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## A Comparative Study of the Religious Values Portrayed in T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and G.B Shaw's *Saint Joan*

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### Abstract:

*After the World War I and World War II had taken place, the people of the English society started losing faith and hope; in other words their faith had been shaken. In order to arouse the religious awareness and the Christian consciousness in the English society, T.S Eliot in *Murder in the Cathedral* and G.B Shaw in *Saint Joan* opt to signify their religious perspectives in the two dramas respectively. In *Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral* and *Shaw's Saint Joan*, both dramatists deploy the theme of religion in order to highlight some lost religious values such as Martyrdom, Sacrifice and Sainthood. Next, with reference to the two above mentioned dramas the researcher shall draw a comparative analysis of the status of the Church vs the State. Furthermore, this study is going to analyze the manner in which both Eliot and Shaw deploy their own religious philosophies in the dramas to examine and criticize the hypocrisy and double standers of the English Church and the cynical and hypocritical behaviours of some clergymen. On the other hand, this piece of research throws a great deal of light on the way in which both dramatists are concerned about reviving Christian philosophical values from one side and reminding people of the importance of the value of Martyrdom, Sanctity and Sacrifice in the society. In fact apart from the entertaining part of the*

*dramas, they can edify the society and instill some dignified Christian ideals into the minds of people.*

**Key words:** Religious values, martyrdom, sainthood, sacrifice, church, Christianity, T.S. Eliot, G.B. Shaw

The protagonists' personal values and beliefs are important, in the sense that they motivate them to take their final choice. Eliot in *Murder in the Cathedral* and Shaw in *Saint Joan* portrayed different religious values, such as holiness, piety and obedience; however the most prominent values are sainthood and martyrdom. These two values were able to lead the protagonists of the two plays to achieve their desired triumph throughout their sacrifice for God's Will and for the redemption of others. When saints sacrifice their souls for the will of God and for the sake of others they will attain some social merits after their execution, and they will give a great lesson in dignity and freedom, for example the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Becket is canonized as a martyr after three years of his assassination. His tomb became well known as the shrine of "the holy blessed martyr" as Chaucer called him, and the old Roman road running from London to Canterbury is known as "Pilgrim's way".

The saints' mission is not bound to preaching and giving advice only, but it expands beyond that. Therefore, they decide to refuse any kind of corruption or abusive behavior from the state towards people. Saints are ready to sacrifice their holy blood and to die for the benefit of others or to reinforce their faith in God. This sacrifice costs them their lives, but in return they would regain the love of their people as well as the satisfaction of God.

Dr. Sen in his book *Murder in the Cathedral: A critical Evaluation* views that the real martyr is an instrument of God, who desires nothing for himself but to God, mentioning to the Archbishop of Canterbury Saint Thomas Becket who refuses to

subjugate to the will of King Henry II rather than to the will of God. Becket refuses all temptations which make him appear like unwilling, powerless and submissive. He even refuses any attempt of reconciliation with the king and his barons; he chooses martyrdom as the only way to achieve triumph; consequently, Eliot in the words of Thomas states that a martyr is not simply a good Christian who has been killed for his faith or one raised to the company of saints. This time the situation is different, there would be not only mourning but rejoice as well “just as we can rejoice and mourn at once, in the Birth and in the Passion of our Lord”<sup>1</sup>

Eliot, in the words of Thomas Becket, tries to show the significance of martyrdom and sainthood considering them as magnificent religious values. Martyrdom and sainthood come to the man by the will of God not by man. Eliot also shows the significance of martyrs and saints in the words of the third priest:

We thank thee for Thy mercies of blood, for Thy redemption by blood. For the blood of Thy martyr and saints shall enrich the earth, shall create the holy places. For wherever a saint has dwelt, wherever a martyr has given his blood for the blood of Christ, there is holy ground, and the sanctity shall not depart from it.<sup>2</sup>

As Dr. Sen states “Christian martyrdom is neither an accident nor a design of man; it is not the effect of man’s will to become a saint. It is an act of submerging one’s will in the will of God.”<sup>3</sup>

A Christian martyrdom is never an accident, for  
Saints are not made by accident, still less is  
A Christian martyrdom the effect of a man’s will  
To become a Saint, as a man by willing and  
Contriving may become a ruler of men. Martyrdom is

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<sup>1</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*. Queen Square , London : Saurabh Printers Pvt. Ltd. 2006.p .56

