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Democratization of Bangladesh politics and the role of Zia: A political analysis

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Abstract

Major Ziaur Rahman is well known to the people of Bangladesh as well as the world community as the announcer of independence of Bangladesh. Later on the event of 7th November 1975 popularly known as National Solidarity Day made this Major leader of future Bangladesh. Dream, input and output of this military ruler turned him into the pulse of the people of sovereign Bangladesh. Though the reign of Zia ended in on May 29, 1981 with his assassination yet his envious personality and charismatic leadership, ideas and contribution to socio-economic, political and administrative fields of Bangladesh transformed him into the iconic figure of Bangladesh politics. This article is intended to verify the causes and reasons that made Zia the idol of sovereign Bangladesh.

Keywords: Democracy, Spirit of war, Martial Law Regulation (MLR), People

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1. Introduction

In classical term politics means to establish social justice and ensure values of life equally to the people as a whole. That means to do good to the people is the ultimate goal of politics. But in a nascent state like Bangladesh politics, according to politicians, denotes to attain power and to stay in power at the cost of anything else for their own self interest. People are made fool by them in the name of democracy. This concept of professional politicians is not quite true in the context of military rulers in the changed political atmosphere in Bangladesh. Unlike civilian government military rulers, particularly Major Zia, strived to establish the rational view of politics to the people. It emphasised on the effective output of their rule through bringing about state privileges to the reach of common people. Zia brought people out of their four walls and made them adapted to the beneficial politics of the regime which ultimately became the choice of the people. This conceptual change in ordinary politics by the military governments notably Zia's one through their deeds placed them in the mind of common people even after their departure.

2. Emergence of Zia as people's choice

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was not for independence of Bangladesh. At the dead of night of March 25, 1971 while the Pakistani Army were committing massacre against the unarmed East Pakistanis (Bangalee) the nation was waiting and eagerly expecting some guide line from Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the leader of victorious party in 1970 general election. But he refused to declare independence (Ahmed, 2014). At this crucial moment Major Zia, an unknown army officer, declared independence on March 26, 1971 and the nation took arms and fought against occupied forces. In independent Bangladesh Awami League government did not honour Major Zia. In spite of being senior in service and rank he was made deputy to Army Chief. Because of establishing one-party authoritarian dictatorship in Bangladesh by civilian inevitable in Bangladesh politics. The post coup government under the leadership of Khandaker Mostaque, the commerce minister of BAKSAL government, made Zia Army Chief (The Morning News, August, 1975). The November 3, 1975 coup led by Brigadier Khaled Musharraf, BU, PSC, a pro-Awami League army officer, replacing Mostaque government made Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem President of Bangladesh and made Army Chief Zia house arrest. But the counter coup orchestrated by soldiers and civilians on early hours of November 7, 1975 foiling the 3rd November coup freed Zia and declared him the leader of future Bangladesh without the knowledge of Zia (The Morning News, November, 1975). Though Zia became the choice of common people yet he did not took state power. Instead he started working under President Sayem. However his ideas and vision were visible into the working of President Sayem. President Sayem went into abeyance handing over state power to Zia on April 21, 1977.

3. Removal of barrier to democracy and spirit of war of independence through constitutional change

Constitution accommodates the hopes and aspirations of the people. Civilian government from 1972 to 1975 had enchained democratic values of the people as well as destroyed the spirit of the war of independence by

Constitution first, second and fourth amendments. Military government from August 15, 1975 to 1981 had to take steps for creating sustainable socio-economic and political atmosphere for the purpose of freeing the buried democracy and exploring the spirit of war of independence. President Ziaur Rahman by fifth constitutional change not only incorporated democratic norms and values in the constitution but also accommodated spirit of liberation war in it.

4. Effort for economic turn around

Minimum economic security of the society is imperative for the working of a democracy. During Mujib regime economy of Bangladesh was on the verge of collapse because of rampant corruption, smuggling, famine, counterfeiting of currencies, misuse of power, deteriorating law and order etc (The Telegraph, August, 1975). This atmosphere caused great hardship to the people. Hence government alienated itself from the people (The Telegraph, August, 1975). New government under Moshtaque Ahmed in order to restore the confidence of the people upon the government took initiatives to root out corruption from the government. Accordingly government formed special Martial Law Courts and Tribunals to try corrupt elements of the government. On August 23, 1975 law enforcing authority arrested 26 top level Awami Leaguers on the charge of possessing huge wealth beyond their known source. Among them Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, Monsoor Ali, Korban were prominent (The Bangladesh Observer, August, 1975).

Mostaque government imposed death penalty for smuggling to relieve the country of the curse of smuggling. Abu Sadat government stopped printing of currency in India consequently fake currency disappeared from the market. Government promulgated the Income Tax Regulation 1976 in order to increase government's income (The Bangladesh Observer, February, 1976). It is to be noted here that from independence Awami League government did not take any action to raise income tax from the probable tax payers (The Bangladesh Observer, February, 1976).

