CHAPTER 3

BAND MUSIC IN WEST BENGAL: PRIMARY FEATURES AND HISTORY
3.1 Introduction

The present chapter in the research tries to explore and locate the historical specificity of Bangla Band music in the Bengali society and aims to find out whether its emergence has been influenced by the socio-cultural situation in the country. It also tries to look for the contribution/role of the Bengali youth in the emergence of this particular genre of music. In this context it can be noted that Bangla band music is one of the popular elements of Bengali music industry. It is especially popular among the young school, college and university students. In every college/university fest there has to be a Bangla Band performing. The members of the Bangla Bands as have been stated before are known faces on teenage magazines, and televisions¹. The interface between youth and Bangla band music in the present context is an interesting subject of study. In this chapter the major themes of discussion would be

- the concept of 'band' as derived on the understandings of the classical musicians, band members, persons from the media, and experts on music as well as academicians.

- the narratives of emergence of the bands. Here an individual history of some commercially successful bands and the lesser known bands would be looked into to get an overall picture of understanding the common features for the emergence of this genre of music in West Bengal.

- traits of Band music in Bengal

- the key individuals who have been major inspirations behind the formation of the bands and

- the socio-cultural factors leading to the emergence of band music in Bengal.
3.2 Definition of a band

This problem of defining the 'band' constitutes one of the central aspects of this research. The definition of the band, it is emphasized again, has been derived from the band members, media persons, classical musicians, experts on music, and fashion designer to name a few. It is a strategy very consciously adopted to develop the concept of band. I did not want to impose my definition, rather develop a loose set of ideas as to what a band means to those who are actively involved in it and those who are experts on it. In the course of the present research, band has been loosely defined as a harmonious collective unit involved in the making of music. The makers of the music are tied by common processes of thought about music. They also share a common ideology and approach of making music.

3.2.1 Collectivity

The dictionary meaning of 'band' would be a group or a collectivity. In terms of Bangla band music, it would mean doing music collectively. In an interview Kaaji Kaamal Naser, a musician and expert on music stated that in the realm of music the English word 'band' would mean a collectivity of people playing musical instruments. Rooting the history of the 'band' in the west especially in America, Naser states that both 'white' and 'black' bands of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had deeply influenced the lives of the Americans. Every American village had its own band that would regularly perform during picnic, political gatherings, dance parties and carnivals. The instruments which were used in these marching bands were trumpet, cornet, trombone, tuba, clarinet and drums. Compared to the situation in west, in India the name of Maihar band can be mentioned which was an instrumental band. The band was a first of its kind formed in Maihar in Madhya Pradesh, India, by classical musician Acharya Allauddin Khan. This band was set up under the patronage of
Maharaja Brijnath Singh, who then ruled the erstwhile princely state of Maihar. Among the early mentors from whom the Acharya sought guidance was Charles Lobo who was the conductor of Eden Garden Orchestra in Kolkata. Lobo and his wife taught Allauddin Khan western classical music, including the technique of violin playing. And this grounding in the western idiom inspired him to set about the task of constituting what came to be known as the Maihar Band. By all accounts, this was the first ever attempt at orchestration of Indian music. During the closing years of World War I, a pernicious epidemic of the influenza swept the whole of India including Maihar. This scourge left many children orphaned. Allauddin found several such boys from peasant and worker families who were ill fed, ill-clad and illiterate and shaped them into instrumental musicians for the Maihar Band. It is on record that the Maihar band shot to fame in the early 1920s after it debut in the Lucknow music conference (Nadkarni 2002). According to Naser later on (he could not specify when), the definition of the 'band' was widened to include the vocalists. The above accounts strengthen the fact that musical band means a collectivity of musicians making music together.

3.2.2 Harmony

Band is simply not doing music collectively. In percussionist Pandit Tanmoy Bose's views, band implies a perfect harmony. To put it simply, a band is a harmonious collectivity. This, he stated in the context of the programme 'Rock e Rupam Taal e Tanmoy' (Rupam on the rock and Tanmoy on Rhythm, telecast on Rupashi Bnga, in 2011). According to him if during a public performance there is any lapse or limitations on the part of individual musician, then it is the duty of the other band members to cover it up. Rupam Islam of Fossils fame echoes the same point stating that band should be a union between different musicians. The band is a process of moving from individual to collectivity.
Talking of the beginning of any band, Islam points out that friendship in the college days can act as a starting point of a band. As friendship calls for strengthening the co-ordination between those who are friends, so is band a combination and *unity* between different musicians. According to one of the leading sound engineers of present times Shubhayun, doing music together for a long time is important for the creation of a band. All the musicians repeatedly focused on harmonious collectivity being a predominant feature of the band.

In spite of the fact that the value of collectivity reigns supreme in a band, there is an underlying dilemma involved in the above features as it has been noticed that 'individual' has also been important in the Bangla bands. This is so because it has been noticed that at times of live onstage performances of the bands the vocalists of the bands become most prominent. This is true of established bands like Chandrabindoo (the last letter in the Bengali alphabet), Fossils, Cactus, Bhoomi (Ground) to name a few. The vocalists do most of the interactions with the audiences. They are also more common public figures appearing as page three celebrities in newspapers or on television commercials and other programmes like debates and discussions. Anindya Bose, the front man of the band 'Shohor' (City) clarifies the fact by stating that the vocalist is the 'face' of a band but at the same time does not forget to mention that the other band members are important as well. Rupam Islam shares the same point in a different way by stating that the vocalist of the band has to take the pressure of the allegation that he becomes the most prominent in the band.

### 3.2.3 Common Ideology

A band, besides being a collective effort, is required to have a **shared or common ideology**. The ideology is to create something new and unique. The statement finds support in the views of Pandit Tanmoy Bose who states that the element of *innovativeness* is an essential quality of any band. Anindya Bose of
the band Shohor echoes the same voice when he says that the journey of the band will create something new.

Band therefore, according to the above respondents is a revolution and the mediums of such revolution are the songs. Here what they imply is probably the lyrics and the tunes of the songs because they are different from those of the songs of the Bengali cinema. Bangla Bands emerged as a form of protest against the songs of Bengali cinema in the decade of eighties as we will see later in the study. Taking up music as a profession has been quite a radical decision taken by the band members. It cannot at the same time be denied that the innovativeness and radicalism are also evident in the live performances of the Bangla bands where the members' attire, body language, stage décor etc. all are essential components making up the totality of the performance. One of the leading fashion designers of the present times, Agnimitra Paul states that band members have to be cool in their appearances. She probably means that the band members have to be casual and relaxed while they perform. This 'coolness' in their attire as well as attitude, she feels, would help the band members to easily relate to their audiences. She also feels that the band members should be both individually as well as a band be fashion icons. They should create their own style and not simply imitate anyone in terms of fashion. In this respect they are radical from the other performers as well. The significant fact is that in case of this genre of music, the term band is perhaps not restricted to music alone. Here the definition of band gets expanded beyond musical reality and becomes a medium of representation of the contemporary society where there is an emphasis on one's looks and appearances. The audiences are consumers not only of the particular genre of music but probably also potential buyers of commodities of fashion that the band members patronize.
3.2.4 Unit
A similar ideology of the members in the band would call for a co-ordination in the thought processes of the members of the band. From merely being a collectivity of its members, a band probably has to be a unit. This unit, in case of bands, usually has a size which can vary between five to seven members. Rupam Islam substantiates the above statement when he points out the fact that in a band there should be a **commonality of thought** between its members. This in all probability would mean a likeness of musical tastes and proper co-ordination between its members as to what new they are thinking in terms of doing music. At the same time Rupam does not forget to mention that band members have to oblige to a number of **rules**. There are rules regarding the rehearsal timings, script for live performances (which are not spontaneous) etc. Every decision in the band is taken with the consent of every member (Islam 2012). Members feel that such responsibility in a band call for **equality** and **trust** among them. The equality is in terms of the contribution that they make towards the production of music as well as the distribution of earning after their live performances, as has been pointed out by a new band Black Beats. To the members, in a band, there is no place for 'solo' performance. Desh, another new band pointed out that the band members complement one another musically. Collective existence in a band motivates them to do good music. Not only the band members, but Mrs. Mohua Lahiri, one of the owners of Asha audio, also defines a band as a team of musicians who are 'equal'. By equality she meant, 'equality of payment'. All of the above components together make up the unit called band.

