CHAPTER TWO: WOMEN AND WORK

A man cannot be a housewife. A man who says he is a housewife is an anomaly.1

- Ann Oakley

On the one hand, patriarchal discourse attaches no monetary value to women's domestic work, and on the other it interpretes their work outside the domestic circle as mere extension of their social roles in the family. Work, as a liberating force for the individual human self is denied to women. From this perspective, I have analysed Bathsheba (Far From the Madding Crowd) and Sati (Rahura Chhaya). In this context, it may be noted that I have neither tried to trivialise the value of domestic work nor have I tried to glorify the worth of non-domestic work. Rather I have tried to show how the existing work-structure itself could be an extension of male perception of women.

BATHSHEBA

Bathsheba Everdene takes up the farm work of her uncle soon after his death. Within the prevailing Victorian ideology, in which men should manage the society and women the homes, Bathsheba's endeavour seems unwomanly. Bathsheba's choice for a farming career (which obviously involves public activities) is a sort of a challenge to the Victorian assumptions
about the private and the public spheres of work. The reaction to her choice is very negative: "She's a very vain feymell - "t is said here and there". (79) For Bathsheba a career in farming does not mean simply an engagement with a job. It is like being somebody to oneself and not just existing through others. Bathsheba wants to achieve that sort of an individual identity when she speaks to Gabriel Oak, "I hate to be thought men's property in that way, though possibly I shall be had someday". (66) She yearns for a high spiritedness and independence in the society, but she fears the inevitability of becoming a man's possession ultimately. This bitter knowledge is the result of social pressures under which she lives. It causes a kind of split of her personality. She is made to evade personal growth (as a separate self) by a method of vicarious living. Betty Friedan explains vicarious living in these words:

It consists in a systematic denial and repression of one's own personality, and an attempt to substitute some other personality, an idealized conception, a standard of absolute goodness by which one tries to live, supressing all those genuine impulses that are incompatible with the exaggerated and unrealistic standard, or simply taking the personality that is the popular cliche of the time.²
The idealized conception or the 'popular cliche of the time' given to Bathsheba is an image of a meek and mild housewife. Her interest in becoming a career woman is her 'genuine impulse', which is suppressed by the pressures of an ideology of 'happy housewife heroine' (Betty Friedan). Bathsheba's hatred to be her husband's property is a protest against the established belief that women find their supreme fulfilment in sacrificing themselves to the interests of the husband and the progeny. Bathsheba sees something beyond the desires of a wife and mother. This is quite unusual in the conventional Victorian value system as it hampers the typical bourgeois notion of respectability. Bathsheba's desire for a farming career opposes the Victorian notion of 'living together and sharing one dream' (Betty Friedan). In one instance, Gabriel Oak proposes Bathsheba with this dream, "And the babies in the little births - everyman jack of 'em! And at home by the fire, whenever you look up, there I shall be and whenever I look up, there will be you". (66) Bathsheba reacts to it strongly, "wait, wait, and don't be improper'.(67) Oak's approach epitomizes the typical Victorian dream of a family and fixes Bathsheba's place in it. Family as an institution is stressed to satisfy man's needs for intimacy, affection, sexuality etc. It shelters man from the pressures of the external world of cutthroat competition and violence, and offers him domestic peace and solace. In this context, Bathsheba as a woman is expected to be the repository of all these
values of intimacy, affection, sex and comfort. But being in charge of a business, Bathsheba gives orders, pays wages and commands men. Her activity as a farmer defies the usual divisions of the private and public. Her passionate search for individual identity that a farming career seems to have symbolized for her is seen as a sin. Her sense of independence is described as the pride of Lucifer: "And those dandy cattle by as proud as a Lucifer in their insides". (79)

She is referred to as cattle too, and the use of the word 'dandy' here is also important. It means she is a superficial being having no depth at all in her personality- a pompous woman without any substance. Moreover, in Biblical mythology, Lucifer revolts against God's scheme. Bathsheba's choice of a career as a woman farmer is a protest against the established order of patriarchy which is thought to be divine and already - given. She is referred to as an evil creature who disturbs the idyllic order of Victorian society.

