Chapter Five

Summation

Murdoch believes that art has to fulfill a moral mission and her fiction contributes to the progress of the society. The ultimate aim of art is to reshape human consciousness by widening man’s sympathy for the sake of the society. According to Murdoch, the function of a writer is to enlarge his readers’ perspectives and help his readers sympathize with their fellowmen. By presenting different types of characters in her fiction, she tries to make her readers see the deficiencies in human personality and invite human beings to attend to each other.

As an artist, Murdoch attempts to fictionalize reality to suit her aesthetic ends. Her manipulation of realistic detail is designed to create the illusion of her character’s independence. Realism is her highest aim and she sees the novel as a marvelous form which tries to show that human beings differ from each other. According to Murdoch:

The novel thus is a place where the nature of morality can be seen. It reveals to us aspects of our world which our ordinary dull dram-consciousness is unable to see. Art pierces the veil and gives sense to the notion of a reality which lies beyond appearance; it exhibits virtue in its true guise in the context of death and chance. (Sovereignty 88)

Murdoch, through her novels, tells the readers a complete story, that evaluates reality and exposes truth. In depicting the whole truth, her vision includes the existence of
metaphysical values. In the novel as such, much of the tension and drama comes from the inner struggle between man’s higher and lower nature, his moral and spiritual aspirations and their relation to the idea.

The present study, through critical analysis, has discovered Murdoch’s moral and philosophical ideas implied in her novels. Her conception of morality is characterized by the relationships among human beings. For her, a man’s moral development is based on his interaction with other individuals. She believes that moral growth comes to those who leave the egoistic concerns and give way to sympathetic response to the sufferings of others. She urges human beings to sympathize with one another. As long as the individuals treat others with sympathy and understanding, they can develop morally.

Murdoch’s views are based on humanistic principles such as love, kindness and compassion. Her aim is to contribute to the creation of a happier society by presenting the evils of egoism. Her characters have distinct egoistic and altruistic qualities. The plots in her novels are shaped by the egoism of main characters whose development depends on their departure from egoism and selfishness and arrival at objectivity. Although the characters in Murdoch’s novels are sometimes in conflict with the society, they tend to find solutions to their problems within the social structure they live in because they, like their creator contend for the harmony of society. To Murdoch, the welfare and happiness of humanity as a whole is more important than the personal satisfaction and happiness of the individual.

Murdoch conveys her understanding of morality through a realistic presentation. In her novels, human relationships are mainly linked with reality. Her characters are
victims of self-created myths and illusions and these illusions are shown to be destroyed when the victims of these illusions come in contact with the reality of the other. The moral growth of the characters in these realistic novels reveals Murdoch’s faith in human potentiality. To be an individual, one requires an ability to be both anxious and capable of the quietude and comfort that comes from illusion formation and self-deception. In the end it is an overcoming of self and its illusions that brings true freedom.

The study finds out the moral depth and psychological freedom in the context of some important and representative novels of Iris Murdoch. Freedom is connected with an accurate vision of reality. As human beings are constantly engaged in weaving falsifying structured veils of fantasies, they often fail to perceive the reality. Psychological freedom can be brought about by a disciplined process of unselfing and suppression of the ego. The study also brings out Murdoch’s contribution in reviving interest in moral philosophy. Her chief preoccupation is with the ethical concerns of goodness and freedom, modified and enriched by the philosophies of existentialism and Platonism.

The analysis uncovers several equally significant themes in the select novels. The characters and story line are intricately intertwined to produce dramatic effect whenever necessary. The study has unraveled the character’s quest for freedom and love and the path they follow towards attaining it. Through her novels, she attempts to distinguish love and freedom from truth and fantasy. These issues are dealt with and illustrated in the main chapters of the thesis.

