CHAPTER V
SUMMING UP

In an interview conducted by Zia lattery, Morrison was asked the question ""Paradise" has been called a "feminist" novel. Would you agree with this?", Morrison's reply was "Not at all" (http:// www. salon.com/books/int/1998/02/cov-Si-02int.html). In the light of this reply, it is clear that Morrison does not consider herself a feminist writer. But, at the same time, she does not want to be given any label for herself. If she is not interested in labelling her works as 'feminist', the researcher wanted to find out whether Morrison's writings could be considered 'womanist', without branding her a 'womanist'. Therefore, this study has been carried out to examine the Womanist Thought in Morrison's works. The conclusions drawn from such an analysis are summed up here:

The women's movement was highly vibrant and visible during the early part of the twentieth century. The fight for women's rights must be seen as part of a larger and necessary revolution in society's attitudes towards the relationship between the sexes. Those who wanted to eliminate the long-standing oppressive and patriarchal attitudes that held women subordinate to men became known as feminists. In its most basic definition, feminism was simply the doctrine that women should enjoy all rights — political, social, and economic - which men enjoy.

Feminists fought in different levels for equal rights and they achieved success in various fields. The Declaration of Independence and the Equal Rights Amendment offered men and women equal access to the opportunities in the U.S.A., but the discriminatory attitude was experienced at various levels by the Americans of African descent, especially, women. These women believed that by
cooperation with their men folk, they could change the "man-made world of aggression if they played a larger role in society" (Livingston 31). Along with a host of male writers, a number of women writers have come up in the literary field. Some of the Black female writers have dedicated themselves entirely to women's issues. Toni Morrison is one among these committed writers. She has gained universal reputation for her writings.

Feminists tell themselves and other women: "don't compromise yourself. You are all you have got" (Rajaiali FR 1). But, the aim of these movements has lost its vigour because of the misplaced enthusiasm and wrong perceptions of the followers of these movements. Women of colour feel that feminism as propagated and practised by the middle-class White women has backfired on women, leaving them to struggle alone with work and children while men enjoyed a new freedom from family responsibilities. It seems that the main message of feminism is that women do not need a man. Feminism demands independence from men and liberation from the sexual double standards. Therefore, it discounts marriage, family and motherhood. Feminism, according to the women of colour, has actually freed men and not women. Instead of freeing women from bondages, in reality, it has put new links to their fetters. For example, some women find themselves working for their living and also taking care of their children. They run families without the help of their male counterparts. When thinking of feminism, most people have come to see the movement as "anti-male, anti-child, anti-family, and anti-feminine" (Crasius and Channell 322). When the feminists decide not to have a family structure to raise their children, there is no difference between themselves and the men who try to escape from marital commitments and family responsibilities.
African American women have expressed dissatisfaction with feminism. They do not want to try to be like men and they want to accept their own feminine nature, which can find fulfillment only in nurturing maternal love. They tend to accept that 'biology is destiny' and believe that women cannot escape from their biological reality, whether they like it or not. As long as their biology is there, women are different and they cannot compete equally with men and succeed.

Women like Germaine Greer were once aggressive feminists. But they have now changed their stance. They feel that feminism is counter-productive, and there must be a change in the ideology of feminism for the future generation. They have disagreed with some of the strategies which troubled feminism. They feel that feminist ideology is not for arguing equality to have features like men. But it is still essential for women to preserve 'genuine femaleness' as a kind of distinguishing character. Through false education of feminist ideas women fail to understand their 'privilege', instead they treat womanhood as 'punishment' and motherhood as 'drudgery'. The efforts of the feminists, through their writings enabled speechless women to speak, and come out of their endless exploitation and pain. But, at the same time, some of the ideas have been perceived by women in a wrong manner. Instead of soaring into the skies with the wings of equality and freedom, they find themselves in the quagmire of a four-fold burden - home, career, marriage and parenting. Things are not as bad as they used to be, but things have not changed as much as the feminists pretend to think. These women do not know whether they are doing like men or like themselves. The feminists rebelled against a few narrowly denned issues like voting rights, abortion, and marriage laws. But the African American women, as womanists feel that they should not confine themselves with these narrow issues
but they must involve themselves in matters, which go beyond mere women's concern.

