Mugdho's Uttara: An Account of a Battlefield of Conscience

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Uttara during the Bangladesh July 2024 revolution

History does not always arrive with spectacle. More often, it seeps in quietly; gathering force in everyday frustrations before revealing itself in moments that cannot be ignored. The July revolution of 2024 in Bangladesh followed that familiar arc. What began as a renewed protest against the quota system in public sector employment soon shed the limits of a policy debate and evolved into something far more consequential. It became an expression of accumulated anger against a system perceived as exclusionary, unaccountable, and increasingly intolerant of dissent. In that unfolding story, Uttara, a part of Dhaka rarely associated with political turbulence, emerged as one of the most vivid and consequential arenas of resistance.

For years, Uttara had been seen as a symbol of orderly urban life, a carefully planned extension of the capital where middle class aspiration found architectural expression in apartment blocks, coaching centres, and private universities. Politics, in its most visible and confrontational form, seemed to belong elsewhere. Yet, when the events of July 2024 began to unfold, Uttara did not remain insulated. It responded, and then it surged.

From quota protest to wider resistance

The immediate trigger of the movement lay in the reinstatement of the quota system in government jobs, a decision that reopened a wound many young people believed had already been settled through earlier protests. But to interpret the protests as merely a reaction to quotas would be to misunderstand their depth. The quota issue served as a conduit through which broader frustrations flowed. It represented, in the minds of many, a system where merit was negotiable and access to opportunity was mediated by proximity to power. Beneath that lay

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deeper concerns about governance, accountability, and the shrinking space for dissent.

As protests began to gather momentum, the state's response followed a pattern that had become familiar over the years. There were attempts to contain, then to discourage, and eventually to suppress. Campuses became sites of confrontation. The death of student protester Abu Sayed in Rangpur on July 16 marked a turning point that was both emotional and political. It altered the moral landscape of the movement. What had been a demand became, for many, a question of justice and dignity.

It was around this time that Uttara began to change its character. The government's decision to close educational institutions and vacate student dormitories of public universities had an unintended consequence. Students from public universities, who might otherwise have anchored protests in their own campuses, were dispersed. In contrast, students of private universities, many of whom lived within Dhaka, remained in place. Uttara, with its dense concentration of such institutions, suddenly became a natural gathering point.

The presence of universities such as IUBAT, Uttara University, BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology, Northern University Bangladesh, and Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology proved decisive. The students of the prominent schools and colleges such as Milestone School and College, RAJUK Uttara Model College, Uttara High School and College, and Nawab Habibullah Model School & College were also the front-liners of the July revolution. These institutions are often absent from the dominant narratives of student politics in Bangladesh, which tend to focus on public universities with long histories of activism. Yet, in July 2024, their students demonstrated that political consciousness is not the monopoly of any one type of campus.

A leaderless but powerful movement

What distinguished the mobilisation in Uttara was its organic quality. It did not rely on established student wings or hierarchical leadership structures. Instead, it drew energy from horizontal networks. Classmates became organisers; and social media platforms became coordination tools. Information travelled quickly, and so did people. A call for a gathering could bring hundreds, then thousands, into the streets within hours.

Roads in Uttara, especially those around key commercial and transit points, became sites of sustained protest. Demonstrations disrupted traffic, not as an end in themselves, but as a way of asserting visibility. In a city where congestion is constant, the act of stopping movement carried symbolic weight. It

signalled that something had interrupted the ordinary flow of life, and that the interruption demanded attention.

Law enforcement responded with measures intended to re-establish control and containment. Tear gas, sound grenades, and baton charges were deployed. There were clashes, and there were injuries. Yet even though the government expected that force would disperse the protesters, the reality proved more complicated. Each confrontation seemed to draw more people into the streets. The movement, rather than contracting under pressure, expanded.

One of the most striking aspects of the Uttara protests was the manner in which they transcended the boundaries of student activism. Residents of the area began to participate in ways both symbolic and practical. Shopkeepers offered water and temporary refuge. Parents stood alongside students, not always chanting, but present in a way that conveyed solidarity and infused the movement with meaning and legitimacy. Office workers on their way back home paused to observe and often stayed to join.

