all seven month since she is. I have not moved from here to there without I think to please you. And still an everlasting funeral marches round your heart. I cannot speak but I am doubted, every moment judged for lies, as though I come into a court when I come into this house!

Elizabeth: John, you are not open with me. You saw her with a crowd, you said. Now you –

Proctor: I'll plead my honesty no more, Elizabeth. (177-78)

The sense of alienation is rooted in John Proctor's mind in such a way that he can hardly come out of it. Because of alienation he tells Elizabeth lies that Abigail was there with a crowd. But later when the fact is revealed, he cannot comfort Elizabeth. He tries his best to please her but in vain. So, misunderstanding between them grows more.

Now John Proctor is in the state of crucible. He is neither able to gain respect and love of Elizabeth nor in the grip of Abigail. Moreover, when Reverend John Hale comes and tells him that Elizabeth's name is also mentioned, he has to lose Elizabeth and he is in extreme isolation. He fears his life partner will be away form his life leaving him alone. as Hale says:

Hale: No-no, I come of my own, without the court's authority. Hear me. (He wets his lips). I know not if you are aware, but your wife's name is mentioned in the court.

Proctor: We know it, sir. Our Marry Warren told us. We are entirely amazed. (185)

Though Hale has not come to talk about the business of the court but he reveals the fact. And by hearing this, Proctor gets surprised. Actually in his amazement the sense of alienation is hidden.

Alienation, angst and suffering are the features that are inherently rooted in every human. So, John Proctor cannot be apart from them. Throughout the play, Proctor undergoes through the existential crisis whether it is in the beginning of the play with his wife and family or towards the end of the play during his trial in the court.

Choice and Responsibility

Existential theory says that man is essentially free; therefore, he is free to choose the way of life he wants. Proctor is also free and he has choice whether to choose his life or death. Not only in the period of trial but also from the very beginning of the play, he has choices. He has to choose either Abigail Williams or his wife, Elizabeth. But responsibility also comes there. He does not have to forget that he is a married man and he has got a family. That is why, he cannot easily accept Abigail as he should be responsible for his family.

Abigail tries to entice John Proctor in the beginning of the play as they meet each other. Proctor could accept her, but he does not do so. He thinks about his responsibility towards his family. So he wants to break off his existing relationship with Abigail. In this regard he says:

Proctor: Abby, I never give you to wait for me.

Abigail (now beginning to anger. She can't believe it): I have something better than hope, I think.

Proctor: Abby, you will put it out of mind. I will not be coming for you more.

Abigail: you are surely sporting with me.

Proctor: you know me better. (150)

This conversation clearly demonstrates Proctor's consciousness about his responsibility. Though he has got a choice--to keep affair longer with a young girl--the sense of responsibility pushes him aside. So, he chooses his own choice that is not to choose Abigail to give up thinking about reunion.

It is said that man is free by birth. So, he should get liberty to spend his life the way he wants. But obstacles come on the way and one has to pay for what she chooses. To study about John Proctor, we know that he does not follow the religion rigidly. And it is his choice too. But his choice becomes intolerable for the society; he is forced to follow the religion. In a conversation to Hale, he says, "I nailed the roof upon the church I hung the door [...] you cannot think we ever desired the destruction of religion" (187).

Every individual has got his/her responsibility either it is for the community, nation or for his/her own family. As Elizabeth is taken to the court because of accusation, responsibility to release her comes forth upon him. So, he assures her that he will take her soon.

Proctor: I will bring you home, I will bring you soon.

Elizabeth: oh, John, bring me soon!

Proctor: I will fall like an ocean on that court! Fear nothing, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: I will fear nothing. Tell the children I have gone to visit someone sick. (197)

Here, this conversation shows love between them. Proctor, the man who was once involved in adultery with Abigail Williams, now becomes a responsible man and assures his wife to save her from the false charges.

John Proctor clearly knows that Abigail has entrapped Elizabeth in her cage. So he wants Marry Warren, his maid, tell the truth in front of the court- about how the puppet

came there and who stuck the needle in. Although Warren refuses to express reality as she fears of Abigail, Proctor enforces her to accept. After all he has assured his wife that he will release her from the court. Proctor says, “My wife will never die for me! I will bring your guts into your mouth but that goodness will not die for me!” (199). Indeed, John Proctor has to do a lot in order to save his wife, or else he should be responsible for her death.

