



**RELINQUISHMENT AND RESISTANCE IN BANI BASU'S GANDHARVI:  
LIFE OF A MUSICIAN: A FEMINIST CRITIQUE**

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**Abstract**

*Patriarchal gender roles for women force women to surrender their rights of an equal individual against men. Judith Butler has argued about these gender roles in her works such as Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990). Women have succumbed to relinquish their positions to fit into these roles and have remained subjugated and survived as 'second sex'. By surrounding their rights, they fit into the gender roles. Their surrender and acceptance of the subjugated position perpetuates their oppression under patriarchal dominance. But, with the emergence of multidimensional feminist movements women have started to break the chains and have taken the charge of their own lives. They resist the dominance of the patriarchal system, develop sisterhood and support each other. Bani Basu's Gandharvi: Life of a Musician (2017), translated by Jayita Sengupta, presents such a panorama. This article attempts to study the novel employing feminist theoretical perspectives. In the novel, Apala and Mitul are two pivotal forces, Basu has used them to depict the plight, right, resistance, sisterhood, motherhood of women. Apala remains a victim of patriarchy who is subjugated, tortured, and stripped of her rights, ambitions and identity until she finds the power to resist. On the other hand, Mitul, a new woman, stands strong against all the odds life has brought to her table. Along with Apala, Mitul unmasks the voids of patriarchal society which they tried to alter.*

**Keywords**

*Subjugation, Resistance, Sisterhood, New Woman, Identity, Gender Roles, etc.*

**Full Article**

Relinquishment is the process of giving up the rights, withdrawing or retreating from something. Contrasting to that, resistance is the force to oppose with strong determination to protect the rights and the very existence. In the patriarchal social system women are succumbed; relinquished of their rights. However, their resistance to the hegemony of patriarchy leads them to become victorious to some extent over their subjugated state. The patriarchal system is androcentric. The implication of the system is that men are in charge in every aspect of the said norm, though the tactics of controlling women may differ from place to place. Kamla Bhasin observes, the term patriarchy is used “more generally to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways” (Bhasin, 3). BaniBasu, in her novels such as *Gandharvi* (2017), *A Plate of White Marble* (2020) *Khana Mihirer Dhupi* (2009) et cetera, has depicted the terror of patriarchy and its manifold customs, regulations, norms to bound women as 'second sex'.

Feminism and its literary and cultural theories have emerged as an alternative potency for the domination of this androcentric world view. The inspections of women's position, representation and participation as 'second sex' in socio-political, cultural and economic systems,



discrimination towards them and the possible initiatives and resistance to alter such discriminatory endeavours on the basis sex constitute the quintessence of this theoretical and political perspective. This discourse casts light on the issues of consideration of women as subaltern entities in patriarchal norms and dictation. Antonio Gramsci has coined the term 'subaltern' in the book *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (1971). He has used it to refer to the inferior people in terms of access to the power in class based society who have but any authority and recognition in the political paradigm (Gramsci, 14). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay titled *Can Subaltern Speak?* (2010) has borrowed the concept of 'subaltern' to stratify the women, specifically the third world and Indian women as they are inferior, unprivileged victims in patriarchy. Their subalternity comes with their gender roles, relinquishment of their rights and, consequently, they become “doubly effaced” (Spivak, *Can Subaltern*, 41) as gendered subaltern. Patriarchal hegemony keeps them yoked to such an extent that they fail to achieve agency to express their plight and right and could not participate in resistance due to absence of “possibility of response and responsibility” (Spivak in Kock, 46). But, in this post patriarchal world, with the help of feminist movements, there emerge, apart from the relinquished, acquiescent women, women with potential of passive as well as active resistance to patriarchal oppressive hegemony. Bani Basu's *Gandharvi: Life of a Musician* (2017) displays such women characters who transform themselves from subjugated, relinquished to resistant, emancipated women.

