SANJAY SIRCAR
Canberra, Australia

An Annotated *Chhaṛa-Punthi*
Nursery Rhymes from Bengal

Abstract

This article provides translations of and commentary on folk nursery rhymes from Bengal, drawing on various printed texts. The rhymes include songs of sleep, rhymes of mother love, verses on the doings of a generic little boy and little girl, and descriptions of rural revels. A tune for one rhyme is included. The translations approximate the syntax, meter, and rhyme schemes of the originals, and convey a composite image of rustic experience that is ingested by the small children to and by whom the rhymes are recited.

Keywords: Bengal— nursery rhyme—folk rhyme—rhyme—verse—translation

Asian Folklore Studies, Volume 56, 1997: 79–108

BECAUSE OF THE ROMANTIC assimilation of the "folk" with the "child" (both being thought of as more simple, naive, "natural," and sweet than the normative urban male adult), the study of nursery rhymes, like that of märchen and other traditional "folk" material, tends to fall midway between the study of folklore and of children's literature proper. Nevertheless, despite their uncertain status in the academy, folk rhymes constitute the imaginative material (whether or not it counts as "literature") by which small children—folk and nonfolk, rural and urban, past and present—are introduced to the noninstrumental uses of language. When nursery and playground rhymes are under discussion, scholarship rather than criticism seems to be the norm (as with the work of the Opies, the Baring-Goulds, and Francelia Butler in England and America).

The cross-cultural mediation or transposition of this sort of material has rarely been attempted, presumably on the grounds that it is too trivial for "genuine" scholarship and too specialized for the general reader. The objection might also be raised (in an older, more conventional version of the currently fashionable notion of the "impossibility of translation") that the job itself is too difficult, owing to the impossibility of capturing the "spirit" of the rhymes.

However, I grew up with Olive Beaupré Miller's thirteen-volume *My Book House*, and remember the joy of seeing there two Hindustani folk rhymes in translation (rhymes that I never knew in any other form). I feel that, just as it has proved possible to translate Carroll's nonsense novels and verses into Bengali, Hindi, and Singhalese (RAY 1984, SINHA 1961, SUGATHADASA 1962), and just as it has proved possible to render Sukumar Ray's Bengali nonsense verses (CHAUDHURI 1985), Jogindranath Sarkar's child rhymes (CHAKRAVARTI 1971a), and Abanindranath Tagore's comic parody verses (CHAKRAVARTI 1971b) into English, so should it be possible to accomplish a pleasurable cross-cultural transposition of similarly difficult, linguistically and culturally specific traditional material.

In Bengal there are no "nurseries" in the traditional English sense, and

"nursery rhyme" conveys the sense of the word *chhaṛa* only approximately. *Chhaṛa* indicates traditional, unpolished, usually rustic or rural naive verse with a focus on household things, sleep, play, festivity, and personified animals that is recited by mothers and siblings to very little children, and by the children themselves. *Chhaṛa* may also be used to indicate similar nontraditional original rhymes (e.g., SARKAR 1899; HAQ 1969; CHATTOPADHYAYA et al. 1993); these nontraditional rhymes sometimes specifically allude to (RAY 1972) or parody (CHAUDHURI 1971) traditional ones. The following exercise in cross-cultural transposition is, however, not explicitly for children, and academic anxiety about accuracy may have resulted in a "Victorian" literary rather than a modern colloquial flavor. The rhymes selected are those that are alluded to (though not directly quoted) in a long passage in Abanindranath TAGORE's *The Condensed-Milk Doll* (1974a, 46–48). In an article to appear in a future issue of *Asian Folklore Studies* I will discuss the significance of Tagore's use of these traditional nursery rhymes in the context of a modern *Kunstmärchen* (art fairytale); for the present I will limit myself to introducing the subject of Bengali nursery rhymes, identifying the sources used for the rhymes presented here, and offering annotated translations of the rhymes themselves.

