Chapter - V

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In the foregoing chapters we saw the two faces of Eve in their dimensional variety and complexity. The face of the lover and the face of the wife are distinct and identifiably different from each other and often pursue unilinear courses independently. But woman in family and society is positioned such that her two faces must be one, for she brings forth and guides the future generations. Unless woman is integrated within herself the two faces will pull apart her soul. Moreover, such identity categories like lover and wife do not have any separate existence in the family. Similarly lesbian and gay categories, extensions of the traditional lover into psychic channels of self-fulfilment, also do not have any separate identity in society and family. These categories are more valid in political discourses than in social reality. And even 'discourse' as Michael Foucault says "can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (101). Woman is an integrated whole; not an assembly of identity-categories. Woman is not a "theme" to theorize about and debate, she is a wholesome presence in history and reality. Her exploits as lover and wife, achievements and even suffering are great, but within the family and society where marriage bonds are still sacred, she is a moulding presence. She must therefore, of necessity, have one face: integrated, harmonized and
wholesome, capable of reflecting emotions the family and society recognize. The total being of woman is more important to society and family than is acknowledged by men and women in history. For this the two and more faces of woman usually derived from the social roles a woman plays in life - daughter, wife, mother - are to be integrated in the being of a woman.

It is true that the so-called social roles of wife and mother (daughter, lover including) have been assigned to woman in a male-dominated society. Woman as essential woman has little choice in that matter. It is always man marrying a woman and not vice-versa, and the desire, aspiration and choice of a woman in the modern society stand sacrificed to man-centric values. Even the adulation, feminine 'sacrifice' and the ego-shedding mother image, women "enjoy" in literature and society is a male value imposed on woman as an essence. The free self or soul of a woman seeking its own essence, and creating her own rhythms is seldom recognized. For this reason, woman as an aggressive lover or a dominating partner in a lover-relationship is most often not applauded by even woman. The training of history imparts a secondary, and at best responsive/reciprocatory role to woman in love relationship. There is no 'female hero' in a human story. Germaine Greer rightly, observes: "Only Cleopatra has enough initiative and desire to qualify for the status of female hero" (The Female Eunuch 233). It is only in Cleopatra that we notice the feminine essence in heroic focus. She builds up a dream for herself, keeping her self at the
centre of her dream. She has desire, initiative, passion, pursuit. She trains and disciplines herself physically and mentally. She keeps herself well informed in almost all aspects of life. From beauty to fashions, medicine to black art, politics to warfare, diplomacy to guile, administration to adventure, seduction to bed-room pyrotechnic and selfishness to sacrifice - all forms of human energy and intelligence are in Cleopatra's being. We have already seen how she tries to extricate herself, at the tender age of twelve, from the forced marriage situation with her brother, and plots to be the queen herself. She dreams of absolute power and cherishes the desire to be the empress of the world. She uses the freedom of her love to create ambitions in Caesar, to be the absolute master of the world. She promises and gives her husband Caesar a son. She gives the power of her love to Caesar and goads him to aspire for the laurel crown of the world. Cleopatra shows what love can accomplish. If she fails in achieving her goal through Caesar, it is not because of her lack of efforts and desire; she fails because of an alien political situation over which she had no controlling authority. Caesar, her alter ego, could not establish firm control over Roman politics and was assassinated. Cleopatra had no power to operate from Rome. But her failure in achieving her desired objectives is not a feminine failure nor a failure of her love. Such reversals are common in history and are sex-neutral. Cleopatra after Caesar's assassination, as discussed in detail in chapter-II, does not live the life of a segregated widow in Egypt, accepting her fate as women normally do, in her political "prisoner" situation. But she rises again by her own initiative taking a second chance in life.
The Cleopatra - Antony love and the tragic end that crowns it, is an illustration of a female hero's essence in its highest intensity. With Antony as her lover-husband she weaves a second dream-web to achieve the laurel crown of the universe. She empowers Antony by her love and sends him to naval and land battles with Octavious Caesar. But before the military machine of Octavious Caesar the Antony-Cleopatra combined might get crushed. Antony dies and Egypt is taken by the "boy" Caesar. But we have seen how she rises as a lover sacrificing her kingdom, children and the future of her royal dynasty in the last Act of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. She achieves the great stature of a heroic lover and finds in love her ultimate essence. Hero Cleopatra sublimates her being in love. Hers is a case of love perfected by sacrifice.