AL government destroyed jute industry by imposing ban on jute export other than to India (Ahmed, 1984). New government stopped jute trade with India and encouraged business men to trade with foreign countries including India (The Bangladesh Observer, September, 1975). Government imposed death penalty for the crime of destroying jute industry such as smuggling of jute, setting fire on jute warehouses, etc (The Bangladesh Observer, February, 1976). Government brought change in the Bangladesh Jute Export Corporation Order, 1972 in order to facilitate jute exporters to enter foreign market (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1976).

Awami League government in the name of socialism just only nationalized some heavy businesses and factories, and established some form of cooperative societies. And this state owned sectors became the centre of corruption (The Bangladesh Observer, September, 1975). Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem stopped nationalization of factories and compulsory agriculture cooperative society by dismantling national Party BAKSAL and its socialist policy (The Morning News, November, 1975). And President Moshtaque took steps to uproot corruption in these bodies by lodging criminal proceedings against corrupt elements of these bodies (Franda, 1982).

On June 12, 1975 President Sheikh Mujib, head of BAKSAL government, with the object of realizing socialism declared to acquire private property forcefully without compensation under one year plan (The Daily Ittefaq, June, 1975). As a result people remained fearful of losing their property to the government. On the other hand Zia brought changes to article 42 of the Constitution that private property will not be acquired without giving compensation (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1977).

As a result of all these measures the economy of Bangladesh recovered quickly in 1976. On February 25, 1976 Mr. Kevin Rafferty, the correspondent of the Financial Times of London, in a dispatch from Dhaka, Bangladesh wrote, "The Martial Law Administration has given Bangladesh a glimpse of hope which was lacking in the previous four years since the creation of the state" (The Bangladesh Observer, February, 1976).

Werner Adams, a West German newsman, on March 3, 1976 said, "Abu Sadat government enjoys unprecedented popularity for its liberal economic policy, and formulation of preferential schedule, better law and order. This government is efficient, disciplined, diligent and people oriented. Awami League government had no such quality at all. It only removed experienced officers from the government and appointed poor party men in that place" (The Bangladesh Observer, March, 1976). On March 11, 1976 visiting IMF team said, "Economy shows marked improvement" (The Bangladesh Observer, March, 1976). Bangladesh Bank reports said that Bangladesh had all time high foreign currency reserve which gave the signal of quick recovery of ailing economy on November 27, 1976 (The Bangladesh Observer, November, 1976). William Smith, the Time correspondent, said the economy of Bangladesh under the leadership Zia was booming (The Bangladesh Observer, December, 1976). In contrast to that Henry Kissinger, US Foreign Secretary, in 1974 watching the precarious economic condition had told Bangladesh a bottomless basket (The Daily Star, March 2008). The regime of Zia showed prosperity.

5. Establishment of clean and efficient administration

It was unimaginable to find out honest and dedicated person free of corruption in Bangabandhu regime. Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on January 25, 1975 immediately before the passage of fourth amendment admitted in the House that his government was a *Chorer Khoni* (reservoir of thieves) (The Morning News, January, 1975). Moshtaque Ahmed in August, 1975 formed the Council of Minister with relatively honest and sincere members of the deposed regime and distributed portfolios to them in order to bring pace in government actions (Hamid, 1996). Moshtaque government repealed the Presidential Order No.9 of 1972 on August 23, 1975 in order to ensure active and efficient service of government incumbent. AL government dismissed government officers under this Order without any reason and in most cases on political reason. Then the present government promulgated the Government Servants (Review of Penalties) Ordinance, 1975 in order to reinstate the incumbents who were sacked by the previous regimes on ideological difference (The Bangladesh Observer, September, 1975).

Moshtaque government published white paper on corruption of the ousted regime in order to exhibit his government's willingness to drive corruption (The Bangladesh Observer, September, 1975). The white paper exposed the horrible picture of corruption during three years and eight months long Awami League rule.

Government lost 550 crores of taka in 1974-1975 fiscal year for under-utilization of installed capacity in nationalized industrial sectors. Deposed government spent 700 crores of taka out of 1400 crores within a period of two and a half years under the 5-year plan but no development work was done in reality. Government officials discouraged foreign investment in Bangladesh in conjunction with top level Awami League leaders for personal benefit. Government's policy was to create an import oriented economy (The Bangladesh Observer, September, 1975).

In order to bring these corrupt elements to justice Moshtaque government took initial steps such as issuing MLO-11 of 1975 directing officials and political leaders of deposed regime to submit their property accounts to the government, (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1975) establishment of Summary Martial Law Court, (The Bangladesh Observer, October, 1975) etc. Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem government expedited this process against corrupt elements of the administration, politics, business and society. Government undertook initiatives to make the administration corruption free, dynamic, efficient and neutral. Gazi Gholam Mostofa former Head of Red Cross, Professor Abdul Matin former VC of Dhaka University, Mr. Sheikh Azizur Rahman former Minister, three former MPs were convicted of corruption and sentenced to imprisonment (The Bangladesh Observer, January and March, 1976). President Zia gave a unique dimension to this corruption drive. While Zia was operating office as CMLA under President Sayem, Moshtaque Ahmed (former President) was arrested and sentenced for abusing office fund by digging deep tube-well in his residence (The Bangladesh Observer, February, 1977). He at a mammoth public meeting at Monohardy, Dhaka vowed to wipeout corrupt elements to ensure smooth progress (The Bangladesh Observer, December, 1976). On the eve of UP election Zia reiterated his call for the selection of honest candidates to the Union Parishad (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1977). In order to ensure the honesty of the elected representatives government made it compulsory for the elected representatives to submit their accounts of property to the concerned authority before entering upon their office by Local Government (Amendment) Ordinance, 1976.

