

Joan of arc a biography english literature essay

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

" A perfect woman, nobly plann'd, to warn, to comfort, and command; And yet a spirit still, and bright with something of an angel light." -William Wordsworth

La Pucelle d'Orléans in French, means ' The Maid of Orleans' which was the name given to Joan of Arc who lived in the 15th century France. Women warriors are not many who are celebrated in the history of the world but Joan of Arc like Rani of Jhansi of India, is France's most loved and acknowledged female fighter of all times. She has been bestowed with the honour of being the National Heroine of France who brought in several victories to the French army in the ' Hundred Years War'. The Hundred Years' War was a series of conflicts waged from 1337 to 1453 between the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of France and their various allies for control of the French throne. Fearless Joan, with the help of divine guidance as she claimed aided the French army in their endeavours against the English thus paving the way for the coronation of King Charles VII. Considered a major threat by the English, she was later captured by the Burgundians; allies of English, and transferred to the English in exchange for money. An ecclesiastical court headed by the pro-English Bishop of Beauvais, Pierre Cauchon put her on trial for charges of " insubordination and heterodoxy" and she was burnt at the stake for heresy when she was barely nineteen years of age. Twenty-four years later when the Vatican decided to review the decision of the ecclesiastical court, Joan was announced innocent and declared a martyr. She was beatified in 1909 and canonized as a saint in the year 1920. Joan had said she had received visions from God instructing her to support Charles VII and recover France from the English domination late in the Hundred Years' War. The uncrowned King Charles VII sent her to the

siege of Orleans as part of a relief mission which is when she gained prominence and overcame the trivializing attitude of veteran commanders. As we know 'faith can move mountains' Joan with her belief in God and her love for her beloved country, lifted the siege in only nine days. Many additional swift victories after that, led to Charles VII's coronation at Reims. Thus the patron saint of France Joan of Arc during her brief and pious life took up arms in defence of her country. Although she didn't live long enough but she left no stone unturned to make her life meaningful and significant. Let's take a sojourn through her life's journey and understand what made a simple yet dauntless, young peasant girl render a selfless service to her homeland, win the hearts of so many and eventually go on to become a saint.

Jeanne d'Arc – the genesis

"She was the consummation and ideal of two noble human efforts towards perfection. The peasant's daughter was the Flower of Chivalry, brave, gentle, merciful, courteous, kind, and loyal.... She was the most perfect daughter of her Church.... her conscience, by frequent confession, was kept fair and pure as the lilies of Paradise." - Andrew Lang-19th Century Scottish Writer and Historian

Joan of Arc also Jeanne d'Arc in French came into this world probably on 6 January, 1412 in Domremy, a village in Champagne. Domremy was then within the Barrois region (now part of "Lorraine") on the border of eastern France and was under the suzerainty of the Duke of Burgundy. There was unrest and internal war in that territory between the Armagnacs which was the party of Charles VII; King of France, and the Burgundians, followers of the Duke of Burgundy who supported the English. While the French

remained divided into warring factions, the loyalties of Domremy always lay with Charles. Joan's mother was Isabelle Romée, a devout Christian woman who hailed from Vouthon, a village nearly four miles northwest of Domremy, and father, Jacques d' Arc was a farmer who owned about 50 acres of land and also held a small position of a village official who collected taxes and headed the local watch. Joan's parents had a humble background but they were not needy. They resided in a secluded patch of eastern France that remained loyal to the French crown despite being surrounded by Burgundian lands

France- A hotbed of conspiracy and unrest

" Of the love or hatred God has for the English, I know nothing, but I do know that they will all be thrown out of France, except those who die there." - Joan of Arc

The events at the time of Joan's birth in France would set the stage for Joan's later life. Charles VI, who was the French Monarch at the time of Joan's birth suffered from bouts of insanity and was not fit to rule the country. Duke Louis of Orleans; the King's brother and John the fearless; the King's cousin were always struggling to snatch the regency of France and the guardianship of the royal children. Queen Isabeau's (wife of Charles VI) strong partisanship for the Duke of Orléans led to rumours of an extramarital affair. These rumours escalated into a dispute and brought in the kidnappings of the royal children. The entire issue culminated in the assassination of the Duke Loius of Orléans in the year 1407 on the orders of the Duke of Burgundy. This internal war that had erupted between two factions of the French Royal family would go on to make it easier for the English to invade. One side, called the " Armagnac" faction, was led by Count Bernard VII of Armagnac

and Duke Charles of Orleans, and their rival group, known as the "Burgundians", was led by Duke John-the-Fearless of Burgundy. This mutual rivalry went on to prove advantageous for the English King Henry V who citing his family's old claim to the French throne, invaded France and emerged victorious in the battle of Agincourt in 1415. Nearly an entire generation of military leaders died or fell prisoner in a single day. After giving a crushing defeat to the French he captured the northern French towns which divided the country and weakened it. John the Fearless, still fighting with Queen Isabeau, remained neutral as Henry V conquered northern France. Most of Queen Isabeau's children did not survive to adulthood. After the death of four of her older children her fifth son assumed the title of Dauphin, the heir to the throne. As soon as he came into power, the fourteen year old, future King Charles VII of France negotiated a truce with John the Fearless in 1418 which ended in a major disaster. The Armagnac partisans murdered John the Fearless while the two met on a bridge, despite the guarantee of protection by Charles VII. The new duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, held Charles responsible for the murder and subsequently entered into an alliance with the English, thus conquering large sections of France. Under Charles VII, the French felt the absence of a real leader, a loss of direction and a lack of confidence.