George Wotten remarks on Bathsheba's relationship with men:

She becomes the observed subject whose very existence is determined by her reactions to the conflicting acts (of sight) of the perceiving subjects by which she is beset. Living in the ideology of femininity, the woman demands to be seen by men. But each of the men by whom she is
sorrounded demands that she should be seen only by him and treats her according to his vision of her.³

Here, Wotten does not say that Bathsheba provokes rape; but the problem is how she is made to yield to male desires. The ideology of femininity as an absolute truth is infused into her mind by the male ideology and she is treated as an object to be observed. Her behaviour is controlled by the 'perceiving subjects'. And the three 'perceiving subjects' are Gabriel Oak, Mr. Boldwood, and Sergeant Troy. Mr. Boldwood is a lonely bachelor. His loneliness and repressed desires lead to violent passions. Sergeant Troy is like a romantic lover. But, in fact, he is faithless in love. Both of them court Bathsheba and virtually deflect her life from its intended course of becoming a farmer-woman. So does Gabriel Oak, who ultimately succeeds in making her a comely bride of his choice. Bathsheba develops attachments with all these three persons, but she does not feel herself as a person with anyone of them as these three men perceive her as an object, not as an independent being.

Actually, Bathsheba is made to fulfil three male phantasies. Strictly speaking, the three men represent three phases of power in taming an independent woman. Bathsheba’s precarious state of dependency
can be understood in a striking scene of sword-display by Sergeant Troy:

It may safely be asserted with respect to the closeness of his cuts, that had it been possible for the edge of the sword to leave in the air a permanent substance wherever it flew past, the space left untouched would have been almost a mould of Bathsheba's figure. (216)

Symbolically, Troy's erotic pleasure is objectified in the dazzling display of the sword. It is important to notice that the sword-exercise is not done within its bounds, it is not realized within itself. It is directed towards Bathsheba. Troy projects himself towards Bathsheba in such a manner that he does not have to lose his independence. He remains in the centre of this activity. He reaches out towards his partner without losing his central position. He is the subject as opposed to the object to be conquered. Bathsheba as the feminine flesh is a prey for Troy. He consumes it like anyother object and thus justifies his access into it. He perceives her as the object and manipulates it and forces her to a dumb acceptance of his power. The dazzling sword, as a sexual metaphor overwhelms Bathsheba. It is so overpowering that it reduces Bathsheba almost to a state of nerveless acceptance - "She felt powerless to withstand or deny him. He was altogether
too much for her".(218) This is not a simple physical attractions for Troy, it shows how a woman is created by man through the instrument of his own desire. Like a painter creating a figure with a brush, Troy creates Bathsheba with his dazzling sword. As it were, she is created through the sexual pleasure of Troy - the sword, a sexual metaphor!

In another instance, Farmer Oak perceives Bathsheba mentally:

Having for some time known the want of a satisfactory form to fill an increasing void within him, his position moreover affording the widest scope for his fancy, he painted her a beauty.

(52)

Of course in the case of Oak we do not find that torrid physical image of Bathsheba as in Sergeant Troy's. But in reality, it is all the same. Both Sergeant Troy and Farmer Oak are creating Bathsheba according to their own fancies. She is given a definite shape by the dazzling sword of the Sergeant and the imaginary brush of Oak.

She is also inspected as an object of sheer physical beauty through the forceful glance of the middle-aged celibate, Mr. Boldwood.

Boldwood looked at her - not slily, critically, or understandingly, but blankly at gaze, in the way a reaper looks up at a passing train - ... He saw her black hair, her correct facil
curves and profile, and the roundness of her chin and throat. He saw then the side of her eyelids, eyes, and eyelashes, and the shape of her ear. Next he noticed her figure, her skirt, and the very soles of her shoes. (149)

Here, in Boldwood's perception Bathsheba is reduced to an object and is dissected through his male gaze. She has come down to the level of her skirt, her shoes etc.