This broadening of participation altered the nature of the movement. It was no longer possible to dismiss it as a narrow, interest-driven agitation. It had become a social phenomenon, reflecting a wider sense of unease. The presence of ordinary citizens alongside students suggested that the grievances being expressed resonated beyond campuses.

A new generation's political awakening

There was also a generational dimension to what was unfolding. Many of the students leading the protests had grown up in a Bangladesh marked apparently by rapid economic growth but also by increasing centralisation of power and resources. Young men and women were digitally connected, globally aware, and less willing to accept narratives that did not align with their lived experiences. Their engagement with politics was not always mediated through traditional channels. It was immediate, expressive, and often uncompromising.

In Uttara, this generational energy found a physical space in which to manifest. The area's urban design, with its wide roads and relatively open intersections, allowed for large gatherings that were difficult to contain. At the same time, its mixed residential and commercial character meant that protests were highly visible. They could not be confined to a campus or a single street. They spilled into everyday life.

As the movement evolved, its language changed. Slogans that initially focused on the quota system began to incorporate broader demands. Questions of fairness were joined by questions of governance. Criticism of specific policies expanded into criticism of systemic practices. For many participants, the protests

came to represent a stand against what they perceived as an increasingly authoritarian style of rule.

The term (mafia-style) "fascism," used by protesters to describe the government, reflected this perception. Whether one agrees with the label or not, its use indicates the intensity of feeling among those on the streets. It speaks to a belief that institutional checks had weakened and that dissent was being treated not as a component of democracy but as a threat to be neutralised.

The list of the dead and the politics of memory

If the protests in Uttara showed the courage and determination of a generation, the publication of the list of those who died presents a much harder reality. It turns a political movement into a human tragedy. During times of unrest, numbers can feel distant. They inform us, and they may shock us, but they often remain abstract. A list of names is different. It gives identity to the victims, makes the loss real, and demands remembrance. It reminds the nation that before moving forward, it must first acknowledge those who paid the ultimate price.

A political and activist platform emerged in the aftermath of the 2024 July revolution committed to building a "fascism-free, democratic and reformed Bangladesh." it frames its identity around remembering those killed or injured during the July protests. Named the July Revolutionary Alliance, it announced that at least 92 people were killed in the district of Uttara alone between July 18 and August 5, 2024. This announcement is therefore not just an act of documentation. It is an intervention into memory. It tells us that what happened in Uttara made the district not simply a site of clashes, but a dungeon of death on a scale that challenges any attempt to minimise or sanitise the movement. The breakdown of the victims is perhaps even more revealing than the total number. Twenty-five students, nineteen employees, ten businesspeople, five drivers, two mosque imams, one doctor, eleven unidentified individuals, and nineteen others whose identities blur into the larger fabric of society.[2]

What emerges from this demographic distribution of victims is a portrait of a movement that did not belong to one class, one profession, or one identity. It was not only the students who stood at the frontlines even though they provided the spark and the structure. It was the working people returning from workplaces, the shopkeepers watching events unfold outside their stores, the drivers navigating roads that had suddenly turned into protest corridors, even the religious figures whose lives are usually confined to spaces of worship—all

[2] "List of 92 killed in Uttara during uprising published," *The Business Standard*, Dec 7, 2024. https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/list-92-killed-uttara-during-uprising-published-1012816

became active observants then participants in the revolution. The presence of a doctor among the dead carries a particularly symbolic weight. It suggests that even those committed to saving lives were not insulated from the violence of that moment.

There is a tendency in post movement narratives to romanticise sacrifice. Words like martyr begin to circulate, carrying with them a sense of honour that attempts to give meaning to death. Yet, behind every such designation lies a family that has lost someone irreplaceable. The voices of those families, as reported alongside the publication of the list, introduce a necessary tension into the narrative. Their demand is not only for recognition, but for accountability and for a future that justifies the cost that has been paid.

Their concern that a new Bangladesh may fail to live up to the sacrifices made in its name is not an emotional exaggeration. It is a political warning. History offers many examples where movements succeeded in dismantling a regime but struggled to build a system that reflected the ideals that had fuelled the uprisings. In such cases, the memory of the dead becomes a site of contestation. It can be invoked to legitimise power, or it can be used to challenge it.

