

PERCEPTION OF COMMUNICATION LEVELS

A STUDY OF BAUL MUSIC

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Abstract

The world today is fighting over religious issues and people are creating divisions, but amidst all this there exist a cult whose thinking and way of living is far different from all this. Their religion is their music and their God is their own soul. They do not believe in idol worship and their culture is a mixture of Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. They are travellers, create music and survive on whatever they are offered by listeners in return of their music. Music for them is not just a source of entertainment but is a very important part of their life. Music being a medium is not always used for communication it is mostly a source of entertainment for the listener and a source of income for the makers. But for the Bauls music a way through which they communicate with their inner self and through this communication are able to unite with their divine. They also use music to communicate with the common people and help them change their perception towards life in a better way. This study deals with the levels of communication that the Baul Music reaches at the same time, depending upon who is listening to it. The study also deals with, according to the Baul singers how new media and technology affected the originality of the Baul Tradition and music.

Keywords: Baul Music, Purpose of singing, Musical Communication

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Bauls and Bauls Culture

To start with a simple introduction, Bauls are a group of nomads, who are found in West Bengal and Bangladesh. They are the most common people present on earth and are free spirited. Their mind has no complexity and their heart knows nothing but the language of music. Bauls are the people who give universal aspect of human religion and aesthetic expression of the people through music and poetry. These people are castles but their work contributes a lot to the society and also their music is originated from the problems of the society and gives a solution also to that problem. The Baul speaks of love and union, but this love means the love between the human personality and the divine beloved within, and in this love man realises his union with the divine. There are two classes of Bauls, ascetic Bauls who reject family life and Bauls who live

with their families. Some Baul tales also mention that a Baul is not allowed to have family or children, they can have a '*Sangini*' (partner) for their *sadhna*s, but they cannot bound themselves into marital woes. Bauls are non communist who reject the outer husk of religion. They are above all the elements of religion, and its practices. The Bauls instead of walking on the path made by the religion walk on an entirely different path, whose practises and rituals are entirely different and according to them are much better than the other practises. The Bauls are both, a syncretised religious sect and a musical tradition. The origin of the Bauls is not known to any great degree of accuracy, but the word Baul has appeared in Bengali texts as old as 15th century. The word is found in the '*chaitanya-bhagavata*' of '*vrindavanadas*' as well as in the '*Chaitanya Charitamrita*' of *Krishnadas Kaviraj*. They are not bound to any particular religion, rituals,

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culture. Also people belonging to any caste, class, communal group can join this group. These activities resemble that of the Buddhist *Tantra* which is over and above all distinctions of caste and religion. Their refusal to accept the fundamental bases of social organization stems from their insistence to judge men with love and not necessarily as a member of a group with pre-ordained virtues or faults.

BAUL MUSIC

For a Baul, music means everything, they live for the love of music and music is just like air to them, without which they can't survive without. The Bauls are travellers; they travel from one place to another and sing songs. They mostly write songs on philosophy of life and their songs are a way through which they believe that they can unite with their God who resides inside their body. They have two purpose for singing songs, the main purpose is that they can unite with their '*Moner Manush*' and the second purpose is that they believe that through their songs they can communicate their thoughts to people those who are listening to them and in a way can change their perspective towards life. Their songs are based on life and gives a message of positivity, which intern helps in changing the way people think. They mostly write songs on – oneness of all religion into humanism, universal brotherhood, and gender equality. The songs speak about intense yearning of the heart for the divine which is in man and not in the temples, or scriptures in images and symbols. The Baul speaks of love and union, but this love means the love between the human and personality and the divine beloved within, and in this love man realises his union with the divine. The Bauls pour out their feelings in their songs but never bother to write them down. This is essentially an oral tradition. The songs are usually sung by sole performer accompanied by a one stringed instrument, the *ektara*. The Baul song is not simply an instrument for the amusement of masses but a subject worthy of serious study, bearing most of the essential characteristics of folk tradition.