In order to make the administration clean of corruption Zia by the Public Leaders (Improper Acquisition of Property) Regulation, 1977 eliminated politicians from politics for corruption and misuse of power. This law authorized the EC not to allow candidate who had failed to disclose their sources of wealth to stand for election. President Zia it is claimed gave Bangladesh the best government in its 42 years of independence (Franda, 1982).

6. Creation of job opportunity

For the purpose of creating job opportunity and make every village economically solvent government undertook the *Swanirvor Bangladesh* program (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1976). With a view to increase agriculture-production and to ensure irrigation during dry season, government started canal-excavation program throughout the country (The Bangladesh Observer, February, 1976). For the purpose of creating jobs for the huge number of unemployed rural people government undertook food for work program (The Bangladesh Observer, February, 1976). Rural people showed great enthusiasm in this project

and supported the government tremendously.¹ Zia himself took part in this work with rural people to boost their courage and said leader must guide the people in the field (The Bangladesh Observer, February, 1977).

7. Reduction of sufferings of city dwellers

In order to reduce the sufferings of the house dwellers from the disproportionate increase of rent government fixed the house rent and severe punishment was fixed for the breach of law (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1976). In order to ebb the suffering of the urban people from air pollution and traffic jam government stopped the old vehicles to run on the roads for the first time in the history of Bangladesh. And special traffic monitoring system was introduced (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1976). Not only that in order to improve law and order in the capital Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance, 1976 was promulgated and special police unit was set up for Dhaka.

8. Law and order

Law and order situation was very poor in Awami League and BAKSAL regimes. But under Martial Law it was quite improved. According to annual report on law and order situation in Dhaka the number of crimes committed in 1974 and 1975 was 11589 and 10035 respectively. On the other hand in the year 1976 it was 8269 (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1977). For improving law and order in rural area Zia established Village Defense Party consisting of 150 members in each village (Ahmed, 1995). He also established Ansar Battalions in 1976. Zia's government raised and trained up 20 Battalions of Ansar in the light of military force for upgrading the strength of Bangladesh Security Forces.

9. Zia and 19-point program

Zia became President on April 21, 1977. President Zia perhaps the first person in South Asia who threw his presidency to the hands of the people in the form of referendum on May 30, 1977. On May 26, 1977 President Zia announced his 19-point program.² Zia from the first day of his office as DCMLA tried in heart and soul to

¹ In a remote village of Bogra district Zia went to inaugurate food for work program on January 15, 1977. People were seen to gather there from midnight and at the time of inauguration the place became public gathering of hundreds of thousand people

² 19-point program includes (1) To preserve independence, integrity and sovereignty of the state at all cost, (2) To reflect in all spheres of our nation's life the four fundamental principles of the Constitution i.e. complete faith in and reliance on the Almighty Allah, democracy, nationalism and socialism meaning economic and social justice, (3) To build ourselves into a self-reliant nation through all possible means, (4) To ensure people's participation at all level of administration, development programs and in the maintenance of law and order, (5) To strengthen rural economy and thus the national economy by according priority to agricultural development, (6) To make the country self-sufficient in food and ensure that nobody has to starve, (7) To set up cloth production as to ensure supply of at least coarse cloth for everybody, (8) To take all possible measures so that no one remains homeless, (9) To rid the country of the curse of illiteracy. 10) To ensure minimum medical care for everybody, (11) To place women at their rightful position in the society and to organize and inspire the youths for nation-building, (12) To give necessary incentives to the private sector for the economic development of the country, (13) To improve the condition of the workers and develop healthy employer-worker relations in the interest of increased production, (14) To create an urge for

materialize these programs in economic, social and political development of the country. When he took over presidency these program had already become familiar with the people.

This program got 98.87% support in the referendum (The Bangladesh Observer, June, 1978). This program was made the political agenda of BNP. BNP got overwhelming majority in second Parliament capitalizing on this program. Abdus Sattar became victorious in the presidential polls of November 15, 1981 after the assassination of Zia. Long after that Khaleda Zia became PM in 1991 on the basis of Zia's 19-point program. This was the election manifesto of BNP in 1991. Even in 1996 parliamentary polls it was on of the agenda of election manifesto of BNP.

