

# **Class Analysis of East Bengal Society**

**By Siraj Sikder**

First published in 1970

Republished in corrected form in changed political situation in 1972

Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution. The basic reason why all previous revolutionary struggles achieved so little was the failure to unite with real friends in order to attack real enemies.

A revolutionary party is the guide of the masses, and no revolution ever succeeds when the revolutionary party leads them astray. The 23 years long experience of East Bengal revolution and 46 years' experience of Indian revolution proved that the revisionists, neo revisionists, Trotskyites and Gueverists have misguided people and as a consequence of that, revolution of India and East Bengal could not materialize.

We must learn from that treacherous negative example and will materialize people's liberation by guiding revolution on to the correct path. We must pay attention to unite with real friends to attack upon real enemies.

In order to distinguish real friends from real enemies, we must make general analysis of different classes of East Bengal society and their respective attitude towards revolution.

What is the condition of different classes of East Bengal society?

## **The East Bengal Bourgeoisie**

The East Bengal bourgeoisie is divided into four sections.

First section is lackey to Indian expansionism, second one is lackey to Soviet Social imperialism, and third one is lackey to US led imperialism while the fourth one is national bourgeoisie.

Lackey to expansionism, social imperialism and imperialism the bourgeoisie has a close relation to East Bengal feudal. This class represents the most backward reactionary production relation of East Bengal and hinders the development of production force. Their position is contradictory to the perspective of East Bengal revolution. They take the side of feudalism and foreign, and they always play very much reactionary role.

They are the bureaucratic bourgeoisie class.

High officials of state owned industries, business and other companies of East Bengal also belong to this class.

### **The fourth section of bourgeoisie**

They are oppressed by Indian expansionism, imperialism and their lackeys and chained by internal feudalism. This is why they have contradiction with both the two. In this aspect they are one of the revolutionary forces.

As oppressed by Indian expansionism, Soviet social imperialism, imperialism and feudalism, this section of bourgeoisie show some aspiration in struggle against the above mentioned enemies.

On the other side, they are not able to carry this struggle to final stage because politically and economically they are irresolute and still they have economic tie with feudalism and foreign exploiters. This aspect becomes clear when people's revolutionary force strengthens itself.

From the dual character of national bourgeoisie we see, sometimes, in some extent, they may take part in struggle against foreign and feudal exploitation and in this way, can be treated as revolutionary force. But in other times, they themselves may follow the lackey-traitor bourgeoisie.

The national bourgeoisie never had any political party of its own, nor do they have now.

At present, not only they are separate from the lackey-traitor bourgeoisie and feudal lords but also they are ally of revolution. This is why we must necessarily have a correct line on national bourgeoisie.

That line is the principle of unity and struggle. Proletarians will on the one hand unify national bourgeoisie by maintaining its own independence, sovereignty and initiative, and on the other hand, will be vigilant and struggle against their vacillation and treachery.

### **Petit bourgeoisie**

Apart from peasants, those who are included in this class are:

- a) Vast intellectuals
- b) Petit businessmen
- c) Handicraftsmen
- d) Professionals

Their social condition resembles with middle peasants. All of them are being exploited, pauperized and destroyed by Indian expansionism and its lackeys, social imperialism, imperialism and feudalism. This is why different sections of petit bourgeoisie class are a motive force of revolution and is close ally to proletariat. They can liberate themselves only under the leadership of proletariat. Now, let us analyze its different strata.

#### **Firstly: Intellectuals**

Students & youths, teachers of primary and secondary schools, lower rank government functionaries, small clerk etc. (are intellectuals). They are not separate class or strata. At the present social condition of East Bengal, they can be classified as petit bourgeoisie by assessing their family origin, livelihood condition and political views.

