



DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL CLEAVAGE IN INDIA

**ETHNOGRAPHY OF RIOTS, EVERYDAY POLITICS AND
COMMUNALISM IN WEST BENGAL C. 2012–2021**

Suman Nath



DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL CLEAVAGE IN INDIA

This book explores the emergence of identity politics and violence at the forefront of political life in an Indian state. Through a close reading of everyday politics in West Bengal, India, which until recently boasted of the longest-serving elected communist government in the world, the volume presents unique observations on Indian politics and its trajectories.

One of the first ethnographic studies of religious polarisation and its interface with politics in West Bengal, this book:

- Offers a fresh perspective, both theoretically and empirically, by using longitudinal, multi-site ethnography, to explain the mechanisms by which identity issues have re-emerged;
- Studies key policy changes, political practices and series of invented traditions during periods of political transition;
- Examines intricate details of the micro-dynamics of the formulation and expansion of Hindu and Islamic fundamentalism and their political counterparts, which carry a capacity to push away secular, democratic forces from the existing political spectrum;
- Sheds light on the mechanisms of riots, its design, organisational bases and mechanisms of spread;
- Includes key observations from the 2021 elections in the state.

The volume will be of great interest to scholars and researchers of political science, social and cultural anthropology, sociology and South Asian studies.

Suman Nath teaches anthropology as Assistant Professor at Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam Government College, Kolkata, India. He did his PhD jointly under faculties from the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta and the University of Calcutta, India, in Anthropology. Since 2007, he has been researching issues of politics of resource allocation, which includes a stint as Research Associate at Public Policy and Management Group, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, India. His books include a monograph, titled *People-Party-Policy Interplay in India* (2020), a co-authored volume on *Sexuality, Identity and Health* (2014), and *Theory, Policy, Practice: Development and Discontents in India*, a collection of essays co-edited with Debraj Bhattacharya (2022). He has also published in international journals on issues of politics, corruption and governance. He was awarded to participate in different research programmes organised by the UNDP, Planning Commission and SaciWATERs. Apart from his academic publications, Suman runs a couple of internationally recognised blogs and writes popular articles in Little Magazines and Bengali dailies.

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Ethnography of Riots, Everyday Politics and
Communalism in West Bengal c. 2012–2021

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PEOPLE-PARTY-POLICY INTERPLAY IN INDIA

MICRO-DYNAMICS OF EVERYDAY POLITICS IN WEST
BENGAL, C. 2008–2016

Suman Nath



People-Party-Policy Interplay in India

This book analyses the political transition in West Bengal, India, which witnessed the longest democratically elected Left regime of the world. It examines and compares micro-dynamics of political practices in India and delineates underlying political themes of state politics. The author explores the politics of land reform and the anti-land-acquisition movements which were critical points in the contemporary history of Bengal in independent India. The volume further delves into the caste and communal politics which had been latent until the Left Front's loss in the state, as well as what sets apart politics in West Bengal from other Indian states.

Based on thorough ethnographic research, this volume will be of great interest to scholars and researchers of South Asian studies, politics and political processes, sociology and social anthropology.

Suman Nath teaches anthropology as Assistant Professor at Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam Government College, Kolkata, India. Since 2007, he has been researching on issues of politics of resource allocation, which includes a stint as Research Associate at Public Policy and Management Group, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, India. He has published in international journals, including *The Economic and Political Weekly*, *Journal of Human Values*, *Review of Development and Change*, *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance* on issues of politics, corruption and governance. He has also participated in different research programmes organised by the UNDP, Planning Commission and SaciWATERS. Apart from his academic publications, Dr. Nath runs a couple of internationally recognised blogs and writes popular articles in Little Magazines and Bengali dailies, including *Anandabazar Patrika*.

People-Party-Policy Interplay in India

Micro-dynamics of Everyday Politics
in West Bengal, c. 2008–2016

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