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 91

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Sen. S, *Murder in the cathedral: A Critical Evaluation*. Amarjeet S. Chopra. Unique publishers. 1976..158

Always the design of God, for his love of men, to  
warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to  
his ways. <sup>4</sup>

The fourth tempter's speech adds nothing to Becket, but it comes just to support and to enhance a desire of death, which is already exist in Becket's mind; In other words, the tempter's advice is more clear that he symbolizes the ambition in Becket's mind to become a martyr:

Seek the way of martyrdom, make yourself the lowest  
On earth, to be high in heaven.  
And see far off below you, where the gulf is fixed <sup>5</sup>

The tempter here offers Thomas to seek for greatness in heaven and watch his enemies suffer everlasting torment below. The tempter offers Thomas of what Thomas desires deep down in his heart, that is clear in Thomas's reply " Who are you, tempting with my own desire?"<sup>6</sup> ; On the other hand, the other three tempters offer Thomas only with worldly pleasures. Becket overcomes temptations and chooses the right decision; he chooses martyrdom for the right reason, the way of eternity and glory to fructify the life of the common man.

Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain;  
Temptation shall not come in this kind again.  
The last temptation is the last treason:  
To do the right deed for the wrong reason.<sup>7</sup>

With these words, Thomas reveals his own desire of sacrifice to reach the glory of saints and martyrs. Thus, he was ready to die that contradicts the views of some critics who interpret Thomas's succumbing to death as a matter of weakness.

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<sup>4</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*. Queen Square , London : Saurabh Printers Pvt Ltd. 2006 p.48

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 54

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 48

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 52

As a saint, Thomas usually deals with religious matters, which provide him with spiritual sensation, his dream to get the satisfaction of God. In other words, the dream of the common people is to be in paradise after death, so what about martyrs and saints who dedicate their lives to serve God? In addition to this desire, his endeavors are to acquire some merits after being a martyr. From this point, the fourth tempter could convince Thomas to achieve what he seeks for:

Save what you know already, ask nothing for me.  
But think, Thomas, think of glory after death.  
When king is dead, there is another king,  
And one more king is another reign.  
King is forgotten when another shall come:  
Saint and Martyr rule from the tomb.<sup>8</sup>

These words come as a motivation to the man who seeks freedom, altruism and salvation of others. Sacrifice and piety as religious values, which are relevant to sainthood dramatized Thomas's personality as a man of God. As Dr. Sen says:

Common to all Eliot's plays, but specially obvious in *Murder in the cathedral*, is a preoccupation with the nature of sainthood, and the ability of the saint's sacrifice to benefit the lives of others.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Sen thinks that Eliot has given hints, firstly in the words of the first priest which portrays Becket as a proud man, and this comes out again in Thomas's rejection of temporal power. Thomas could not realize this obstacle to true martyrdom as if he is blind to recognize this weakness in himself. Temptation of the fourth tempter shocked Thomas of his mixed up motives for becoming a martyr, he has been thinking of attaining merits and glory that comes along with martyrdom which will bestow

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 47

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Sen. S, *Murder in the Cathedral: A Critical Evaluation*. Amarjeet S. Chopra. Unique publishers. 1976. p. 85

him to a position above earthly kings and give him his final victory against Henry. Becket's moral struggles teach him the significance of martyrdom as the perfection of will. His initial desire is imperfect; from this he rises to a greater good. Thomas faces death bravely, a death which could have been avoided. He becomes ultimately satisfied that a true martyr desires nothing-not even martyrdom. In achieving this level of spiritual awareness, he achieves a position which is beyond earthly experience:

I give my life  
To the laws of God above the law of man  
Thomas fulfils his part in the eternal design.<sup>10</sup>

In the Christmas morning, 1170 the sermon preached by the Archbishop. The text that he has chosen for the sermon shows his ultimate succumbing to the will of God. Throughout his speech, the archbishop gives hints and allusions about his destiny, he laments and mourns himself with reference to the sacrifice and suffering of the "Christ" as well as to himself.

