Chapter -1

INTRODUCTION

Modernism as an age is very complex to define. The term began with arts and architecture and gradually was accepted in literary circle of the early 20th century. It includes Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Symbolism, Imagism, Vorticism, Dadaism, Surrealism and many other movements which are not of one kind and some are radical opposites to each other. Modernism means a ‘strong and conscious break with tradition’; a characteristic kind of imagination that insists on referring itself i.e. it pursues solipsism. It implies a discontinuity from the past, a kind of alienation, loss and hopelessness. It not only rejects history but society too and uplifts the individual over the society; inward over the outward and prefers unconscious over the self-conscious. The theories of Freud and Jung paid a seminal amount to this modern movement in literature. It was a reaction against Realism, Naturalism and also against scientific facts of Victorian Age. The modern writers found a refuge in Existentialism as they could see in it a reflection of their attitude. The modern indulged in a dense and often complex reality as opposed to the practical and systematic; they were richly experimental in exploring it; traditional representations of reality were broken, novel ways of narration and characterization were experimented by writers. Simultaneous deliberate transformations could be seen in music, arts, architecture and sculpting also.
The term Modernism came into use in the late 1920’s and 1930’s in arts (sculpture, architecture and music) and according to Oxford English Dictionary, it was applied to literature not before 1955. The Modern writers never liked to be called ‘modernists’ and most of them were awarded with this title posthumously. Modern writers had a strong inclination to arts and music and often coined critical terms from these faculties to describe their writings; ‘rhythm’ and ‘modulation’ is from music and ‘significant form’ and ‘pattern’ from art. Most of these writers were artists also, D. H. Lawrence was a painter and Ezra Pound was a musician and composer. They experimented with form and style and looked at man and its position with a new perspective. ‘New’ was the favourite word of the time. Literary magazines – *The New Age, The New Republic* and *The New Statesman* etc. were flourishing. Contrastingly, on the other hand people were outraged and shocked by the obscenity and modernity found in these writers which led to an increase in their moral dilemmas and eventually books like *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* etc. were banned. Eliot’s *Wasteland* when appeared in 1922 also evoked hostile reviews. But, slowly this kind of writing was to be accepted in the mainstream. Early modernist writings first appeared in periodicals and ‘Little Reviews’. *The Wasteland* was published in *The Criterion* with a circulation of 800 copies. James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* appeared in *The Egoist* with a subscription of 150. T. S. Eliot encouraged the ‘New’ writers in Jan 1939 issue of *The Criterion*, a critical magazine that he edited with:
For this immediate future, perhaps for a long way ahead, the continuity of culture may have to be maintained by a very small number of people indeed—and these not necessarily the best equipped with worldly advantages. It will not be the large organs of opinion, or the old periodicals; it must be the small and obscure papers and reviews, those which hardly are read by anyone but their own contributors that will keep critical thought alive and encourage authors of original talent (Smart, 2008, 10).

Edwardian England was affluent and stable. It was an ‘island of peace and prosperity’ and ignored the deep rooted social and political problems dealt by Charles Dickens and G. B. Shaw. H. G. Wells had imagined a future divided by class in *The Time Machine* (1895) and as if his prediction came true, the period between 1910 and 1939 was full of turmoil. Edwardian Capitalism was denigrated, labour laws and economic policies were questioned. Bernard, Wells and other progressive thinkers wrote against capitalism and finally labour party was formed in 1906 to represent the interests of the working class. Virginia Woolf in her essay *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (1924) recalled ‘in or about December 1910 human nature changed’. Women’s roles in the society changed drastically during this period. The Victorian ‘angel in house’ woman was changed into new independent woman who was no longer ready to accept the traditional subordinate position. Change in dress was a sign of women liberation and revolution; the corset disappeared and hobble skirt reached calf before the First World War and soon reached knee length. The most prominent feature of the time was change and transformation. Inventions of bicycles, motor cycles, motorcars, steamships and ultimately the aeroplane by Wright brothers in 1903 showed the supremacy of humankind over nature. Two writers of this time Polish Joseph Conrad and American Henry James’ style was to
be developed further by the modernists. Conrad’s focus on the power of narration; a single narrator with greater emphasis on symbolism and Henry James style of using long complicated sentences to express the emotions of characters was fully to be exploited by these writers. The modernist movement was full of experimentalism towards sophistication, difficulty and novelty in art but it also had its share of disillusionment, darkness, alienation and disintegration. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane note:

