

# MYANMAR PEOPLE ON A LONG AND DIFFICULT ROAD OF STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

The military coup in Myanmar on February 1st, 2021 has pulled down whatever the nominal and captive democratic rule there existed. Through its action, the military tore off the deal of compromise Aung San Suu Kyi and her NLD were made to sign with it. For a while, Myanmar people were again thrown back into the same dark rule of military dictatorship. The people are left with no alternative but to continue the struggle for democracy.

There existed not even a semblance of democracy in Myanmar for several decades. Ne Win's military dictatorship lasted for nearly three decades. One military rule was replaced by another. Military junta not only wielded the state power, but also came to control the economic and political levers of people's life.

There was a time when the Burmese (present Myanmar) waged many a valiant struggles against the British colonialists and Japanese fascist invaders. They staunchly stood in solidarity with the Indian freedom fighters. Aung San (father of Aung San Suu Kyi) was a most revered leader of this struggle. He was assassinated by the imperialist agents in 1947 just when he was 32 years old. Provided a correct leadership, these struggles could have developed into a successful National Liberation Movement. But the reactionary and Counter-revolutionary developments had overtaken the situation and the people were pushed into a situation where they had to live for long under one or other military dictatorship and fight for even marginal democratic rights.

In 1988, the forces who were struggling for democracy came into touch with Aung San Suu Kyi who, at the time, was living her own life in London. She agreed to lead the movement for democracy. She formed the National League of Democracy (NLD) with an aim of ending military rule. There was an upswing in the movement for democracy. Military Junta felt threatened. It unleashed brutal repression, arrested Aung San Suu Kyi and many leaders of NLD.

Yet, under the international pressure, the S P D C (political face of Military Junta) held elections in 1990. NLD had swept the polls. It was totally unacceptable for the Military. So, it annulled the elections and arrested Suu Kyi and several NLD leaders. Suu Kyi was kept under House arrest for 15 years. Yet, the protests continued with no break.

In the meanwhile, the Country was sinking into worst economic crisis. With increasing poverty, unemployment, costs of life, exploitation, oppression and natural calamities the life of people was becoming more miserable. The rulers were never bothered about the sufferings of people. While ruthlessly suppressing the people and brutally crushing the ethnic minorities like Rohingyas with one hand, and with another hand were tying up the economy with the MNCs and placing the vast natural and human resources of the Country at their disposal for loot and control.

In 2008, the Military regime brought a new Constitution. It reserved 25 per cent of Parliament seats, Defense, Home and Border Ministries to the Army. It held elections to the Parliament. But the NLD boycotted it. Pro-Military party-USDP declared itself elected and formed the govt.

As part of political reforms, the Govt. had set free Suu Kyi and other leaders and promised a transition to democracy. This time, Suu Kyi had softened her stand and accepted the new Constitution and co-operated with the Govt. in holding the Parliament elections in 2015. In the elections, the NLD led by Suu Kyi had again won with thumping majority. But the Army did not allow Suu Kyi to head the Govt. on the plea that she married a foreigner (Britisher). A dual power continued in Myanmar. Suu Kyi and NLD also made a reprehensible compromise on the question of Rohingya Muslims by supporting Army's crack down on Rakhine State and 700,000 Rohingyas being forced out of the Country.

Again, in the elections held in Nov'2020, the NLD had won a landslide victory. But the Military dismissed the elections as a "fraud". It staged an armed coup on Feb 1, 2021 and unleashed a brutal repression. Thus neither winning an overwhelming majority nor making compromises to cripple the democracy could keep the democracy alive.

Basically, two types of political forces are at work here. One: People's forces – working class, peasants, middle class, ethnic minorities and other democratic and national forces. They are active in the movement and defying all kinds of state repression against the movement for democracy. At the same time, they are yet to realize that the struggle for democracy will be weak unless it is not

combined with the struggle to democratize the economic and political relations in the society. It means, it must be an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggle. In the present movement, vast masses of exploited and oppressed people take inspiration from their past democratic and anti-imperialist struggles. They are genuinely reacting against the oppressive policies of military rulers. The political force at the helm of the present movement continues to be the prisoner of its own limitations dictated by its own class nature. Two: All along, the leadership of the movement had been trying to gain some space in power through democratic pressure, tolerance, bargain and compromise while, at the same time, assuring not to hurt the economic, social and political system existing in the Country. However, this policy is failing them. The policy of Military Junta seems to be to push the present leadership of the movement through its policy of brutal suppression to the wall so that it can dictate more shameless compromise to it. Subjecting Suu Kyi and other leaders to worst repressive moves and foisting criminal cases against them in are only a part of it. But the leadership is unyielding.

US, Japan and European powers are brandishing economic sanctions at the Military rulers and are calling for the restoration of democratic rule in Myanmar. China is talking about non-interference in Myanmar's internal affairs. India is pursuing a 'wait and see' policy. Here, every country's ruling classes have their own economic, political and strategic interests in Myanmar. They have no problem in dealing with a regime headed by either the Military Junta or Suu Kyi led NLD or a combination of the two as the situation may finally settle down. In reality, they are least bothered about who would win the present tussle. They are mainly interested in a regime which is stable and which would be more amenable to pursue their own economic, political and strategic interests in Myanmar. It is possible that the imperialist powers may broker a deal of compromise between the conflicting sections of the ruling classes in Myanmar to avert the 'danger' of present movement from developing into a more comprehensive peoples' democratic movement.

The genuine democratic and national forces and people in Myanmar are now in a most difficult phase of their struggle. On one side, they are faced with Military Junta's worst suppression in the form of massive arrests, brutalities and shooting down dozens of protesting people. The people are defiant and braving to resist the Military Junta. They are continuing to resist it in an organized manner. The situation also demand them to prepare themselves for a more serious, long drawn and consistent struggle to break Myanmar free from feudal bondage and the imperialist strangle hold and for a New Democratic Society.

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