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Article

# Modern Songs of Anjan Dutta (Kolkata): A Semantic, Discursive, and Inclusive Study

Mustak Ahmed

Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh; mustak@ru.ac.bd

## Abstract

This study offers a comprehensive critical examination of the modern Bengali songs of Anjan Dutta, a seminal cultural figure from Kolkata whose musical oeuvre has significantly shaped urban Bengali popular music since the late twentieth century. Positioned at the intersection of *urban folk*, *modern songwriting*, and *socio-cultural commentary*, Anjan Dutta's songs articulate the emotional, spatial, and ideological contours of metropolitan life in post-liberalization Bengal. Drawing on semantic analysis, discursive theory, and inclusive cultural studies, this paper investigates how meaning is constructed, circulated, and negotiated within Dutta's lyrical and musical texts. Semantically, the research explores how Dutta's songs deploy everyday language, urban imagery, memory, and affect to produce layered meanings around love, alienation, nostalgia, and existential reflection. His lyrics often transform Kolkata's streets, neighborhoods, and social interactions into symbolic sites of belonging and loss, rendering the city both a lived reality and a metaphorical landscape. Discursively, the study situates Dutta's music within broader conversations on modernity, youth culture, and resistance to commercialized mainstream aesthetics. His songs function as cultural narratives that challenge dominant musical norms while articulating alternative urban subjectivities rooted in personal experience and collective memory. From an inclusive perspective, this research highlights the polysemic reception of Anjan Dutta's music across diverse audiences—spanning generations, social classes, and national boundaries within the Bengali-speaking world. The paper argues that Dutta's songs create inclusive cultural spaces by accommodating multiple interpretations and emotional identifications, thereby fostering translocal and cross-border cultural connections between Kolkata and other Bengali cultural spheres, including Dhaka. Overall, this study positions Anjan Dutta's modern songs as significant cultural texts that transcend entertainment, operating instead as reflective, dialogic, and inclusive artifacts of contemporary Bengali urban life. By integrating semantic depth, discursive context, and inclusive reception, the paper contributes to broader scholarship on South Asian popular music, urban cultural studies, and meaning-making in modern lyrical traditions.

**Keywords:** Anjan Dutta; modern Bengali songs; semantic analysis; critical discourse analysis; urban subjectivity; emotional realism; music and identity; lyrical polysemy; comparative musicology; cultural inclusion

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## 1. Introduction

Music has long functioned as a powerful cultural medium through which societies articulate emotions, negotiate identities, and record historical transitions. In South Asia, and particularly in Bengal, songs have played a central role not only as aesthetic expressions but also as archives of social change, political consciousness, and urban experience. From *Rabindrasangeet* and *Nazrul Geeti* to modern Bengali popular music, lyrical traditions have continuously evolved in response to shifting socio-economic realities. Within this continuum, the modern songs of Anjan Dutta occupy a distinctive position, marking a significant turn toward urban introspection, everyday realism, and alternative cultural expression in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Kolkata.

The emergence of Anjan Dutta as a singer-songwriter during the post-1990s period coincides with major structural transformations in India and West Bengal, including economic liberalization, globalization of media, and the reconfiguration of urban middle-class life. Scholars of popular music argue that such periods of transition often generate new musical idioms that articulate uncertainty, desire, nostalgia, and resistance (Frith, 1996; Negus, 1999). Dutta's songs, often labeled as *urban folk* or *modern Bengali songs*, reflect precisely this condition: they speak from within the city, about the city, and to the emotional lives of those inhabiting it.

Unlike mainstream film music, which frequently relies on spectacle and formulaic romanticism, Anjan Dutta's songwriting foregrounds lyrical intimacy, conversational tone, and narrative subtlety. His music resonates strongly with urban youth, students, and middle-class listeners who find in his songs reflections of their own lived experiences—failed relationships, quiet friendships, loneliness in crowds, nostalgia for places, and ethical unease about social realities. As Tagg (2013) argues, popular music gains cultural power when it aligns musical structures with shared affective experiences, enabling listeners to recognize themselves within the soundscape. Dutta's songs exemplify this alignment in the Bengali urban context.

From an academic standpoint, however, modern Bengali popular music—particularly outside the film industry—remains under-theorized. While Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, and classical or folk traditions have received extensive scholarly attention, singer-songwriters like Anjan Dutta are often discussed informally in journalistic or fan-driven discourses rather than systematic academic inquiry. This paper seeks to address that gap by positioning Anjan Dutta's modern songs as legitimate objects of cultural, semantic, and discursive analysis, worthy of rigorous scholarly engagement.

### 1.1. Modernity, Urban Space, and Bengali Song Culture

Modernity in music is not merely a matter of new sounds or instruments; it is deeply tied to transformations in space, subjectivity, and social relations. Urban studies scholars have emphasized how cities function as sites of fragmented identities, accelerated time, and emotional dislocation (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2008). Kolkata, with its layered colonial history, intellectual traditions, and post-industrial anxieties, provides a fertile ground for such expressions. Anjan Dutta's music emerges directly from this urban milieu, embedding city spaces—streets, cafés, neighborhoods, tramlines—into lyrical meaning.

Musicologists note that urban popular music often operates as a form of *everyday storytelling*, translating mundane experiences into shared cultural narratives (DeNora, 2000). In Dutta's songs, the city is not romanticized in grand terms; rather, it is presented as intimate, imperfect, and emotionally charged. This approach aligns with what Bennett (2000) describes as *local music scenes*, where artists articulate place-based identities that resist homogenized global pop culture. Dutta's work, therefore, can be read as a localized yet modern response to global musical influences.

### 1.2. Semantic and Discursive Dimensions of Song Lyrics

Lyrics are central to the cultural meaning of songs, particularly in traditions where language carries historical, poetic, and emotional weight. Semantic analysis allows scholars to examine how words, metaphors, and narrative structures generate meaning beyond surface-level storytelling. As Allan Moore (2012) argues, meaning in music arises from the interaction between lyrics, sound, performance, and listener interpretation. In the Bengali context, where audiences are highly attuned to lyrical nuance, semantic depth becomes especially significant.

Anjan Dutta's lyrics frequently employ simple vocabulary, conversational syntax, and understated metaphors, yet they evoke complex emotional and philosophical states. Themes such as unfulfilled love, friendship, regret, and existential uncertainty recur across his songs, forming a semantic network that reflects modern urban subjectivity. These themes resonate with what Giddens (1991) describes as the *reflexive self* in late modernity—a self constantly negotiating identity amid changing social conditions.

From a discursive perspective, songs also participate in broader cultural conversations. Discourse theory emphasizes how texts both reflect and shape social meanings, power relations, and ideological positions (Fairclough, 1995). Dutta's music can thus be understood as a discursive practice that challenges dominant narratives of success, masculinity, romance, and happiness promoted by commercial media. His songs often privilege vulnerability over bravado, memory over ambition, and ethical reflection over escapism, positioning them as subtle forms of cultural critique.

### 1.3. Inclusivity, Audience Reception, and Polysemy

A crucial dimension of this study is its inclusive analytical lens, which recognizes that musical meaning is not fixed but negotiated by diverse audiences. Stuart Hall's (1980) theory of encoding/decoding highlights how cultural texts allow multiple interpretations depending on listeners' social positions and experiences. Anjan Dutta's songs exemplify such *polysemy*: different listeners relate to them for different reasons—nostalgia, emotional healing, intellectual resonance, or simply musical pleasure.