Theoretical Framework

RITUAL MODEL

The model is given by James Carey. According to the Ritual Model, the purpose of communication is for sharing, fellowship, participation, association. Communication functions for the feeling of oneness. According to the model, communication is not just the act of imparting information but the representation of shared believes or interests. Also communication is about intrinsic satisfaction of the sender and the receiver. The model also says that here, medium and message are hard to separate. The model sees the original or highest manifestation of communication, not in transmission of intelligent information, but in the construction and maintenance of an ordered, meaningful cultural world that can serve as a control and container for human action.

SADHARANIKARAN MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

The model is given by, Nirmal Mani Adhikary (Asst. Prof. of Media Studies Dept. of Language and Mass Communication School of Arts. Kathmandu University Nepal). The term Sadharanikaran is derived from the Sanskrit word sadharan. It is bound with another concept, sahridayata, that is, a state of common orientation, commonality or oneness. Sadharanikaran is the attainment of sahridayata by communicating parties. When senders and receiver accomplish the process of sadharanikaran, they attain saharidayata and become sahridayas. The essence of sadharanikaran is to achieve commonness or oneness among the people.

Objectives

- To study Baul music as a source of intrapersonal communication. (from Baul's perspective)
- To study Baul music as a source of interpersonal communication. (from audience's perspective)
- To study the relation between the different levels of communication

- through Baul Music.
- To study the mode of communication among
 1. Bauls
 2. Bauls and rest of the world
- To study the current scenario of Baul music.

Methodology

The research is both qualitative and quantitative. The research designs used in the study are –exploratory and descriptive. Survey and Interview methods were used to find out the results. Secondary data was also used as a part of the study.

Research Tools

Questionnaire was used in the survey, which contained total 17 questions and was filled by the people attending the 'Posh Mela'.

7 questions were framed for the interview of the Baul singers.

Sampling Framework

The proposed study was done using two methods.

1. Sample size of the survey was 100, out of which 80 surveys were successfully done. The respondents were chosen using **purposive sampling technique** as it was required for the study. The respondents were the people attending the 'Posh Mela' in *shantiniketan*, Bolpur.

2. An **interview** of the Baul singers was also done. The sample size of the interview was 7. The Bauls were also in the 'Posh Mela'.

Universe

The universe of the study was *Shantiniketan* (Bolpur) in West Bengal.

DATA ANALYSIS

Baul Interview Analysis -

The life of a Baul is all about music. Their life revolves around music and for them music is the only way through which they can have an ultimate union with their God. The songs sung by

Table 1 Initiation for dancing while performing Baul song

Respondent	Statement 1	Statement 2	Theme
Baul No. 1	When song comes in rhythm and beats start.	When there is music in between the song.	With beats
Baul No. 2	When I explain the <i>sadhna pranali</i> through my songs and start feeling it.	-----	While communicating
Baul No. 3	When the feeling of happiness arouse in my heart while singing.	-----	Happy feeling
Baul No. 4	When I completely get into the feel of the song.	-----	Feel of song
Baul No. 5	When the song catches the rhythm.	When I completely go into the feel of the song.	Rhythm in song
Baul No. 6	With the rhythm of the song I start dancing.	-----	Rhythm in song
Baul No. 7	When I completely go into the feel of the song.	-----	Feel of the song

them are known as *Baul Gaan* (Baul Songs)

A Baul roams around and sing songs to people he meet in his journey of life. The Bauls even perform in stage shows where hundreds of people come to listen to them. Bauls are very much engrossed in singing and while they are performing (be it for themselves or for the audience), they start dancing to the tune of their *ektara*. So, the Bauls were asked, at what point of time, or when do they start dancing while singing the songs. To this the Bauls said that, as soon as the song starts taking rhythm the Baul starts dancing, also when the Baul goes completely into the feel of the song, he/she starts dancing. One of the Baul also said that, the happiness while singing the song makes them dance.

