CHAPTER-V

CONCLUSION
Iris Murdoch is a writer of very great sophistication and intellectual range and of course of immense imaginative gifts and verbal powers. Forcing the literary critic to take stands which go beyond the purely aesthetic, her art pinpoints its own inadequacy in the face of the world’s intractable and irreducible variegatedness. As a novelist, the intellectual agenda that Murdoch pursues is at once philosophical, humanistic, practical and useful and her themes centre on fundamental moral concerns. She explores concepts of humanism, freedom, justice, the problematic nature of sexual desire, what actions constitute goodness, strategies for dealing with intense suffering and she celebrates the redemptive power of love while illustrating its fragility. All such issues are framed in an imaginative exploration of the ways human consciousness can be expressed in art and conducted by means of fascinating experimentation with the novel form.

Iris Murdoch is a thinker, a novelist of ideas, a philosopher who dares to introduce philosophic discussion into her novels; at the same time she is a myth-maker, a weaver of stories, interested in patterns, interested in form, interested above all in establishing a raison d’être for truth, goodness and love in a world that has dispensed with God.
Murdoch's novel typically have convoluted plot in which innumerable characters representing different philosophical positions undergo kaleidoscopic changes in their relation with each-other. Realistic observation of twentieth century like among middle-class professionals are interwoven with extraordinary incidents that partake of the macabre, the grotesque and the wildly comic. The novels like *The Sea, The Sea, The Book and The Brotherhood, The Message to The Planet, The Green Knight and Jackson's Dilemma* illustrate Murdoch's conviction that although human beings think they are free to exercise rational control over their lives and behaviour, they are actually at the mercy of the unconscious mind, the determining effects of society at large, and other, more inhuman, forces. Above all they deal with issues of morality and the conflicts between good and evil are often presented in mundane scenes that gain mythic and tragic force through the subtlety with which they are depicted as the conflict between the good Tallis and the bad Julius in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, the conflict between the good Harriet Gavander and the bad Blaise in the *A Scared and Profane Love Machine* where seldom The Christ figure Tallis overcome the Satan like 'Julius ; and sometimes goodness dies like Harriet because of injustice by the society

Murdoch feels that the present man is totally absorbed in his affairs. He has lost interest in the world around him and does not
realise the problems a man has to face to rise above the worldly interests. That's why she discusses many practical and real things in her novels like arousing problem of extramarital affairs, broken marriages and divorces discuss in *A Severed Head, The Black Prince, The Bell, The Nice and The Good, The Philosopher's Pupil, A Fairly Honorable Defeat, A Sacred and Profane Love Machine* and *The Book and The Brotherhood*. Murdoch feels the complexity of moral life and also that human beings try to understand the complexity of moral life and also that human beings are opaque and cannot be understood like other material objects and individual is seen as struggling against psychological desires, social habits and prejudices. Murdoch believes on the fact that human personality and freedom and happiness can not be linked together in literature, because it is the struggle of man which brings forth his moral integrity and human qualities on which the human personality is based. She feels that the present generation is not taking morality and politics in that serious manner as the people in pervious century did. She desires to see a man as free and separate in the complicated world from where he has to learn many things. Murdoch also observes that freedom and virtue are concepts, which ought to be pinned into the place by some more fundamental thinking about a proper quality of human life, which begins at the food and
shelter level. She means that the concepts of freedom and virtue should deal with at the glass-roots.

There is a great need in the present times to link freedom and virtue both in art. For her, freedom and virtue are identical. In all her novels, Murdoch gives a different meaning of freedom than that of commonly understood by people, in her novels *Under the Net, A Severed Head, The Black Prince, The Sea, The Sea* and Jackson's *Dilemma*. Normally the word freedom is used to convey: the sense of liberty; frankness; familiarity; and license. The word free means: not bound by rules; unimpeded; unconstrained. But for Murdoch true freedom means respecting and understanding other than oneself. It means giving other people right to exist in their own way. In her novels freedom is not strictly the exercise of the will, but rather the experience of accurate vision which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions action. For her freedom, the proper human goal, is the freedom from fantasy. She interprets fantasy as the proliferation of blinding self-centered aims what is often called will. It is an actual experience of freedom, the realization that although swayed by passions for capable of rational conduct with Freedom, Humanism is also essential element shown in Iris Murdoch's novels. For Murdoch humanism help to civilize man to make him realize his potential powers and gifts and to reduce the discrepancy between potentiality and attainment.
In her novels *The Bell*, *The Nice and the Good*, *The Philosopher's Pupil* and *The Green Knight*, Murdoch considers morality and goodness only as forms of realism. For her the idea of a really good man living in a private dream world seems unacceptable. The chief enemy of excellence in morality is personal fantasy. Murdoch is right in saying that a good man must be aware of his surroundings and the existence of other people and their claims because goodness of a person only comes to be known when he does something to improve his surroundings and also does something to mitigate the sufferings of other people. Goodness of human beings is such a quality as cannot exist in the void. Morality is a way of life. It exists in the actions of men and not in their fantasies. Murdoch thinks that those people who are busy in amassing wealth and live in their own fantasies cannot do real deeds of goodness. In great art goodness is shown through actions. It is in Murdoch’s novels where we find the intrusion of fantasy, the assertion of self resulting in diminishing the reflection of the real world. And she believes that for being good one requires the intellectual ability to understand the truth and the suppression of the self like Hugo in *Under the Net*, Dora in *The Bell*, Ludens in *The Message to The Planet* and Charles in *The Sea, The Sea*. Murdoch claims that true good which is almost impossible to be seen in real life can be seen in art. And art and morals have their bases in
love. By love, she means the realization of something other than oneself and not the self indulgence as ordinary people take it to mean. For her love, art and morals lead the discovery of reality which is true representation of life in great art.