While the White writers degraded the Black women in their works, the Black male writers ignored them. So, the Black women writers wanted to assert the role of the Black women in life and literature. Therefore, the Black women writers started their works with 'verve and soul'. The Black women writers are associated with the transforming onerous task of world. Their endeavour is to build their temples for tomorrow. They would like to stand on top of the mountain free within themselves. The Black women writers believe that if they have chosen the medium suited to their creative needs and have written honestly, their works would usher in a brave new world. They believe in quality and responsibility rather than dishonesty and the quantity of their works. They include their male counterparts in their struggles. The Black women writers believe that "The world stands for truth and authenticity. It is a place for the Black brothers and sisters to explore their creativity and support each other" (Siddhartha LR X). They have been successful in presenting their protagonists as womanists who succeed in creating a new social order based on love and respect for all living things.

As a writer inspired by such a noble vision, Morrison tries to project the Black women's predicament in America and to delineate the way they try to use their potentials to assert themselves and lead purposeful lives. Morrison offers a unique portrait of slavery as seen from the perspective of woman. While illustrating the horrors of slavery with a firm sense of its tragic magnitude, Morrison also recognise the power and resilience of human nature. Her writings chronicle desolation and death but at the same time they offer hope and renewal.
She does not consider herself a feminist. The Black women writers have chosen womanism because it is better than feminism. For example, Alice Walker explains why she prefers Womanist Thought to Feminist Thought, "I choose it because I prefer the sound, the feel, the fit of it, because I cherish the spirit of the women" (1984:94).

(a) Attributes of an African American woman in the light of the Womanist Thought:

From the writings of African American writers like Zora Neale Hurston, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall and Gloria Naylor, one can discern the following characteristics as attributes of an African American woman in the light of the Womanist Thought:

(i) Mothering:

Mothering is base for womanhood. The reality of motherhood is an inevitable part of her identity. The Black mothers become life-givers, and nurturers. The feminists feel that motherhood is a kind of cage. They feel that mother is the identity that seems to "cling to them like ivy on the walls of an old stone house" (Crusius and Channell 339). According to them, motherhood is a daidgery and one that reeked of reliance on a man and loss of identity. But the womanists feel that the role of mother is challenging and invigorating, that the future of the next generation is in the hands of the mother. They also feel that motherhood is responsible because it is mother's duty to preserve their culture and to pass it on to the future generation. That is why an African mother is respected as the 'Earth Mother' and Chinua Achebe in his Things Fall Apart, declares "Mother is Supreme" (121).
In the African mythology, the universe was conceived and delivered by a woman. No other person has the ability to give birth and to link the past with the present. The woman in Africa was not seen as a rib or appendage or afterthought to man but as his equal. Young quotes an Ashante proverb which emphasises the greatness of woman, "it's a woman who gave birth to a man, it's a woman who gave birth to a chief (208 - 23). The African American women thus have accepted this African ideology of the supremacy of motherhood.

Morrison has delineated the various roles of mother in her novels. She portrays mothers like Pilate in *Song of Solomon* and Suggs in *Beloved* as preservers of their culture and tradition. Pilate transmits it to Milkman and Suggs to her grand-children and other people in the community. Morrison describes Eva in *Sula* as a Supreme Mother, who becomes the life-giver by protecting others. In Morrison's novels African American grand-mothers and 'other mothers' like, Aunt Jimmy, Eva, Circe, Ondine, Suggs, Alice become the sturdy Black bridges by showing great responsibility in rearing the children in the absence of their biological mothers. These mothers need support from both their family and from the community in which they live.