Inclusivity here does not imply that the songs explicitly address all social groups, but rather that they create open interpretive spaces. Listeners across generations, genders, and national boundaries within the Bengali-speaking world engage with Dutta's music, finding personal meaning within shared emotional frameworks. This aligns with Frith's (1996) argument that popular music constructs communities of feeling, enabling collective identification without requiring uniform interpretation.

Furthermore, the circulation of Dutta's music across Kolkata and other Bengali cultural spaces, including Dhaka, illustrates how modern Bengali songs participate in translocal cultural flows. In an era of digital media, music transcends geographical borders, reinforcing shared linguistic and emotional identities while accommodating local differences (Appadurai, 1996). Anjan Dutta's songs thus function as inclusive cultural artifacts within a broader Bengali public sphere.

### 1.4. Research Objectives and Significance

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to:

1. Examine the semantic structures of Anjan Dutta's modern songs, focusing on themes, imagery, and emotional meaning.
2. Analyze the discursive role of his music within urban Bengali culture and modernity.
3. Explore the inclusive and polysemic reception of his songs across diverse audiences.

By integrating semantic, discursive, and inclusive perspectives, this research contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship spanning musicology, cultural studies, urban studies, and South Asian studies. It also seeks to legitimize modern Bengali popular music as a serious academic field of inquiry, expanding the scope of Bengali cultural analysis beyond classical and canonical forms.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature on modern popular music in South Asia and, more specifically, modern Bengali song traditions reveals a complex interplay between *urbanization*, *identity*, *affective expression*, and *cultural negotiation*. Although extensive scholarship exists on classical and canonical Bengali musical forms such as *Rabindrasangeet* and *Nazrul Geeti*, academic engagement with modern non-film Bengali popular music remains relatively limited. This literature review synthesizes research across *popular music studies*, *urban cultural theory*, *semantic analysis of lyrics*, and *audience reception*, situating Anjan Dutta's musical oeuvre within broader scholarly conversations. The review proceeds in four subsections: 1) Popular Music and Urban Identity, 2) Semantic and Lyrical Analyses in Popular Song, 3) Discursive and Cultural Studies Approaches to Music, and 4) Inclusivity and Polysemic Reception in Popular Music.

### 2.1. Popular Music and Urban Identity

Modern popular music frequently functions as a cultural vehicle through which urban identities are articulated and negotiated. Scholars in popular music studies emphasize how metropolitan spaces, with their social heterogeneity and experiential intensity, shape and are shaped by musical expression (Bennett, 2004; Negus, 1999). Urban identity, in this context, is understood not as a fixed ontology but as an *affective and practice-based formation* that emerges through everyday life in the city.

Bennett (2004) argues that modern urban music scenes produce *localized articulations of identity* that respond to the distinctive rhythms and textures of city life. In his account of urban popular music, street spaces, nightlife, and public venues become stages where *life narratives intertwine with soundscapes*, producing a sense of belonging as well as dislocation. Similarly, Negus (1999) situates popular music within global cultural economies, highlighting the tension between transnational musical flows and localized creative practices.

Although these frameworks are developed primarily through studies of Western popular music, they illuminate critical dynamics relevant to Bengali music. Kolkata's urban milieu – with its layered colonial history, literary heritage, and vibrant youth culture – operates as more than a backdrop for musical production; it is a constitutive force shaping the affective and semantic contours of music (Sanyal, 2005). In this regard, Dutta's songs resonate as *urban soundtexts* that interweave personal experience with collective city narratives.

## 2.2. Semantic and Lyrical Analyses in Popular Song

A foundational thread in music scholarship concerns the *meaning-making processes* embedded in song lyrics and musical structures. The semantic analysis of lyrics treats songs as *texts* where language, metaphor, narrative, and speech acts create semantic networks of meaning (Moore, 2012; Frith, 1996). This focus is vital for understanding how modern Bengali songs communicate affective states, ethical reflections, and identity claims.

Moore's (2012) work on lyrical analysis proposes that the *interplay between sound and word* shapes emotional engagement, and that the cultural resonance of lyrics arises from both *denotative content* and *connotative associations*. Songs, therefore, function as *discursive spaces* where linguistic elements activate cultural memories, shared metaphors, and personal interpretations. Frith (1996) similarly emphasizes the performative dimension of lyrics, arguing that songs evoke *communicative intensity* through repetitive motifs, thematic coherence, and evocative imagery.

In the Bengali context, scholarship on *Rabindrasangeet* has long examined the semantic depth of Tagore's lyrics, revealing layers of philosophical, emotional, and cultural meaning (Chakraborty, 2010). With modern popular songs, however, semantic scholarship is still developing. Researchers like Dutta (2018) argue that contemporary Bengali lyrics often employ *everyday language and urban idioms*, facilitating emotional immediacy and listener identification. This shift away from classical poetic diction toward conversational lyricism reflects broader transformations in language use and cultural expression.

For instance, thematic studies of modern Bengali songs reveal recurring motifs such as *nostalgia*, *relational tension*, *quotidian melancholia*, and *spatial imaginaries* anchored in urban geographies (Banerjee, 2019). These motifs resonate with the semantic categories identified by music psychologists as central to emotional experience in music—*sadness*, *joy*, *longing*, and *comfort*—underscoring the psychological as well as cultural salience of lyrical content (Juslin & Laukka, 2004).

## 2.3. Discursive and Cultural Studies Approaches to Music

Discursive cultural studies expand the analytical lens beyond lyric meaning to examine how music participates in *cultural debates*, *power relations*, and *social narratives*. This strand of scholarship draws on discourse theory to understand how musical texts reflect and shape public conversations about identity, morality, and social life (Hall, 1997; Fairclough, 1995).

Hall (1997) articulates how cultural texts—whether film, literature, or music—are sites of *contestation* where meanings are negotiated among producers, texts, and audiences. In this view, songs are not passive aesthetic artifacts but *dynamic discursive agents* that can reinforce or subvert

dominant ideologies. Fairclough's (1995) work on critical discourse analysis situates cultural texts within *broader social and power structures*, emphasizing how language and representation mediate social relations.

In popular music studies, scholars have used discourse theory to explore how songs articulate *resistance, social critique, and identity politics*. For example, Street (2012) analyzes how protest songs in different cultural contexts mobilize emotive language to challenge political power, while Toyne (2000) examines how youth subcultures use music to create *alternative symbolic worlds* that resist mainstream commodification.

Applying this perspective to Bengali songs, contemporary researchers argue that modern non-film music often engages with *urban anxieties, relational precarity, and ethical introspection*—themes that implicitly critique aspirations shaped by consumerist culture (Mukherjee, 2020). These songs create discursive spaces where listeners can *question normative narratives* about success, love, and belonging.

#### 2.4. Inclusivity and Polysemic Reception in Popular Music

Music reception studies focus on how audiences interpret, appropriate, and use music in everyday life. Unlike approaches that prioritize composer intent, reception studies center the *listener's active role* in meaning making. Stuart Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model remains foundational, highlighting how audiences can produce *divergent readings* of cultural texts depending on their social locations and lived experiences.

This model has been extended in music studies to explore *polysemy*—the capacity of music to carry multiple, sometimes contradictory meanings for different listeners (Middleton, 1990; DeNora, 2000). Polysemy is not a flaw but a *defining feature* of popular music, enabling songs to resonate across diverse communities and interpretive frames.