We mourn, for the sins of the world that has  
Martyred them; we rejoice that another soul  
Is numbered among the Saints in Heaven, for  
The glory of God and for the salvation of me <sup>11</sup>

According to Dr. Sen, Eliot sees a parallel to the sacrifice and martyrdom of Becket in the death of Oedipus and to some extent, the death of Christ. Eliot's Becket has a similar attitude towards suffering as Sophocles' Oedipus, both overcome temptations. Both die gloriously and each one's death brings benefit to the people, though on different planes. A similarity for Becket's Martyrdom can also be found in the death and agony of Christ bringing redemption to mankind. Eliot has been able to show that martyrdom is a universal phenomenon

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<sup>10</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*. Queen Square , London : Saurabh Printers Pvt Ltd. 2006 p.79

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 56

mentioning to the past in a bid to associate the religious events in the very past with the events in the modern life making parallels with each character from different eras including the religious values.

As Dr. Sen views that if Thomas died without realizing the purpose of God for which he died, it would be a mere murder. If he died, however, for the wrong reason, it would be a form of suicide and an anathema which is going against God's will, i.e. if Thomas's sacrifice was not sincere to God, it would be a simple murder and it would have less effect and benefit. Thus, Thomas is a true martyr because he has realized the real meaning of martyrdom, which is a complete submission to God's Will. He overcomes the most dangerous temptation of becoming a martyr.

The blood of martyrs has the great impact to revive nations from their spiritual stagnation and awaken the revolutionary spirit which motivates to tumble down the oppressors' thrones. People are grateful to those who are ready to sacrifice their holy flesh and blood, which have the favor to set them free from chains of subservience to kings and to the tyrannous regimes. Thomas Becket was one of those martyrs who have been considered as a mercy of God which has to be appreciated, as the third priest sees that. "Let our thanks ascend to God, who has given us another Saint in Canterbury."

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The execution of a clergyman is not a simple thing. The doers must have a well-prepared plan after carrying out their crime. In other words, the situation after assassinating the clergyman will be much different and more complicated than killing a common man because the popularity and sanctity of the clergyman will change the situation for his side. The consequences will be at the high level, the state will be in chaos, an overwhelming revolution might happen and people will be in rage. People will sympathize with the martyr. The murder of

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.90

the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Becket gives negative results to the state. The Four knights feel guilty after killing the Archbishop and the throne of King Henry became weak and ramshackle, Becket's tomb became a symbol of freedom and sacrifice which is able to receive pilgrims from different cities and countries to get his blessings.

As usual, death of an opponent can be considered as a defeat, but it is different for clergymen, it can be regarded as a triumph. Although the death of Thomas Becket is quite tragic, he achieves the glory of martyrdom. "The death of martyrdom is presented us to not as a defect but the victory of the individual, the issue of a conflict in which the individual is ranged on the same side as hanger powers and the sense of suffering consequently is lost in that of moral triumph."<sup>13</sup> One of the merits he achieves is that to purify the lives of others, lives of poor who are under the hegemony of King Henry and those poor are represented by the chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral*.

The assassination of Thomas Becket presaged similar political murder of Martin Luther King and of the Archbishop of El Salvador in 1980 Oscar Romero, both murdered by retrograde squads. Likewise Thomas Becket, Oscar Romero was at first in ally of the ruling oligarchy of El Salvador. After he was named Archbishop in 1977, increasing cruelty, attacks on the clergy, murders of priests and the misery of the poor changed his views. He became the spokesman for the poor and a messenger of liberty. Romero opposites the state power, especially when he rejected the new president's investiture, depriving him the blessings of the Catholic Church, and announced the election invalid. Soon he led a veritable munity campaign of nonviolent civil disobedience denouncing the murdering campaigns carried out by reactionary death squads relevant to the state. As Thomas had intimated 800 years earlier, Romero said:

If they kill me, I shall arise in the Salvadoran people. If the threats come to be fulfilled, from this moment I offer my blood

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<sup>13</sup><http://ardhendude.blogspot.in/2012/09/ts-eliot-murder-in-cathedralthe.html>



to God for the redemption and resurrection of El Salvador. Let my blood be a seed of freedom.<sup>14</sup>

### **Joan of Arc as a Saint and Martyr**

Joan of Arc the teenaged girl, later canonized as Saint Joan, was a simple country girl, approximately seventeen years of age. She was the daughter of a farmer from the village of Domremy, France. Highly religious and pure, she attained her piety and faith from the quietness of the farmlands in which she was able to feel the unseen powers and presence. She sees visions and hears voices which they have played the essential role in drawing her life. She believes that the visions and voices come straight to her from God. Her devotion and godliness grew stronger day by day as these voices bestowed her self-discipline and strong mindedness. As a result, she lives as God directs her, following his commands over those of the Church and humbly claiming nothing for herself. Joan believes that God has called her to crown the Dauphin (the heir to the throne of France) as a King, and to save France from the invading English. Determined and persuasive, she is successful in convincing others of her cause. They join her forces as she marches against the English to deliver her country from confusion. She proves that she is a capable and a courageous leader, defeating the French in battle after battle bravely.