10. Summary trial court

During AL government lower judiciary was not quick to dispose of the cases coming to it. Particularly criminal courts had failed to give quick relief to the litigants. As a result common people lost faith in judicial system. President Abu Sadat Mahammad Sayem removed these sufferings by empowering the Magistrates to dispose of pending cases under summary trial by the Criminal Procedure (Temporary Provisions) Regulation, 1976 (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1976). Consequently, common people got back their confidence upon the legal system and number of criminal cases dropped quickly.

11. Workers' democratic right

Although under 1965 Factory Act workers and labourers had right to form trade union and collective bargaining agent to express their legitimate demands and rights before the management of the company and factory but civilian government from 1972 to 1975 did not allow them to use this right properly. In the name of socialism civilian regime just tried to establish state control over big factories and businesses without asking their demands and dream. Zia realized that without protecting the interest of workers and labourers industrial development was not possible. That's why Zia on the eve of May Day urged the workers and labourers to make trade union and collective bargaining agent to realize their demand from the owners through democratic process (The Bangladesh Observer, May, 1978).

12. Significance of Islam

AL leaders put on black coats which Indian politicians wear. Nationalist people do not like this. That's why President Khandakar Moshtaque Ahmed in his speech before declaring dress code for members of his

public service and nation-building among the government employees and improve their financial condition, (15) To check population explosion, (16) To build up friendship based on equality with all countries and especially strengthen the relations with the Muslim nation, (17) To decentralize the system of administration and development and strengthen local government, (18) To establish a social system based on justice and fair play and free from corruption and (19) To safeguard the rights of all citizens irrespective of religion, colour and sect, and consolidate national unity and solidarity.

government said, "We are Muslims. Our religion and culture are different from others. This difference must be reflected in our day to day life. In order to maintain our distinct cultural identity members of the new government should put on Islamic dresses" (The Bangladesh Observer, August, 1975).

Bangladeshi people are not fundamentalists. They lead modest Islamic way of life. But they are not ready to accept any act or phrase which are used by any quarter that goes against their Islamic belief. It is found that people before starting their business take the name of Almighty by saying *Bismillah-Rahmanar Rahim* and Zia himself used to start his speech with *Bismillah-Rahmanar Rahim*. Such cultural tradition was upheld by Zia in the constitution. He inserted *Bismillah-Rahmanar Rahim* in the Constitution. He adopted Absolute faith in the Almighty Allah in the Constitution replacing secularism. Again socialism is against religious political philosophy. He abolished socialism and in its place introduced the concept of social justice. All these were done to create support base for his regime (Franda, 1982).

13. Nationalism

It is claimed that most of the citizens of Bangladesh did not like themselves to be identified with the people living in West Bengal because of bitter historical Hindu-Muslim relation. They did not like Hindu domination and they identified Hindu domination with Indian rule (Abedin, 2009). After independence Bangladesh as a nation was suffering from identity crisis because of Bengali nationalism and Bengali citizenship. Bengali nationalism was a confusing concept of national identity of newly born Bangladesh. That's why Abu Sadat government on November 8, 1975 suspended the application of Bengali nationalism. President Zia gave the people Bangladeshi nationalism and Bangladeshi citizenship (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1975). He always said, "Be Bangladeshi first and Bangladeshi last" (The Bangladesh Observer, 1976).

14. Political integration

BAKSAL government did not tolerate opposition politics. Those who failed to comply with its order were arrested and detained in jail under the Special Powers Act of 1974 (The Bangladesh Observer, 1975). Moshtaque government released all these political prisoners such as Mr. Mashiur Rahman, Oli Ahad etc (The Bangladesh Observer, 1975).

Awami League government tried to divide the nation into freedom fighters and non-freedom fighters. And oppositions to the regime were termed as enemies of the state and non-freedom fighters. Awami League government used the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunal) Order 1972 against the opposition frequently (Ahmed, 1984). Even Maulana Bhasani, President of NAP (B) and Mr. Ataur Rahman Khan, president of National League and Parliament Member were termed as collaborators by AL (The Morning News, April and August, 1973). Under influence of Indian government and with the direct assistance of Indian Army Awami League government set up *Rakkhi Bahini* on February 1, 1972 to protect her interest. India wanted to liquidate the Army and make this *Bahini* more sophisticated to protect her interest in Bangladesh. The Army held the idea of sovereign entity of Bangladesh. On the other hand *Rakkhi Bahini* held

pro AL ideology. It is alleged that it had soft corner for Indian interest in Bangladesh because it was trained by Indian special force and equipped with Indian weapons. Such condition was a major threat to political integration and sovereign entity of Bangladesh. President Khandakar Moshtaque Ahmed dismantled the *Rakkhi Bahini* and absorbed it in the Army (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1975). Abu Sadat government tried to integrate different forces for national integration. It repealed the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunals) Order, 1972 in order to remove the differences between freedom fighters and non-freedom fighters (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1975). The Awami League government kept the Islamic political parties out of politics because of their pro Pakistani role in the liberation war and anti-Indian feeling (Franda, 1982). Not only that, some left leaning political parties were also banned by the then Awami League government because of their anti-Awami role. President Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayeem removed ban on religious political parties in 1976. President Zia allowed the Islamic and left political parties to participate in open politics to nourish democratic values in the country. On November 4, 1976 Zia in a nationwide speech urged the countrymen to build up a prosperous and happy Bangladesh on the basis of Bangladeshi nationalism, self reliance administrative system having participation of all people at all levels and with infinite faith in God (The Morning News, November, 1976).