Being totally possessive in nature, the relationships of these men essentially lack genuine love and understanding. Bathsheba's three lovers tend to deprive her of a life of her own. Betty Friedan describes this sort of man-woman relationship:

The other person is needed not as some one to relate oneself to; she is needed for filling out one's emptiness, one's nothingness. This nothingness originally was only a phantasy, but with the persistent self repression it approaches the state of being actual.4

Bathsheba's passionate involvement in work and strong determination to carry on with the business of farming is reflected in the few words that she delivers to the workers with dignity:

Now mind you have a mistress instead of a master. I don't yet know my powers or my talents in farming: but I shall do my
best, and if you serve me well, so shall I serve you. Don't any unfair one's among you (if there are any such, but I hope not) suppose difference between bad goings-on and good. (117)

Such involvement in work suggests that it is not merely an economic necessity for Bathsheba, it is something more than that. Work is closely associated with human relationship created by the work-process itself. By serving her workers well and by treating them well Bathsheba aspires to create an altogether different work atmosphere.

David Meakin mentions in his book, *Man and Work* plato's attitude to work and workers. Plato looks down on smiths, shoemakers and other artisans whose souls and bodies are maimed and disfigured by their trades and crafts. This is again contrasted by Meakin with Tolstoy's attempt to learn the craft of cobbling in the hope of capturing an essential truth. Meakin shows that slaves cannot have joy or fulfilment in work like Tolstoy. Since they work under autocracy, they cannot have a free association with the work process and so they cannot enjoy the sense of creativity. The work is only an economic activity for them. In this light, Bathsheba's agricultural work as a career is a complex issue. For her work in the farm-yard would not be the same with that of the kitchen. Household chores, where she has no choice, offer no meaning to make her a real person.
Farm work involves monetary profit which brings mobility, power and independence for Bathsheba (in comparison to the unpaid work of the housewife). Again it would bring Bathsheba out into the external world and help in shaping her total personality. A choice of work would give her scope to define herself \_\_ in a creative way.

Like the effects of industrialization on rural England, Bathsheba's presence as a farmer is, symbolically, a threat to the male-oriented agricultural practices. As a landowning farmer, she has some authority which she can exercise, on her labour, organization and capital. It is this sense of mastery and confidence in Bathsheba as a farmer which is feared by the Victorian males: "A headstrong maid, that's what she is - and won't listen to any advice at all". (137), as one of her male workers observes. Bathsheba's work as a housewife would not have given her this confidence and authority. Her work in the farm is comparatively free and creative. Bathsheba as a farmer, again, opposes the crude division of work into masculine and feminine activities, and questions the gender-based separation of work.

Bathsheba sets in motion a new work ethics:

Strange to say of a woman in full bloom and vigour, she always allowed her interlocutors to finish their statements
before rejoining with hers. In arguing on prices she held to her own firmly, as was natural in a dealer, and reduced their persistently, as was inevitable in a woman. But there was an elasticity in her firmness which removed it from obstinacy, as there was a naivete in her cheaping which saved it from meanness. (124)

A new form of dealing in business is noticed here - a potential restructuring of economic, and possibly human relationship. In Bathsheba, there is a subtle combination of practical wisdom and an absence of meanness or a temperament for exploitation in her business - dealings. This pattern of behaviour of Bathsheba, the woman farmer, is fundamentally different from that of a man-farmer whose primary concern is profit - making even at the cost of human generosity. Unfortunately, Hardy does not elaborate and develop this aspect of Bathsheba's personality as a woman-farmer, which could result in a new social relationship, less aggressive and more tolerant than the traditional one represented by man farmers and their traditional agricultural practices in the novel. Bathsheba's potentiality as a farm worker, in the novel, perished under the so-called feminine ideology of the Victorian society. Her intimate association with work could have given her a sense of herself as an individual, a kind of self reliance and moreover a different outlook on her relationship with men. But she is utterly pressurized by the feminine morality. And her determination for work ultimately collapses. She is afraid of
the so-called masculization of woman which she thinks is dangerous to the dream of being a comely bride. Her fear of her own freedom is expressed in these moving lines addressed to Farmer Oak; "I want somebody to tame me: I am too independent; and you would never be able to, I know". (68) Ironically it is no one but Gabriel Oak who tames her with cold calculation and practical wisdom, whose "feelings were as sensitive as the money-market in calculations upon his chances". (61)