Through the process of canonization, someone can be called a saint According to the Catholic Church; the Pope does not make someone a saint unless the designation of sainthood only recognizes what God has already done. The process of becoming a Catholic saint is very lengthy, often taking decades or centuries to complete.

The difference between true religious faith and the hypocrisy of organized religion is recognized as the main theme of Saint Joan. Shaw's Joan of Arc is a true believer, one who

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<sup>14</sup> <http://southerncrossreview.org/60/stewart-cathedral.htm>

strives to do God's will in everything she does. In contrast to her, Shaw pictures organized religion, represented by the Roman Catholic Church of the fifteenth century, as manipulative and hypocritical. Saint Joan also portrays the wickedness of political schemes and treacheries. Joan, who believed in the truth of God, is victimized by self-serving and corrupt men who fear her influence.

Joan's mission as a saint was not only to carry out the will of God by crowning Charles VII as a king or to set France free from the British hegemony upon her country, it goes more than that. Moreover she succeeded to reveal the dark side of the Church which is represented by the Archbishop. Therefore she rejects any kind of occupation or abusive behavior from the British towards her people. She is ready to sacrifice her holy blood and to die for the benefit of others or to enhance her faith in God. This sacrifice costs her her life, but in return she would have obtained the love of her people and the satisfaction of God as well.

To some extent, Joan is a controversial character who is regarded as a saint by some characters and as a witch by others; because of her unwillingness to accept the hierarchy of the church and her claims of direct instruction from God constituted heresy. In the eyes of the Archbishop, she is regarded as a witch or a woman of heresy, sorcery and witchcraft, he also attacked her femininity:

This creature is not a saint. She is not even a respectable woman. She does not wear women's clothes. She is dressed like a soldier, and rides round the country with soldiers.<sup>15</sup>

One aspect of Joan's appeal was the belief people held that her saintliness caused miracles to happen. Those people have different views about Joan, they think that she is a true saint who ordered by God to bring back the true political and ecclesiastical affairs to its right position. She comes to revolt

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<sup>15</sup> Shaw, George Bernard: *Saint Joan*, Feed books, 1923.p17

against tyranny and dominance of the Catholic Church on the state as well as to put religion on its right path. One of those people who regarded Joan as a saint and an angel was Charles especially when he says:

No: he is sending a saint: an angel. And she is coming to me: to me, the king, and not to you, Archbishop, holy as you are. She knows the blood royal if you don't.<sup>16</sup>

As a saint, Joan opines that the French army will not be able to defeat the English, and will not feel the glory of victory unless they undergo to the will of God rather than the will of their feudal lords. In other words, the French soldiers' failure to drive the English out of France will not be achieved without faith in God and Land. Dr. S. Sen Says "Joan advises Charles and other kings to hold the land in the name of God and manage it as God's bailiffs" She merely opines that if the French soldiers fight for the right purpose or have a real determination not to ransom money, they will win the war and sweep the British troops away. She explains her view while talking to Robert:

JOAN. I do not understand that a bit. We are all subject to the King of Heaven; and He gave us our countries and our languages, and meant us to keep to them. If it were not so it would be murder to kill an English- man in battle; and you, squire, would be in great danger of hell fire. You must not think about your duty to your feudal lord, but about your duty to God.<sup>17</sup>

In other situation Joan refers to the Almighty God and to her confidence in God. When Robert tells Joan that the goddams (the English) fighters are devilish fighters and even ten thousand like her cannot stop them from taking Orleans, she comments on Robert's speech that ten of her can stop them and with help and faith of God ten are sufficient for that. She tells him that if the French soldiers do not fight courageously, they

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 17

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 11

will be beaten by the British. In other words, she opines that victory cannot be achieved according to the quantity of the soldiers but according to the quality, i.e. the number of fighters is not important as much as loyalty to God.