3.2.5 Language
In the present research the entire focus has been on the Bangla Bands. The prefix 'Bangla' in Bangla band has a particular significance attached to it.
Bangla (Bengali) here definitely implies the language in which the lyrics of the songs of the bands are written/have been written. Here it needs to be mentioned that not all Bangla bands have their original lyrics. Bands like Dohar (Repeater), Bhoomi (Ground) (some songs), Surma Dohar (Lovely Repeater) and many others collect Bengali folk songs and present them to the audience. Therefore an indigenous flavor can be attached to this genre of music. Very significant information which repeatedly has come up in the process of the interviews in the present research is that in India the phenomenon of band perhaps does not exist in any other regional languages except Bengali. There have been Hindi bands like Euphoria but it would probably not be correct to label Hindi as a regional language. Besides, Hindi also enjoys the status of official language of our country along with English. In this context it can be claimed that 'language' provides a measure of uniqueness to the Bangla bands. It has also been pointed by band members like Siddhartha of Cactus that during their initial years, when they had been in college, there had been some English bands like Shiva whose performances they used to regularly attend. But language became a barrier in this case as they, as audiences could not fully comprehend the lyrics of the band. The problem had been a shared one and therefore the young college and university goers thought of making rock music in Bengali. Bengali language here probably becomes one of the sources of rooting themselves in their own society as rock n roll music is basically a western cultural element. English language in the above case had probably been a source of alienation to these Bengali youth and they found refuge and strength in their own mother tongue. Language here becomes a means of rooting themselves and their thought patterns in their own society. It is this language which has been one of the many probable reasons for the popularity of the Bangla bands in Bengal.

Music critiques and lovers like Kaaji Kaamal Naser and Mr. Swapan
Som feel that the unique feature of Bangla bands is the language in which they make music. Both of them feel that the band members can probably freely and frankly root their ideas in their own mother tongue which is Bengali. The members of the band Black Beats stated that they want to express their opinion through Bangla. A very significant point which they had mentioned in the course of their interview is that the members of the Bangla band want to change the world but cannot do so altogether, therefore would want to begin the change from their own Bengali society and hence the name Bangla band. What is noticeable here is that the members did not specifically mention the changes that they want to bring about in their society. In all probability they had the social anomalies and inequalities existing in Bengali society in mind. To them the context of Bengal becomes significant in rooting their music.

### 3.3 History of the Bangla band music in West Bengal

A review of the process of emergence of Bangla band music in West Bengal has shown that it is a genre predominated by the young people who constitute its members and audiences. The bands like **Moheener Ghoraguli** (Moheen's Horses) of the 1970s, to **Cactus, Chandrabindoo** (the last letter in the Bengali alphabet), **Paraspathar** (Touch stone) in the early 1990s, **Fossils** in the late 1990s and many other struggling bands in today’s society are all instances to show that young college and university students have formed its core members.

#### 3.3.1 Origin

In the present research band has been defined loosely as the collectivity or group of musicians who contribute in the process of music making. With this definition in mind it would not be wrong to state that the history of making and performing music collectively in Bengal can be dated as far back as the days of
Nagar Sangkirtan (or kirtan as it is now known) initiated by the proponent of the Vaishnavite cult Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The singers and musicians collectively performed the songs while moving around in the streets. The Kabiyal songs (songs by the poets) in Bengal have also been a tradition of performing songs collectively. Here there was a singer who performed the song before the audience while his group of followers cheered him. The tradition of Gonosangeet (Collective singing) during the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) movement in Bengal is another form of collective presentation of songs. These songs took the value stand point of the proletatiats and the have nots. Therefore it would not be wrong to conclude that Bengal has had a tradition of making and performing music collectively. Bangla Band is just a contemporary variation in form in the process of collective music making.

The beginning of Bangla Band music in West Bengal can be dated back to the 1970s with **Moheener Ghoraguli (Moheen's Horses)**, a group of young men doing music which was very different from the predominant Bengali mainstream film music. The mainstream film music (as will be mentioned elsewhere) had the other worldly objects like sun, moon and stars as the subject of the songs. Common man and his struggle for existence did not feature in the then film music. This group of young men was disillusioned with the monotony of Bengali film music. **Gautam Chatopadhyay**, along with his brothers **Pradip** and **Biswanath Chatopadhyay**, Cousin **Ranjan Ghoshal** and friends **Abraham Mazumdar**, **Tapesh Banerjee** and **Tapas Das** formed a band **Moheener Ghoraguli (Moheen's Horses)** in 1975. At the beginning they called themselves **Saptarshi** (Seven Rishis) and later on changed it to Moheener Ghoraguli as proposed by Ranjan Ghoshal. The name had been derived from the poem **Ghora** (Horses) by the Bengali poet Jibanananda Das. Das has been considered as one of the primeiere and modern poets of the post Tagore era.
Gautam Chattopadhyay was highly influenced by the left-radical movements then prevalent in West Bengal in the form of Naxalite movement. According to Kaaji Kaamal Naser, developing countries like Bangladesh and India were at the time distracted by social problems like poverty, illiteracy, corruption, and political superficiality. It needs to be noted here that it was a period after the liberation movement in Bangladesh. Bangladesh separated from West Pakistan (now Pakistan) in the year 1971 after the completion of the Bangladesh liberation war. The political exclusion, ethnic and linguistic discrimination and economic neglect by the politically dominant western wing, led to popular agitation, civil disobedience and nationalism in Bangladesh. These led to the war of liberation after which secular democracy was to be established in the country. However Bangladesh had to endure years of poverty, famine, political turmoil and numerous military coups. West Bengal in its turn was already witnessing the Naxalite movement from the late sixties to the early seventies. This was a peasant uprising in a place called Naxalbari in West Bengal in the year 1967. Later on the movement had spread to the city of Kolkata in different colleges and universitites where students had been inspired by the extreme leftist ideology. The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) was formed in 1969 with Charu Majumdar as its leader. The CPI(M-L) carried on with its strategy of armed struggle for the next couple of years. The movement soon spread to other parts of the country but its span was short lived. As hundreds of CPI(M-L) cadres lost their lives and thousands were put behind bars, the movement witnessed splits, confusion and disintegration. It finally collapsed with Charu Majumdar's death in the year 1972. The aftermath of the Naxalite movement, coupled with severe power shortages and numerous strikes in the factories in Bengal had resulted in the stagnation of its economy. More over after the Bangladesh Liberation war in 1971, Bengal's infrastructure had been shattered entirely due to the influx of millions of refugees from
Bangladesh. According to Kaaji Kaamal Naser, the socio-economic, socio-political and cultural conditions in Bangladesh and India created a category of extremely frustrated young people who (not surprisingly at all) found refuge in the frenzy of the western music. the band Moheener Ghoraguli can be said to be an out come of the confluence of the above factors.

3.3.2 Difference with the Mainstream
According to one of his friends Divyo Mukhopadhyay, Moheener Ghoraguli was a collective effort, which was something unique in the Bengal music scenario. This could be probably because that was the time when individual singers like Hemanta Mukhopadhyay and Manna Dey dominated the Bengali music industry. It was unique also because of the fact that in Moheener Ghoraguli the composer of the songs was the singer himself. The members of the band arranged the music for the songs as well. This was not the case with Hemanta or Manna. They mainly sang the songs composed and arranged by others.