Early Days in Domremy

" Of the love or hatred God has for the English, I know nothing, but I do know that they will all be thrown out of France, except those who die there." Joan of Arc Joan's father, Jacques d'Arc, wasn't a wealthy man and Joan was brought up in her father's poor dwelling. Joan and her family fed on light

wine and brown bread, and had seen a hard life. The land in her village wasn't fruitful resulting in the peasants working really hard. The children were left to themselves most of the times and Joan lived in perfect liberty. She would spend her days all by herself in the pastures with only cattle and sheep. Joan was liked by the village children and she got on well with them. A little neighbour, Hauviette, who was three or four years younger than she, was her daily companion. In those days it was not uncommon for the village maidens to be well read and educated but Jacques and Isabella's daughter Joan, did not learn to read or write. From her mother she learnt the Paternoster(prayer beads), Ave Maria (meditation), and the credo(Christian beliefs). She also loved to hear beautiful stories of the saints, all of which went into making her a very pious child. Joan frequently used to visit the chapel of Notre-Dame de Bermont with her sister Catherine, and sometimes with the boys and girls of the neighbourhood. There were times when she went there all alone, immersed her-self in prayers and as often as she could she lit a candle in honour of the heavenly lady. It is said that she loved the poor so much that she once gave up her own warm bed to house a beggar for the night. Even as a child Joan was known for her obedience to her parents, generosity and kindness towards her neighbours and her religious fervour. Her playmates would often tease her for being over virtuous and religious but she remained unmoved. Simonin Munier was a childhood friend of Joan who lived on to tell how when he was sick Joan had looked after him till he was strong enough. As soon as she was old enough she laboured in the fields, weeding, digging, doing the work of a man and thus helping her parents. Mark Twain; 19th century American writer, was right in saying that "

Whatever thing men call great, look for it in Joan of Arc, and there you will find it." Joan's Voices" When I was thirteen years old, I had a Voice from God to help me govern my conduct. And the first time I was very fearful. And came this Voice, about the hour of noon, in the summer-time, in my father's garden; I had not fasted on the eve preceding that day." Joan In the summer of 1425 when Joan was thirteen and a half years old, she was in her father's garden when she heard a voice for the first time that filled her with a great fear. It came from towards the church, and at the same time, in the same direction there appeared a blaze of light. The voice said: " I come from God to help thee to live a good and holy life. Be good, Jeannette, and God will aid thee." On another day the voice spoke again and repeated, " Jeannette, be good." Joan couldn't comprehend wherefrom the voice came but the third time, as she listened intently, she knew it was an angel's voice and she even recognised the angel to be St. Michael. She could not be mistaken, for she knew him very well as he was the patron saint of the duchy of Bar. She sometimes saw him on the pillar of church or chapel, in the disguise of a handsome knight. The angel would not come alone, he was accompanied by other angels, St. Margaret and St Catherine. Joan continued hearing voices and one day the voice said to her: " Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret will come to thee. Act according to their advice; for they are appointed to guide thee and counsel thee in all thou hast to do, and thou mayest believe what they shall say unto thee." Saint Michael, the Archangel, did not forget his promise to Joan and Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret came to Joan as he had said to her. On their very first visit the young peasant maid vowed to them to preserve her virginity as long as it should please God. The saints

came to the village everyday, and often several times a day to visit Joan. She said that they appeared in a ray of light coming down from heaven, shining and dressed up like queens. Joan's Voices are an essential part of the story of Joan of Arc but shall always remain a kind of a mystery as they are part of the mystical side of Joan. One can decide not to believe about Joan's Voices but one should always keep it in mind that they were real to Joan and she had a firm belief in them. She never ever faltered in her belief that they had been sent from God to direct her life. She was always reluctant to talk about her voices and would cry out of joy when they left as they were extremely beautiful. Many rationalist historians, including Anatole France, explain this condition as a result of spiritual and hysterical exaltation which could be triggered due to priestly influence. Also during those days there were certain prophecies that said ' a maiden from the oakwood, (near which the Fairy tree was situated) would save France by a miracle' could have influenced Joan's mind. But many non Catholic writers have rubbished these claims as there is no evidence to prove that priestly advisors persuaded Joan to pretend about her voices. Joan used to say, " Angels are wont to come down to Christians without being seen, but I see them." According to Joan the voices spoke to her of love for the kingdom of France, of that love which she felt in her heart. The holy voices started growing stronger and more fervent and revealed to Joan her mission. The voices said " Daughter of God, thou must leave thy village, and go to France." As soon as Joan began to receive these revelations, she gave up her games and her excursions in the village. Now she became extremely devout; she heard mass in her parish church every day and most of the time she would visit the church. Joan would sometimes

lie prostrate on the ground, sometimes with her hands clasped, and her face turned towards the image of Our Lord or of Our Lady. She seldom danced round the fairies' tree, and would hardly play with the children. From early childhood she had shown signs of piety and ever since she started hearing the voices she became even more pious.

