HUMAN RELATIONSHIP IN THE NOVELS OF IRIS MURDOCH

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SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE

TOPIC : HUMAN RELATIONSHIP IN THE NOVELS OF IRIS MURDOCH

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CONTENT

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CHAPTER - I
Introduction: Human Relationship Vision

CHAPTER - II
Human Love Relationship: Filial, Sexual and the Contingency

CHAPTER - III
Conjugal Relationships: Man and Moral Philosophy

CHAPTER - IV
- Tangle in the Family - Women in Men’s World : Distortion in Human Relation

CHAPTER - V
Other Relations: Society and Individual

CHAPTER - VI
Conclusion
INTRODUCTION

Dame Jean Iris Murdoch (1919-1999) British writer, philosopher, university lecturer and a prolific and highly professional novelist born at 59 Blessington Street, Dublin, Ireland, on 15 July 1919, the only child of Anglo-Irish parents -- Wills John Hughes Murdoch from a sheep farming family from Hillhall, County Down, and Irene Alice Richardson, a trained opera singer who gave up training career to marry at the age of 18. When Iris was a child the family moved to London where her father worked in the Civil Service and had also served as a cavalry officer during World War I. Murdoch was one of the most acclaimed 20th century prolific writers. Her literary legacy includes 26 novels, 5 books of philosophy, 5 plays, one volume of poetry and a libretto and numerous essays. Alzheimer’s disease caught her during the mid-1990s then she began to suffer the early effects of this dreaded disease. She died on 8th February 1999. Murdoch’s fame as a novelist soon carved for her a niche in temple of the fictional literature and established her as creative social genius, the various facets of the diamond impressed the lovers of the fiction and
scholars began to study and analyse her works and yet some aspects of her full genius remain explored.

**Purpose of Study**

The main focus of present study is to make a contribution, however modest, to Murdoch’s studies mainly by evaluating her views on the human relationships. This is an interesting study; for example, how man behaves towards other man, how woman towards other woman, husband towards wife, children towards parents and boys towards girls and friend towards friend and other relations.

She deals with social patterns, erotic involvements, family entanglements and restricted inner spaces of houses within which human relationships are explored and confined. There is a free play of human sentiments like love, hate, sympathy, indifference fear and like sometimes uniting and sometimes separating them. She has rare capacity to fathom the depths of individual feelings and sees how far they can go.
She visualizes that love paves the way for intimate relations and becomes main-spring of social and personal ties. It is in *Sublime and the Good* that Murdoch recognizes the true nature of love as an endeavour to discover reality.

Along with love, Murdoch valued the freedom co-operates with love in perceiving the reality. In her essays Murdoch has described also the process by which one arrives at the experiences of freedom or virtue or beauty. She realized that concepts of virtue should be seen in terms of their quantitative contribution to human life, keeping in view even the requirements of the basic necessities of life.
Selected Bibliography

**Primary sources:**

(A) **Novels** : (The year immediately after each title refers to the first edition published by Chatto and Windus, London).


(B) Plays:


The Black Prince adapted for the stage, 1987.

(C) Libretto


(D) Poetry:


(E) Philosophical Works:


Secondary sources:

(2) *Essays and Articles on Murdoch*


“*Knowing the Void*”, *Spectator*, CXCVII (2 Nov. 1956) 613-14.


(3) *Interview and Letters*:


(4) CRITICAL ESSAYS, ARTICLES AND REVIEWS;


Wolfe, Peter, “Philosophical Themes in the Novels of Iris Murdoch”. D.A. XXVI (1965).

(5) Books:


The titles of other critical books, magazines, periodicals etc. will be added to the list if any help is taken from them while pursuing the study.