A Baul while singing goes into a completely different world of music. The fact that they start dancing proves that Baul music has that power which can hypnotise them and send them into another state of mind. Their mind concentrates only on the music and nothing else matters to them at that point of time. While performing they forget all their sorrows and

happiness and their only goal is to meet the God which resides inside their body, which according to them is their temple

The life of a Baul revolves around only one thing that is music. For the bauls, music is everything, his God, his temple. Music gives their life a direction and leads them towards the almighty who according to them resides inside their body. For them music is a compulsory thing just like breathing. Without music their life has no purpose. Music is their identity; it is not just some notes, but something which reflects who they are. Music helps them to express and to communicate, the bauls usually choose songs over normal conversation to explain to people the philosophy of life, as according to them, through songs it is easier for them to explain things to other and it is easier to understand through music. Music to them is a ray of light, which guides them in their life.

They use their songs as tools to change the perception towards life of common people and also help them to change their wrong way of

Table 2 Meaning of Baul music for Bauls

Respondent	Statement 1	Statement 2	Theme
Baul No. 1	Music is one of the compulsory things that we have to do for our body.	-----	Compulsory for life
Baul No. 2	Music is like a identity for me, it's like my reflection.	Because of music my happiness and satisfaction of life has increased.	Identity
Baul No. 3	Baul music is the ray of light in my life.	-----	Ray of light in life
Baul No. 4	Baul music to me is 'Dehotto'	-----	Element of body
Baul No. 5	Baul music for me is a way of communication.	-----	Communicator
Baul No. 6	Baul music is a way of expressing oneself to other.	It is also a way of making people understand what life is and how to live life happily.	Way of expression
Baul No. 7	It is a form of communication and it can change people's perception towards life.	-----	Communicator

living and makes them understand what is right and what is wrong for them.

It has been said earlier that, when a Baul is singing, he/ she goes into a completely different world, and at that point does not care

about anything else. When asked to them if the reaction of the audience disturbs or affects them while performing on stage all the bauls said that, no the audience's reaction does not affect them at all while performing. It is a very special time for

Table 3 Affect of audience's reaction on Baul's performance

Respondent	Statement 1	Theme
Baul No. 1	No the audience's reaction does not affect me.	Does not affect
Baul No. 2	While performing my only aim is to make the audience understand what my songs are about and to make them lead life on a proper path.	Does not affect
Baul No. 3	I don't look at the audience when I perform on stage. I go into the feel of the song.	Does not affect
Baul No. 4	It does not affect me, because I sing for the love of music only.	Does not affect
Baul No. 5	I sing song to explain people, their reaction does not affect my performance.	Does not affect
Baul No. 6	No, it does not affect my performance.	Does not affect
Baul No. 7	No it does not affect my performance.	Does not affect

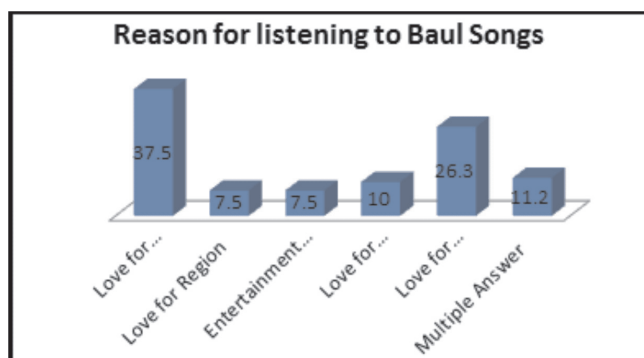
them as they are in a process of unison with their God.

This also proves that Baul songs are a form of intra personal communication, as they are mainly singing it for themselves so that they can reach that point which is known as the ultimate union. This also proves one of my objectives which was that, Baul music is a form of intrapersonal communication.

The bauls said that they sing for themselves and for the love of music, so the audience's reaction has nothing to do with their performance, also one of their purpose of performing on stage is to communicate to the audience the philosophy of life and to help them

lead a changed and better life.

Survey Analysis:

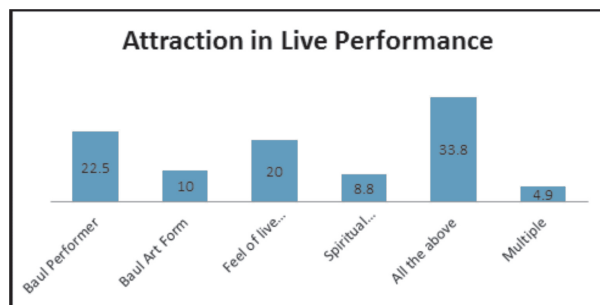


When asked the respondents attending

Table 1.1 Reson for listening to Baul Music.