Cleopatra, however, is an extreme example of woman as lover. In situations of familiar reality such levels of perception and such heroic passion are not seen. Similarly Draupadi is a unique illustration of wife, a seminal identity of woman in social life. She is fire-born, destined to be wife to the five Pandava brothers who are mighty, wise, varied and vast. But she does not get wifehood like an ordinary woman. She is a challenge to male pride, skill, training and single minded concentration. She is won as a "prize" in a great archery contest by the greatest archer Arjun in the *Mahabharat*. Draupadi, the daughter of fire, the princess of Panchala goes as the prize to masculine excellence, to Hastina. She raises the disguised Pandava princes from their fugitive state and restores them to royalty. She
restores identity to her husbands and brings them the luck to gain their share of kingdom and majesty. She raises her husbands to the highest level of royalty. Yudhisthira becomes the emperor after the Rajsuya Yajna and she too is elevated to the stature of Empress, the Empress of the world of (India) Aryavarta. She then faces with pride the fall of her husbands, gracefully accepts her humiliation sharing, as an ideal wife, their lot. But she does not give in with helpless docility, nor does she weaken them by constant bickering. She absorbs their sorrow, harmonizes their different tempers into goal-oriented vision, and through the agonizing years of their banishment and underground existence, she supports their morals by wifely fortitude. We have seen in chapter-III how she met each of her husbands with equal reciprocity. Her knowledge of statecraft, warfare, economic management, social sophistication and royal shenanigans as well as home management in the palace and forest make her a complete woman, capable of interacting with male essence in all its diversity. She herself displays a range and variety of feminine essence that is unparalleled in literature (even in history). She embraces all binaries like plenty and poverty, majesty and lowliness, royalty and ordinariness, bejeweled queenliness and dishevelled forest dwelling ordinariness and finally fire and ice. She is born of fire but falls on the Himalayan snow failing to complete her physical journey to heaven.
Draupadi as wife experiences the largest socio-human territory envisaged in literature. But in the closing reckoning, she takes nothing, gains nothing and receives nothing. With five husbands alive and straight on the ground she does not get the farewell caress from any one when she falls on the snow. The husbands do not even turn back. Lord Krṣṇā, her dearest Sakha (friend, lover and protector) who had saved her from shame by providing endless yards of cloth when Dussasan tried to denude her in the open court, does not comfort her with any warmth at the end. He is no more there in the world. She leaves alone, exhausted and weary:

	tesāṁ tu gachchatam śighram sarveṣam yogadharminam 1
	yajnasenī bhrastayogā nipapāta mahītale 11

(Mahaprasthanikaparva, Canto 2, Sl. 6, 8)

[While all of them committed to the yogadharma were walking at a quick pace, Draupadi fell on the ground.]

She has completed the last great wifely role of sending her husbands heavenward which was her creed. Her feminine essence, as per the Indian mythico-cultural traditions, attains the ultimate salvation in its moral existence.

Cleopatra as lover and Draupadi as wife, are the ultimate imaginative projections of woman in her spiritual totality. The other celebrated women—Helen, Dido, Sakuntala are a shade incomplete. They either are too earthly
like Helen and Dido or too spiritual like Šakuntala. Helen and Dido too are lovers, but their love does not transcend the carnal self. They do not orient their love towards a vision of integration of the universe, nor do they rise beyond their selves by any sacrifice. No metaphysical transcendence sublimes their love from the flesh to the spirit - the esemplastic spirit of synthesis of opposites. Šakuntala on the other hand carves a multilayered reality not as the protagonist of her fate but as the plaything of fate. Her love removes her from the symbiosis of nature to loss of self and inhuman humiliation in the palace. In her case nature does not naturally integrate the society nor does society civilizationally integrate nature. She had to be rescued by miraculous intervention of supernatural powers. Her love, however, fruitions in motherhood in supernatural. Her patience, heroic suffering and determined feminine essence is rewarded in the end. She rejoins her husband and is reunited with him at the level of supernature. Both Šakuntala and Dusyanta are taken away from nature and socio-royal reality to the realm of the spiritual where they "enjoy" bliss. But Šakuntala's love does not get the celebration of life in the human order. Her love and being are too abstract to be human.