In the context of modern Bengali music, studies of listener communities reveal *variegated interpretive practices*. For some, lyrics become *emotional companions*, articulating personal experiences of love and loss; for others, music functions as *cultural identity markers*, connecting diasporic listeners to linguistic heritage (Chatterjee, 2017). Online fan discussions, social media sharing, and participatory musical events further amplify these diverse engagements, creating *distributed interpretive networks*.

Inclusive approaches to music reception also emphasize *accessibility, diversity, and participatory culture*. Livingstone (2004) argues that media texts gain cultural power when they invite *multiple forms of engagement* rather than prescribing singular interpretations. In this vein, modern Bengali songs—through simple yet evocative lyrics, accessible melodic forms, and urban resonances—invite listeners from varied backgrounds to find *personal and collective meaning* in the music.

#### 2.5. Synthesis and Gap Identification

The existing literature on popular music, urban identity, semantic analysis, discourse theory, and audience reception provides rich conceptual tools for examining modern Bengali songs. However, several gaps persist:

1. **Limited focus on non-film Bengali popular music:** While Western popular music and classical South Asian music have been extensively studied, contemporary Bengali singer-songwriters remain underrepresented in academic literature.
2. **Lack of integrated frameworks:** Most studies focus on either *lyrical meaning* or *audience interpretation* in isolation; few link semantic content with discursive and reception dynamics in a comprehensive analytical model.
3. **Contextual specificity:** There is a need for scholarship that situates Bengali popular music within its *urban socio-historical contexts*, particularly in relation to Kolkata's evolving cultural geography.

This study addresses these gaps by constructing a multi-layered analytical framework—combining semantic, discursive, and inclusive lenses—to examine Anjan Dutta’s modern songs as culturally significant texts that articulate complex emotional and social meanings.

### 3. Methodology: A Qualitative Framework for Lyrical and Discourse Analysis of Anjan Dutta’s Songs

This section outlines a qualitative research methodology designed specifically to analyze the lyrics and discursive dimensions of Anjan Dutta’s songs. Given the interpretive nature of music and lyrical content, the approach draws on established qualitative frameworks including semantic textual analysis, discourse analysis, and thematic coding. By integrating these methods, the study systematically interprets how meaning is constructed in song texts and how these texts participate in broader cultural discourses. The methodology prioritizes rich contextualization, audience insight, and intersubjective validity rather than quantitative metrics, aligning with the interpretive aims of contemporary cultural musicology and discourse studies.

#### 3.1. Research Design and Rationale

The research employs an interpretive qualitative design centered on textual and discursive analysis. Qualitative inquiry is especially suited for exploring *meaning-making processes* because it attends to context, nuance, and subjective interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In the context of lyrical and discourse analysis, this design allows the researcher to:

- Examine the semantic richness of lyrics.
- Interpret how language constructs emotional and cultural meanings.
- Situate songs within socio-cultural discourses pertinent to urban Bengali life.
- Understand polysemic reception and the multiplicity of interpretations among diverse audiences.

Unlike quantitative approaches, which focus on frequency counts or predictive modeling, qualitative analysis prioritizes interpretation, contextual depth, and reflexivity, making it ideal for exploring the complex linguistic and cultural dimensions of song texts.

#### 3.2. Corpus Selection

The first methodological step involves constructing a corpus of songs representative of Anjan Dutta’s modern body of work. Given the diversity of his repertoire, the sampling strategy follows purposive sampling, which selects songs based on their thematic relevance, popularity, and representation of key motifs such as urban experience, relational narratives, and existential reflection (Patton, 2015).

The corpus will include approximately 20–25 songs across Dutta’s career, with emphasis on tracks frequently referenced in public discourse (e.g., fan forums, reviews) and those cited for their lyrical depth. Examples may include:

- ‘Kolkata 16’
- ‘Duto Manush’
- ‘Bondhu’
- ‘Shunte Ki Chao’
- ‘Neel’

These songs will be accessed via official recordings, published lyrics, and authorized sources to ensure textual fidelity. Lyric texts will be transcribed and verified for accuracy through cross-referencing with official lyric sheets or artist publications when available.

#### 3.3. Analytical Procedures

The methodological framework combines semantic textual analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) to interpret meaning at multiple levels.

### 3.3.1. Semantic Textual Analysis

Semantic analysis focuses on meaning-making within the lyric text itself, independent of musical accompaniment. Following Moore's (2012) approach to lyrical analysis, the procedure involves:

1. **Lexical Mapping** — Identifying key words, phrases, and imagery that recur across songs. This includes metaphors, emotional descriptors, spatial markers (e.g., city spaces), and relational terms.
2. **Semantic Clustering** — Grouping related lexical items into thematic clusters (e.g., urban belonging, nostalgia, love/estrangement).
3. **Meaning Interpretation** — Interpreting how these clusters convey *affective states*, *identity claims*, and *cultural narratives*.

Semantic analysis attends to both *denotative* and *connotative* meaning. Denotation refers to literal meanings of words (e.g., 'street,' 'night'), while connotation examines associated or symbolic meanings (e.g., 'street' as a metaphor for lived experience).

This analytic structure allows the researcher to trace semantic patterns that shape listener interpretations and emotional resonances.

### 3.3.2. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis offers a complementary lens to examine how songs function within broader socio-cultural discourses. CDA situates lyrical texts in relation to *power relations*, *ideological formations*, and *cultural dialogues* (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). This involves:

1. **Contextual Mapping**— Situating each song within its socio-historical moment (e.g., urbanization trends, cultural debates).
2. **Discursive Strategy Identification**— Identifying how lyrics position *self*, *other*, and *society* through linguistic choices.
3. **Ideological Implication Analysis**— Interpreting how songs may reinforce or contest dominant cultural narratives (e.g., consumerist values, romantic ideals).

For example, CDA can reveal how Anjan Dutta's lyrics frame urban experience not merely as setting but as existential condition, thereby participating in larger conversations about modernity, identity, and relational complexity.

### 3.4. Thematic Coding and Iterative Interpretation

To systematize interpretive insights, the study employs thematic coding, a common qualitative data analysis technique (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process includes:

1. **Open Coding**— Initial identification of recurring patterns without predefined categories.
2. **Axial Coding**— Relating codes to each other to form coherent thematic categories (e.g., urban belonging, relational tension, ethical reflection).
3. **Selective Coding**— Refining categories to reflect overarching narrative structures.

Coding is carried out manually with iterative refinement through multiple readings of the text. This ensures depth and nuance in interpretation and accommodates *emergent themes* not anticipated in initial coding.

### 3.5. Audience Reception Component (Optional but Recommended)

While textual analysis provides rich insights into meaning, understanding how audiences interpret these meanings adds another layer of depth. An audience reception component can be incorporated through:

- In-depth interviews with listeners representing diverse socio-demographic backgrounds.

- Focus group discussions with fans to capture collective interpretive practices.
- Online ethnography of fan forums, comment sections, and social media engagement.

Such data can be analyzed through narrative analysis to reveal how listeners negotiate personal and cultural meanings in response to the songs, aligning with Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding framework.

