

# Challenging the Nonsense: Teaching *Abol Tabol* in translation

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## English Translation by Satyajit Ray

### GROOMY TIDINGS

My dear Sir, do, let me shake your hand –  
Your daughter is soon to wed. I understand,  
Great news. Congrats. Now, luckily  
I know this Gangaram, the groom – to – be  
Splendid chap. You've won a fair prize –  
Though not so fair, ha – ha, complexion wise!  
His face reminds me of – now, let me see. . .  
Ah, yes – an owl; the same rotundity.  
Education sir? Now, there's a lad  
With all the strength of will that's to be had.  
He sat for his final tests for school. No luck. He  
flopped.  
Nineteen times he tried, and then he stopped.  
Financial state, you ask? His property?  
He's sunk in debts as far as I can see!  
His brothers are a sorry bunch I fear,  
One's a loony, one's a racketeer.  
A third they put the clinkers on because  
By forging money he was breaking laws.  
The youngest one, I gather, plays the drum  
In restaurants, and earns a paltry sum.  
Gangaram himself despairs to fight his  
Ailments of the spleen and hepatitis.  
But mark you, sir, his noble ancestry –  
Ganga branches from a princely tree!  
Sham Lahiri (and it has been proved)  
Is Gangaram's own cousin, thrice removed.  
Looking for a future son – in – law  
I daresay you could ask for more.

## A MARRIAGE IS ANNOUNCED

I went to Posta, and they said  
Your daughter was about to wed,  
And Gangaram's the lucky man!  
So let me tell you what I can.  
Dear Gangaram's a comely youth —  
A shade too dark, to tell the truth —  
And on his face, a constant scowl  
A little like an angry owl.  
His scholarly accreditations?  
You must admire the young man's patience.  
He tried full nineteen times to get  
His Junior School Certificate.  
On top of that, he's rather poor :  
The wolf's for ever at their door.  
His brothers are a precious lot,  
For one's a freak and one's a sot,  
And one assumed the noble mission  
Of forging notes, and went to prison.  
The youngest plays a set of drums  
In music-halls for modest sums.  
Poor Gangaram's for ever ailing  
With jaundice and a kidney failing.  
But still, they're of a noble breed :  
The Grand Panjandrum's direct seed,  
And Lahiri of Banagram  
Is cousin, now, to Gangaram.  
So now you've got it cut and dried —  
A worthy match for such a bride!

- **The Blooming Groom**
- I was away at Posta and I learnt it now
- That your daughter is going to have her wedding vow.
- Gangaram is her blooming half
- But, Sire, do you know him enough?
- Needless saying, he is a quite good man
- Though his skin is a little too tan...
- Moreover Gangaram doesn't look foul
- But then, he resembles, wait, I know, an owl!
- Intellect and brains? If that's what you wonder
- For heaven's sake, the guy's a blunder!
- After Nineteen failed attempts at matriculation
- His efforts finally reached an expiration.
- Money and finance, that's another mess
- He barely manages to survive each day's race
- And oh, the siblings, I wish I could have sworn...
- One's a lunatic, and one's a stubborn.
- The other guy who forges money is one of a sample
- He resides now in the prisoner's cell.
- And, well the youngest one, is a Tabla player,
- Works in jatras and earns very meagre!
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- Honestly, Gangaram is quite the man
- Has every disease one literally can...
- But, as blue blood runs his veins for free
- One must know Kongsho was an elite of his family tree!
- Oh and, Shyam Lahiri of Bonogram
- I presume is the cousin to Gangaram...
- Anyways, now that the search's over
- Do you really think, one could have scored better?
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- -Arkadeepta Roy  
(Maharaja Manindra Chandra College)

Thank You