Like Romanticism, Modernism originated with historical neatness about the beginning of a century, in a period of deep intellectual reappraisal and social and intellectual change, and has come increasingly to dominate the sensibility, aesthetics of mind of the hard core of our greatest writers… Like Romanticism, it is a revolutionary movement, capitalizing on a vast intellectual readjustment and radical dissatisfaction with the artistic past – a movement that is international in character and marked by a flow of major ideas, forms and values that spread from country to country and developed into the main line of the western tradition(1976,28).

The modernists never stuck to one style. Their work was always individualistic in nature – a masterpiece; no two works were of similar kind. Novelists James, Mann, Conrad, Proust, Suvo, Joyce, Gide, Kafka, Musil, Hesse and Faulkner. Poets Eliot, Pound, Rilke, Mallarme, Valery, Lorka. Painters Picasso, Matisse and Briquet. Musicians Stravinsky and Schoenberg; all are creators of modernist masterpieces. It is therefore hard to convert modern into a universal style or tradition, the reason why critics have found it difficult to agree on its place or date of origin.
For example Cyril Connolly sees modernism somewhere between 1910 and 1925; D.H. Lawrence opines in Kangaroo that ‘it was in 1915 the old world ended’; Harry Levin called 1922 the miraculous year: the year of Ulysses, The Waste Land, of Rilke’s Duino Elegies and Sonnets to Orphans of Brecht’s first play Baal, Lawrence’s Aaron’s Rod and Virginia Woolf’s Jacob’s Room and Proust’s Sodom and Gomorrah. Even so, some critics assume this was the time when modernism started to decline; there is an argument on the time when modernism ended. The wars had a great impact on the sensibility of people. The modern in the post war period was changing into post-modern.

The modern / post modern distinction in literature is vague as it was a gradual transition in the writings of authors like Samuel Beckett, Robert Coover, Thomas Pynchon and others. Post modern is used to suggest literature of the last half of the 20th century or World War II onwards. Modernism placed faith in values and beliefs of western culture, whereas, post-modernists see human experience as unstable, ambiguous, indeterminate, fragmented and inconclusive, with no specific reality possible. These writers use strategies such as parody, metafiction and self-reflexivity as tools for word play. Since their work is ‘open’, a reader is free to make his own connections, meanings and conclusions. Post-modern is skeptical and distrustful of the modernist vision.
Jeremy Hawthorn in his *Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* notes not only how both modernism and post-modernism put a lot of stress on fragmentation but also how their ways are separate: the ‘modernist laments fragmentation while the post-modernist celebrates it’. Post-modernism is a major break from modernism and is yet its continuation. Although it preaches the dissolution of meta-narratives, it is itself the last meta-narrative: the loss of truth, ethics, value and responsibility. Frank Kermode and James Mallard were among the critics who believed that post-modernism is a renewed, sophisticated revision of modernism, suited to the contemporary times. It works with an ontological uncertainty and epistemological scepticism, attacking the ideas of a stable, autonomous being, with the individual being ‘deconstructed’ and ‘decentred’ into a subject who is also subjected. Post-modernists believed that we can never really know anything because all fields of knowledge: history, science and philosophy are entwined and thus reject epistemological certainty and authority. They seek a more democratic mindset, a tolerance of differences; multidimensionality of truth and its acceptance, for there are no fixed points of reference. Both the world and the self have lost unity, coherence, and meaning and are radically ‘decentred’ in post modernism.

One such postmodernist writer for whom the self and the world have lost unity is Iris Murdoch (1919-1999); the significant twentieth century writer, philosopher and literary critic whose novels display the features shared by Post-modernist writers. Her novels portray bizarre and carefully observed social and sexual narratives within
an intellectual middle-class milieu living in an eccentric nightmarish world. She often uses fantasy and gothic elements and her characters always grope in dark to find meaning to their lives in extra-ordinary situations. Her novels offer a wide world of characters and plots with ‘multiple interpretations’. She is a ‘prodigiously inventive and idiosyncratic writer’ who attacked both superficial self knowledge and hypocritical sincerity as second rate and found those virtues to be delusive. It was inconsistency and paradox that Murdoch specially wanted to capture in her novels; the real world.

