

Introduction: Rethinking Castelessness in Mid-Twentieth-Century Bengal

In late 1946, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar turned to Bengal to seek, and ultimately secure, his historic election to the Constituent Assembly of India. Despite being a member of the executive council and the singular spokesman for India's Dalits over the previous two decades, he was unable to muster support from within his home constituency in the Bombay Presidency and was therefore critically reliant on the work undertaken by activists of his All India Scheduled Castes Federation in eastern India to mobilize the necessary backing.¹ Ambedkar's election from Bengal thus spoke to the considerable power of Dalit political activism in that province at the time, especially since their campaign contended with stiff opposition from a hostile Congress party. Less than two decades later, however, the political terrain presented a stark contrast with the late-colonial moment. Partitioned into West Bengal and East Pakistan, neither territory featured the politics of caste with anywhere near the same degree of prominence.

Many have noted this puzzling absence. Writing in 1959, Ram Manohar Lohia, arguably one of the more insightful observers of the intersection of caste and class in modern Indian society, could thus remark on the "somewhat peculiar situation" that obtained in eastern India: "It is commonly supposed that Bengal has no caste politics."² The notion that the region transcended such identification found perhaps its most forthright declaration in Communist Chief Minister Jyoti Basu's reply to the Mandal Commission that, as caste was a legacy of feudalism, "viewing the social scene from the casteist angle was no longer relevant for West Bengal."³ So it was that Kanshi Ram, founder of independent India's most successful Dalit political party, remarked how its leaders

¹ Dhananjay Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1962), 380.

² D.L. Sheth, "Ram Manohar Lohia on Caste in Indian Politics," in Ghanshyam Shah (ed.), *Caste and Democratic Politics in India* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005), 114.

³ Government of India, *Report of the Backward Classes Commission, First Part, Volumes I and II* (New Delhi, 1980), 46.

2 Rethinking Castelessness in Mid-Twentieth-Century Bengal

claim that “there is no casteism in Bengal.”⁴ Asok Mitra, distinguished civil servant, census commissioner, and secretary to the Government of India, therefore reflected in his memoirs as follows: “There must be something odd about a state which, professedly so secular and anti-sectarian, has yet not produced a single Jagjivan Ram, Kamaraj, Buta Singh or Rafi Ahmed Kidwai to hold major portfolios.”⁵ To various commentators, the postcolonial decades seemed to have brought about an uncanny resolution to the caste question in the east.

How and why did Dalit political activism go into decline around the Partition of British India and Bengal in 1947, coeval with the resumption of upper-caste domination of society and polity in West Bengal, the Muslim domination of the same in East Pakistan, and the securing of freedom from British colonial rule? This is the question, the historical problem as it were, motivating this book. It presents a problem not only because society in West Bengal was, and remains composed of, one of the largest Dalit populations of any Indian state and yet is subject to enduring perceptions of its alleged castelessness, but also because, as was true elsewhere in late-colonial India, Bengal was indeed home to significant Dalit mobilization, as suggested by Ambedkar’s unlikely route of entry to the constituent assembly. Even as the “silent revolution” unfolded elsewhere in India, what became of Dalit political radicalism in Bengal?⁶

The principal figure responsible for Ambedkar’s historic election to the constituent assembly of India, Jogendranath Mandal, was born in 1904 to a Namasudra family in Maisterkandi, a village in northern Barisal (or Bakarganj) district in eastern Bengal. He rose to prominence as the most controversial leader of the more politically assertive Scheduled Castes in late colonial Bengal.⁷ Elected to the first legislative assembly of undivided

⁴ Kanshi Ram, “Marxists in India: Interview with Illustrated Weekly,” in N. Manohar Prasad (ed.), *Views and Interviews of Bahujan Nayak Manyavar Kanshi Ram* (Delhi: Gautam Book Centre, 2012), 102.

⁵ Asok Mitra, *Towards Independence, 1940–1947: Memoirs of an Indian Civil Servant* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1991), 87.