Valid		Frequency	Percent
	Love for Music/ Folk Music	30	37.5
	Love for Region	6	7.5
	Entertainment/ Relaxation	6	7.5
	Love for Language	8	10.0
	Love for message/Lyrics	21	26.3
	Multiple Answers	9	11.2

the 'Posh Mela' the reason why they like to listen to Baul songs, maximum said that they listen to it for the love of music, table 1.1 shows that, 37.5% of the respondents said so. Second highest number of response got by the respondent was that they listen to it for the love of the message they get through the Baul songs, 26.3% of the respondents said this. Rest 7.5 % said that they listen for the love of regions, 7.5% said that they listen for entertainment, 10% said that they listen to it for the love of language, and 11.2% gave multiple answers from the given options. Thus the result according to the table proves that after love for music, lyrics are one of the major factors for liking the songs and they do deliver messages, which intern proves that Bauls songs are a form of communication.



Graph 2

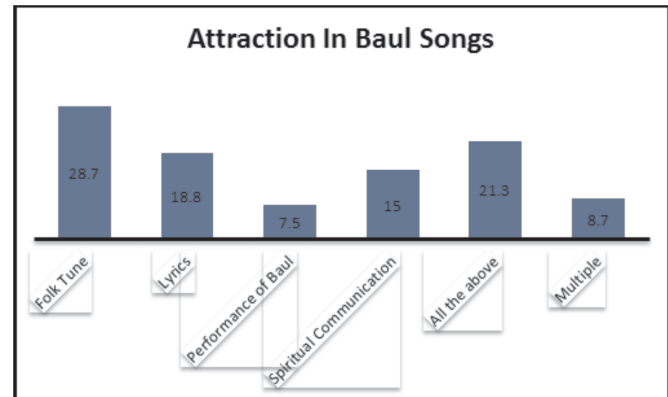
Table 1.2 Reason for attending a live Baul performance

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Baul Performer	18	22.5
	Baul Art Form	8	10.0
	Feel of live performance	16	20.0
	Spiritual Communication	7	8.8
	All the above	27	33.8
	Multiple Answers	4	4.9

The respondents were asked, what attracts them in attending a live Baul performance, to which from table 1.2 it can be said that, 22.5% respondents said that, the Baul performer attracts them to attend a live show, 20.7% said that the feel of the live performance is their main attraction, 10% said that they attend Baul shows because of the art form, 8.8% said they attend it for spiritual communication and 33.8 % said that all the mentioned factors attracts

them to attend a live Baul performance/show.

The results prove that the people really feel a connection with the baul songs and also with the singers.



Graph 3

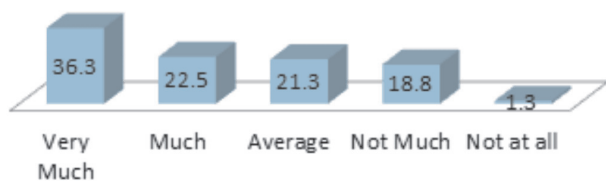
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Folk Tune	23	28.7
	Lyrics	15	18.8
	Performance of Baul	6	7.5
	Spiritual Communication	12	15.0
	All the above	17	21.3
	Multiple Answers	7	8.7

Table 1.3 Reason for liking Baul Songs

Interpretation –

The respondents in the 'Posh Mela' were asked, what attracts them the most in the Baul songs. According to table 7, maximum of the respondents, i.e 28.7% of the respondents said that the Folk tune of the songs attract them the most, 18.8 % said that the lyrics of the songs attracts them the most, 15% respondents said that, it is the spiritual communication in the songs which attracts them, 8.7% of the respondents gave multiple answer and 21.3% respondents said, that all the factors mentioned here attracts them towards Baul songs.

