CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION
6.0. Preliminaries

The study explores and examines the feminist features in the works of Toni Morrison. To be specific, four novels of hers have been studied: “The Bluest Eye”, “Sula”, “Beloved” and “Song of Solomon”.

Toni Morrison is truthful to the cause of women and she is also hyper-sensitive towards political thinking, culture, critical theory, feminism and above all humanism. In broader perspective, Morrison’s novels are documents of the dynamics of human relationship. The French feminist thinker Helene Cixous (1988) suggests the idea of ecriture feminine in which she specified the fact that on the basis of writing there can be a critical trace of the points like feminine in theme, style and approach.

6.1. Toni Morrison and Feminism

Morrison has made a significant assessment by exploring, exposing and redefining the position of women in the socio-historical, political and economic context, highlighting her latent power and talent. She strongly shows her disrespect to patriarchal society which nourishes preoccupied notion of women being synonymous with womb, bust and
hips. Morrison’s treatment is different from others because she is committed to the black women’s experience.

The importance of feminism has been reflected in the creative works of Morrison. The themes of love, marriage and sex have been dealt with a sense of historicity keeping in mind the various aspects of social and cultural nuances.

The effects of slavery of black women enabled Toni Morrison to pursue the consequences of the destruction of the mother-child bond on female identity. Morrison has displayed prolific exuberance in depicting the complex intricacies of the instinctual and emotional responses of the women characters in her novels, specifically the psychological scanning of those women who played the role of mothers in various situations under coercion of the existing circumstances. A creative work of quality is always followed by the rush of criticism, so lots of critics have already emerged with their good deal of criticism regarding the creative works and vision of Morrison. The intellectual skill and analytical capability of modern man is rising higher and higher with the speeding pace of the electronic advancement; therefore, it seems likely that future generation may find some profound interpretations of Morrison’s work. But on one point they would all have to agree that the philosophical essence of her novels is based on a love, and acceptance, and an embrace of the whole
black community regardless of the individual’s personal, social, moral and political philosophy.

In the present study, the main characters of the novels were analysed. In the first three novels, the characters like Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*, Sula in *Sula* and Beloved in *Beloved* were depicted vividly. They have some things in common. They were black women and they were all victims of brutality. Sula in *Sula* and Sethe in *Beloved* are both victims and victimizer. Both women deny themselves and are denied a sense of self and a place in community. Sula finds her uncentred and unbounded existence is one exile, and she seeks boundaries in herself, in the community of Medallion, and in her friend Nel. Sethe in *Beloved*, finds that motherhood is not an affirmation of her identity but another manifestation of her mark.

Sethe’s mark is the sign of her slavery and it limits her. With the return of Beloved, it traps her in 124 Bluestone. Sula with her rose birthmark is denied identity by her mother, and she murders a childhood friend by throwing him accidentally into a river. Yet Sula, in contrast to Sethe, claims absolute freedom, which is symbolized by her mark. If Sethe is a woman trying to find herself, Sula Peace, at first, seems to be complete self. Her birthmark seems to confirm this wholeness and difference, distinguishing her from other girls.
The last novel under the study *Song of Solomon* was different from the first three novels because the main character of the story was a man. The researcher tried to attract the readers’ attention to this fact that Morrison considered Black male in her writings. She taught us that Black women were not the only victims of race or gender discrimination.

Morrison’s novels eliminate the Western Christian love principle and replace it with a purer love based on human sympathy and compassion that extends to the isolate black human being. Morrison was passing on her sense of congenial myths that were rooted in the collective universal imagination and sustained by deep emotional springs related to black history and black traditions. She attempts to teach us – white and black – how to rid the air, to rise from the dead. Thus, her lofty conception of humanism rises far above the wounded psyche of the black. Her vision of morality excels the contemporary moral order and imparts meaning to the dynamics of spiritual wisdom. Her philosophy of human life visualizes those precepts of essential nature, which bear the potential of growth within the framework of emotional, intellectual and spiritual self of man. The sad but still music of humanity has its own symphony, and this kind of symphony can be heard in almost all the novels of Toni Morrison.
Every story has its own shades of experiences in a variety of situations. But all stories grow from the same seeds out of the same soil. Marriages are made and torn. Women are left deserted by their husbands. Love is considered infatuation and lust and sex unforbidden by any measures whether social or moral. Many children born out of love, marriage and sex usually do not know the names of their fathers because fathers do sex, abandon their wives, and forget. Some of the black children do never know their parentage because when they grow up they are told they have been brought up by some kind of patron and their birth is shrouded in mystery. Morrison has skillfully taken up all the dimensions possible thrown around to project them in her novels.