Uday Chandra considers the term resistance "as the negotiations rather than negation of the social power" (563) to make material condition of one's subaltern position more bearable. Though, resistance could bring changes in the life of individual and society, but it would not become the way of future revolution yet this new concept of resistance paves the way “to study a wide range of contentious politics from foot dragging through protests to social revolutions under a single analytic umbrella” (Uday, 563). Generally, resistance is to refuse to accept, to fight against anything that could be a threat to anyone's existence. Power, in the sense of hegemony, and resistance (as it also requires power) are entangled. If there is an involvement of power, there must be resistance. In power dynamics, resistance is never an external phenomenon rather it posits itself in the interiority of the power. Merely it is not an opposing force of power or dominance, yet it is a counter power to secure the existence of the dominated, subjugated subaltern subjects.

Bani Basu's novel, *Gandharvi: Life of a Musician*, translated by Jayita Sengupta, is based on the life of musicians. But the prohibitions sanctioned by the customs on the way to their ambitions, the struggles and strivings of the characters depict a political scenario of gender violence. The notions of Traditional Woman and Modern Woman and their strivings are the main focal points of the scenario in the novel. Those women are struggling with the values of tradition and modernity within the broader abstractions of time and space. The novel deals with women who have succumbed and relinquished their rights, and concerns parallelly with "New Woman" who revolts, resists and survives. In the novel, Apala has to sacrifice her ambition, her career, her chance to form an identity as an individual to satisfy the patriarchal norms while Mitul affords to challenge societal norms, remain unmarried and defy patriarchal dictations.

The setting of the novel is Calcutta in 1970 (now Kolkata), where the patriarchal social system is gradually reducing and paving the path for a post-patriarchal society. In this scenario, the patriarchal system, by using social and cultural structures such as religion, family, education etcetera, convinces the society that women are 'destined to be subordinated'. The term Patriarchy originated from Greek *patriarkhēs* which means 'ruling father.' Patriarchy is a societal system in which men are in the dominant positions and every aspect of the system is controlled by and centred around men. Sylvia Walby describes it as, “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Walby, 214). In the system, women are forced to shake off their rights to fit into the structure and they have to suffer exploitation, racial, sexual



and physical abuses. It works in various forms of ideology and perpetuates man's domination over woman and woman's subordination towards man. Due to ideological interference, women as well as other counterparts of the society would never come to comprehend women's oppressed positions. Feminist theories unmask these unequal power dynamics and ideologies in patriarchy. Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf and other feminist theorists have spoken about the subjugated position of women.

In the novel, Basu has depicted the lives and livings of Apala and Mitul. Among other female characters in the novel, these two characters have significant appeal to the main motif of the novel. However, Apala presents the victimization of a woman, who is forced to surrender her rights, and Mitul, who is the resistance force, presents the subversion of patriarchal norms. The socially moulded roles, played by these two characters, signify and represent the scenarios of contemporary times. In society, there are different gender roles for different sexual entities. Persons of different sexual categories have to perform different roles. These performances construct gender identities. Judith Butler in her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" defines gender as "a performative act" (Butler, 526). This act is not an individual choice or it is imposed upon the subject. However, the gendered subject acts what it requires to be acted within culturally bound corporeal space and within the existing social orders. Thus, it is not a stable identity rather in an insubstantial way it's adopted or assimilated by the subject through a 'stylized repetition of acts' (Butler, 519). Butler notes, "Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (Butler, *Performative*, 527). In its formation, certain kinds of acts are expected to be performed to express gender identity. Likewise, Simone de Beauvoir claims in her seminal book *The Second Sex* (1949), "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (Beauvoir, 293). She asserts that societal rules develop a girl child to a woman and a boy child to a man while in their infancy, possibly in every way they were similar. Women are chained through gender roles in the first place. For being biologically woman, they are relinquished the very freedom an individual would enjoy (Beauvoir, 293-296). Apala, in the novel, is one among those women.