Since the publication of her first novel *Under the Net* in 1954, Murdoch emerged as one of the most influential British novelist and was immediately recognized as a powerful intellectual and an ‘original theorist’ of fiction who pursued her metaphysical interest and examined it closely in her novels. Her literary sensibility and philosophical understanding helped her to write brilliantly. Peter J. Conradi regards *Under the Net* to be the best novel of Murdoch and thinks if she had not written any other work after it; she would still be remembered for this first novel. He thinks it to be of Romantic tradition which systematically inquires into the nature of man and his relations with art, true vision and imitation. From 1950’s onward her productive flow of novels brought a great deal of public attention as the work of no other post-war British novelist succeeded in doing. The 1960’s saw an increase in the frequency of her novels and also earned a lot of critical hostility. However the last years of the decade brought a change of direction both in the size and expression of her novels. She had matured and mastered the art of writing now. The decade of
1970 brought along a lot of public appreciation for her work. She was elected to the Irish academy in 1970 and became an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1975. Her 26 novels went on to win many honours making her one of the greatest novelists of international acclaim.

She received Whitbread Prize for her novel *Sacred and Profane Love Machine* in 1974. *The Black Prince* got James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1973 and was awarded the prestigious Booker Prize for her novel *The Sea, the Sea* in 1978. Several of her works have been adopted for screen like *An Unofficial Rose* and *The Bell*. J.B. Priestley dramatized her novel *A Severed Head* into a successful play. She has also written handful of plays, a volume of poetry and five books on philosophy. She is one of the dominant figures of postwar British literature who has published more than 50 titles during her lifetime.

Iris Murdoch was born in Dublin, Ireland. She studied at the famous Badminton School and learnt classics, ancient history and philosophy at the Somerville College, Oxford. Between 1942 and 1944 she worked for British Treasury and then for two years as an Administrative Officer with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. In 1948, Murdoch was elected a fellow of St. Anne’s College, Oxford where she worked as a tutor until 1963. She resigned to be a full-fledged writer but continued to deliver lectures at Royal College of Art. In 1987, she was made Dame Commander of the order of the British Empire. She married John...
Bayley – an Oxford Don and a fellow writer who was six years younger to her. She had no children. She contacted the dreadful Alzheimer’s in later years of her life and died in 1999 with the mental age of a three year old forgetting everything and surrendering to the contingent; the most important idea in her fiction.

Her post-modernist context notwithstanding, Murdoch explored truth both in her fiction and philosophical writings. Her fictional characters have almost always a separate internal and external world and one finds a complex relation between the mental and the physical world in these works. She explores the internal to link it with the external. Ramanathan (1995) suggests that Murdoch’s focus on the internal is to convey to the readers what they do not want to know about themselves: the convulsive, dark interior of ego and self. She shows her characters, with all their failings, to whom the readers can empathize. She shows what Elizabeth Dipple (1982) calls “the profound truth the questing mind seeks”, bringing out unexpected features of life which lie dormant in the unconscious. She believed that a novel can convey meaning if and only if the dark and incomprehensible nature of the human mind is mapped to help it to be understood. She believed in showing people their true selves, and to impress upon them the need to be ethical and moral so as to give up their egos. This she does through her novels; her ideal novel is one which combines form and contingency in a perfect way. She attempts to find a midpoint between metaphysics and empiricism as a part of her ethical philosophy by allowing a kind of metaphysical unity accounting for a contingent individual and his ordinary moral struggle. She brought back metaphysics to ethics in 20th century with her
treatise *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. She believes that metaphysics tries to find the basis of everything, to identify the deep structure which cannot be thought away from human life. Maria Antonaccio puts metaphysics as “fundamentally ‘one making’ endeavour which seeks to impose unity on a mass of detailed perceptions about human life in order to provide a guide to moral reflection” (1996, 126).