The basic source for these rhymes is communal (and personal) memory. But with the movement in Bengal away from the small rural communities and country towns and toward the megacity (as in Europe), the rhymes have begun to be written down and illustrated, and thus perpetuated through the printed word rather than purely by oral and mnemonic means (readings often take place with the book held in front of the audience). The contents of *Chhele bhulano chhaṛa* [Rhymes to delight children] were collected by Abanindranath Tagore's uncle Rabindranath in his youth, and were later augmented by Nityanandabinod Goswami (GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992). For about ten years starting in 1893 the journal of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat (Academy of Bengali Literature) published many traditional rhymes collected by enthusiasts such as Abdul Karim (who delightfully signed himself "Sahityabisharad" [Literary Connoisseur]) and Muhammad MANSURUDDIN (whose work is collected in the volumes of *Haramani* [Lost jewels], a series started in 1942).

I have used Goswami's text, a set of modern texts, and three modern anthologies; these are directed at a general audience, and present the rhymes in the form in which they are most widely disseminated today. Because of their usefulness as sources I have chosen them over more scholarly collections (e.g., DATTA 1970). The set of texts consists of three (out of a series of four) large, slim, unpaginated paper-covered booklets from the 1950s and later; they consist of fourteen pages each, with the texts beginning on the

inside covers (DATTA 1989, 1990a, 1990b). It is safe to say that these can be found in most literate homes in Calcutta. The booklets are called *Chharar chhabi* [Illustrations of nursery rhymes], a title indicating that the rhymes are already known to the audience and that the function of the booklets is to add to the reader's enjoyment with illustrations. The first three of the four booklets are illustrated in a sweet, idealized chocolate-box style; the fourth booklet (printed later than the others) is set in another typeface and illustrated in a more modern caricature style by a different hand. These booklets were approved by the West Bengal education authorities as texts for Class I (infant class) in primary schools (DATTA 1990b, cover). Thus the rhymes have also become a medium for teaching children their letters.

Rabindranath Tagore describes these anonymous rhymes of uncertain date as timeless—old even if composed today, new even if composed ages ago—and admires the way they depict an extraordinary land whose phantasmagoria troubles no one. Although he believes that they might refract snippets of history (as in rhyme 13 here), he asserts that they lack didactic intent as their disconnected vignettes and diffuse images (as in rhyme 16) fly along at their own speed, the benign nonsensicality of their oddities exciting and pleasing the child mind (GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992, 3–4).

One of the modern anthologies includes traditional folk rhymes as well as modern ones with a nursery-rhyme feel that renders them harmonious with the older entries. The compilers are well aware of the differences between folk verse and modern poetry for children (BASU and DATTA 1985, 3). The introductory material is set in a less-traditional typeface than the main text, and the illustrations are more self-consciously stylized than those in the booklets. The illustrations in both the booklets and this anthology feature similar themes: there are rustic children at play and mothers with children; at times the illustration shows a mother lulling a child even though the rhyme itself is not specifically a lullaby (rhyme 17 in BASU and DATTA 1985 [33]). In cases where the versions of a rhyme presented in the respective publications differ, the versions in the anthologies (both older and more modern) tend to be longer than those in the booklets. The second anthology, which is unillustrated, takes up from the author's earlier scholarly work but is intended for a more general audience. It includes variants of rhymes and rhymes in dialect (DATTA 1973). The third anthology is for children, with fine-lined illustrations (MAJUMDAR 1963).

I have attempted to remain as faithful as possible to both the subject matter and the spirit of the rhymes, to approximate if not replicate the syntax, meter, and usually the rhyme schemes; if the sense of the rhymes is unclear here, it is just as unclear in the originals. These are not meant to be polished translations, as the original rhymes themselves neither scan nor

rhyme with perfect regularity. There are more words to a line in the English translations (Bengali being a more concise language than English), which makes it somewhat difficult to approximate the meter. The rhymes sometimes move from one verb tense to another, and I have not always been able to retain the original tenses or the movements between them. Alien kinship terms are always a problem in English translations; I have omitted the delineation of particular sorts of uncle (paternal/maternal, elder/younger), retained the delineation of aunts in one case (rhyme 1) but not another (rhyme 4), and retained "elder brother" and "elder sister." I have sometimes used a general word for a specific one (e.g., "drum" can mean one of a number of types of drum), and have tried to incorporate external matter only when necessitated by the exigencies of meter and rhyme. All significant additions have been noted.

