

SPECIAL ARTICLE

Dalit-Muslim Political Coherence: Interrogating Jogendranath Mandal's Bahujan Philosophy

Haimanti Dey

Senior Publications Coordinator, Research and Publications Division,
Prime Ministers Museum and Library
(previously Nehru Memorial Museum and Library), Teen Murti

Abstract: *As a fresh entrant to the new system of legislative representation – the result of the much contested Poona Pact – Jogendranath Mandal created some political upheavals by first, deciding to contest from an unreserved constituency and second, upset the status quo by emerging victorious against an upper caste. But since then, whatever political maneuvers he tried, failed consistently for various reasons, none as definitive as the Partition. His sincere efforts to gain concessions for the Dalit-Scheduled Castes – with alliances ranging from the grassroots to the coalition – were unsuccessful till he turned to the Muslim League. But here too, in the newly created nation, the possibility of equal opportunities for the Dalits failed. This paper discusses Mandal's attempts to enter into 'any' political alignment that would give his community social equality and political power. Finally, the paper explores the possibility of a Dalit-Muslim alignment under the current scenario that Mandal envisaged almost ninety years ago. Three times as cabinet minister, two times as law minister, and the 'introducer of a Bill to amend and codify certain branches of the Hindu Law' (the Hindu Code Bill), Mandal does not find mention in any of the contemporary history books, not even as a footnote.*

Keywords: *Ambedkar, Bahujanabad, Dalit, Identity, Partition, Scheduled Castes*

Introduction

In the midst of the political turbulence and nationalism, the cultural and intellectual awakening, during the late 19th-early 20th centuries—the most transformative phase of Bengal—the dynamics of power structure combined with a decline of traditional industry, enabled people to explore newer professions and awareness to earn. The developments also revealed separate identities due to these newer livelihoods and professions. The population comprised of the Hindu and Muslim higher castes on the one hand while on the

other there were poor Muslims and the 'backward' castes, mostly peasants, in the overwhelmingly agricultural Bengal. Even before the 'Dalit identity'^{1, 2}, formally established itself there were a few individuals who independently had organized themselves in declaring their unwillingness from participating in any agitation by the upper castes against the government. For example, under the leadership of Brajendranath Mandal a meeting was organized in 1906 in Gopalganj pledging support to the partition.³

To these Namasudra leaders, social reform took precedence over colonial rule; to them without social justice political negotiations could not happen. Such organizations often condemned anti-colonial movements by the nationalists like defying the 'boycott' as described by Tagore after the first Bengal partition:

*"...from a reliable source I came to know even though the price of 'karkach laban' (common salt) has become cheaper than the imported salt, Muslims are still buying the imported stuff... the Muslims wear foreign made cloth and eat imported salt just to spite the Hindu Swadeshis. In many instances even the Namasudras have been found to follow this pattern of behaviour..."*⁴

Tagore blamed the swadeshi leaders for not having cared for the subalterns before—both Muslims and Hindus, who were now defying their orders, sometimes forced, to buy indigenously produced cloth and salt as a part of the anti-imperial movement.

So, to view Muslims as their social and political ally evolved within a political ecosystem through a process of social and economic discrimination.

The swirl of the swadeshi movement's later manifestations in the non-cooperation movement made young Jogendranath realize what 'freedom' meant for a Namasudra—they would remain marginalized or at the bottom in the social hierarchy as political freedom would not bring for them social equality. Thus the efforts by the upper castes to deny concessions found countering expressions by the marginalized in different ways—the election of Jogendranath Mandal in 1937 provincial election from an unreserved constituency was one such.

2. Challenging the Status Quo

Mandal's momentous victory in an open contest in 1937 was not about just numbers, it was a giant leap by the 'Depressed Classes' collective crossing all sociopolitical barriers into the mainstream upper caste political hierarchy; the unexpected success in this unequal political contest brought hope towards politics of inclusion. The Hindu-Muslim binary of conflict remained outside the political literature of Bengal until the time when the peasants in the Krishak Praja Party founded by AK Fazlul Haq were to become later the electorate in the Muslim League politics in Bengal.⁵ Mandal chose to make an independent identity for himself and his community, while the conscious choice of the upwardly mobile, read elite, 'Depressed Classes' would be the Congress or the

Hindu Mahasabha.