We have also seen the high society extra-marital love in Anna. She tries to escape the stifling incompatibility of wifehood (and motherhood) to fulfil
her being in love. But she fails. Trying to escape her social fate she lands
herself in almost a no-man's land, that is, in a non-cosmic stasis. Romantic
passion is not love nor is obligatory social duty wifehood. Love as we have
discussed in chapter-II and elsewhere is a freedom not an adventure. It
ennobles and fulfils the being. But when man-made laws of society and
civilization intervene love loses its freedom and limps into stasis. Anna in the
bargain loses both love and society. Family, motherhood, wifehood and also
the freedom of a lover are progressionally taken away from her. She faces
finally the crashing engine of a train to culminate her agony. For her there is
no salvation. She dies without any essence. She is neither a wife nor a lover
when her mangled body oozes the last few drops of the vital human fluid on
the asymptotical railway tracks.

Radha, a late entrant into cultist philosophy and Vaishnava literature is
more metaphorical than real. She is the absorbing and energizing principle of
creation and life, she has no social face, no motherhood no wifehood and no
substantive social ethic. But she is abstractly real in a mythical frame of the
universe where her "love" generates, modulates and stabilizes the creative
process. She was created to harness the bullish forces of Kṛṣṇa, the Lord
Creator, and she harmonizes his dark propensities into wholesome divinity. She
maintains the equilibrium of life by love. She gives and absorbs without any
desire for return. She is the archetypal symbol of love which dispels darkness and dark desires in life and creation. But she has no corporeal substance and to search for her in home and society is futile (as has been shown, in a lyrical classic *Navrang*, a film made by India's celebrated film-maker V. Shantaram).

Radha at best is an abstract archetype. She is nature, pastoral reality, the inspiring passion to creativity. But she has no place in the humdrum routine of life. She is beauty, grace, rhythm and energy but her essence is not palpable reality. She causes the dynamism of reality, dispels the darker allurements which digress the creative process, and sustains creativity by her love. But she can not rise above symbolism nor can she come out of it. Radha is an idea to inspire the home-setters to creative dynamism but she cannot be a spouse or lover in real life.
II

But life is not abstract existence or literary verisimilitude. It is real, societal and familial. The two faces projected in this dissertation, are social faces, real and identifiable faces. The lover is the active 'yang' force energizing the male to creativity and the wife is the receiver, displayer of the entire creative process. This is as much true of the universe as of the home and society. Woman as lover energizes the man to pluck the stars from heaven, to climb up the Everest and to play the shooting match of life to the epitonic limits of his soul force. And as wife woman displays his achievement, shares his failure and humiliation, absorbs his agony and again sends him to the shooting arena. The two faces are indeed one in the home situation. Woman is lover-wife, not lover and wife. If Cleopatra and Draupadi are two there will be no home, no society and no history - long or short. If the universe is symbolically an energy whole where equilibrium, dynamism and progressive manifestation ceaselessly go on, the home in social life too is a microcosm of the same macro process. The woman in the home-universe is Radha, her energies vibrate the home and make it the showpiece on earth. She is not of divisible identities. She has no separate existence as lover. She has no monolithic identity as lover. The social identity of wife is also the identity of a lover. Draupadi is Cleopatra and Cleopatra Draupadi in all homes. She makes her spouse achieve the laurel crown within the parameters of their existential conditions. She bears the children (not his
alone) as she alone has been endowed by nature with this power. She makes everything grow and mature into perfection. She holds life in display. Reality is such that no display or achievement is permanent. In the mutable process of reality the single or individual displays are transitory perfections. Such perfections are created and displayed by women all through history and civilization and the process will continue till the universe lasts. The home-universe is one bright spot in the entire process and at no time can the single effort be mistaken with the whole. The spatio-temporal limitations of life are, however, redeemed by making the single effort beautiful and artistic like the universe of God who is bisexual in principle. The Indian philosophers, for this reason, call God Ardhanareeswara, (half-feminine and half masculine) who is both male and female in essence. Woman is the energy and man is the manifestation of the energy. Man is the dancer but woman is the dance. The dance and the dancer are not separable like horse and the rider or the trigger and the trigger-finger:

The man-woman form of Siva - Ardhanareeswara - represents in art-form the depth-significance in realising the macrocosm and the microcosm as the mere play of the ONE SELF in and through the not-Self.

(Swami Chinmayananda, "Ardhanareeswara" 232)

In this dance of life man and woman are like the flower and its symmetry and fragrance. Where the symmetry ends and the flower begins is
not known, nor is there any need to know. The human home is like a flower, in bloom. There is no need to know where the identities of man and woman begin or end. Similarly the lover and wife in a woman are not two selves struggling to surpass each other by their separate energies. The lover is the wife and the wife the lover in social life. Like the "fire" and the "rose" attaining oneness in the end of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* the lover and wife glow in each other's superego. Woman is one and an energy whole. She is Cleopatra. She is Draupadi. And she is Cleopatra and Draupadi in a metaphorical wholeness. Or should be, otherwise the home or social life can not display any thing.

The true essence of woman is a blend of the lover and wife. As lover she projects, moves, acts, reacts and causes things to happen, and as wife she anoints herself with the glory and displays it in her home, children, husband and her small universe. The total identity she gains is the ultimate glow of life, the ultimate essence. As long as marriage, whatever be its form, exists in human society the identity of woman will be of such unifocal essence.

Modern women, especially, those who claim to have a separate gender identity and lavish love in a lesbian or gay manner *colonize* themselves politically. Such contentions are laughed away as "an ontological joke" by feminist writers like Monique Wittig ("The Mark of Gender") while others like Luce Irigaray contend that a woman's desire is unfortunately phallocentric. If
sexuality is the hallmark of a lover, and desire for distinctive pleasure is a woman lover's prerogative, Irigaray negates the possibility. She thinks that woman is:

Only a more or less complacent facilitator for the working out of man's fantasies. It is possible, and even certain, that she experiences vicarious pleasure there, but this pleasure is above all a masochistic prostitution of her body to a desire that is not her own and that leaves her in her well-known state of dependency.

("The Sex Which is Not One" 324)

Luce Irigaray negates the woman in sexual union and makes her a dependent self. When Cleopatra rode the Philippan, (Antony's sword and the phallic symbol) she had overwhelming joy. She wouldn't have agreed with Irigaray. Such imaginary scenario is visualized when sexual union is effected without love. It is love that makes union a blissful experience for both man and woman where body-mind-soul participate in multicellular atomism. Irigaray is, however, absolutely right about woman's entire body being a composite sexual system:

But Woman has sex organs just about everywhere. She experiences pleasure almost everywhere. Even without speaking of the hysterization of her entire body one can say that the geography of her pleasure is much more
diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is imagined - in an imaginary centered a bit too much on one and the same. (326)

It is true that the geography of her pleasure is like a vast and multiple field. Shakespeare uses the imagery of a fertile field to denote woman in *Antony and Cleopatra*:

> He plough'd and she cropp'd  

(II, ii, 227, 61)

What Irigaray lacks in her portrayal of female sex is the cosmicity of essence. If sex makes a woman a corporeal isolate and a sexless sex-field desiring "nothing and everything" (327) there is nothing to be amazed about. She is all that and the pre-modern world recognized her as such. Marvell's *Coy Mistress* had the eyes, lips, and hands which could be praised till eternity blushed yet she desired nothing and sat mute:

> Had we but World enough, and Time,  
> This coyness Lady were no crime.  
> We would sit down, and think which way.  
> An hundred years should go to praise  
> Thine Eyes, and on thy Forehead Gaze.
Two hundred to adore each Breast:

But thirty thousand to the rest.