Jung suggests that work should not be seen as mere pipeline for our energies and urges. It must have the quality of freedom which of course implies choice and responsibility and creativity. Freud also says that work can be a source of special satisfaction if it is freely chosen and if it channels into social directions the elemental urges and instincts of the individual. It is this freedom of choice for work in Bathsheba that is seriously opposed by the 'public patriarchy' (Linda J. Nicholson) of Victorian society. It is, actually, an option of living for which Bathsheba aspires: "Well, what I mean is that I shouldn't mind being a bride at a wedding, if I could be one without having a husband. But since a woman can't show off in that way by herself, I shall not marry - at least yet". (67) This shows Bathsheba's awareness of the difficulties of her position as a farmer-woman in the Victorian society. Her awareness is misunderstood by people surrounding her. That's
a terrible wooden story (67) for Gabriel Oak. 'And not a married woman. Oh, the world!' (79), a native reacts. 'A woman farmer?' (83) Her spirit of creativity through work is negated by the society. Bathsheba's fierce sense of independence, her zeal for creativity are manifestations of her elemental urges that need to be channelised into a proper form of work. For a Victorian male she is a vain creature, "Yes - she's vain. 'T is said that every night at going to bed she looks in the glass to put on her night cap properly". (79) Since passivity and submissiveness are taken to be the characteristics of a woman, Bathsheba's strong or somewhat stubborn dealing with the merchants seem unusual and unwomanly to the local farmers. As one of them comments: "Yes 't is a pity she's so head strong. But we ought to be proud of her here - she lightens up the old place. 'T is such a shapely maid, however, that she'll soon get picted up". (124) Bathsheba's independent dealing in the business is also not taken seriously as these lines show; if she is strong, a stronger man will appear someday and pick her up!

As an independent woman Bathsheba wants to expand her energy and responsibilities, and undergoes the harsh struggle against the world's opposition. And like her male partners, as a woman she also needs to satisfy her physical needs and to enjoy the relaxation and diversion provided by the agreeable sexual adventures. However, by
exercising this freedom Bathsheba risks her reputation and career. All these experiences (that come out of her relationships and her social position) in different roles are in a perpetual flux. It generates a peculiar perplexity and makes Bathsheba utterly confused in her choice of her life—whether to be tamed or to be independent. The obvious reason of her confusion is that all the role modelled experiences are controlled by a patriarchal power structure. Sergeant Troy’s sexual domination over Bathsheba is the first face of a power which is visible in direct action with its usual violent mode. Boldwood’s attempt to take possession of Bathsheba by a milder method of ‘moral coercion’ (Rosemarie Morgan) is the second face of this power which seems less threatening but is equally powerful to stifle an emerging woman. The third face of this power is not easily discernible. It operates in a subtler form through the apparently ‘unassuming’ Gabriel Oak, who manipulates Bathsheba’s perception, helps her “to cope with the way things are, not to change the way things are” and becomes most successful in taming her.

With each of these relationships with men she had shed some inner power from her personality. As it is said.

Bathsheba loved Troy in the way that only self reliant women love when they abandon their self reliance. When a strong
woman recklessly throws away her strength she is worse than weak woman who has never had any strength to throw away.

(219)

Boldwood's love takes away the capacity of firmness from her and leaves her in a tortured state. In one occasion Bathsheba encounters him thus:

Bathsheba commanded herself well. But she could hardly get a clear voice for what comes instinctively to her lip: 'There is little honour to the woman in that speech'. It was only whispered, for something unutterably mournful no less than distressing ...(233)

Oak's love hardly hunts Bathsheba or leaves her in some embarrassment, yet is powerful in such a way that it takes away her selfhood. It reshapes her mind, subjugates her fierce sense of independence, kindles 'femininity' in her and she becomes the final victim of 'dependency complex' when she cries: "And what shall I do without you? Oh, Gabriel, I don't think you ought to go away ..."(414) A highspirited Bathsheba, 'the buying and selling farmer' (125), once who walked 'as a queen among the gods of the fallow, like a little sister of a little Jove' (125), becomes like a rake who 'gambles away his expectations,
the fact that it is an inconvenient debt doesn't make him less liable". (380)