Meeting Count Robert de Baudricourt

" Every man gives his life for what he believes ... one life is all we have to live and we live it according to what we believe." Joan of Arc By May 1428, Joan was convinced about her mission, that she must help deliver the French people from the English, win back Orleans, and see her dauphin Charles VII crowned king at Rheims. But how could she, a simple peasant girl, deliver the French from the English? As mentioned in the records the voices came to Joan's rescue and cleared the obscurity of thoughts that was bothering her: " : " Daughter of God," the voice said, " go thou to the Captain Robert de Baudricourt, in the town of Vaucouleurs, that he may grant unto thee men who shall take thee to the gentle Dauphin." Captain Robert de Baudricourt was the garrison commander at the neighbouring Vaucouleurs. It was not easy for a simple village maiden to reach a man of his position so Joan took the help of Durand Lassois, a kinsman, who was sixteen years older to her whom she called Uncle. Joan went to see him, told him of her intentions of meeting Sire Robert de Baudricourt, and in order to make him believe her she repeated to him the strange prophecy, " that a woman should ruin the kingdom of France and that a woman should re-establish it." Seeing Joan's simplicity and piety, Durand Lassois consented to take her to Vaucouleurs. Sir Robert Baudricourt was like all the warriors of his time and country. He

was greedy and cunning and always fought for his advantage. Joan dressed in a poor red gown with love for her country and Lord burning in her heart, climbed the hill where was situated the castle of Baudricourt. She went straight inside the hall and without any difficulty recognised the Count whom she said with a sense of urgency that she wanted the permission to visit the royal French court at Chinon. Baudricourt was stubborn and refused to believe her at all. Instead he treated her with much contempt and sarcastically told her uncle: " Take her home to her father, box her ears and give her a good whipping." After a week's absence Joan returned to the village. She felt neither humiliated nor discouraged by the garrison's insults. She was as calm as she could be in the face of obstacles and undeterred was determined to follow her dream. Jacques d Arc was an upright man who was very strict when it concerned the matters of his children's conduct. Joan's behaviour caused him extreme anxiety and he felt that her mind was wandering as being a girl how could she be thinking of cavalcades and battles. He was terribly afraid for her and this agonising anxiety haunted him even in his sleep which he shared with his wife Isabella. Meanwhile the plight of the French King Charles and his supporters was going from bad to worse. That July, the inhabitants of Domremy left their homes for fear of armed bands of Burgundians, and her family lodged in Neufchateau. During this time, Joan was denounced for breaking a marriage contract, which she successfully denied. On 12th October, 1428 Orleans was captured and it was likely that by the end of the year the French would be completely vanquished. On the other hand Joan's voices grew fervent and more strident to the extent of becoming threatening whom she even resisted saying: " I am

a poor girl; I don't know how to ride or fight." But the voices would not spare her according to Joan and only reiterated that it was God's will: " Leave thy village and go into France." As Joan was impatient to set forth on her journey she left Domremy in January 1429 and reached Vaucouleurs. Thus Joan, in the company of Durand Lassois, left her childhood home, which she was never to see again. On her second arrival at Vaucouleurs, Joan went to Robert Baudricourt just as she had done nine months before but this time with support from two men of standing: Jean de Metz and Bertrand de Poulengy. This was the revelation which Joan made to him: " My Lord Captain," she said, " know that God has again given me to wit, and commanded me many times to go to the gentle Dauphin, who must be and who is the true King of France, and that he shall grant me men-at-arms with whom I shall raise the siege of Orleans and take him to his anointing at Reims." Strangely Robert's conduct towards Joan had completely changed who said nothing about boxing her ears and sending her back to her parents. He no longer treated her roughly and if he did not believe her announcement at least this time he listened to her willingly. But Baudricourt was still not convinced by Joan's claim and so she decided to stay back in the town in order to win him. Her persistence gradually paid off and on 17 February she made a startling prediction about a stunning defeat befallen on the French in the Battle of Herrings outside Orleans. A few days later her prophecy was officially found to be true which garnered her much respect and opened the gates for her to meet the King at Chinon. Accompanied by three men - at - arms which Baudricourt granted her as escorts, she made the journey through hostile Burgundian territory. She had chosen to clad herself in male

attire to safeguard her modesty from the men who were with her in the camp and also to protect her from the enemies whom she would encounter while passing through their territory. It is said that she would sleep fully clothed and all those who knew her said that there was something about her that prevented them from seeing her as an object of lust. Along the way to Chinon, Joan desired to attend Mass, at whatever town they might pass on the way but she was only able to attend Mass twice, because of safety precautions necessary for the avoidance of Burgundians. Mostly they travelled by night as an extra precaution, so they would not be detected. As Joan was leaving Vaucouleurs a woman asked her: " How can you make such a journey when on all sides are soldiers?" And Joan said " I do not fear the soldiers, for my road is made open to me; and if the soldiers come, I have God, my Lord, who will know how to clear the route that leads to messire the Dauphin. It was for this that I was born!" As she journeyed ahead to Chinon, Joan of Arc said to her Knights on the road: " Fear nothing. You shall see how at Chinon the noble Dauphin will greet us with a glad face." Chinon Calling" I have been commanded to do two things on the part of the King of Heaven: one, to raise the siege of Orleans; the other, to conduct the King to Rheims for his sacrament and his coronation." St. Joan