Murdoch wishes to highlight a philosophy which can accommodate inner experience. The individual’s personal experience is fundamental in Murdoch’s view
because the moral value is recognized in the individual’s capacity to be good. The concept of the self is the starting point for her broader philosophical vision, which depends on the capacity of the individual to have meaningful inner experience and to recognize and experience different levels of consciousness. She not only traces the decline of philosophically workable concepts of the self and ideological changes but also the decline of a religious worldview. As theology and religion lose their authority the picture of the soul fades and the idea of the self loses its power. As a result of the decline of religion and the accompanying philosophical ideology, man not only has lost belief in God, but also has lost his concept of self and concludes that the individual with his boasted inner life is really disturbed by illusion. For Murdoch, filling this void is central, one must reject the current denial of the inner and establish a working concept of self.

In her attempt to reassert the concept of the self, Murdoch comes into direct conflict with her contemporary philosophers who advocate existentialism and empiricism. She takes Sartre seriously because Sartre takes consciousness seriously, and although he attacks the idea of the unified self, and explores the viscous insubstantial nature of consciousness, he still locates the individual in the reality of consciousness. Murdoch is very much impressed in this nature of human consciousness, she feels, the existentialist writings are at their most brilliant in this sort of semi-psychological description and analysis. However, despite her initial infatuation towards existentialism, Murdoch ultimately finds it unsatisfying in its attempt to preserve the individual consciousness. She is dissatisfied with the explanation and seeks other explanations for filling up the void.
According to Murdoch, the emphasis on the freedom of the will means egocentric. To deny the self, consciousness and the inner life, for Murdoch is to deny the reality of the individual and to ignore an important source of knowledge, particularly moral knowledge. For Sartre, the individual is outside the world. To Murdoch, Sartre’s picture of self-knowledge is negative, destructive and inaccurate. The elevation of the individual consciousness denies the reality of the world, the reality of other people and the complex nature of the inner self. For Sartre, there is no human nature, there is only the human condition.

Most of the characters of Murdoch can be classified into two types: conventional or Ordinary Language Man and neurotic or Totalitarian Man. She delineates Ordinary Language Man as exemplified in the works of English linguistic philosophers and Totalitarian Man particularly exemplified in the works of Sartre and other French existentialists. Murdoch feels both the images of the human self are profoundly inadequate as they do not gain spiritual or worldly success. This is because partly they are egoistic and also do not allow for the variety of experiences. She finds that convention and neurosis are the ailments of the modern man. Convention would lead an individual into a life pattern, where too much of importance is given to primitive internal reality. Neurosis gives too much importance to external reality. Both these would become enemies of love and morality. Murdoch considers morality and goodness only as forms of realism. She believes that for being good one requires the intellectual ability to understand others.

Murdoch’s ordinary language man or conventional characters are good characters who always want to do good for others. They form certain restrictions and ideas of their
own and try to adhere to those fixed rules. A good man is aware of his surroundings and the existence of other people and their claims. Goodness of a person comes to be known when he does something to improve his surroundings and also does something to mitigate the sufferings of other people. She considers goodness fundamental in her philosophy. As a devoted Platonist, she equals her notion of good with Plato’s image of the sun from his allegory of the cave. To join the world, to pay attention to it and to unself oneself are the central concepts of her philosophy.

In most of Murdoch’s novels there is a marginal character who is a saintly figure and paradigm of good. Such a person being self-effacing is almost invisible and powerless. Such characters continue doing good quietly, according to their understanding, in a world becoming increasingly amoral and even immoral. Murdoch also indicates the difficulty of presenting interesting good characters because they are not assertive. However, her novels present a convincing portrait of the good person through several characters who approach goodness. They see unity in all life and strive for the harmony of all living things. Humility is their prime virtue because they are not worldly and are not looking for earthly consolations or rewards. These characters are viewed as failures by their materialistic and ego-centred fellow characters. Even these good characters possess power, they do not use it to gain for selfish ends, for manipulation and for power-wielding which are worldly concerns which discrete spirituality. In Under the Net, Murdoch presents Hugo as a good character doing good to others. Ann in An Unofficial Rose, is a conventional character who loves and sacrifices her aspiration for the sake of her family members. Even after the departure of her husband, Randall, she refuses to marry Felix. Being a conventional figure, she sticks on the rules and continues
to lead an orderly life. Tallis in *A Fairly Honorable Defeat* is unrecognized by others due to his conventions. He is ready to accept his wife Morgan, though she develops an affair with Julius. Thus these conventional figures live for others forgetting their needs. They do not try to control others. Instead, they display a just apprehension of others. Their moral vision precedes right action.