Audience's Connection with the Baul



Graph 4

Table 1.4 Connection the respondents feel with the baul performer in live performance.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very Much	29	36.3
	Much	18	22.5
	Average	17	21.3
	Not Much	15	18.8
	Not at all	1	1.3
Total		80	100.0

respondents feel a connection, with the Baul singer while listening to their live performance. Maximum of the respondents (36.3%) feel very strong connection with the singer performing in front of them, 22.5% said they feel much connection, 21.3% said average connection, 18.8% said not much connection and only 1.3% said no connection at all. This result proves that, Baul songs have the power to captivate the attention of the audience in a very nice way, though it also depends on the performer in some way. But the audience while listening to the Baul sing feel that a one to one interaction is taking place and that whatever the Baul singer is trying to communicate through his/her song, is especially for them. Thus this makes the Baul songs, a form of interpersonal Communication.

Talking to the Baul

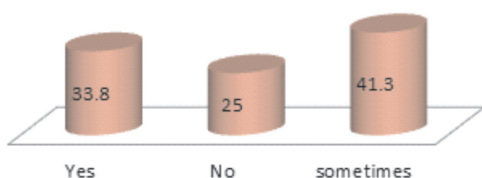


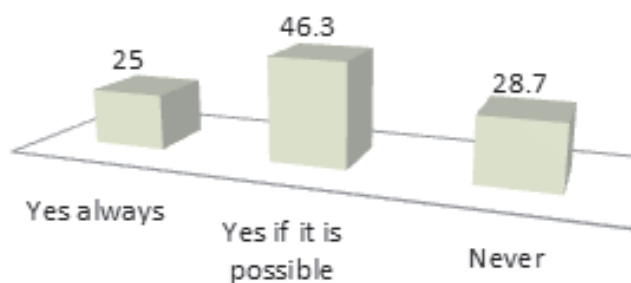
Table 1.5

Preference of respondents to talk to the performers

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	27	33.8
	No	20	25.0
	sometimes	33	41.3
	Total	80	100.0

Table 1.5 Shows that, most of the respondents prefer to talk to the Baul singers after listening to the live performance. Some of them prefer to talk always (33.8%) and rest prefer to talk sometimes (41.3%). Only a few respondents said that they do not (25%) prefer to talk to the singers after attending the show. Since the result shows that, most of the respondents refer to talk to the Bauls, proves that they do feel a personal connection with the singers and their songs.

Feed back to the Bauls



Graph 6

Table 1.6

Frequency of respondent's giving feedback to the Baul performer

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes always	20	25.0
	Yes if it is possible	37	46.3
	Never	23	28.7
	Total	80	100.0

Table 1.6 Shows that most of the respondents give feedback to the Baul singers, if it is possible. The results also say that, 71% (respondents who said yes always respondents who said yes if it is possible) of the respondents said that they prefer to give feedback which again proves that they are able to connect themselves to

the songs and the singer because of which they are willing to talk to them after listening to their performance. There were few respondents (28.7%) they never give feedback.

Change experienced in life

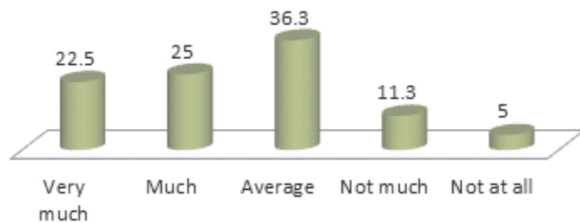


Table 1.7
Changes the respondents have experienced by listening to Baul songs

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very much	18	22.5
	Much	20	25.0
	Average	29	36.3
	Not much	9	11.3
	Not at all	4	5.0
	Total	80	100.0

Results of table 1.7 Shows that, all the respondents have experienced some change in their life after listening to the Baul songs; only the extent to which they have experienced the change in their life differs. Maximum people (36.3%) have experienced an average change and only 5 % have not experienced any change, 11.3% respondents said not much . 22.5% respondents said that they have experienced very much change and 25 % said they have experienced much change. One of the purposes of the Baul singer's life is to guide his listeners through the songs so that they lead a better life and if the respondents are saying that they have experienced some change, then it means that the communication through the Baul songs which the Baul wants have been successful.