The importance she attached to empiricism made her feel the need for the contingent to be an essential part of ethics. Defending the value of the contingent human beings, she says, “Human beings are valuable… because they are human beings.” (Murdoch, 1992, 365) She hoped to revive the inner regions of consciousness (unconscious, subconscious) as a moral territory. Consciousness at individual level deals with form and contingency. It always creates unities, makes wholes from fragments, and is a continuous unified stream which is a permanent part of our being; we as human beings are constantly making discriminations between good and bad, true and false, better and worse etc by only looking at it from one personal perspective never looking at its multi-dimensionality. This is the bedrock of Murdoch’s philosophy; a journey from appearances to reality with the help of mindful consciousness and a desire for spiritual improvement or change. She believes that there is more than contingent connection between beauty, truth and goodness, the three great values. She criticized the contemporary emotive and meta-ethical theories and looked up to Plato for an alternative concept of ethical life where sensibility and vision are emphasized over principles and will. Ethical progress and aesthetic experiences form an integral part of the discussion in her philosophy.
She uses the term ‘unselfing’ for the activity by which one can free oneself from the egoistic, instinct-driven psyche directed at self-preservation, which is helped by aesthetic experiences. Beauty for her is “the convenient and traditional name of something which art and nature share, and which gives a fairly clear sense to the idea of quality of experience and change of consciousness” (Murdoch, 1970, 47). Murdoch felt that philosophical thinking should not be rigid and considered the possibility of alternative approaches to philosophical questions. Her style of writing is unlike any other philosopher; is the same as her fiction. She uses metaphor, assonance, simile like devices to ignite the mind of the reader. Style and content, conception and expression suit each other in her philosophy. She acquired the title of ‘mystical and idiosyncratic thinker’ during her Oxford days as she gave away the standard analytical ethics. Her philosophical style was to do philosophy in a way which both comments on, and presents an ideological alternative to the prevalent standard analytical ethics. She believed that the post-modern world can afford to lose God but not Good; the light in which human moral actuality is lived, judgements and choices are made. It is an unavoidable dimension of a moral life. She wants Good to be made the ‘centre of attention’ by continuous effort; by contemplating on it; by making it the ‘central point of reflection.’

Undesirability and indefinability are characteristics of the Good. She presumed that metaphors can help to understand its meaning and applies her most famous metaphor of sun: it is difficult to look at with naked eye but we can see it with the help of various instruments in comprehending Good. Although such metaphors do not define
Good, but they tell us how it functions in our lives and its different forms, but we can never have ‘possession’ of the whole idea of Good. For her Good and Love are synonyms. She puts immense faith in the power of love and feels it can be the reason for ‘unselfing’; the annihilation of the ego, if looked at in the correct perspective. Love for her is ‘the delightful perception of the inexhaustible otherness of the other’. She described love as the strain between the imperfect soul and the perfection which lies beyond it. Love is the core of her art and it works two ways; acting upon the self increases one’s capability of loving bringing about an awareness of a larger unity and wholeness which can be realised by letting love work in the soul, which then brings us to a central point that love is the virtue of loving ‘the other’ in its purest form which is nothing else but Good.

The main problem of her moral philosophy is “how is one to connect the realism, which must involve a clear-eyed contemplation of the misery and evil of the world with a sense of an incorruptible good without the latter idea becoming the merest consolatory dream.”(Murdoch, 1970, 61). Iris Murdoch distanced herself from all the theories that were prevalent in her times and gave importance to metaphysics; deconstruction was also not spared. In her seminal work *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* it was condemned openly (although she regarded Derrida a brilliant thinker). Whereas, her novels portray ‘a deconstructive position’ with their uncertainty, doubt and undecidability. Her narrative technique is also deconstructionist in nature with its denial of a centre. For instance:
In making the Good peripheral and central simultaneously, in having it both ways, as the angles of a room sometimes seem to change even while remaining exactly the same. Iris Murdoch, saying yea and nay at one and the same moment, engages in a dissolving of boundaries that Derrida would understand (Ramanathan, 1995, 43).

