SUMMARY

The present study proposes to examine the novels of Toni Morrison from the twin perspectives—the art of storytelling i.e. narratology and recall as narrative technique. Recall is a narrative device that a writer uses to remember the past happenings. Recall includes memory, interior monologue, stream of consciousness and flashback etc. As the novels of Morrison begin in medias res, it is obvious that the writer would have to go back to tell the earlier story to the reader flashback using narrative devices such as recall, interior monologue, memory, stream of consciousness, flashback etc. The goal of narratology is to discover a form of narration that covers all the possible ways in which stories can be told. In the present study the word ‘narratology’ is discussed in relation to point of view. Point of view or narrative technique signifies the way a story is told. A simple and most widely accepted classification of narrative technique of storytelling is a broad division between third-person and first-person narratives, with further sub-classification of the third-person narrative into omniscient and limited point of view techniques. The narrator’s access to character’s thoughts is communicated to readers by narrative distance. Narrative distance in fiction is determined through direct discourse, indirect discourse and free indirect discourse, which are abundantly used in the novels of Morrison. There are only two modes of narration and they are ‘telling’ a fiction and ‘showing’ it and this is not language specific. The narratives mode which Morrison picks to use is not highly dramatic rather it just reports to the readers. In her novels the third-person unlimited omniscient narrator narrates the story and the narrator is not reliable most of the time. The study probes and tests various questions and problems familiar from literary studies, such as the question of the omniscient narrator, the reliability and unreliability of the narrator. Morrison has published nine novels, to date, and all the novels have been duly discussed in the present study.
Morrison wants to re-write the history of the blacks, for the blacks, without having to look over her shoulder to explain her world to white people. The only firm basis she could rely on is the oral tradition. Earlier slave narratives were written with the perspective of the whites. But the liberatory narratives of Morrison radically depart in the technique of narration whose primary function is in describing how to achieve freedom. These narratives has a plot without defined beginning and ending, without a chronological arrangement of events, and the use of reliable and omniscient narrators as well as having postmodernist characteristics i.e. fragmentation, non-linearity and discontinuity. Morrison is interested in ripping the veil drawn over proceedings too terrible to relate for any black, who were seldom invited to participate in the discourse even when they were its topic. Morrison uses narrative techniques that utilizes resources in native languages, and uses non-colonial forms of history-recording, such as myths, folk songs, ballads and stories. The oral quality in her narratives and her desire to manipulate the reader’s interest accounts for the frequent variations in stylistic emphasis.

To show her distinctiveness, Morrison resorts to two comparisons – she underlines her artistic affinities with painting and the pictorial arts to depict universality. She looks for fragmented images which are the germs from which she develops the fictional scene. She wants her prose to recreate black speech, to restore to its original power that black people spoke – language is the thing that black people love so much. The study shows how Morrison compels readers to participate, to create the novel with her and to help construct meaning.

Thus, in order to have a penetrating look at the narrative techniques and aspects related to narratology used by Morrison, the present study has been divided into five chapters:
The introductory chapter of the present study aims to encompass a brief survey of the major critical writings and reviews on Toni Morrison. There is a brief biographical account of the writer to highlight the age and circumstances that influenced and shaped her sensibility as a creative writer to a considerable extent. The chapter also spells out the approach to be adopted in the discussion of the novels of Morrison; particularly the understanding of the strategy of art of narration in different novels. A brief introduction of narratology, point of view and related aspects and terms of narratology has been discussed.

The second chapter attempts to analyze *The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon* and *Tar Baby* critically. An attempt is made to relate narratology to the themes and to explore to what extent she succeeds in applying the narrative techniques effectively to depict the menace and psychological impact of slavery. *The Bluest Eye* addresses issues of race and beauty standards through the figure of Pecola Breedlove, who dreams of having blue eyes. Unable to get blue eyes, Pecola pays price through her insanity. Besides introducing Claudia, a child narrator, Morrison also uses Dick and Jane primer, flashback, oscillation of events from the present to the past, an omniscient narrator for the purpose of exploring the devastating effects of the Western ideas of beauty on a black girl. Morrison demonstrates how such ideas can invert the natural order of an entire culture. In *Sula*, Morrison wants to show that sometimes what society calls evil can also have a good purpose. To show this theme, Morrison uses gaps, dots within dots, the third-person
narrative technique, with an unusual combination of omniscient narrator, figural narration and psychonarration to get adequate space to reveal the character’s fragmented psyche to the reader. In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison tries the theme of cultural identity as the entire action is focused on the broad experience of the central character. She uses a flying myth and third-person, omniscient limited narrator for the purpose of ‘telling’ rather than ‘showing’. The third-person narrative has enough space to get into the world of many characters, events and actions. In *Tar Baby*, Morrison successfully delineates the theme through the characters of Jadine and Son to reflect the positive principles of traditional African society. Each of her major characters has an opportunity to present his or her particular views on self and others. And while there is an omniscient narrator, he is not given a role superior to that of each of the others. He only highlights and not prescribes or defines the thoughts and actions of significant character.

