

The July Uprising in Bangladesh

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On the 5th of August, 2024, Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled to India. In this way the fifteen and a half years of fascist Awami rule has ended in Bangladesh. The July uprising was the most extensive, profound and aggressive event against the rulers in the series of people's uprising that have taken place here since 1952.

After this mass uprising, not only Sheikh Hasina, but the top floor, middle floor, and even the bottom floor leaders and workers at all levels of her party left the country or went into hiding inside the country fearing people's attack. Many have been caught by the police. Many others were killed or seriously injured by the angry mob. Such predicament of the rulers has never been seen after any other mass uprising in Bangladesh. This reaction has happened in the context of Sheikh Hasina's fifteen and a half years of all-compassing and all-out exploitation and torture on the masses. Rather than exploitation, torture creates a stronger reaction among the people against the ruling party. During Sheikh Mujib's three-and-a-half year rule, people were tortured on a large scale, but the torture of Sheikh Hasina's government exceeded even that. One of the reasons is that her rule lasted much longer than that of Sheikh Mujib. There is no doubt that if Sheikh Mujib's rule was more than three and a half years, then his situation would have been similar to that of Sheikh Hasina. In that situation he would either had been killed by the people or flee from the country.

The public anger that was expressed throughout the country against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman during the people's uprising of July is very significant. Because until now, through Awami League's campaign, Sheikh Mujib was projected as the savior of the nation, the great hero of the liberation war, the father of the nation, etc. Sheikh Hasina placed her father Sheikh Mujib in the seat of god as the hero of everything in the country and making all her misdeeds like torture, disappearances, murder, reckless looting, money laundering etc to be rational and acceptable, using his image, presenting themselves to the public as

successors of Sheikh Mujib's regime. As a result of this, people felt angry against Sheikh Hasina, against the torture of Awami league government, and that anger also arose against Sheikh Mujib. He became the target of public anger. In that situation, with the fall of the Awami League government led by Sheikh Hasina on August 5, the people spontaneously turned against not only the leaders at all levels of that government, but also wanted to erase the false image and influence of Sheikh Mujib from Bangladesh. They set on fire his house on 5th August and destroyed his statues and murals all over the country including Dhaka.

Ever since she came to power after winning the 2008 elections, Sheikh Hasina had been determined to cling to power by any means. That is why from the beginning she started to pull different types of strings. The most notable of these strings was the elimination of the electoral system in Bangladesh. Her initial move in this regard was an all-out attack on the opposition, especially the BNP, depriving them of all their democratic rights, throwing them in such a position so that it becomes impossible for them to even participate in the elections, far from winning them.

That is what happened in the 2014 elections. All opposition political parties, including the BNP, boycotted the election. As there were no candidates in 153 seats, Awami League won 153 seats before the elections and achieved the necessary majority to form the government! Not only in the history of Bangladesh, but in the history of the whole world, this kind of election, farce in the name of election has not been seen anywhere before. In fact, Sheikh Hasina continued to create and implement plans to remain in power by performing farcical dramas in the name of elections while maintaining constitutional legitimacy.

BNP decided to participate in the 2018 elections and took part in it. But Sheikh Hasina created a strange situation by controlling and exploiting all the state agencies during the election. Voting results were altered through rigging. Awami League's goons with the help of the Election

Commission filled their ballot boxes the previous night before the polls began. Awami League won in almost all the seats!

The events of 2024 were even more shocking. All opposition political parties boycotted the election. As a result, none but Awami League was in the field. Only Awami League people submitted nomination papers to participate in the elections. From among them, Awami League selected its own candidates and nominated them. But then other candidates of Awami League decided to participate in the election instead of withdrawing their names. For this, as per the constitutional rules, these candidates were supposed to be expelled from the party. But instead of doing so, Sheikh Hasina, without taking any action against them, announced that even if they do not get party nomination, those who will be elected will be considered as members of Awami League if they win. This means that those who will win the election will remain members of Awami League! As a result, Awami League formed the government for the fourth time in succession after winning 100 percent of the seats in the 2024 elections. This is the story of Awami League being in government power since 2009.

Since the formation of the government in 2009, Sheikh Hasina made a plan to stay in power for indefinite period and started taking various steps accordingly. The way they conducted elections in 2014, 2018, and 2024 was part of this conspiratorial plan. For this, they practically destroyed the electoral system by interfering in the elections. Showing honour to constitutional rules and regulations on paper, they showed their thumbs to the constitution by conducting the election in this way.

Winning the elections was not possible only by controlling the election processes. For this it was necessary that the opposition political parties, especially the BNP, do not participate in the elections or remain in a weak condition. To this end, Sheikh Hasina's government controlled all the armed forces including police, RAB, bureaucracy, courts, election commission, etc. They prevented them from organising meetings, assemblies, etc or attacked them if they did so. To this end, they not only used police, they also used the goons of their students' organisation, the

Chhatra League. They arrested thousands of opposition party leaders and activists on false charges or without any charge at all. Thousands of opposition activists were forced to leave their homes due to their attacks and oppression. These raids were accompanied by widespread disappearances and murders. For this they used the military intelligence department, the DGFI, extensively without any regard for the law. DGFI set up the torture centres called 'Ayna Ghar' in different areas for inhumane torture of missing political persons. Most of the missing persons were held for years in these 'Ayna Ghar'. As time went by, this torture of Awami League was becoming more wide-spread and cruel.