There were organization such as the Depressed Classes League formed by Mukunda Behari Mullick apparently to meet the interests of their own community.⁶ However, these were limited to gaining respectability and position among the Hindu upper castes; representation of the community especially the poor peasants, was limited.

As an independent candidate contesting against the mighty Congress, Mandal received support from both the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes although he was not a candidate of the Namasudras and therefore, it won't be impertinent to say he was a 'People's Leader'. However, the singular achievement of charting an improbable electoral victory is blurred as gradually he became known as the 'Namasudra leader' (*Sudraneta*).

Meanwhile, Mandal's search for a bigger platform brought him in contact with Babasaheb Ambedkar.⁷ In 1945 the Bengal Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) was formed by Mandal and a few others after the All India Scheduled Caste Federation founded by Ambedkar in 1943. The Gopalganj conference of the Bengal SCF in April 1945 was one of the biggest such sanmelan of the Namasudras where, as its president, Mandal underlined the importance of unity and political independence.⁸

3. The Poona Pact: lost opportunity?

The Poona Pact that replaced the Communal Award in 1932 was signed by, among others, a few Dalit leaders prominent among them M C Rajah, a strong contender for the 'Depressed Classes' leader's post, and also Rasik Lal Biswas, a Dalit leader from Bengal. And that sealed the fate of the 'separate identity' for the 'Depressed Classes'. *Perhaps Gandhiji's full knowledge of the support of M C Rajah and a few other Dalit leaders made him stand firm on his resolve.*

Well known leaders from Bengal such as Acharya PC Roy, Nirmal Chandra Chanda, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Kamini Roy and others also declared their full support for Gandhiji.⁹

And thus, almost seventy years after Harichand Thakur mobilizes the neglected and oppressed castes and teaches them the doctrine of equality, the Poona Pact permanently obliterates the rights of the Dalits.

4. Disunity within the community

In the 1937 election, 23 Scheduled Caste members won as 'independents' among who were Pramatha Ranjan Thakur, Jogendranath Mandal, Birat Chandra Mandal, Prasanna Deb Raikat, Mukunda Behari Mullick and others — the last two got ministerial positions in the first Bengal Provincial Assembly.¹⁰ While the election in the primary round was by members of their community, the secondary round was determined by a joint electorate as against a separate electorate. *The highly contested 'polarization' claim of the latter laid bare the discord within the community;* so the rules created by the colonial government were also

responsible for the disunity and dependency.

Gradually the independence of selecting candidates from the 'Depressed Classes' was lost and by the time the last elections in Colonial Bengal took place in 1946 there was hardly any 'independent' candidate from the community. It is a matter of great misfortune that with 32 MLAs, the Dalits could not build a strong political front because of the absence of a central identity. This disunity blunted the achievements of the early movements which had openly defied the nationalist movements against colonial rule.

There were leaders who had found a place among upper caste leadership through their own efforts or by 'plan' executed by mainstream parties like the Congress. Instead of standing as an independent candidate they contested as Scheduled Caste candidates 'supported' by the Congress—from independent 'Depressed Classes' candidates to complete alignment. Both, the Depressed Classes League (led by Thakur) and the Federation (led by Mandal) in the Provincial Assembly claimed support of an equal number of members but from all available information it appeared that the majority were more inclined towards the League than the Federation.¹¹ *Thus the panel as suggested by Sapru¹² did not work on field.*

By the time the provincial elections were held in 1946, the Dalit-Scheduled Castes in Bengal were sharply aligned along the larger national parties as mentioned above. And although leaders such as Mandal and a few others extracted concessions from successive governments on education, employment etc., Mandal's efforts to bring the peasants and the working class under one umbrella could not be fully met as his focus remained primarily on political representation which would bring relief and concessions to the community. This is evident from the declaration made in the Bengal Scheduled Castes Federation Conference at Gopalganj, Faridpur, where only one resolution made was on peasantry; the rest were all on concessions and rights—employment, education, job reservation etc.¹³

So, for Mandal, it was a never-ending circle which sucked him into its vortex; *his involvement with the peasantry remained insufficient although Scheduled Castes formed the majority of the peasantry.*