⁶ In using the term “Dalit,” I am, of course, being anachronistic. Yet, I do so not only because this nomenclature is part of contemporary scholarly, activist, and journalistic convention, but because it is the conceptual product of the very struggles about which I write.

⁷ For various histories of the Namasudras, see Sekhar Bandyopadhyay’s *Caste, Politics and the Raj: Bengal, 1872–1937* (Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi and Company, 1990) and *Caste, Protest and Identity in Colonial India: The Namasudras of Bengal, 1872–1947* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997); A.K. Biswas’ *The Namasudras of Bengal*; Naresh Chandra Das’ *Namasudra Sampradaya o Bangla Desh*; N.B. Roy’s two-part volume, *A People in Distress, Being a Connected Account of the Namas from 1812 A.D. Down to the Present Day Together with a Study of Their Antiquity, Vol. II.* (Calcutta: B. Sarkar and Co., 1992), and *On the Origin of the Namasudras*; and Sumit Sarkar’s *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Relocating Postmodernism, Hindutva, History* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002).

Bengal following the British colonial grant of provincial autonomy in 1937 as an independent candidate amid noteworthy circumstances, Mandal became the head of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation in Bengal, the political organization founded by Ambedkar, widely acknowledged by then as the preeminent champion of the Dalit cause. In this capacity, he served as a minister in the two Muslim League-controlled governments in undivided Bengal prior to 1947; in the Interim Government of India as a Muslim League nominee; and in the Government of Pakistan till 1950, when he resigned and returned to Calcutta against the backdrop of renewed communal violence. He reemerged as a major, if embattled, figure in the refugee movement of West Bengal, yet he was unable ever to join legislative politics again, despite trying to do so on several occasions before his uncannily timely death in 1968, when he seemed on the verge of mounting a return.

A contextualized study of Mandal's political life and history, straddling as it did both the territorial and temporal divides of Partition and independence, offers a compelling prism through which to examine the seeming abatement of the caste question over the transition from colonial to postcolonial rule. To be sure, I am interested in understanding the reasons for the failure of Mandal's distinctly Ambedkarite politics as a comment on the specific political-cultural milieu within which it occurred. Although I am by no means seeking to resuscitate a "great man" theory of history, a methodology attuned to the exemplary individual nonetheless contributes meaningful historical insight about the wider contexts in which that life was lived.⁸ Mandal's deeper significance surely derives from his leadership within the Scheduled Castes Federation and the Republican Party of India, the foremost attempts at autonomous Dalit political organization in colonial India. Mandal, in short, was Bengal's response to Ambedkar.

There are equally important historiographical reasons for why Mandal is at the center of this account. Histories of caste-subaltern protest have remained fairly limited within the otherwise voluminous scholarship on Bengal of the period, wherein themes of anticolonial nationalism and communalism have received pride of place.⁹ Accorded a relatively minor role in the pioneering studies of late-nineteenth- to mid-

⁸ David Nasaw, "AHR Roundtable: Historians and Biography – Introduction," *American Historical Review*, 114:3, 577.

⁹ As Sugata Bose has observed, "In contrast to the literature on other regions of India, subordinate caste critiques of the discourse on unitary Indian nationalism have been seriously addressed by only one historian of Bengal." Sugata Bose, "Between Monolith and Fragment: A Note on the Historiography of Nationalism in Bengal," in Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (ed.), *Bengal: Rethinking History; Essays in Historiography* (Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 285.

4 Rethinking Castelessness in Mid-Twentieth-Century Bengal

twentieth-century caste politics in Bengal, the depth of historical discussion on Mandal's place in modern South Asian history pales by comparison to the many volumes of scholarly and activist reflection on his leader and ideological inspiration, Ambedkar, or the innumerable studies of Gandhi. This book thus contributes a case study of the political activities and aspirations of one whom historians seem to have largely ignored in order to understand the curious decline of the caste question over the watershed of Partition and freedom from colonial rule in Bengal. The foregoing effort is directed toward the description and analysis of this historical change using an archive grounded in Mandal's private papers.