JOAN. One thousand like me can stop them. Ten like me can stop them with God on our side. You do not understand, squire. Our soldiers are always beaten because they are fighting only to save their skins; and the shortest way to save your skin is to run away.<sup>18</sup>

Persecution and agony this woman of virtue suffers, which at times lead to death, is the price of her dignity and glory. It is not seen as a final point but as a transformation process. Joan chooses to die honorably rather to undergo to the orders of the Catholic Church, because she thinks that the church at her time leads the country to abyss. Her stubborn will ends her to be tried with the charge of heresy, and finally burnt on a stake. She was in fact one of the first Protestant martyrs.

P. S. Avasthi in his book *Saint Joan a critical study* argues that Joan was a truly religious saint who was unintentionally sacrificed by the combination of her religious and political enemies. Shaw suggests that she died as a significant Protestant martyr. She was not a completely conscious genius. Her genius was that of a semi-evolved creature who was not fully conscious of her motivations. The true religion of Joan appears to be much guided by the Shavian worship of the power of the creative evaluation. Joan truly had the iron determination and the stubborn will of a prophet as she listened to her voices and obeyed them.

Joan becomes a symbol of purity and humanity, she dies as a martyr. By her death and sacrifice, she represents Christ. That is why in the epilogue, Cauchon tells John de Stogumber: "Must then a Christ perish in torment in every age to save

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 12

those that have no imagination?"<sup>19</sup> In these simple words Cauchon tries to say that the experience of martyrdom and sacrifice can be repeated in every age as long as there is tyranny and subjugation. Joan in her sacrifice is a manifested example for Christ in his suffering and torment. She defends her beliefs bravely, and refuses to confess under torment, that she is a heretic woman and the voices of the saints which she claims are not true but a lie. Finally she was tried in a mingled court ecclesiastical and political; her trial was unjust which ends in burning Joan at a stake. The scene of burning was a part of tragedy shared the passionate crucifixion of Christ.

According to Dr. Sen, the martyrdom of Saint Joan had a great impact on a various groups of people in the society. Joan's refusal to the dictatorial tendency of the churchmen had terrified them at first. Therefore they put her on trial in the charge of heresy and burnt her. But the impact of the martyrdom was such that they released their mistakes as well as their hypocrisy and jealousy. King Charles's attitude was merely vain, he did nothing to help Joan on her trail, but he did so in the retrial. Charles did not defend her because he sympathized with her, but to deliver a message telling that, he had not been crowned by one accused of heresy. This situation concludes that, the Dauphin was hypocrite and thankless as well.

The repentant Bishop Cauchon says: "The Church Militant sent this woman to the fire; but even as she burned, the flames whitened into the radiance of the Church Triumphant."<sup>20</sup> Shaw reveals these acts only in the epilogue, which they are relevant for a proper evaluation of St. Joan's impact on society after her martyrdom. Another thing that Shaw achieves through the Epilogue is the reconciliation of a personal tragedy in death with the comedy of an impersonal evolution. The last words uttered by Joan are remarkable. She

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 86

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 84

says: "O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?"<sup>21</sup> These words elucidate the suffering and challenge of saints along the ages. Most of saints did not die normally but suffered and tortured until death because their opposition to the unfair and tyrannous regimes. The weird thing is, kings never give up torturing and killing saints while they already have knowledge and experience about the social and political consequences after executing saints.

Although Joan achieved her mission by setting her country free from the British occupation, she is still regarded as a heretic woman; especially in the eyes of the churchmen who seem thankless for Joan's tangible services. As Dr. Sen depicts them "their behaviour clearly indicates the contention that mankind is still imperfect and the process of evolution is incomplete."<sup>22</sup>

Dr. Sen also argues that although every martyrdom leads humanity towards an upward progress of evolution, all those obstacles in the path of progress such as traditions, conventions, institutions and social codes of conducts will continue to exist in human society requiring a clash with the saints who are also bound to incarnate off and on. In other words, the holy blood of a murdered saint will lead the human society to some good changes and to an overwhelming success, especially in the social and political field.

There are many research papers and scholarly articles which peripherally shed light on the theme of religion in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and G.B Shaw's *Saint Joan*, but there is no comprehensive study which examines the religious values in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and G.B Shaw's *Saint Joan*, namely the value of martyrdom and sainthood, therefore the need for this thesis. With this perspective in mind, in this

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 91

<sup>22</sup> Dr. Sen. S. *Saint Joan: A Critical Evaluation*, Amarjeet S. Chopra., Unique publishers.1923.p.396

research, the treatment of religion in the Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* is undertaken to be examined, and an attempt is made to explore the role of church in the two mentioned dramas. Through these two plays, Eliot and Shaw touch on the various problems connected with religious awareness and spiritual values.