The rough categories into which I have placed a rhyme (there are obviously other categories possible, and a given rhyme can often be placed into more than one) give some indication of the rhyme's general thrust. They are unsophisticated folk products, which is reflected in the occasional rustic word (some rendered with terms like "shoon," "scholard," etc.). There are also some Muslim (Urdu-derived) words (e.g., *Kazi*), and some nonstandard ones (e.g., *gosa* rather than *rag* for "anger" in rhyme 13, perhaps indicating in this particular entry the geographical purview of East—i.e., Muslim—Bengal, now Bangladesh). Certain rhymes (although none included here) reflect a slightly more urban, British-influenced setting, with an English word or two (e.g., DATTA 1989 [7], BASU and DATTA 1985, 15, 19).

Some work has been done on the influence in these and similar rhymes of the society and culture of their origin (e.g., SAHED[A] 1988). The rhymes reflect the experience of a South Asian rural childhood: bathing in the river (rhymes 15, 16); riding in palanquins (rhymes 7, 14, 17); playing with cowrie shells (rhyme 17); wearing dhotis and shawls and checkered (striped) saris; relishing large, round, puffed-rice sweetmeats (*ḳhoi-moa*),[1] sweet puffed rice (*muṛḳi*, sweetened *ḳhoi*), and small, round, sharp-tasting sweetmeats (*jhaler naṛu*) (rhymes 4, 7, 14); and chewing betel leaves taken from the special receptacle (loosely rendered as "tray") in which the spices used to prepare them are kept (rhymes 1, 14, 17, 18). Also seen are certain cultural assumptions, such as that long hair spread out to dry is beautiful, complicated hair knots are attractive, and (with characteristic Aryan racism) black complexions are ugly (rhymes 7, 8, 13, 15). The rhymes convey an experience of childhood in a milieu different from that of English nursery rhymes, with parrots, hawks, toads, and otters in the sunny trees, fields, and waters (rhymes 3, 5, 6, 7, 15, 16), and with playful fantasies about fabulous animals and Uncle Sun (rhymes 4, 14, 19, 20, 21).

The rhymes convey a strong cultural emphasis on love, play, coaxing, and comforting on the part of mothers (rhymes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6a, 7, 8, 10, 11), and to a lesser extent on that of aunts; fathers are usually absent, and schoolmasters are liberal with corporal punishment (rhyme 9). The rhymes prepare small children for their adult lives, depicting—indeed celebrating—child marriage. Children of both sexes leave their parents' house (the boy to get married, the girl, after the wedding, to join her new family; rhymes 7, 10, 15) in a milieu where polygamy is the custom (rhyme 13), where married boys and girls must stay at home and placate mothers-in-law during visits (rhyme 7), where brides can expect to be ill-treated but can also return to their own homes in a huff (rhymes 11, 13). The rhymes also bear the imprint of folk custom and religion, with puzzling references to the evil eye, to comic incantations, to the Lord dancing beneath a tree, to the conch-shell bangles that signify a woman's married status, to paste for betel leaves that is as red as the fiery goddess Durga, and to the goddess Shashthi (rhymes 9, 10, 11, 17, 20, 21).

Quite apart from the problem of conveying culturally specific rural experiences, the translator faces the added difficulty of mediating meaning when the original is obscure (e.g., the last lines of rhyme 15, the middle lines of rhyme 17), when the verse consists of nonsense rhyme (rhyme 14), and when the rhymes are not all in standardized forms. The compilers of one anthology chose what seemed to them the most euphonious versions of the local variants (BASU and DATTA 1985, 4), and in most cases the general meaning remains unaffected. For example, in one version of a rhyme a mother asks a son who is going to visit his uncle if he will eat before he goes; she says that there is white refined flour at home and ghee in a large receptacle, and that if he waits a little she will fry him hand-bread (*luchi*) (DATTA 1989 [5]). In another version (which Abanindranath Tagore quotes in part [1974c, 443]), the refined flour is from Sayedabad, the ghee is from Cossimbazaar (Kasim-bajar), their location at home is unmentioned, and the boy is asked with a more formal word to tarry rather than to wait. In a third, the boy is going to his father-in-law's house, and the mother, in the space of two stanzas, promises to fry him *jilipi*-sweetmeats and give him warm puffed rice (no. 38 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [34]).