The third chapter seeks to examine the novels *Beloved*, *Jazz* and *Paradise*, and shows narratology in relation to history. The characters are primarily preoccupied with their past memories and the structures of the novels are so fragmented that a writer none other than Morrison could only unified it. What characterizes this phase is the author’s working out the implications that identity may be more a construction than a biological essence. *Beloved* is about trying to forget (or repress) the past; *Jazz* is about trying to ignore (or skip over) the past and *Paradise* is about re-inventing (re-writing) the past. This study shows how Morrison succeeds in using different narrative techniques to re-write the history under slavery. In *Beloved*, Morrison puts Sethe at the central position. The very technique of Morrison to leave her novel open-ended makes the reader turn back to the first page of the novel to make re-reading to trace clues as to what the ending means. The story is told through third-person narrative technique interspersed with first-person narrative executed with omniscient and implied narrator for the purpose of
‘telling’ rather than ‘showing’ an experienced truth of life is unique. There is an extensive use of flashback and stream of consciousness technique. Morrison by narrating the horrific, heart-wrenching story of a mother, a wife, and a woman questions the very existence of relationships in the face of hostile outer world and how she tries vainly to get her life back on track. Sethe is raped and forced to murder her own daughter. However, no resolution occurs for any of the characters and each learns to accept and deal with the past only to find a future. In *Jazz*, Morrison tries to re-write history of jazz music by taking a historical event on the pages of the novel. The structure of the novel is also suggestive, just as jazz, in which one performer takes on the theme of another and plays variations around it, so the different performers in the text take on each other’s themes, between sections of the novel. To show the changing nature and tempo of the music, Morrison used an unreliable, third-person omniscient narrator for the purpose of ‘telling’ rather ‘showing’ the lives of migrated slaves. This study shows the similarities between the changing tempo of jazz music and the narrator’s unreliability as well as the swapping nature of the characters. Morrison has delineated the story of Dorcas, Violet and Joe. It is seen that at the end of one of Felice’s visits, the couple start dancing to the music drifting from the house across the alley. The community seems to have forgotten their violent acts of the past winter, and the couple finds a place to rest and talk. *Paradise*, has multithreaded beginning that eventually leads towards a unified ending, and thus concludes all character narrators presence within the novel. The second aspect is how the whole set of varied stories initially narrated by unrelated characters are juxtaposed with careful pertinence to echo a single plot. Third, how a singular omniscient narrator sounds immensely incompetent in leading the narrative towards a proper closure or ending. For this, it takes repeated short leaves of narration to provide the established characters with considerably enough time to have their internal voice heard. This is an act of how
a third-person omniscient, unreliable narrator who ‘tells’ the story rather than ‘shows’ it to show the after-effects of slavery after the Civil War. Morrison wants to explore why human beings, often influenced by religion, feel the need to create their own kind of paradise in society, and why creating a paradise often means other human beings must be excluded - as the men in Ruby exclude the women at the Convent. It is impossible to create a paradise of one’s own.

The fourth chapter, Narratology in relation to (Dis ) guished image of slavery , deals with Love and A Mercy. The primary emphasis in these novels remains the same - the dominant forces menace the community and the silenced group faces anxiety and dread of their existence. The masters have started discriminating blacks /women under the disguised image of slavery. Morrison has treated both these titles as words rather than the feelings they evoke. Actually the stories of (dis)guised image of slavery and camouflaging love and mercy towards black women are being portrayed in Love and A Mercy. The technique of split narrative is used in Love. The narrative situation continually changes from omniscient to point of view and to postmodern subjective multi - perspectives. This study shows how a man camouflages three women. To show the camouflaging mercy towards blacks in A Mercy, Morrison very effectively used the narrative mode of ‘telling’ rather than ‘showing’. Although shifting point of view from the first -person narrative to the third -person narrative has been dexterously manipulated. Morrison introduces Florens as a facilitator with whom the story delves deep into the psychology of the masters towards slaves. At the same time feministic attitude of the slave community is also depicted thoroughly. With a non-linear style of narration with flashback, interior monologue and stream of consciousness, the use of the present tense interspersed with the past is used for readers’ involvement in the story is retained till the very end.
The last chapter, conclusion, conveys that reading of these novels it becomes clear that Morrison has made an attempt to re-write the history of the blacks but in her own ways; the ways of blacks. This chapter concludes that as a novelist Morrison has contributed new techniques, new matter, new approach and new style of African-American novels. In her novels, she interprets African material in term of new universalism and employs technique of narration which best suits a due situation which is also the best in both Africa and America. It also presents a brief statement or the world-outlook of the novelist that provides coherence to this narrative mode.