

**THE WEALTH AND WELFARE OF THE
BENGAL DELTA**

THE WEALTH AND WELFARE OF THE BENGAL DELTA

[Comprising the Districts of Mymensingh, Dacca, Bogra, Pabna,
Faridpur, Bakarganj, Tippera and Noakhali]

*Thesis approved for the Degree of Doctor of Science (Economics)
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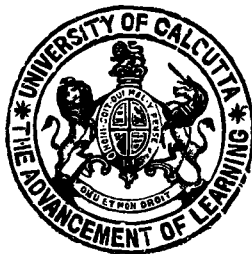
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PREFACE

When the writer joined the Dacca University in Eastern Bengal in 1921, the fact, of which he had already been aware, that there was no good book dealing with the economic organisation of Bengal, came more forcibly to his notice. The only book on the subject is the late Mr. Jack's "Economic Life of a Bengal District." It is an admirable exposition of certain aspects of the economic life of the Faridpur District, but it deals only with this district, and even then is incomplete in that certain other important aspects of that life find no place in it. Its main purpose was the vindication of the British Rule in Bengal from the economic point of view, and it hardly deals with the shortcomings of the economic organisation of the province and their causes. For these deficiencies of the book, however, Mr. Jack was not responsible. He had an unrivalled personal knowledge of a large part of Bengal, combined with high intellectual capacity and keen insight, and if he had had the necessary time, there can be no doubt that he would have produced a far better book. The book in question was written by him in London in 1915 entirely within five short days, largely from memory as most of the material which he had collected had been left behind in India, just before he went to the war front and was killed. Even a genius could not have done justice to the subject under such circumstances. But it is rather surprising that no one has yet come forward to carry further the work which Mr. Jack had begun so well, especially as in the other major provinces of India substantial work has already been done in rural economics. In Bombay, Mr. Keatinge, the late Director of Agriculture, has written "Rural Economy in the Bombay Deccan" and

“Agricultural Progress in Western India”; in Madras Dr. Gilbert Slater, Professor of Economics in the University, has brought out “Some South Indian Villages”; in the United Provinces, Mr. Martin Leake, the Director of Agriculture, has written “The Bases of Agricultural Practice and Economics in the United Provinces”; and in the Punjab Mr. Calvert, the Registrar of Co-operative Societies, has produced “The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab.” The present writer therefore commenced a close and first-hand study of the economic conditions of rural Bengal as soon as he joined the Dacca University and continued it without intermission for more than two years. As the whole province of Bengal would have been too large an area for this study, and as the natural and economic conditions materially differed in East, West and North Bengal, he selected for his study the deltaic portion of the province, comprising the districts of Mymensingh, Dacca, Bogra, Pabna, Faridpur, Bakarganj, Tippera and Noakhali, in which these conditions were more or less uniform; and the phrase “the Bengal delta” used throughout the following pages refers only to this tract and not to any other part of Bengal. The writer has travelled throughout this delta, and these pages are very largely the result of his own personal observations and investigations, but he has also drawn on the experience of many men, both official and non-official, who have given it out in the course of discussions and conferences and in Government reports and other writings, and to whom the writer is much indebted.

The ignorance of rural economics, on the part of the intelligentsia of Bengal as of the other parts of India, even of those whose homes are in villages, and their apathy towards agriculture are great, yet the working out of the new system of Government, whose paramount object must be the improvement of the economic conditions of the great mass of population deriving its livelihood from agriculture,

is in their hands. There is therefore a considerable risk of mistakes being made, unless a sound knowledge of rural economics can be spread among them. History shows how easy it is to advocate and adopt wrong remedies, which promise good results to the ignorant, but which produce the effect of aggravating economic ills instead of curing them. These pages will not have been written in vain, if they arouse the interest of at least a few members of this class, in the economic problems of rural Bengal, and if they stimulate them to consider the remedies that they advocate.

The title of the book was first suggested by Prof. Pigou's famous "Wealth and Welfare." But before it could be completed, the writer found that by a curious coincidence, the same title had independently suggested itself to Mr. Calvert also. However, as the title indicates most effectively the main purpose of these pages, it has been retained.

The writer is deeply indebted to the late Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, the Vice-Chancellor and the Syndicate of the Calcutta University for taking up the publication of the work at the beginning of 1924, but owing to the pressure of work on the University Press, it could not be published till the middle of 1926.

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GLOSSARY OF INDIAN WORDS

- Abwabs—Illegal exactions by landlords from tenants.
Aman paddy—Paddy harvested in winter.
Aratdars—Brokers.
Aus paddy—Paddy harvested in autumn.
Bhadralog—The respectable and educated class.
Beparis—Petty traders.
Baid—Depressions in table-land.
Barga—Produce-rent.
Bigha— $\frac{1}{8}$ of an acre.
Bil—Marsh.
Boro paddy—Paddy harvested in spring.
Chamar—Low-class Hindu.
Char—Alluvial island.
Chaukidar—Village policeman.
Hat—Village market.
Hookah—A kind of smoking-pipe.
Ijaradars—Contracting agents of landlords for the management of market places.
Jheel—Marsh.
Kachuri—Water-hyacinth weed.
Kala Azar—A type of fever prevalent mainly in Assam.
Kanango—Recorder of rights in land in villages.
Katcha—Temporary.
Khal—Canal.
Khatian—Document in which rights in land are recorded.
Khas mahals—Government estates.
Mahajan—Money lender.
Pacca—Permanent.
Pagree—Turban.

Paradanashin—Kept behind a curtain and not allowed to unveil in the presence of strangers.

Pargana—Part of a district.

Patwari—Village Accountant.

Raiyat or Ryot—Landholder.

Sanad—Legal document conferring some office or privilege.

Taktaposh—Low rude wooden platform.

Zamindar—Landlord or landowner.

Zamindari—Landed Estate.

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