In the novel Apala is sexualised with the pre-existed gendered values. Apala had to sacrifice many things in life to fit in the structure of a good woman. She had been forced to do and prohibited to do many things for being a woman. Judith Butler aptly says in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), "gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (Butler, 34). Judith Butler, incorporating with Simone de Beauvoir, asserts that gender identity is attributed through the repeated performance, a girl must perform some pre-existing roles to become a woman and consequently she would cease to have certain rights including some activities which are preserved only for men to act.

Despite the limited rooms in the house, Apala's brother is allotted a room in the attic, but in spite of being an adult and aspiring singer she is not allotted 'a room of her own'. When she asked for the attic for her music practice in isolation, her mother refused to give the room to her:

“---Have gone out of your mind? How can a grown-up boy like him do without a room of his own?”

“---'And a grown-up girl? Doesn't she need a room to herself?’ (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 11)

Sarani Roy in her research article “Gendering Space and Spacing Gender: Plurality of Meanings in *Piku* and *Gandharvi*” analyses the ambience aptly as follows: "Apala's mother tries to justify the



situation by saying it's only natural that an adult son, a medical student would need a separate space, conditions which do not apply on the daughter who too is both an adult and an aspiring singer" (Roy, 13). In this regard, Apala has questioned the patriarchal gender value, where a boy and a girl are not being treated equally. A girl is being forced to take the submissive position to reach the criteria of a 'woman.' She has ceased the right to have a room of her own. Prominent feminist Virginia Woolf speaks in a manner that a woman must have "a room of her own" (Woolf, *Room*, 6) to become independent and enjoy privacy while working on themselves. Apala's demand for a room is declined. But against such discrimination Apala revolted silently. She resisted this sanction and claimed her share of the room in the attic from her brother. Then she used it for her daily musical practices. Moreover, Apala had to return home early in the evening wherever she had gone, from her music class and concerts. Otherwise, she would have to bear scolding from her *Jethu*: "I admit that you have a gifted voice. But do you know how risky it is to hang around there at this hour of the night" (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 8).

In the traditional patriarchal society of 1970's Calcutta (now Kolkata) people were liberal enough but could not accept women to be professional singers. Here, gender roles work to the fullest to force Apala to relinquish her ambition. A promising singer, Apala, is forced to step down from her singing career by her family patriarchy, her *Jethu*. Under his dominance, no one could utter a word against his decisions. The singing carrier is seen as '*mujras*'<sup>2</sup> and singers as '*baiji*'<sup>3</sup> by the patriarchal boss, Apala's *Jethu*. According to him, singing as a hobby is alright. Apala could use it to entertain in-law households but if she took music as a profession from which she would earn plenty of money, it would defy the patriarchal norms. According to *Jethu*, singing is not a prestigious profession, rather a woman must have a role of housewife, a patriarchal sanctioned role for woman: "And instead of mujras as a baiji from house to house, I think it would be much better for you to pursue music as a *bahu* Not just me, any gentleman would think this way" (Basu, 40). When Apala was about to get married she did not even know about it. Her *Jethu* decided about her marriage and imposed upon her. When the man came with the marriage proposal, she was not informed about that. She was surprised to hear it from her mother:

--Waiting?...For me? Why?'Apala was surprised.

--They have come to meet you. It's about your marriage(Basu, 36).

She did not want to marry but just because she is a woman, her ultimate fate is to be a housewife, her shelter is her husband, she can't be a professional singer, can't have an identity of her own, she will have to be someone's someone. Apala's mother tried to convince her by using this patriarchal ideology:

--'I don't want to marry, Ma', she said in a choked voice.

--Can women get away with that, Apu? You'll have to marry, be it today or tomorrow ' her mother tried to explain (Basu, 36).

Simone de Beauvoir aptly says: "Marriage is the reference by which the single woman is defined, whether she is frustrated by, disgusted at, or even indifferent to this institution" (Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 451). Marriage is considered as the ultimate destiny of a woman. A woman is defined by her marriage. For this shake, Apala must relinquish her career and get married to an unknown person.