3.3.3 Albums of Moheener Ghoraguli
The members of the band borrowed money from the kabuliwallah (Afghan money lender) to bring out their first album Sanbighno Pakkhikul O Kolkata Bishoyok (Scared Birds and about Kolkata) in 1977. This act of theirs reflects the involvement and commitment of the members towards their music and band. Two other albums named Ajana Udonto Bostu (Unidentified flying object) and Drishyaman Moheener Ghoraguli (Visible Moheener Ghoraguli) came out in 1978 and 79 respectively. These albums are no longer available in the market.
3.3.4 Probable reasons for the Breakup of the Band

The members of the band disbanded in 1981 for reasons not provided very clearly and specifically by Kankar Bhattacharyya, one of the friends of Gautam Chattopadhyay. It might be that Moheen's music was probably accepted by a limited audience and it did not gain in much popularity and mass market. It also probably provided a genre of music, a genre which was very different from that created by Bengali individual singers like Hemanta Mukhopadhyay and Manna Dey. According to Bhattacharyya, the use of the western musical instruments like the 'guitar', 'bass guitar' with the Bengali songs was probably not accepted by the then Bengali audience. This move was something new in the Bengali music scenario, a move much ahead of its time and perhaps not fully appreciated by the Bengali audience since they were largely overwhelmed by the songs of the yester years. The Bengali music industry was predominated by songs which were romantic and mainly dealt with the objects like sun, moon, and stars etc. Common man and his struggle for everyday existence which were largely missing in Bengali film songs were explored by Gautam in his songs of Moheener Ghoraguli. But the Bengali audience was not probably ready for the genre of songs that Moheen patronized. According to Bhattacharyya, this in no way indicated that Moheen's songs were completely rejected by the Bengali audience. Naser points out that the songs of Moheen were conspicuous in terms of their lyrics, tunes and presentation of songs as well as the use of instruments which were mainly western. All these carried a mark of extreme 'modernity' (meaning probably western modernity) and 'internationality' in their music which had been acceptable among some youth. But as far as the question of creating a large market in the Bengali music industry is concerned, Moheener Ghoraguli failed to do so. Naser reasons that the simplicity, uncomplicated and easy going life that the Bengalis were used to and the duet love songs in the lips
of Uttam Kumar and Suchitra Sen (sung by Hemant Kumar and Sandhya Mukhopadhyay respectively) were the major challenges that Moheen's horses faced in its path.

Siddhartha, the lead singer of a present band Cactus does acknowledge the contribution of Moheener Ghoraguli in the 70s in the realm of Bangla Band music. But he refuses to root the history of Bangla bands in Moheen. According to him Moheener Ghoraguli was not materially successful, did not find a wide audience and therefore was probably not convinced about carrying on with their band, and they disbanded. According to him if anything has to label itself as the 'history', it needs to have continuity but as far as Moheen was concerned, it had lost that continuity, and as well lost its claim of doing something novel in its time.

3.4 Arrival of the New Bands

During the late 80s and early 90s bands like Chandrabinoo (the last letter in the Bengali alphabet), Cactus, Parash Pathar (Touch stone) and Abhilasha (Desired One) started to consolidate. These were the years during which we find the revival of Bangla bands. Siddhartha, the lead vocalist of Cactus stated in an interview that the Bangla band movement started in West Bengal in the 1990s. It has been found in the course of the present research that the bands Paras Pathar and Abhilasha do no longer exist today. Anindya Bose of Paras Pathar has been the main initiator in forming a new band named Shohor (City). Some bands like Chandrabinoo and Cactus have completed over two decades in the music industry. In the section below the reasons for the emergence of established bands like Cactus, Chandrabinoo, Laxmichhara (Juvenile Delinquents), Krosswindz and Bhoomi and some other new bands have been taken into consideration.
3.4.1 Reasons for the Formation of Cactus

Talking of the urge behind the formation of his band Cactus Siddhartha stated that he was a medical student when he thought of forming a band. Siddhartha gave three main reasons for forming a band. Firstly, he started to listen to rock music and understood that it was trying to protest against the authority. Siddhartha found rock music to be something different from the predominant music of that time. Secondly, Siddhartha felt that in West Bengal during his time there were no songs for the younger generation, no songs speaking about them. Thirdly, he was also influenced by the English rock bands like 'Shiva'. The details of this band have not been provided by him. He started attending Shiva's performances in different college fests. In spite of thoroughly enjoying it, he was unable to comprehend the lyrics of the songs of the band. This created a feeling of inferiority within him but when he shared his inability with other friends; they revealed the same viewpoint. He realized that the cause of popularity of Shiva lay not in its lyrics but in its mood and energy. The idea of writing lyrics in the mother tongue, that is Bengali, struck upon him. He decided to compose songs in Bengali so that everybody would be able to comprehend and follow. With a few like-minded friends he formed a band. After the lineup of the band crystallized, they got musical instruments essential to make rock music (the specificities of the instruments have not been mentioned). He informed that none excepting one had professional training in music. When asked about the reason behind naming the band Cactus, Siddhartha mentioned that like cactus survives in the most difficult conditions in the desert, their music has similarly survived in the society devoid of music suitable for the youth.
3.4.1.1 Pattern of Emergence

Cactus' journey of music began in the fest of National Medical College in Kolkata on 24th of August 1992 in the category of Eastern Group song. According to Sidhu (nickname of Siddhartha), the judge, though appreciated their performance, failed to evaluate them because he/she could not decide whether they fell into the category of eastern song. A similar incident happened again with them when they went on to perform in the fest of IIT Kharagpur Springfest in January 1993 and gave in their name for the Eastern Group song. Just before the beginning of the event, they were prevented from performing because some felt that since they were performing rock music they do not fall in the Eastern category. The band members tried to establish the point that since they would be singing in Bengali they would not fall in the western category. Such an ambiguous position made them realize that they were doing something unique and novel. This realization acted as a moral boost and they decided to take up music as a profession.

3.4.1.2 Professional live performances

Soon after this, the band had booked an auditorium called Children's Little Theatre situated in the central location of the city to stage their first show. One of the band member's uncles who was a businessman agreed to sponsor their show and the members started distributing tickets among friends, sometimes forcibly. Posters were made with the caption, “ebar theke paati banglay rock” (from now on there would be rock music in Bengali) and pasted in places like universities. With all such preparations Cactus' first professional show was launched on March 6, 1993. According to Siddhartha, they performed in front of nearly 250 to 300 people who had appreciated their performance. From then on they started to get regular offers for stage shows. An event manager had watched their first show and had approached them to offer a show at Nazrul
Manch. To Sidhu and the other band members this was a dream come true and he acknowledged the encouragement and support of their friends. The band began to get calls for shows in colleges and universities like Jadavpur University, Presidency College, South City College and Ashutosh College to name a few. Sidhu recalled that no special effort was required to get the shows; their friends had helped them a lot in this matter.

3.4.1.3 Acceptability among the Audience

That Cactus' songs had gained acceptability among young people was evident to Sidhu when one evening in the year 1994-95 he visited R.G. Kar Medical College and heard some students singing something familiar. Soon he realized that it was one of the band's songs named Holud Pakhi (yellow bird). He sang with them though he did not know them and such an experience provided a moral support to him. Sidhu remembered that other Bangla bands like Chandrabindoo, Parash Pathar and Abhilasha also started consolidating themselves. The latter two bands do not exist today.

3.4.2 Reasons for Formation of Laxmichhara

'Laxmichhara' (Juvenile Delinquents) is another band which started its journey in the decade of nineties. The band was nurtured by Gautam Chattopadhyay of Moheener Ghoraguli fame and included his own son Gaurab Chattopadhyay in the drums. He was the one who had named the band Laxmichhara since he believed that the band did music which was not in conformity with the established norms of doing film music. The band was composed of members who were school going boys and recorded their first song Parashonay Jalanjoli (Studies Prohibited) in an album titled Abar Bochhor Kuri Pore — Moheener Ghoraguli Sampadito Bangla Gaan (Again After Twenty Years —
Bengali songs composed by Moheener Ghoraguli.) (Asha Audio 1999). The song was penned by Gautam Chattopadhyay. It is due to this initiative by Gautam Chattopadhyay that the band was formed. It can be inferred that perhaps Chattopadhyay was realizing his dreams through that of his son and the formation of his own band.

3.4.2.1 Pattern of Emergence
Though Gaurab (Gaboo as he is well known in the industry by this name) was a constant member of the band from its inception, Debaditya and Nilanjan joined the band in 2000. They took care of keyboards and guitar respectively. In 2001 they brought out their debut album Megha Mallar (Songs of the Cloud) from Asha Audio. Though not a very popular album, yet some songs from the album like Care Korina' (We don't Care) and Sudhu Chai Tomay (I want Only You) gained popularity and were regularly played on the FM channels. In 2001 the band's lead vocalist Sayak had left the band. Soon a new vocalist Subhojit had joined and the composition of the band had probably crystallized. The band has again suffered a setback recently (2011-12) when Subhojit left the band and shifted to Mumbai.