Mother bears children in pain, feeds them from her body, cherishes and nourishes and prepares to lose them. This happened in the Blacks' life during slavery and the period immediate after slavery. Suggs and Sethe in *Beloved* are the appropriate examples from Morrison's works. Suggs is separated from her children and Sethe prepares to kill her child. Feminists feel that becoming a mother is irksome, whereas for the Black women, 'Mother' is not a career option. It is true that "Mother wears a fixed mask of pain and sorrow" (Greer 196) but that does not deter a womanist from discharging the duties of a mother.
In African American society, girls learn mothering from their young years, by mothering their brothers and sisters. In *Song of Solomon*, Milkman's sisters, in *Beloved* Denver, and in *Paradise* Mavis' daughter look after their siblings. While mothers go out in search of livelihood, it becomes the girls' duty to care for their brothers and sisters. But feminists feel that this is due to male's irresponsibility. This is the root cause for the single-headed families. They do not want this to be perpetuated, and therefore, they hate the institution of marriage.

The Black mothers are single parents and they are willing to take up the roles of a home-maker and bread-winner. The worst thing is "she never had any time to herself" (Greer 201). Eva never spends time with her children and when her daughter, Hannah asks, whether she loves them, Eva replies that she does not find time except to feed them. Hence the womanists feel that the mother's role is necessarily deeply involved with the caring, socialising and teaching her children everything including 'human relationships'.

In the African American community "motherhood represents maturity and the fulfilment of one's function as a woman" (Christian. 1986 219). Motherhood is not an issue of the individual; it is an ideology that is interwoven into every aspect of society's basic structure. The Black mothers have always passed on these qualities to their children, particularly to their daughters' self-assertiveness, strength, independence, and a fighting spirit. It opens the visions of possibility in them. Thus unlike feminists, the womanists appreciate the role and responsibilities of mothers; they cherish motherhood and embrace its responsibilities willingly.

(ii) Nurturing:

The next important characteristic of Womanist Thought is nurturing. Morrison declares in an interview that the Black women have had "'the ability to
be the ship and the safe harbor", to build the houses and raise the children, to be complete human beings who did not allow education to keep them from their nurturing abilities" (McKay.flg r?$Along with the role of biological nurturer they nurture the eternal values of their ancestral history. During slavery, the Black mothers were not allowed to nurture their own babies. They were assigned to the White master's children. In Beloved, Morrison's character Baby Suggs becomes the nurturer of others. She has lost her own children but nursed her master's children. After getting her freedom, Suggs educates her grand-children and other Black people in the town to live with self-respect. She also teaches others to love themselves and their bodies. Suggs teaches those whose bodies and spirits have been broken by slavery that they have the power to 'lay down' the anger and pain associated with the past, so that they can learn to love themselves and to begin again to live meaningfully.

Sethe gives importance to nurturing. While she escapes from the Sweet Home, Sethe tries to protect her milk from the Schoolteacher's boys. Till the end of the novel, Sethe tries to assert herself as a nurturer. She tries to satisfy her dead daughter, Beloved, even when she comes back to her as an eighteen-year-old child-woman.

In Tar Baby and Song of Solomon, Therese and Pilate become nurturers of Son and Milkman respectively. Therese guides Son to take up his ancestral past by embracing the blind horsemen, whereas Pilate helps Milkman to know himself and his ancestors.

(iii) Treating Meis as Allies:

The advocates of Womanist Thought prefer to work in concert with males. The Black women try to eliminate a patriarchal social structure that serves to
dehumanise them. They do this without hatred towards men. The Black women writers give importance to their men folk. In general, the Black men leave their homes for various reasons. If they happen to be with their family, they are very helpful and protective. Mr. MacTeer in *The Bluest Eye*, Son in *Tar Baby*, and Paul D in *Beloved* are very helpful to their children and women. MacTeer protects his daughters, Son explains the Black culture to his ladylove Jadine, and Paul D tries to save Denver and Sethe from the ghost. Morrison as a womanist presents a number of men characters as well-wishers and supporters of women.