An Age at least to every part,

And the last Age should show your Heart.

For lady you deserve this State,

Nor would I love at lower rate.

The poststructuralists and postmoderns have deconstructed a woman's body and self and do not give her an identity. She is removed from the phallus in the social order which has no definition of her vast separateness. But we believe that her vast separateness is not phallus-exclusive. In our introductory chapter we have already examined her vastness and universal energy. Her variety and flux, her changing moods and words endlessly flowing into separate moments of being do not make a woman different and undefinable in the context of society. Her nature is such that she grows and matures every moment giving and lavishing bounties on the world without repeating herself. She renews herself every moment as the universe. Her universe is complete in love and the creative union that is so essential for the consummatory process of reality. Even John Donne recognizes the royal vastness of woman's universe calling the sun, "the busy old fool" to warm the consummate bed which is the total universe:
Looke, and tomorrow late, tell mee,
Whether both the 'India's of spice and Myne
Be where thou leftest them, or lie here with mee,
Aske for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt heare, All here in one bed lay,
She is All States, and all Princes I,
Nothing else is.
Princes doe but play us; compar'd to this,
All honor's mimique, All wealth alchimie.

Thou Sunne are halfe as happy as wee,
In that the world's contracted thus.
Thine age askes ease, and since thy duties bee
To warme the world, that's done in warming us.
Since here to us, and thou art everywhere,
This bed thy center is, these walls thy spheare.

("The Sunne Rising" 16-30, 4)

The essence of woman can never be a radical feminist posture denying her own being and its cultural significance. The attempts of post-structuralists to reduce woman to an ontological joke notwithstanding, woman is a valued presence in history and society. Identity, essentialism, anti-essentialism and nominalist discourses with their strategic political overtones, often take away
woman from her valued positionality in the family and society to a platform where her sex has no significance. She has no cultural or historical validity when she operates in an asocial void. Woman finds identity in a network of relations which she manipulates by her native intelligence. Her family traditions, social status, economic condition, the environment and political situation do not always shape her being. Woman too tries to relate herself to her reality by manipulating the network of relations within which she finds herself. It is a two-way give and take relationship with reality in which she is both determined and determinant. The patriarchy determined value system within which women had to operate without any choice is rightly rebelled against by feminists but to reject the female biology and sex identity simply because those were male observations and male-discoveries, is not well taken if not unreasonable. Adrienne Rich observes: "We must touch the unity and resonance of our physicality, our bond with the natural order, the corporeal ground of our intelligence" (Of Woman Born 21). Rich in a celebratory tone highlights the high points of female physicality and asserts that the female body "has far more radical implications than we have yet come to appreciate" (21). The physical presence and physicality of a woman cannot be denied, for these are the sources and assets of her essence. Mary Daly, similarly, posits that sex difference and sex identity are the distinctions of woman and her essence is in her sex. She becomes the object of envy and therefore hatred
because of her life-energy, her capacity for love and her creativity (Gyn/Ecology 355-365). It is only the French feminists, influenced by Derrida (Of Grammatology), and Foucault (The Foucault Reader, and The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences) who argue and deny physicality and essentialism to woman. Julia Kristeva, ("Woman can Never Be Defined"), and others delight in woman's indefinability as a political strategy. They assert that woman defines herself by her own understanding of history and society in relation to her contemporary situation. While we may temporarily agree with such a viewpoint, only in the context of urban sophistication, where woman denies even motherhood to herself, we may survey women everywhere as the nourisher and sustainer of mankind. This historical identity of woman as the bearer of mankind cannot be eschewed by any strategy or theory. Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak rightly advocates to go beyond the essentialism - anti-essentialism debate. In an interview with Ellen Rooney she says:

... Essences, it seems to me, are just a kind of content. All content is not essence. Why be so nervous about it? Why not demote the word "essence", because without a minimalizable essence, an essence as ce qui reste, an essence as what remains, there is no exchange. Difference articulates these negotiable essences. There is no time for essence/anti-essence. There is so much work to be done.