3.4.2.2 Professional live Performances
From the year 1999 onwards the members of Laxmichhara started doing music professionally in college fests, hotels, pubs etc. The year 2001 proved significant for the band because of two major reasons — first, they had performed in the 'Banga Sanskriti Utsav' (Bengli Cultural Festival).

3.4.3 Reasons for Formation of Chandrabindoo
Chandrabindoo (the last letter in the Bengali alphabet) is a band which is
popular for its satirical verses. The members say that since they are the last word in Bengali music, therefore they have named themselves as Chandrabindoo. The band was formed in the late eighties possibly in 1989 with Upal as its main initiator. Upal and some other members (names not mentioned in the interview) had the band Chandrabindoo. In the year 1996 Anindya (one of the lead singers and lyricist) and Chandril (lyricist) had joined the band. The members of the band have stated in their interviews that they have met each other in the process of participating in competitions at different college fests. In the process of such participation there developed a friendship between the three lead members of Chandrabindoo (Upal, Anindya and Chandril). Chandril stated in an interview that when they actually started to do music together, the scenario of the Bangla band was not very impressive. This dearth in good music perhaps had motivated them to do music collectively and create a bangla band.

3.4.3.1 Pattern of Emergence

The band members stated that they had created some songs for the event 'Pentathelon', which was a popular event in the college fests. In the particular event the groups had to do five things on stage, singing originally composed songs by the participants was one of them. The other four activities of the event have not been specified by the band members in the interview. According to the band members, Anindya's (originally written) songs had become extremely popular in the above mentioned event and people started to sing them in different events calling them to be their original ones. Chandril and Anindya decided to propose Upal and his band Chandrabindoo to record their songs of Pentathelon so as to have a copyright over them. Chandrabindoo, then was singing songs by Salil Chowdhury and Gautam Chattopadhyay, but the trio decided to make original songs (written and composed) by them for their album. The inspiration behind such originality in songs was provided by Sumon Chattopadhyay (now Kabir Sumon). The trio admits that they were
highly inspired by Sumon. The songs were prepared within two weeks and recorded in Upal's house. They had no aims to achieve through the songs and made the songs without any marketing pressure. Most of the songs were on college romance and their contents were mostly humourous, though melancholic at times. But unfortunately their records had been lost. But a positive outcome of the effort was the crystallization of their band Chandrabindeo. In the year 1996, the band had been on an official tour to Delhi for on stage performance.

3.4.3.2 Acceptability among the audiences

There they had obtained an initial idea and confidence that their songs would be liked by the people and they would soon get consumers of their songs in spite of the fact that no recording company were yet ready to bring out an album of theirs.

3.4.4. Reasons for Formation of Krosswindz

Krosswindz, another significant Bangla band had also made its appearance in 1990 when its members were in college. According to the members it was mainly due to the inspiration of Gautam Chattopadhyay that the band had started and made rock music in Bengali. Chattopadhyay had made them sing the songs of Moheener Ghoraguli and re-recorded them in the album Abar Bochhor Kuri Pore.

3.4.4.1 Pattern of Emergence

In an interview in a leading youth magazine Unish Kuri (2007), the members of the band stated that almost all of them had been students of St. Xavier's College, Kolkata. They started performing as college band and participated in
different fests of other colleges. It was after their win at the Spring fest organized by IIT Kharagpur that the band members realized their potential as musicians and decided to take up music seriously as a profession. In the year 1994 the band was successful in bringing out their first album but it was in English.

3.4.5 Reasons for Formation of Bhoomi

The narrative of the history of Bhoomi was told by Soumitra of Bhoomi who is also one of the lead singers of band. Soumitra repeatedly stressed upon the fact in an interview that 'Bhoomi' was born just because the members wanted to and loved singing. He also emphasized upon the fact that Bhoomi aims to provide entertainment to the people and apart from it there is no serious socio-economic and political reasons for Bhoomi to emerge. But he categorically mentioned that during the formation of Bhoomi he had never heard of Gautam Chattopadhyay of Moheener Ghoraguli though Surojit, another prominent member of the band had known him for many years. It was mainly the friendship between Soumitro and Surojit that led to the formation of their band. Bhoomi mainly has the flavor of folk tunes in their songs and they also narrate the everyday life of the people in the village through their songs, hence they have named themselves Bhoomi which means 'ground'.

3.4.5.1 Pattern of Emergence

Soumitro, a leading band member informed that before Bhoomi was formed, he used to play guitar in an English band and it is then that he met Surojit, another lead singer of Bhoomi. Surojit was unemployed but Soumitra, though he did not divulge the details, was into employment. In the meanwhile Soumitra was composing some songs in Bengali and on the insistence on one of his friends (who had already read the songs) they recorded the songs in his (the
friend's) studio in order to bring out an album. After the recording they liked their presentation and decided to form a band consciously. Soumitra recalled that at the time of beginning of Bhoomi he was already thirty eight years of age and claimed to have the intellectual maturity to start a band. On 24th July, 1999, they had staged their first show in Baguiati in Kolkata.

3.4.6 Formation of Some Other Bands
Apart from the above named bands which are established ones, there have been many other bands not so popular. They are Kaya (Body), Surma Dohar (Lovely Repeater), Prithibi (Earth), Mokam (Destination), Eeshan (Name of Shiva or North East), Kaalpurush (Orion or A Constellation of Stars), Ivn Batuta and Tatar, Alienz, The Missing Link, Praachir (Boundary), Insomnia, Ujaania, Canteen, Music Street, Desh (Country), Ferrari (Absconding), and Empty Spaces, to name a few. According to the band members, the beginning of these bands can be rooted in their college days. Many of these bands have been formed quite spontaneously in the process of participating in the college fests, or fresher's party. Therefore the members of these bands are also college students and in their youth. The above named bands have been formed during the late 90s and 2000 and later. An interesting information which came out during the analysis of the data is that unlike the earlier bands, some of these bands claim themselves to me from semi-urban areas like Kalyani and Asansol, not only from Kolkata. This probably shows the impact that the Bangla Bands are having on the youth. These young bands have probably been influenced by their more established counterparts.

3.5 Common Factors/Traits of Bangla band music
From the history of different bands the following traits of this genre of music have been derived. It must be remembered that these traits are not exhaustive
categories but derived in the process of research. It has been found form the data that Bangla bands are initiatives taken by the urban middle class youth. Friendship has been one of the central preconditions for forming a band and all bands had initially had a period of struggle before they became commercially successful. From the data it would not be wrong to state that Bangla band does not represent all categories of youth. It can not be called a cultural expression of the lower class youth as has been found out from the present research.

3.5.1 Urban phenomenon

It can be inferred from the above data that Bangla Band music at least in its initial years in the 90s has predominantly been an urban phenomenon. This is not to state that the participants of this genre of music are all inhabitants of the cities. Rather the root of band music has been the colleges and universities predominantly located in and around an urban setting like that of Kolkata. Though it cannot be denied that later on many bands have formed in semi-urban areas as has been pointed before.

3.5.2 Band Members from Privileged Background

The young people who have been active participants in the phenomenon of Bangla Band music have been from a privileged background in terms of education. The narratives of some of the leading band members suggest that when they started the bands they have been students of colleges and universities. These members claim to have obtained at least their graduate degree. It is this common educational background that has probably helped them to communicate to each other and interact on a common platform. This commonness in outlook has urged them to realize their common musical tastes and dissatisfactions and therefore strive to make the same music and take up music as a profession. The dissatisfaction perhaps lay in the fact that there was
no significant music which the youth could relate to. In this context it can be inferred that these people can be said to have come from the middle class backgrounds. Here it is to be noted that class membership of the band members have not been defined in terms of the occupation and income, rather their educational background has been decisive in determining their class.

3.5.3 Explanation
The middle class in the contemporary Bengali society attributes high importance to institutional and formal education. To be more specific, they can be said to belong to the category of the new middle classes. The new middle classes are the products of globalization and opening up of educational opportunities in our country. In this context we can borrow Andre Beteille's viewpoint while he states in delineating the features of the Indian middle class, that the new middle class is defined not by occupation alone but also by education. Education, according to him has become institutionalized to an unprecedented degree (Ahmad and Reifield 2007). Following Beteille we can infer that given the fact that most of the band members have received an institutionalized education, they belong to the middle class background.

