

Relative positions of individuals in society

Economic solvency of an individual can resolve many of his or her problems in life. If one has financial ability, he or she can send the children to school, participate in politics, feel that he or she is somebody of importance in the society in order to achieve the objective of securing a relatively high position, writes **M Azizur Rahman**

PEOPLE at all levels are interested in up scaling their respective economic, social and political positions. However, people are not equally interested in everything. For example, the poorest of the poor family are mostly interested in the things that are needed for their survival and living, including food or three meals a day. They do not care much about the social or political position. They participate in politics only as voters. They also do not care much about taking the role-play of a social leader. The very affluent people or the people of the upper income bracket are not very interested in the job of a public or private sector official. Or they are very little interested in the job of government officials or bureaucracy in particular. They have a lot of substantial amount of inherited property from their parents or forefathers, in addition to their existing income.

The upper class individuals can easily acquire a lot of assets and property at the beginning of their working life by using their family and social connection. What the members of the affluent families like to do is playing a role-model for the society as investors, entrepreneurs and being the ones among the development partners of the government as the ruling class. They employ the people of the working class and help the government, directly and indirectly, to run the state by paying progressive income tax. Upper-class individuals are, therefore, interested in socio-economic positions in the society.

In many developing countries of traditional culture, marriage takes place between two equally smart individuals as well as between two equivalent families or two families of equivalent sta-

tus and reputation. It is highly unusual to see a girl of the affluent family getting married to a boy of the poorest of the poor family. In the traditional culture of developing countries, we also look for the social and political status of two families through the marriage between their children. According to the Nobel Laureate Prof. Grary S. Baker of Chicago University, "Marriage takes place between two equally smart".

Some of the affluent families get directly involved in politics, who are able to acquire social power and individual reputation, both domestically and internationally. The poorest of the poor or the richest of the rich or the most affluent people of the solvent class are very little interested in getting involved in the job of bureaucracy. All it means that the lower middle-class, upper-middle class and the middle-class families on an average and their children, are mostly interested, particularly these days, in getting involved in the system of bureaucracy. Precisely speaking, the children of lower-income families are not able to have an environment to be qualified or so, do not have enough ability to compete for the jobs of bureaucrats. Only a very few of the children from affluent families are interested in the job of bureaucracy. According to the historical family characteristics of the upper class families, many or more of their children look for the money-making business and social reputation. Some of them also get interested in acquisition of political power, which may be or may not be their family tradition.

People are interested in the societal relative position or would like to be

according to their ability and permissible environment or atmosphere. Oligarchy is a small group of people who run a country or organization. Oligarchies eventually take over democracy. Once again, people are interested in relative positions in the society. Or other things remaining the same, we would like to have a better position in the society than the others. For example, about a dozen of faculty members or teachers have been quitting their jobs at Uttara University, Bangladesh, to join the bureaucratic jobs for better prospects either for getting higher salary or achieving higher social status or both. Mr. Jhony is a direct nephew of this writer; he has been working for a public sector commercial bank in Bangladesh (2012) with a good compensation package. He has been trying very hard to compete for the civil service examination for the public sector administrative jobs or magistracy in particular. The Superintendent of Police (SP) is a very prestigious and powerful job in the traditional bureaucratic system in Bangladesh. According to a senior bureaucrat, government officials from top to bottom or from the chief of the army or that of the police to village police ('chowkider') are all traditionally very powerful individuals in the society of Bangladesh. According to a senior public sector administrative officer, she is proud of saying that "Wherever I go, power goes with me, and my body and mind are always accompanied by my bureaucratic power of both physical and psychological in nature". Once again, bureaucratic jobs are both prestigious and powerful.

Most of the bureaucrats, as noted earlier, are from broad range of mid-

ple reasons. We would like to have the relative position in the society with good name and fame, status and prestige, both socially, economically and politically. We are careful about our relative position in the society. Does it mean that we are relatively less careful of the other's position in the society? The answer is 'Yes' to some extent. We do serve ourselves first, before we can serve others. Politicians and bureaucrats are assumed to serve everybody in the society. As a result, some sections of the poor people in the society get dropped or are left out of the system or channel of the societal oligarchy. A section of the poor people who are quite a few in number in any or many societies, do not fall in the group, for which the hypothesis of relative position in the society does apply. The people belonging to the lowest of the lower-income class are mostly busy to acquire food and nutrition to meet their needs for survival. They do trade-off between food and leisure. They work more to buy food even at lower wages and enjoy less leisure. They face a segmented labour market supply curve in the economy, where labour supply increases with lower wages. Or the lower is the market wage, surprisingly the higher is the labour supply. The poor substitutes leisure for food. In economics, once again, their labour market supply curve starts from the bending point of the backward bending labour supply curve, which is also called a forward falling labour supply curve. This group of workers or labourers do not care about their relative position in the society, compared to those who love to

relatively high positions under societal oligarchy. This situation is inhuman for the poor section of the general people in the society. Or it is not good or for the expected social services which a society normally expects from its ruling class including bureaucrats, investors and politicians.

Sometimes the ruling class (including bureaucrats) ignore some sections of people, intentionally or unintentionally. A great example of this kind is May Day - May 1, 1886. The workers or the working class as a whole used to be oppressed world-wide and in the USA until the end of 19th century. The oppression of workers used to be of various nature, such as low wages, higher working hours, less than congenial working environment and unacceptably less than the appropriate amount of allowance and fringe benefits. In the USA, maybe like any other countries, the ruling class did oppress the working class in several ways. Workers did not have any limit of hours to work. They were used to be forced to work a lot more than eight hours per day without any overtime. More hours of work may otherwise be beneficial to the society. At the same time, there should be an opportunity of substitution between work and leisure. However, we can decrease our leisure and work more for the extra benefits, if we would like that. Extra benefits or compensation should be at a higher rate than the normal wage. But it was not the case in Chicago industrial zone during the mid-1880's.

The relative position of the workers or their financial position in particular was ignored inhumanly by the ruling

cians and bureaucrats. Once again, the workers did not have any opportunity to think of their self-interest and relative economic positions in the society. This was an undesirable working environment. This resulted in a revolt in the industrial zone of Chicago in May 01, 1886. Quite a few workers were shot down by the US policemen. This unfortunate phenomenon is greatly celebrated as the May-day or Labour day World-wide. Finally, the US society was forced to approve the demand for limited working hours of eight hours per day and the extra-allowance as overtime. During 1890-1927, the celebration of May Day was established world-wide. Finally, working class or the labourers who range from menial workers to officers or employees with black-and-white jobs have been working world-wide to date for eight hours per day.

The people are interested in many things in life. Among which name and fame, social reputation and goodwill, social power, political affiliation and political power, economic solvency and financial ability are very important. Economic solvency of an individual can resolve many of his or her problems in life. If one has financial ability, he or she can send the children to school, participate in politics and have a good social life. Finally, one can feel that he or she is somebody of importance in the society in order to achieve his or her great objective of obtaining a relatively high position in the society through a device of involvement in the bureaucratic system.

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