

The Left in Parliament: From Boycott to Intervention in Reference to Nepal

By Bhim Rawal*

There was a trend of boycott and refusal to the parliament and peaceful mobilization of people in the left movement in the world few decades ago. The ruthless exploitation of feudalist states and imperialism in different stages of history had oriented the working class movement towards armed revolts and movement. Because the rulers were not ready to allow the ordinary, masses even to speak out peacefully. Rather they were using state armed forces against the voices of laboring masses. Every dissent and dissatisfaction was brutally suppressed and all peaceful avenues of ventilation for opinion were closed. This kind of situation sharpened class contradictions leading to violent conflict between the exploiters and exploited classes at different period of time. Similar trend appeared in the conflict between the imperialist-colonialist countries and colonies and dominated countries. Armed movement became an imperative for exploited and colonized people and the countries to fight back. Earth-shaking revolutions occurred in the world that shaped and reshaped the political, economic and social systems in the world. Virtually all countries had to accept the rights of every human being and country. It had a long-term serious impact on the world workers' and left movement.

International political scenario and the power balance gradually changed over time. Revolutions, uprising and social movements have forced imperialist and hegemonic countries to adjust themselves according to the changed context to some extent. International movement, that is closely linked with national movements, for human rights, social justice and peace have changed perceptions of people, countries and international organizations to a greater extent. Thus the mode and methods of political movements and governance have to be changed accordingly. The character of the left movement also now has not limited within violent struggles rather increasingly based on broad masses of people. It is remarkably seen especially since 1980s. Left movement has made considerable progress and achievements since then mobilizing the people power. It has transformed the politics of boycott into intervention and participation on behalf of left forces globally. Nepal is not an exception.

Like in other parts of the world, the leftist forces in south Asia have undergone through policy of boycott of parliament to intervention and participation. It is not only seen in Nepal but also in Sri Lanka in case of JVP and various leftist parties in India. Similar trend is seen other continents including in Latin America and Europe. People's power demonstrated during the mass uprisings and movements has been proved far more effective, appealing and stronger than armed actions to bring substantial changes in politics and in societies in the contemporary world. Its importance in the present day world is well understood and well taken by all leftist forces the world over. No one can ignore and under mine people's power and sovereignty.

The Communist Party of Nepal, established in 1949, had combined both participatory and militant mass movement together to fight against autocratic and

reactionary regimes initially. However, the Party bogged down in the debate of the new democratic revolution and national democratic revolution coming under the influence of polemics of international communist movement during 1960s and 70s. It seriously harmed the Nepali communist movement. The leadership gradually realized it and again a strong unified left movement evolved in 1980s. The formation of the Communist Party of Nepal (ML) that was further developed as the CPN (UML) in 1991 was its obvious result. This party gradually shifted its policy of armed struggle and boycott of the parliament towards militant mass movement and intervention in the bourgeoisie parliament. It pursued the policy of destruction of the so-called partyless Panchayat regime from within interfering in the local elections at the first stage then in the national elections afterward during 1980s first time in the history of the Nepali left movement. A considerable number of people's representatives won the district, municipal and village level elections virtually leading to the presence of some leftist members in the national parliament. All those party representatives played an important role to emasculate the partyless Panchayat system from within and to encourage and help the people's democratic mass movement.

That intervention and role of the people's representatives created obstacles before then autocratic government to carry out activities against the people's democratic movement. The elected members both in the local bodies and in the parliament not only played the role to expose the undemocratic features of the regime but also tried their best to work together with the people in defense of their rights and interests. This intervention was continued up to the time of the mass movement of 1990, which proved useful for the democratic movement.

The 1990 popular peaceful movement overthrew the partyless autocratic Panchayat regime compelling the King to remain as a constitutional monarch. Multi-party system of government was established in the country. However, the government that was led by rightist Nepali Congress party ignored the multiple contradictions and aspirations of people existed in the society and undermined the importance of social justice. Consequently, the politics of boycott again appeared in the country on behalf of another left party called the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)-CPN (M), even under the multi-party system. The CPN (M) declared the "People's War" in 1996 that was continued for a decade. They claimed their own "People's Government" in various parts of the country completely boycotting the elections.

The Maoists' politics of violence almost obstructed the parliamentary political process. At the same time, the King took over all executive power in October 2002 dismissing the elected government. Again, the King vested all dictatorial power on himself in February 2005 trampling down democratic rights of people. He tried to hold local elections that were totally rejected by the political parties. The parliamentary parties and the Maoists entered into a 12-point understanding in November 2005 to fight against the King's autocratic regime. Subsequently, a nation wide militant mass movement led by the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) swept away the autocratic regime in April 2006.

The SPA and the CPN (M) entered into serious negotiation that led them to a comprehensive peace accord in November 2006. Based on this comprehensive accord, an interim parliament has been formed and the CPN (M) has agreed for the management of their combatants and weapons. The UN has been invited to that regard. Now the CPN (M) has participated in the interim parliament with their 83 nominated members. Thus, the CPN (M) has also abandoned the politics of boycott and pursued the line of participation in the parliament. Now all leftist parties are in the parliament and they command absolute majority together comprising of 182 members out of 329 members of the interim parliament. It is an unprecedented event in the history of the leftist movement in Nepal.

The peaceful mass movement is proved stronger and effective than the armed struggle launched by the CPN (M) for a decade. The Nepali people demonstrated their strong desire for democracy and peace coming out massively in the streets. People's power clearly proved its force to overthrow the King's autocracy and to motivate the CPN (M) for peace. The agitating parties backed by hundreds of thousand people foiled all repressive measures of the royal government. The Maoists also realized that popular uprising with the participation of millions of people is stronger and effective than the armed guerilla actions to bring political transformation in the country. This realization has inspired the CPN (M) to take part in the interim government and the upcoming constituent assembly election.

Nepal has experienced different political trends and ways during the past six decades ranging from armed struggles, election boycotts, and tactical intervention in the elections by banned opposition parties, parliamentary exercise and coalition for interim parliament, government and consensus for the election of constituent assembly. It is unique in Nepal.

The experiences of Nepal have shown that peaceful mobilization of people is very important. Militant mass movement can change political and economic system in an effective way. Mass mobilization within the country of course requires international solidarity and co-operation to isolate autocratic and undemocratic rulers. #

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