Purpose of Baul Music



Graph 8

Table 1.8
Purpose of Baul music according to respondent

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	For Entertainment	11	13.8
	For giving message	26	32.5
	For Communicating Culture	11	13.8
	For Self Expression	7	8.8
	For Spiritual Communication	14	17.5
	Multiple Answers	11	13.6

Table 1.8 Shows the responses of the respondents of 'Posh Mela' on the question that what according to them is the purpose of Baul music. Maximum respondents, i.e 32.5% said that it is for giving message, 17.5% said that it is for spiritual communication, 13.8% said it is for entertainment and 13.8% said it is for communicating culture, 8.8% said that it is for self expression and 13.6% gave multiple answers.

The results shows that, according to the respondents, the Baul music is for giving message, or in other words we can say that it is for the purpose of communication.

Baul songs as communicators

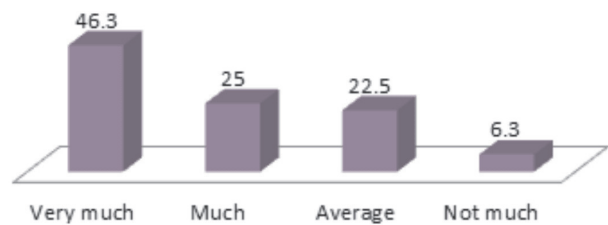


Table 1.9

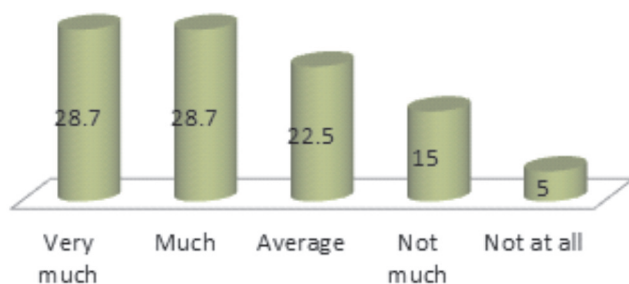
Extent of communication through Baul songs

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very much	37	46.3
	Much	20	25.0
	Average	18	22.5
	Not much	5	6.3
	Total	80	100.0

Results of the table 1.9 Shows that maximum number of respondents agrees that baul music communicate message. Very few respondents said that the Baul songs do not communicate any message. 46.3% said very much, 25% said much, 22.5% said average and 6.3% said not much.

Thus going with the result of the maximum responses, now it is clear that Baul songs are a type of interpersonal form of communication.

Changing perspective towards life



Graph 10

Table 1.10
Influence of Baul music in changing perspective towards life

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very much	23	28.7
	Much	23	28.7
	Average	18	22.5
	Not much	12	15.0
	Not at all	4	5.0
	Total	80	100.0

The result of table 1.10 shows that, Baul

music has great influence on the respondents. Out of the respondents, 28.7% said very much, 28.7% said much, 22.5% said average, 15% said not much and 5% said not at all, when asked to what extent they feel Baul music influence the respondents life. It has the power of changing the perspective of the respondents towards life. As mentioned before, the Bauls sing song to the audience so that they can help them lead a good life and if their listeners are disturbed or are in depression or may be are leading a life which is not correct, then the Bauls find it their duty to help them and change their perspective towards life. After asking the audience the responses also showed that, their perspective towards life does change by listening to the songs. This proves that the purpose of the communication through Baul songs are being fulfilled and thus Bauls songs are a means of interpersonal form of communication.

Findings of the study

In the study it was found that, the Baul songs touches three levels of communication at the same time. The singer who is singing, for him it is intrapersonal form of communication, for the listener it is an interpersonal communication and simultaneously intrapersonal form of communication. For a third person who is watching this from a distance, it is a form of mass communication. Thus the song at the same time is a different mode of communication in the perspective of different people.

The data of this research was divided into two parts, interview of the Bauls, and survey on the people who had come to attend the 'Posh Mela'.

