Preface

Woman studies, in India and abroad, have advanced beyond critical reckoning but simultaneously homes are broken, tempers are frayed and agitation for political and other identities go on. This dissertation grew out of a perception of life's practical familiarity and ordinariness where women are still the focal point of the home and family. It is true that she has been a victim of patriarchy down the ages and even today struggles for her rightful identity in the society. But it is also true that woman alone makes life at home and society, pleasant and meaningful. She is now working in the offices, factories and fights in the battle fields. She is in administration and politics. But her very essence is in her self and soul which nourishes and sustains life in society. She cannot absolve herself from her original role of bringing life on earth, and shaping the destiny of human kind. She has to play several roles in life to fulfil herself as an ontological entity as well as human being. But in social life she primarily plays two roles: lover and wife. The male order seldom recognizes her role as lover and often takes for granted the role of wife. In this thesis we examine woman as lover and wife. The choice of Cleopatra as lover and Draupadi as wife was suggested by their uniqueness in history and literature. Cleopatra is the only woman hero who celebrates love above all other values. Draupadi played wife to five great Mahabharat heroes, the Pandava brothers, simultaneously, which is the only illustration of woman
accommodating five heroic tempers in literature. This dissertation studies these two faces of woman — lover and wife — focusing critical attention on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and the *Mahabharat* of Vyasa. Other texts on the Cleopatra theme like Daniel's and Dryden's have also been examined contrastively. Besides great women in myth and literature, from the east and west, have been discussed to assess feminine success as lover and wife. The contention in this dissertation is to harmonize and integrate the two faces (lover and wife) of woman without which social life can never be viable. The contemporary feminist arguments also have been used here to rediscover feminine essentialism in the light of the present needs of the society.

In chapter-I, the introductory chapter, myths of east and west have been analysed to derive an objective perspective of woman. The creation myths, socio-anthropological and literary-philosophical myths about woman, her biopsychic essence and spiritual significance have been examined through a variety of evidence ranging from philosophy to science. Illustrative references have been made to various texts in anthropology, philosophy, science and literature.

Chapter-II discusses Cleopatra as lover in history and literature. Section one is devoted to history and biography of Cleopatra and evidence is assessed in terms of her love life. In section two, Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is analysed with contrastive references to Daniel, Dryden and Shaw inter-textually. The primary focus, however, is on woman as lover.
In chapter-III, Draupadi as wife is analysed in the context of the *Mahabharat*. The original Sanskrit text is referred to illustrate Draupadi's qualities of mind, body and soul. The meaning of the Sanskrit quotations have been given in English, parenthetically. The great woman of the celebrated Indian epic, *The Mahabharat*, is shown to be a universe-absorbing genius, physically irresistible and spiritually redeeming. Like a true wife she sends her husbands to heaven.

In chapter-IV some great women in literature like Helen, Sita, Dido, Śakuntala, Radha and Tolstoy's Anna have been discussed as lovers and wives to measure woman's soul force in human reality.

In conclusion it is posited that the two faces of woman are not mutual exclusives. The lover and wife in woman in society, are a *mono-dynamic synthesis of feminine essence*. The feminist position is also evaluated here as a corroborative counter to our position.

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