15. Mixed Economy

Zia cancelled socialism. Government encouraged private entrepreneurs to set up business and factories in order to boost the economy (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1976). In order to ensure continuous supply of international money in the economic development of the country Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayeem government set up International Finance Corporation in Bangladesh by the International Finance Corporation Ordinance, 1976 (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2007). Not only that in order to encourage and broaden the base of investment, develop the capital market and mobilize savings government set up Investment Corporation in 1976 (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2007). In order to encourage private individual to invest in private sectors government reactivated stock exchange in Dhaka (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1976).

Again Awami League government in the name of socialism just only nationalized some heavy businesses and factories, and established some form of cooperative societies. And this state owned sectors became the centre of corruption (The Bangladesh Observer, September, 1975). Zia stopped compulsory acquisition of private business, agricultural land and property without compensation (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1977). It removed corruption from government owned businesses, factories and institutions. That means Zia maintained mixed economy for the smooth growth of economy and he became successful in this regard.

16. Democracy: Expansion of political participation

People are the ultimate repository of sovereign power in democracy. Zia wanted to establish participatory democracy. So he created avenues for asserting their (people) voice in the process of governance.

16.1. Gram Sarkar

In order to make the village people aware of the government decision, plan of action and above all to engage them in the activities of government Zia introduced *Gram Sarkar* consisting of village head and other elderly people of each village. It made the rural people habituated with actions of the government's 19-point programme (Ahmed, 1995).

16.2. Local Government

AL government abolished elected local government bodies and established BAKSAL based local government where common people had no say. Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem government encouraged the local people to take part in administration through their elected representatives. For that object government tried to decentralize administration and make the rural people aware of their rights and duties (Hossain, 1998). Government with a view to creating political atmosphere took some steps. Among those- the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1976 and the Delimitation of Constituencies Ordinance, 1976 were promulgated (The Bangladesh Observer, March, 1976).

Zia realized the importance of participation of women in the development of the country. Keeping this thought in mind two seats were reserved for women in Union Parishad (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1976). He ensured female participation in local politics. Zia arranged Union Parishad election from January 13 to 31, 1977 with a view to involving the local people in the development program of the country (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1977). Spontaneous participation of common people in this election made the government policy a success. After this election, he arranged Paurashava election on August 13, 1977 ensuring the participation of urban people in decision making process (The Bangladesh Observer, August, 1977). In 1973 first UP election was held. Fourth amendment omitted local government provision from the constitution. It stopped election to UP and said local members of BAKSAL should form this body through selection.

16.3. National level

Fourth amendment introduced presidential form of government in the Constitution. It was said that president would be directly elected. For power consolidation Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became President without holding election on January 25, 1975 (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1975). However as a qualification of the President fourth amendment laid down that only BAKSAL nominated person could stand for election. President Khandaker Moshtaque by first Martial Law Proclamation on August 20, 1975 suspended provisions of articles 48, 55, 148 and third Schedule regarding the holding of direct presidential polls (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1975). President Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayeem kept the suspension in this regard. He dismantled BAKSAL on November 8, 1975 (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1975). Zia promulgated the Presidential Election Ordinance 1978 for the election of President on the basis of universal adult franchise. Under this ordinance election commission was reconstituted with the power of holding Presidential poll (Ministry of Law, Justice

and Parliamentary Affairs, 1978). On June 3, 1978 presidential election was held. Ten candidates stood for the post. 20548930 out of 38486247 eligible voters cast their vote in the polls. Zia won the election bagging 76.72% votes. Thus article 48 came into reality through universal franchise (The Bangladesh Observer, June, 1978).

16.4. Parliamentary membership

By fourth amendment AL government extended the term of the first Parliament seven years from five years (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1975). Government also ordered the opposition MP to join BAKSAL and dismantle their parties in the name of greater democracy. It laid down that only BAKSAL nominee could stand for polls (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1975). Zia omitting these undemocratic provisions arranged multi-party second Parliamentary polls on February 18, 1978 with the spontaneous participation of 29 political parties (Election Commission Report). AL government allowed government officials to participate in politics and asked them to be a member of BAKSAL so that it could use the permanent executive as a party organ. Zia barred the government officials from participating in politics and political parties. He ensured female participation in national politics by increasing number of women reserved seats in the House to 30 from 15 and extending duration to 15 from 10 years.

