PREFACE

Gloria Naylor is a well known Black modern American writer hence needs no introduction. Yet, the present work on her needs an introduction. I was deeply influenced by her when I read her novel *The Women of Brewster Place* which was cited by the American Book Award Committee as the best first novel of 1982. Gloria Naylor has a talent for writing because she puts her personal life and familiar past into every story. All of her novels are linked together by referring to characters or places in separate stories. Her novels touched a deep chord in me. I endeavoured to find out more about her and this thesis is the result of my pursuit.

Gloria Naylor has so far written five novels. *The Women of Brewster Place* in 1982, *Linden Hills* in 1985, *Mama Day* in 1988, *Bailey's Cafe* in 1992 and *Men of Brewster Place* in 1998. It is very difficult for any researcher to cover all the aspects of any writer. So guided by the recommendations of the Research Degree Committee and being aware of our limitatons we have confined ourselves to her feministic approach in the novels. For the sake of convenience and clarity this study is divided into nine chapters as summerized below.

Chapter One is the Historical Account of Black Women Writers. It in divided into three sections. Section A gives the history of Afro-American Literature which begins from 1414 A.D. The first age of Afro-American Literature was over in 1830. Then from 1830-1895 is the Age of Abolitionists 1920-1940 was the dawn of the Harlem Renaissance. 1940-50 was the Age of Wright. 1960 the Age of the Black Militant and then onwards till 21st century there has been technological and scientific growth.
Section B, is about the development of the Black women novelists. It shows the chronological development of Black Women novelists in America. It begins with Ameba Johnson in 1891 and has Laude Lorden in 1982. This section includes the birth of mammy figure, conjure woman, tragic mulatta revealing the conflict of values that blacks faced as conquered people. It briefly studies the novelists individually.

Section C, brings out the different aspects dealt by the Black Women writers. They started from folk tradition and cultural bonds. They focused on the concepts of generation continuity, passing of cultural values, change in socio-political status of the heroines, sexism in connection to racism. It analysed the intersection of class, race, gender and different styles of life. It aimed towards rearticulation of the double-self, not as opposing force but as dialectical existence. They transmitted culture and helped in keeping the tradition alive in their community.

The second chapter speculates the term feminism. It exposes how the Afro-American women writers raised their voice against oppression, suppression and tried to compromise with the politics of Black feminist thought. It presents the various reasons which influenced the feminist theory. Earlier, they were for the moral development of the white middle class later it expressed gender equality. As the Black men had a masculinist bias against Black Women writers the latter fought not only the colour but the gender also. The theories are set under different sections Academies, Epistemological, Subjectivities, Sexualiteis, Visualities, and Technologies. Each section includes theories of different criticus viewing Feminism under its banner. The chapter views the feminist Utopia which includes, Amazon Feminism, Cultural Feminism, Eco Feminism, Feminazi, Individual Feminism, Material Feminism, Moderate Feminism, Gender
Feminism, Pop Feminism, Radical Feminism and Separattists. The theories are presented as paradigms. Each incorporating elements of previous paradigms thus summarizing the major of critical theoreis

The third chapter gives a brief life history of Naylor. Her parentage, education and influences are viewed. The fourth chapter deals with the core themes of Gloria Naylor’s standpoint under various sections. They are Work Family and Black Women’s Oppression, Mammies Matriarchs and other controlling images, The Power of Self Definition, Black Women and Motherhood, Rethinking Black Women’s Activism, The Sexual Politics and Black Women’s Relationship. The above features are discussed with reference to Naylor’s different novels.

The fifth chapter presents the portrait of sisterhood in Brewster Place. The problem of womanhood in society where women are undervalued and abused. The experiences of the seven women in term of their femaleness. The mother-daughter relationship, the woman to woman relationship, sisterly friendship and different aspect of femaleness are discussed.

The sixth chapter brings the social identity in Linden Hills. It presents the struggle for Afro-American identity, the idea of feminist consciousness is brought forward. There is a fight against racism. Women is found to be dominated, humiliated and harassed by the male characters. The theme of tragic mulatto is introduced in the novel, reinforcing the importance of racial roots.

The seventh chapter studies the feminisms in the novel Mama Day. It studies the spirt of black sisterhood, black feminist consciousness, importance of individual voices in revealing the past and conceiving relationship, in the novel.
The eighth chapter gives the feminist theory of double consciousness in *Bailey’s Cafe*. It exposes the American consciousness with the double consciousness of being a female and an Afro-American. It highlights the experiences of the black women. Female is subjected to male desire. They view that black and white are essentially different and the loss of this difference equals the loss of cultural and spiritual identity.

The ninth chapter is the summing or the conclusion which forms the end of the thesis. It puts together all the insights derived at in the thesis. It encapsulates the critical assessment of Gloria Naylor as a writer and brings forward feminism in her novels at all levels and from different angles.

In the body of each chapter, the names of the novel referred to or quoted from are given in brackets (or mentioned in the body of the paragraph) where Gloria Naylor’s works are referred to or quoted from they are given in brackets in abbreviated form, along with their page numbers. That obviates the need to refer to them again in the end references. The abbreviations used are listed on a separate page. All other references come as end notes at the end of each chapter. They are documented according to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (Pg. 184-193). The Bibliography given at the end of the present work is prepared on the principles of documentation of bibliographic form recommended in section 5.8.3 on page 184 of the MLA Handbook.

The present study could not include the last novel of Gloria Naylor, *The Men of Brewster Place* as it is not available in India. This work lays no claims to be all inclusive or thorough, but we have made a reasonable attempt to study feminism in the works of Gloria Naylor from our perspective. We are aware that the same theme could be treated differently and perhaps better by other researchers, and that is our asset as well as a forgivable limitation.