

The Decline of the Caste Question

This revisionist history of caste politics in twentieth-century Bengal argues that the decline of this form of political mobilization in the region was as much the result of coercion as of consent. It traces this process through the political career of Jogendranath Mandal, the leader of the Dalit movement in eastern India and a figure of prominence in the history of India and Pakistan, over the transition of Partition and Independence. Utilizing Mandal's private papers, this study reveals both the strength and achievements of his movement for Dalit recognition, as well as the major challenges and constraints he encountered. Departing from analyses that have stressed the role of integration, Dwaipayan Sen demonstrates how a wide range of coercions shaped the eventual defeat of Dalit politics in Bengal. The region's acclaimed "castelessness" was born of the historical refusal of Mandal's struggle to pose the caste question.

Dwaipayan Sen is Assistant Professor of South Asian History at Amherst College.

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*Jogendranath Mandal and the Defeat of Dalit
Politics in Bengal*

Dwaipayan Sen
Amherst College, Massachusetts



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For Ma and Baba,
Meredith, Bodhi, and Isha.
And Mr. Mandal.

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