Jacques Derrida began life in a ‘multilingual and culturally complex world’ of French speaking Algerian Jew parents on July 15, 1930. His high school dream was to become a writer and teacher of literature. He completed his baccalaureate in 1948. While reading to get admission in one of the prestigious French Grandes Ecoles he began to be ‘awed by the philosophers especially Soren Kirkegaard and Martin Heidegger’ and got admission in eminent Ecole Normale Superieure in 1952. He cleared the highly competitive aggregation in 1956 to become a teacher for lifetime. In total he wrote forty-five books along with hundreds of essays and public presentations. Derrida became a philosopher of world importance in 1967 when he published three momentous texts: Of Grammatology, Writing and Differance and Speech and Phenomena. These were followed by many more influential texts which made deconstruction to occupy a major role in Europe and Anglo-American philosophy. Deconstruction’s way of textual analysis was extensively adopted in literary criticism and cultural studies and it made a tremendous change in the perceptions of the thinking milieu. Simultaneously, he was faced with unnatural amount of criticism throughout his tenure. When in an interview he was asked, “What's the most widely held misconception about you and your work?” He exclaimed:
That I'm a skeptical nihilist who doesn't believe in anything, who thinks nothing has meaning, and text has no meaning. That's stupid and utterly wrong, and only people who haven't read me say this. It's a misreading of my work that began 35 years ago, and it's difficult to destroy. I never said everything is linguistic and we're enclosed in language. In fact, I say the opposite, and the deconstruction of logocentrism was conceived to dismantle precisely this philosophy for which everything is language. Anyone who reads my work with attention understands that I insist on affirmation and faith, and that I'm full of respect for the texts I read. (McKenne, 2002)

No Philosopher has tried to disown the idea what his writings show more than Derrida.

Derrida’s method of reading a text is called deconstruction; a process, an activity of reading, irreducible to concept or method. He does not offer any definition of deconstruction, but only tells us what it is not. He tells:

Deconstruction is not primarily a matter of philosophical contents, themes or theses, philosophemes, poems, theologemes or ideologemes but especially and inseparably (of) meaningful frames, institutional structures, pedagogical or rhetorical norms, the possibilities of law, of authority, of representation in terms of its very market (Norris, 1987, 14).

He coined the term differance in order to suggest how meaning is always at once ‘deferred’ and ‘differential’, due to constant play of language and it cannot be fixed for a definition. He used this term extensively in Speech and Phenomena (1967) in which he challenges Husserlian phenomenology. Differance is the result of a long and careful process of argument not only in literature and linguistics but in the ontology of being itself.
Derrida insists that nothing is outside of a text and advises reading and re-reading. Each re-reading leads to a new meaning and this is his basic argument. He always wants to show that it is impossible to separate ‘irreplaceable singularity and machine like repeatability or iterability’ into two different things. Deconstruction is the dismantling of conceptual oppositions, taking apart of hierarchical systems of thought which can be put back in the text in a different order. It is the careful looking for *aporias*, blind spots or moments of self-contradiction when a text loses the tension between logic and rhetoric, between what it means to say and what it says. Deconstruction operates on reversal, capturing on casual metaphors, footnotes and turns of argument, which were always passed over by the traditional critical readers.

Derrida resists all these ‘methods’ of describing his deconstruction; the main assumption of his thought, i.e., meaning can never be grasped in the form of some proper, self-identical concept. It is thwarted by any of the above said techniques. He gave preference to writing over speech which shook the entire ‘logocentric’ order of Western metaphysics. Writing is *a priori* for Derrida in truly Kantian sense. We cannot think of culture, history or knowledge without the presence of the written word. He calls it *arche –writing*; the pre requisite of all possible knowledge. It is a form through which ideas are advanced and preserved in a perpetually expanding archive. In his *Of Grammatology* through his deconstructive logic of reversal –he insists that all thinking about language, philosophy and culture can be visualized within the context of a ‘massively extended writing’. This led philosophers to
believe that deconstruction is anti-philosophy and naïve literary critics got a chance to denounce the ‘superior truth-claims’ of great philosophers from Plato to the present day.

The deconstruction process does not see the world in specific or fixed entities, but in terms of a ‘dynamic process of differentiation’. Language is perfect example here as we understand the world with language and it can mean quite different from what was originally intended by language’s signs (written word); its meaning changes with the repeatability of words in different contexts, leading to *differance* (the meaning is always different and deferred). It is through certain double-edged metaphors that Derrida pursues his veiled textual logic.