Feminism is, of course, woman-centred. But they consider female separation as the only solution to their ills. But the Black women do not advocate any solution of their problems, which alienates the Black women from Black men. Instead, they encourage loyalty to men rather than rivalry towards them. Some of the characters like Pilate, and Eva are portrayed as rebels by Morrison. Even when they establish female-headed families, they never abandon their male folks.

The Blacks' spirits have been broken by slavery. So Baby Suggs says in *Beloved* that "there is no bad luck in the world but white people" (104). But Morrison shows that there are some kind-hearted White masters like Garner and Bodwin. Garner treats his slaves as human beings and Bodwin takes steps to set Sethe free. Bodwin proves that Sethe is a victim of evil for which Whites are responsible. Morrison as a womanist portrays both the White and Black men as allies of women. Feminism is perceived as a principle that enables women to have power over men, but womanists prefer to have power over themselves.

(iv) Self-Defmers:

The negative images of the Black women imposed by others have been overturned; they have been replaced by positive images acquired by self-
definition and self-determination. The Black women are self-definers. The history of slavery was always so hideous, so degrading that it further diminished the humanity of the enslaved. Feminists believe that the only escape from that horror is love -- first love yourself and be yourself. Womanists accept the idea 'to love oneself and be oneself because only then can they work towards the welfare of others. The Black women expect self-respect, self-identification, self-sufficiency, self-love, self-righteousness, self-fulfilment and self-denial as the stepping-stones to become self-worthy persons. Morrison's stories pass on the Black people, especially women, the memories of their slave ancestors. They create or recreate an imagination of self that 'white history' or 'male history' has denied them.

Some of the female characters who define themselves in Morrison's novels are Ondine, Pilate, Eva and Sula. Ondine, a Black servantmaid in Tar Baby works hard at Valerian's house. Ondine asserts herself when her niece Jadine fails to take care of her. In Song of Solomon, Pilate is neglected by her brother, Macon Jr. But she protects her daughter and grand-daughter through her self-employment. And in Sula, the protagonist Sula asserts herself even when she is neglected by the townspeople. She and her grand-mother Eva lead their lives based on self-determination, but they also realize that only in an experience of community the self is fully experienced. The 'We' of the community is prior to the T of self-identity.

(v) Family-Centred:

The Black women are family-centred. During the slavery period, the Blacks were denied family life. So, they try to forge family bonds. This is possible with blood relatives or with any human beings. The Black women believe in the truth
that we are all members of a single human family. Morrison has shown most of her women characters as family-centred. Jennifer Uglow comments that "[Morrison's novels] explore in particular, the process of growing up Black, female and poor. Avoiding generalities, Toni Morrison concentrates on the relation between the pressures of the community, patterns established within families, . . . and the developing sense of self (http://www.biogra~3htm).

The feminists consider marriage and family as the primary institutions of the patriarchal world, which keep women tied down with domestic chores by urging women to involve in reproduction. That is why, they try to escape from marriage and family. But, the Black women for historical reasons, did not enjoy the benefits of the family life, marriage and childbearing. Therefore, they support these institutions and also strengthen them. They expect that marriage should be based on the principle, 'give and take'. But in reality, the Black women face an ironic situation where the Black women give and the Black men always take. That is why many of the Black families are female-headed households. Morrison's characters — Sethe and her mother-in-law, Suggs, were separated from their children during slavery and were forced to work without enjoying the nurturing care of a mother. This deprivation created psychological scars. Beloved is the embodiment of the Black people's longing for family life and mother's love.

In *Suta*, Eva has her own family with daughter and grand-daughter. Along with them she creates a family with the mentally retarded children and the other destitute women in the town.