("In a word" 370)
Spivak takes essence into multicultural contexts and thinks that it is a pluralistic problematics. She almost terms it as a strategy where history, the multicultural contexts and future hopes and needs determine essence or anti essence. But we know that strategies are not acontextual. Those are shifting grounds to continue the fight. Such shifting and countershifting will continue endlessly, because woman is not a product of history but an evolutionary part of the process of history in a cosmic context. The labelling, theorizing, nominalising and artificially identifying of woman as European, American, Third-World Woman or black and Indian, stems from competitive perspectives that are often localized and time-specific. Beyond and above such country-culture-language specific categories or essences woman continues to live in homes and societies with her biopsychic functions. She loves, desires, marries, gives birth to children and prepares human generations for the future. Her roles of lover and wife are of inexhaustible dimensions. Yet she is underestimated, often ignored. Linda Loman in Arthur Miller's celebrated play *Death of a Salesman* is never allowed to speak on any important issue by her husband Willie, although it is she who holds the family together. Literature down the ages underplays woman. The goddess is only given a back seat, the gods only fret and fume in a self-created aggressive area.

The result of patriarchy and man-dominated woman and nature, is now evident in our postmodernist century caving in at the beginning of the new millennium. The
centre of the universe fails to hold, "things fall apart" (in the words of W.B. Yeats *The Second Coming*) and reality is loaded with chaos. Scientists, philosophers, poets and even economists predict the doom of our "yang" civilization. Fritjof Capra, a leading scientific philosopher of our times says:

Excessive self-assertion manifests itself as power control, and domination of others by force, and these are, indeed, the patterns prevalent in our society. Political and economic power is exerted by a dominant corporate class, social hierarchies are maintained along racist and sexist lines, and rape has become a central metaphor of our culture - rape of woman, of minority groups, and of the earth herself. Our science and technology are based on the seventeenth century belief that an understanding of nature implies domination of nature by 'man'. Combined with the mechanistic model of the universe, which also originated in the seventeenth century and with excessive emphasis on linear thinking, this attitude has produced a technology that is unhealthy and inhuman: a technology in which the natural, organic habitat of complex human beings is replaced by a simplified, synthetic, and prefabricated environment.

*(The Turning Point 28)*

The scientific temper which once prided itself, as the most rational intellectual attribute of 'man' is now crushing under its own aggressiveness. The world is now realizing that its so called progress has been one sided,
leaning on the masculine other. The integrative principles of woman, her love and pain-bearing wife-motherhood, and her harmonizing essence have not been allowed the participation mystique of the universe. Historians of ideas at the end of the twentieth century realize to their dismay that we have reached a point of no return by our historical folly of alienating the feminine-principle from our civilization - building process. In his influential book, The Passion of the Western Mind, Richard Tarnas makes a plea and prophecy for the primordial union of the two principles: Feminine and Masculine:

... As Jung prophesied, an epochal shift is taking place in the contemporary psyche, a reconciliation between the two great polarities, a union of opposites: a hieros gamos (Sacred marriage) between the long-dominant but now alienated masculine and the long-oppressed but now ascending feminine.

And this dramatic development is not just a compensation, not just a return of the repressed, as I believe this has all along been the underlying goal of western intellectual and spiritual evolution. For the deepest passion of the western mind has been to reunite with the ground of its own being. The driving impulse of the west's masculine consciousness has been in dialectical quest not only to realize itself, to forge its own autonomy, but also, finally, to come to terms with the great feminine principle in life,
and thus to recover its connection with the whole: to differentiate itself from but then rediscover and reunite with the feminine, with the mystery of life, of nature, of soul. (443)

The new millennium is the right space-time for the union of the aggressive and the integrative. But before that woman must be restored to her nature—biopsychical and natural to replenish the archetypal void by her love, care and energy. She must rise as nature to hold, display and create the rhythms that modulate creativity. She will then inaugurate the paradigm shift, from the aggressive to the integrative with her love and devotion.