In addition to that, even Apala's mother is enslaved by her *Jethu*, elder uncle. They fell prey to the lordly master of patriarchal middle class standard. Apala and her brother were detested with the system, as their mother too had been oppressed under feudal lords like *Jethu*: "Ma slaved under *Jethu*. Despite the old two-bladed fan swirling overhead, Ma would always sit with a handheld fan with cotton frills during his meals" (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 29).Apala's *Jethu* controls the



entire household, what to do in life, when to return home, even what to cook in the kitchen. *Jethu* has forced Prodyot to take medicine as a profession instead of his wish to take science, but she refused and took humanities. Thus, it exhibits the grip of patriarchy over women, here patriarchal supremacy forcing a woman to be a 'woman'.

Apala succumbed and had to give up her ambition. Her obedience towards patriarchal family tradition brought the consequences of her early marriage. She was promised by her husband that she would be able to continue her singing practices and Shibnath's mother and aunt would help her in household work: "You won't have to do any more than that. My mother is there. My aunt will most probably never allow you inside the kitchen. She has her own fads" (Basu, 60).

But what occurred to Apala after marriage is no different than a common Indian housewife. Patriarchy uses motherhood and mother's sense of responsibility to subjugate and domesticate women. Gayatri Devi in her article, "Radical Failure: Mother of 1084 as a Subaltern Critique" rightly observes "motherhood being the most ethically persuasive mode of subordination in many patriarchal cultures" (Devi, 15). After marriage, within a few years she got the role of mother of three children and it hampered her piety to the music. Moreover, in her law-house Apala usually was run off her feet for household works, consequently she hardly got the chance for *riyaz*. These responsibilities become the obstacle to her emancipation and leads her to subjugation. Nothing stops here, in addition to that, her position was so servile that she didn't even get the chance to have the privilege of naming her children: "She privately named him 'Hindol'. However, the name was overruled. His grandfather announced at the naming ceremony that he was to be called Ranojoy, for he had fought his very first battle in life at birth and won in that difficult game" (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 118). She had to let loose this right too. Her children, especially her son Hindol, are fond of their grandparents. She had no right over her children: "Besides, nobody had given her the right to her children. They were always in the possession of their grandparents" (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 212). She had not got the chance to convey her legacy to any of her children. All these incidents prove her plight as a woman who has no power to resist the phenomenon happening in her surroundings.

Moreover, Apala's powerlessness in the in-law house brings inconvenience for her paid work of music teaching. Her husband and her in-law family members did not favour her music teaching class as it would undermine their control and dominance over her and it could interrupt the exploitation of her in the household works. Referring to Hartman, Sylvia Walby in her article "Theorizing Patriarchy" argues that within the field of paid work occupational segregation is used by organised men to keep access to the best paid jobs for themselves at the expense of women" (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 215). Similarly, if Apala have not been married off at such circumstances she would have gone Lucknow to learn classical music under Nazneen Begam, Soham would not get the chance to be a great professional singer, here patriarchy collaborates with capitalism to exclude the woman from highly paid job and makes woman financially dependent on man and consequently subjugate them.

Apala is held accountable for her son's suicide endeavour, despite she did not get the chance to spend much time with him. Her mother-in-law blames her for not taking great care of her children and spending time in the musical world. She says: "Alas! His mother never even turned to look at him since his birth! She spent her whole life with the stringed instrument, singing *ta nanana* and catering to her own whims! Returning home with flowers in her hair at twelve thirty in the night--how could her son have a better fate?" (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 231)

Apala's husband used to be violent in bed with her. Violence against women is not an individual psychological phenomenon instead a weapon to subjugate women. Walby states that "men use violence as a form of power over women" (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 224). Violence is constituted of various actions such as "rape, wife-beating, father/daughter incest, flashing, sexual



harassment at work, sexual assault"(Basu, *Gandharvi*, 224). But this power of violence does not need to be practised at every occasion, but for shaping women's certain disobediences. Violence is exercised to control certain actions of women and in the formation of submissive and obedient women.