Murdoch employs the psychological term ‘Neurosis’ in which egoistic perception functions as a form of totalizing vision that subordinates the reality of the world and others to its own self-consciousness. The neurotic self is so enclosed in its own solipsist fantasy that it never confronts anything real outside itself. Jake in *Under the Net* leads a self-centered life without caring for others. He fails to understand the existence of others. He avoids his friends and seeks them whenever he is in need of them. Even though, he lives with Madge in the same flat, he makes no effort to know her. In the same way, he ignores Finn and his aspirations. He fails to understand Hugo and his ideas. Thus Jake, with his egoism lives in his own world without attending to others.

Murdoch’s protagonists also seek some form of definition in an uncertain society. Initially each protagonist shows a lack of involvement in work and unresponsiveness to social demands, and an acute sense of estrangement from physical surroundings, from other people and most of all from the self. Rosa in *The Flight from the Enchanter* alienates herself from others and lives in a world of illusion. Murdoch’s characters are self-centered concerning with their own wants and needs. They live in a world of fantasy. World of fantasy represents human egoism and urges one to construct falsifying veils, which distort one’s vision. These false veils created by egomaniac fantasy thus stand in the way of one’s possibilities of seeing true reality. In order to cope with these aspects of
life the individual consoles him/herself by creating false systems and illusions for his/ her interpretation of life.

Randall in *An Unofficial Rose* dwells in a world of fantasy and goes in search of form and freedom. Due to this, he fails to lead a happy married life. He ignores the needs and love of his wife, Ann. In *The Unicorn*, through Hannah, Murdoch takes the aid of the gothic framework to create a suitably closed atmosphere of fantasy and enchantment which cramps moral progress and keeps freedom at bay. In *The Nice and the Good*, Ducane is interested only in himself and fails to love others.

For Murdoch, the modern man is totally absorbed in his affairs. He has lost interest in the world around him and does not realize the problems he has to face to rise above the worldly interests. Morgan in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* is interested only in herself. She in her solipsism ignores her husband’s love for her. She blindly believes that she loves everyone. As she is blurred in her moral vision, she fails to identify her own failures. Murdoch presents Morgan as a self-obsessed character, who craves for love and freedom. The illusion of perspective has placed man at the centre of space in a way that each person imagines that he/she is situated at the centre of the world, and as such one lives an unreal existence. Bradley in *The Black Prince* leads a self-obsessed life not caring for the needs of others. In order to fulfill his goal as a creative writer, he ignores the people around him.

Murdoch’s Totalitarian Man or neurotic figures are self-centred and live in a world of illusion. She feels that human beings do lose their freedom through neurosis or obsession. The select novels are tales of obsession, jealously and guilt. In these novels, she
extends her investigation of the saint and the artist, the quest for the good, the difficulties of renouncing power and the relationship between arts and life. The totalitarian man’s highest value is his own will and his own assertion of his solitary self in a hostile society.

Murdoch argues that liberalism, romanticism, existentialism and linguistic empiricism fail to articulate a criterion for morality that goes beyond choices and the will. Instead of a solitary agent who creates value by choices alone, the moral self, according to Murdoch, ought to efface its ego in seeking to perceive the other as they really are in order to respond to them in a morally adequate way. According to Murdoch, the modern philosopher’s focus on human will fails to dismantle selfishness, the central dilemma of moral life, which distorts the moral agent’s perception of others. As Murdoch’s moral psychology locates egoism directly at the image-creating processes of human consciousness, this process must be disrupted.