From a highspirited woman she is made into a comely bride for Oak. The whole process is like taming a wild animal. The so-called richer emotional growth that she gains is at the expense of her spirited selfhood. And Bathsheba seems to enjoy it. Hence it is said, "power may be operating most effectively when we are unaware of it or experience it as pleasurable". She looses her authenticity as a person and becomes a mere ghost of her earlier self. As Rosemarie Morgan rightly points out:

Bathsheba's perpetual exposure to the world of male violence, her unknowing proximity to something dark and brutal in Oak's world, draws us into a deep, shadowy region of Far From the Madding Crowd ... where Hardy, who so clearly loved the voluptuous Tess of his later novel, lovingly dwells. His vibrant, self delighting, energetic heroine whose resource- fulness and strength sustain a family property, a labour force and a farming community, blossoms into womanhood, ventures into business, into marriage, into the world of men, and is nullified. And Hardy is the lone mourner. 

SATI

When the novel Rahura Chhaya opens, Sati is an unmarried school mistress. The girl's school where she works is situated
in an urban area and is directly controlled by Chakradhara Babu, a well-to-do man of that area. Indeed, he represents the ideology of a particular class which ultimately determines the nature and scope of education for the girl students, shapes their mind for particular purposes and fixes their goal in life. As a teacher in such a school Sati is expected to regulate herself by the law of celibacy. In other words, her personal life should be a model of a passionless creature which would help the girl students to be motivated on sexual chastity as the ultimate womanly virtue. But Sati's personal life is a clear contrast to this middleclass moral code and so she is accused by the school authority of sexual impurity and immorality:

Here character means a kind of stiff personality devoid of passion and the school serves the purpose of a conduct book in building up such characters. It is a preparatory school for the girl students for the future
feminine role i.e. to be a wife and a mother. The school as an institution indoctrinates the girls for their so-called feminine fulfilment in a patriarchal society. It does not open a new horizon for the girls through education, a new vigour in the pursuit of truth and happiness. The school virtually leads the girls to commit a sort of spiritual suicide.

More over, functioning like a bureaucratic and self-justifying institution the school denies Sati a personal life of her choice. Doing the work of a teacher as a moralist Sati is expected to be a substitute for parents (especially a mother) and tell the girls about what is wrong or right for a woman. Such an uniformity of ideals give a sense of oneness to the girls, but at the same time it takes away their individual vision of truth, their personal sense of right and wrong. Sati finds that the school as a work-place is nothing but an extension of the institution of family, with new strategies of domestication. As we see in the novel, Sati’s angry protests against the institution of marriage, motherhood or, in short, the ideology of family are extensions of her desire to have a passionately involvement in work. But Sati learns to her dismay that there exists not much difference between the work of a teacher and the work of a mother in making her daughter grow into a nice girl. Again, on one occasion, Chakradhara Babu, the school secretary approaches Sati for sexual favour. This is not only an instance of the hypocritical nature of a respectable male character in the novel, it exposes
the 'chaste/unchaste dichotomy' even in the work place. The patriarchal tradition determines the chaste image for woman so that she would safeguard her chastity and thereby ensure safe inheritance of property without producing illegitimate offsprings. On the other hand, the unchaste image of woman indicates man's attraction for sexual pleasure outside the institution of family. Chakradhara Babu's desire for Sati is an example of man's extra-familial sexual expectations. These two images of woman suggest male fear and fascination of women's sexuality -- a fear which operates even at the work place outside the home, and thereby hinder women's self expression through public profession. Sati finds the school as simply a new territory for domestic work within the social arena. Her resignation from her job indicates her angry reaction against such domestication of work and work place. But the irony is that without this job there is no scope left for Sati to search for an alternative mode of work with a new work ethic. This is how the author presents Sati's predicament. So her reactions towards all other institutional values should be understood in the context of a woman's desperate search for an identity through a job or profession located in a male dominated world.

So far the traditional values are concerned, Sati is a least adjusted personality. She has to decide between adjustment and conformity
(and thereby avoid conflict) or individuality and human identity. Sati takes up the latter. Thus it is natural that Sati is always in conflict with the traditional social norms. She thinks: "What is happening to her! She feels she is breaking away from those who somehow manage their material life having grasped it closely and blindly as if there is no alternative to it.] Sati is disgusted with the way in which one is made to surrender one's total self to the demands of convention. She has no faith in it. She questions the institution of marriage, motherhood, education and even reproduction. Her questioning is a sort of search for new modes of existence for a woman.