3.5.4 Youth as leading members of the phenomenon called band music
With the exception on some bands like Bhoomi most of the bands have been formed by people who have been in the age group of twenty to thirty years. This age group can be named as youth (Oommen 1990). That they have taken up music professionally is a decision quite radical in itself. It shows a dedication and commitment on their part which is quite typical of youth. As far as the initial consumers of band music has been concerned, it has been in most of the cases found to be young people, mostly the friends of the band members, as has been found from the data. The predominance of college fests created a common platform for these young musicians and their audiences (college and university
goers) to freely interact about their everyday living and represent their lifestyles in their songs.

3.5.5 Composition of the Bands

As far as the composition of the Band members is concerned, a brief survey has been carried out on the Band members of some popular Bangla Bands. The list includes bands like Mohiner Ghoraguli (Mohin's Horses), Chandrabindoo (the last letter in the Bengali alphabet), Krosswindz, Bhoomi (Ground), Insomnia, Fossils, Cactus, Shohor, Abhilasha, Parash Pathar (Touchstone) (the last two named bands no longer exists), Lakkhichhara, Empty Spaces, Love Runs Blind (LRB), Artcell, Miles, Warfaze, and Aurthokin (Meaningless). All of the above named bands have five to seven persons who can be called their active members. A unique feature of the Bangla band is that every member contributes in making music. The band members are involved in the total process of making a song. From writing the lyrics to setting the tunes and arranging it musically—all are the responsibility of the band members. This is not the case with the other categories of popular music where these processes may not coincide. The lyricists, composers, instrumentalists, music arrangers and the singers are different persons. They might not form a unit as is the case of the bands. Apart from the above, there are certain features of the Bangla band which deserve special attention.

3.5.5.1 Absence of a female member

One common factor which binds them together is the absence of a female member. Amongst all these major bands (the list provided might not be exhaustive) Krosswindz can only boast of the presence of a female member. This six-member band at present includes Chandrani, who is the lead vocal as well as the lyricist in the band. She is the only band member
who knows Bengali well (Unish Kuri 2007). This special quality in her has helped her establish in the realm of Bangla Band music. Mohiner Ghoraguli had the unconditional support of two women members who did the designing of the albums and looked after the marketing of the same but what is noteworthy is that their names never appeared anywhere on the covers of the albums.\(^2\) The rest of the above named bands do not have any female member either as lyricist, lead vocalist, manager, or as instrumentalist. This stark absence of women can also be noticed in case of some comparatively new bands, which are struggling to make a place in this world of music. Here reference can be drawn from the programme 'Airtel Bandwagon' telecast on a predominant Bengali entertainment channel ETV Bangla. It was a programme, which was meant to provide a platform to the new bands from all around West Bengal. Almost forty bands had participated, out of which twelve were selected for the performance before the camera. What has been noteworthy throughout the entire programme was, only one amongst all the bands had a female member. Christine, the only woman band member in the entire show belonged to the band called Loventana. The only all-female Bangla Band existing today is 'Madol'.

3.5.5.2 Implications of the absence of women

The absence of women indicates an absence of women in the text of a song. Their problems, emotions as well as achievements go unrecognized. Here we can draw reference to the liberal feminists who have tried to figure out this absence of women in major spheres of life. The 'male' has been taken as the norm and hence, all explanations follow the male parameters. They are the protagonists and naturally the subject of the songs. Women are merely the objects (Tong, 1989). That, there can be an alternative way of looking at society
remains unknown to a large section of the young people who are the predominant producers as well as the consumers of this music.

5.5.3 Explanation for the Absence of Women

This is unusual because those who form bands are usually the young, educated, progressive people. Many of them are students in co-educational colleges or universities, at least in the initial years of formation of bands. But the underlying pressure of mainstream Bengali culture probably prohibits girls joining such bands. This can be clearly understood from the responses of young people obtained in the course of my interview. When asked whether women can form their own bands, a majority (60%) of the female respondents have stated very affirmatively that women can definitely form their own bands. The required qualities that the respondents identify are dedication, hard work, ability and mentality for co-operation and last but not the least, love for music. Besides, display of same level of energy as men is mentioned frequently by the girls as necessary attribute for the female band members. The other 'masculine' traits, which the women need to possess are high spirit, self-confidence, capacity to be able to break all barriers and perseverance. The female respondents have unhesitatingly stated that men are better than women as far as this genre of music is concerned. May be - this explains their absence in this alternative genre of music. The views of the male respondents were not very radically different from the women. They felt that women are equally good composers and musicians as the men are. Besides they should also be able to handle (like men) the various musical instruments. The above responses illustrate the intensity of the influence that the mainstream patriarchal culture have on members of society, irrespective of their gender identity.

To sum up, the responses indicate the fact that the concept of 'gender'
does indeed make a difference as far as the women's active participation in the realm of band music is concerned. They have repeatedly asserted that the inclusion of women can add variety and vitality to the Band music industry. In addition, women-related issues like rape, molestation, eve-teasing etc. would get addressed in the songs of the Bangla Bands. But the consensus across gender regarding the problems women might face as members of bands is that this industry is not at all able to provide safety and security to the women performers. Though they did not clearly point out the implication of 'safety and security', but in all probability they meant that women performers are prone to sexual abuse and harassment at the hands of their male colleagues. Thus it becomes very apparent that the entrenched patriarchal social values and norms would not easily accept the women in such an unconventional set up. It seems paradoxical in the sense that the performers of this music claim to be deviating from the conventional in terms of their preferences. But when it comes to questioning patriarchy they seem to uphold the age-old traditions. They differentiate categorically between masculine and feminine traits, labeling the latter as inferior and unsuitable for band music.

3.5.6 Musical Instruments used in Bangla Bands

The major musical instruments that these band members play are guitar, bass guitar, key board and synthesizer, percussion, mandolin, and drums. All of these instruments can be said to be western and not Indian in origin. It can be inferred that the concept of the bands as it is understood today in Bengal is to a certain extent borrowed from the west. Professional training is required to play these musical instruments. The band members have expressed the fact that they have taken professional training to play these musical instruments. Many band members like Rupam Islam of Fossils and Mainak of Cactus have trained themselves to play the guitar.
3.5.7 Division of Labour in Bangla Bands

It has been found out in the course of the research that the bands have members who are the lead vocalists. A band also has its own songwriter. The different members in the band perform separate and specific tasks. They play different musical instruments. At the same time it is also worthy of mention here that a single member in a band can do a multiplicity of tasks. For instance Anindya of Chandrabindoo, being the lead vocalist also is the songwriter of the band, Soumitro and Surojit of Bhoomi being the lead vocals can play different instruments at the same time. These instances show that the besides the division of labour the concept of multitasking is apt in the case of bangla bands. A single member can perform a number of tasks in the band. All their tasks are coordinated in the end while producing a song.

3.5.8 Friendship as a predominant feature of Band Music.

It is also worth noticeable from the above data that friendship has been one of the important and probably most consistent factors in making these bands. While rooting the Indian youth in urban setting Prof. D. P Mukerji has pointed out the psycho-social attitude of young men and women at the universities. He stated that at the university level there is gradual displacement of primary, personal contacts by secondary and tertiary impersonal contacts. In large cities the youth are mainly with new friends and with such impersona items as newspapers, books, radio and cinema (Mukerji 1945). Borrowing his position it would not be wrong to state that the same might have happened with the band members because it has often been seen in most of the cases that a good rapport and understanding between the friends have given a band the stability that it requires to persist. The band members who were actually friends might have shared the same feelings, thoughts and musical tastes which led to the
formation of bands. This is very true of bands like Chandrabindoo whose three members namely Upal, Anindya (the two lead singers) and Chandril (lyricist) have been friends since the inception of the band.

3.5.9 Bands have an Initial phase of Struggle
From the brief account of their history, it has been evident that many of the bands had an initial phase of struggle for survival before they have been commercially successful. But music recording companies like Asha audio came forward to provide them a chance to record their albums. Most of these struggling bands had their initial recorded albums from Asha audio which had realized the potential markets for their songs and acted to that effect. Besides, FM radio also probably played quite a significant role in taking the songs to a larger audience.

3.6 Influences on Band members
The influences on the band members can be analytically separated into

- key individuals who have had a high impact on the band members and
- socio-cultural milieu of West Bengal

The combination of both these sets of factors has been important in laying the ground work for the emergence of Bangla band.