Sometimes only minor verbal differences between texts need be noted (e.g., rhyme 2). By the simple substitution of a homonym, in which a hard "r" in a verb takes the place of a soft one (as is easily possible in oral transmission), the line in rhyme 15 that says girls have wound checkered saris around themselves to wear (*ghure porechhe*; TAGORE 1974a, 48) then means that the checkered saris the girls have wound around themselves have billowed or swirled out (*ghure poṛechhe*; no. 55 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [56–57]; BASU

and DATTA 1985, 29). But the meaning is sometimes more radically altered, as when lines enjoining two little girls not to cry promise in one version to give them a place in their parent's lap if they are quiet and, in another version, threaten to bag them or to trip them if they are not (DATTA 1989 [3]; BASU and DATTA 1985, 32; no. 16 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [16]).

Despite the problems, these rhymes *can* be translated. It remains to be seen whether the translations are found useful for scholarship, and whether they give pleasure.

SONGS OF SLEEP

The first two are crooned as lullabies, the third (included in the next section) is recited as children nestle in their mother's lap.

1) Lulling to sleep (*Ghoom-paṛani Mashi-Pishi*) [The sleep-bringing aunts]

Maternal Aunt, Paternal Aunt, Sleep-Givers, oh come hither,
We've no hard bed, nor soft instead, so sit on these eyes thither.
I'll give you trays of betel leaves, to fill your cheeks and eat,
In Laddie's eyes there is no sleep, give him your sleep so sweet.

(BASU and DATTA 1985, 13; DATTA 1990b [10])

Heptameter. Betel leaves, with various spices inside them, serve as a digestive and an appetite suppressant, and are the equivalent of an after-dinner mint or cigar. A tune for this rhyme is given in figure 1 on page 86 (see also rhyme 4). Similar enticements are offered in other rhymes of beckoning and lulling (Nos. 6, 62 in DATTA 1973 [2, 24]). There are variants of different lengths that start off with the same sleep-bearing aunts (nos. 158, 159, 160 in DATTA 1973 [56–57]; see also nos. 308, 309, 310 in DATTA 1973 [100, 101]). The sleep-bearing aunts are elsewhere called the *nidrali* mothers, mothers of sleep, offered similar gifts (nos 87, 240, 241 in DATTA 1973 [34, 80]).

2) Come, sleep, come (*Ai ghoom ai*) [The sleeping fisher-boys]

Come, sleep, come creeping,
To us, thro' Fishers' Lane come by—
The fishers' sons are sleeping
Covered with their nets, they lie.

(No. 1 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [9]; BASU and DATTA 1985, 9)