Toni Morrison, in almost all her novels, has projected rampant sexuality as the seeping reality of the black culture. It is transpired that her main occupation in her literary work is to appraise the world of the undercurrent circumstantial evidences that corroborate the fictive vision, a reality responsible for a fluid frequency in sexual life of the black community.

In Morrison’s works, the discord in the family relationship and in gender relationships arise out of the racial sufferings of the Black. However, community feelings with its rites of healing, communal existence, sharing, acceptance, joking, conjuring and story telling help to
release the historical tension of the race and serve to nurture and heal the
wound. These four novels of Morrison followed this pattern in their
images of community nurturance.

Morrison condemned racism as a concept where the dichotomy is
not between White and Black but is between the strong and weak. She is
feministic in her cause of preservation of the rights of women regardless
of class, caste and community. She objects to the idea of destruction and
echoes her desire for the maintenance of peace and for discovering one’s
paradise within the soul. Moreover, she is a writer from racial context
who endeavors to analyze the gender behaviour in family and
community. She attempts to unravel the repressive forces in patriarchy to
find alternatives for a better existence. Among other female writers, Toni
Morrison has a more positive outlook on life and finds community
existence to be a sustaining one.

In Morrison’s novels, it is the male as well as female characters
which go through a process of comprehension of self and society in The
Bluest Eye, Sula, Beloved and Song of Solomon. She did not treat her
male characters as stereotypes. In her socio-political context, the
patriarchy is signified by the white and male, which had continued to
oppress the black irrespective of their sex. Gender conflict ensues from
the white domination of the black ‘other’, which results in the psychic
oppression of the black culture (‘white’ as male and black as ‘female’). The gender conflict within marriage and between lovers has become a part of the painful experience of racism. Toni Morrison from the feminist standpoint tried to analyze the psychic damage done to the male as well as female due to white domination.

As a highly matured fictional artist, Toni Morrison stands out as an apt comparison with novelists of other countries, as she plays with a variety of viewpoints, as whites and blacks, husbands and wives, parents and children, observe and misunderstand each other. As in the fiction of great novelists like Jane Austen, in Morrison's novels of black American life, appearance and reality, the magical and the real, the comic and the tragic are continually juxtaposed. Irony operates on many levels as the hopes and plans of Morrison's characters are frustrated by their white neighbours. She frames her tales within mythic narrative structures thereby creating a heroic context for her themes and characters. At the same time, she develops a rich irony by juxtaposing heroic expectation with mundane reality. Furthermore, by putting contrasting figures against one another, Morrison repeatedly reverses the reader's expectation. Through the craft of writing and art of storytelling, she seeks to discover the consequences of choices and the actions for her
characters. Her readers are not handed over ready answers but rather must become part of a tale's resolution.

Morrison uses the mode of magic realism with great success to analyze historiography. Magic realism, which is a postmodern device, takes an unexpected turn in the hands of Morrison to emerge as a component of African-American poetics, since it becomes the means of creating an African worldview. African culture traditions are thus integrated into contemporary western literary tradition in the fiction of Toni Morrison.

Morrison's individual texts have always been contested sites for general readers as well as academic critics, and the consequence of large numbers of persons thinking of her works as part of main line American fiction has been an amazing diversity in interpretation.

Race or, rather, color is a substantial field of inquiry for critics, partly because of Morrison's own continual reinforcement of the fact that it shapes in central ways all she does.

On an individual level, the mothers that Morrison creates are exceedingly diverse. They exist in the flesh or only in fragile memories. They are named and unnamed, some occupying centre stage while others are relegated to the periphery of the text. Maternity comes to the very young, such as eleven-year-old Pecola Breedlove in The Bluest Eye. At
the other end of the age spectrum, the Great Mother figures of Eva Peace in *Sula* and Pilate Dead in *Song of Solomon* dominate our imagination. Such mothers as Sethe and Baby Suggs in *Beloved* are equally unforgettable; the terrible anguish of motherhood that they experience is almost beyond comprehension. Other mothers are less visible, however, and are given such marginal reference as “Somebody’s grandmother” or “Teapot’s Mamma” (*Sula* 16, 172). Sethe knows her mother only by a mark under her breast, as circled cross “burnt right in the skin” (*Beloved* 61). Sethe’s mother remains unnamed in the novel, and for the most part, she exists only in fragmented memories. Sethe’s “Ma’am,” as she is called, was hanged early in Sethe’s life and her body burned and mutilated beyond recognition. This attempt at erasure or annihilation of the maternal fails, however, for “Ma’am” still functions as vital link in the matrilineal heritage of Sethe and her daughters.