Murdoch, in her novels, thus examines the reasons that prevent one to arrive at reality. Man in the Post-War period turns to be a hollow man who loses faith in God and experiences a spiritual emptiness within. For leading an orderly life, God and religious faith should be at the centre, but modern man alienates himself from this centre and leads a confused and disorderly life and eventually fails to see the self of others. Thus he becomes a self-centred man rejecting the reality of others, even the conventional characters refuse to change their notions for anything. Thus modern man and his problems receive Murdoch’s attention. Murdoch through her characters examines the importance of self expression.
Murdoch’s novels depict the sinful world, which is full of self-centered characters indulging themselves in various sins. Her interest in morality and ethics is not a preoccupation with a narrow and a dogmatic set of moral precepts. Murdoch’s imagination is concerned with how men handle their lives, how they live out their relationships with others, how they conceive their choices and how they respond to those choices. The sterile systems provided by the language philosophers for describing man’s moral behaviour cannot encompass the richness and complexity which Murdoch sees in man’s impact with his world. For her, morality consists in the task of understanding and loving others. This conception of morality is central to Murdoch’s thought and in her writings, she stresses the importance of attending others.

As a moral-philosopher, Murdoch believes that art not only functions to enrich one’s moral understanding but also cultivates one’s virtue and helps human beings achieve a better life. She does not fail to bring out the characters’ moral failings in her novels. As they are blinded by egoistic fantasies, they fail to follow moral values. They indulge themselves in adultery, homosexuality, incest, power-mongering, abortion and suicide. These immoral activities remain obstacles to perceive reality. Due to this moral disorder in their lives they fail to arrive at transformation. Living in a world of fantasy, they fail to understand and respect the individuality of others. The study identifies the moral lapses in the lives of the characters. Through the characters’ demoralization, Murdoch makes the readers realize the importance of moral order in one’s life.

Murdoch states that ethics should not merely be an analysis of ordinary, mediocre conduct but that it should be a hypothesis about good conduct and about how this can be achieved. In her novels, she brings out the sin of adultery, in order to focus the genuine
significance of marriage. Her disloyal partners break the laws of marriage, in pursuit of freedom and love. Dora in *The Bell* flees from her husband Paul to regain her individuality. In *A Severed Head*, both Martin and Antonia deceive each other by developing extramarital relationships. Randall in *An Unofficial Rose*, leaves his wife Ann and develops an affair with Lindsay in search of form and freedom. He thinks coming out of the marriage bond will help him lead a happy life. Morgan in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* fails to understand the love of her husband Tallis. Thus most of the characters fail to respect the institution of marriage. In *The Black Prince*, Rachel, Arnold’s wife tries to trap Bradley because her husband does not love her and allow her to assert her individuality. Similarly, Roger forsakes his wife Priscilla for the simple reason that he needs a child. Marriages depicted in Murdoch’s novels are in a state of decay or dissolution. Marital disharmony occurs due to lack of love and attention between the partners.

The theme of power and enslavement is one of the ways of projecting evil. Murdoch catches the play of the dreaming ego and its fantasies and through this she presents an intensified vision of evil. The ego twists even the most subtle and positive materials into instruments of power in human relationships. Murdoch’s Mischa Fox and Julius King are demonic controllers, who prevent the freedom of others. As the enchanter figures delineated by her fail to show love, they suffer and make others also suffer. Mischa and Julius represent the lack of love. They destroy those with whom they come into contact. Those who are able to recognize and accept reality are able to love others. Lack of understanding the reality coexists with lack of love. The function of the
enchanter figures is to explain and emphasize this theme. While portraying omnipotent power-mongers, Murdoch highlights the archetypal play of evil.

In her novels, Murdoch examines the psychological problems of the homosexuals. The various laws passed during her time, make the homosexuals feel insecure. Homosexuality is considered as sinful and unnatural by the public. Homosexuals fear that if people come to know about their intention, they will be alienated from their public lives. This fear and guilt prevent them to love others. Micheal Meade in the *The Bell* suffers from this torment of guilt. As the leader of a religious community, he is expected to be free from this kind of sinful activities. No one in the community except Nick knows about his past sinful life. After Nick’s arrival in the Imber Court, Micheal fears that Nick would reveal this to others. This fear leads him to exercise his power over others and becomes an obstacle to attend others. His alliance with Toby also disturbs him a lot. In *The Fairly Honourable Defeat*, through Axel and Simon, Murdoch presents how these homosexual characters are perceived by the public. They lack freedom and try to hide their affairs. Murdoch through these characters stresses the importance of freedom and love in one’s life.