3.6.1 Key Individuals
The band members in the contemporary society have named some individuals who have acted as key figures behind the formation of Bangla band music in West Bengal. They are Gautam Chattopadhyay of Moheener Ghoraguli, singer composer Suman Chattopadhyay known as Kabir Suman and Maqsood-ul-Haq of the band Feedback of Bangladesh.
3.6.1.1 Gautam Chattopadhyay

Majority, if not all, members of the established and popular bands have named Gautam Chattopadhyay or 'Monida' as he was popularly known, among the young musicians struggling to get hold in the music industry. These musicians had been fascinated by the personality of the former and owe an allegiance to him in shaping their careers in music. Surojit of Bhoomi, Gourab of Lakkhichhara, Anindya of Chandrabindo, Surojit of Bhoomi and members of Krosswindz are some of the names highly influenced by Monida. Though the other members might not have named him directly yet they could not deny Monida's influence on them. The underground and the comparatively new bands perform the songs of Moheener Ghoraguli on stage or on television. It is due to this that the exploration of Gautam Chattopadhyay's life and the formation of Moheener Ghoraguli form a quintessential part of the present research.

Gautam Chattopadhyay was a student in Presidency College, Kolkata during the 1960s. According to Sri Kankar Bhattacharyya, one of Gautam Chattopadhyay's close friends, 60s was a decade of protest in the west and its impact came in the east during the 1970s. It was also a time of social disturbance in Bengal due to the Naxalite movement. Chattopadhyay became highly influenced by the Naxalbari movement which was already gaining ground in West Bengal. Gautam and his Anglo Indian friends started a band called 'Urge' that would play in 'Moulin Rouge' and 'Trincas' (pubs) in Park Street. He was so actively involved in the Naxalbari movement that he had been arrested in 1969-70 by the authorities and tortured mercilessly by the police in order to obtain information. He was kept in police custody till 1970-71. On his release, he was forced to leave the state and went to Jabalpur and Bhopal respectively. In Bhopal he again formed a band; so music can be said to be an
integral part of his life and probably provided inspiration throughout. On his return to Kolkata (the year not specified by Bhattacharya), Gautam Chattopadhyay, along with his brothers Pradip and Biswanath Chattopadhyay, cousin Ranjan Ghoshal and friends Abraham Mazumdar, Tapesh Banerjee and Tapas Das formed a band 'Moheener Ghoraguli' in 1975. According to Bhattacharyya, Gautam was very much influenced by 'Beatles' because they showed how ordinary things can be converted into themes of music. Both their sound and lyrics were revolutionary in the sense that their lyrics were down to earth and they used no other instruments apart from guitar. Gautam found no novelty in the contemporary Bengali songs. To quote Bhattacharyya, “at that time Bengali songs were very inane”. Therefore the band 'Moheener Ghoraguli' (Moheen's Horses) was formed by Gautam Chattopadhyay to connect the Bengali songs to the contemporary society. The fact that 'Beatles' was an influence and an inspiration behind Gautam Chattopadhyay to make music has been strengthened by Kaji Kaamaal Naser. According to him, with the development of technology, the songs of 'Beatles' started to reach the Indian sub-continent, through the medium of radio and television. However the band Moheener Ghoraguli had disbanded in 1981 for the reasons already mentioned.

Throughout the decade of the eighties Gautam Chattopadhyay made feature films and documentaries but never left his passion for music. “Nagmoti” (Snakepearl) and “Samay” (Time), the former being the national award winner, are the films directed by him. He was immensely influenced by the baul songs (Bards' songs) and came in close contact with some of the bauls (bards). Although he moved into films his house provided a platform to many young singers and musicians to discuss and experiment with different genres of music. He always used to encourage them to make new music in Bengali language. Bhattacharyya stated that Moni da (that is the name by which he used to call Gautam Chattopadhyay and by which others knew him) always wanted
to promote new singers and tried to provide a platform to them. In between the years 1995 to 1999 he had composed four albums namely “Abar Bochor Kuri Pore” (Again After Twenty Years), “Jhara Samay er Gaan” (Songs of Withered Times, “Maya” (Illusion) and “Khyapar Gaan” (Songs of the Lunatic), all brought out by Asha Audio. What is noticeable in these albums is that Monida did not sing them although he had written them. Rather he made other singers especially young ones sing the songs for the above named albums. Contemporary singers like Bonnie, Surojit (of Bhoomi), Tuki (of Krosswindz) and Parama, to name a few, were regular visitors to his house. According to Bhattacharyya, Monida was a man who would like to move with all. This was his romanticism and possibly the quality which attracted the youth towards him. Another probable reason which prompted him to take such a collective approach has been provided by Professor Nilanjana Gupta of the Department of English in Jadavpur University who states during the course of an interview that Monida did not believe in the concept of band. By this she meant the element of inflexibility in a band by which there is a fixed set of performers for every song. Rather Monida believed in trying out different permutations and combinations according to the need of a song. In the year 1995 he had recorded the songs of their bands in an album named Abar Bochor Kuri Pore (Again after twenty years) (Asha Audio). In the same year he had sold the album in the Kolkata International Bookfair. Gautam Chattopadhay died in June 1999 yet his songs are still popular among different generations of Bangla band members.

3.6.1.2 Suman Chattopadhya

Suman Chattopadhyay, now known as Kabir Suman, has been another major inspiration behind the evolution and popularity of the genre of Bangla band music in the decade of 1990s. He is a songwriter and singer himself. Many band
members admit even today that Suman's lyrics had paved the way for the consumers of Bengali songs to accept something different from the songs of the Bengali film music. It was also the time when there had been a vacuum in the Bengali music industry because contemporary film music had completely failed to appeal to the mass audiences, especially the educated middle class. In the year 1992, Suman's album, 'Tomake Chai' (I want you) was released and became a major milestone in the Bengali music industry. This was the time when the revolution in the communication industry had not yet fully arrived. Mobile phones had not yet been a common feature, STD calls were not as cheap as the local ones, the concepts of DVD, download, Facebook, and Twitter had been unheard of. Set top box, CD, MP3 as well as FM channels were also not in existence. The song 'Tomake Chai' from the above named album became widely popular through the medium of radio and tape recorder (Patrika 2012). This song by Suman had provided many of the Bangla Band members with the courage to compose songs in their own lyrics and tunes. Kabir Suman had been successful in revolutionizing the taste of the Bengali audience as far as Bengali music was concerned. But an interesting fact is that Suman states in an interview that rock music can not be done in Bengali (The Times of India, 2011). This is quite ironical because many band members stated that they are doing rock music in Bengali. Rupam Islam in his book Ei to Ami (Here I am 2012) had discussed how Suman's presentation of his own songs on stage had shocked the Bengali audience many of whom had included today's band members. Rupam was quite surprised to see how Suman single handedly handled the musical instruments like keyboard and guitar on the stage. He also expressed his anger, frustration, sorrow and love towards the system, sometimes even cursing the system. Rupam stated that he realized the power of a single person on stage and was therefore attracted by the novelty and uniqueness of Suman's presentation. He admits that Suman had instilled
courage and confidence in all those musicians who had dreamt to write their own songs and present it before the Bengali audience. In Rupam's expression Suman had achieved the status of God to all the contemporary modern music lovers (Islam 2012: 147). Other singers like Anjan Dutt, Nachiketa, and Shilajit apart from the band members soon followed in the footsteps of Kabir Suman.