Mandal's historical significance resides in the fact that he gave life to the distinctive and radical strand of Dalit political thought pioneered by Ambedkar, stressing the need for their unity and autonomy from other formations, whether the Indian National Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha, or the Muslim League. As founder of the Bengal branch of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation, he galvanized Dalit protest and activism in that region into a more assertive and politicized posture than before, dramatically instantiated by that organization's mobilization of unprecedented numbers in support of its historic conference in Gopalganj in 1945.¹⁰ As the party's most explicit slogan captured, the Federation demanded the recognition of Scheduled Castes as a "separate political existence" and advocated the formation of a radical Dalit political consciousness. Mandal therefore contradicts the central claim of the extant historical account of caste politics in mid-twentieth-century Bengal: namely, the gradual though unmistakable transition from alienation to integration of Dalit leaders and communities into mainstream Indian nationalism over the course of provincial autonomy.

This book undertakes a critical reexamination of this seeming nationalist resolution of the caste question by scrutinizing the processes whereby the ironing out of caste difference was produced and situating Mandal within them. It denaturalizes the self-evidence of Dalit integration by paying attention to how Dalits' political radicalization was contained. In so doing, it reorients the terms of reference through which Dalit politics in Bengal has been understood, from preoccupations about proximity and integration with Indian nationalism, to an evaluation of the possibilities for and eventual failure of Dalit political power. My concerns are therefore trained at the specific issue of how and why the caste question,

¹⁰ See Chapter 3 for an account of this gathering, which drew, by some estimates, in the range of 50,000 people, and was regarded by contemporaries as a landmark event in the history of Dalit movement in the region.

as formulated by Mandal, eventually found no fertile terrain in the east. Why, could Mandal not speak, or rather, be heard? The historical and contemporary relevance of the matter stems from the fact that wherever such politics has made its presence felt in the legislative institutions of independent India – whether the Republican Party of India or the Bahujan Samaj Party – it has done so under the sign and inspiration of Ambedkar, animated by concerns of Dalit political autonomy.¹¹ An examination of Mandal’s historical trajectory is therefore essential to this endeavor. I thereby share the conceit that it is equally the “spokesman who creates the group” than the other way around.¹² As this book will suggest, the eventual failure of his political struggle, following as it did on a remarkably vibrant phase, is an instructive and meaningful one. His exceptionality is precisely what enables this revisionist attempt to tell a crucial chapter in the largely untold story of what Partha Chattopadhyay has called Bengal’s “social counter-revolution.”¹³

At stake, then, is historical understanding of the occlusion of radical Dalit politics in a region where it seemed to have been far more significant than hitherto believed, and the implications of this occlusion for broader accounts of Dalit politics and postcolonial transition. The study places caste at the center of a regional history in which it has often been seen as marginal, and it places a region generally thought to be of little consequence to the history of caste politics at center stage precisely because of the resounding defeat the Dalit movement eventually experienced there. Such an inquiry, I hope, will be of interest to discussions about the possibilities for such politics both in Bengal and beyond, past and present.

¹¹ See Eleanor Zelliott, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1992); Eleanor Zelliott, *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Untouchable Movement* (New Delhi: Blumoon Books, 2004); Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Revolution: The BSP in Uttar Pradesh* (New Delhi: Sage, 2002); Christophe Jaffrelot, *India’s Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India: From the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994); Anupama Rao, *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Ramnarayan S. Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability: Chamars and Dalit History in North India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), for important contributions to the historical study of Dalit politics.

¹² “It is because the representative exists, because he represents, that the group that is represented and symbolized exists and that in return it gives existence to its representative as the representative of a group.” Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 204.

¹³ Partha Chattopadhyay, “Pascimbanglay jati o janajati,” *Baromas (saradiya)* (Kalakata: publisher not available, 2010), 102.

The Narrative of Dalit Integration

The story of Dalit politics in extant historiography sees their effective merger with Indian nationalist currents over the course of the last decade of colonial rule, following on decades of mutual antagonism. By the late nineteenth century, the Namasudras formed one of the largest caste communities in Bengal, and over the following decades constituted the predominant force of the Dalit movement of the region. Concentrated predominantly within the eastern districts of the province, its members primarily engaged in fishing, boating, and the provision of agrarian labor. Situated within the lower echelons of Bengal's caste hierarchy and class structure, Namasudras were among the most significant peasant castes of the east, which, although differentiated by subcaste identifications, gradually developed a shared sense of collective identity as land reclamation enabled greater agricultural opportunity and settled community life.