In *Paradise*, Morrison describes how the slaves found it difficult to have a family even after their emancipation. Almost all the characters in *Paradise* have
problems with the members of their family. The women in the Convent form themselves a family and try to overcome the odds in their lives.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison has shown how harmonious family relationships can foster wholesome personalities. The protagonist Pecola belongs to a family which has no peace and therefore, she suffers. Whereas, the narrator Claudia’s parents are caring and protective and therefore, she finds her life enjoyable.

In *Song of Solomon*, Pilate treats Milkman as a member of her family even though her brother Macon Jr. hesitates to recognize her as his sister. In *Tar Baby* Son belongs to a Black communal family, but Jadine has a family bond with the White masters, and in *Jazz* Joe tries to forge a family bond first with Violet and then with Dorcas.

The Black men often try to escape from home and family responsibilities. In *The Bluest Eye*, Sammy tries to run away twenty-seven times by the age fourteen and does so permanently by the novel’s end. Like many African American men, he obviously feels that he can find a better family on the streets. But the African American women always try to have stable families in order to preserve their family history. They try to convert dysfunctional families into functional families.

(vi) Strong and Sturdy:

The Black women are strong in physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects of life. They are strong against evil and injustice. They use their strength to strengthen others, particularly women and children. From the beginning, the Black women have proved that they are strong enough to face the trials and tribulations of life without the help of their men folk.
Feminists feel that men have to give up their right to judge women. A woman should not be valued for her looks only. She should be respected based on her capabilities. To prove this point, feminists indulge in mutilation, body-piercing and tattooing of their bodies. But the Black women indulge in mutilating their body parts to pose threat to others and to protect themselves from the evil-deeds of others. Eva in *Sulci* proves that she could protect her children by cutting her leg, and Sula is bold enough to cut her finger to frighten the boys who tease her and her friend Nel.

(vii) Respectful:

Morrison has shown that Black women are respectful of others and they are respected by others. They give and get respect. They demand respect from others through their deeds. Nel tries to assert herself and expects others to give respect to her as a person and not as her mother's child. Ondine asks Mr Valerian to respect her as a person and not as a Black woman.

African American women venerate their people, their families, their African tradition and their American heritage. They have reverence for Mother Nature and all her living creatures.

(viii) Reconciliation:

Flexibility is one of the major traits of the Black women. They are not rigid, or narrow minded. They change according to the changing circumstances without compromising their basic commitments. They adapt themselves to changing conditions. They reconcile with others and forgive others. Eva's husband deserts her and their children. She struggles a lot to protect her children. But, she forgives her husband when he comes back after a long time with another woman. Eva does not show her anger, instead she welcomes him and accepts him.
Pilate can withstand any eventualities. After her father's death, she moves from place to place in search of livelihood. When her grand-daughter seeks a better life, she tries to fulfil her wishes. Pilate forgives and forgets her brother Macon Jr., and willingly helps his family members. For example, when Ruth is ill-treated by her husband, Pilate saves her from him by using black magic. She also helps Milkman in his search for his ancestors.

When Joe murders Dorcas, her aunt Alice forgives him. She does not want to punish him because she feels that there is no use in punishing him. At the end of the novel Joe's wife Violet also forgives his sin and tries to have a cordial relationship with him.

The Black women as womanists believe in the principle, 'hate the sin, not the sinner' and 'reconciliation leads to redemption'. Moreover, since intolerance breeds oppression, forgiveness is both ideal and practical way of moving ahead.

(ix) Role Models:

The Black women are industrious persons. They have noble aims in their life. They become role models to others. They not only preach but they practise what they preach. Morrison shows Pilate, Suggs, Eva, Consolata, Sula, and Jadine as ambitious persons. Sula and Jadine, though ambitious, fail to become role-models to others, whereas Pilate, Suggs, Eva, and Consolata are exemplary role-models. With their noble qualities they help the younger generation to become dignified persons.