Deconstruction is critical reading. Derrida pulls out the threads that give a text: philosophical, poetic, autobiographical, anthropological, linguistic or psychoanalytic coherence. He unravels them all, using the figure of a web to present a text: conflicting messages woven together. He notes that there are two kinds of forces: unifying and unravelling, working together in a text. When he says, ‘there is nothing outside the text’, he means that “the text is already an attempt to include its own outside. There is no outside of that” (Leitch, 2001, 1817). The text although its meaning is deferred and differs exists only in that moment of production. It reduces its signs of origin. The texts should be interpreted rigorously and prudently with
‘endless re readings from alternate points of view’ to untangle the hidden forces linking the present with the absent. He sees uncanny forces at work in every text of every language helped by ‘figural substitution’ with the same ‘metaphysics of presence’. Derrida believes in the prevalent theory of metaphor; essentially a deviant figure which attains its effect by disrupting the established (literal) relation between a signifier and signified. He wants to convey, “It is not therefore a matter of inverting the literal meaning and the figurative meaning but of determining the ‘literal’ meaning of writing as metaphoricity itself” (Derrida, 1967, 15). He believes in Plato’s philosophy to see beyond the sensory perception and material objects to a higher idea which is although present in the things but can be perceived essentially by inward seeking after truth.

Deconstruction is neither biased towards philosophy nor literature but the deconstruction of metaphysics passes through philosophy, trying to expose its dark spots. Derrida is more interested in the boundary that demarcates between philosophy and literature. Famous philosophers like Sartre and Voltaire’s philosophy may not find favour with modern readers but their literature is still widely read. It is difficult to classify deconstruction as philosophy or literature. Paul de Man observes that “deconstruction is an aspect of a text in which the impossibility of our knowing the world, the frailty of our understanding, and the limitations of our finite and mortal selves all come into play” (Thomson, 2006, 309). There is therefore never a ‘metaposition’ to be looked up to in deconstruction; the reading is committed towards finding the gap, the *aporia* which leads to an engaged relation to the *Other* which
can never be known and always deferred. So, Derrida opens the textual network of traces, omissions and silences with his reading and innumerable readings to come afterwards without any expectation or predictable future. ‘What remains unread’ is the central premise of Derrida’s work; it declares an endless commitment to reading, there is always work to be done. In his *Genesis, genealogies, genre and genius: the secrets of the archive* (2007) he discusses literature and its secrets and how they are never revealed; always to come in any moment of reading. There is the *Other*, present at all times the ‘haunting revenant’. This is the infinite power of literature to ‘forever seal the secret of what it says’ (18). We can’t ever read towards a final truth or ultimate central meaning as it is always deferred. Every work of literature is singular and hence every reading; meaning can be thought to be produced by differance, which is also reduced again innumerably through language. It demands rigorous reconstruction of what a text says at face value, keeping in mind its rhetorical and logical techniques to make it more effective. A text is not ruptured by excess of figural language and innumerable associations with a particular word or image. Deconstruction demands the interpretation to be a slow and patient process of “showing how a text is attached to the networks of metaphysical concepts which precede it and underlying the points at which those networks are themselves exposed to disruption and resistance” (Alex, 2006, 313).

Deconstruction method means a way of reading where the text is kept central and not the reader. The effort is to study how the text creates different meanings that may also be conflicting rather than to understand the author’s interpretation. The aim is to
look for contradictions, loopholes (aporia) in text which lead to different interpretations. Derrida’s deconstruction seems to have two important aims. First is to understand the text from how it manifests and second understanding the text from a non-logocentric point of view, not dominated by some transcendental signified or a central idea. So, one concentrates on analyzing the play of differences and textuality in a text. In deconstruction, one is not interested to know what the author wants to say than what is said in the text. It points to those spots of disputes within a text where it produces ‘aberrant meanings or chains of disruptive implication’ which work to threaten its manifest ‘logical’ sense. Derrida describes deconstruction as ‘double-writing’, ‘double-gesture’ and ‘double-science’, and demonstrates it by turning over the hierarchical binary oppositions. He displaces the opposition and gives a new concept by presenting the opposition differently. He uses this method of binary oppositions in deconstructing Rousseau’s texts in *De la grammatologie* (*Of Grammatology*).

