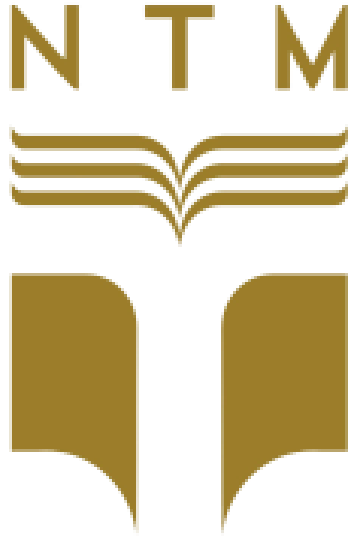


# Translation Today



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# The Art of Translation: On Translating Sukumar Ray's *Abol Tabol* in English

UMA RAY SRINIVASAN

## Abstract

*This essay is primarily an attempt to lay out the intricacies of the process that have been experienced while translating in English what is perhaps the best-known nonsense verse of our country, Abol Tabol (containing fifty-three poems) by Sukumar Ray written in Bengali. This analytical process also reflects upon similar difficulties one may encounter in translating nonsense verse in general. The short Part I of the essay considers the challenges of translation, which critics have always pronounced and which has been experienced by this writer. Part II specifically discusses how these challenges are encountered in translating Abol Tabol. It considers the linguistic eccentricities of Bengali that make the translator's task difficult, but also rewarding; and it also considers other nuances of verse translations such as the use of rhyme, rhythm, vocabulary, proverbs and idiomatic expressions, word coining, etc. each of which is assessed especially in the context of Abol Tabol translation. This article also presents a few samples of individual pieces of translated poems by this author wherever they help amplifying the points discussed.*

**Keywords:** Translation, Language, Rhyme, Rhythm, Sukumar Ray.

## Part I: Preliminary

### The Act of Translation

Saussure, among others, foregrounds the untranslatable nature of a literary text in a given language, which is a product of a certain cultural and temporally circumscribed entity. For language is not merely a naming system, but a system of