In a telling passage Sati breaks the glasshouse of romantic illusions about marriage and exposes the social reality of this institution:
destined pole and tied herself with it, unquestioningly, like a cow. People would have at least taken care of her even if they beat her with a stick. Her worth would have been weighed within that permanent bondage. And the society would have auctioned her commercial value. Cooking food, washing utensils, serving her husband, giving birth to children, rearing them - with all these labour her health would have gradually declined. Then one day, after repeated child birth she would become old and die of any common disease prematurely, as an auspicious married woman long before her aged husband. As a reward for this life some people would shed a few drops of tears for her, and some would praise her.

This is not a simple emotional reaction against marriage. The whole paragraph is an angry protest against the ideology of marriage. Here woman is presented as a domestic animal ('a cow') tied to a pole - the 'pole' obviously represents a male. The rope that binds her is the nuptial tie. The traditional value system romanticizes it as love-knot. Sati comments on it ironically and describes it as divinely ordained. The divine authority is obviously the male made ideology. The household responsibilities of a married woman, the effect of repeated child birth and child care on her body, etc are not simple facts of informations of women's works inside home. Behind these there lies an exploitative mechanism of social control which locks all other work potentialities for women within the domestic sphere through a sexual division of labour. Moreover, such work of
'caring' has no market value in the male defined system of production. Generally it is believed that a woman's work at home has got a personal, emotional, domestic and sexual connotation whereas woman's work outside the home or in the public sphere has a rational, impersonal, abstract meaning. But Sati's bitter experience in her work place i.e. the school, shows the inexorable link between the private and public domain of work especially for a woman perpetuating similar values with the sole purpose of having sexual control over women. Infact, Sati's protest against marriage can be seen as a protest against a gender biased work contract operating in the larger framework of cultural practices.

Defying marriage as a commonly accepted norm, Sati enters into a new relationship and lives with Samir without marrying him. Her living together with Samir is different from the traditional man-woman relationship in 'marriage' in Oriya society. In case of the former one Sati and her male partner can exercise their choice on continuing or discontinuing the relationship. There is an option of free entry and free exit from it. To this extent it is unconventional. But the situation in which Sati enters into love relationship with Samir is no different from that of a woman entering into marriage. She does the same household duties, waits for Samir who goes out to work and earns the bread. The
role bound family tradition against which Sati reacts vehemently, operates here too, and she is controlled by patriarchal values of work and economy. Sati's relationship with Samir is associated with her economic dependence on him. It is not love between two independent beings and that is why it is not enriching. As an intense human experience it does not enlarge her individual self. Rather a growing sense of dissatisfaction, guilt, frustration and despair haunt her mind. As she cannot express herself truly through this relationship, she thinks it is a wrong choice for her: "সতি ভাল ভাল ভাল ভাল ভাল, ভাল ভাল ভাল ভাল ভাল ভাল ভাল ভাল ভাল - ভাল - ভাল - ভাল!" (88) [She feels she has unlimited energy within her. And without an outlet, like pressurized steam, it fires her imagination day and night. The thought of Samir seems out of tune and is derailed from the track of her imagination. She feels it was wrong-wrong-wrong.]

But it may be noted that Sati feels protected or secured whenever she thinks herself in relation with a woman. She feels herself comfortable with her mother, her women friends - Hamida, Tania, Sandhyatara, Dipali etc. - who are working women (teachers in the same school). With them she shares the exploitation and experience of alienation in an androcentric work system, even though they themselves remain generally unaware of it. Sati's feeling of being
protected and comfortable with her women friends is an expression of her fellow-feelings for her fellow sufferers. However, Sati wants a different kind of man-woman relationship as follows:

[She is Night who shelters the setting Sun and is also sheltered by him. But the setting sun and the night become an unshakable force together. And the limitless bounty of the night, imagination and philosophical truth - all become one. In that endless dynamics of eternity where there is no desire, no grief, no fear - where does she have the immensity of experience? ... nothing is fulfilled.]