Murdoch is against those philosopher novelists who allow their philosophic to interfere in the work they do as novelists. So the characters and events in the novels should be allowed to follow their own course without any hindrance from the philosophies of the novelists. Murdoch's own obsession with philosophy is evident in the titles of her novels, The Philosopher's Pupil and The Good Apprentice. Murdoch uses the word contingency to describe what is random, accidental, simply factual, about things and people and what is both immediate, and not part of any formal patter in her novels. Murdoch attempts to be a realistic because her real people are far more eccentric than any body portrayed in the novels. Real people are terribly odd, but of course they keep this secret. They conceal their fantasies. This is a clear and consistent theme in all her novels. Murdoch like John Bayley, thinks that love is a great subject for novels. Sometimes the intense drama of love results in the false loss of self more like Bradley Pearson in The Black Prince. Her own novels show the redemptive quality of love. In assenting the variousness and the differentness of peoples and stressing the need for love as the sole factor of human freedom and
salvation, she revived the British tradition of realistic novel and does not want to be included in any of the categories like existentialist or surrealistic or symbolist or mystic. For Murdoch, the proper novel is about people's treatment of each other and is concerned with human values. Murdoch presents a shallow view of human nature, a simplified and impoverished inner life. For her freedom is not mere exercise of the will, but a disciplined overcoming of the self. Goodness means knowledge which connects human beings with reality. Love means the realization that something other than oneself is real. A study of what Murdoch means by contingency, freedom, knowledge and love helps to make the most intricate of her plots and the most puzzling of her character's motivation intelligible and predictable. Through her novels like *The Bell, The Red and The Green, A Word Child* and *Henry and Cato*, it is clear that for Murdoch, religion is the love of goodness and morality is truthfulness, kindness and courage. Both religion and morality involve more or less clearly articulated set of beliefs, practices, attitudes and motives. What they have in common is that they are fundamental to the way of life of an individual or of a society, and it is not surprising that they should be closely connected. But Murdoch's emphatic concern assumes importance in the wake of the Post Christian break down and the death of God ethos. In the struggle to be modern, mass has chosen to abdicate the inward and upward look
and has preferred to reject the possibility of transcendental. The failure of religion, separation from church and priesthood, the disappearance of God from our lives, has created innumerable problems and good has become a vague and a distant and hollow concept. Through the medium of her novels Murdoch tries to reclaim certain possibilities for human life in the twentieth century context and presents life as worth-living.

Many of her novels have archetypal plots. They provide to the readers a sophisticated and compassionate journey through a number of lives, tightly intertwined emotionally and sexuality. The complexities of Murdoch’s plot usually spring from her ingenious device of surrounding the central action of discovery with a host of variations, comic or serious, in which other characters learn or fail to learn the same lesson. Aldous Huxley’s novels are considered formal ancestors of Murdoch’s novels.

Iris Murdoch’s fiction occasionally generates excitement and exasperation. There is a mixture of apparent bizarreness and excogitation but one remains fully absorbed in the narrative. Murdoch takes up the themes of adultery, homosexuality, incest, castration, violence and suicide, and yet succeeds in making her novels brilliantly enjoyable. She often included gay characters in her fiction like Simon and Axel in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, Gerard’s love of Jenkin in
The Book and The Brotherhood, George’s love for John Robert in The Philosopher’s Pupil, Michael’s love for Toby and Nick in The Bell and Francis in The Black Prince. Murdoch gives importance to man’s character more than sexuality. Murdoch’s novels usually portray complicated and sophisticated sexual relations among the professional classes. Her portrayal of twentieth century middle class and intelligentsia reveal her acute observation as well as her inventive power.