The 'class' politics among the Scheduled Castes requires further study. It later developed into divisive and unhealthy political processes far from the peasantry and the working class who formed a significant large. As Partition became inevitable, Mandal engaged with the Muslims to prevent the split among the peasantry which however met with opposition from many. All his efforts saw only setbacks due to inadequate resources; the already socioeconomically backward Dalits becoming victims of Bengal's Partition, which he had vehemently opposed. *Mandal became trapped in his loyalty to Jinnah. The pull and push of the interest groups caused his efforts to fail consistently to hold together as a politically independent entity. That along with the Partition brought to end the dream of political rights of the oppressed irrespective of religious identity, in South Asia.*

5. The Bose Brothers

Having failed to form a government that would hold together successfully, a broad new progressive coalition consisting of the Krishak Praja Party, Congress (Bose group), a few progressive members of the Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, Independent Scheduled Caste Group (Mandal) came into existence towards the end of 1941 with an aim to win *political power with linguistic, religious, and ethnic minorities*.¹⁴

However, the new progressive political experiment largely worked on by Sarat Bose was rejected by the colonial government even before it began. Jinnah accused Huq of treachery for forming a coalition with opposition without League approval.¹⁵

*"Sarat Bose's singular effort in bringing Huq on board resulted in communal harmony in place of hatred...but Sir John Herbert was alarmed of what a united Hindu Sabha and Muslim leaders could do. So Sarat Bose, whose efforts led to a non-communal, all-party ministerial cabinet was suddenly put behind bars ... the governor wanted someone like Nazimuddin as home minister, while a person of strong personality and independent thinking Sarat Bose as home minister was not acceptable to him."*¹⁶

With the arrest of Sarat Bose (and also Subhash Bose's disappearance), the hope of a progressive coalition was dashed and with it ended Mandal's dreams of joining a ministry with strength and equal rights.¹⁷

The Shyama-Huq Progressive Coalition, the first attempt at a Hindu-Muslim joint ministry was dissolved within a year. The Muslim League was finally called upon to form a ministry led by Jinnah's staunch follower Nazimuddin. Mandal's conditions that he had previously put to the coalition were finally met and he and members from the Independent Scheduled Caste Party joined the Nazimuddin ministry. It is interesting to know that the demands put forth to Nazimuddin were scaled down from what was demanded of Shyama-Huq ministry earlier.¹⁸ Unsure of their acceptance perhaps the Dalit members thought to play it safe; also it shows their desperation to be a part of a ministry, any coalition that will accept their demands for the community's interests.

The first Bengal provincial ministry had two 'elite' Namasudra members out of the 23 winning independents, Mukunda Behari Mullick and Prasannadeb Raikat. *It is not established yet if Mandal was offered a ministerial berth.* If indeed he was, it is highly unlikely he would not have accepted the offer.

Mandal isolated

The Quit India Movement followed by the terrible famine and the rise of communal clashes put the Federation leaders particularly Mandal in a tight spot. For Mandal, it was a double set back as he belonged to a party that did not participate actively; was a minister in the government which was held responsible for the terrible mis-management of the famine; and, the increasing communal clashes in rural Bengal over which he had little control. In the 1946 provincial election Mandal could win only from the reserved constituency as

the lone contestant from the SCF.

Mandal's induction in the Pakistan cabinet by Jinnah proved costly. Post-independence Pakistan shattered Mandal's dream

*"...Mr. Jogendranath Mandal, Law and Labour minister of Pakistan, who had asked the Scheduled Castes in Pakistan to look upon Jinnah as their savior and had even asked them to wear a badge blatantly suggestive of Islamic associations, was now rudely shaken from his dream. He grieved at the way things had shaped in Pakistan."*¹⁹

The developments led Mandal to believe he was betrayed by the Muslim League leadership.²⁰

*"Ambedkar...lamented about the sufferings of the Scheduled Castes, their forced conversions, and that they were not allowed to come to India,...I want to say is (that) it would be fatal for the Scheduled Castes...to put their faith in Muslims or the Muslim League. It has become a habit with the Scheduled Castes to look upon the Muslims as their friends simply because they dislike the Hindus. This is a mistaken view."*²¹ (emphasis author's)

Did Mandal feel 'let down' by his mentor-guide, especially regarding his known and declared 'trust' in the Muslim League? If that was so, was Mandal's resignation from the Pakistan cabinet driven by emotions other than that of the mayhem and, Pakistan's shift from equal rights for all, to political Islam?