There are two powerful authorities which have their own claims on each and every society; the religious authority that is presented by the institution of the church, and the secular power which is presented by the state. The state's endeavors are to preserve citizens and to set them free from the religious shackles. However, the institution of the church seeks to control the society through following and applying the commands of God.

In his play *Saint Joan*, Shaw provides a critical view of the role of Church in the British society of his times. The play is a powerful expression of hypocrisy and pretensions inherent in the institution of Church. *Saint Joan* shows the difference between true religious faith and the hypocrisy of organized religion. Joan is a true believer, one who strives to do God's will in everything she does. In contrast to her, Shaw pictures organized religion, represented by the Roman Catholic Church of the fifteenth century, as manipulative and hypocritical.

As far as *Saint Joan* is concerned, G.B Shaw tries to examine the concept of hypocrisy and double standards of the church. The church has strongly rejected the concept of redemption and salvation through the protagonist Joan as a mediator. Joan's message is refuted by the church due to her gender, low social class, and her young age. This refusal by improves the church's futile mission of preaching love, peace and blessings. The church completely ignores the accomplishments of Joan due to the early mentioned flaws that the church locates in Joan. These achievements include the coronation of Charles VII as a king, and to set France free from the British hegemony. Joan has been accused of heresy and

sorcery by the church to regain its previous fame and name. Another reason that made the church takes revenge over Joan is instead of showing loyalty to the French church, but it rather shows loyalty to the English Cathedral.

If the church, as G.B Shaw argues, was true to its mission of spreading love and preaching justice, equality, peace and brotherhood, it would have not burnt Joan on a stake. Again, this act of murder shows G.B Shaw's severe criticism of the cruel concept of the institution of the church at that time. It is worth mentioning that Shaw does not criticize Christianity as a religion as such, but he rather lambastes the professed Christians who wear masks of hatred, hypocrisy and double standards. When the church wills to punish a person who does not comply with its commands, it directly executes him even though execution completely contradicts with the teachings of the Gospel.

Shaw pin points this foolishness of the people of the church in every page of the play, and he also highlights the spiritual and the intellectual poverty of the cynical of some clergymen. He describes their narrow mindedness and stresses the need for the true spirit of religion for his deprived community. This led to the fact that even after a period of twenty five years John's case was retried and she was declared to have been misjudged by her judges, and it is also declared that her judges were full of malice, corruption and fraud.

Shaw's plays are more or less devoted to an exposure of contemporary weaknesses, corruption and follies which were conducted by the church community at his time. His basic aim in his play *Saint Joan* is to provoke the moral sense of the man as well as to raise the true religion whose followers are faithful to God and their land, or ready to sacrifice their lives for the benefits of others. Likewise Eliot in his play *Murder in the Cathedral* gives a clear vision of the true religion throughout his protagonist Thomas Becket, however in the context of *Murder in the Cathedral* Eliot exposes the role of the state



which tries to exploit the authority of the church for its own advantages.

In T.S. *Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral* and George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, both dramatists took the theme of religion as an instrument in order to establish religious awareness among their readers. Eliot and Shaw are very much concerned about the fate of a society moving toward secularism and the materialism which accompanies it. In this context, Eliot and Shaw warned their readers to note that secular humanism was not enough; they also held that urgent need was some form of religious belief in God. *Murder in the Cathedral* also sheds light on the theme of Christian martyrdom as Becket realizes that by being killed within the place of the Canterbury Cathedral at the hands of the Knights, he is going to become the supporter of God, to defend the inevitable glory of a martyr to his faith. The murder of Becket is the sacrificial death of a martyr, a re-enactment of the martyrdom of Christ.

Eliot and Shaw use historical facts of Becket's and Joan's martyrdom to suggest a moral vision of universal relevance. Both writers focus on the significance and the impact of the concept of martyrdom in the society. Both writers' message is to convey to their society a moral lesson of two historical protagonists whose denial to subjugate to the tyrannous authority, led them to be suffered and tortured in worldly life and to get respect and veneration after being martyrs. Both writers also give a sample of the hero who seeks for glory throughout obedience and sacrifice to the will of God. On the other hand they also give a clear sample of satire on the unjust and the hypocrite authority which is represented by the religious authority of the church in *Saint Joan* and the secular authority in *Murder in the Cathedral*.