Christian missionaries are believed to have established their first contact with Namasudras as early as the seventeenth century, but it was with the Baptist Mission Society of the early nineteenth century that any meaningful engagement emerged. By 1838, their missionaries found reception with Kangali Mahanta, the spiritual leader of the Namasudras in the Barisal locale, who agreed to be baptized, along with 115 of his disciples, to the Christian faith. The trend progressed despite persecution from orthodox Hindus.¹⁴ A mid-nineteenth-century Baptist missionary, Rev. J.C. Page, noted that although the chandals (as Namasudras were then known, in customarily derogatory address) were “despised by the brahmin, and oppressed by the Zemindar,” some among them were at the same time “gaining possessions, aspiring to knowledge, and rising to a kind of respectability.”¹⁵ Such aspirations toward social mobility likely prompted the first recorded mass agitation by Namasudras in 1872, in a “general strike” resolving not to serve any among the upper classes and castes “unless a better position among the Hindus castes than what they at present occupy was given to them.”¹⁶

Over the following decades, the leadership of the Namasudra Matua sect, engagement with Australian Baptist missionaries, the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League, and the colonial state all shaped Namasudra subject formation and activism in varying degrees. Although they adopted emulatory practices broadly comparable to what the

¹⁴ J. Reid, “Baptist Missionary Societies’ Work Among the Outcastes of India,” in G.E. Phillips, *The Outcastes’ Hope* (London: 1912), 139–142.

¹⁵ M. Wylie, *Bengal as a Field of Missions* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, and Co., 1854), 103.

¹⁶ W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal, Volume V* (London: Trubner and Co., 1875), 285.

sociologist M.N. Srinivas once termed *sanskritization*, these nonetheless coexisted with gravitation toward missionary figures such as the Australian Baptist C.S. Mead, and, through his intercession, an active allegiance toward the British colonial administration. Their self-assertion thus bore a resemblance to features of caste-subaltern movements elsewhere in India: resistance and opposition to the discrimination and exploitation of upper-castes, advocacy of changes in caste nomenclature with a view to self-respect, the production of histories claiming a once exalted but now degraded status, a stress on acquiring cultural and social capital through formal education, the emergence of a caste public through print-capitalist journalism, the rise of associational life through public meetings and conferences, and the efforts of a moderately expanding, though nonetheless slender, tier of legal professionals, government servants, students, and businessmen invested in the opportunities to be had of colonial political and economic institutions.¹⁷ Even as a pronounced loyalty toward the colonial order was a marked feature of their politics, this contrasted sharply with Namasudra leaders' indifference and resentment toward upper-caste nationalist preoccupations for more than the first half-century of their movement. This was true of every major turning point in negotiations with the colonial government, from the Swadeshi movement of the first decade of the century through to the Quit India movement in the early 1940s.

Namasudra antipathy to Indian nationalism was rooted in the fundamental oppositions constituting their social and political relations with the upper-castes. Although various observers, foreign, Indian, and Bengali, noted the comparatively relaxed stringency of norms and practices of untouchability in the region, the essential conceptual and practical core of casteism remained untouched and grounded in the social intercourse between Namasudra and upper-castes.¹⁸ Nationalist social reformist efforts at the "social uplift" of those they considered their inferiors – ranging from temple entry, to staged demonstration of inter-caste commensality, or self-driven philanthropy – were thus prompted by the concern to demonstrate a certain upper-caste liberalism. Indeed, the reformist critique of untouchability undoubtedly posited radical implications from the vantage of Brahminical conservatism. Yet, as meaningful as these symbolic gestures of outreach might have been within limited contexts – which primarily consisted of scripted ceremonies of violating norms of untouchability – they never amounted to more than the lip

¹⁷ Das, *Namasudra Sampraday o Bangla Desh*, 31–51.