Was it not his only available option to resign and return to India to mobilize his community? Did the public declarations espousing the glory of the Hindu society by his one-time mentor disappoint Mandal, especially viewing the conditions of the Scheduled Castes in Pakistan?

Poona Pact, Mandal, and Pakistan

Denying special status to the Scheduled Castes in Pakistan Constitution follows the same pattern that evolved in 1932 by the Poona Pact. The Scheduled Caste community was considered a religious minority within the Hindu fold. The Pakistan leadership failed to recognize 'Depressed Classes' as a separate minority outside of a broad category of religious minority, Hindus, in the majoritarian framework of the Pakistan state. It was now Mandal's turn to be kept out of crucial cabinet matters. He tendered his resignation on 8 October 1950. The letter offering his resignation is itself a document of historical importance vis a vis a theocratic state and the position of minorities.

6. The political philosophy of Jogendranath Mandal

The politics of the sub-continent

Jogendranath Mandal walked a path that he chose over everything that was exclusionary—and found himself alone at the end. In the Independence doldrums Mandal's ilk had little participation, their opinions swamped by other larger parties although they formed the majority among the Hindus.²² In the 1937 elections the Congress won only 73 out of 151 seats reserved for the

Scheduled Castes on all India basis as determined by the Poona Pact, meaning *even the Congress did not enjoy full support of the Dalits*. In Bengal too, 23 out of a total of 32 members were independents. With these independents Mandal, Hemchandra Naskar and others formed the Independent Scheduled Caste Party. But inter-community rivalry *fractured the already delicate balance between Mandal's leadership and other Dalit leaders*. In spite of SCF's efforts to remain independent and insulated from any major political party most of the Dalit-Scheduled Caste leaders' destination became either the Congress or the Mahasabha – the larger parties having consolidated their position through power and political pressure.

Several important developments took place for the first time in the sub continent's political history:

Possibilities of negotiations between grassroots political parties like the KPP and a national party like the Congress – that however, was a non-starter.

For the first time too, the upper caste – upper class hegemony was challenged in legislative contest and Mandal emerged victorious; negotiate and re-negotiate to stitch alliances with bargaining power and 'pressure politics' with groups that promised to look into the interests of the Dalits. During his *conditional alliances* with the Shyama-Huq or the Nazimuddin ministry or the Suhrawardy ministry, he joined as a member of the Independent Scheduled Caste Party or, the Scheduled Caste Federation – *never as a member of the Muslim League*. His *attempts to unite the Dalits and the Muslims were for political purposes only that were conditional* (a situation that still exists today, discussed later). His forming the Bengal Scheduled Caste Federation threw a challenge to the hegemony of the upper castes.

Was Mandals' philosophy good for all Dalits?

Mandal's quest for social and political recognition for his people during the tumultuous decades spanning the first provincial election in Bengal and his demise in 1968 may not have been wholly successful but the unprecedented steps that he took in his political journey – contesting an open election; starting an independent political party for the Dalits; joining a League-led ministry only to get his conditions met for his people; not joining any of the larger parties who he thought were speaking more for the caste Hindu interests; and create awareness among his people of their rights – may have set an example for Dalit leaders. Some called him 'maverick' but to achieve what he set out to achieve one needed to be unconventional and had it not been for the Partition tsunami he would be remembered with honour and pride.

The 1932 Award gave the 'casteless' the recognition that gave birth to representation and the beginning of a close relationship between the State and the 'lower castes'. Mandal's brand of politics was thus aimed not against the politics of the upper castes who denied them rights but towards an attempt to

unite his community and the Muslims. His success in extracting an annual education grant of Rs. 5 lakhs for Dalit students points to the fact that instead of actively opposing caste discrimination, he used the alliance to oppose the economic-political discrimination. *Rather he took advantage of caste disadvantage.* And that was a new alternative political thought! Uniting the Muslims and the Dalits was a political development— '*Bahujanabad*'. The possibility existed as far back during the 'Swadeshi' movement.