On the 6th of March in 1429 Joan arrived in Chinon and sent a letter to the King requesting to meet him. After two days she was taken to the royal court and presented to Charles VII who was not at all convinced by her story of divine mission. So, he decided to test her by disguising himself as a courtier and dressed a courtier instead, who was better looking than he, in his clothes and put him on the throne. He then hid himself in the crowd and waited quietly. When Joan was allowed

into the King's chamber, she realized that the person at the throne was not the real dauphin. She picked out Charles from the crowd without any hesitation and presented herself to him. When Charles asked her how she knew that the person at the throne was not the dauphin, she replied, "Gentle dauphin, it is you and none other." Then without wasting any time, she asked for a private discussion with Charles to which he obliged. There she convinced him of her mission and showed him signs from God, ones which he was not to reveal to anyone. Most probably the sign that was shown to him was verification that he had royal blood, which he himself had doubts about. It is also probable that she revealed to him a prayer which he recited while he was alone. It is said that during this private conversation, addressing him with the familiarity of an angel, she made him this strange announcement: " My Lord bids me to tell you that you are indeed the heir of France and the son of a King; he has sent me to you to lead you to Reims to be crowned there and anointed if you will." Not that Joan didn't have to face any opposition in the royal court and was accepted easily by one and all. From the beginning there were people who opposed her at the court and denounced her as a crazy visionary. La Tremoille, who was a royal favourite, was one such person who was against her. As Andrew Lang said, " She was the bravest of the brave" Joan kept moving in the direction of her goal despite all the hurdles. Induction as a soldier" In God's name, I well know that I shall have much to go through at Poitiers! But God will aid me. Now let us be going." Joan of Arc With her determination, faith and belief in God Joan was able to convince Charles, but as an extra assurance, Joan was sent to the church at Poitiers, so she could be examined by a committee of bishops

and doctors and cleared ecclesiastically to carry out her mission. When asked about her education, she replied, " I do not know A from B." They then persistently continued to examine her. When asked why a divine mission would require soldiers, she responded, " In God's Name! The soldiers will fight, and God will give them a great victory!" When further questioned about a divine sign, she said, " Let me go and free Orleans. There you will have your sign!" Though the minutes of the proceedings were lost, Joan's devout faith, simplicity and honesty seem to have made a favourable impression on the theologians who didn't discern anything heretical in her claims to supernatural guidance. They decided that there was no harm in allowing her to do what she ardently wished to. On returning to Chinon, Joan started her preparations for the campaign. The king offered her a sword which she declined and sent a messenger to the Church of St. Catherine de Fierbois to retrieve a sword which was previously unknown to have been buried under the altar. The search was carried out and the sword was found in the very spot as told by her voices. The sword which was St. Catherine's sword had five crosses embossed on the blade near the hilt. A banner was made especially for Joan, with the words " Jesus, Maria," with a picture of God the Father, and kneeling angels presenting a fleur-de-lis (a kind of lily). A suit of armour was also made for her; it was a suit of " white armour" without decoration of any kind. Around this time Yolande of Aragon; Charles mother-in-law, was sending a relief expedition to Orleans and Joan asked for permission to accompany the army. After all the preparations, she rode off to free Orleans.

City of Orleans

" Trust in God. God will aid the city of Orleans and expel the enemy." Joan of Arc. Interestingly on April 29, 1429, one Sire de Rotslaer wrote in a letter from Lyons which predicted that Joan would save Orleans and compel the English to leave. She would also be wounded by an arrow, but would not die from it. It also said that the king would be crowned in Rheims during the coming summer. Eventually all these things came to be true. Before entering the campaign, Joan audaciously summoned the English to remove their troops from French soil. Her boldness infuriated the English commanders but Joan ignored them and entered Orleans on April 30, 1429. At first, Jean d' Orleans, who was at that time the acting head of the Orleans ducal family, excluded her from war councils and did not inform her when the army faced the enemy but later on she made it a point to be present at almost all councils and battles. There, she constantly compelled all her soldiers to receive confession and go to Mass. She also made sure to keep any camp-following prostitutes out of the camp. On April 30, Joan spoke to William Glasdale; an English Soldier, and what passed between them was more of a shouting match, where she warned the English to retreat and the English called her the " Whore of the Armagnacs." This rudeness hurt her and it's said that she broke down and cried. The next day, Jean, the Count of Dunois, famously called the " Bastard of Orleans," left to summon French troops from Blois. On May 2, Joan had gathered important information about the English bastides; fortified towns, and an attack was launched by the French to regain the bastides. On May 4, the Saint-Loup bastide was taken and on the next day Joan marched with the army to a second fortress called Saint Jean Le

Blanc. It was deserted there was no bloodshed and it was a bloodless victory. On the 6 May Joan locked horns with Jean D Orleans at a war council as she wanted to assault the enemy forces whereas D'Orleans had the city gates locked to avoid another battle. Joan collected the townsmen and the soldiers and forced the mayor to unlock the gates. She went ahead fearlessly with just one captain to support her and captured the fortress of Saint Augustines. The same evening she came to know that she had been kept out of a war council which had decided that they would not battle until reinforcements in their army. Sidelining this decision Joan urged ahead attacking the main stronghold of the English called " Les Tourelles" on the 7 of May.

Unfortunately in the battle, Joan was wounded by an arrow which she herself pulled out bravely. Despite being wounded, in a hurry to oust the English from France, she returned to lead the final charge. The next day, the English forts which surrounded the city had fallen into French control and the English had raised the siege. There was great celebration in the city but Joan and her companions had no time to rejoice. She had to liberate the rest of the Loire river valley, which meant there were four more battles to be won. She proceeded with haste, because her voices had told her that she had little more than a year left in the army but the King and his advisors, La Tremoille and the Archbishop of Reims were not quick in taking decisions or actions. Joan asked Charles VII to grant her the permission to co-command the army with Duke John II of Alencon. She also managed to secure King's permission to capture nearby bridges along the Loire which was a step towards Reims and would lead to Charles coronation. Reims, was in the heart of the enemy territory so daring to venture there was a fearless act of Joan.