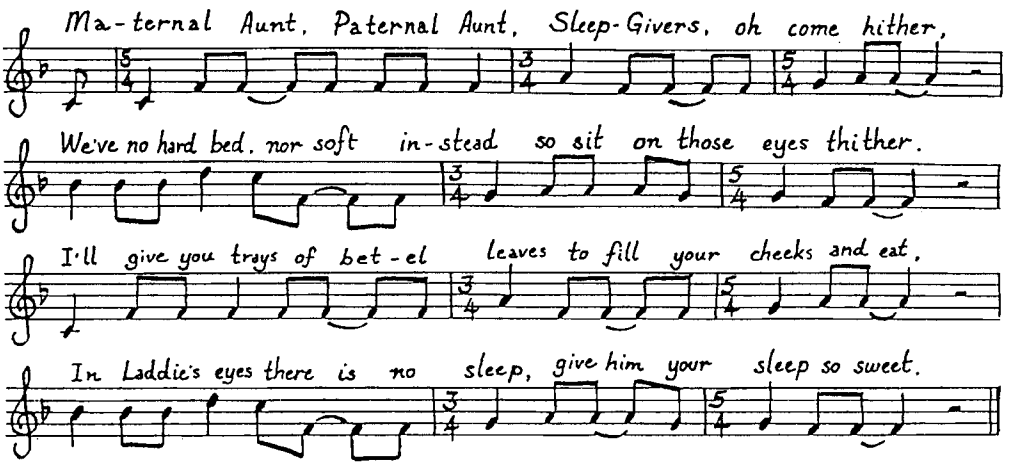

FIGURE 1. Tune for rhyme 1

Trimeter. The content and diction of rhyme 2 are the simplest of the ones I have presented, and it was the most difficult to translate. The translation substitutes tetrameter for trimeter, translates the "locality where the fisherfolk live" as "Fishers' Lane," and adds "to us," "creeping," and "lie" for the sake of rhyme. Both printed sources use a more caste-related word for "fishers" (*bagdi*), where Abanindranath uses an occupation-related word (*jele*; TAGORE 1974a, 47).

RHYMES OF MOTHER LOVE

3) Come, oh bird (*Ai re pakhi lyaj-jhola*) (The dangle-tailed parrot)

> Come, oh bird, dangle-tailed one,
> Come and play with Little Son.
> You'll eat your fill and loud you'll cheep
> And Little Son you'll put to sleep.
>
> (BASU and DATTA 1985, 5; DATTA 1990b [5]; no. 14 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [15])

Tetrameter. This rhyme is very well known. Placing the adjective (*lyaj-jhola* or *nyaj-jhola*) at the end of the line emphasizes it. The first two sources talk of a parrot, which indicates that Abanindranath is very likely alluding to this

rhyme when he twice mentions a dangle-tailed parrot, though he uses no other details (TAGORE 1974a, 46, 48). The third source is a variant, in which the adjective is *nyajchhola* (spread out) and the bird is offered rice and chick-peas and is said to play with the little boy rather than put him to sleep. There is another variant, and also a similar rhyme in a different meter, with a dangle-tailed bird (nos. 43 and 45 in DATTA 1973 [16]).

4) The Aunts of Forest Village (*Mashi-pishi Bon-gan-bashi*)

The Aunts of Forest Village
In woods so deep dwell they,
But Mother's Sister never says,
"Rice sweetmeats—eat, I say!"

Whatever sort those Aunts may be,
Whate'er Brinda-ban Wood—
Now, at last full well I know
Mother's a treasure good.

For Mother a conch-bangle thin,
For Father a horse of blue—
And I will go to Gauṛ to bring
A peacock—gold of hue.

My Brother's marriage I'll arrange
With flow'rs and sandalwood-ground—
There's no oil in the oil jar—strange!
I'll dance! The earth I'll pound.

There's fried eggplant on one side
And curried fish placed here,
Dance and dance, accomplished bride,
The drums beat loud and clear.

(No. 41 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [37]; BASU and DATTA 1985, 11; DATTA 1989 [4]; variants in MAJUMBAR 1963 [7, 18], and same sentiments on aunts and mothers in no. 46 in the second part of MUMTAZI 1967 [69])

Heptameter. "Forest-Village" (Bon-gan) is the name of a place near Calcutta; Brinda-ban (Vrindavan) is the forest where the little god Kṛṣṇa sported with his group of playmates, and is possibly used here as a metaphor

