

ABSTRACT

Bāul refers to a devotional sect, a mystic philosophy and a sacred musical genre of Bengal that are inextricably linked with one another. Bāuls are a group of mendicant minstrels strongly opposed to formal religious practices, rites, customs and scriptures who dedicate their entire lives for the realization of the inner soul or the *moner mānush* through the medium of music. Despite traditional Bāuls' attempts to preserve musical purity, Bāul music's contact with other musical influences has transformed it over the years leading to the production of a new musical genre known as Bāul Fusion Music two decades ago. This study examines the transformation of traditional Bāul music into a new musical genre labeled Bāul Fusion music.

The study begins by tracing the emergence of Bāul music following the evolution of the cult and its philosophy. This is followed by an examination of the gradual transformation of traditional Bāul music into a new musical genre that has come to be known as Bāul Fusion music. It draws on genre theories of music and interviews with contemporary Bāul and non-Bāul musicians and analyzes contemporary Bāul music in order to explain the transformation of Bāul music into a new musical genre.

Key Words: Bāul, mysticism, genre, genre theory, music, fusion music.