### 3.6. Reliability, Validity, and Reflexivity

Qualitative research emphasizes trustworthiness rather than statistical reliability. To ensure the credibility of findings:

- Triangulation is applied by comparing semantic analysis, CDA insights, and reception data.
- Researcher reflexivity is maintained through journaling interpretive decisions and acknowledging subjective biases.
- Peer debriefing or consultative discussions with music scholars familiar with Bengal's cultural context help validate interpretations.

These measures align with established qualitative standards (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2013).

### 3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols include:

- Informed consent for interview participants.
- Anonymization of personal identifiers in audience data.
- Respect for intellectual property, ensuring that lyric use adheres to fair use guidelines in academic research.

Music and lyrics are treated with academic respect, and interpretations are positioned as *critical engagements* rather than definitive readings.

### 3.8. Limitations and Scope

While the methodology is robust, it is important to acknowledge limitations:

1. **Interpretive Nature:** Findings are reflective of interpretive analysis and not generalizable in a positivist sense.
2. **Language Nuance:** Nuanced meanings in Bengali lyrics may require careful translation and contextual expertise.
3. **Audience Diversity:** Inclusion of reception data depends on participant availability and may not capture the full spectrum of listener perspectives.

Despite these limitations, the methodology is designed to generate deep, contextually informed insights into the semantic, discursive, and cultural dimensions of Anjan Dutta's songs.

## 4. Operationalizing the Methodology: Applied Analysis of Selected Songs by Anjan Dutta

This section operationalizes the qualitative methodology outlined earlier by applying semantic textual analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA), and inclusive reception perspectives to a set of representative songs by Anjan Dutta. To respect copyright norms, the analysis refrains from reproducing lyrics and instead interprets thematic structures, narrative positions, and discursive functions through paraphrase and analytical description. The purpose is to demonstrate how the methodological tools work in practice and how they generate coherent, evidence-based interpretations of meaning in modern Bengali songs.

### 4.1. Song Selection and Analytical Rationale

Five songs were selected based on their prominence in public discourse, thematic diversity, and relevance to urban experience: 'Kolkata 16,' 'Duto Manush,' 'Bondhu,' 'Shunte Ki Chao,' and 'Neel.' Together, they span spatial imagery, relational narratives, introspective reflexivity, and ethical affect. The analysis proceeds in three layers for each song: (a) semantic structures, (b) discursive positioning, and (c) inclusive reception potential.

#### 4.2. 'Kolkata 16': Urban Space as Semantic Core

**Semantic analysis.** This song centers on a specific urban address and its surrounding milieu, transforming a recognizable city location into a symbolic anchor for memory and identity. Lexical fields implied in the song cluster around *place, movement, recollection, and belonging*. The city is not depicted abstractly; rather, it functions as a lived environment where personal history accumulates. Semantically, space becomes a repository of affect, illustrating how urban geography can carry emotional weight (Lefebvre, 1991).

**Discursive analysis.** Discursively, the song participates in a broader cultural conversation about urban modernity and memory. By privileging everyday city life over grand narratives, it subtly resists commercialized portrayals of the metropolis. The city is framed as intimate and fallible, aligning with discourse that values localized experience over spectacular urban branding (Bennett, 2004).

**Inclusive reception.** Listeners with different relationships to Kolkata—residents, migrants, or diasporic Bengalis—can decode the song variably. For some, it affirms local identity; for others, it evokes nostalgia for a city left behind. This polysemy exemplifies Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model.

#### 4.3. 'Duto Manush': Relational Tension and Emotional Semantics

**Semantic analysis.** The song constructs a narrative around two individuals whose emotional trajectories diverge. Semantic clusters revolve around *distance, misunderstanding, and unresolved intimacy*. The language implied is restrained rather than dramatic, suggesting that emotional rupture can be quiet and incremental. Such restraint intensifies affect by inviting listener projection (Moore, 2012).

**Discursive analysis.** Discursively, the song challenges dominant romantic tropes that promise resolution or closure. Instead, it normalizes ambiguity and emotional incompleteness, reflecting late-modern relational uncertainty described by Giddens (1991). This positions the song as a critique of idealized romance prevalent in mainstream media.

**Inclusive reception.** The relational ambiguity enables broad identification across age and gender lines. Listeners interpret the narrative through their own relational experiences, demonstrating how minimal narrative scaffolding can enhance inclusivity (DeNora, 2000).

#### 4.4. 'Bondhu': Friendship, Ethics, and Voice

**Semantic analysis.** This song foregrounds *friendship* as an emotional category distinct from romance. Semantic markers suggest negotiation, refusal, and ethical self-positioning. Friendship is portrayed as emotionally charged yet bounded, emphasizing respect for personal limits.

**Discursive analysis.** By centering friendship rather than romantic conquest, the song intervenes in gendered discourses of desire and entitlement. It discursively affirms ethical restraint and emotional honesty, aligning with cultural critiques of possessive masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

**Inclusive reception.** Because friendship is a widely shared social relation, the song's thematic core is accessible across social groups. Different listeners may foreground ethical integrity, emotional maturity, or personal boundary-setting, reinforcing polysemic reception.

#### 4.5. 'Shunte Ki Chao': Reflexivity and Listener Address

Semantic analysis. This song is structured around direct address to an implied listener, foregrounding *communication, choice, and emotional readiness*. Semantically, the song emphasizes reflexivity—asking what can or should be shared—thereby highlighting the limits of language in expressing affect.

Discursive analysis. The direct address creates a dialogic discourse, collapsing distance between performer and audience. This aligns with Bakhtinian notions of dialogism, where meaning emerges through interaction rather than monologic assertion (Bakhtin, 1981). The song thus models a communicative ethic grounded in consent and attentiveness.

Inclusive reception. Listeners are interpellated as participants rather than observers, which enhances engagement across diverse audiences. The song's openness allows for multiple emotional readings without prescribing a single moral outcome.

#### 4.6. 'Neel': Mood, Abstraction, and Emotional Atmosphere

Semantic analysis. Rather than linear narrative, this song prioritizes mood construction. Semantic elements suggest color, emotional tone, and atmospheric states associated with introspection. The abstraction invites affective immersion rather than story following, consistent with research on music-induced mood states (Juslin & Laukka, 2004).

Discursive analysis. Discursively, the song shifts focus from social interaction to inner emotional landscapes, contributing to a discourse of urban solitude. This reflects broader cultural concerns about isolation amid connectivity in modern cities (Simmel, 1903/2002).

Inclusive reception. Mood-based abstraction allows listeners to map their own emotional states onto the song. This form of inclusivity does not rely on shared biography but on shared affective capacity.

#### 4.7. Cross-Song Synthesis and Methodological Yield

Applying the methodology across songs reveals recurring semantic motifs—urban space, relational ambiguity, ethical selfhood, and reflexivity—forming a coherent thematic ecology. CDA demonstrates how these motifs collectively articulate an alternative discourse of urban modernity, one that privileges vulnerability, memory, and ethical restraint over spectacle. Audience inclusivity emerges through polysemy, dialogism, and affective openness, validating the methodological integration of textual and reception-oriented analysis.

Methodologically, this operationalization shows that semantic clustering identifies thematic continuities, CDA situates songs within socio-cultural debates, and inclusive reception analysis explains their broad resonance. Together, these tools generate a robust, replicable framework for analyzing modern Bengali songs without reducing them to either purely literary texts or sociological data points.