(s) Sisterhood:

The Black women give importance to genuine sisterhood. African American women create their own happiness inside themselves, and when they have enough to share, they always find someone to share it with. Women are the endangered
group in a male-dominated society, and through sisterhood they try to protect themselves. They fight for their rights, and regain their pride through solidarity with other women. Working toward the community bond brings "sisterhood" among women. The women in sorority strive towards a relationship linking equals in a lose but strong network that acknowledges no leaders, imposed no sanctions and indulged in no peculiar or secret rituals. The sisterhood has no hierarchies, or no secret signs. They believe in the network of sisterhood. There are some human societies, where sisters work together to raise children and share breast-feeding. In Black society, it has been a common practice because of slave history and Morrison describes it in her novels.

The Black sororities try to control blatantly criminal activities. They want to eradicate the cruelty, racism, or any other barbaric behaviour. They insist on some life-long friendships. They strictly enforce regulations to ensure that no more innocent women are hurt by others. The notion is that all women are sisters, and they should bond together across ethnic, class, generational and regional lines by their common experiences as an oppressed group. Morrison's *Tar Baby* describes the bond between women like, Ondine and Margaret, who come out of class and race distinctions. Previously, non-biological sisters have never been bonded together except in Convents that grew out of the old religious institutions. Morrison's seventh novel, *Paradise* talks about the formation of a sisterhood among the Convent women. These women forge a bond among themselves and that bond is not based on race and class.

In the Black society, from the beginning of slavery whether directly or indirectly, the African American women have been forming sisterhoods. The Black women thought that sisterhood bound women of different generations. They went
through their life changes more or less simultaneously, bearing their children in
the same epoch and brought them up together. Now a days, the friendship among
women has become a seriously debated topic.

Sisterhood is viewed with suspicion because people think that women come
together for the purpose of sexual gratification without the company of men. The
Black sisterhood is formed to fight against social evils, not for sexual satisfaction.
The relationship between women blossoms due to social and family circumstances.
At first, these relationships flowered on the basis of humanistic ideas. But
sometimes, it extends to lesbianism, which is treated as a taboo. It has now
become a contentious issue since men look at these sisterhoods as a threat to
their masculinity.

Morrison does not show the lesbian act explicitly in her novels. Now and
then, in a few novels, she refers to it indirectly. *Sitta* in general is criticised as
having a lesbian theme, but it never lends itself to be viewed as a lesbian novel.
In *Paradise*, the Convent women are openly engaged in lesbianism, not for
pleasure but for mutual support and comfort. Feminists want to neglect the male
tolk totally and they show their anger by indulging in lesbianism. But in Black
society, the sisterhood is viewed as network of women for some common causes.
It is certainly not to avoid men.

(xi) Holistic Approach:

The Black women have a holistic approach in solving their problems. They
are against division on the basis of race, class and gender. They are against
segregation. They are against fragmentation. They unify everything. While feminists
work towards autonomy, self-reliance and individualism on the basis of female
separation, the womanists want to develop these traits in a community that relies
caring, loving and life-affirming values. They feel what is to be female is to be human. They love the network connections and a web of relationship with others. Morrison, in her novels, encourages women to live with community relationship to overcome the odds. The local community in Beloved helps Sethe exorcise the demon-child. In Paradise Morrison gives importance to community. There is no central character in the novel because Morrison "wanted to force the reader to become acquainted with the communities" (Reames 73).

Race and sex are both used to oppress women. The Blacks face differently institutionalised forms of inequality. The Black men are given license to exercise the Black male privileges, but only within the confines of the Black community and at great cost to the Black women; the Black women have more independence from the patriarchal family, but are subject to extreme economic exploitation and poverty.

Morrison brings out the relationship among women beyond considerations of race and class in her novels. In Tar Baby, the Black servant maid Ondine helps the White woman Margaret when she is in trouble. Amy, a White servant girl helps the Black woman, Sethe to deliver her baby in the novel Beloved. Amy also helps Sethe when she is chased by the Schoolteacher and his nephews.