The deconstructive way of reading is close reading. Texts are read slowly to observe different meanings, connotations, allusions, opposite meanings and dispersion of meanings. It does not attempt to understand text from the author’s point of view but from the reader’s intertextual allusions. It aims at studying ‘alien and incomprehensible’ parts of a text, without wanting to organise them in the basic theme of the text. He observes:
Deconstruction not only teaches us to read literature more thoroughly by attending to it as language, as the production of meaning through differance and dissemination, through a complex play of signifying traces; it also enables us to interrogate the covert philosophical and political presuppositions of institutionalized critical methods which generally govern our reading of a text. (Kearney, 2004, 125)

In deconstruction the movement is towards contextuality and inter-textuality. The meanings can never be presented finally and the text can be endlessly interpreted. It doesn’t advocate open-ended ‘free play’ instead advises meticulous ‘exchange and substitution’ of metaphoric links which move into a chain extending beyond the boundary of a single text or corpus of writings. It wants to find out that moment in a text which repeats itself; wherever thought tries to fix some factual ground on which to construct its ‘superior claims-to-truth.’ It wants to catch those moments of ‘undecidability’ in a text where writing tangles the meaning beyond its premeditation, “a point in the system where the signifier can no longer be replaced by its signified, so that in consequence no signifier can be replaced purely and simply.” (Derrida, 1976, 266) Deconstruction’s principal claim is that we are dealing with signs of a movement that is always present, repressed but decodable in the discussion of mimetic realism. It reminds that meaning is always ‘the sign of a sign’ and that thought cannot escape this logic of unlimited supplementarity.

Derrida was anointed a ‘post-structuralist’ after the historical conference in 1966 where he presented his revolutionary essay *Structure, sign and play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* though he never proclaimed any allegiance to structuralism
like Barthes and Foucault. Structuralism was only his latest attempt to understand the world by stripping away its myth. Saussure argues that ‘language is a system of differences without positive terms’. He treats language as fixed in time, a language we can only know in writing. However, Derrida says that the structure of language is always changing (differance). Saussure gave importance to speech, relegating writing to a secondary position much like Plato and Husserl and other Western thinkers, who regarded writing as a ‘dangerous supplement’ that philosophy must repress for its purpose by maintaining an impression of the priority of self-present speech. This repression of writing began with Plato who divided writing into a ‘good’ writing—the figurative ‘writing in the soul’ which leads to truth, and the other, the ‘debased literal’ writing. The main question of Derrida is against this logocentric thinking that “how has it come about that writing is subject to this strange reversal of values, its literal meaning everywhere spoken against while its figural sense takes on a whole range of occult or mystical overtones?” (Norris, 1987, 81). ‘Derridean grammatology’ or deconstruction wants to find out the blindspots of this logocentric treatise, the points at which writing returns to the scene of its own suppression. It wants to show the ultimate undecidability of these deep rooted conceptual oppositions. He begins by the classical idea that writing is ‘sign of a sign’ and hence meaning is also ‘sign of a sign’ and therefore thought cannot evade this endless supplementarity. So, writing is there since origin of language as origin is not possible without admitting the differential nature of signs. Derrida turned the argument around and showed how writing surpasses its restricted application. He insisted on rigorous literalism of the text. But this doesn’t mean to look at writing as
only literal marks on a page; it will reduce deconstruction to be simply a kind of meticulous close-reading technique. There always is an opposition between the letter and the spirit of the text, between an undermined literal way of understanding and an elite access to revealed truth which the researcher wants to seek in Iris Murdoch’s novels. Language is intentional through and through but that doesn’t mean that it can be taken in the literal sense or by authorial intention only. The researcher would show through contextuality and inter-textuality the various meanings that can be assigned to the novels of Iris Murdoch.

The research aim is not to point out conflicting elements in Iris Murdoch’s text. The aim is to open the limits of tradition to otherness, another logic, structure or interpretation and analyse the relationship between the tradition and the reverse image it represses. There will be an attempt to understand the logic, hierarchy and casual order that are presented in the texts and simultaneously to show the opposite in relation to the tradition. There will be a kind of acceptance of the opposites, as the opposites cannot be comprehended without the other. For Derrida this otherness of the text is unconsciousness of the text. Derrida’s unconscious is different from Freud’s (which is the part of brain beyond consciousness which however has a strong influence upon our actions); it is a mark of otherness hidden in a text from performance which can be attempted to make visible through deconstruction. For Derrida, the unconscious is part of the very framework of language and thought, rather than an empirical unknown that can possibly be manifested. The unconscious for Derrida is always deferred; it is an irreducible delay, a part of the very structure
differance, of language. It is the search for that which remains absent and other than oneself. This Otherness has to be perceived in a text with the help of language; the ‘signs of signs’ whose meaning always changes. Sign implies a deferred presence, one not immediate. So, we can never really get to its root, the ultimate central meaning. This is where Derrida and Iris Murdoch meet; both of them are in awe of life and its mystery. Both of them know that it can never be understood with our limited human knowledge so, their most pertinent concept is the concept of Other and their understanding that truth can never be known. It is always postponed for Derrida and for Murdoch, if at all it can be understood with ‘unselfing’ which demands two understandings: the first is the knowledge that human beings are in a state of illusion. The second is the comprehension of the moral state first through physical love and then converting this love into spiritual love which she thinks is another name for death. Acceptance of death (both physical and metaphorical) makes us unselfed; which for her is synonymous to Good. Murdoch never defined Good; it is mysterious in nature and its complete understanding is always deferred.