for paradise; Gauṛ is an old name for Bengal. Abanindranath TAGORE quotes the first four lines of the rhyme in *Bhut[a]patrir desh[a]* (1974b, 219), in keeping with his allusion in *The Condensed-Milk Doll* (1974a, 46–47); in both cases the aunts live not *in* but on the *edge* of the woods. These lines also constitute the nub of the opening conversation in *Mashi* [Maternal aunt] (TAGORE 1974d, 127). The first two stanzas of this rhyme have the same cadence as rhyme 1 above, and my mother sang lines 5–6 plus an additional line as part of yet another lullaby with a similar tune (a version of this lullaby, without these lines but with two others at the end, is in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [12, no. 8] and BASU and DATTA 1985 [23]; see also nos. 134, 164, 220, 221, 223 in DATTA 1973 [49, 58, 74, 74, 74–75], MAJUMBAR 1963 [4, 31], no. 25 in the second part of MUMTAZI 1967 [63–64]).). The flow of the rhyme changes in the last three stanzas, which are more feminine in tone and are found only in the first source—Abanindranath must have known a version with both parts, since he cites them in close proximity (TAGORE 1974a, 47). The last stanza here is the first four lines of another rhyme, with eggplant and a yoghurt drink placed on stones instead, followed by four more lines on the bride and her mother-in-law in a different meter (no. 73 in DATTA 1973 [29]). Lines on the golden peacock and going to Gauṛ also occur at the end of a completely different rhyme (no. 282 in DATTA 1973 [93, ll. 10–11])

5) Come oh come, Popinjay (*Ai re ai tiye, na bhara diye*) (The popinjay and the otter)

Come oh come, Popinjay,
In a fine boat—this way.
The Catfish took the boat away to flee—
Seeing the sport, the Otter danced in glee;
O Otter, turn and look—what joy!—
Just see the dancing of my Little Boy!

(No. 32 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [28]; BASU and DATTA 1985, 14; DATTA 1990a [4]; no. 39 in DATTA 1973 [15]; MAJUMDAR 1963, 8, without terminal couplet))

Tetrameter with fast feet in lines 3–4. There are very slight variations between the first source and the second two. The second line is somewhat unclear, but the meaning approximates to "in a boat"; I have added "this way," the fish "fleeing," the otter's "glee," and the exclamation of joy. "Catfish" translates *bo-al* (and can also include the *magur* and the *tangra*).

The word *bhondaṛ* is used in West Bengal and the word *ud-biṛal* is used in East Bengal for the same animal, here rendered as "otter"; Abanindranath uses both words (TAGORE 1974a, 47–48 [for *bhondaṛ*] and 45 [for *ud-biṛal*]). It was thought that this animal could also be called a "beaver," but apparently there are no true beavers in Bengal. The otter eats eggplant and fish and similarly dances in another rhyme (no. 13 in DATTA 1973 [6]).

THE LITTLE BOY

The generic Little Boy is called Khoka, Khokon, or Khokababu (Little Sir); this is a non-Aryan, native Bengali term, here translated in various ways. The opening formula for all three of these rhymes is "The Little Boy will go to...."

6) Fishing (*Khoka jabe machh dhorte*)

The Lad will go the fish to catch
At the thick-milk brook.
The rod and line—a toad did snatch,
The fish—a hawk, he took.

The Lad, he says, "Oh, that bird—
Tell me where it roams!"
The Lad says, "When my call is heard—
Flying, to me it comes."

(No. 12 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [14]; BASU and DATTA 1985, 10; DATTA 1990a [2])

Roughly alternating tetrameter and trimeter (which could be printed as single lines in heptameter, just as all the lines in heptameter could be divided into two). The "thick milk" is the same condensed milk as in the title of Abanindrath's *The Condensed-Milk Doll* (TAGORE 1974a). The bird is more properly a kite than a hawk, but "kite" in this context might be confusing. A variant has the second two lines with two hawks flying after snails since there are no fish, while another has the boy taking two hawks with him and getting his feet muddy (nos. 145, 174 in DATTA 1973 [51, 60–61]). Two lines in a rhyme with a completely different meter and written in a question-and-answer form have the boy going to fish, and the hawk taking the fish (no. 151 in DATTA 1973 [53]). In another version the boy is called Patal and a snake takes the fish; the version ends with the mother's plea to the gods that

her Patal should return safely (no. 305 in DATTA 1973 [101]). In a rhyme with a similar opening, a fox goes to fish, a tiger causes trouble, and a mother-in-law breaks her son-in-law's face (no. 96 in the second part of MUMTAZI, 1967, 82). The rhyme is often told (as in DATTA 1990a) without the second stanza (the stanza most undistinguished in form and content among all presented here), in which the third and fourth lines seem to mean that the bird comes flying at the Lad's call but can also be translated in other ways. The stanza occurs independently, with a pigeon (instead of a hawk) that falls into its mother's lap when called; this is varied in a rhyme with a male and female bird that cling together (nos. 121 and 330 in DATTA 1973 [45, 109]). Abanindranath does not use it.