¹⁸ See "Appendix to Chapter XI," "Caste to-day: Its influence and tendencies towards amalgamation or fusion," and "Appendix I – The depressed classes," in the 1931 Bengal census for an overview of the specific nature of caste discrimination in the region.

8 Rethinking Castelessness in Mid-Twentieth-Century Bengal

service paid by the reform-minded among them. That lip service nevertheless paled in comparison with the kinds of rights and privileges conferred by the colonial state, and did little to undercut the systemic and everyday casteism of Bengali society.

Indeed, the Swadeshi movement's leaders and activists were often "hostile or indifferent to the aspirations of peasants and tenants," the vast majority of whom were Dalits and Muslims.¹⁹ *Bhadrolok* nationalists' failure to mobilize them in their cause to reunite their province, torn asunder by British colonial fiat, was unavoidably related to the "vast ocean" that separated them from the majority of the people in the province.²⁰ The editor of the *Modern Review* could thus flatly remark as late as 1909, when the peak of this first major upsurge against colonial rule had passed: "The Brahmo Samaj has long been pleading theoretically but not much in practice for the elevation of the depressed classes on religious and humanitarian grounds. Swami Vivekananda has also done so theoretically. But in Bengal no indigenous agency has done anything practical to raise their condition."²¹

As such lessons registered, the upper-caste *bhadrolok* gradually came to grasp the problem posed by their prejudices and indeed, expressed great anxiety against the backdrop of census classifications about growing Muslim clout on the one hand, and hints of separatist tendencies among Dalits on the other. U.N. Mukherji's influential and symptomatic 1909 tract, *Hindus – A Dying Race*, for instance, illustrated how upper-caste Hindu social reformers and political leaders became increasingly concerned about the caste fissures that marked their imagined Hindu community. As Pradip Kumar Datta has shown, over the first two decades of the century: "... prompted by the census and their self-activity, the low castes provided a major source of anxiety for their caste superiors. To a great extent, the antagonism against the Muslims was shaped by the fear that the low castes would sever themselves from the rubric of Hinduism."²² Such anxieties informed the spate of largely staged measures over the following two decades to endear Dalits to the causes of Indian and Hindu

¹⁹ Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010), xiv. The social category "*bhadrolok*," literally translated as "respectable people," was perhaps at one time closely associated with upper-caste Hindus alone (that is, Brahmins, Kayasthas, and Baidyas). However, it gradually changed in its meaning over the course of the twentieth century to refer to those who had acquired a certain degree of refinement, education, and "culture," irrespective of social origin, thus including many of the so-called middle castes. It would nonetheless be inaccurate to state that the majority of *bhadrolok* in the period under study were not of the upper-castes.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xiv. ²¹ "The Elevation of Namasudras," *Modern Review* 5:2, 1909, 275–76.

²² Pradip Kumar Datta, *Carving Blocs: Communal Ideology in Early Twentieth-Century Bengal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 47.

nationalism, which predominantly showcased upper-caste individuals' willingness to touch and be touched by those they considered untouchable.

Joya Chatterji's study of Hindu communalism and its role in the making of Partition in Bengal drew these efforts into focus by showing how upper-castes' concern to secure Hindu unity turned on inducing Dalits into their political movements over the course of the 1920s and 1930s. Undertaken primarily by the Hindu Mahasabha, their rhetoric of *shuddhi* (purification) and *sangathan* (consolidation) resonated with Dalit aspirations for higher status within the caste order. In contrast to earlier decades of recalcitrance when faced with *bhadrolok* overtures, Chatterji did not find "much contemporary evidence to suggest that the Scheduled Castes resisted this drive to bundle them into the 'Hindu Community'" in the cases she studied.²³ This meeting of minds then was certainly a significant shift, even if it remained tethered to the terms of caste hierarchy. As she clarified, "... in fact a radical critique of the caste system formed no part of the programme and ideology of the Hindu Sabhas."²⁴