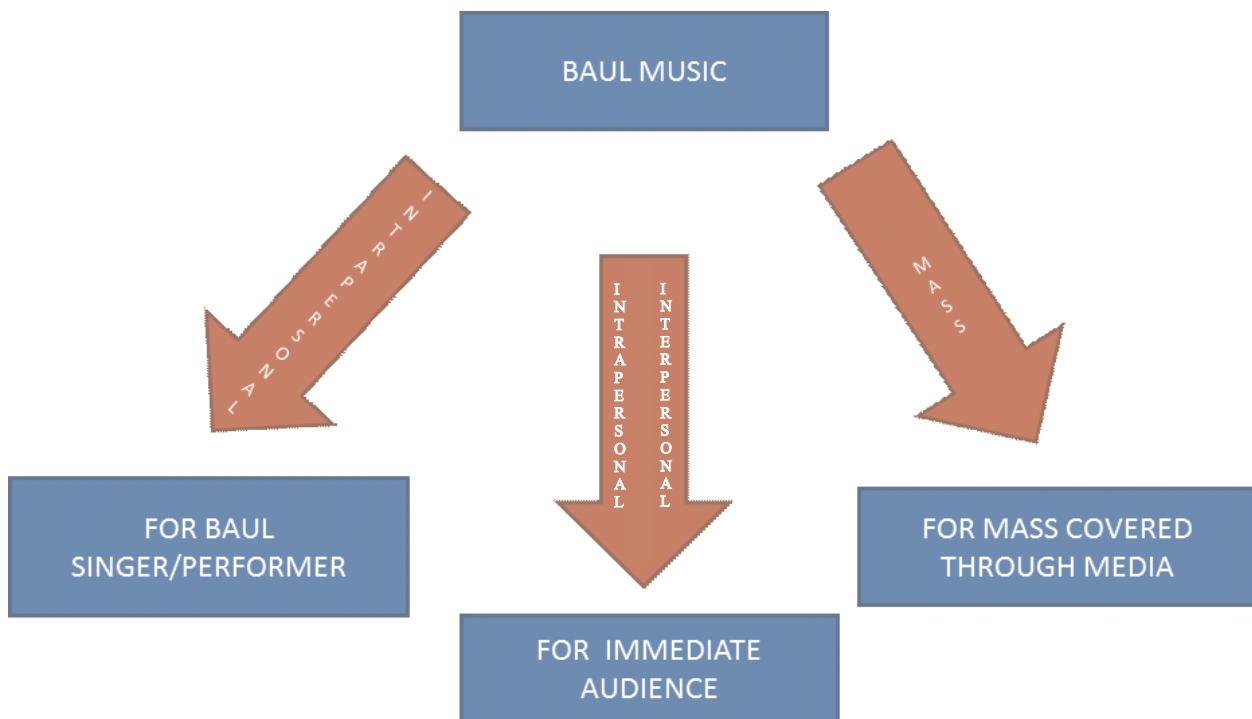
Findings of the Baul Interview are -

- Baul music is an intrapersonal mode of communication in context to the Baul singer.
- Baul music is a form of interpersonal mode of communication for the listener.
- A person is considered to be Baul only after he/she successfully completes practices of the Bauls under their *Guru*.
- The Bauls are above all the materialistic things and while living in the society they

- lead a life very different from the society.
- There is huge difference between the pre and post Baul life, the perspective towards everything changes after becoming a Baul and music becomes the lifeline.
- The Baul starts dancing while singing a song, when he/she completely gets engrossed in the feel of the song.
- According to the Bauls new media has both good and bad affects on their traditions.
- For the Bauls, music as important as is air for life.
- According to the Bauls music is a way of expressing themselves and communicating with others.
- Once the Baul starts singing while performing on stage, anything happening around does not affect their performance as they get completely lost in the feel of the song.
- The Bauls take knowledge from their guru orally and at times just write down the songs.
- The Bauls communicate with each other through symbols and secret languages and they communicate with their listeners through their songs.
- One of the Bauls was also able to help an alcohol addict from overcoming his addiction.
- According to some of the Bauls, the new and advanced technology, Baul music has become more popular in the entire world and people know about it and thus these people are getting more shows to perform in.
- On the other hand there are some Bauls according to whom these new technologies have destroyed the originality of the culture as people are now copying the tune distorting it and this ruins the originality of the songs.
-