(xii) Spirituality:

The Black women give importance to spirituality. They have religious bent of mind. The Black women consider all human beings as belonging to one universal spirit called God. They also find soul-mates. Consolata devotes herself to God. Most of the time, she engages in prayer and meditation. Thus, she treats the Convent women as her soul-mates. Sula and Nel are also soul-mates. The narrator comments that they have one soul in two bodies. Suggs becomes a
preacher in *Beloved*. She acts as a self-ordained preacher and gives sermons to other people urging them to know themselves and to give importance to their own 'self and 'body'.

(b) Difference between Feminism and Womanism:

Feminism is a movement, which tries to end sexist oppression. Whereas Black women revolt against both sexist and racist oppressions.

Feminism is a celebration of values, beliefs, ideas and behaviour exclusively the characteristics of women. But womanism is an honour of human values and humane attitude towards all living things.

Feminism attempts to secure rights for women whereas womanism seeks to attain human rights for men, women, and children.

Feminism is usually self-centred. It considers female independence as a solution to their ills. But the Black women as womanists do not advocate any solution to their problems without taking into account the welfare of their men folk. They do not wish to alienate themselves from Black men. They encourage loyalty to Black men rather than animosity towards them.

Feminists fight for their citizenship rights. But the Black women as womanist are interested in kinship with men in order to gain their rights. They look upon men as their allies in gaining their civil rights.

When the White women fought for liberating slaves, they did not pay attention to the Black women's rights. There was a great stir about the Black men getting their rights, but not even a single word about the Black women's rights. So the Black women felt betrayed. The White feminists were concerned about their rights only but the Black women were against the issues of racism, poverty, exploitation, and discrimination which ruined the lives of all men and women.
Feminists argue that women possess the same capabilities and abilities as men, and if they are given opportunities, they can do anything that men can do. But the Black women are proud of their womanly capacity that men do not possess—mothering and childbearing. So, they explore new communal forms which depend on the distinctive gender characteristics of women. For them sex equality is not enough. They look beyond equality to liberation in a society that is just, less dominative and more interactive emphasizing holism, harmony and peace among human kind.

Feminists work towards autonomy, self-reliance and individualism on the basis of female separatism but the Black womanists want to develop these traits in a community that relies on nurturent, caring, loving and life-affirming values. They insist on the fact that one must be human before one is male or female. They assume a network of connections, a web of relationships that is sustained by a process of communication, describing themselves through actions that bring them into connection with others.

Feminists believe that sexual freedom is the foundation of all freedom. But for the Black womanists liberation and sexual liberation are not synonymous. They also seek freedom from invasions of privacy and the insults of degrading stereotypes.

Feminists view marriage as a primary formalization of the persecution of women. They believe that family is a patriarchally entrenched institution that keeps a woman as a domestic drudge. But the Black women, for historical reasons did not enjoy the benefits of family and marriage and childbearing, therefore, they want to strengthen these institutions because they believe in 'give and take policy'.
African American women as womanists strive to create equity for both genders, and free themselves of all traces of oppressive tendencies despite the fact that they have been shackled by their own negative self—image by centuries of the internalisation of the ideologies of patriarchy and gender hierarchy. The Black women writers try to change the negative images of women portrayed in literature. They also try to change the stereotypical notions of the nature of women. Man created these stereotypes and they can undo them. Along with the feminists the Black womanists also accept that only a woman can understand and can represent the pains and sufferings of women. Only a woman can have a better grasp of woman's issues than a man.

Feminists believe that feminism is a struggle for women alone. But the womanists feel that their struggle is not exclusively for women alone. It is a struggle to liberate women, men, children and nature. They consider that it is a struggle for the rights of all human beings as one that requires the partnership of both the genders.

Feminism is an escape route from the dominating male-world. The womanists accept this idea, but they struggle without breaking up the foundations of society and also without breaking away from man's world.

