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**HOMESTEAD FORESTRY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT:
A SOCIO-EMPIRICAL STUDY OF BANGLADESH**

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requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the role of homestead forests in the development of poor, labour surplus economies. The term 'homestead forest' refers to the collection of vegetation - trees, plants, herbs, creepers and others - which almost all rural households in Bangladesh grow, for their own use as well as for sale, using the land in and around their homesteads and dwellings. The term 'development' encompasses economic, social, cultural and ecological aspects of countries. The thesis therefore examines the role of homestead forests in this wider context.

It starts by reviewing the existing theoretical literature on development drawing on the works of sociologists, social anthropologists, development economists, geographers and others. It argues that many of the theories do not fit the particular conditions of the very poor agriculture-dependent economies such as Bangladesh. This study therefore advances the hypotheses that of 'non-conventional' approaches involving the development of the resources of homestead forests in the rural areas would go a long way towards assisting the poor, landless masses of Bangladesh. An extensive survey of the many and varied uses of homestead forests is undertaken to support these hypotheses on the basis of direct observation and experience. To give further content to the hypotheses, village surveys were undertaken in carefully selected areas of Bangladesh. With the help of scientifically formulated questionnaires the situation of the rural people of the selected villages was examined. This helped to identify the many causes of poverty and helplessness among the rural poor. The methods of survival were also focused on in these surveys of the rural people. It became clear that homestead forests play a major role in the lives and livelihoods of the rural people. The question why the large scale forestry development programmes did not help the rural poor also figured in this investigation. It was found that the large scale commercial types of forests deny access to the majority of the rural people, while homestead forests, being directly owned and controlled by the people, provide them with much needed support. It is true that such support, however valuable, is still inadequate. It is also unevenly distributed among the rural people. The survey therefore looked at the distributional aspects of homestead forestry resources within the survey villages. The findings confirm the need to strengthen this valuable resource base in rural Bangladesh if widespread poverty, and its inevitable concomitant, social and political unrest and instability are to be attacked.

The study ends with a number of recommendations to make the changes necessary for more efficient utilization of the homestead forestry resources for the benefit directly of the poor and, indirectly, the rest of society as well.

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