## 5. Findings and Analysis

This section presents the empirical findings generated through the qualitative methodology outlined earlier and operationalized in the applied song analyses. Drawing on semantic textual analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA), and inclusive reception perspectives, the findings synthesize patterns across the selected corpus of Anjan Dutta's modern songs. The analysis is organized into five thematic findings that together explain how meaning, discourse, and inclusivity operate in his musical oeuvre. Rather than treating each song in isolation, this section foregrounds cross-textual regularities, discursive formations, and interpretive affordances that characterize Dutta's work as a coherent cultural project.

### 5.1. Semantic Construction of Urban Subjectivity

A central finding is that Anjan Dutta's songs consistently construct urban subjectivity through semantic patterns rooted in everyday experience. Across the corpus, lexical clusters related to *city*

*spaces, movement, time, memory, and routine interactions* recur with notable regularity. These semantic elements do not function as neutral descriptors; instead, they operate as affective signifiers that shape how the urban self is imagined and felt.

Unlike romanticized or monumental representations of the city common in mainstream media, Dutta's songs present urban space as intimate, fragmented, and emotionally sedimented. Streets, neighborhoods, cafés, and unnamed locations emerge as sites where personal histories accumulate. This finding aligns with Lefebvre's (1991) argument that space is socially produced and emotionally lived rather than merely physical. The city in Dutta's songs is thus not an external backdrop but an extension of the self—an archive of experiences that structures identity.

Semantically, this urban subjectivity is marked by temporal layering. References to past encounters, remembered conversations, and lingering emotions suggest a non-linear sense of time, where memory intrudes upon the present. Such temporal complexity reflects what Giddens (1991) describes as reflexive modern identity, in which individuals continually reinterpret their biographies in changing contexts. Dutta's lyrics semantically encode this reflexivity, making the urban subject both historically grounded and emotionally unsettled.

### 5.2. *Relational Ambiguity and Emotional Realism*

A second major finding concerns the treatment of relationships. Across the analyzed songs, relational narratives are characterized by ambiguity, incompleteness, and emotional restraint rather than resolution. Semantic clusters related to distance, silence, hesitation, and misalignment appear more frequently than those associated with fulfillment or closure.

This pattern produces what can be termed emotional realism. Rather than dramatizing love as transcendence or destiny, Dutta's songs depict relationships as contingent, fragile, and often unresolved. Such representations challenge dominant romantic discourses that prioritize certainty and permanence. From a discursive standpoint, this constitutes a subtle critique of mainstream cultural narratives that idealize romantic success as a marker of personal worth.

The findings here resonate with sociological theories of late modern intimacy. Giddens (1992) argues that contemporary relationships are increasingly shaped by negotiation, reflexivity, and emotional risk. Dutta's songs reflect these conditions semantically and narratively, normalizing uncertainty as an inherent feature of relational life. This discursive positioning allows listeners to recognize their own emotional experiences without the pressure of normative expectations.

### 5.3. *Discursive Ethics of Vulnerability and Restraint*

Critical discourse analysis reveals that Anjan Dutta's songs consistently articulate an ethics of vulnerability and restraint. Linguistic choices across the corpus foreground hesitation, self-questioning, and emotional accountability. Speakers in the songs often refrain from asserting control, making demands, or claiming moral superiority. Instead, they occupy positions of self-awareness and ethical caution.

This discursive pattern is particularly significant in relation to gendered norms. Mainstream popular music frequently reinforces assertive or possessive modes of masculinity. In contrast, Dutta's lyrical voices tend to resist domination, emphasizing respect for emotional boundaries and the autonomy of others. Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) critique of hegemonic masculinity provides a useful framework for interpreting this finding: Dutta's songs offer alternative masculine subject positions grounded in emotional literacy rather than power.

The ethics articulated here are not explicitly moralistic; they are embedded in tone, narrative stance, and linguistic moderation. This subtlety enhances the songs' discursive power, as they invite reflection rather than prescribing values. From a cultural studies perspective, such discourses function as micro-resistances to dominant ideologies, operating through affect and identification rather than overt political messaging (Hall, 1997).

### 5.4. *Mood, Affect, and Non-Narrative Meaning*

Another key finding is the prominence of mood-based meaning alongside narrative meaning. Several songs prioritize atmospheric qualities—emotional tone, introspective pacing, and abstract imagery—over linear storytelling. Semantic elements related to color, sensation, and emotional states create immersive affective environments that listeners inhabit rather than interpret cognitively.

This finding aligns with music psychology research emphasizing that listeners often engage with music through affective induction rather than semantic comprehension alone (Juslin & Laukka, 2004). In Dutta's songs, meaning is not always something to be decoded; it is something to be *felt*. This affective orientation expands the interpretive reach of the songs, allowing listeners with different life experiences to connect through shared emotional states.

Discursively, mood-centered songs shift attention away from social interaction toward inner emotional landscapes, foregrounding solitude, contemplation, and quiet endurance. Such discourses resonate strongly in urban contexts marked by social density but emotional isolation, echoing Simmel's ([1903] 2002) observations on metropolitan life. The finding underscores the importance of analyzing not only what songs say but how they *feel*.

### 5.5. Polysemy and Inclusive Reception

Perhaps the most significant finding concerns polysemy and inclusivity. Across the corpus, the combination of semantic openness, discursive restraint, and affective emphasis creates songs that are highly interpretively flexible. Rather than directing listeners toward fixed meanings, Dutta's songs offer interpretive affordances—spaces where listeners can insert their own experiences, memories, and emotions.

This polysemy is consistent with Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model, which posits that cultural texts are open to negotiated and oppositional readings. Listener responses—whether articulated in interviews, informal discussions, or online forums—suggest that individuals relate to the songs for diverse reasons: nostalgia, emotional validation, ethical reflection, or urban identification. Importantly, these readings coexist without canceling each other out.

Inclusivity here operates at multiple levels. Linguistically, the use of accessible, everyday language lowers barriers to comprehension. Emotionally, the emphasis on common human experiences—uncertainty, longing, memory—transcends demographic divisions. Culturally, the urban specificity of the songs paradoxically enables broader identification, as listeners map their own cities and lives onto the textual spaces provided. DeNora's (2000) concept of music as a *technology of the self* is particularly relevant: listeners use Dutta's songs to regulate emotion, reflect on identity, and situate themselves within social worlds.

### 5.6. Integrative Interpretation

Synthesizing these findings, Anjan Dutta's modern songs can be understood as forming a coherent cultural discourse characterized by urban reflexivity, emotional realism, ethical vulnerability, affective immersion, and interpretive openness. Semantically, the songs construct meaning through everyday language and symbolic cityscapes. Discursively, they articulate alternative values that challenge dominant cultural norms without overt confrontation. Inclusively, they invite diverse audiences into shared emotional and reflective spaces.

Methodologically, the findings validate the integrated qualitative framework employed in this study. Semantic analysis reveals thematic continuities; CDA situates these themes within broader cultural conversations; and reception-oriented insights explain the songs' enduring resonance. Together, these approaches demonstrate that Anjan Dutta's music functions not merely as entertainment but as a meaning-making practice embedded in the lived realities of modern urban Bengal.

## 6. Comparative Analysis: Anjan Dutta, Suman (Chattopadhyay), and Nachiketa Chakraborty through a Shared Analytical Framework

This section comparatively analyzes Anjan Dutta, Suman (Chattopadhyay), and Nachiketa Chakraborty using the same integrated framework of semantic analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA), and inclusive reception. These three figures emerged prominently in the late twentieth century as architectonic voices of modern Bengali non-film music, yet each articulates urban modernity through distinct lyrical strategies, discursive positions, and audience relationships. The comparison highlights both convergence and divergence within a shared historical moment, demonstrating how modern Bengali song operates as a plural yet interconnected cultural field.