3.6.1.3 Maqsood-ul-Haq

Rupam Islam, the front man of the Bangla band Fossils, in his book 'Rupam on the Rocks' (2009) has mentioned the influence of the poet musician from Bangladesh Maqsood-ul-Haq (more popularly known as Mac) on him while composing the songs for his band. Mac had been the lead singer of the band 'Feedback' in Bangladesh from 1976. He had spent the next eleven years (till 1987) in singing English songs for the band which used to perform live in the night club of the Intercontinental Hotel (at present known as the Sheraton Hotel). Deep in his heart Mac had always wished to do something for the youth of Bangladesh and he had dedicated his life to that effect. In 1987, due to Mac's insistence Feedback had decided to enter into the realm of Bengali Rock music. Bengali rock music or Bangla band music (the two have almost become synonymous) had been established in Bangladesh largely due to the efforts of Maqsood. The band Feedback had been extremely popular amongst the youth of Bangladesh. In 1987 Feedback had released the album 'Ullash' (Joy) and in 1990 their next album was 'Mela' (Fair). In 1992 the album 'Joar' (High Tide) had been released from H.M.V. and became a massive hit. This was significant from the perspective of the Bangladeshi band singers because the market for their songs was created in West Bengal. Till 1996 Feedback had released albums named 'Bangabda 1400' (Year 1400), 'Dehaghor' (Bodyclock) and 'Bauliana' (Lunaticism). In 1997 Mac had parted ways with Feedback due to
ideological reasons. The former had wanted to use his songs as weapons to bring in a cultural revolution in Bangladesh which the other members of Feedback had opposed to. Having parted ways with Feedback Mac had formed his own band 'Maqsood O Dhaka' (Maqsood and Dhaka) in the year 1997. The band from its very inception had focused on social and political issues of Bangladesh as themes of its songs. In the same year the band had released its first album Prapto Boyoshker Nishiddho (Taboo for Adults) which contained songs that were direct attacks on the system. Through the songs Mac had attacked the political system of Bangladesh. He had attacked the women leaders by their names and had pointed out to the religious fundamentalists how deviated have they become from religion. He also had pointed out the in his songs about the hollowness of the political system in Bangladesh (Islam 2009). Though the songs were strongly detested by the authorities, yet they had gained immense popularity amongst the youth of Bangladesh. Maqsood had to face severe threats, even life threatening ones, from the mainstream political parties as well as religious fundamentalists. As a result the number of his public performances had to be curtailed. Mac had retreated from the mainstream cultural activities and performed in the underground shows.

In the year 1999, the band had brought out its second album 'Ogo Bhalobasha' (Oh! Love) where in Mac had experimented on a Rabindrasangeet by fusing it with jazz. After its telecast on Bangladesh television, Mac had to face the angst of the traditional mainstream Rabindrasangeet singers who vehemently demanded his punishment in the form of ban from public life. He had even faced a show cause from B.T.V. (Bangladesh television) which he chose to ignore. The debate had already gained media attention and as a result the cultural syndicate and the media of Bangladesh decided to punish Mac for his high 'condescending attitude'. The whole issue became important here because Rabindrasangeet has a given tune and due to the copyright of the
Vishwa Bharati University (Shantiniketan) on the songs (which now no longer exists), no body had the right to present it in any other form. As a consequence, Mac had been arrested from his home on the charges of being a terrorist leader, keeping illegal weapons and trying to avoid arrest. He had to face the brunt of brutal mental and physical torture by the police. The media with whom Mac had a bitter relationship gave a colour of domestic violence (that Mac had carried on his wife) to the whole issue. However Mac had been released of all the charges in the year 2000 but he had been so completely shaken by the whole incident that it took him nearly six months to recover from his trauma. At present he has retreated from active public life and his band has concentrated mostly on recording albums. The number of his public performances has also become minimal.

Mac has been termed in Bangladesh as an internet activist who has regularly triggered off debates through his powerful writings on the net. His writings have been categorized as philosophical ones, analyses of social and political situations and cultural activism. He has also established rock music as an alternative genre in the cultural circuit of Bangladesh. It was due to his initiative that in the year 1990 on 16th December an all day long Open Air Concert had been organized in the Dhaka University campus. He had also been the founder member of Bangladesh Musical Band Association (BAMBA) and had been its secretary from 1987 to 1991.

3.6.2 Socio-Cultural Milieu

The key factor responsible for the emergence and popularity of the bangla bands in West Bengal from the late eighties to the nineties has been the socio-cultural milieu. It is relevant to mention here that popular music especially rock n roll has been influenced by the socio-cultural milieu of the western society. In this respect, both genre of music share a similarity. The instance of
rock n roll is pertinent here because most of the Bangla bands owe their allegiance to the former and call themselves to be rock bands. The amalgamation of a number of factors like failure of the Bengali cinema to cater to the taste of Bengali middle class audience, emergence of cassette culture, rise of FM radio, emergence of local audio recording companies, inroads of satellite television and the predominance of college fests has been decisive in giving rise to the band music culture in Bengal. This list of factors does not claim to be exhaustive.

3.6.2.1 Failure of Bengali cinema to cater to the taste of middle class audience

Till the mid-1970s the Bengali cinema had a close relationship with Bengali literature, a Bengali middle class world view. But since the early 1980s it was radically transformed by a growing adoption of the 'formula' elements commonly identified with popular Hindi cinema (Gooptu 2010). According to Anjan Chowdhury, one of the leading Bengali film directors of this time, the films were made to cater to the people like the rickshaw pullers, fish sellers and vegetable vendors. By the 1990s the principal audience for the mainstream Bengali cinema was a class of people different from its erstwhile middle-class patrons (Gooptu 2010). As far as the Hindi movies were concerned, the decade of 1980s was a gloomy period as well. Amitabh Bachchan and others who embodied the genre in 1970s were starting to gray and lose their appeal and no new figure had yet emerged. The Bengali youth had been deprived of the enjoyment derived from the Bengali as well as Hindi cinema.

3.6.2.2 Emergence of Cassette Culture

In 1984 when prime minister late Shri Rajiv Gandhi came to power he reduced
the import duties on electronic goods. The new government policies encouraged foreign (mainly Japanese) firms to seek collaboration with Indian companies and there began the mass producing players and cassettes\textsuperscript{14}. Soon the market was flooded with locally manufactured cassette players. The consequences of this technological revolution were a profound fragmentation, dispersal and democratization of the production of music and an unprecedented diversification in the musical genres available for consumption (Krims, 2003). In place of the singular, homogenous musical genre arose a huge heterogeneity of genres of music and music producers that targeted audiences defined by age, class, gender, ethnicity, religion and even occupation. New forms of regional music aimed at very specific local audiences began to emerge in local dialects in different regions of India (Kasbeker 2006). Scores of music genres and subgenres were created. An example of such genre and sub genre can be the Bengali band music, the main proponents of which have been the college and university going youth of Bengal. The emergence of cassette culture in India revolutionized the musical scenario in the country and provided a possible explanation to the emergence of band music in this part of the country.

3.6.2.3 Emergence of Asha Audio

According to Kasbeker (2006) by the 1990s and within the next decade the music scenario in India ushered in a new era, thanks to the cassette culture in the country. The established audio recording companies like the HMV was not able to take immediate advantage of this situation. The company had been preoccupied with the pan-national markets and lacked the flexibility to cater to and exploit the potentialities of the small localized regional markets. In such a situation emerged small-scale producers of music recording companies all over the country. As a result, the forces of production shifted to these new
centres of the music industry (Kasbekar 2006). An instance of such localized music production company can be Asha Audio which began its operation in the year 1995 in Kolkata under its owner Smt. Mahua Lahiri. Smt. Lahiri stated in an interview that recognizing their potentiality to become popular, Asha audio tapped these young singers and started bringing out their albums. It is probably through these albums that the songs of the Bengali bands had reached a wide audience.

3.6.2.4 Frequency Modulation (FM)

In 1995 the Supreme Court of India ordered the government to privatize a part of the airwaves (Kasbekar 2006). Several private companies like Times FM and Radio 1 began broadcasting FM radio programmes mostly geared to urban youth. FM programmes include music talk shows and telephone call-ins (Singhal and Rogers 2001). The FM channel started on an experimental basis from the Kolkata station around April 1980. Initially beginning with short durations, it was extended as a 24 hour channel in 1995. FM became a strong medium through which the songs of the Bangla bands might have reached the Bengali listeners of music. The various programmes in 91.9 Friends FM, 104.8 FM to name a few regularly play the songs of the Bangla band besides other modern Bengali songs.

3.6.2.5 Inroads of Satellite television

In the 1990s a revolution began with the arrival of satellite television (Kasbekar 2006, Singhal and Rogers 2001, Page and Crawley 2001). After years of state monopoly, the satellite channels were like a breath of fresh air for India's middle class viewers. The viewers were exposed to a number of international channels apart from Doordarshan and later on to programmes made for the Indian viewers especially (Kasbekar 2006). Indians were exposed for the first time to
music channels such as MTV which telecast American rock, pop, hip-hop and similar genres (Kasbekar 2006). Channel V emerged later to provide a platform for Indian music. As has been stated above the due to the inroad of MTV, the Bengali middle class youth must have been exposed to the western principles of music and must have been influenced by them. Formation and persistence of bands can be an expression of such influence.