Assam

Not only did the Bengal SCF erode gradually in the face of the onslaught of the combined strength of the Congress and the Mahasabha, but also the Assam Scheduled Caste Federation, started along the lines of the All India Scheduled Caste Federation did not see any hope. Its biggest rival, the All Assam Scheduled Caste Association, although running as a non political organization ('their Constitution is silent on this') was very much a part of the Congress. By 1953 the All Assam SCF became inactive *although their province was not truncated*. It can be surmised that the strength of SCF weakened not due to Bengal Partition alone but due to their inner weaknesses such as finance, organizational strength, and popularity.²³ But it is clear that no one from the organization took part in the 1952 general elections.²⁴ Even among the Assam Scheduled Caste Association (Depressed Classes League) Namasudras were not heard after the general elections of '53. The Depressed Classes League too had grievances even before Independence. The issues raised with the government were not heard—that is strange as it was affiliated with the Congress and the province was then ruled by the Congress, unlike in Bengal. So, while there were raptures in Dalit identity politics in Bengal there were no pronounced disturbances among the SCF in Assam, yet they dissolved.

7. In the current context

The possibility of a shared Dalit-Muslim political platform

Around the same time Mandal achieved the historical feat of winning an open election in 1937, a few Muslim leaders from the artisanal 'class' were thinking of joining together to protest the denial of rights by 'upper class Muslims'. Abdul Qaiyum Ansari, a prominent leader was gathering together his community, the *Julaha*, the largest Muslim occupational caste, to 'promote a subaltern understanding of Muslim politics thereby contributing to more inclusive democratic visions'.²⁵ The All India Momin Conference (1939), steered by Ansari, spoke for the marginalized Muslims who were ignored by the powerful Muslim League which denied them political or social representation. The Conference emphasized on equality, dignity, and political autonomy. The Momin discourse visualized an inclusive democracy in India where their voices would also be heard through representational institutions, and not that of only

the powerful Ashrafs. Similar to the Scheduled Castes, they wanted the British administration to provide education, employment in recognition of their artisanal skills. A parallel can be drawn between the efforts of the leaders of the community such as Ansari and the various Dalit-Scheduled Caste organizations formed by leaders who introduced a 'range of anti-caste thought' and self-respect movements through political resistance and social organizations.

In the last couple of decades there have been several attempts to unite the Dalit and the Muslim community especially during electoral contests. But while the alliance remained clear on Dalit representation there was ambiguity over Muslim representation: who could be considered as true representative of the community? Do we see early 20th century upper caste-Dalit-Namasudra scenario being played? Galvanizing a Dalit-'backward caste' Muslims—Pasmandas—to share a common platform and fight their elections together would prove to be a powerful tool to challenge the Hindu upper castes. However, to challenge the right-wing hegemony, the political leadership generally failed to address an important issue: the sociopolitical diversity among the Muslim community. As, according to Kumar and Ansari,

*"...like any other social groups, Muslims are also socially 'heterogeneous community divided into more than 700 caste groups...In this scenario the "Muslim community" must be socially-politically addressed in terms of caste groups, not as a religious group... one could easily understand from the experiences of social justice crusader Manyavar Kanshiram. He highlighted the caste system and sociopolitical discrimination among Muslim society."*²⁶

The high castes like the Syeds, Sheikhs, Ashrafs do not want the Ansaris and the Qureshis to rise to their sociopolitical level. Once it is understood that social identity is more important today than religious identity, India shall truly have the *Bahujanabad* polity that Jogendranath Mandal had attempted almost ninety years ago.

That Mandal continues to be relevant stems from the fact that he is mentioned in election campaigns by the ruling party as a leader of the Dalits who were 'lured by Muslim League's politics which proved disastrous for them'.²⁷ It was a kind of a warning. On the other hand the Bahujan Samaj Party countered the BJP claim of Ambedkar being anti-Muslim, by stating— had Babasaheb not been elected to the Constituent Assembly with the help of Scheduled Caste members of the Bengal Assembly aided by the Muslim aristocracy, India would never have got the Constitution. While for the BSP, Mandal's alliance with Muslims was a 'great experiment,' the BJP claim that the alliance by Mandal proved to be a disaster as his resignation states.²⁸ Whichever argument one chooses to accept, the fact that Jogendranath Mandal had almost single handedly brokered this political alliance in the tumultuous pre-Partition Bengal keeping the upper caste Hindus out, would be too difficult to comprehend in present political environment. There are too many complexities. In spite of having a wide support base, the Samajvadi Party (SP), the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)

and others could not make a quest for stimulating the 'peripheral life' among the Muslims to make substantial gains to create a 'movement'; instead, it remained a party. In every successive election since 2007 – when the BSP won a respectable number of seats – its performance has been declining. The Mayawati-led BSP could not win a single seat in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and failed to forge a formal alliance with the Muslims despite fielding many Muslim candidates. It needs to be explored whether distribution of tickets favoured only the 'upper class' Muslims. However, the possibility of a grouping that includes the Dalit-Scheduled Castes and the Muslim 'backward-castes' do have strong potential to change the basic character of today's electoral politics, especially in Uttar Pradesh which goes to polls in 2027.