The increasing responsiveness of Dalits to the Hindu nationalist agenda of the Bengal Congress and Mahasabha and their affiliated social organizations found explicit confirmation in Sekhar Bandyopadhyay's studies of the Namasudras. Bandyopadhyay showed how after more than a half-century of what he termed "alienation," both the masses and leadership of this caste community finally "integrated" into the dominant currents of Indian nationalism, the cumulative result of decades of persuasive nationalist outreach, anticolonial sentiment, and the heightened communal tensions and polarization of the time. This was illustrated most dramatically in his analysis of the results of the 1946 elections, which saw the vast majority of Dalit members of the legislative assembly emerge as supporters of the Congress, an indication of their "merger into the Indian, predominantly Hindu, nation, as represented by the Congress-Mahasabha combine ..."²⁵ In his view, Ambedkar's and Mandal's Federation was marginalized due to its own inadequacies, and their politics supposedly lost meaning on account of Ambedkar's subsequent collaboration with the Congress. By mid-1947 the "appropriation of the [sic] Scheduled Caste politics by the Congress was now complete ..."²⁶ The Namasudra leadership therefore "conveniently integrated into the dominant political structure in the country ..."²⁷ We are given to believe that nationalist hegemony over Dalits was at long last secured largely through means of persuasion, in remarkable

²³ Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 197.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 198. ²⁵ Bandyopadhyay, *Caste, Protest and Identity*, 236. ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 208.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 208.

testimony to its ideological appeal and accommodative embrace. As Bandyopadhyay described, the Dalit leadership “found it more convenient to merge into the political mainstream and integrate into the nation, which had always been their ultimate goal, the separatist rhetorics [sic] notwithstanding.”²⁸ Such explanations rested, ultimately, on what may be regarded as a theory of Dalit conformism and accommodationism. In this Srinivasian imagination of caste society, “. . . people, even among the most exploited untouchables, would prefer to conform to [sic] dominant cultural ethos of the society and desire to be integrated into it.”²⁹ Protest itself was understood to be couched in terms of existing cultural idioms. “Integration” was born of a seemingly intrinsic Dalit receptivity to nationalist persuasion.

This book departs from this narrative of consensual integration to which historiography tends; despite points of convergence, there is much in the forthcoming pages that cannot be reconciled with its central thrust. As an early, discerning reviewer observed: “. . . Bandyopadhyay overestimates the degree of upward caste mobility in Bengal and underestimates the extent of real cleavage, exploitation and caste oppression.”³⁰ G.K. Lieten elaborated that he was “. . . imprudent in his indictment of the British colonial administration . . .” and noted “. . . some tendency to overstate the reach of government policies . . . and a tendency to understate the citadel mentality of the upper-caste Hindus in not granting any of the privileges to the members of the other Indian nation.”³¹ Lieten’s review suggested that the too-great emphasis on integration and mutuality was insufficiently mindful of some rather significant differences. In a related vein, though a more specific context, Sumit Sarkar’s reading of Mahananda Haldar’s *Sri Sri Guruchandcharit*, one of the most important Namasudra literary texts of the century, conveyed far too many tensions to indicate “any seamless transition from alienation to integration.”³² Sarkar believed there was far too much anti-upper-caste-nationalist sentiment in the text, for instance, to justify such an interpretation. Likewise, his pointing to the significance of the continued support that Namasudra members of the legislative assembly extended to the Muslim League ministry in spite of the Bengal famine in 1943 indicated further difficulties with such a formulation.³³ In another study of how

²⁸ Ibid., 242. ²⁹ Ibid., 10. ³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ G.K. Lieten, “Mandalisation under British Rule in Bengal,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 26:25, 1534.

³² Sarkar, *Beyond Nationalist Frames*, 75.

³³ Ibid., 77. M.A.H. Ispahani thus noted the “record number of Scheduled Caste voting on any side” about the so-called Food Debate in five years of provincial autonomy in a letter to M.A. Jinnah. See Z.H. Zaidi (ed.), *M.A. Jinnah Ispahani Correspondence, 1936–1948* (Karachi: Forward Publications Trust, 1976), 361.