One of Murdoch’s recurrent themes is the sexual habits of the British bourgeoisie which has begun to develop after the Second World War. As they have discarded Victorian morals, Murdoch freely talks about incest in her novels. Palmer, the psychoanalyst in *A Severed Head* is supposed to cure this kind of ailment but he too commits incest with his half sister Honor Klein. For Murdoch, psychoanalysis generates self-concern and redirects one’s vision. It will not make one grow morally. For her, one’s energy should turn outwards by loving and attending others.
Murdoch shows serious attention in her novels about deaths and suicides. She analyses the reasons for committing suicide. Murdoch’s philosophy of love is linked with all the moral problems. Lack of love urges one to take unwanted decisions. Murdoch wants the human beings to possess goodness and love. Her characters like Nick, Nina and Priscilla commit suicide as they are neglected by others. The ideas of unselfing, attention, otherness and the real that make up Murdoch’s conception of love are to be encountered in all her novels. Self-absorption, fantasy and illusion make the individuals blind to see the needs of others.

In her novels, Murdoch displays the traumatic state of the characters after having abortion. She considers abortion as an evil and makes the characters realize their flaws. The characters in their ego-centric fantasies are dispelled to do wrong. After coming out from this world of illusions, they come to know and realize their misgivings. Murdoch’s erring characters like Morgan and Priscilla abort their children for their own welfare.

The analysis has explored Murdoch’s moral depth in her novels. As a moral-philosopher, she wants the human beings to lead a morally good life. To fulfill this quest, she points out some of the moral problems in her novels. Through her ethical discussions, Murdoch renders moral values for the modern man. She witnesses loss of religious and moral values in the twentieth century individuals. Man has become materialistic and in pursuit of his own needs, leads a life of illusion. This quest changes him into a self-centred person caring only for himself. As he is devoid of moral values and faith in God, he readily falls into the pit of sin. His self-centredness blinds him to view the reality of others. He continues to lead a sinful life not bothering its consequences. Murdoch realizes the mental state of the modern man and tries to find a solution for these problems. She
finds the modern man in a state of lack of essence and meaning of life. She tries to capture the attention of the modern man through her novels. She examines the various moral failures and gives solution to overcome from these evils. She identifies the reasons for each problem and makes man come out from that act. Murdoch discovers goodness and love as essentials to out beat these problems. If one possesses these virtues, he/she can conquer these evils and lead a righteous life.

Murdoch also highlights human being’s progression towards self-discovery. The study focuses on the quest of an individual to identify a meaningful direction for his/ her life. In order to attain this desired goal, the individual must overcome his acute sense of isolation by acquiring self-knowledge. Once the individual develops an acceptable concept of self, the estrangement he experiences is minimized. From a close reading of the select novels, this study has identified that after an adventurous pursuit of freedom and love, the characters obtain self-renewal and self-transformation.

The inability to perceive objectively the individual personalities of the other characters stems primarily from strong dependent relationships with other people who appear to be in touch with reality and thus confident of their identity. These dependent relationships are however based on illusions held by the pursuer. When these illusions are shattered, each protagonist who has been uncertain of an identity gains an insight into his/ her individuality and the personalities of the other characters. When Jake, the self-centred protagonist in *Under the Net* is freed from his fantasies about Hugo and Anna, he recognizes for the first time his uniqueness and his potential to be a creative writer. Jake as an artist, achieves personal and artistic freedom by facing reality and loving others.
The basic predicament of each central character springs from a lack of self-knowledge, the inability to perceive and to be responsive to the uniqueness of others. Creative use of attention becomes essential to one’s perception of others. It brings moral change and reduction of egoism through an increased awareness of the reality of other people and things. In *The Flight from the Enchanter*, Rosa, who is under the overpowering spell of Mischa, liberates herself from his influence and returns to work as editor of an independent socialist publication, a responsibility she had previously avoided.

