Preface

One of the leading British novelists of today, Iris Murdoch is internationally famous and extremely popular. Her essays, articles, and novels express ideas related to social and cultural reality.

Murdoch believes that loss of moral reference in the twentieth century has seriously affected characterization in contemporary fiction. Characters now lack profundity. Man must live entirely in the present and be concerned with only the contingent or he must draw sustenance from convention.

The contingency, according to Murdoch, along with death, must be included in one's love for life. Some basic fundamental values like love, charity, truth, and goodness are extremely precious, as they create social intercourse, and connect one human being to the other in a just and harmonious manner.

Iris Murdoch's novels are concerned with the most central and fundamental problem of modern times. All around us in modern society, she finds a bleakness created by decay of faith. We find in her novels an awareness of the moral bleakness and aimlessness of man. Several characters in her novels are acutely conscious of this lack of moral reference or some substantial faith to fall back upon in times of uncertainty.

Murdoch's novels mostly portray a godless generation, yet the emotional and spiritual quest goes on. The simple, innocent characters in her novels are drawn towards evil.
Therefore evil reigns supreme in many of her novels, and the characters of evil are powerful and attractive. But this is the reality that Murdoch portrays.

In Murdoch's novels the characters grope their way about in a morally, intellectually bleak world and seek or reject values. She portrays brilliantly the anguish of the realisation of the contingency of life through certain characters.

In many of her novels, Murdoch has used the first-person male narrator, a male voice. She is certainly not a feminist. She is wholly a realist, a philosopher who has given deep thought to how love as a felt emotion can help in man's emotional maturity and moral development.

A reader has to read and re-read her novels to understand the depth with which she portrays reality and tries to show a path through the web of illusions, unpredictability and complexity which defies theorising.

In my thesis I have tried to explore certain areas of Murdoch's works which have long been of much interest and a mystery to me. I have also felt that these topics which I have dealt with have not been much examined by others. I have therefore tried to make a near-detailed study of some of her novels to obtain a clearer view of the direction of her thoughts.

Having examined Murdoch's surrounding academic topography, the Post-War novelists, the Angry Young Men and the existentialist writers, I have found that Murdoch can neither be
grouped with the Angry generation of novelists or be termed exclusively an existentialist writer. She has shown deep concern for human beings as individuals and the responsibility of human beings to God and to other men in this chaotic world full of sin and muddle.

I have felt that her interest in the East, in its rich culture and tradition, in the Buddhist religion, has been portrayed in many of her novels. So after a general discussion of the world of Iris Murdoch’s novels, I have termed the next chapter; Iris Murdoch and the Oriental Interest. Murdoch has continuously dealt with characters who are good and saint-like in this godless world where evil seems to reign supreme. Some characters are near-saints, some are normal, good characters who are sane individuals. So, in chapter four, I have dealt with the sane and the sage in some of the novels of Iris Murdoch. In chapter five, I have tried to show how Murdoch has handled the subject of homosexuality in some of her novels. So I have entitled it 'Homosexuality in Some Novels of Iris Murdoch'. I have all along felt that Murdoch has a great depth of understanding of and a real concern for the youth and adolescents of the modern age. I have therefore dealt with youth and adolescence in some novels of Iris Murdoch in chapter six and have termed it Murdoch’s Treatment of Youth and Adolescence.

Although Murdoch is an internationally acclaimed novelist and a popular one too, and many critics have made critical
studies of her work. I have tried to throw light in the conclusion to my thesis, on those aspects which Murdoch has thought about or shown an interest in, one which deserve more critical attention than they have received so far.

This thesis is more exploratory than definitive.

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I have received also a very kind and helpful letter from Iris Murdoch herself in answer to some of my queries. In it she has mentioned:

"I feel deeply attached to India ... I am interested in Hinduism and Buddhism & in Indian art."

I am including a copy of her letter in the Appendix.

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