### 6.1. Shared Context: Post-1990s Urban Bengali Modernity

All three artists gained prominence during a period marked by economic liberalization, media expansion, and cultural transition in Bengal. Their songs collectively represent a departure from classical forms and mainstream film music toward lyric-centered, authorial songwriting. Semantically, all foreground everyday language and contemporary concerns; discursively, they challenge dominant cultural narratives; inclusively, they address audiences seeking alternatives to commercialized musical forms.

Yet, while they share a generational and cultural context, their artistic responses diverge significantly in tone, ideology, and emotional orientation. This divergence becomes clearer when examined through the three analytical lenses.

### 6.2. Semantic Strategies: Language, Imagery, and Meaning

Anjan Dutta employs conversational lyricism and understated imagery. His semantic field is dominated by *urban spaces, memory, relational ambiguity, and affective states*. Meaning emerges gradually through implication rather than declaration. The city functions as an emotional archive, and relationships are depicted as contingent and unresolved. This semantic restraint enhances interpretive openness (Moore, 2012).

Suman (Chattopadhyay), by contrast, uses a dense, philosophical, and often confrontational semantic style. His lyrics frequently draw on *historical references, political critique, moral reasoning, and existential inquiry*. Semantically, Suman's songs are less ambiguous; they aim to provoke reflection and ethical judgment. Language is often elevated, argumentative, and intertextual, positioning the listener as an intellectual interlocutor rather than an emotional confidant.

Nachiketa Chakraborty occupies an intermediate semantic position. His lyrics are direct, narrative-driven, and emotionally explicit. He often constructs clear storylines around *middle-class anxieties, social injustice, personal struggle, and moral dilemmas*. Semantic clarity is central to his appeal; metaphors are accessible, and emotional cues are explicit, enabling immediate comprehension and identification (Banerjee, 2019).

#### Comparative finding:

- Dutta privileges *implication and mood*.
- Suman prioritizes *argument and critique*.
- Nachiketa emphasizes *narrative clarity and emotional directness*.

### 6.3. Discursive Positions: Ideology, Power, and Cultural Critique

From a discursive perspective, all three artists engage in cultural critique, but their modes of intervention differ markedly.

Anjan Dutta's discourse is subtle and affect-driven. His songs articulate an ethics of vulnerability, restraint, and reflexivity, challenging dominant ideals of success, masculinity, and romantic fulfillment without overt polemic. Discursively, his work aligns with what Hall (1997) describes as *negotiated cultural resistance*—soft, introspective, and embedded in everyday life.

Suman's discourse is explicitly counter-hegemonic. His songs often directly confront political authority, cultural hypocrisy, nationalism, religious dogma, and intellectual complacency. Drawing on critical rationalism and leftist thought, Suman positions the singer as a public intellectual. Using

Fairclough's (1995) framework, his lyrics can be read as high-intensity discourse, seeking to disrupt dominant ideologies through confrontation rather than affective resonance.

Nachiketa's discourse is socially moralistic and empathetic. While critical of injustice and inequality, his songs often adopt a *didactic tone*, guiding listeners toward ethical conclusions. His critique is framed through personal narratives of suffering and resilience, which align with what Street (2012) describes as *emotive moral discourse* in popular music.

**Comparative finding:**

- Dutta resists through *emotional realism*.
- Suman resists through *ideological critique*.
- Nachiketa resists through *moral storytelling*.

#### 6.4. *Affect, Mood, and Emotional Orientation*

Affective analysis reveals further differentiation.

Anjan Dutta's songs are heavily mood-oriented, often privileging atmosphere over message. Emotional states such as quiet longing, nostalgia, and introspection dominate. Meaning is affectively induced rather than discursively asserted, aligning with Juslin and Laukka's (2004) findings on music-induced emotional states.

Suman's affective mode is cognitive and confrontational. Emotional engagement arises from intellectual stimulation, moral discomfort, or ideological provocation. His songs demand attention and reflection, often producing tension rather than comfort.

Nachiketa's affective strategy is empathetic and cathartic. His songs aim to move listeners emotionally through identifiable struggles and resolutions. Sadness, hope, anger, and reassurance are clearly signaled, facilitating collective emotional release.

**Comparative finding:**

- Dutta → affect as *atmosphere*.
- Suman → affect as *intellectual disturbance*.
- Nachiketa → affect as *emotional narration*.

#### 6.5. *Inclusivity and Audience Reception*

Using Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model, all three artists demonstrate polysemic potential, but the *degree and nature of inclusivity* differ.

Anjan Dutta offers high interpretive openness. His lyrical minimalism and emotional ambiguity allow listeners from diverse backgrounds to insert personal meanings. Inclusivity here is experiential and affective rather than ideological. DeNora's (2000) notion of music as a *technology of the self* is particularly applicable: listeners use Dutta's songs for introspection, memory-work, and emotional regulation.

Suman's music is selectively inclusive. While admired for intellectual rigor, it often presumes cultural literacy and ideological engagement. Some listeners decode his songs as emancipatory, while others perceive them as confrontational or elitist. Inclusivity is thus conditional upon alignment with the discursive stance.

Nachiketa's music is broadly inclusive due to semantic clarity and emotional transparency. His songs are easily decodable across class and age groups, especially among middle-class and lower-middle-class audiences. Inclusivity here is grounded in shared social experience and moral sentiment.

**Comparative finding:**

- Dutta → inclusive through *polysemy*.
- Suman → inclusive through *ideological alignment*.
- Nachiketa → inclusive through *narrative accessibility*.

#### 6.6. *Synthesis: Three Models of Modern Bengali Song*

Synthesizing the comparison, the three artists can be seen as representing distinct models of modern Bengali musical subjectivity:

1. **Anjan Dutta:**

*Urban affective-reflexive model* — prioritizes mood, memory, and ethical vulnerability.

2. **Suman (Chattopadhyay):**

*Critical-intellectual model* — foregrounds ideological critique and philosophical engagement.

3. **Nachiketa Chakraborty:**

*Narrative-moral model* — emphasizes storytelling, empathy, and social conscience.

Together, they constitute a plural ecology of modern Bengali song, demonstrating that modernity in music is not monolithic but negotiated through multiple aesthetic and discursive pathways. Anjan Dutta's distinctiveness lies not in overt political messaging or narrative dramatization, but in his capacity to translate urban emotional life into inclusive, polysemic musical texts.

## 7. Discussion: Theoretical Implications and Comparative Insights

This discussion interprets the *findings* within broader theoretical frameworks in musicology, cultural studies, and urban sociology, and synthesizes how Anjan Dutta's songwriting compares with contemporaries such as Suman (Chattopadhyay) and Nachiketa Chakraborty. The goal is to articulate the *theoretical significance* of the patterns identified in the analysis, situating them in academic debates on modern popular music, identity, emotion, discourse, and inclusivity. The discussion unfolds across four key themes: (1) music and urban subjectivity, (2) relationality and emotional realism, (3) music as discursive practice, and (4) polysemy and cultural inclusion.

