any opposition to it. When he met Khwaja Nazimuddin in Karachi at that time, the young Mujib had the temerity to tell the Prime Minister of Pakistan: "The Awami League is in the opposition. It should be given the opportunity to act unhindered. After all, a democracy cannot function without an opposition" (213). Faced with communal riots against Kadiyanis and Ahmadiyyas in independent Pakistan, and the intolerance displayed in parts of the country against these sects and people of other religions, Bangabandhu stresses that Islam taught us not to punish even non-believers. Moreover, when he emphasises that Pakistan was supposed to be a democracy where people, "irrespective of religion were supposed to have equal rights" (244), he is indicating clearly his belief that he would like to be in a democracy where all were treated equally by the government and by the law.

In Dhaka and in East Pakistan, and supposedly in a completely independent country where people were supposed to have all kinds of human rights, Bangabandhu was shocked to see attempts underway to deculturise East Pakistan's Muslims, strip the "Bengali" part of their identity as far as possible, and make them adopt the Urdu language for state occasions. By early 1948 the young Mujib and fellow members of the Student League had joined the members of the Tamaddun Majlish in opposing Muslim League moves to make Urdu the only state language of Pakistan, and in demanding that Bengali be made one of the two state languages. He soon spoke up on the topic on every possible occasion, and joined meetings and demonstrations organised on the issue. Although in jail in February 1952, Bangabandhu was in constant touch with organisers key to the Language Movement. He had come to believe that the movement would succeed since all Bengalis were supporting it and since, as he puts it, "no nation can bear any insult directed at its mother tongue" (197). Bangabandhu records in his memoirs not only his shock and regret at the death of the language martyrs on February 21, but also his feeling that the blood they had shed would not go in vain. As he puts it, at a time in Faridpur prison when he saw little hope for himself, "I thought since our boys had shed blood they would end up making Bengali the state language even though I myself would never be able to see that day" (203).

Throughout *The Unfinished Memoirs*, Bangabandhu records his love of everything Bengali. He was deeply attached to Bengali culture as a whole and the Bengali language in particular. When he heard Abbasuddin's song in a boat on the Meghna, he tells us that he was simply mesmerised by the beauty of the whole scene. When in Karachi a few years later, he is reminded by its setting of how green his beloved Bengal was, and how beautiful, compared to the "pitiless landscape" of the West Pakistani one. This makes him compare the hard mindset of West Pakistanis to the softness of the Bengali temperament and makes him conclude "We were born into a world that abounded in beauty; we loved whatever was beautiful" (214).

In the Peace Conference he attended in China in 1951, Bangabandhu spoke in Bengali, reasoning thus: "Chinese, Russian and Spanish were being used in addition to Bengali, so why should I not speak in Bengali?" (230). Mr. Ataur Rahman Khan had delivered his speech in English before him, but it was Bangabandhu's nationalistic feelings that made him speak in Bengali. This was perhaps the first time the language was used in an international conference held on such a scale. As Bangabandhu wrote on the occasion, "I could speak English fluently but I felt it was my duty to speak in my mother tongue" (230). His growing conviction that autonomy was needed for East Bengal was now linked to his linguistic nationalism. This is why in a passage of his memoirs that deals with the political situation in 1953, Bangabandhu writes clearly, "We were bent on making Bengali a state language and would not compromise on these issues" (247).

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with Mao Tse Tung (Mao Zedong), Head of State and the Chairman of the Communist Party of China (October, 1957).

COURTESY:
MUJIB SHOTOBORSHO PHOTO ARCHIVE

And so as he immersed himself in the politics of Pakistan after coming back from Kolkata, Bangabandhu had come closer and closer to the view that Bangladeshis needed a country where secularism, democracy and the kind of nationalism based on upholding the Bengali language and celebrating Bengali culture must take roots. As for the fourth pillar of our 1973 constitution, it should be clear to readers of this piece by now that he felt strongly that inequality in all spheres should be minimised in all fronts—political, cultural or economic ones. Not only was he against feudal ways of thinking and the zamindari system, he was always inclined to favour the equitable distribution of resources. This is abundantly evident in the pages of *Unfinished Memoirs* devoted to the "New China" that he visited for the Peace Conference, as well as his long discussion of the socio-economic experiment he saw there, and the comparison that he drew between it and contemporary Pakistan in his "New China" book. At the end of his description of his visit to China in *The Unfinished Memoirs,* he says unequivocally: "I myself am no communist; I believe in socialism and not capitalism. Capital is the tool of the oppressor" (237). Analysing the defeat of the Muslim League at the hands of the United Front in 1954, Bangabandhu observes that it was no good to try and fool the people by using religion as an excuse to exploit and dominate others. He notes that what "the masses wanted is an exploitation-free society and economic and social progress" (263). He knew from China's experience that the forces of capital would always stand in the way of whoever wanted to establish such a society.

The Unfinished Memoirs is thus not only a record of the first 34 years of Bangabandhu's life but also a book depicting the evolution of his political thinking that can be of immense use for us at this time as we attempt to restructure our society and take our country further along the road to the future. It is also a work telling us that we need to restore the four pillars of the country—nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism—fully if we are to build the kind of S*honar Bangla* that Bangabandhu dreamt of. Of course to do so we should realise that we will need the willingness to sacrifice, demonstrate the capacity to do hard work, and exhibit courage, determination and organisational skills. That is to say, we will need to emulate the young Mujib in every way. We will also need to have his kind of love for the Bangla language and the country, and his respect for all of its citizens, regardless of their religion or class positions. Like him, we must demonstrate the courage to speak up and say truth to power, whether within the country or internationally; for dark forces will always deter us and attempt to take us away from our founding principles.

But the *Unfinished Memoirs* indicates too that to achieve such goals we also need humility, the courage to admit that we may have taken the wrong course every now and then, and the alertness to readjust our course when we need to. As Bangabandhu tells us at one point of his narrative, "If I have been mistaken or if I have done wrong I have never had difficulty in acknowledging my mistake and expressing my regret" (85). As he also says at the conclusion of the passage: "When I decide on doing something I go ahead and do it. If I find out I was wrong, I try to correct myself. This is because I know that only doers are capable of making errors; people who never do anything make no mistakes" (85).

Fakrul Alam is UGC Professor, Department of English, and University of Dhaka. He received the Bangla Academy Puroshkar (Literature Award) for Translation in 2013. His publications include *The Essential Tagore* (Harvard UP, 2011; with Radha Chakravarty); *Imperial Entanglements and Literature in English* (writer's ink: Dhaka, 2007); *South Asian Writers in English* (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006) and *Jibanananda Das: Selected Poems* (UPL, 1999); Other works include translations of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's *Unfinished Memoirs* (Dhaka: UPL, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2012) and *Prison Diaries* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2016) and *Ocean of Sorrow*, a translation of the late nineteenth century Bengali epic narrative, Bishad Sindhu (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2017). Recent publications include *Once More into the Past* (Dhaka: Daily Star Books, 2020) and *Ballad of Our Hero* Bangabandhu, a translation of Syed Shamsul Huq's *Bangabondhur Bir Gatha*. Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2019.

Part of the lecture was published previously in The Daily Star.