Apala is submissive, obedient from the beginning. So her husband has not needed to use any violence to control her. She does her household works, takes care of her in law houses. Therefore, she could be considered as a perfect housewife. But there occur certain changes in Apala's etiquette when Soham returns to Calcutta, as if Apala gets back her sparkle of unmarried life. But for Shibnath, it becomes unbearable. He becomes jealous when he observes that Apala is more comfortable and compassionate with Soham. He gets furious when he sees the picture of Apala and Soham: "Shibnath handed back the journal to Bonnie and left the room without a word. Titu and Bonnie could understand very well that the picture had somewhere hit their father badly" (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 209). It hurts the male sentiments and it prompts him to rape Apala like a wild beast: "Shibnath suddenly gripped Apala hard. So hard that she felt her bones were crumbling. She cried out, 'Ohhh, what are you doing? What...'" (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 214). This act of violence symbolises Shibnath's dominance over her wife and also symbolises as an act of control over women by subjugating them through physical violence. But Apala has resisted this violence when time comes.

Nevertheless, Apala becomes a subjugated woman and turns out a victim of patriarchal, androcentric hegemony, but on the other hand stubborn Mitul pops up as a potential individual who is able to have the power to stand against the oppressive hegemonic patriarchal power as resistant force. Resistance contrasts to the power dynamics and hegemonic instability. In the process of resistance, a subaltern group or individual is always in struggle against the dominant group in order for securing their position and interest and, sometimes to make their subordination more bearable (Uday, 565). In Bani Basu's novel *Gandharvi: Life of a Musician* (2017), there are plenty of instances of resistance to patriarchal power. Basu displays this resistance through different characters, especially through the deeds of Mitul. Her mother left her when she was only five years old. She became a widely famous singer. She is a self-dependent woman. She has achieved in her life more than she desired: "Deprived of many essential things since childhood, her ambition was limited. At least she never had to run after her ambition. What she had received was more than what she expected"(Basu, *Gandharvi*, 147).

From an arrogant exploited teen, as an adult she learned to hate men except her father. But she became a self-conscious, self-respected person. She could not even bear an insult from Soham, one of her admirers, to her father, the only person she loved: "---'And what! How could he call you a lecher? He could have said anything he wanted about my mother. Though he had absolutely no right to do even that! But you! His guru! You're such a godly man Baba!" (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 151) This implies her rebelliousness. This trait helps her to become victorious over the patriarchal boundaries. Mitul's self-consciousness, her ambitions, her self-dependency make her a 'New Woman'. 'New Woman' is an idea caricatured by Irish author Sara Grand in 1984 to ascribe the strata of women who demand plenary alterations in the gender dispositions. They resisted and revolted against the contemporary dominant patriarchal provision and demanded equality. B. June West in an article titled "The 'New Woman'" describes 'new woman' as, "...who in sports, business, drinking, politics, sexual freedom even in dress have come closer and closer to man's level" (West,59). Among many cravings, 'New Woman' seeks economic independence. Economic freedom brought the position to attain better upliftment in every aspect of life.

Mitul knows the importance of financial independence for women. She replies to Apala when she expresses her reason for giving music classes to the children: "Mitul replied with a sarcastic smile, 'of course! Without one's personal earnings no woman is fully human. She is either



just a brat or a wence!” (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 160) Mitul encouraged Apala to act in the film, so that she can get some recognition. “--Listen, a wonderful film is being made. A bilingual film--Hindi and Bangla about music. It's about a singer's life. I am doing it. But more songs are required. And I need you to do the character of a classical singer in the film” (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 161). As new women are economically independent, they can defy marriage considering it as a patriarchal institution. Economically and educationally they are equally equipped like men, so they have no compulsion to marry. This power lets them have multiple partners to compel upon sexual experimentation (West, 59). Mitashree herself chooses her sexual partners. By not marrying anyone she defies the patriarchal norms: “Only when someone could arouse her with lightning touch, she accepted him. The rest, the thirsty-eyes who are so desirous of her company, have to be satisfied with an unfathomable smile on her beautiful face” (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 148). She is a strong woman, she knows how to handle unnecessary attention from bad people in her music world. It could easily be comprehended through her words:

--Mitul, these are not good people', Rameshwar warned, "I know their type.'