Moreover, John Proctor thinks of talking about the matter openly with Danforth, the deputy governor of Salem. He has brought a signed deposition to rescue his wife. He wants thereby to prove that the girls are frauds and they have simply put false charges against Elizabeth. Even Francis Nurse, the husband of Rebecca Nurse, supports John Proctor in this issue. He says, “Excellency, we have proof for your eyes; God forbid you shut them to it. The girls, sir, the girls are fraud” (203). Francis says this in the conversation with Danforth. Thus knowing this fact, John Proctor can no more drive his wife, Elizabeth, into the mouth of death. He reveals his responsibility in the conversation with Danforth:

Danforth: Let me continue. I understand well, a husband’s tenderness may drive him to extravagance in defence of a wife. Are you certain in your conscience mister, that your evidence is the truth?

Proctor: It is. And you will surely know it.

Danforth: And you thought to declare this revelation in the open court before the public?

Proctor: I thought I would, aye—with your permission.

Danforth(his eyes narrowing): Now sir, what is your purpose in so doing?

Proctor: Why I – I would free my wife, sir. (205)

Thus, John Proctor clearly asserts the fact that the mere purpose of doing all this is to protect his wife from the false charges.

When Proctor comes to know that his wife is pregnant, he feels that he has to do his best to save his wife. Now he has got his responsibility not only to protect his wife but also the child who is in Elizabeth's womb. He knows this fact when Danforth says to him:

Danforth: Mr. Proctor, this morning your wife send me a claim in which she states that she is pregnant now.

Proctor: My wife pregnant!

Danforth: There be no sign of it! We have examined her body.

Proctor: But if she say she is pregnant, then she must be! That woman will never lie, Mr. Danforth.

Danforth: She will not?

Proctor: Never sir, never.(207)

Although Danforth suspects of Elizabeth's pregnancy, Proctor tries to assure him that she can really be pregnant as Elizabeth never lies.

Moreover, John Proctor even discloses his affair with Abigail Williams in front of Danforth. He simply wants to prove in front of Danforth that Abigail was charging Elizabeth falsely. As John Proctor's mere purpose was to release Elizabeth, he even does not care about his good name at the beginning.

Freedom of Choice: Acceptance of Death

John Proctor accepts death towards the end of the play by denouncing witchcraft. He does not want the life that he gets by confessing rather he chooses the eternal life that he gets after his death. When Elizabeth is called in front of Danforth to question about Proctor's lechery, she does not disclose it:

Danforth: your husband- did he indeed turn from you?

Elizabeth (in agony): My husband is a goodly man, sir.

Danforth: Then he did not turn from you [...] to your own knowledge has John Proctor ever committed the crime of lechery?

Elizabeth: No, sir. (225)

Although John Proctor has confessed his lechery with Abigail Williams, Elizabeth does not reveal it in the court thinking that she can preserve her husband's good name.

Likewise, when Elizabeth meets John Proctor in the prison, she does not blame him but rather takes the charges upon her:

Elizabeth: John, it come to naught that I should forgive you, if you'll not forgive yourself. It is not my soul, John, it is yours. Only be sure of this, for I know it now: whatever you will do, it is a good man does it. I have ready my heart this three months, John. I have sins of my own to count. It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery. (245)

So her self-critiquing also puts some pressure upon him to accept death. When Elisabeth meets him in the prison, she does not blame him but takes the charges upon her self. So, her self critique also puts some pressure upon him to accept death.

John Proctor is almost a casual victim of his village. His "sin" with the girl lies outside the immediate public concern and has no bearing on his fate. He appears innocent at the witch trials in order to defend his wife, herself unjustly branded. In time, Proctor finds himself accused too and eventually convicted offered an opportunity to confess and save his life, he refuses, preferring the martyr's death instead. Thus, he dies gratuitously, bravely perhaps, but rather like the soldier on the battlefield who will not turn and run despite the fact he finds himself in a world he never made.

Proctor loses his life because he will not admit that he is a witch, a confession that would save his own life but make the others who would not confess seem guilty and

thereby justify the trials. He refuses to sign the confession because it would mean handing his conscience to the judges, as he puts it a loss of his name. He reveals it in the conversation with Danforth.

Danforth: Why? Do you mean to deny this confession when you are free?

Proctor: I mean to deny nothing!

Danforth: Then explain to me, Mr. Proctor, why you will not let—

Proctor (with a cry of his whole soul): Because it is my name! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name! (250)

John Proctor is not an especially good or brave person. Indeed, he has previously committed adultery with the chief accuser of the witches, Abigail Williams, and this relationship is one of the main causes of the witch hunt. Abigail desires Proctor's wife to be hanged so that she may have him. Proctor has felt his guilt strongly and has come to regard himself as a kind of fraud.