### 7.1. Music and Urban Subjectivity: Revisiting Modernity in Sound

The analysis revealed that Anjan Dutta's lyrics consistently construct urban experience as an emotional archive—a concept that resonates with Henri Lefebvre's assertion that *space is socially produced and laden with meaning* (1991). Dutta's songs locate feeling in quotidian urban environments—streets, intersections, forgotten cafés—transforming *geographic reference into affective semantic fields*. This demonstrates how music engenders urban subjectivity by embedding affect within lived space.

In urban sociology, the experience of the city is increasingly understood as a *fragmented affective field* rather than a unified symbolic center (Lefebvre, 1991; Simmel, 1903/2002). Dutta's work reflects this fragmentation not as dissonance but as *narrative texture*, capturing city life's discontinuities with lyrical simplicity rather than grandiloquence. This aligns with Arjun Appadurai's (1996) concept of *locality as a site of emotional engagement amid global flows*. By foregrounding local spaces, Dutta's music constitutes *affective counter-publics*—spaces where listeners negotiate personal meaning against broader cultural currents.

The semantic strategies of Dutta's songwriting contrast with the discursive intensity found in Suman's oeuvre, which foregrounds *cognitive urban critique* over affective immersion. Suman's lyrics mobilize references to historical and political structures, situating the urban subject against larger socio-political forces. In contrast, Dutta's focus on interiority reflects what Giddens (1991) describes as the dilemmas of *reflexive modernity*, wherein individuals continuously rework their biographies amid shifting social landscapes. This theoretical framing positions Dutta's music as a *sonic site of personal urban negotiation*, rather than a manifesto of structural critique.

### 7.2. Rationality and Emotional Realism: Affective Authenticity in Lyrical Form

One of the most striking findings is the presence of relational ambiguity and emotional realism in Dutta's songs. Unlike mainstream popular music, which often codifies romance in archetypal forms—courtship, union, resolution—Dutta's lyrics depict relationships as *open-ended, unresolved, and*

*affectively nuanced*. This mirrors what Giddens (1992) terms *pure relationships*—social bonds negotiated without recourse to traditional scripts or closure.

This theoretical insight dovetails with research in music psychology that emphasizes how lyricism interacts with emotional cognition. Juslin and Laukka (2004) argue that music induces emotion through structural mechanisms and semantic cues. In Dutta's songs, emotional cues operate through *paratactic lyrical structures*—adjacent phrases linked by affect rather than narrative progression. This semantically fluid form encourages listeners to *project personal experience onto ambiguous affective landscapes*, enhancing emotional resonance.

Contrastingly, Nachiketa Chakraborty's lyrics deploy *narrative clarity and emotional explicitness*, structuring relational experience in clear arc-like forms. This aligns with what Frith (1996) identifies as *communal emotional storytelling*—music that foregrounds narrative arcs to foster shared feeling. Nachiketa's approach, anchored in explicit life stories and moral lessons, appeals to collective sensibilities rooted in social morality. Dutta's approach, in contrast, privileges *private emotionality*, reflecting individual negotiation within urban life.

Theoretical implications here extend to broader debates on authenticity in popular music. Drawing on Moore (2012), who argues that *lyrical meaning is co-generated by cultural context and listener interpretation*, Dutta's semantic openness exemplifies music's capacity to *mediate affective authenticity without didactic closure*. His songs do not prescribe emotional outcomes but *invite affective engagement*, positioning the listener as co-creator of meaning.

### 7.3. Music as Discursive Practice: Power, Identity, and Everyday Life

The discourse analysis revealed that Dutta's songwriting articulates an ethics of vulnerability and restraint, subtly challenging dominant cultural narratives. Rather than overt political critique, his work enacts *micro-resistances*—discursive moves that foreground ethical self-awareness, emotional sincerity, and personal integrity. This aligns with Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of cultural texts as *sites of contested meaning*, where resistance can be *negotiated rather than oppositional*.

From a discourse theory perspective (Fairclough, 1995), Dutta's songs participate in what critical scholars call *everyday cultural resistance*—practices that undermine hegemonic norms through quotidian modes of representation. His refusal to universalize emotional experience, his embracement of uncertainty, and his foregrounding of modest emotional registers together resist the *grand narratives* of commercial pop and heroic masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) critique of hegemonic masculinity elucidates how alternative masculine subjectivities can emerge through *discursive restraint and emotional literacies*. Dutta's lyrical protagonists often avoid dominance, opting instead for introspection—a form of ethical self-positioning that counters normative assertive masculinities.

By contrast, Suman's discursive practice is more *confrontational and explicit*. His lyrics evoke power structures directly—whether political, religious, or cultural—and invite listeners into *ideological engagement*. This form of musical discourse aligns with what Street (2012) describes as *music and politics*, where songs function as platforms for explicit critique and collective identification around social causes.

Nachiketa's discursive position occupies an intermediate space. His songs critique inequality and injustice, but do so through *empathetic storytelling* rather than overt ideological provocation. Nachiketa's approach resonates with Screen's (2012) concept of *moral emotional discourse*, which uses narrative empathy to engage listeners in questions of social justice without heavy theorization.

Thus, the three artists demonstrate distinct discursive trajectories within modern Bengali music: Dutta's *micro-ethical navigation*, Suman's *macro-ideological challenge*, and Nachiketa's *empathetic moral storytelling*. Each trajectory enriches theoretical understandings of how music functions as *discursive practice* across emotional and ideological registers.

### 7.4. Polysemy, Inclusivity, and Cultural Reach

A final significant theme concerns polysemy and cultural inclusion. Across the corpus, semantic openness and narrative ambiguity enable multiple interpretations, which Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model explains as *negotiated and oppositional readings* of cultural texts. Anjan Dutta's songs embody this polysemy by providing *interpretive affordances*—spaces where listeners bring their own emotional and cultural contexts into the meaning-making process.

This inclusive potential resonates with DeNora's (2000) theory of music as a technology of self, wherein individuals use songs to *frame and regulate their own emotional experiences*. Dutta's tracks often serve as emotional tools for solitude, reflection, or memory work, rather than as vehicles for shared collective narratives alone. This *private publicness*—music that is publicly shared but personally integrated—suggests a complex form of cultural inclusion that privileges individual reflexivity.

Suman's songs, while intellectually compelling, often presuppose a degree of cultural literacy and ideological alignment. Their *conditional inclusivity* is contingent upon listeners engaging with broader political and philosophical contexts. This does not diminish their cultural value but situates them within a more *thematically bounded interpretive community*.

Nachiketa's broad narrative clarity facilitates *wide accessibility* across class and age groups. His stories, grounded in everyday struggles and moral wisdom, resonate across social strata, aligning with research on *narrative empathy* in music (Juslin & Laukka, 2004). Nachiketa's songs thus reflect *collective inclusion* grounded in shared experience.

This comparative nuance underscores a theoretical point: inclusivity in music is multidimensional, shaped by semantic structure, discursive orientation, and affective strategy. Dutta's *interpretive openness*, Suman's *ideological depth*, and Nachiketa's *narrative clarity* represent alternative pathways to cultural resonance and inclusion.

#### 7.5. Theoretical Contributions and Future Directions

The comparative analysis contributes to multiple scholarly domains:

##### 1. Musicology and Popular Music Studies

By treating modern Bengali songs as *analytically rich texts*, this study challenges frameworks that marginalize non-film South Asian music as peripheral. It demonstrates how lyrical nuance and discursive positioning matter theoretically, not just culturally.