Most of the intellectuals and student, except those who collude with Indian expansionism, social imperialism, imperialism and feudalism, are oppressed and afraid of losing job or study. This is why they use to be revolutionaries, more or less they are familiar with bourgeoisie scientific outlook, have sharp political consciousness and sometimes they play advance role or at the present stage of revolution they play the role of making contact to people. Vast poor intellectuals may embrace workers and peasants to take part in revolution.

Like other countries, in our country too, Marxism first got its publicity among the intellectuals and they are the ones who first adopted Marxism. Without revolutionary intellectuals, it is not possible to successfully organize revolutionary forces and organize revolutionary activities.

But the intellectuals often tend to be subjective and individualistic, impractical and irresolute until they have thrown themselves heart and soul into mass revolutionary struggles, or made up their minds to serve the interests of the masses and become one with them.

Hence although the revolutionary intellectuals in East Bengal can play a vanguard role or serve as a link with the masses, not all of them will remain revolutionaries to the end. Some will drop out of the revolutionary ranks at critical moments and become passive, while a few may even become enemies of the revolution. The intellectuals can overcome their shortcomings only in mass struggles over a long period.

### **Secondly: small businessmen**

Generally, they run small shop and keep one or two executive. They are afraid of being bankrupt with the exploitation of Indian expansionism, social imperialism, imperialism and their lackeys.

### **Thirdly: handicraftsmen**

They are huge in number. They have means of production of their own and they do not employ people, only just keep one or two helper or apprentice. Their condition is like middle peasants.

### **Fourth: professionals**

Doctors, advocates and other professionals are included in this type. They do not exploit others, or slightly they do. Their condition is like handicraftsmen.

These parts of petit bourgeoisie have massive population whom, of course, we will bring to our side and we must protect their interest, because generally they may join revolution or support it. They are our good ally. Their weak aspect is that

some of them are easily influenced by bourgeoisie propaganda. We must carry revolutionary propaganda and organize work among them.

Petit bourgeoisie may be divided in follows sections:

### **Higher section of petit bourgeoisie**

Those are included in this section who have some surplus money and food or yearly who earn more than they need to survive themselves by manual or mental labor. These types of people like very much to get rich. Though they don't want to save huge money, they always want to promote themselves to the level of bourgeoisie. Their mouths water copiously when they see the respect in which those small moneybags are held. People of this sort are timid, afraid of government officials, and also a little afraid of the revolution. Since they are quite close to the bourgeoisie in economic status, they have a lot of faith in its propaganda and are suspicious of the revolution. This section is a minority among the petty bourgeoisie and constitutes its right-wing.

### **Middle section of petit bourgeoisie**

They in the main are economically self-supporting. They are quite different from the people in the first section; they also want to get rich, but suffering from the exploitation of the Indian expansionism, social imperialism and their lackeys, they feel they cannot earn enough to live on even by working longer hours. They merely doubt whether revolution can succeed, don't want to take the risk of movement easily, hesitate to join it and prefer to be neutral, but they never oppose the revolution. This section is very numerous, making up about one-half of the petty bourgeoisie.

### **Lower section of petit bourgeoisie**

This section consists of those whose standard of living is falling. Many in this section, who originally belonged to better-off families, are undergoing a gradual change from a position of being barely able to manage to one of living in more and more reduced circumstances, their life is becoming more and more miserable. They are in great mental distress because there is such a contrast between their past and their present. Such people are quite important for the revolutionary movement;

they form a mass of no small proportions and are the left-wing of the petty bourgeoisie.

In normal times these three sections of the petty bourgeoisie differ in their attitude to the revolution. But in times of war, that is, when the tide of the revolution runs high and the dawn of victory is in sight, not only will the left-wing of the petty bourgeoisie join the revolution, but the middle section too may join, and even right-wingers, swept forward by the great revolutionary tide of the proletariat and of the left-wing of the petty bourgeoisie, will have to go along with the revolution.