On 12th June the army under the leadership of Joan captured Jargeau, then Meung-sur-Loire on 15th June, after that Beaugency on 17th June. Joan had garnered quite a lot of support which included Duke of Alencon and Commander Jean d'Orleans who were in agreement with her decisions. Alencon believed that Joan had saved his life by warning him of an artillery attack at Jargeau wherein she too had survived a cannonball shot to her helmet. On 18th June under the command of Sir John Fastolf the reinforcements for the English arrived and a fierce battle was fought at Patay. Before the English archers could prepare their defence the French vanguard assaulted them and in the ensuing battle the English suffered heavy losses. Their leader Fastolf escaped with few of his men while most of the other commanders were killed or captured. Patay was by far the greatest victory of Joan's career in which the French totally massacred the English. The accumulated losses rivalled those of the 1415 battle of Agincourt, where the French lost 4,000 men, compared to the English loss of only around 500.

Reaching Reims

"Very dear and well-beloved, whom I greatly desire to see: I Joan the Maid have received your letters mentioning that you fear facing a siege. Know then that you will not, if I can meet them [the enemy] soon. And if it should so happen that I do not intercept them and they come against you, then shut your gates, for I will be with you shortly. And if they are there I will make them put on their spurs in such haste that they won't be able to do so; and their time will be short, for this will be soon. I won't write you anything else for the present, except that you should always be obedient and loyal. I pray to God to hold you in His keeping." Letter by Joan of Arc sent to the city of

Rheims on March 16, 1430. It was not difficult for Joan to reach Reims now as the way was practically clear. On the 29th of June the French army set out for Reims from Gien-Sur-Loire. As they proceeded to the Burgundian held city of Auxerre, on 3rd July, the city surrendered itself to Joan's army. The other towns too that came their way accepted French allegiance without putting any resistance. Troyes too, the place where the treaty to attempt to alter the traditional pattern of French royal succession was signed, surrendered after a bloodless siege of four days. Joan of arc had come to Troyes with the Dauphin on their way to Rheims for the coronation. The people of Troyes weren't sure if they wanted to ally themselves with Charles VII so they delayed the decision in order to see what kind of deal the Duke of Burgundy would offer. Joan insisted that they prepare to fight if they were denied immediate entry into the city and with the threat of fighting the citizens of Troyes opened the city gates and promised allegiance to Charles. Joan was also lucky as a wandering friar named Brother Richard whom the people of Troyes sent to assess her, put in a good word for her. Thus the royal army under the aegis of Joan entered the city, with no bloodshed, on their way to Rheims. Joan had helped organize this attack strategically, and by this time she proved to be able to grasp some of the finer points of military leadership and organization.

The coronation

" Noble King, now is accomplished the pleasure of God, who willed that I should raise the siege of Orleans and should bring you to this city of Reims to receive your holy coronation, thus showing that you are the true King, him to whom the throne of France must belong."- Joan of ArcJoan and her army

finally reached Reims on July 16, 1429 along with the Dauphin and the next morning the coronation took place. At nine o'clock in the morning Charles entered the church with his retinue, the Duke of Alençon, the Counts of Clermont and of Vendôme, the Sires de Laval, de La Tremouille, and de Maille. Joan, stayed by the King's side with her white banner all throughout the crowning ceremony because, as she explained, "as it had shared in the toil it was just that it should share in the victory." Then others in their turn held her standard (banner), her page Louis de Coutes, who never left her, and Friar Richard the preacher, who had followed her to Chalons and to Reims. With much pomp and celebration, the dauphin Charles was crowned King at Rheims Cathedral, the traditional venue for the crowning of French kings, on the morning of July 17. Thus Joan's mission came to end with Charles coronation and her voices too began to go silent. She now yearned to go back home to her family in Domeremy but the army detained her against her wishes. Joan could have done much more for the French soil but she was constantly hindered by the lack of interest of Charles and his advisors, and by their almost suicidal diplomacy which bit off almost every bait thrown out by the Duke of Burgundy.

The Truce

"At length, the sun begins to shine once more and the fine days to bloom again. That royal child so long despised and offended, behold him coming, wearing on his head a crown and accoutred with spurs of gold. Let us cry: 'Noel! Charles, the seventh of that great name, King of the French, thou hast recovered thy kingdom, with the help of a Maid.'" Joan of Arc. Following the coronation, Joan and the duke of Alençon urged a prompt march on Paris but

the King negotiated a truce with the Duke of Burgundy. All throughout this campaign the King of France was resolved to recapture his towns rather by diplomacy and persuasion than by force. The Duke, Philip the Good broke the agreement and utilized it as an excuse to stall a fight, in order to strengthen the defence forces of Paris. Meanwhile the towns near Paris surrendered to the French army without showing any resistance. On 15 August, Duke of Bedford led the English Forces to take on the French army which resulted in a standoff. The Duke of Bedford's most serious objection to Charles was that he was accompanied by the Maid; Joan of Arc and Friar Richard. He said to Charles: " You cause the ignorant folk to be seduced and deceived, for you are supported by superstitious and reprobate persons, such as this woman of ill fame and disorderly life, wearing man's attire and dissolute in manners, and likewise by that apostate and seditious mendicant friar, they both alike being, according to Holy Scripture, abominable in the sight of God." Despite all criticism on 8th of September the French attacked Paris in which Joan was wounded in the thigh by a bolt from the crossbow as she cheered her men who filled the moat. Joan's inner strength and courage did not let her leave the battlefield till the day's fighting came to an end. The following morning she was ordered to withdraw and the King's counsellors immediately struck a deal with the Duke of Burgundy. Joan was highly disappointed by this cowardly act and sadly she laid down her arms at the altar of St. Denis. Most historians blame the French Grand Chamberlain, Georges de la Tremoille for the political blunders that followed the coronation. He is called the architect of all the political mistakes during that time. In September, Joan was wounded near Paris. Charles then regrouped his army and went to Bourges

where he would spend the winter. Joan remained with Charles. In October, Joan was sent to take Saint-Pierre-le-Moûtier [located in the département of Nièvre, in the region of Burgundy] where she took the town with a courageous assault with a small band of men. Joan's army then attacked La Charité-sur-Loire [also located in the département Nièvre, north of Saint-Pierre-le-Moûtier], but had to withdraw because of a lack of munitions. Late in December, 1429, Charles issued letters patent ennobling Joan, her parents and her brothers.