The attacks and aggressions on the opposition were taking place without any reason. The exploitation and torture and at the same time looting of the people's resources of the country by Awami League continued to increase unprecedentedly and with it people's anger, protest and resistance against it. Countering these protests and resistance was necessary for the safety and existence of the government.

The trading bourgeoisie, which began to form as Bangladesh's ruling class from 1972, established total control and authority over the regime during Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule. The country turned into a mafia regime and Sheikh Hasina became its supreme representative, the head of the mafia. In order to fulfil this role, she created a situation of anarchy by throwing away general rules of the country's production system, distribution system, trade and economic system as a whole. Even though they kept beating their achievements tirelessly by talking about development, every small, medium and big development projects of theirs turned into an arena of corruption and loot. The bigger the development project, the bigger the theft and looting continued. On the one hand, the country was getting stuck in the web of foreign debts; on the other hand, the looting committed starting from Awami League leaders to bureaucrats and businessmen was reckless and sky-high. In Bangladesh, nothing close to the way these looters continued to loot the country's resources had ever happened during any government in the past. Not only that Awami League leaders, bureaucrats, businessmen, etc used government power to own thousands of crores taka. A large part of

this money was illegally smuggled abroad. Their looting and smuggling is comparable to British East India Company's looting and smuggling. But there is a big difference in this case. The East India Company looted abroad and sent money back home which helped the industrial revolution there. The money that has been smuggled during the Awami League government under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina is looting the country's wealth and smuggling it abroad. If the wealth was looted and invested in the country, it would not have caused much damage and it would have played a role in the development of the country. But due to the wealth of the country being smuggled abroad instead of being invested in the country, the country has suffered on a large scale, there has been a crisis in the country's economy and by this the economic life of the people has also been disrupted.

The fact that the July uprising was the most extensive, profound, intense and aggressive compared to other previous uprisings in the region was due to Sheikh Hasina's fascism. It was crushing the people of the entire country, the country's economy and various state institutions like the claws of an octopus; there was no previous example of that here. The lives of the working people, middle class professionals and students became unbearable. They were prepared for resistance, but in the absence of proper political leadership, a general inaction among the people was also a reality as there was no possibility of an all-out offensive from their side. There was nothing they could do but wait in silence. Yet in spite of this silence of the people, despite an outwardly peaceful atmosphere, the situation was explosive. This explosion was caused by the students' quota movement.

The students' quota movement was against the quota set for the children of the freedom fighters and for merit-based job system, but the basis of that movement was the overall actual situation of the student community in the country. The impact of this situation described earlier was not only on the general public but also on the student community. In addition, the general student community was strongly angry against the Awami League's student organisation, Chhatra League, which had turned into a mafia gangster force and had been continuing the torture

and repression of students in the universities for years. A reflection of this protest was in the quota movement. Awami League was engaged in giving jobs to their mafia students in the quota that was fixed for the children of freedom fighters.

The student movement started in early July and quickly gained momentum. From the beginning, the government opposed this movement and tried to suppress it by calling them traitors, etc. They termed the students who participated in the quota movement as *Razakars* and were engaged in suppressing their movement. Thus Sheikh Hasina's opposition to the quota movement of the students made the movement even stronger instead of being weak. Students of Dhaka's private universities also came out in droves to join the quota movement. The movement spread to all universities and educational institutions throughout the country and became huge and vigorous. Students at this stage called for agitation not only for quota but also against government repression and mismanagement.

This situation created a spark among people from one end of the country to the other. This spark ignited a fire among the people of the country who were quietly ready to resist Sheikh Hasina's fascist rule. The largest and most aggressive mass uprising in the region began. In the face of this attack, Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled the country and took refuge in India and the leaders of all levels of Awami League, even many leaders of the union level left their homes and fled to India, some were caught by the police and most of them went into hiding in the country. In many countries, the government had fallen due to the massive and strong movement against the government. Mass movements like the 'Arab Spring' had taken place from Tunisia to Egypt. But no country's head of state or government except Tunisia's Ben Ali fled the country. In Egypt, Husni Mubarak remained in the country until he was arrested and tried. Batista and Ben Ali were the only leaders in history to flee. Two years ago, Raja Paksha of Sri Lanka fled in the face of a people's uprising, but returned to the country shortly after, so he did not escape like Batista. After Batista, Sheikh Hasina is the only head of government who fled the country in fear of public attack. If she had not escaped in this way, if

she had delayed leaving the *Ganabhaban* for another hour, she would have been beaten to death by the public who had entered *Ganabhaban* in large numbers. It is important to note that Sheikh Hasina is not only a hateful criminal to the people of Bangladesh; she is a hated criminal to the whole world. That is why no country wants to give her political asylum. She is now staying in India in a difficult situation.