Other mothers in Morrison’s texts are similarly defined by their absence, leaving behind orphaned and abandoned children scarred for a lifetime. Generally speaking, children who suffer the loss of a parent find that grief resurfaces periodically throughout their lives. In describing this process, a *Newsweek* reporter explained: “Children mourn piecemeal; they must return to it at each stage of maturity and conquer grief anew. Over the years, the sharp pang of loss turns to a dull ache, a melancholy
that sets in at a certain time of year, a certain hour of the night. But every child who has lost a parent, remains in some secret part of his or her soul, a child forever frozen at a moment in time, crying out to the heedless heavens. Morrison’s characters who suffer a maternal loss early in life seem similarly plagued by a persuasive melancholy and restlessness. The absent mother continues to affect characters, events, and entire texts from the recesses of the past. Moreover, the repercussions of the loss of the mother are horribly visited upon succeeding generations as well. In *The Bluest Eye*, for instance, a drunken and delusional Cholly Breedlove, who was abandoned at the age of four days upon a junk heap, rapes his eleven-year-old daughter Pecola. *Song of Solomon*’s Macon Dead, whose mother dies in childbirth, tries to force the abortion of his own son. And in *Beloved*, Sethe attempts to kill her four children rather than send them back to slavery, the institution that had murdered her mother.

While all of Morrison’s novels depict complex manifestations of the maternal, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved*, foreground maternity to the greatest extent. In these three novels, Morrison presents motherhood with compelling and brutal honesty. She juxtaposes silence and voice in each novel and uses the maternal body as a source of myth and metaphor to reveal the realities of female experience. Indeed, the “fantastic earthy
realism” that characterizes her novels as a whole gives the maternal in these works a richer, more terrifying expression. Morrison’s adroit blending of myth and reality, horror and beauty, body and voice results in a complex portrait of the maternal that reveals devastating and confounding truths most readers would prefer to deny.

What is discerned in this research is the consistent attempt of Morrison, to explore the creative potential of the black woman in all the novels taken for this study.

Morrison’s novels have provided a medium for her to articulate her ideological stance as a black woman writer and also realize her commitment to her people, in portraying a very complex black and female life in America. In all her novels, Morrison has made concerted efforts to probe the interiority of the most complex black and female experience in white America. She has delved into multiple oppression, that the black woman has been subjected to, from slavery up to capitalism that has persistently thwarted the black female sensibility. And the black woman’s concerted efforts to foster an authentic independent identity which for Morrison is, evolved out of coming together of the black and white culture in America.

As a black and a woman herself living in a hostile climate of white racial imperialism and black sexism, Morrison is able to understand the
black woman’s complex life of multifarious and multifaceted experiences. And that is why, for Morrison, the novels she has written, women are centred and her commitment has been towards articulating the nuances of black women’s lives. She strongly believes that black women of African origin are inherently creative and that creativity has been nurtured and has survived through several generations of black women in America, despite slavery and inspite of racism of the 20th century. Moreover, according to her, that has been the most enduring form of self-expression, which is arguably one aspect of self-definition among black women. And Morrison herself, as a creative writer, who has chosen literary medium for creative self-expression, has successfully rendered the black woman’s artistic potential within the structural framework of her novels.

6.2. Impressions of the Researcher

From the researcher’s point of view, The Bluest Eye is the most impressive novel among other novels of Toni Morrison. The Bluest Eye is an artistic portrayal of a girl’s life struggling to find her way in a white world. She was a lonely black girl who is yearning for blue eyes. She thinks that blue eyes make her family and friends love her. She suffers in every way, physically and mentally.
As far as feminism is concerned, *The Bluest Eye* has everything that can attract every feminist writer or reader; themes like rape, violence against women, poverty, race discrimination.

### 6.3. Suggestions for further Research

There are few suggestions the researcher would like to add for the further research at the end of this research project. The first one is feminist features can be explored in different plays of different playwrights from different countries and from different perspectives the present research touched on almost all feminist aspects in the four novels of Toni Morrison.

These novels can be compared with other novels of different writers. Toni Morrison herself has written several other novels such as *Jazz, Paradise, Love and Merci*. One can compare and analyze these novels. It will be surely beneficial to the student of English literature.

As very few studies, in Indian English literature, have emphasized on a similar grounds, new researchers can take up the current study as a model to apply to other Indian English writers.

Furthermore, the present study can serve as platform for other studies concerning the reflections of other influential movements in
literary works as can be seen in a contemporary period. Such seminal works, as the plays under study will be produced in order to suffice the attempt to answer the perennial questions related to feminism. The student of literature must, therefore, develop an outlook to foresee such concerns, as depicted in various similar works.