Murdoch is of the opinion that ego stands as an obstacle in the way to attain proper and complete freedom which helps a person to perceive reality. The essentials of human nature do not allow the ego to come out of its limited self. The very conventionality obstructs the perception of objective reality and makes people destructive and unloving. Randall, in *An Unofficial Rose*, in a fit of frenzy quits his wife and lives with Lindsay. Only after his departure, he begins to realize his faults. He hopes that Ann will wait for him and dreams a better life in Grayhallock. Hannah Crean-Smith in *The Unicorn* is deluded by a false idea of freeing herself from her past. The pursuit ends in defeat as she refuses to perceive reality.

Murdoch makes the most lucid, convincing and enlightening statement on the subject of death and its relationship with love in *The Nice and the Good*. The experience of living close to death forces an intensity of attention which is unusual in the dreamy life of man. It sharpens not only the apprehension of reality but also inspires a selfless love and teaches a true exercise of freedom. Such mystical moments of the sublime are
experienced by the self-centred character Ducane. He is in a state of illusion that he
comes to recognize through love and a near death experience.

Murdoch’s characters are enslaved by society and by the will of others, stronger
than themselves. But they are also figuratively enslaved by their passions and their
obsessions. Morgan in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* lives in the world of illusion. Her
egoistic notions prevent her from seeing the reality of others. When these illusions get
scattered from her mind, she begins to realize her own faults. Murdoch has mentioned the
perception of reality as the most important aspect in the growth of the personality of an
individual. This perception of reality is possible only if the self is to be freed from selfish
passion, cruelty and egoism. When the true knowledge arrives the self of the individual
gets liberated from the fetters of the world. In *The Black Prince*, Murdoch presents the
danger and ambiguity of an aesthetic life in the character of Bradley. His life in pursuit of
art and beauty is actually an indulgence in fantasy and egoism. It also suggests, although
Bradley pursues art for all the wrong reasons, it ultimately serves to purge him of his
egoism and finally leads him towards goodness. The novel focuses on moral
improvement through the enabling power of love and particularly through art.

The protagonists first suffer the setback and failure resulting from their self-
centeredness, then by realizing this, they give up self-attention and learn to focus on
others and the world. They remove selfishness from their own consciousness which
becomes a kind of void and allow love to enter it and this process leads them to achieve
the ultimate good. This pilgrimage is a process in which man gives up self-attention and
learns to focus on others. Only when the self is emptied from the consciousness, the
reality can be perceived by the individual.
Through a variety of incidents, all the characters in Murdoch’s select novels experience a dialectical change which enables them to discover the uniqueness of their own identities and to apprehend the individual value of other people. The overall solution that Murdoch suggests in these novels is that the individual once freed from his subjective illusions about others, can find meaning and purpose in life. Furthermore, once the protagonist discovers this purposeful direction in life, each one is able to balance the various demands of his/her social, professional and private life in accordance with the demands of his/her distinctive nature. Each central figure gravitates from a position of isolation to affiliation with other people, from non-identity to identity and most of all, each major character develops a desirable concept of self that restores purpose and direction in the protagonist’s otherwise meaningless existence.

Murdoch’s conventional characters are rational beings who stick on to their own notions. Though she appreciates them, she does not fail to condemn them wherever convention prevents them to attain reality. Hugo in Under the Net realizes his mistakes and commits himself to a life of material renunciation. Murdoch does not show Ann in An Unofficial Rose attaining reality. Throughout the novel, she remains the same without any change. She continues to lead her life as usual. Like Ann, Tallis in A Fairly Honourable Defeat does not attain reality. He too remains unchanged till the end of the novel. Though Morgan rejects him and leaves with his sister for California, he remains unaffected. These characters fail to shed their false notions to attain reality.

The chapter wise analysis has made evident that the stage before ‘unselfing’ is a condition of inability for the protagonists and their fragmentary forms of selves are either misleading, disturbed or distorted images of themselves. Once the unselfing is attained,
the self makes a compromise or adjustment to the reality of existence. And this is the chief function of self. Self at this point is a tactful liberator of the psyche from the binding shackles of obsessions, illusions, fears, anxieties, marriage, violence, alienation, truth, emotional disparities and sense of guilt that issue forth from the predicamental existence. Murdoch’s protagonists enjoy a common ability of celebrating reality, however despicable the contingencies may be. They come to terms with self only after a marathon exercise of illusory pursuits, misappropriations and misinterpretations.