An interim government was formed in Bangladesh on August 8 after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government on August 5. Some people are criticizing this government as puppet government, a government coming from the blue and sitting on the throne, etc. It is true that this government is not the government of the angels. They are the representatives of the same ruling class, which is represented by the Awami League, BNP, Jamaat-i-Islami, Jatiya Party, etc. Therefore, it is a kind of stupidity to expect that they will provide milk and honey to the people. But it is also not right to criticize this government saying that it 'came from the blue'. After the fall of the Awami League government, it was necessary to fill the vacuum that was created in the field of governance of the country. It is in this situation that the present government has come to power. If this government would not have been formed then the only option was military government.

The fall of the Awami League government led by Sheikh Hasina is a great loss for India. For the past 15 years, Sheikh Hasina had surrendered all interests of Bangladesh to the Indian government led by Narendra Modi. The way India had extracted all the benefits from Bangladesh, in fact, had tied Bangladesh in the chains of slavery, India was not at all ready to end it overnight. So, this situation is not easy for India to accept. It is a big blow to their interests. No previous government in Bangladesh did what Sheikh Hasina had done as a boot-leaker to Narendra Modi's government for keeping her in power. In fact, the relationship between Narendra Modi and Sheikh Hasina stood like a master-servant relationship. India actually considers Bangladesh to be their protectorate. No other country in the world has agreed to give shelter to Hasina, so India cannot help giving her shelter, even though India is being accused for this. When a seditious criminal like Hasina is

sheltered in this way, India-Bangladesh relations are difficult to normalise.

It is important to note that the Indian government is not the only one acting in a domineering attitude towards Bangladesh. The attitude of India's left-wing political parties, India's writers and intellectuals towards Bangladesh is not appreciable. There was no support for the popular uprising against Sheikh Hasina's extreme fascist torture in Bangladesh for a long time from the left-wing political parties, writers and literary intellectuals of India. They are silent. Even a powerful writer like Arundhati Roy who has written a lot against the oppression of various peoples including Kashmir in India and against oppression in other countries. She also did not write a single sentence supporting it during the July uprising in Bangladesh. She did not say anything anywhere! But why? The answer is that no matter how progressive they are, they have a view of Bangladesh which can be called a colonial mindset. They want to see Bangladesh as a protectorate of India. It is noteworthy that in this regard, the role of Indian media, newspapers, radio, television, etc is disgraceful.

After the present government came to power, it has fallen into a difficult situation due to the various problems created during Hasina government's tenure. Not only did the previous government bring the country's economy to the brink of destruction, they also caused a disaster in the character of the ruling class as well as a significant section of the country's people. They took part in theft, corruption, terrorism, looting and created an anarchic situation in the country in terms of morality. The character of the business class which has developed since 1971 and is now controlling everything in the country as the ruling class is the worst in this respect. Despite the fall of the Awami League government, they still remain and remain in a strong position as the ruling class. They have stolen from big projects, robbed banks, taking advantage of closeness with the government, they have grabbed land, canals, lakes, even rivers, controlled markets and hit the pockets of the masses. They are still there. They are now an obstacle even in the few reforms that this government wants to make. The problem that is

bothering people the most today is the high cost of daily necessities. This price is now increasing instead of decreasing. And this situation is artificially created by the business class. They have different types of syndicates. The government has no control over them.

There is a lot of talk about the constitution of Bangladesh, because Sheikh Hasina had continued her misrule for 15 years by using this constitution. So, it is ineffective at present. Under this, as one election after another has been held from 2014 to 2024, it has become necessary to reform the election system. In this case, the current government can take some effective steps. But any major constitutional change or framing of a new constitution is beyond the legal purview of this government. That will have to wait for an elected government. By acting as Parliament on one hand and Constituent Assembly on the other hand, the next elected parliament can make major changes in the constitution or enact a new constitution.

The July Uprising created a great stir and drastic change in the situation of the country. It freed the country from the bonds of octopus. It was a great blow on the thieves, corrupts, robbers and terrorists. But this popular uprising is no social revolution. As a result, the people of the country got a new taste of freedom of expression, but there is no reason to think that this freedom will always be maintained in the country. Awami League was the representative of the ruling class, and this ruling class has not been evicted after the fall of the Awami League government. They are still there. However, it can be said that due to the change in the mindset of the people of the country through the July Uprising, even if there is torture in the future, its level will not be the same as the torture of the Hasina government, not even close to it. This lesson has also been received by the ruling class of this country. They have no power to ignore it.

The changes that the July Uprising brought about in Bangladesh were massive, profound and far-reaching. But despite the importance of this uprising, it must be remembered that it is not a social revolution. Therefore, even if a new government is formed later through elections,

even if a new constitution is made by them, even if the level of torture during their rule is less, the people's struggle will continue because there is no radical change in the production and distribution system and overall man to man relations. No time frame can be indicated, but in the future, a new revolutionary socialist party will emerge in Bangladesh. They will gain strength through building up organisation and movement and at some point lead a final popular uprising. The social revolution caused by that popular uprising will bring about radical changes in all aspects of the country. So, there will be a struggle for this change even after the formation of a new government in the country and the promulgation of a new constitution. People's struggle will continue.

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