##### 2. Urban Cultural Theory

The study elaborates how *urban subjectivity* is sonically constructed. Dutta's semantic strategies enrich theories of urban affect by showing how space and emotion intertwine in lyrical meaning.

##### 3. Discourse and Identity Research

Examining music as *discursive practice* illuminates how songs participate in cultural negotiations around power, emotion, and ethics. The findings extend discourse theory into the realm of affective representation.

##### 4. Audience Reception and Inclusion

The analysis underscores how polysemy and narrative strategy influence *interpretive communities*. It suggests that inclusivity in music operates through semantic openness, emotional accessibility, and cultural context.

Future research can expand this work by incorporating empirical audience studies such as interviews or ethnographic listening sessions, deepening understanding of how listeners negotiate meaning in diverse sociocultural contexts. Longitudinal analyses could examine how these artists' works evolve in response to changing urban dynamics.

## 8. Conclusion and Implications

This study examined modern Bengali songs by Anjan Dutta through an integrated qualitative framework combining semantic analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA), and inclusive reception perspectives, and compared his work with contemporaries Suman (Chattopadhyay) and Nachiketa

Chakraborty. The analysis yielded insights into how Dutta's music constructs urban subjectivity, emotional realism, ethical restraint, and interpretive inclusivity, while positioning him within a plural ecosystem of modern Bengali songwriting. The following section synthesizes key conclusions and outlines their broader cultural, theoretical, and practical implications.

### 8.1. Summary of Key Findings

#### 1. Urban Subjectivity and Affective Space

Dutta's lyrics consistently transform urban spaces into repositories of memory and emotion, constructing a nuanced urban subjectivity. Streets, neighborhoods, and cafés serve as semantic anchors, linking spatial perception to affective experience. Unlike Suman's politically charged urban discourse or Nachiketa's narrative clarity, Dutta's music foregrounds introspective and emotionally resonant cityscapes, allowing listeners to negotiate personal and collective urban identity simultaneously.

#### 2. Relational Ambiguity and Emotional Realism

The study highlighted Dutta's preference for depicting unresolved and ambiguous relationships, contrasting with mainstream popular romantic tropes. This emotional realism aligns with Giddens' (1992) notion of reflexive modernity, where relationships are continually negotiated rather than predetermined. By comparison, Nachiketa's songs offer narrative closure and empathic guidance, whereas Suman's lyrics focus on philosophical or ethical dilemmas.

#### 3. Discursive Ethics of Vulnerability

Through CDA, Dutta emerges as a practitioner of ethical restraint and vulnerability, positioning his lyrical subjects as emotionally literate, self-reflexive, and non-possessive. This contrasts with Suman's confrontational discursive strategy and Nachiketa's empathetic moral storytelling, highlighting alternative ways that popular music can challenge hegemonic ideologies without overt politicization.

#### 4. Mood, Affect, and Polysemy

Dutta's use of mood-based meaning and semantic openness allows for polysemic interpretation, inviting listeners from diverse backgrounds to co-construct meaning. This contrasts with Suman's selective inclusivity, reliant on ideological engagement, and Nachiketa's broad accessibility through narrative clarity. The songs function as *emotional technologies*, offering spaces for reflection, nostalgia, and introspection (DeNora, 2000).

#### 5. Comparative Insights

Comparative analysis demonstrates that modern Bengali songwriting encompasses multiple models of affective and discursive engagement:

1. **Anjan Dutta:** Urban affective-reflexive model
2. **Suman (Chattopadhyay):** Critical-intellectual model
3. **Nachiketa Chakraborty:** Narrative-moral model

These models coexist within a shared cultural field, reflecting diverse responses to urban modernity, relational complexity, and social ethics.

### 8.2. Theoretical Implications

#### 1. Music and Urban Cultural Theory

Dutta's work extends theories of urban subjectivity by showing how music can mediate the experience of space, memory, and affect. His songs exemplify how *ordinary urban life* becomes a locus for emotional negotiation, bridging cultural theory with lived experience.

#### 2. Emotion, Polysemy, and Reception

Findings contribute to music psychology and cultural studies by demonstrating that emotional engagement and semantic ambiguity foster interpretive inclusivity. Dutta's songs exemplify how polysemy operates in popular music, enabling affective co-creation across diverse audiences.

### 3. Discursive Resistance and Ethics

The study illustrates that popular music can enact subtle forms of resistance through ethical positioning rather than explicit political messaging. Dutta's lyrical restraint challenges hegemonic notions of masculinity, romantic norms, and emotional expression, providing a model for understanding *micro-resistances* in cultural texts.

### 4. Comparative Methodology

Applying the same framework to Suman and Nachiketa demonstrates the utility of integrated semantic, discursive, and reception analysis for cross-artist comparison, offering a replicable method for examining contemporary musical cultures in South Asia and beyond.

## 8.3. Practical and Cultural Implications

### 1. For Music Education and Criticism

The study underscores the importance of teaching lyrical analysis alongside musical performance, highlighting how text, mood, and discourse shape listener experience. Educators can integrate songs like Dutta's into curricula exploring urban identity, emotional literacy, and ethical reflexivity.

### 2. For Cultural Policy and Archiving

Understanding polysemic and affective dimensions of modern Bengali songs informs cultural preservation and archiving, emphasizing the need to document both lyrical content and reception practices. Policies that support non-film popular music can sustain diverse cultural expression.

### 3. For Music Production and Composition

Artists and producers may draw on these findings to craft songs that resonate inclusively. Dutta's balance of ambiguity, ethical framing, and urban reference offers a template for creating music that engages diverse audiences without sacrificing aesthetic subtlety.

### 4. For Urban Sociology and Media Studies

The study demonstrates that music functions as a lens into urban modernity, revealing everyday emotional economies and ethical negotiations. Researchers can extend this approach to other regional musical cultures to explore how urban life, social norms, and affect intersect in popular media.

## 8.4. Limitations and Future Research

While the study provides rich qualitative insights, several limitations should be noted:

1. **Corpus Selection:** Only a subset of Dutta's songs was analyzed, potentially omitting stylistically or thematically divergent tracks.
2. **Reception Analysis:** Audience interpretation was inferred from secondary sources rather than empirical ethnography.
3. **Comparative Scope:** The comparison focused on Suman and Nachiketa; inclusion of additional contemporaries could further contextualize findings.

Future research could employ ethnographic fieldwork, listener interviews, and digital platform analysis to capture real-time reception dynamics. Longitudinal studies could explore temporal evolution of affective and discursive strategies in Dutta's and contemporaries' works. Cross-cultural comparisons could situate Bengali modern songwriting within South Asian popular music at large, expanding theoretical generalizability.

## 8.5. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, Anjan Dutta's modern songs exemplify lyrical sophistication, affective nuance, ethical reflexivity, and inclusive interpretive potential. By comparing him with Suman and Nachiketa, this study illustrates plural modes of engagement in contemporary Bengali music, highlighting diverse strategies for articulating urban modernity, relational complexity, and cultural critique. The findings advance theoretical understanding of music as semantic, discursive, and participatory practice, offering frameworks applicable to cultural studies, musicology, and urban sociology. Ultimately, Dutta's music embodies a sensitive negotiation of emotion, ethics, and urban life, reinforcing the enduring value of lyrical art in mediating personal and collective meaning in contemporary society.

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