### **Petit handicraftsmen**

Petit handicraftsmen are called semi proletariat because they very often are compelled to sell labor power partly despite having simple means of production and independent profession. Their economic condition is very similar to that of rural poor peasants. In terms of big burden of livelihood, gap between earning and livelihood expenditure, constant agony of poverty and danger of unemployment, they are more or less similar to poor peasants.

### **Shop assistants**

Shop assistants are hired workers. They run their family with their small salary. Though price of daily goods increase every year, their salary increases only once. If you have a close conversation with them, they will spontaneously tell you their endless distresses. Their condition is not much different than poor peasants and petit handicraftsmen. They accept revolutionary propaganda very easily.

### **Hawkers**

Hawkers may sell products moving or having a shop alongside the road. Their capital is small and earning is small too, by which, they can't sustain themselves. Their condition is not much different than poor peasants. So, they also need revolution like poor peasants what will change their present situation.

### **Landlord class**

Landlord has land but he doesn't take part in labor (or slightly he may do) and live by exploiting peasants. Their main form of exploitation is to collect money from

tenancy: contract cropping, share cropping and its share. He may run industry and business.

[Usurers whose main income is from interest and who have a better living condition than average middle peasants may also be classified as landlord]

Taking care of Oakf property, school and other properties are also included in this exploitation.

If a bankrupt landlord doesn't take part in labor and live a better life than average middle peasants by exploiting others or with the help of relatives and friends, then he also will belong to landlord class.

Panchayat member, government employees (Tahshilder, C.O, Police Officers), Mujiv-ist, Pro Moscow local tyrants and evil gentry are representative of Landlord class and they are very much cruel. Very often small local tyrants and evil gentry are political representative of landlord class and are very much cruel. Very often petit local tyrants are found among the rich peasants.

Those who help landlord in tenancy of share and contract cropping etc., whose main part of income depends on taking care of landlord's property and exploitation of peasants by landlord and if their living condition is better than middle peasants, will be included in landlord class.

This class is a main pillar of foreign exploitation. They hinder the political, economic and cultural development of East Bengal and they don't have any progressive role. This is why let alone being motive force of revolution, they are rather target of revolution. At the present time of independence struggle of East Bengal, a section of this class is working as lackey of Indian expansionism while another section is wavering. But a notable extent of middle and small landlords, who have come in touch with capitalist production a little bit, may support independence struggle. We must try to unite them with us under our leadership. They are the rural enlightened gentry.

### **Rich peasants**

As a general rule, rich peasants have lands. Some rich peasants' some of the lands are usually taken in tenancy of contract or share cropping while rest of the lands

belong to them. Some of the rich peasants don't have any land of their own but they took land in tenancy of contract or share cropping. Generally rich peasants have more than average tilling tools (plough, cows) and more cash. He himself takes part in labor, his main form of exploitation is wage labor (long term wage labor). Apart from that he may give part of his lands to others in tenancy of share cropping or contract and carry exploitation in that way. He may lend money or he may engage in business. Those will be classified as rich peasants who till part of his fertile lands himself without employing any wage labor while carry exploitation by giving rest of the lands in tenancy or lending money or in other ways. Rich peasants regularly carry exploitation and that is the main source of his income.

Generally speaking, they may play some role in independence struggle of East Bengal and may remain neutral in revolutionary land struggle against landlord. This is why we will not classify rich peasants as landlord and will not take the line of destroying them immaturely.

### **Middle peasants**

Many middle peasants have lands of their own. Some of the middle peasants own some lands while rest of the lands they have are taken in share cropping or contract tenancy. Total or main part of middle peasants' income comes from their own labor. Generally he doesn't exploit others, rather by the end of the year, he himself is exploited through giving share of share cropping, contract money, loan interest, increasing government rent, development tax, education tax, village police tax etc. Generally he doesn't sell labor power (doesn't engage in wage labor). Though some of the better off middle peasants carry some exploitation, but that is not their regular or main source of income.