3.6.2.6 Predominance of College Fests

As has been stated by the band members themselves (pointed out elsewhere in this work) the inter college fests also provided a platform for these young students to interact with each other freely and share their likings on music. The bands had gained popularity in the college fests and began to crystallize and experiment with their music.¹⁶

The bangla bands' emergence and popularity might be a result of the coincidence of so many factors but it cannot be denied that these bands provided a means of livelihood to these young musicians. They began to perform in the live shows in different college fests and other programmes. Not only in Kolkata, their popularity had also earned for them shows in other metropolitan cities like Delhi, Bangalore, and Bombay and later on abroad (the venues have been mentioned elsewhere). This is largely significant given the economic scenario in Wet Bengal with no new industries and hence no scope of jobs for these then young educated and energetic people. The situation of educated unemployment in West Bengal could be one of the possible factors which have helped nurture the Bengali bands. At the same time it can be mentioned that the band members were not quite sure of their success. They rather experimented with their songs and music which had been largely appreciated by the student community especially in colleges and universities. The bands could perhaps create their markets mainly among the student
community and gradually it had spread to the large masses. The predominance of college fests created a common platform for these young musicians and their audiences (college and university goers) to freely interact about their everyday living and represent their lifestyles in their songs. It can be said that the band music is an expression of youth alienation in the existing socio-cultural set up and has been fruitful in creating a youth sub culture with specific traits in and taste for music.

3.7 Conclusion
The history of Bangla band music can not be separated from the youth culture in Bengal. The formation of the bands is the indicator of youth dissent in and alienation from the existing cultural set up. But in the wider perspective it show cases their dynamism to create something new and upholds their entrepreneurial skills and ability. The youth as a group are reservoirs of energy and are prompt enough to respond to a difficult situation and find solutions to it. This is perhaps because they have no vested interests in the power structure. In the present scenario music has formed a cathartic solution to their source of alienation and trouble. But in cases where their grievances and emotions do not find an outlet, they can be sources of trouble in the existing social set up (Oommen 1990). It is the presence of these inherent contradictions in their nature that they become sociologically interesting subjects to study. The contradictions and ambivalence in their nature have been revealed more pronouncedly in the next chapter on lyrics of the Bangla bands.

Endnotes
1. The band members like Rupam Islam has written columns in teen age magazines like Unish Kuri (Nineteen-Twenty), July 2007 and Parama (August and September 2012). Chandrabindoo's interview with the film director Aparna Sen had been published in Parama (August 2012). The Band's Krosswindz interview had been published in Unish Kuri (August
2007). Rupam Islam regularly featured on Rock e Rupam Taal e Tanmoy (Rupam in Rock and Tanmoy in Rhythm) being aired on the Bengali music channel Tara Music, in the year 2011. These are but a few of the many instances to show the popularity of the Bangla band members.

2. Ranjan Ghosal, a former member of the Band Mohiner Ghoraguli, said in an interview to The Telegraph that although the original album covers of the band contained the names of seven 'guys' who formed it, yet there was the unconditional support of two women, Sangeeta and Sharmishtha, who did everything from designing the album covers to looking after the marketing aspects (The Telegraph, September 10, 2005).

3. Ranjan Ghosal, is an engineer by profession, settled in Bangalore and was an engineering student in 1975 during the formation of the band. (The Telegraph, September 10, 2005). Lakhchirhara formed as a band when they were in the first year of college (Unish Kuri, July 4, 2007). Most of the members of Krosswindz were students of St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, when they started forming the band in 1990 (Unish Kuri, August, 19, 2007). The lead vocal of Cactus, Siddhartha, is a doctor. Rupam, the lead singer of Fossils, is a teacher by profession and the inspirations of his life are Rammohan Roy, Michael Modhusudan Dutta, Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Narendranath Dutta and Kaji Nazrul Islam (Unish Kuri, July 19, 2007). All these instances are indicative of the fact that the members of these bands are educated and progressive people.

4. 10% of the respondents provided no response to this question. 30% of the respondents were unsure of the fact that women can form their own bands.

5. 30% of them just avoided this question, showing probably they were unsure of the fact that women can form bands. 10% responded negatively stating that they do not think that women can form bands independently. Quite interestingly they have not assigned any specific reason of their thinking so. The rest that is 55% of the respondents felt that women are capable of having their own bands.

6. The respondents were also asked as to whether 'gender' determines success in this alternative genre of music. To this 20% of the female respondents were unable to provide any response. 45% of them feel that being man or woman is not an indicator of success in the band music industry. 35% of the respondents have very categorically stated that gender does make a difference because women cannot lead the fast life which the male band members usually do. They are usually constrained by their family members. The women also cannot compete with the men in terms of energy level, so their appeal to the audience is less. There is a lot of difference if the song is sung by a male and a female. The male voice would have more appeal in this type of songs. As far as the responses of the men are concerned, 20% of them feel that gender is a critical issue as far as participation and success in this music is
concerned. They either failed to assign any clear reason for their argument or talked of social constraints like the one imposed by the family in particular and society in general. Furthermore, the music industry is not at all safe for the women. 10% of the respondents have stated that the major hindrance comes from the women themselves who are still reluctant to enter this realm of music. 40% of the respondents have not provided any response whereas only 30% of them have stated that gender of an individual is not at all important as far as his/her success in Bangla Band music industry is concerned. What really matter to them are creativity and talent, good lyrics and tunes and over all a passion for music.

7. 45% of the men feel that more women should enter the realm of Bangla Band music industry. This, they feel, would provide an element of variety and vitality in such music. The audience would be relieved of the monotony of the male voice. It would also be encouraging for the women who aspire to enter this realm. They would draw inspiration from these women performers. Though all these are very valid points provided by the respondents but what made their response striking is when they said that the presence of women would add an additional element to the 'show biz' industry. If women remain to be treated as commodities in the industry then it cannot be a safe place for them to work.

8. Musical instruments like Guitar, synthesizer, drums, are not Indian instruments but western in origin (Ei to ami-This is me, Rupam Islam 2012, p144).

9. In every band there are five to seven members who play instruments like drums, electric bass, guitars, keyboard and synthesizer besides contributing in the vocals. This information can be obtained from the websites of different bands.

10. In Unish-Kuri (July 2007), Siddhartha stated that during his college days the English bands were popular in college fests. The music of these made the audience dance. Siddhartha and many other of his friends missed the Bangla music in such gatherings and decided to do such form of music in Bengali.

11. Nazrul Mancha is an open air auditorium in Kolkata. It is one of the prominent event venues in the city (wikipedia.org).

12. The Presidency College (now Presidency University, one of the most reputed colleges in the country and situated in Kolkata) Alumni Association in Mumbai organizes the Banga Sanskriti Utsav in Mumbai which becomes a platform for exchange between the cultures of West Bengal and Maharashtra.

13. Anindya Bose of the band Paras Pathar (Touch stone) and later on Shohor (City) writes about Jadavpur University's A.C. Canteen, the lobbies of Arts Faculty, Calcutta National Medical College Campus, Lady Brabourne College Auditorium, and the field of Presidency College
which have been witnesses to the formation of Bangla Bands (Ebong Bikolpo-And a substitute 2011). In this context it can be mentioned that all these colleges and universities are situated in prime locations in the city of Kolkata.

14. In the same article in Ebong Bikolpo mentioned above Anindya Bose further writes that the main impetus behind the formation of such bands was provided by singers like Suman Chattopadhyay's (Kabir Suman) powerful and unique lyrics.

15. Kasbekar writes that the new government policies encouraged foreign mainly Japanese firms to seek collaborations with Indian companies. Several emerged—Bush-Akai, Orson-Sony, BPL-Sanyo and Onida-JVC—and began mass-producing players and cassettes (Asha Kasbekar, Pop Culture India! 2006 p. 19).

16. Anindya Bose in his article in Ebong Bikolpo echoes the band Chandrabindoo's tone and writes that the members of bands like Chandrabindoo, Parash Pathor, Cactus and Abhilasha have met each other during various competitions in different college fests.