16.5. Political party

After the formation of BAKSAL by President Mujibur Rahman on February 24, 1975 under fourth amendment all political parties were banned after April 25, 1975 (The Bangladesh Observer, February, 1975). President Abusadat Mohammad Sayeem by Second Proclamation dissolved BAKSAL on November 8, 1975. Not only that, by MLR No-XXII, 1976 all political activities were suspended. Multi-party politics started from May 1, 1978 under the auspices of President Ziaur Rahman. Nationalist Front consisting of Jatiyatabadi Gonotantrik Dal, the Muslim League, the United People's Party, NAP (B), Bangladesh Labour Party and Bangladesh Schedule Castes Federation nominated Zia as their Presidential candidate for the June 3, 1978 election (The Bangladesh Observer, May, 1978). M A G Osmani, stood for the election against Zia as a candidate of Gonotantrik Oikya Jote consisting of Awami League, NAP (M), People's League, Jatiya Janata Party, Krishak Sramic Party and Jatiya League. Zia allowed all to form political parties (The Bangladesh Observer, November, 1978). He withdrew ban on political parties (The Bangladesh Observer, November, 1978). As a result of all these steps 82 political parties submitted nomination papers for the polls of Second Parliament but ultimately 29 political parties participated in the polls held on February 18, 1979 (The Ittefaq, February, 1979).

17. Freedom of press and enjoyment of fundamental rights

Zia was in charge of Information and Broadcasting Ministry under President Abusadat Mohammad Sayeem. He was aware of the role of newspaper. For the betterment of the society, democracy and state strong role of news media is essential. Zia in a conference of news media said, "Press must reflect hopes and aspirations of

people” (The Bangladesh Observer, April, 1976). But the BAKSAL regime did not want the newspaper to portray people’s will and they treated newspaper a threat to their regime. On the other hand Zia expected the newspaper to play its role for national interest.” Government withdrew ban on publication of news paper that was imposed by BAKSAL government under Mujib regime (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1976). Zia urged the journalists to act as soldiers to earn fame for country (The Bangladesh Observer, December, 1976).

18. Establishment of strong army

Nationalist forces like Maulana Bhasani always said, “We shall shed last drop of blood to protect our sovereignty” (The Bangladesh Observer, May, 1976). Zia said, “Nation will sacrifice everything for the cause of sovereign entity of Bangladesh” (The Bangladesh Observer, December, 1976). Sovereignty is manifested through armed forces of a country. For the protection of sovereign entity strong military power is a must. For strong army Zia brought discipline in armed forces (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1975) and raised the manpower of army from 26000 to 77000 (Hossain, 1988). Not only that government dismantled party based militia Rakkhi Bahini. On the contrary it is contended that AL maintained weak army to make Bangladesh subservient to India and maintained strong Rakkhi Bahini to protect Indian interest (Uddin, 1993).

19. Strong judiciary

Government has three organs- executive, legislature and judiciary. The efficiency of a government depends upon the efficiency of it’s judicial system. In other words whether the citizens of a country enjoy the state privileges equally, and whether they enjoy fundamental rights that depend upon how much judiciary is capable of protecting individual rights. Since by fourth amendment to the constitution citizens of Bangladesh lost their power to enforce their fundamental rights under article 44, and Supreme Court’s original power to restore fundamental rights to citizens under article 102 as well as supervisory power over subordinate courts and tribunals under article 109 were snatched away and the judiciary was made a biteless institution which lost every thing but the structure. In order to ensure the peaceful enjoyment of fundamental rights by the citizens Zia by Martial Law Proclamation (Tenth Amendment) Order, 1977 reinstated the judiciary in it’s earlier position and strong judiciary was the contribution of Zia.

20. Establishment of the supremacy of the people

Bangladesh though started it’s journey with parliamentary system of government Sheikh Mujib being the most popular figure failed to make this system workable. By fourth amendment the legislature was made a rubber stamp of the executive. Such system was against the spirit of the liberation war. People wanted a system where legislature would act free from executive. Zia removed President’s veto power against the legislature from article 80 of the constitution. Participation of people in constitution making process is

essential for the sound working of the constitutional system. Constitution is said to be the expression of the will of all sections of the people of a country. Where the constitution fails to accommodate the will of majority of the people of a country, it can't be said to be treated as the sacred document for the governance of the country. Constitutional change can't be imposed upon the people, if it is done it will lessen the sanctity of the constitution as well as undermine the sovereignty of the people. When the Constitution of Bangladesh, 1972 was framed a good number of political forces who participated in the liberation war were excluded from the process of constitution making let alone the Islamic parties who were opposed to liberation war for the sake of Muslim brotherhood. The 1972 Constitution was an Awami League Constitution because all the members of Constitution Drafting Committee except Surojit Sen Gupta who was from NAP(M) belonged to AL. AL ensured its partisan philosophy by the Bangladesh Constituent Assembly Members (Cessation of Membership) Order, 1972. In the order it was laid down that if any member of Constituent Assembly went against the party decision or violated party rule he or she would lose his seat in the Constituent Assembly. However Maulana Bhasani demanded scrapping of the existing constitution (The Bangladesh Observer, November, 1976). He demanded a constitution which would reflect the will of the Muslims of our country. Though by Martial Law Regulations and Ordinances will of the people of that period had been satisfied but how their participation in the making and unmaking the constitution could be ensured permanently there was no such mechanism in the constitution, 1972. Zia introduced the system of referendum by Martial Law Regulation. Thus, he made the voice of the people supreme in constitution amending process. Zia by Second Martial Law Proclamation (Fifth Amendment) Order, 1978 made a provision that amendment to the preamble to the constitution, the four state principles and manner of election to the office of Presidency will have to be referred to the people for decision through a referendum. Zia was the first person who left his presidency to the decision of the people on May 30, 1977 in order to habituate them of this right.