This study is a deep and a comparative analysis of the religious values in *Eliot's Murder in the cathedral* and Shaw's *Saint Joan*. The religious values to be discussed in the two mentioned dramas are martyrdom and sainthood. Both

concepts are complementary to each other i.e. the impact of a martyr as a saint has much more significance on the society than the ordinary martyr as such. For example, the martyrdom and sacrifice of the tragic hero, Thomas Becket, has a great influence on the society of the Canterbury. This influence that Thomas has left on the society has been appreciated and underscored even by his bitter rivals and murderers- the king himself who issued the decree of killing.

Furthermore, the great effect of martyrdom on the society has even been signified and underlined by the Fourth Tempter, who represents the inner consciousness of Thomas Becket, this appears clearly when the fourth Tempter says: "Saint and Martyr rule from the tomb". These words come as an inspiration to the he who seeks freedom, altruism and salvation. Sacrifice and piety as religious values reflected the personality of Thomas as a man of God. The blood of martyrs has the great surpass to revive nations from their spiritual stagnation and to awaken and to sensitize the revolutionary spirit which motivates to tumble down the oppressors' thrones. People are grateful to those who are ready to sacrifice their holy flesh and blood, which have the ability to set them free from the chains of the bondage and slavery of kings and tyrannous regimes.

The role of religion in directing the people of the society is indispensable; this great impact of religion appears clearly when G.B Shaw declares that, "men without religion have no courage". That is to say, men should imbue their inspiration from God. The role of religion appears in Saint Joan is underlined by the words of Joan when she justifies the defeat of the French army, she believes that is due to the soldiers materialistic aim, i.e. the French army fights for the sake of worldly pleasures and temptations. When Joan of Arc the epitome of sacrifice and obedience of God, took the leadership of the army, she instantly defeats the enemy and leads Franc

towards victory. In a nutshell, Shaw wants to emphasise the power of spirituality over materialism.

T.S. Eliot and G.B Shaw wrote both dramas during the World War I and II to remind their people of some significant religious values, such as martyrdom, sacrifice and sainthood, which were no longer exist in Europe at that particular era. Another reason behind their writings is to revive and instill the some lost philosophical concepts and values of martyrdom and sacrifice into the minds of people at that age, in a word, to motivate the society and to appreciate the value of sacrifice and martyrdom. A nation which does not value its history and significant figures, leaders, martyrs is not worthy of respect. The fragmentation of the society which no longer had a spiritual faith has motivated both authors to write their masterpieces for the sake of redemption of the society.

Eliot thinks that the seeds planted by Jesus Christ and irrigated with his holy blood is now thirsty, and they need to be irrigated again with a holy blood in order to survive and continue. That sacred blood was of the Archbishop of Canterbury Saint Thomas Becket. Just like Eliot, G.B Shaw's protagonist Joan of arc, the teenage, simple, country girl, who was highly religious and pure attained her piety and faith from the quietness of the farmlands in which she was able to feel the unseen powers and presence. She sees visions and hears voices which they have played the essential role in drawing her life. For Shaw she plays the role of an apostle who is ordered by God to deliver a message and to carry out an important mission. Sanctity, piety and other religious values of both Protagonists Becket and Joan led them to have a great impact on the society after their martyrdom. Both Characters Becket and Joan are clear examples of Jesus Christ in his suffering and torment.

This comparison emphasizes the idea that a man who is not faithful to God and to his country is not worth of living. More important than his beliefs is that such beliefs are his, and he has to fight for the freedom of keeping them. When this freedom

is denied to someone, it is his/her self which is denied. That is the kind of reasoning that leads Becket and Joan to their final choice.

When the tragic hero has high ethical merits, his sacrifice arouses pity and fear, but his motive will be universally highly praised and understood. For this to happen there must be a kind of intelligible heaven, something which surpasses life in which to believe, to base one's faith. If none of the two martyrs had a faith in something which transcends life, something to which they were, in a way or another, obliged to or thankful for, their death would be certainly meaningless and unfruitful. They would not be the hero or saint, climbing to a superhuman wisdom, but the fool obsessed by the most fatal of illusions.