The world of Murdoch’s fiction is the contemporary twentieth century world of disintegrated beings who are undone by the physic play of mechanical forces. Murdoch relies heavily on Freud while delineating the play of such forces. Yet her characters aspire for and yearn towards a kind of Platonic goodness. But their guest is rendered futile because these characters lack the vigor to come out of self seeking consolations. Her fiction, in various ways, reveals that it is very difficult to transcend the determinism of nature and temperament. Even though her characters may feel disappointed with the glamour of the world, yet the illusions cling to them. They become attached to their personality and are agitated by the conflicting forces of the world. Most of her characters are shown to be working their destinies in dark. The human condition is revealed as ironic. Much of the authorial energy is devoted to the portrayal of muddle and mediocrity. There is
always a conscious effort to deflect attention from a rare, hard earned and disciplined knowledge of good. The characters invariably choose the hope of life rather than dwell in the absolute of death.

Elements of myth, supernaturalism and Gothic in her novels have been discussed in the novels *The Bell* and *The Sea, The Sea*, miraculous things happen in these novels. The themes of persecuted maidens, illicit or incestuous love are enacted in them. New religious experiences are revealed. We meet priests who do not believe in God and traditional morality. Her novels depict most of the perversities found in the previous Gothic novels and Murdoch is successful in creating uncanny and weird atmosphere. Murdoch’s achievement is that she has successfully used the Gothic form to tell stories of the present times. She does not use the Gothic technique to depict something unusual, but uses it to show the ever present struggle of good and evil. Murdoch’s Gothic novels make evil look powerful but ultimately it gets defeated at the hands of the humble it gets defeated at the hands of the humble good. By doing so Murdoch shows her faith in the moral strength of the good.

Murdoch is not like many other women novelists, who think that by advocating certain things they are doing a lot for the emancipation of woman. She is not interested in the feminine contribution as is claimed by some female writers but she wants that woman by getting
education should do a sort of human contribution. Through her novels she discusses the real painful and practical problems of women which are common now a days in modern and materialistic world. In *The Book and The Brotherhood*, Tamar and Violet are facing the problems like abortion and survival of illegitimate child. In *The Philosopher’s Pupil* Diane represents a harsh and painful life and struggles of a prostitute. Through Dora Greenfield in *The Bell*, Harriet Gavander in *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*, Murdoch emphasis on the problem of existence for women in male dominating world. She means that women should always think themselves to be human beings. Whereas normally other women writers choose female first person narrators, Murdoch chooses men as first person narrators. But by doing so she does not experience any sort of impressive leap for the imagination. She thinks it makes no difference whether the writer identifies with the female narrator or with the male narrator, because all the time the writer remains a human being. Murdoch’s technical brilliance seeks attention in the brilliant way she makes use of the authorial voice and the omniscient viewpoint. When she uses omniscient narration a sense of sympathy, pity and deep understanding flows from the authorial source in a way reminiscent of the nineteenth century style. As a narrator, she enters the consciousness of one of the characters which happens frequently in her version of omniscience.
The reader makes an empathic identification even when he knows that arguments can be suspect. The objectivity with which she creates and projects the psychological dilemma of her characters is a unique enrichment to the narrative mode for presenting consciousness in fiction.

Her male first person narratives can be considered her permanent achievements. Murdoch's seven novels—Under the Net, A Severed Head, The Italian Girl, The Black Prince, A Word Child, The Sea, The Sea and The Philosopher's Pupil—are in first person male narration. While the narrators of the first six novels identity themselves and express their own desires, the narrator, N, of The Philosopher's Pupil never identifies himself. Except The Philosopher's Pupil, every other first person Murdochian narration depends for at least some of its effects on what the narrator thinks he does not know. The narrator, N, of The Philosopher's Pupil knows even more than any third-person in Murdochian Canon about the details of the story he is telling.

In the creation of characters, those who believe that Murdoch only creates states of mind rather than individuals of flesh and blood fail to notice some of the brilliantly alive characters. Jack Donghue, Dora Greenfield, Mortin Lynch Gibbon, Rachel Baffin, Anne Cavidge are some examples of fully developed characters. These characters are not other worldly characters. It may be pointed out that Murdoch's
stringent vision deflects the authority of good in the absence of action. Various expositions of the concept of good, which invariably occur in all novels in one form or another are rendered meaningless, because the exponents do not possess the required detachment. Even the minor characters, who sometimes act as catalyst agents, to the erring muddlers, remain ineffectual. Only those who can devote themselves to truth, goodness and reality make a distinct impact. Ann Peronett, Hugo Belfounder, Tallis Brown, and Stuart Cuno highlight what Murdoch implies by selfless attention to truth, goodness and objectivity.

As recent trends in criticism have questioned high theory and given way to a new eclecticism that allows a reconsideration of the links between art, reality and morality. Murdoch’s unique role as a moral philosopher and writer is taking on fresh significance and renewed intellectual importance. The breadth of her intellectual interests and the complexity and experimental nature of her writing ensures that her work will reward many years of continuing research and intellectual debates on twentieth century literature, philosophy, theology, psychology and other related disciplines.