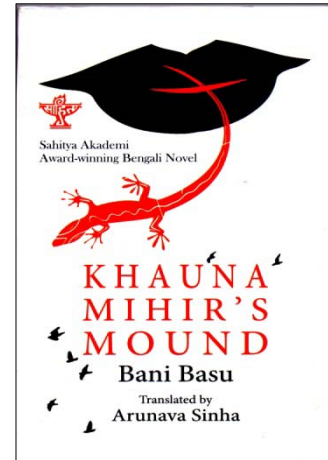


Bangla Novel in Translationby **Avishek Rath**¹***Khauna Mihirer Dhipi*** by **Bani Basu**.Trans. **Arunava Sinha**'s. ***Khauna Mihir's Mound***

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This novel by Bani Basu has two plots which run side by side. One is situated in the ancient past which opens with characters like Ranka, Matangi, Nimesh, Bhaga, and Aryama. The ideal leadership of liberal chieftain Matangi is destroyed by the attack of another group which was led by another female chieftain as well. The intermingling of the two groups opens up hopes of a bright future. But it was destroyed by one of the male members of the group who was earlier expelled for his atrocities. The liberal ones were killed in war and the domination of man-made one-sided rule began. On the other side, a parallel plot runs in the text which has modern day society as its context. But in this society as well, those same attitudes of the past could be found albeit in cloaked avatars. The only positive point is while in the other plot the end comes in a tragic way, in the plot with modern civilization as its context we encounter rays of hope at the end.

“The novel speaks in several voices. There are the internal monologues of a mother and a daughter, telling the stories of five generations of women in a family. These are interleaved with a recreation of the transition of power from women to men in a prehistoric society, as imagined by an archaeologist. Capturing the different registers of narration as well as the cadences of thought was a formidable challenge.”

This was Arunava Sinha's reply while answering a question regarding the “particular interests and challenges” of translating *Khauna Mihirer Dhipi* from Bengali into English.

¹ A former student of CENTIL of Jadavpur University and SOLC of Rabindra Bharati University, Avishek Rath is a PhD Research Scholar in the Department of English of the University of Calcutta with his area of research being Translation Studies

While going through the English translation of the Bengali novel which examines the passing of the rein of the civilization from women to men, it is found that the translation is a smooth one with a few expressions in italics bearing the mark of its tag as a “translation”. The text is translated almost word by word in many cases and in some cases even the intonation pattern of the Bengali is sought to be captured in the translation by dividing phonemes in exactly the same places as in the original. Onomatopoeic words are translated through different techniques in different places. Sometimes they are simply transliterated and sometimes they are replaced by cultural equivalents. In the original text, there are characters from the ancient past and there are words in the speeches of some characters which stand for the historical context of their speakers. For example, the text has many words that are no longer in currency. They have been replaced by other words. But in the translation, these markers seem to be absent. However, that is perhaps inevitable while translating a work such as this one. There are arguments, and in many cases justified, in favour of translating ancient classics employing contemporary usage. While translating quotations from songs, the author translated the text first and then presented a paraphrase of it. It is also a common practice as in many translations published by several international publication houses, we often find that even in cover designs of the translations of Indian titles, the titles of the original books are first transliterated and then a catchy paraphrase-like expression follow. In some cases, the problematic cultural terms are simplified and replaced by cultural part-equivalents. But the positive impact is that the reader of the translation can somehow feel the essence of the original expressions. The absence of any footnote or endnote in the translation may be thought of as a bold step towards the post-colonial stance of translation theorists. It is perhaps to attract the mindset of the readers of Indian classics who may feel the smooth text as a “text” in itself and not a “translation”. It is possible to surmise from the translation that the translator perhaps has in mind the pan-Indian readership along with the international readership as well. As a translator of so many Bengali classics, Sinha is well acquainted with the different dimensions of problems which a translator has to face while translating from Bengali into English. His experience comes through in the way he deals with the challenges of translating a complex text like the one under review. The result is an enriching and pleasurable reading.