

Critical thinking on joan of arc

Government, Army



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Introduction

Joan of Arc is a French traditional heroine and a Roman Catholic saint. She was born in an era when France was experiencing a series of wars resulting from disputes over succession of the French throne, which had been going on for several years. In addition, the economy of France had also been affected by the chevauchee tactics of the English army. Joan of Arc became highly appreciated in the French society as well as among the Roman Catholics because of the role she played in liberating France and her religious beliefs.

Short Biography

Joan of Arc was born in Domremy village, eastern France, to Jacques d’Arc and Isabelle, in 1412. Her family was well-known its farming activities, and her father augmented his farming activities with a village official, responsible for tax collection and leading the local watch. Her family was among the few

families that maintained their loyalty for the French crown. However, because of this loyalty, her village was burnt in several occasions during her childhood. It is this kind of experience that motivated her to be at the forefront fighting for the liberation of France. Joan of Arc claimed to have seen visions at the age of 12. In these visions, which she termed as verbal and perceptible figures of angels and saints, she was instructed to liberate the French people from the hands of the English.

At the age of 17 years, she was granted control over the army, by King Charles VII, to lead them into combat. She had significant influence among the troops because of her determination and her claims of having seen visions, something that motivated those who had left the army to rejoin to fight in support the King. In fact, among the soldiers she was seen as a mythical leader, something that encouraged them to move forward with the fight. As a result of her achievements and leadership, her family was accorded the noble status.

Nevertheless, after one year of joining the army, she was captured and forwarded to the English. She was judged with witchcraft, and was found guilty and was sentenced to death through burning. 26 years following her execution, the English were forced out of France. Joan of Arc was declared innocent following an inquest, and was voted to be a martyr; which was followed by being sanctified a saint in 1920. At only 19 years, she achieved a lot; particularly exemplified religious devoutness with humility and great bravery.

Controversy surrounding her

Despite her achievements, from both religious and political perspectives, various controversies have been raised. For instance, her religious visions remain a debatable issue to-date. Modern scholars argue that these visions could be explained from a neurological or psychiatric perspective. The present-day doctors are of the opinion that she could have been suffering from a medical condition, such as epilepsy or schizophrenia, which made her have visions. These arguments have found grounds especially following a critical analysis of the figures she claimed to have seen and talked to in her visions. In the visions, she claims to have seen St. Margaret (of Antioch), St. Catherine (of Alexandria), Gabriel, Archangel Michael, as well as a large collection of angels. Apart from Archangel Michael, who was a French Royal army's patron saint, none of the above mentioned figures had convincing significance to the military state of affairs. Nevertheless, most historians conquer on the sincerity of her faith, based on the identification of the above mentioned saints in her visions.

Scholars have found it difficult to justify the medical claims due to the fact that not much information on her life is available. Besides, it is argued that Joan of Arc the favor of King Charles VII's court, further discrediting the mental disorder hypothesis. This is especially the case considering King Charles VII's father had a mental disorder, and it could have been easy for him to notice the same in Joan of Arc. Furthermore, no symptoms of any of the above mentioned medical disorder was noticeable, particularly looking at her prudent answers during her trial.

Lessons learnt from her

Joan of Arc was a strong-willed woman. Despite her background, being uneducated and coming from a peasant family, she managed to make a big difference in the French society. She never feared of the consequences she was likely to face considering the fact that during this time women were seen as inferior beings in the society. Therefore, women can make a big difference in the society if only they can be courageous enough to face the odds that await them. Besides, Joan of Arc displayed strong political leadership skills as a woman. Without prior experience in the army, she managed to conquer the English army with her army. Her success is associated with her leadership abilities, because of the manner she managed to motivate her army to keep on fighting for what they believed to be the right of the French people. In fact, it is argued that even those who had defected from King Charles VII's army rejoined the army because they believed in her and her approach to the war. All these shows that women can be effective leaders given an opportunity, just like their male counterparts.

Role of gender in legend

During Joan of Arc's era, women were rarely appreciated, especially when it came to political issues. Furthermore, women in the lower class had no say in the society because it was argued that they lacked the knowledge and education to make a sensible contribution for the growth of the society. Therefore, Joan of Arc's not only participation in, but also being the leader of an army at a very young age, against all the odds, was a greater revolution towards the position of women in the French society. Her actions became a testimony that women can be of great importance in changing the society.

Historians argue that she came into the scene at a point when the King had lost hope of keeping his reign, and her contributions were the main reason behind the restoration of the King's power. All these indicate the position of women in society during this period, and how it changed with her contributions not only in the society, but also in religious matters.

Conclusion

Joan of Arc is one of the icons of the history of not only the French society, but also women in all parts of the world. In spite of her limitations, coming from a less fortunate class of people in the society, her contribution to the restoration of the freedom of the French people was remarkable. In fact, she became a role model for many women facing similar limitations in the society as per that period. She is a perfect example on the contributions that women can bring in the society if only given an opportunity.

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