Enduring Jealousies

Joan, as we know, was good-hearted and untiring in energy. She tried her best to inspire the men of her party and give them immense courage which was the need of the hour. Nevertheless King Charles's counsellors avoided consulting her and Joan had a feeling that she would not last long. The winter months passed away with Joan having to bear the jealousy of her opponents in the royal court and no achievement of the army to be proud of. She was held against her will by Charles from returning back home which saddened her. It is said in order to placate her, on 29th December, 1429, King Charles honoured Joan and her family by ennobling them and giving them the name of Du Lis, from the lilies on their coat of arms. Joan returned to the field in April, only after the conclusion of the truce. When she was in Melun, in North central France, her voices had told her she would be captured before the Midsummer Day and she had entreated them: " When I am taken, let me die immediately without suffering long." It went on to happen as predicted.

Maid in Captivity

" By my staff! We are enough! I shall go to my good friends at Compiegne!" -
Joan of Arc Upon hearing that the town of Compiegne needed help, Joan in April 1430, went to Compiegne to defend them from an English and Burgundian siege. On the morning of 24th of May, when the town was under a Burgundian attack, Joan attempted to save it. In the evening she decided to go in for a raid but her small troop of five hundred soldiers was outnumbered by a much advanced force. Her followers although put up a brave fight, had to back off. By some mistake or due to panic, Guillaume de Flavy, raised the drawbridge to Compiegne during a Burgundian attack, and Joan was not able to get back inside. Joan who was on a horse was pulled down and as she kicked and screamed, she was taken a prisoner by a follower of John of Luxenburg; a French nobleman and soldier who had joined the Duke of Burgundy. The survivors of the troops, the Maid had taken to Compiegne abandoned the siege, and on the next day they returned to their garrisons. The same evening the Duke of Burgundy, from his quarters at Coudun, saw to it that letters were written to the towns of his dominions, telling of the capture of the Maid. It read " Of this capture shall the fame spread far and wide and there shall be bruited abroad the error and misbelief of all such as have approved and favoured the deeds of this woman." The news that Joan was in the hands of the Burgundians, reached Paris on the morning of May the 25th. The next day, University of Paris sent a directive to Duke Philip asking him to give up his prisoner to the Vicar-General of the Grand Inquisitor of France. At the same time, the Vicar-General himself wrote a letter stating the Duke to bring the young prisoner before him who was

suspected of diverse crimes. It said " We beseech you in all good affection, O powerful Prince, and we entreat your noble vassals that by them and by you Jeanne be sent unto us surely and shortly, and we hope that thus ye will do as being the true protector of the faith and the defender of God's honour."

Despite his strong attachment to the interests of the Church, the Duke of Burgundy did not respond to the urgent demand of the University ; and Duke of Luxembourg, after having kept the Maid for three or four days in his quarters before Compiègne, took her to the Castle of Beaulieu in

Vermandois. Joan's constant worry was how to escape the hands of the enemy and how to save the town. It was a common practice in those days for the captive's family to pay a ransom for the prisoner of war so as to free him but Joan's family being poor did not have the required funds. Charles VII has been criticised by several historians for not extending aid to the maid when she needed it most. Joan tried to escape from the clutches of the enemy many times. On one occasion she tried to escape by slipping between two planks. She had intended to shut up her guards in the tower and take to the fields, but the porter saw her and stopped her. She concluded that it was not God's will that she should escape this time. Self reliant as she was Joan was not to be easily despaired and she kept trying to free herself. Another time she made an unsuccessful bid to escape by jumping from her seventy feet tower in Vermandois on to the soft earth of a dry moat. After this incident she was taken to the Burgundian town of Arras. During this period of captivity Joan found solace in her voices and dreams which consoled her and told her to see the King of England. When the inhabitants of the towns loyal to King Charles learnt about the disaster which had befallen the Maid they

went into great mourning. The people, who venerated her as a saint, went so far as to say that she was the greatest of all God's saints after the Blessed Virgin Mary. They erected images of her in the chapels of saints, ordered masses to be said for her and wore leaden medals on which she was represented as if the Church had already canonized her. On Joan being held captive they did not withdraw their trust, but continued to believe in her. Such faithfulness scandalized the doctors and masters of the University, who reproached the hapless Joan thus: " Jeanne, hath so seduced the Catholic people, that many have adored her as a saint in her presence, and now in her absence they adore her still."