21. Foreign policy

It is claimed most of the citizens of Bangladesh did not like pro-Indian foreign policy and pro-India role of the ousted government because of bitter historical Hindu-Muslim relation. They did not like Hindu domination. Most of them were unhappy regarding the subservient foreign policy of the past regime (Abedin, 2009). Moshtaque government strived to come out from that Indian clutch and started to adopt open foreign policy. That's why the Moshtaque government in a letter to Commonwealth Chief expressed his government's commitment towards international peace and cooperation (Franda, 1982). As a result of which Saudi Arab, Oman, Sudan, China etc recognized Bangladesh in August, 1975. It is necessary to mention that Mujib regime had tried her best to get recognition from these countries but failed. PM Mujibur Rahman was allowed to join OIC conference in Lahore, Pakistan in 1974 in the pressure of Turkey and Indonesia after he had released 92000 Pakistani POWs including 195 war criminals. Civilian government from 1972 to 1975 failed to convince the middle-Eastern countries that it had sovereign entity.

The Awami League government had imposed ban on jute export to foreign countries except India perhaps to appease her. As a change of policy Moshtaque government withdrew this ban on September 20, 1975 (The Bangladesh Observer, September, 1975). Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem government brought some changes to

the Bangladesh Jute Export Corporation Order 1972 in order to facilitate the jute exporters to enter foreign markets (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1976).

Zia shunned the pro-Indian policy and asserted to establish Bangladesh as an independent sovereign state. He said that they must be united to defend their sovereignty. Bangladesh stood for peace and every inch of their territory would be defended (The Bangladesh Observer, May, 1976 and January, 1977). At Islamic Foreign Ministers meeting held at Jeddah Zia said that justice and equality must be for world peace (The Bangladesh Observer, May, 1976). Zia brought the Farakka issue to international forum at Islamic Foreign Ministers meeting held at Jeddah Zia said that India must give them their rightful share of Ganges waters (The Bangladesh Observer, May, 1976). He addressed Farakka havoc in details in 6-Nation Labour Conference at Tehran (The Bangladesh Observer, September, 1976). Bangladesh sought impartial UN hearing on Farakka on September 30, 1976 (The Bangladesh Observer, October, 1976).

As result of this the US State Department said, "This government is less corrupt than the previous one (BAKSAL and Awami League). This administration is efficient, honest and people oriented. Eighteen months ago all people wanted to migrate to get out. But now they feel confident and proud to be termed them Bangladeshi, it is Zia's achievement" (The Bangladesh Observer, December, 1976). China accepted Zia as the future president of Bangladesh (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1977).

In a state visit to China Zia signed different trade agreements and two states vowed to act together for establishing world peace and security on the basis of preserving sovereign entity and independence of state (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1977).

On the other hand Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had congratulated Sheikh Mujib for becoming President earlier in fourth amendment under one-party authoritarian undemocratic system in the night of January 25, 1975 (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1975).

22. Support of the people

Bangladesh under the leadership of Zia emerged as a strong economic force in South Asia. According to economic report of January 30, 1979 Bangladesh's export earnings went up to 63% since 1975 (The Bangladesh Observer, January, 1979).

For the changes brought by Zia and development program taken in administration, economic sector, foreign policy, industrial and rural areas, the people whole heartedly supported him. Maulana Bhasani in a news conference demanded for scrapping constitution and postponement of election. He in November 1976 said, "I am not against election or democracy but I will like the election to be deferred till the basic economic, political, and social problems are solved. 90% population of the country do not want poll at this moment. They want that the government shall engage itself in the task of developing and stabilizing the economy on emergency basis" (The Bangladesh Observer, November, 1976).

Zia became so popular that wherever he went that became a mammoth public gathering (Franda, 1982). He used that support for the national integration and for betterment of the people. Ziaur Rahman being an army person had the quality of statesmanship. He, after being elected as president on June 3, 1978

presidential election as the nominee of Nationalist Front, thought of having a broad based political platform for the implementation of his 19-point program. In the meantime his Special Assistant Justice Abdus Sattar launched a political party named Jatiyatabadi Gonotantik Dal on February 23, 1978 (The Bangladesh Observer, February, 1978).

It was one of the components of Nationalist Front. It was thought that Jatiyatabadi Gonotantik Dal had the blessing of Zia but he did not join it. However on September 1, 1978 he floated a new political party named Bangladesh Nationalist Party in Dhaka and became president of that party. This party was the conglomerate of different political parties. This party was committed to socio-economic development, unity and sovereign existence of Bangladesh through its 19-point program.