6a) Petulance (*Khoka elo beṛiye*)

From an outing Boy returns,
Cool the milk for him—it burns!
The milk-bowl's hot and boiling,
Our Lordling's temper spoiling.
Boykin will go in a boat so fleet
With two red shoon upon his feet.

(No. 24 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [24, 21]; variant in MAJUMDAR 1963 [8])

Abanindranath's allusion to fishing inverts the order of the two lines he quotes from the first stanza, reverses their word order, and makes a singular boy plural (TAGORE 1974a, 47). The following lines on the bad temper, return home, and cooling milk (which allude to the lines above) also make a singular boy plural, but it is unclear whether he saw these lines as a separate rhyme or as an additional stanza, possibly with the lines in another order. I have taken them to be an additional stanza, even though the rhyme scheme in the fishing stanzas is *abcb*, *abcb* (or *aa*, *aa*), and the rhyme scheme here is *aabbcc* and the feet are faster, with fewer syllables. Only lines 3–4 in the translation approximate the speed of the original; the others are slower. The word "burns" is an addition. An ironic honorific form of the verb for getting angry is used, hence the translation of "Khokon" in the fourth line as "Lordling." Other rhymes mention little boys being called to eat milk and rice (DATTA 1990b [3], TAGORE 1974b, 283), and milk and sugar (DATTA 1990b [8]). These lines show how easily rhymes about the generic Little Boy blend into each other, for the last two lines are the same as the initial lines of rhyme 8, which this source does not have.

7) Journeying to the in-laws (*Khoḳa/Puntu/Khuḳu jabe shwashur-baṛi*)

As Boy goes to his in-laws' house, Who'll keep him company?
Our Tomcat's waist is girded firm, And he is quite ready.
I'll give mango and jackfruit groves, To shade him on his way,
I'll give soft streams, their banks bound fast, That he his thirst may stay.
I'll light bright lanterns on long rods, To let his path be light,
And give him special sweet puffed rice—For his Ma-in-law's delight.
(BASU and DATTA 1985, 17; DATTA 1990a [10])

Heptameter. This version features the Little Boy, accompanied by a tomcat (*hulo-beral*). The first two lines can stand independently (as in DATTA 1990a). The banks of the streams are cemented or bricked, and the special paddy out of which the sweet puffed rice is made is of the variety called *uṛḳi*, which rhymes with the sweet puffed rice, *muṛḳi* (sweetened *ḳhoi* [popped rice]) but these terms cannot be translated. The parent-speaker gives the puffed rice to Boykin to charm his mother-in-law, and win her favor. In a variant that starts with two lines wondering what the parent will do when "Boy-Jewel" gets married, Boy-Jewel gets seven maids, seven bearers, crisp fried puffed rice, and then juice-filled small *naru*-globules to delight the mother-in-law (no. 142 in DATTA 1973 [51]). Another version substitutes a girl for the boy:

Puntu will go to her in-laws' house, Who'll go with her? Make haste!
We have a She-cat here at home, Who's girded up her waist.
I'll give mango and jackfruit groves, For her path soft shade to win,
I'll give four sturdy bearers too, To bear her palanquin.
I'll give fried long-grained crisp rice fine, For when she'll drink and eat,
I'll give four serving wenches too, To gently oil her feet.
I'll light bright lanterns on long rods, To let her path be light,
And give her special sweet puffed rice—For her Ma-in-law's delight.
Mother- and Sister-in-law will say, "The new bride's black, you know!"
But Father- and Brother-in-law will say, "She makes the house to glow!"
(No. 42 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [38]; DATTA 1970, 104)