Sold to English

Eventually the Duke of Burgundy sold Joan to the English government. She was removed from Beaurevoir fortress and was now the prisoner of the English who guarded her closely because they feared her with a superstitious terror. They were determined to destroy her name and take her life at all costs. The English would soon try her for heresy. Bishop Pierre Cauchon of Beauvais who was an English partisan played a crucial role in the negotiations between the two parties; English and Burgundy, and went on to play even major part in Joan's trial later. It was a shame, Charles VII and his advisors turned their backs upon Joan, the woman who had fearlessly fought for them. They could have easily exchanged her for English prisoners like Earl of Suffolk who were in their custody; instead they exhibited apathy and ingratitude. Joan was sold for a huge amount of money to the English who were it seems scared of her supernatural powers. They were bent upon putting her to death on the pretext that she was a witch and an heretic so

that they could overcome their fear of her. The English were determined to try her for heresy and nothing would make them change their mind. To make the trial seem prearranged by the church, the English had with them Bishop Pierre Cauchon of Beauvais, who was a staunch English supporter. The alleged reason of his involvement in the trial was that Joan's place of capture, Compiègne, was in the Diocese of Beauvais. Since Beauvais was in French control, the trial took place in Rouen. In the trial Cauchon's assessors were mostly Frenchmen who were doctors and theologians in the University of Paris. Joan made her first appearance before her judges on 21 February, 1431. Joan had to face a lot of problems as she was denied access to an advocate and although accused in an ecclesiastical court she was imprisoned in a secular prison, contrary to the custom for a heretic to be kept in a church prison. She was allowed no spiritual privileges such as confession, and attendance at Mass, because she was considered a heretic and also because of her male attire. As she was guarded by ruffian English soldiers she complained about this and asked to be shifted to a church prison with female attendants. But the English turned a deaf ear to her pleas and treated her harshly. She was kept in an iron cage, chained by the neck and her feet and hands too were ruthlessly bound.

The Trial

" I know that the English want to put me to death." But were there one hundred thousand Godons, more than at present, they would not conquer the kingdom." Joan of Arc There is no doubt in the fact that Joan's trial was a politically stimulated one. The Duke of Bedford wanted the throne of France for his nephew Henry VI whereas Joan was the reason behind Charles'

coronation. So by accusing her he hoped to challenge Charles authority. The legal proceedings started on the 9 January 1431 at Rouen, the seat of the English rule. The procedure was unfair and irregular on many counts. The judge Bishop of Beauvais was appointed just because he was a staunch supporter of the English government which was the authority to have financed the whole trial. The clerical notary Nicolas Bailley was asked to find evidence against the charges on Joan. He found none, still the court carried on with her trial which was wrong. In the months that followed, the English questioned her almost every day for about two hours. Joan initially refused to take an oath, since she had no knowledge of what she would be asked. On her first public questioning she accused those who were present of being partisans against her and requested for French ecclesiastics for herself. Unfortunately she was never offered any counsel at all, except for that which came from her voices, who told her to answer boldly. During Joan's trial, the judges tried hard to confuse her but her simplicity, piety and good sense were obvious at every turn. In the months that followed, the English queried her almost every day for about two hours. She initially refused to take an oath, since she had no knowledge of what she would be asked. They questioned her about her visions and voices but she refused to answer them. When the Bishop insisted on her swearing to tell the whole truth: "Touching my father and mother and what I did after my coming into France I will willingly swear, but touching God's revelations to me, those I have neither told nor communicated to any man, save to Charles my King. And nought of them will I reveal, were I, to lose my head for it." Joan boldly announced on the 1st of March: "Within seven years' space, the English would have to

forfeit a bigger prize than Orleans." In fact, Paris was taken from the English by Henry VI on 12 November 1437. This was exactly six years and eight months later. Joan had the sympathy of the people with her which prompted the Bishop of Cauchon to conduct the inquiry in the prison before a small committee of judges rather than continuing it in front of a large assembly of people. She was questioned about activities she took part in as a child and she replied that she was busy with household duties and seldom went into the fields with the cattle. When interrogated about ' spinning and sewing' she said, " I am as good as any woman in Rouen." Thus even in domestic activities she displayed her ardour and her chivalrous zeal. She was questioned about her male attire, which itself was considered enough to convict her in those days. She was questioned about why she took her banner to the coronation, about what the saints looked like, about anything and everything the English could think of. They were trying to catch her off guard at just one point so kept on hurling all kinds of questions at her. They enquired what sign she gave the Dauphin when they first met. She told that it was St. Michael, an angel, who brought the king a golden crown but on further screening she seemed confused and contradicted herself. This was the only point on which any charge of prevarication could be brought against her. On another point, her lack of education went against her when the judges ordered her to submit herself to the Church Militant; a phrase which Joan did not understand and was puzzled. It was believed that her hesitation to simply commit herself to the decisions of the church was caused by fraudulent advice doled out to her in order to defeat her purpose. The records say when she was in difficulty as to what to answer her judges, she

would pray to Lord; she would address him devoutly and say: " Good God, for the sake of thy holy Passion, I beseech thee if thou lovest me, to reveal unto me what I should reply to these churchmen. Touching my dress I know well how I was commanded to put it on; but as to leaving it I know nothing. In this may it please thee to teach me." Joan was an uneducated, simple peasant girl, but that didn't mean she wasn't intelligent. Maitre Beaupere asked her during the trial: " Do you know whether you stand in God's grace?" This was an extremely insidious question which led to a murmuring throughout the chamber, but Joan said: " If I be not, then may God bring me into it; if I be, then may God keep me in it." This question was a scholarly trap because according to the doctrines of the church no one could ever be confident about being in God's grace. Had she said yes to it then she would be found guilty of heresy and if she answered no then it would be admitting her own guilt. On hearing Joan's subtle reply those who were interrogating her were left stunned. The twentieth century playwright George Bernard Shaw was so impressed by Joan's answers that he wrote a play on her; St. Joan.