--'Don't worry, Babai. I have handled many such bad and not-so-good people in my life. I have to. And that includes your Soham Chakraborty' (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 150).

When Kejriwal and Sinha have misbehaved with and insulted Mitul on the set of film *Ashavari* in which she and Apala are lead characters, Mitul does not let them escape so easily. She has waited for the shooting to end. When there is no going back of the shooting she teaches a lesson: She had called Sinha to her own room and said, 'Gauranga, if I now give you two tight slaps on both of your cheeks before the entire team, how would you feel?' (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 186) This incident shows Mitul's rebelliousness, her strength of character. It is similar to the idea of 'New Women'.

Mitul consciously builds solidarity with Apala and manages to develop a sisterhood. Bell Hooks in her article titled, "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women" elaborates the nature and objectives of 'sisterhood' in the feminist scenario. The patriarchal system makes women believe that only through bonding with men, women could obtain value, and as women are natural enemies towards each other, their solidarity would never exist (Hooks, 127). But the women-bonding feminist movement subverts this ideology, and sisterhood essentially bonds women with other women “on the basis of shared strength and resources” (Hooks, 128). Hooks states, “we can bond on the basis of our political commitment to a feminist movement that aims to end sexist oppression” (Hooks, 129). As a woman, Mitul observes Apala's strengths and potential and she has supported Apala to meet the power. Mitul has spoken out against the oppression towards Apala and awakened Apala in regard to the oppression of Apala's husband and her in-law's. Apala's husband promised her that after marriage there would be no obstacle in continuation of her music but she was betrayed by her husband and in-law house. Mitul did not only consider men's sexist attitude as an enemy but also counted women's sexist attitude as an evil against women's freedom. Consequently, Mitul refused to meet Apala's in-laws, because they were responsible for ruining Apala's musical talent. She has spoken frankly about it to Apala: “...Apudi's husband had snatched her away from the music world after listening to her singing, when he had promised that there will be no obstacles in her way of continuing with her profession. It's a huge waste of human capital if such talent is misused for drying cow-dung, for preparing *luchi* and fried brinjal or for changing diapers year after year!” (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 162) Mitul attacked Sibnath formal-treating Apala. She directly accused Sibnath "... Sibnath da, do you see how precious and lovable your wife is? Aha!...you don't deserve Apu-di" (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 164). At the time of departing from Apu's in-law house. Mitul advised Sibnath: “Please open Apu-di's cage, Shibnath-da. I shall take my leave now!” (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 165) Mitul has resisted patriarchal norms at every possible



observance. Patriarchy puts “every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman in subordinate one” (Walby, 214). In the case of Apala, Shibnath is quite successful in holding the dominating position over Apala's submission. But Mitul could resist these norms with her cunning and vigor.

Apala is assertive and firm when it comes to music. She argued with one of the judges on the stage: “By the courage of her conviction, she added , 'Moreover Pandit-ji, what's the difference in a closed room? Can't the ragas create their own time? Nature has nothing to do with it!' (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 2). But when it comes to the servitude to the family she succumbed and relinquished her ambitions. In the first half of the novel she was a meek, submissive, pleasing woman; her character develops in the course of the novel. She has become resistant. Apala becomes financially self-independent by giving music tuition. She helps her mother-in-law economically. When she gives her hard-earned money to her mother-in-law, she expresses the deep anguish of the women. This act delimitates Apala's consciousness for women's plights as well as rights.