8. Dalit to 'Bahujan'

The formation of political organizations of the *Mulnibasi* with permanent independent identities remains elusive as, on the electoral battlefield these organizations can not contest independently. A few experiments such as the Bahujan Samaj Party were successful in Uttar Pradesh—where once the Scheduled Caste Federation held great political strength— and could hold on their own a few times, but successively lost ground, and in the last Parliamentary elections (2024) they drew a blank.²⁹ A broad based alliance of OBCs, Muslims and SC/STs would be an answer to the far right nationalists as was the situation in pre-Partition Bengal. Dwaipayan Sen asks just such a question, 'what is preventing the possibility of such an alliance today?'³⁰

The BSP realized socially backward Muslims should be given political importance. Kanshiram attempted to present a political discourse which would appear inclusive. 'Bahujan' representation was the core theme. A parallel can be drawn between the efforts of Mandal and Kanshiram where the latter states:

*"In this way Muslims have become 'helpless' and dependent; the restriction on (access to) education (that) is concomitant to social and economic advancement (is) a conspiracy to bind them to bondage'. The BSP leaders further stated: (since) 'low class' (Muslim) artisan communities of weavers, dyers, butchers etc. apparently 'belonged to the Dalit constituency', originally low-caste 'exploited' Hindus before their conversion to Islam, Muslims are inseparable from the Dalits. (Thus) to participate in government they need to 'unite) with Shudra (lower backwards) and ati-Shudra (Dalits)."*³¹

The transformation of the 'Bahujan' from the party to a movement can only happen when the Dalits together with the Muslim 'backward class' become aware that they too belong to a social category with common interests and political aspirations. Recognition as a distinct social category on the one hand, and assertions for their social and political rights on the other could transform these into movements with political power.

Notes and References (Endnotes)

1. The words Namasudra, Scheduled Caste, and Dalit have been used interchangeably in the essay. Jogendranath Mandal was a Namasudra, the largest among the Dalit community in Bengal.
2. Vivek Kumar. 'Nature and crisis of Dalit leadership: A brief socio-cultural profile, Dalits and Peasants', in *The Emerging Caste-class Dynamics*, ed. Ashish Ghosh, Gyan Sagar Publication, Delhi 1999, p. 58.
3. Kotani, H. (ed.), *Caste System, Untouchability and the Depressed*, Manohar, New Delhi 1997, p. 231-2.
4. Tagore, Rabindranath. 'Sadupay' (first published in *Probasi*, 1315 sraban, pp. 221-226, 1908); reproduced, Rabindra Rachanabali, Pancham Khanda in collection 'Samuha', quasiquicentennial edn., Visvabharati, 1986, pp. 713-14. (Translated by author).
5. Ahmed, Salahuddin. *Bangladesh Past and Present*, APH Publications, Delhi, p. 305.
6. Talukdar, Kiran. Jananayak Mukunda Behari Mallik: Jibon o Sadhana, Dekas Prakashani, 1988, p. 58. As early as 1915 he formed the All Bengal Namasudra Association,
7. The AISCF later became the Republican Party of India and Mandal became its head in post partition Bengal and also fought elections from its platform in 1964, without success.
8. Parvez, Altaf, Sabhapatir Abhibhashan, Bangiya Pradeshik Tafshili Jati Federashaner Pratham Mahasammelan (President's address, First Conference of Bengal Scheduled Caste Federation) in *Jogen Mandal Bahujanabad o Deshbhag*, Prathama Prakashan, Dhaka, 2019, p. 77.
9. Tagore, Rabindranath. Gandhi O Ambedkar, in Jagadish Chandra Mandal, Mahapran Jogendranath, Vol. 2.
10. The author has so far not found any document to show if Mandal was offered a ministerial berth in 1937.
11. IB File no. 191/46, West Bengal State Archives.
12. Tej Bahadur Sapru had suggested a middle-path solution to obfuscate the problem of Communal Award which Gandhiji found 'polarizing'. Dhananjay Keer. Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission, 2ndEdn, Popular Prakashan, Bombay 1962, p. 392; IGNOU, Indian National Movement, National Movement and Social Groups II, p. 19.
13. Parvez, Altaf. Ibid. p. 77-89
14. In 1938 Mandal and others had constituted the Independent Scheduled Caste Party with 21 independent MLAs. It is important to note, MLAs in the Congress party were not independent as they were elected from reserved constituencies. So, Mandal added the word 'independent'. Hemchandra Naskar, Rasiklal Biswas and others were members of this party who had supported Gandhi on his demands. The Independent SC Party received attention which was not received earlier either by the ML or the KPP. They realized that their freedom lay in remaining outside the parties of the upper castes.
15. Amrita Bazar Patrika. NMML Archives (microfilms), 9 December 1941.
16. Sonar Bangla. , Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Ist Instal. (Journals), NMML Archives, Teen Murti, 22 Sept-10 November 1945, (translation author's)