•Findings of the survey of People attending the *Posh Mela*–

- It was found in the survey that music is listened by all and a large population listens to Baul songs.
- People listen to Baul songs for the love of music or folk music (37%) and for the love of message (26.3%) that the songs give.
- *Ravindra sangeet* is the most popular (48.8%) form of music in west Bengal and also it is highly inspired by Baul songs.
- Tune of the Baul songs is one thing that is liked the people (28.7%) a lot in Baul songs.
- The Baul performer (22%), the art form (10%), the feel of the live show (20%) and spiritual communication (8.8%), all attracts the people to attend a live Baul performance.
- Most of the audience listening to Baul songs feels a very strong (36.3%) connection with the performer.
- Most of the music lovers try and attend a live Baul performance every time it is possible for them.
- Apart from the live shows, people prefer to listen to the Baul songs on internet.
- The audience after listening to a live show only sometimes (41.3%) talk to the performer.
- Most of the people give feedback to the Baul performer after attending their show if it is possible (46.3%).
- Many people have experienced change in their life after listening to the Baul songs.
- Most of the people (32.5%) agree that the purpose of Baul songs is to give messages.
- Most of the people (46.3%) agree that Baul music is a mode of communication
- Maximum people said that Baul music has influenced their perspective towards life.



Communication levels in Baul music

Fig. 1 showing levels of communication through Baul Music

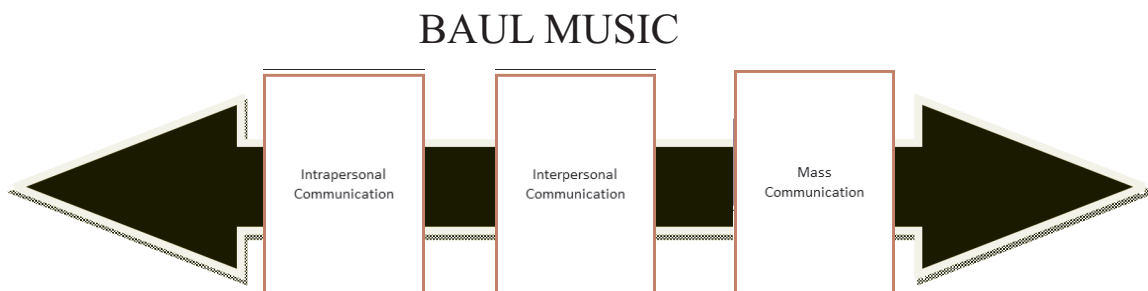


Fig. 2 Show levels of communication in Baul music at the same time, where the arrow indicates time dimension, which is same for all the communication types

Conclusion

From the entire study it can be concluded that, Baul music is a very strong means of communication which is used by the Baul singers to communicate their thoughts and thinking with the common people. The audience of the Baul

songs also feels very connected with the singers and the songs. For them it becomes a interpersonal form of communication where they feel that, the singer is directly conversing with them.

The songs of the Bauls are mostly about

the philosophy of life and teach the common people how to lead a good life. Most of the people who listen to baul songs regularly, have experienced change in their perspective towards life and felt a change in their mind. Thus in short it can be said that, Baul is not just a form of cultural communication or spiritual communication, it is more than that, and it is something that the people feel is their own and feel connected with. Talking about the Baul singers for them their music is their life and without music they are nothing. For them music is their guiding light of life. It is not just a casual thing, but a very important part of their life, in fact music is their life. They communicate through music. Their songs are like

their identity. The Bauls mostly write on gender equality, *dehatto*, life etc.

In the end it can be said that, Baul songs are not just any usual form of music, it is very different and holds a very special place in the heart of the singers and the listeners as well. Baul music reaches three different levels of communication at the same time, intrapersonal for the Baul singer, interpersonal for the audience attending the live show and mass communication for the one listening to the live performance over a medium. No other form of music reaches different levels of communication at the same time.

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