The Sentence

" Since God had commanded it, it was necessary that I do it. Since God commanded it, even if I had a hundred fathers and mothers, even if I had been a King's daughter, I would have gone nevertheless." - Joan of Arc
The records say that many court functionaries disclosed that several sections of the transcript were altered to lay the blame on Joan. Many clerics of the likes of Jean Le Maitre were pressurized to serve on the insistence of the English and some were also given death threats if they didn't behave in accordance with the English. Inquisitorial guidelines had been violated when Bishop

Pierre of Cauchon denied Joan to appeal to the Council of Basel and the Pope. He was apprehensive that by allowing Joan to appeal he would fail in his vicious plans of sentencing Joan. Her questioning came to an end on the 17th of March with seventy false charges filed on her. She was then allowed to hear and clarify these charges after which a final set of 12 charges were framed against her which contradicted the already tampered court records. All through this Joan remained firm in her beliefs despite being twice exhorted and once threatened with torture. Most likely because of threat of reprisal from Cauchon, a bench of 22 judges declared that Joan's visions were false and satanic, and if she refused to apologize she would be burnt at the stake. But no amount of pressure or threat would make Joan retract. On Wednesday, the 9th of May, Joan was taken to the great tower of the castle and into the torture-chamber. There, Bishop of Beauvais, in the presence of the Vice Inquisitor and nine doctors and masters, read her the articles, to which she had previously refused to reply. She was threatened that if she did not confess the whole truth she would be put to torture. Joan did not relent and the twelve propositions were now submitted to the University of Paris which denounced her in violent terms. A decision was taken by the judges that if Joan still denied the charges against her she would be shifted over to the civil authority. On May 22nd another attempt was made to alter her mind but it proved futile. The next day she was taken to the cemetery of St-Ouen, and as a large crowd looked on, a stake was erected. Joan was once again warned about the consequences of her offences one last time. But here also she challenged the preacher's contemptuous remarks made to King Charles and told to Bishop Cauchon: "What I have always held and said in the trial

that will I maintain.... If I were condemned and saw the fagots lighted, and the executioner ready to stir the fire, and I in the fire, I would say and maintain till I died nought other than what I said during the trial."

A Reprieve

All this while Joan had shown courage but probably the prospect of being burnt alive shook her for the first time. Alas, she agreed to sign a retraction, the terms of which are not known. The conditions which were read out to her and that which was signed by her were quite different. It is likely that Joan had no idea what she was retracting, as she was not able to read. Joan did not sign unconditionally, but said that she retracted just because in so far it was God's will. She was not burned and was then conducted back to her cell.

The Entrapment

The English and the Burgundians were furious at this life-saving retraction, for as long as Joan was alive she was a hazard to their interests. Bishop Cauchon, it is said, calmed them down by saying, " We shall have her yet." He knew that if Joan reverted, another retraction would not save her from burning at the stake. One of her points of accusations was wearing of male attire so if she got back into the same outfit for which she had been condemned she could be charged of heresy. It is so said that Pierre Cauchon schemed with the jailors to trap her into wearing male attire. As testified by Jean Massieu, probably her woman's clothing were forcibly taken away from her and to save her chastity and modesty she was left with no option but to don men's clothes. Joan too was sure of the fact that her enemies would not spare her anyway and just needed an excuse to kill her. Joan after learning

of her impending execution said to Pierre Cauchon, " Bishop, I die through you."

The Crucifixion of the Maid

" Rouen! Rouen! Must I die here? Ah, Rouen, I fear you will have to suffer for my death!" - Joan of Arc

Joan's end was imminent. On the morning of Tuesday, 29th May the tribunal assembled in the chapel of the Archbishop's house. The forty-two assessors present were informed of what had happened on the previous day and invited to state their opinions. The judges unanimously decided that Joan was a relapsed heretic and so be sentenced to be burnt on the next day 30th May, 1431. When she was informed of her impending death, Joan said:" Alas! Am I to be so horribly and cruelly treated? Alas! That my body, clean and whole, which has never been corrupted, should this day be consumed and burned to ashes! Ah! I would far rather have my head chopped off seven times over, than to be burned!" Joan was taken out of the prison, wherein she had been in bonds for one hundred and seventy-eight days. She was placed in a cart, and, escorted by eighty men-at-arms, was driven along the narrow streets to the Old Market Square. In this place three scaffolds had been raised and on the first scaffold Joan was to be stationed, to listen to the sermon. Another and a larger scaffold had been erected adjoining the cemetery where the judges and the prelates were to sit. The third scaffold, opposite the second, was of plaster, and stood in the middle of the square, the spot where executions usually took place. On this scaffold was piled the wood for Joan's burning and on the stake which surmounted it was a scroll bearing the following words:" Jehanne (Joan), who hath caused herself to be called the Maid, a liar, pernicious, deceiver of the

people, soothsayer, superstitious, a blasphemer against God, presumptuous, miscreant, boaster, idolatress, cruel, dissolute, an invoker of devils, apostate, schismatic, and heretic." Joan was allowed to make her confession and to receive Communion. She was tied to a tall pillar and when she asked two of the clergy, Martin Ladvenu and Isambart de la Pierre, to hold a crucifix before her, a peasant made a cross for her and gave it to her. A crowd of curious folk pressed behind the guards to watch Joan, people were staring through the windows and the roofs of the nearby houses were covered with onlookers. When the sentence was announced Joan breathed heart-rending sighs and wept bitterly. She fell on her knees, surrendered her soul to God, and very humbly she asked for mercy from all people, of whatever rank or condition, from her own party and from the enemy's, entreating them to forgive the wrong she had done to them and to pray for her.