Murdoch and Derrida both have an ethical dimension which is quite prominent in Murdoch from her first novel itself and is quite explicit in her philosophy. For Derrida it surfaced with Simon Critchley’s seminal work The Ethics of Deconstruction. In Of Grammatology Derrida elucidates that the removal of delusions of language is an ethical task (truth seeking) which deconstruction aims at. “There is no ethics without the presence of the Other but also, and consequently
without absence, dissimulation, detour, difference, writing…the ethic of speech is the delusion of presence mastered”(Derrida,139-140,1977)

The researcher will use deconstruction as an analysis to look into Iris Murdoch’s five chosen novels and show how the meaning, the reality is always prolonged and postponed both for the characters and readers; the only way to come closer to its understanding is by looking at the Other as different from one’s own selfish self. Peter Barry (2010, 71-76) has divided the deconstruction process into three stages; the verbal, the textual and the linguistic. The verbal stage is similar to the conventional close reading in which the texts are studied looking for ‘paradoxes and contradictions’ at purely verbal level. The researcher looks for internal contradictions which suggest the untrustworthy nature of language. The reversal of the ‘privileged’ binary oppositions is put here, this is ‘reading the text against itself’, showing the ‘signifiers’ against the ‘signified’ and bringing out the Derridean unconscious. The second stage is the textual stage which looks at the entirety of the text. It seeks to find out shifts or breaks in the continuity which can be of many kinds; “shift in focus, shift in time, tone or point of view or attitude, pace or vocabulary, grammar” (72). In the textual stage the paradoxes and contradictions are looked at from a broader perspective. ‘Omissions’ also have to be looked at carefully. It is when a text hides something purposefully. The third stage is the linguistic stage, where language’s inadequacy comes into question. It means when a text says something and then does exactly the opposite. The deconstructive reading thus aims to show disunity and conflicts in a text.
The researcher will look into disunity, conflicts, shifts and contradictions which is general *aporia* in Iris Murdoch’s chosen novels keeping well in mind the post-modern sense and sensibility of human race with all its oddities and paradoxes which Iris Murdoch has justified brilliantly in her novels. She has given us myriad reasons to think and ponder over the world and its multidimensionality without passing any judgment. The researcher wants to show that aporia in Murdoch is a device to glossify the text, to keep the *otherness* hidden under layers of meanings so that the privileged understanding stays with the erudite. This is the reason why she puts a lot of melodrama, myth, mystery, gothic, detailed natural descriptions and various postmodern devices like magic realism, temporal distortion and fragmentation to waiver the reader from the *otherness* of the text. There is an unconscious narrative process in her novels which brings out the gap between meaningful, ordered fiction and the chaotic, contingent reality of lived experience. This is the Derridean ‘play’ in her novels. She uses a lot of italics also in her novels, whose usage increased with the expansion in her works. The italic is the typeface of the elite. It depicts accuracy, insistency and prominence. It is the master trope in English rhetoric. Italics fracture the English body type; it is to print the other, the highly authorial words. Iris Murdoch uses italics as a medium to show her authorial presence, to give an idea to look into the unconscious desires, actions and motives of her characters. The more the number of italicized words of a character the more he has to struggle to find out the answers to his questions; more confused and ‘muddled’ he is. The researcher will be using one or all or many kinds of analysis that encompass deconstruction in reading Iris Murdoch’s five novels which are chosen keeping in mind her long
END NOTES