The fact that the list has been compiled without government support adds another layer to its significance. It suggests a gap between institutional response and citizen initiatives. When the state does not immediately take responsibility for documenting and acknowledging losses of lives, civil society often steps in. This act of documentation is not merely administrative. It is political. It asserts that these lives matter, that they will not disappear into statistical ambiguity, and that their stories deserve to be told.

The mention of eleven unidentified individuals is perhaps the most haunting element of the list. In a movement that was so visible and so widely discussed, the existence of unnamed casualties pointed to the limits of visibility. Not everyone who participated in or was affected by the protests had a network to speak for them. Not everyone had documentation, identity, or recognition. These unnamed individuals represent a silent margin within the movement, reminding us that even in moments of collective uprising, inequality persists.

Mugdho: The human face of the movement

If the published list of those killed by government forces gives the movement a collective face, the story of Mir Mahfuzur Rahman Mugdho (1998–2024) gives it a human one that is difficult to forget. Revolutions are often remembered through symbols, and sometimes those symbols are not crafted in speeches or

slogans but in fleeting, ordinary acts. Mugdho was not standing on a barricade, nor was he leading a procession. He was carrying water.

That image carries a quiet power. In the middle of confrontation, fatigue, and fear, a young man moved through the crowd asking a simple question: *"Bhai pani lagbe karor, pani, pani?"* (Bothers, anyone need water? water? water?"). He was offering relief to those who had been standing in rallies or demonstrating for hours under the weight of both weather and uncertainty. It was an act that did not seek attention, yet it came to define a moment. When he called out asking who needed water, he was also, in a way, responding to the deeper thirst that had brought so many onto the streets. The water in his hands was not merely a physical necessity; it became a language of care in a space increasingly shaped by tension and exhaustion. His humanitarian instinct was not performative or symbolic in the political sense, it was immediate, almost instinctive, as if he could not separate himself from the suffering around him. In that sense, Mugdho appears less as a figure inserted into a movement and more as someone who instinctively humanised it.

The metaphor of "thirst" extends beyond the body into the moral and political realm. Those gathered were not only thirsty for water, but for dignity, recognition, and justice—forms of relief far more difficult to distribute than anything carried in a bottle. Mugdho's act quietly bridged these two meanings. While he offered water to the exhausted, he also embodied a deeper response to deprivation itself, as though acknowledging that a society in protest is often one searching for something elemental that has been withheld from it for too long. The violence that followed turned that moment into something far more tragic. A single bullet erased not only a life but also the possibility of what that life might have become.

In accounts that later circulated, there is a recurring detail of how his friends struggled to get him to a hospital in time. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) fact-finding report on the July–August 2024 protests in Bangladesh, as protests escalated around areas including Rabindra Sarani Street (Uttara Sector 7) and nearby points such as BNS Centre and Uttara East Police Station, law enforcement units, including the police and RAB, reportedly used tear gas, rubber bullets, sound grenades, and lethal ammunition fired from military-style rifles to disperse demonstrators. Witnesses and video evidence verified by the UN indicate that around 5:50 PM, Mugdho was struck in the head by a bullet fired from a rifle while he was distributing water to exhausted protesters. The shot caused catastrophic head trauma, leaving him critically wounded on the spot. Despite attempts by companions to reach medical assistance amid chaos and blocked

movement, he succumbed to his injuries shortly after, his death later confirmed as caused by that fatal gunshot wound. It is a detail that speaks to the chaos of that evening in Azampur (near Uttara Sector 7), where narrow streets became sites of panic, and where the line between protest and survival blurred within seconds.

The deaths on that day, at least nine in Uttara alone, marked a turning point in how the movement was perceived. Until then, there had been an expectation, largely from the authorities' perspective, and partly echoed in official assurances, that the unrest could still be managed through dispersal, containment, and a gradual return to normalcy without irreversible rupture. It was a belief in control: that force could be calibrated, that fear would be temporary, and that the streets would eventually quiet down without crossing a fatal threshold. The scale and intensity of the violence shattered that assumption.

Uttara was no longer just a site of protest. It became an open wound in the city's geography, where public space itself seemed to turn against those who had gathered within it. What had begun as a demonstration of voice and demand was abruptly transformed into a landscape of mourning and shock, where ordinary intersections and familiar roads carried the weight of sudden absence. It stood as one of the earliest and most searing sites of lethal confrontation, where the language of negotiation gave way to the finality of gunfire, and where the streets, once filled with collective purpose, were marked instead by dispersal, silence, and the unbearable immediacy of loss. Mugdho's death resonated because it cut through political interpretation. It was difficult to frame his presence on the street as anything other than humane. He was not confronting authority. He was tending to fellow citizens. That distinction made his killing particularly jarring. It raised uncomfortable questions about the nature of force used and the thresholds that had been crossed.