Here, the natural images like that of the sun, the night etc suggest that Sati's idea of ideal man-woman relationship is free from 'social' constraints. But she lacks proper scope to express herself in such a relationship. Up to this point of the novel Sati's reaction and response to the existing institutions and value system seem logical and clear. But her reaction towards the institution of motherhood seems somewhat confused and contradictory. Earlier, while attacking the institution of marriage Sati criticizes ‘motherliness’ as a way of life and protests against such male biased definition of reproduction.
and parenting. Contradictorily, in the following paragraph she glorifies motherhood and breast feeding:

Warm like the earth, beautiful like the earth. Her mother, whose love never ends inspite of giving it to all, who is not special in body, not in physical structure, whose identity is that she has a heart, she can breast feed.

It indicates that breast feeding gives a woman a heightened sense of fulfillment and determines her identity as a protective figure with tender feelings and encompassing love. Being a loving mother (or breast feeding a child) is not a negative thing in itself. But in the context of Sati, such reactions seems illogical, abrupt and unconvincing. It also shows the pervasive structure of male ideology which operates in her unconscious inspite of her revolt against it.

In the novel, the author notes his meditations on woman’s body on various occasions which underscore his understanding of woman’s position and work in society. For example, his description of sleeping Sati (in pp.37-41) is noteworthy. Sati’s body is clearly under the male authorial gaze. It is presented as a sexual landscape. Its
human identity disappears, and Sati is seen as Mother Earth receiving and sustaining the seeds of the sky. Her body is invested with a metaphysical meaning - it is ultimately a generous womb where the procreative power of male is manifested. Unfortunately this sort of metaphysical glorification does not find in the novel a proper equation with the social manners of Sati. Indeed her relationship with different men is neither generous nor self sustaining. It is this contradiction that fails the author in appreciating potentialities of a character like Sati, who is in search of an identity through 'work'. Furthermore the author does not elaborate, nor does he integrate the existential meaning of human condition with Sati's social realities. It is clearly indicated in the following lines:

(Translation of lines)

...
According to the author all life of a plant or of a human being - is insignificant from the cosmic perspective of a male creative principle. All seeds of life are scattered from the sky. The earth grows them without any plan and purpose. The sky forgets them as it were after a burst of sexual passion. In the novel the author never shows Sati experiencing this sort of existential reality. Therefore her character as a woman is never connected with the above perceptions of the author. The author does not seem to examine the women's social position seriously with regard to his metaphysical speculations.

Sati as a woman earning through work would have brought for herself social mobility, autonomy and ultimately her freedom. But her capacity
for work or professional efficiency as a teacher, or her desire
to liberate herself through work is destroyed by the existing mode
of work ethics which is patriarchal in nature. The school, her work place,
becomes a dummy ideal of traditional family system. It makes Sati's life
distorted. It is not that she is left between either freedom of work
and marriage, but between being either a public or private property.
Her self reliance is neutralised. Sati thinks of her passive
retirement in the end in these words:

She is so very different from the
self confident Sati. Once having surrendered
herself she cannot stand up again. She accepts her
world down below. Her life is now like any other woman
without want; and she feels no need to understand
this difference.

Her fierce sense of questioning is here severely diminished. She seems
overpowered by the existing ideology. Her final entering into a virtually
meaningless marital bond with Mr. Shaw, a stranger, makes her a non-
entity in the end.
As we see in the above analysis, unlike Bathsheba Sati does not enter a profession where women's entry is prohibited, yet she too fails. This should not be seen as a personal failure of Sati, but as a crisis in the patriarchal value system. Sati fails, because even though there is an easy access for her into teaching profession, but the very structure of that profession is essentially male oriented. Both Bathsheba and Sati are rendered a given set of work-ethic with which they are expected to carry on their profession. But Bathsheba's new form of business dealing is a step towards remodelling the economic and human relationship which does not fit into the utterly pragmatic mode of business dealing. Similarly, Sati's personal sense of education does not tally with the gender biased education system in the traditional Oriya society. In other words, both of them have tried to break the conventional norm of their professions. Their new professional outlook is a kind of threat to the patriarchal work-system which imposes its sexual ideology upon them and finally succeeds in silencing them.

Notes