Apala who endures in silence, who could not take singing as her profession, after losing her voice, she becomes an artist to express herself. After her son's sickness, she has managed to gain power to break the hegemony of patriarchal dictation enforced upon her by her in-law house. When Apala has been pushed against the wall, she has resisted. Similarly, in Mahasweta Devi's novel, *Mother of 1084*, Brati's mother Sujata transforms herself from submissive wife, mother to a rebellious person to attain her existence as an individual. Her son's death, who had a special concern for his mother's humiliation, insult, has enlightened her and provided her the necessary momentum for the struggle of “self-assertion and independence” (Bandyopadhyay, xvi). However, she has started showing her resistance to the hegemony of her patriarchal family members and society, and has unmasked their hypocrisy after her son's death. Sujata has remained an independent, determined, self-expressive woman until her death. In Apala's case, her first rebellion has been manifested when she refused to have sex with his husband as it was one kind of marital rape out of jealousy and insecurity. Apala was tortured in bed by her husband Sibnath, she could not do anything but weeping and calling the goddess mother. Her submissiveness casts this misery upon her: “The night turned into one of horror. Her husband seemed like a demon--uncivilised. Apala sobbed out in pain, 'why do you torture me so!' Her voice choked with agony” (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 214). But at last, after years of oppression, she broke silence, and she spoke back. She protested against her husband's misdeeds:

--'I've always wanted to refuse you .' Said Apala, 'I couldn't out of politeness. I couldn't because I didn't wish to hurt you. Because I am not the protesting type. But you. But you? Someone so calm and collected outwards...you...you have raped me mercilessly over the years. No other woman would have tolerated this year after year but me! Either you don't know how to love--you're cruel; your mask of politeness and calmness drops before me, whom you have always ignored as ignorant, simple and meek--or else you don't know how to make love' (Basu, *Gandharvi*, 228).

According to Spivak, “When the subaltern "speaks" in order to be heard and gets into the structure of responsible (responding and being responded to) resistance, he or she is or is on the way to becoming an organic intellectual”(Spivak, xxvi). Apala has gathered and displayed power to speak against the oppression which helps her in resistance and achieving response from other sides. This leads her to the path of organic intellectuality.

Apala's passivity and cold behaviour towards Sibnath are also forms of resistance. As has been said before, Soham's arrival brings back the sparkle and excitement of her life which she



could not feel with Sibnath. Sibnath and his family's oppression cause her passivity which results in her not showing any excitement towards her oppressive husband. Here, she incorporates Daulati, a character from Mahasweta Devi's short story "Daulati the Bountiful". In the story, Daulati is a debt slave, a whore; she remains passive while being raped by her rapists. In doing so, she denies her rapists the dominance they want from her. Daulati's "complete sexual passivity is her only form of resistance" (Bhowal, 136). Subtly in a similar way, Apala's passivity towards her oppressive husband displays her resistance to patriarchal hegemony practised over her by her husband. This act of Apala demonstrates the silent suffering of women, under their husbands', patriarchal agents, dominance as well as the achieving of agency to resist to such power, and it magnifies their moving on towards emancipation.

At the end Apala becomes victorious over the patriarchal subjugation. After falling victim and losing her voice, she took painting as an alternative domain of her creative self-expression where she quite succeeded in breaking the shackles. She cannot talk to her family members and refuses to listen to their advice of abandoning her newly found domain of self-expression through painting. This is another act of her rebellion like Sujata's refusal to leave her job in the novel *Mother of 1084*: "Refusing to leave her job was Sujata's second act of rebellion. Her first act of rebellion was when Brati was two. She had refused to be a mother for a fifth time" (Devi, 46). What Apala could not do in the domain of singing, she did it through painting. She brings recognition to herself and she attains love and respect of her children, her in-law house and last but not the least she gets another identity in addition to being a daughter, wife and mother or just being a mare woman.

As has been argued, patriarchy subjugates women in every aspect of life and erects men's dominance over women. But when feminism has come into the scenario, the power hierarchy has been broken down. Then there appeared 'New Women', who defied the men's control over women. Their power to resist brings the changes in their lives and overall social consciousness. In this context, *Gandharvi: Life of a Musician* (2017) presents the relinquishment of rights, of equal opportunities to grow, and resistance to the discrimination on the basis of sex. Apala and Mitul have carried the novelist's ideological standpoint appropriately. Apala's subjugation, surrender, and at the end of the novel her regaining of power to form her identity contrast to Mitul's radical, assertive attitude toward life.

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