Yet, focusing only on Mugdho risks obscuring the broader pattern of loss that unfolded in Uttara over those weeks. Between mid-July and early August 2024, the number of deaths continued to rise, including not only protesters but also law enforcement personnel. This complexity complicates any attempt to construct a single, simplistic narrative. It reminds us that moments of upheaval often produce layered tragedies, where different groups bear different kinds of loss.

Even after the political turning point of August 5, 2024, the intensity in Uttara did not immediately subside. The persistence of violence in the days that followed suggests that the forces unleashed during the movement could not be easily contained by a change in leadership alone. It points to deeper fractures that had been exposed but not yet resolved.

Within this broader context, Mugdho's story endures not because it is unique, but because it captures something essential about the movement. It reflects the intersection of courage and vulnerability, of care and conflict. It reminds us that revolutions are not only driven by grand ideas but are sustained by small acts of solidarity that give those ideas meaning.

From remembrance to the demand for justice

Again, if the list of the deceased demands remembrance, the voices of their families demand something far more difficult. They demand justice, and in doing so, they transform grief into a political force that cannot be easily managed or dismissed. The gathering at Shaheed Mugdho Mancha in Uttara's Azampur on December 28, 2024 was not simply a memorial event. It was an assertion that the story of July has not ended, and that the burden of its consequences is still being carried by those who lost the most.

What stands out in the testimonies of the bereaved families is not only their pain, but their growing sense of abandonment. Revolutions often promise recognition for sacrifice, yet the period that follows can expose a troubling gap between rhetoric and reality. The families' frustration reflected a belief that the state, which then claimed the legacy of the movement, had not taken sufficient responsibility for those who paid for it with their lives. Their words suggest that memory alone is not enough. Without accountability, remembrance risks becoming hollow.

During the July–August 2024 uprising in Bangladesh, the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina was the key person behind the state's response to the unarmed protests. Initially, she rejected the students' demands for quota reform and drew widespread criticism after referring to the protesters as "Razakars" (traitor)—a remark that intensified public anger and polarization. As the movement expanded into a nationwide anti-government uprising, her government imposed Internet shutdowns and curfews, and deployed security forces and the military across the country to apply force to contain the mass movement. Investigations by the United Nations and Al Jazeera reported that security forces used excessive and often lethal force against protesters. According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), up to 1,400 people were killed during the 46-day unrest, with the report attributing responsibility for the protest-related killings to the actions of the Hasina administration, state security forces, and affiliated groups.

The demand for the return of Sheikh Hasina is, in this context, both a legal and an emotional claim. It is shaped by grief, but also by a desire to locate responsibility at the highest level of power. Whether such a demand is politically

or legally feasible is a separate question. What it reveals, however, is the depth of anger among those who witnessed the loss of their children, siblings, friends, or other near ones. For them, justice is not an abstract concept. It is immediate, personal, and tied to the faces of those they hold responsible.

Equally striking is the recurring allegation of impunity. Families speak of accused perpetrators who remain free, of offending police officers who have not been held accountable, and of a system that appears reluctant to investigate itself. This perception, whether fully accurate or not, is dangerous in its implications. A movement that began as a call for fairness risks giving way to a post movement reality where the same questions about accountability remain unanswered. In such a scenario, trust in institutions erodes further, and the cycle of grievance continues.

The testimonies of individual parents carry a rawness that resists political framing. The inability of Ainun Nahar (mother of July martyr Naima Sultana) to see a police officer without breaking down is not a statement of ideology. It is a reflection of the trauma she has been enduring. Father of July martyr Alvi, Abul Hasan's account of being threatened even in mourning introduces a darker dimension to the aftermath, suggesting that the violence of July did not end with the clashes on the streets. It lingered, shaping the experiences of those left behind.