Murdoch’s novels are realistic depictions of the morally vacuous nature of contemporary society. Though she presents the life of the twentieth century individuals, it can also be applicable to the present era. Like Murdoch’s characters, most of the people are in pursuit of their own interests. The world is full of ambitious and self-centred people. In their trial to achieve their goal, they become egoists. For Murdoch, the fundamental moral problem is to acquire clarity of vision as the condition of virtuous consciousness. Virtue comes through a complex process called ‘unselfing’. As an idea of perfection, goodness is also connected, by analogy with the attempt to see oneself in relationship with others; this practice of seeing and responding to the real world of others develops a virtuous consciousness by overcoming the tendency of the ego to efface the reality of others. Hence, virtue consists partially of the complex movement beyond the self, toward what Murdoch calls “virtuous consciousness” and partially the nurtured capacity for love.

For Murdoch, literature is the highest form of art. Its fundamental virtues are tolerance, and respect for reality as it is. According to Murdoch, morals must have their starting point in the concrete and in contextual reality. It is life as it is experienced that
provides the framework for being moral. Moral life must be rooted in reality, but at the same time must include active focusing on and attention towards ideals. For her, the primary task of moral philosophy is to develop a set of terms that will enable one to reflect upon morality in a way that transcends human experience. Her philosophy is concerned with developing a metaphysical horizon for morality, rather than constructing simple ready-made recipes of what to do and what not to. The desire to see truly and justly the others with patience and tolerance is an exercise of virtue because clear vision brings with it insight, lucidity, clarity, enlightenment, truth, knowledge, love and moral goodness.

Murdoch stands out among her contemporaries for her consistent concern for moral intensity and technical virtuosity. She employs techniques like symbols, allusions and imagery. Symbolism plays a significant role in the novels of Murdoch. In *An Unofficial Rose*, the rose is the fundamental symbol of the novel. The unofficial roses acquire natural beauty and a natural form. The official roses are symbols of determinism and the human urge to impose a form on nature. In *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, Morgan’s hunt of the pigeon symbolizes her chase of her innocent self. In *The Unicorn*, Murdoch presents her philosophical ideas through the gothic image and setting. These symbolic representations substantiate the philosophical truths implied in the novels.

The imagery which Murdoch uses in her novels has a reinforcing and consolidating function. In *The Flight from the Enchanter*, she uses bird imagery by comparing Mischa’s face to a hawk. She also relates him to a fox as he is cunning and wicked in his actions. In *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, Morgan identifies herself with the pigeon. The dilemma concerning the pigeon states her psychological state.
Murdoch’s brilliant narrative technique seeks attention of the readers. She makes use of the authorial voice and the omniscient view-point. Her male first person narratives can be considered her permanent achievements. In these novels, Murdoch lavishes all privileges of self-interpretation on characters who are intolerably self-deceived. Murdoch’s male protagonists often deform reality.

Thus the study finds out the internal coherence of Murdoch’s moral thought and its richness in providing conceptual schemes and explanatory pictures of human being in relation to the good. Murdoch presents a sufficiently complex image of human personality. One of the most significant aspects of her novels is the attention which she devotes in order to reveal the good and the insight of the truth. As modern man lives in a state of confusion and emptiness, he must come forward to find the essence of his life. For that, he has to shed his egoistic notions and direct his attention towards others. Goodness is the outcome of recognition of truth. A perfected goodness is constantly oriented towards seeing and knowing the goodness of others. Murdoch believes, goodness diminishes one’s selfishness and guides one towards moral perfection.

As the study focuses only on the philosophical and moral issues of Murdoch, it paves way for further research possibilities. Murdoch’s novels can also be studied in the light of queer theory and cultural studies criticism. As Murdoch’s novels are concerned with the conflict between good and evil, she can be compared with novelists like Graham Greene and William Golding. Like Murdoch, George Eliot too gives undue importance to the evils of egoism. Even though Murdoch does not call her an existentialist, existential issues can be explored in her novels. Comparing her with the Indian novelists like Arun Joshi, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande will be a rewarding experience.