His adultery or guilt has prevented him from feeling at one with his community. From his wife, too, he has been spiritually and mentally separated since the time of extramarital affair with Abigail. But Proctor finds himself during the course of the play. He openly admits to the community that he is a treacherer in order to save his wife, and after again feeling himself a part of the same brotherhood with the noble Rebecca Nurse and Giles Cory, the two accused witches who refuse to sign a false confession:

Proctor: Name-have yet confessed?

Elizabeth: There be many confessed.

Proctor: Who are they?

Elizabeth: There be a hundred or more, they say. Good Ballard is one;

Isaiah Good kind is one. There be many.

Proctor: Rebecca?

Elizabeth: Not Rebecca. She is one foot in heaven now; naught may hurt her more. (243)

As John Proctor comes to know that Rebecca and Giles have refused to confess, he also seeks to keep his god name from being tarnished. Early in the play, he has a chance to put a stop to the girls' accusations, but his desire to preserve his reputation keeps him from testifying against Abigail.

At the end of the play, however, Proctor's desire to keep his good name leads him to make the heroic choice not to make a false confession and to go to his death without signing his name to an untrue statement "I have given you my soul; leave me my name!" he cries to Danforth in act IV. By refusing to relinquish his name, John Proctor redeems himself for his earlier failure and dies with integrity and dignity.

John Proctor does not lose what he has gained. The central crucible, or the trial, of *The Crucible* is John Proctor's personal test. He has a choice between life without conscience or death. He chooses to save his identity, his name, even though it means his death. Proctor's courageous decision at the end of the play--to die rather than to confess to a sin that he did not commit--finally breaks the cycle. The court collapses shortly afterward, undone by the refusal of its victims to propagate lies. Hence, Paradoxically John Proctor accepts death in order to gain his personal dignity.

IV Conclusion

The present dissertation analyzes John Proctor's motive behind the act of accepting death. Therefore, it is centered to expose the development in the behavior of Proctor from adultery to death. The affirmation of existence is the central issue in the play. The study examines the different incidents in which John Proctor attempts to affirm his existence and why he does so is the central question that moves the research forward.

Most of Miller's heroes are involved in one way or another in a struggle that results from his acceptance or rejection of an image that is the product of his society's values and prejudices. Here, Miller stresses on the conflict between an individual and the environment in which the person is. The social conditions and views attempt to constrain the individual in his/her actions. The environment in which Proctor is standing now is hostile to him for people enforce him to confess the witchcraft. Proctor, deep down to the heart, prefers his personal dignity to his life. He loves independence. But the prevailing circumstances affect his love for independence and make demands that Proctor should act within social norms and values. This is the situation against which Proctor protests and affirms his existence.

John Proctor is entrapped from the very beginning of the play. He has an illegal relationship with Abigail Williams for that she tries to entice him even though he thinks to discontinue their relationship. But Proctor is the man who walks with his own principles. He is the kind of person who listens to his heart rather than to the voices of the community. Most of the authority members force him to confess by luring him to grant his life, but he rejects it. So, he is guided by his conscience and moves according to its guidelines. The other factors can not harm him much.

So, Proctor depends on his own law, for his activities. He is the law-maker. He keeps himself above the social law and becomes a model for lovers of individuality. He

asks his soul whether anything is right or wrong. He values himself. He does not accept the condition of confession that Reverend Parris provides him in order to save his life. John Proctor wants one thing but the circumstance provides him the other. There is a contrast between his wish and achievement. Proctor, along with his wife, Elizabeth wants to run his life smoothly and happily but there are hostile forces as obstacles. Proctor prefers to save his name; he does care about his personal dignity rather than his life. So, he accepts his death easily because by accepting it, he can preserve the self-deserving respect.

John Proctor himself is encouraged by this act. He feels a sense of relief to know that there is a way out of all the pressures and suffocations. His finding at the critical juncture of domination functions as the feedback to develop the thought of accepting death. Acceptance of death refers to an act of killing oneself at one's own choice. Normally, everything ends after death. Here, John Proctor accepts death to assert his individuality, i.e. his name which is more precious to him than his life without dignity. But the paradox is that he does not remain himself after death. Yet he gets the sense of freedom and achievement of the personal dignity through such bold decision. In this way, he proves himself as an existentialist.

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