

LAND RIGHTS IN BANGLADESH

Problems of Management

T. Hussain


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Preface

During my thirty-five year-long career in the civil service, starting from the position of a magistrate in a district town in undivided Bengal to that of a Secretary to the Government in independent Bangladesh, I had the privilege of serving in various capacities in the administration of the country.

After I had completed the usual four month-long training in the cadastral survey and settlement operation in Dinajpur district in early 1939, I joined as an Assistant Settlement Officer in the Revisional Settlement Operation in Bakerganj district. Soon I came to learn that my former tent-mate in the above mentioned settlement training, Mr. Abdur Rashid was to join the Faridpur Revisional Settlement Operation. In those days, it was considered a matter of special recognition for a civil service officer to be selected for a posting in an on-going major settlement operation. Mr. Rashid was indeed a very bright officer, which was proved later by his early selection to the superior civil service cadre and subsequent elevation to the post of a Secretary in the Central Government of Pakistan.

However, I joined my new assignment with some reservation in mind. But a few weeks later, when I met, the veteran Director of Land Records & Surveys, Mr. Nepal Chandra Sen, I was confirmed in course of our conversation that presumably Settlement Department would not let go of me for sometime more to come. In actual fact, my presumption came true. But for my subsequent postings as Sub-Divisional Magistrate at Chittagong, Feni and Comilla between 1947 and 1953, all my other assignments were either in the Revenue Department or the Ministry or in the Land Records & Surveys Directorate. From Comilla I went to Barisal as Settlement Officer in 1953 and back in Comilla in 1956, I continued in the same position as State Acquisition Settlement Officer for Noakhali-Comilla-Chittagong Zone till the end of 1959. Thereafter, except for a short stint of nearly ten months as Member-Secretary of the East Pakistan

Land Revenue Commission (known as Mahmud Commission), I served again as Settlement Officer, Dhaka Settlement, which was followed by my appointment as Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue), Barisal and then as Additional Collector, Dhaka, before joining as Secretary, Board of Revenue in the Provincial Secretariat and serving there for a little over 3 years. This was followed by my next assignment as Director of Land Records & Surveys for long 6 years from early 1966 to early 1972. I ended up my revenue career as Secretary, Ministry of Land Administration and Land Reforms, Government of Bangladesh, retiring finally in April, 1973.

Since my retirement, on the suggestions from my many friends and well-wishers I embarked upon the task of writing a book on different aspects concerning land and connected issues in the light of my long and varied experience in Land Records Directorate and Revenue Ministry and in implementation of land reforms, so that these rewarding experiences were not lost.

During my tenure as Director of Land Records & Surveys, I delivered a series of lectures and talks to the under training officers at different camps like Hariari and Premtali in Rajshahi district, Manikganj in Dhaka district and finally at Chunati in Chittagong district. In between these settlement camps, there were a number of other such training camps organised throughout erstwhile East Pakistan, which were meant for training of officers of other ranks like Circle Officers (both revenue and development), newly recruited Settlement Kanungos and others. I had been invited to give talks on various subjects relating to land records and land administration in these camps.

I had retained copies of most of the written talks and lectures delivered by me in the camps and they came in very handy. Along with these were papers which I had prepared for seminars and workshops sponsored by Bangladesh Government jointly with such international bodies as the Commonwealth Secretariat. Finally, I was able to put together a manuscript, which maintained the chronology, accuracy and relevancy of subjects suitable for the modern readers. I have divided the chapters subjectwise avoiding technicalities as far as possible and tried to offer the reader materials of sustainable

rest. I have also treated matters relating to land surveys, records
 aration, laws of alluvion and diluvion, land administration, etc.
 historical perspective. Efforts in introducing land reforms in the
 ntry have been discussed chronologically. I concentrated on
 king available information to land policy, land administration,
 nd use planning and land development. But my special thrust has
 en on a pragmatic approach to ensure a sound land management
 tem. If my efforts can induce the future researchers, land plan-
 and policy makers to take to further analytical studies, not so
 from the point of view of a land economist as from that of a
 land manager, I will consider my work as reasonably
 ng.

ompleting this book, I have consulted the administrators at
 level as also those associated with policy making at the
 have also taken the views of agrarian economists, re-
 land owners, besides speaking at random to landless
 share-croppers. I tried to collect statistics and infor-
 relevant Government agencies and offices of Govern-
 Bureau. Unfortunately, I did not succeed in getting
 operation from all these sources equally well. But I
 y enquiries at my former places of work—the Minis-
 and Directorate of Land Records and Surveys—evoked
 from those now in charge. I am grateful to them and
 rs who co-operated with me in various other ways.
 ularly thankful to Sadrel Reza, Director-General,
 itute of Development Studies (BIDS), who took the
 through the manuscript and giving his comments.

In fond memory of
my dear youngest son Taimur Hussain,
who suddenly passed away at the prime age of his mid-thirties
at dawn on Friday, August 12, 1994 at Dhaka.

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