Feminism believes in segregation or separation. Whereas womanists believe in integration. Feminists suspect male folks and look at them as their adversaries, whereas womanists trust human ties and human obligations.

With the help of feminist movement, women have secured their basic rights, but women cannot live in isolation without the company of men. The Black women look for the welfare of human beings on Earth. If one can recognise one's place in humanity, then one will become an ideal human being. When one
lives for oneself, and for the humanity, one will be truly free. No human problem will be solved unless human beings regard one another as equals. Thus, the responsibility of bringing about changes in the world and establishing a peaceful and prosperous society is on men and women.

When the Black women writers have proved that womanist ideology is possible in their society, then it may be applicable to any other society. To bring about a change in the society, there should be a shift in public opinion, a change in attitude of women to themselves, a change of attitude of men to women, and women to men. Change of consciousness may take place slowly. To get a true change, it takes time and it has to be slow. And by cautious and slow revolution rather than a rapid one, it is possible to create a society beyond race, class and gender.

(c) Womanist Thought as a Universal Concept In Morrison's Writings:

Morrison has attracted the attention of the world through her novels, because they are based on the nobility of the suffering humanity, and they are not for any particular gender. Morrison's books are not specifically for Black, they are not exclusively for women, but they are generally about human beings. Morrison highlights "humanism, collectivism, and egalitarianism" in her works (Mbalia 69). There is a belief that women write only for women and men write for everyone. This is a prejudice and Morrison breaks this in her novels by writing for everyone. She comments that "I'm in the better category. I write without gender focus" (McKay.in$W$ Many critics have praised Morrison's ability to provide insight into the problems of all human beings irrespective of their race, class or gender. Jonathan Yardley describes Morrison's writing as "Quite purposefully, it seems, she is striving not for the particular but for the universal" (Blashfield 89).
Morrison's main focus is to challenge the invisibility of women in recorded literary history. Her works as a part of the growing discipline of the Black Women's Studies, examine the lives of women, find unique ways to focus on the issues of Black female identity and powerlessness. She focuses mainly on the quest for female self and the historical conditions of racism and sexism. She opposes the traditional stereotypical images of Black womanhood and shows the empowerment of all women as they have "moved from silent object to speaking subject" (Coyle and Malcolm 223). When receiving the Nobel award, Morrison said that it was a great honour, one that symbolised long overdue recognition of women and Black writers: "I felt I represented a whole world of women who either were silenced or who had never received the approval of the established literary world" (Blashfield 90). Thus, Morrison brings into her novels, through an imaginative sweep, universal vision in which questions of slavery, race, gender, the dilemmas of historical memory are compellingly posed in "the light of Human condition" (Vyas LR X).

The Black women are more group-centred and community-oriented than self-centred and they work toward the reconstruction of self and society. Simultaneously, they work with all disadvantaged people. When the commonly oppressed refuse to co-operate with each other, the oppressor prevails, so they see women's right in the light of human rights. Virginia Woolf too brings awareness between women and men. This awareness should not be based on nationality of the individuals: "As a woman, I've no country. As a woman, I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world" (Woolf. 1938 229). The womanists create literature to tell about being a woman, to describe reality from a
woman's perspective in order to eradicate the diabolical and pervasive forces haunting humanity everywhere.

The main focus of this study is the analysis of the writings of Morrison. It also focuses on various streams of Feminist Thought and its culmination as the Womanist Thought. This study examines the life and struggles of the oppressed people from the perspective of women. It also expresses how men and women can work together to overcome their problems and create a paradise on earth.

(d) Suggestions for Further Studies:

Further studies may be undertaken on how Alice Walker's exposition on Womanist Thought is endorsed or spurned by the African American women writers. Investigations may be undertaken on how the African American male writers, project or reject Womanist Thought in their writings. Studies may also be undertaken on whether Womanist Thought is delineated in the writings of other women writers in America and the writers from other continents. Further investigations may show how far this Womanist Thought has been assimilated or rejected by writers of the third-world countries.