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17. Sisir Kumar Bose. *A Centenary Offering: Sarat Chandra Bose: 1889-1989, Remembering my Father*, Netaji Research Bureau, Netaji Bhaban, Calcutta.
 18. On 26th May 1945 MLA Raisaheb Manomohan Das wrote to SP Mookerjee with the following demands: 4 ministers from the Scheduled Castes; 4 Parliamentary Secretaries; '...in choosing the personnel, the Scheduled Caste members, who helped in the break of the ministry (emphasis author's), should have their extensive rights; a sum of Rupees ten lakhs per annum be earmarked on a recurring basis for the education of the Scheduled Castes;...an adequate sum be earmarked for backward Hindus not designated as Scheduled Castes., SP Mookerjee papers, (II-IV Instal., Legislative Assembly Papers, NMML Archives, Teen Murti Bhavan).
 19. Dhananjay Keer. *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, Popular Prakashan, 5th edn. 3rd reprint, Bombay 2018, p. 397.
 20. Author's interview with late Sri Gyanendranath Halder, close relative of Mandal whose brother Rajendranath Halder had accompanied Mandal on the above tour. The meeting with author took place on 19 March 2020 at his residence in Kolkata.
 21. Keer, *ibid*.
 22. The Scheduled Castes did not have a strong organizational set up in Bengal. 32 members in the legislative assembly were sufficient to build a strong group. However, the complexities of the caste structure and each caste group having its own organization led by reputed and senior Scheduled Caste leaders belonging to the party of their choice, did not help them build a homogenous political identity. Debesh Roy, *Barishaler Jogen Mandal*, Dey's Publishing, 2010, Calcutta (translation author's).
 23. The author has not been able to find any relevant documents to the origin/ date of the organization so far.
 24. Assam Pradesh Congress Committee Papers, Pkt. 43/s. No. 53/54.), PMML (formerly NMML) Archives.
 25. Arshad, Amanullah. 'Momin discourse as Subaltern Muslim Nationalism in Late Colonial India: A study of AQ Ansari's Speeches and Writings', PMML Occasional Paper, (History & Society, New Series), S. No. 117, December 2025.
 26. Kumar, Sanjay and Khalid Ansari, 'The Alliance Matrix: Dalit-Muslim Unity or Dalit Pasmanda Unity?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.57, Issue no. 2, 28 May 2022.
 27. <https://caravanmagazine.in/perspectives/jogendra-nath-mandal-bjp-bsp-up-election-2017> (last accessed January 2026).
 28. Thus we see the lone Schedule Caste leader-minister nominated to the Interim Government by the Muslim League, on Jinnah's recommendation, having joined the Liaquat government lost his position as the representative of the 'minorities' in Pakistan as, in a changing Pakistani political framework there seemed to be no recognition for the Scheduled Castes as a separate minority – only Hindus were. Gazala Asif, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00856401.2020.1689472#d1e172> (last accessed Nov 2024)
 29. *The Hindu*, 5 June 2024.
 30. Sen, Dwaipayan. 'The Contemporary Relevance of Jogendranath Mandal', academia.edu.
 31. Sarkar, Jayabrata. *Politics as Social Text in India: The Bahujan Samaj Party in UP*, Routledge T&F 2021, p. 73.