The question of Rokeya Begum (mother of July martyr Jabir Ibrahim) whether anyone can bring back her son, cuts through the entire discourse. It reminds us of the limits of justice. No legal process, no political decision, can reverse what has been lost. And yet, her insistence on justice for her son and for all others like him underscores a collective dimension of grief. It is not only about one life. It is about a pattern that must be acknowledged and addressed.

The reflection of Mir Mustafizur Rahman (father of Shaheed Mir Mugdho) on the nature of the state response adds another layer to the discussion. His disbelief that a government could open fire on protesters speaks to a rupture between expectation and reality. For many participants and observers, the July movement revealed a gap between democratic ideals and state practices. In principle, a democratic state is expected to manage dissent through dialogue, proportional restraint, and respect for civil liberties. However, the response on the ground often appeared to rely heavily on coercive force—rapid escalation, large-scale deployment of security agencies, and the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and in many cases lethal ammunition against largely unarmed protesters. This created the impression of a state prioritizing order over accountability, and control over negotiation. It exposed an image of governance where the right to protest was not protected as a democratic expression, but treated as a threat to

be contained. Addressing that dissonance is essential if the post movement order is to be seen as legitimate.

While demands for justice dominated the conference organised by the National Revolutionary Council, Chhatrisher Sahasini, and the Global Knowledge Foundation at Shaheed Mugdho Mancha in Uttara on December 28, 2024, the event carried a broader significance. The proposals advanced at the conference suggested an attempt not only to seek accountability but also to shape the historical narrative of the uprising and define how its consequences will be managed in the years ahead.

The idea of a Shaheed Smriti Public Library and a Shishu Academy (Martyrs' Memorial Public Library and Children's Academy) in Uttara points to a desire to institutionalise memory, to create spaces where future generations can engage with the history of July 2024. Such initiatives, if implemented meaningfully, could move remembrance beyond symbolic gestures and embed it within everyday civic life.

The call for psychological support for children affected by the movement introduces an often-overlooked dimension of political violence. The impact of July was not limited to those who were injured or killed. It extended to those who witnessed the incidents, who lived through days of fear and uncertainty, and who continue to process those experiences. Addressing this aspect requires a recognition that the consequences of the movement are not only political, but also deeply human.

There is also an important acknowledgement in the demand to recognise the contributions of women and children. Movements are often narrated through the actions of visible actors, frequently young men at the frontlines. Yet, as Uttara demonstrated, participation was far broader. Women organised, supported, and protested. Children were present, affected, and in many cases, directly involved. A complete account of July must include these dimensions if it is to avoid reproducing the exclusions it sought to challenge.

A society between pride and uncertainty

What emerges from the conference organised by the National Revolutionary Council, Chhatrisher Sahasini, and the Global Knowledge Foundation at Shaheed Mugdho Mancha in Uttara is a complex picture of a society in transition. There is pride in what was achieved, but there is also anger at what remains unresolved. There is a desire to honour the dead, but also a demand to ensure that their deaths are not absorbed into a narrative that avoids uncomfortable questions.

The challenge for the state is not only to respond to these demands, but to do so in a way that restores confidence in institutions. This requires more than announcements or symbolic recognition. It cries out for transparent investigations, credible legal processes, and a willingness to confront the actions of those within its own structures. Without this, the promise of a new beginning risks being overshadowed by the persistence of old patterns.

The costs of the movement were significant. For many, the protests were not an abstract political exercise but a deeply personal encounter with the realities of power and resistance. The streets where they had walked to classes or met friends became associated with confrontation and courage.

The role of private university students in the movement deserves particular attention. For years, there has been a perception that such students are politically less engaged than their counterparts in public institutions. The events in Uttara challenged that assumption. Students from IUBAT, Uttara University, BUFT, Northern University, and Shanto-Mariam University did not merely participate. They organised, they led, and they sustained the momentum of the protests in their area.

Their involvement also broadened the social base of the movement. Private universities draw students from diverse economic and geographic backgrounds. Their participation brought new voices and perspectives into the protests. It also made it more difficult to frame the movement in narrow terms.

When perception becomes momentum

In mass uprisings, facts rarely travel alone; they move with emotion, rumour, and perception. The July 36 (August 5) narrative—that hundreds of thousands of people were advancing from Uttara towards the official residence of Sheikh Hasina—was one such moment where information blurred into momentum, and momentum began to resemble destiny.