Living in such popularity Zia announced January 27, 1979 as the election date for second Parliament. Zia always demanded a united Bangladesh. That's why even after the declaration of date he reiterated that solid unity was a must for progress. He was sincere and honest. He wanted the Jatiya Sangsad to be filled by honest, sincere and dedicated elected representatives (The Bangladesh Observer, December, 1976 and February, 1979).

Due to some reason the election date was shifted to February 18, 1979 from January 27, 1979. Zia called upon the electorate, "Elect right person, your wrong decision will lead the country to disaster." As a result of removing the bottle necks to democratic system 29 political parties participated in second parliamentary election. Zia's BNP got 207 seats out of 315 seats, AL (Malek) got 39 seats, AL (Mizan) 2 seats, Muslim League-Islamic Democratic League bagged 20 seats, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal 8, NAP (Muzaffar) 1, Gana Front 2, Sammayabadi Dal 1, Jatiya League 2, Ganatantrik Andolan 1, Jatiya Ekota Party 1, Independent received 17 seats. 17 political parties did not win any seat. 50.94% voters cast their votes. BNP got 40.3% popular votes (The Morning News, February, 1979).

23. Recognition of contribution

After the election first inaugural session of the second *Jatiya Sangsad* was summoned on April 4, 1979 and on the same day Constitution (Fifth Amendment) Bill was introduced to the House. This bill ratified and confirmed all Proclamations, Martial Law Regulations and Orders, and other laws made under Martial Law during the period between August 15, 1975 and April 6, 1979 (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 1979).

All these changes made in the constitution were intended to implement Zia's famous 19-point programme for meeting the needs of the society (19-point program of Zia). He had easy access to common people. He traveled to 414 thanas across the country (Franda, 1982). It seems that politically aware common people of the country expected such type of changes. The spontaneous participation and enthusiasm of the people in referendum on May 30, 1977, presidential election on June 3, 1978 as well as second parliamentary election on February 1979 are evident in this regard. The Appellate Division on May 10, 2011 declared the fifth amendment illegal. But it did not negate all the above mentioned administrative, economic, political, judicial etc reforms of the military regime from August 15, 1975 to April 6, 1979.

24. Death of Zia and gathering of millions of people

The nation was not only shocked at the news of Zia's assassination but also fell into deep mourning. At his funeral Namat a million people (The Bangladesh Observer, June, 1981), the largest gathering of people in the political history of Bangladesh, participated and prayed for his peace in heaven. On the other hand common people were seen happy and joyful at the killing of President Sheikh Mujib, father of the nation. The benevolent and charismatic leadership of Zia in realizing the spirit of liberation war which was unimaginable during the reign of Sheikh Mujib perhaps forced the people to untie their tears at his death.

25. Present scenario of Zia's dream and ideology

Military rulers are not remembered by the people after their departure. But this practice is proved wrong in respect of Ziaur Rahman. Before 1991 general election, the first free and fair election held in Bangladesh after autocratic Ershad, political analyst predicted that Bangladesh Nationalist Party would not be victorious but common people made the prediction false. Thereafter in all elections held in 1996, 2001, 2008 common voters cast 30 to 35 percent votes for BNP. In last election held on January 5, 2014, popularly known as voter-less election in which in 153 (The Daily Star, January, 2014) seats out of 300 MPs were declared victorious without election political analysts held that BNP had the highest rate of popularity among the voters than any other time. It is to be noted here that present leadership of BNP except Chairperson Begum Zia, widow of late Zia, are corrupt and lack of integrated personality. People love and care for BNP not for present leadership but for teaching, thought, and benevolent contribution of Zia in sowing multiparty democracy and materializing spirit of war of independence in Bangladesh.

26. Conclusion

Zia's contribution to the creation of Bangladesh and making her a democratic polity is incomparable to any other great leaders of Bangladesh, no doubt. The events of Zia's emergence happened in all cases beyond his knowledge. However when he was pushed into the place of governance he used every effort, wisdom, and weapon to materialize the spirit of war of independence into reality and made independent Bangladesh a full-fledged multi-party democratic polity based on rationality and equal sovereignty in world arena. In doing so he uprooted corruption, dismantled one-party dictatorial government, made judiciary independent, introduce mixed economy, set up multi-party democracy, established sovereignty of the people by referendum, ensured accountability of government by introducing direction election at local and national level. He introduced Bangladesh to the family of nations as a sovereign entity capable of making her decision on the basis of equality and mutual trust. Because of all these deeds the people of Zia's reign felt the taste of sovereign independent democratic Bangladesh first time after independence. With the aim of giving the dream and thinking of Zia permanent shape Bangladesh Nationalist Party was formed with Zia as first chairperson accommodating all democracy loving people a common platform to proceed with the idea of sound and healthy sovereign independent democratic Bangladesh. Assassination of President Zia halted this

journey but the love, affection, respect and honour for Zia for his enormous contribution in making Bangladesh an economically solvent, exploitation free multi-party democratic sovereign polity brought BNP into state power in 1991, 1996, 2001. At present under undemocratic corrupt autocratic rule of AL government maximum people are expecting Zia style rule again in Bangladesh.

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