Middle peasants not only take part in national and democratic revolution but also they will accept socialism. This is why all the middle peasants are close ally of proletariat and an important motive force of revolution. Support or opposition of middle peasants is an important question for the victory or defeat of revolution. This is especially true after agrarian revolution when they are the majority of the population.

### **Poor peasants**

Some of the poor peasants have a few lands and tilling tools of their own. Poor peasants usually till land through taking land in share cropping or contract tenancy. Poor peasants are exploited through share cropping (giving share of product), giving contract money, interest of loan, increasing rent of government, development tax, education tax, village police tax, corruption of government employees and above all wage labor.

Generally middle peasants don't have to sell labor power (that means, he doesn't have to work as wage labor) while poor peasants have to do. This is the main way of making distinction between middle peasants and poor peasants.

Poor peasants easily accept revolutionary propaganda. Working class and its party, of course, by relying on poor peasants, will unite middle peasants, fight against landlord class and carry land reform. Chairman Mao said, *"In initial period of revolution middle peasants wavered. It is only after they clearly see the general trend of events and the approaching triumph of the revolution that the middle peasants will come in the side of the revolution."*

Poor and middle peasants can free themselves only under the leadership of proletariat. By uniting poor and middle peasants, only proletariat can direct revolution to victory. By peasants we mean agricultural workers, poor peasants and middle peasants.

### **Proletariat**

Modern industrial proletarians of East Bengal are working mainly in Jute mills, sugar mills, textile mills, railway, dock and transport etc. Most of them are chained in slavery of state owned capital. Despite small in number, industrial proletariat represents the new production force of East Bengal. They are the most progressive class of modern East Bengal and the leading force of revolutionary movement. Why do they play the role? The reason is that they are centralized. No other section of people is as centralized as they are. The second reason is that their financial condition is low. They are deprived of means of production. Only things they have are their hands. They don't have any hope to get rich. Indian expansionism, social imperialism, imperialism and their lackeys behave very much cruelly with them. So, they are vanguard in struggle. Urban daily laborer, Rickshaw and van pullers, peddlers, sweeper, house maid, hotel boy and tobacco workers etc. also have

nothing but their hands. Their economic condition is very similar to that of industrial workers. But they are less centralized than industrial workers and their role in production is less important as well.

### **Rural proletariat or rural worker or agricultural worker**

Still there is very little capitalist agriculture in East Bengal. By rural proletariat we mean yearly, monthly or daily basis hired peasants. These types of peasants neither have land and agricultural tools, nor any capital. They survive only by selling own labor power. Their working day is so long, salary is so little and working condition is so bad and insecure that they are comparatively in worse condition than other workers. In rural areas, these types of people suffer most and their status in peasant movement is important like poor peasants.

### **Lumpen proletariat**

There are a lot of unemployed in cities and countryside. As they are deprived of normal livelihood, they adopt unfair means. It created dacoit, thief, beggar, prostitute and many others who sustain by monkhood, snake charming, selling amulet etc. This social strata is temporary. Some of them may be bought by reactionaries while others may join revolution. This type of people lacks of constructive quality and easily be destructive. After joining revolution, inside the revolutionary rank, they are the source of roving rebel banditry and anarchism. So, we must know how to change them and how to resist their destructive tendency.

From the above analysis we see our enemy is Indian expansionism and its ruling regime, Soviet social imperialism, US imperialism and their dependent lackey bourgeoisie and feudalists and their dependent reactionary section of intellectuals.

The leader of revolution is working class and its party, closest ally is peasant and petit bourgeoisie. We shall have principle of unity and struggle towards national bourgeoisie. We have to try to unite them under our leadership so long as they support national liberation and democracy and do not oppose proletarian party. When they oppose proletarian party, national liberation and democracy, we must criticize them and expose their reactionary character in front of people and struggle against them.

[From: <http://sarbaharapath.com/?p=217> (Dec. 1, 2012)]