Whether the numbers were precise is almost beside the point. What mattered was what people believed. Until then, the July movement had been intense but uneven—energetic in pockets, uncertain in direction. The image of a massive crowd moving towards the centre of executive power altered that uncertainty. It suggested not just protest, but convergence; not just anger, but arrival.

For protesters, this was psychological oxygen. Movements grow not only on grievances but on the belief that they are growing. The expression that "lakhs [hundreds of thousands] are on the move" dissolves individual fear into collective courage. Risk becomes shared, and courage becomes contagious. People who

might have stayed on the sidelines suddenly feel history tilting—and few want to stand still when history appears to be created.

For the state, the same narrative produced a different calculation. A crowd of that scale approaching the prime minister's residence signals more than dissent; it suggests potential instability at the very core of authority. In such moments, governments do not respond only to facts; they respond to perceived thresholds. If that threshold is believed to be crossed, strategies shift—from routine containment to urgent reconsideration.

This is how movements approach their turning points—not through formal verdicts, but through shifts in perception.

Uttara as a new geography of resistance

As the days passed, the cumulative effect of protests across the country began to shape the political landscape. Uttara was one of several nodes in a network of resistance, but its significance lay in demonstrating that the movement was not confined to traditional centres of activism. It showed that dissent could emerge from places not previously associated with political confrontation.

The eventual political consequences of the July movement were profound. They altered the trajectory of governance and opened a period of transition. Yet, as with many moments of upheaval, the aftermath brought its own uncertainties.

In Uttara, the physical traces of the protests have faded. Roads that once echoed with slogans now carry the usual flow of traffic. Shops have reopened, and daily routines have resumed. Yet, beneath this return to normality, there remains an awareness that something significant took place. The memory of those days continues to inform how people think about their role as citizens.

The Uttara chapter of the July 2024 movement is important not only for what happened, but for what it revealed. It showed that political engagement in Bangladesh is not limited to a few iconic spaces or institutions. It can emerge wherever there is a convergence of grievance, awareness, and willingness to sacrifice. It also demonstrated the capacity of students, including those outside the traditional centres of activism, to articulate and pursue collective demands.

Perhaps most importantly, it highlighted the interplay between state action and public response. Efforts to suppress dissent did not eliminate it. In many cases, they intensified it. This dynamic is not unique to Bangladesh, but its manifestation in July 2024 offers a case study in how quickly a specific issue can evolve into a broader movement when underlying tensions are already present.

For Uttara, the movement marked a moment of transformation. A place known for its relative calm became, for a time, a focal point of national attention.

Its streets became arenas where questions about fairness, power, and rights were contested. Its students became part of a generation that chose to step beyond the boundaries of routine work and engage with the political realities of their time.

Conclusion

In the years to come, the July movement will likely be studied, debated, and interpreted in multiple ways. Different narratives will emerge, each emphasising particular aspects of what occurred. Within those narratives, the role of Uttara should not be overlooked. It provides insight into how movements spread, how they are sustained, and how they draw strength from unexpected places.

There is a tendency, when looking back at moments of upheaval, to focus on outcomes. Who gained power, who lost it, what policies changed. These are important questions, but they do not capture the full significance of such events. Equally important are the experiences of those who participated, the ways in which their perceptions shifted, and the precedents that were set for future engagement.

In that sense, the legacy of Uttara in July 2024 lies not only in its contribution to a particular political outcome, but in its demonstration of civic possibility. It showed that even in spaces not traditionally associated with protest, people can come together to assert their concerns. It showed that students of private universities in Bangladesh, often seen as transient actors, can play a sustained and meaningful role in shaping public discourse.

Whether that legacy will translate into long term changes in political culture remains an open question. Much will depend on how institutions respond, how leadership evolves, and how citizens continue to engage. What is clear is that the events of July 2024 have expanded the imagination of what is possible.

Uttara, in that moment, ceased to be just a residential and educational zone. It became a site where the abstract ideas of rights and accountability were translated into action. It became a reminder that the geography of protest is not fixed, and that the boundaries between centre and periphery can shift when circumstances demand it.

The story of the July movement is still being written. Its implications will unfold over time. Yet, within that ongoing narrative, the image of Uttara in those days remains a powerful one. It is the image of students stepping onto the streets, of residents standing beside them, and of a community discovering, perhaps unexpectedly, its capacity for collective action.