This rhyme shows how easily rhymes can undergo gender transposition, with no certainty about whether a primary version exists (though pleasing the mother-in-law is indeed more important for a girl than a boy). The above female version has "Puntu" for the Little Girl, and another has "Khuku" (the feminine of "Khoka"). "Puntu" (West Bengal), "Putu" (East Bengal),

and Putun, Putuni, or Putu-rani ("Queen Putu") are variations of *punti* or *puti*, which means "tiny," as in *puti-machh* (small fish), and is a common nickname for girls. It appears in certain districts of West Bengal as the usual equivalent of "Khuku," used in other districts. Abanindranath uses Puturani/Punturani (both appear in his text, probably the work of the printer's devil), with a "she-cat" or "house cat" (*kuno-beral*), bearers, and serving wenches (TAGORE 1974a, 47–48). The order of the lines could be changed to put the servants in closer juxtaposition than they are here. In another version the girl, named Jhunu, is accompanied by a black dog who has dressed up (no. 183 in DATTA 1973 [63]). Another calls her Nunu, asks her why she is crying on her journey, gives her colored caps to delight the mother-in-law, then groves and the sweet puffed rice to eat herself (no. 246 in DATTA 1973 [81]). Yet another calls her "Daughter-in-law," tells her not to cry, gives her maids, big and small cowrie shells to buy things with, mango and jackfruit groves, and a clear lake (no. 268 in DATTA 1973 [88]). The crisp fried puffed rice is savory (*chnṛe*), unlike the special sweet puffed rice mentioned later on.

8) In the boat (*Khoḳa jabe naye*) (The boy in red shoon)

Boykin goes in a boat so fleet,
With two red shoon upon his feet,
In costly finespun raiment rare
And a gold shawl neat.

To call him black, which of you dare?
From Patna I'll bring yellow spice
To make him lustrous fair!

(BASU and DATTA 1985, 26; no. 144 in DATTA 1973)

See rhyme 6a, which ends with the initial lines here. The original has two lines in trimeter, a line in tetrameter, followed by a line in trimeter, then two lines in tetrameter and a line in trimeter (I have been unable to maintain this exactly). There are other verses in which Little Boy wears red shoes (*juto*) and socks (e.g., BASU and DATTA 1985, 24; DATTA 1990b [13]) or red socks (DATTA 1990b [7]). It seems that only the rhymes translated use the unusual archaic-seeming form for "shoes" (*jutuwa*). *Jutuwa* is possibly a rustic plural form, or one influenced by Hindustani (particularly as Patna is a city in the neighboring Hindustani-speaking state of Bihar); or both. Hence the use of the dialect plural form "shoon" in the translation.

The Condensed-Milḳ Doll mentions a cap, which must be an authorial

addition (easily rhymed with the previous lines ending in *-ai*), and a flowered shawl that could be the golden shawl with the simple substitution of an adjective (TAGORE 1974a, 46). The price of the clothes is given at Rs. 500 in the printed source, and at Rs. 100,000 in Abanindranath. Both describe the raiment as made of *mull-mull*; that is mull, a soft, costly fabric. The yellow spice is turmeric, which, when ground, is used in cooking and also in making a yellow paste with herbs and massage oil as a bleach and cleansing agent for the skin.

Abanindranath uses this rhyme as the central plot clou of his short story "Mahamash[a] tail[a]," in which a doctor parodies the verse to mock a jumped-up, pretentious, colonially bootlicking member of the literati, so that the rhyme goes "Rama came [for "go"] to the village [for "boat"; the words "boat" and "village" rhyme], / Boot-shoon [to indicate his Westernized pretensions] upon his feet, / [the next two lines omitted] / "Who will call him black? [a slight variation of the text used above] / He has anointed himself with turmeric from Patna / He has become lustrous fair!" (TAGORE 1974c, 444). There is a very different variant of this rhyme as well (no. 135 in DATTA 1973 [49]).

9) At school ("Sir, Sir!": "*Guru-mashai Guru-mashai!*") (The schoolmaster)

The pupils (in chorus):
Schoolmaster, Sir, Schoolmaster!
Your scholards—ready here.
Let the cane fall, stripe and lash—
A judgement most severe!

The schoolmaster (chanting):
Comes Dhugri, Goes Dhugri,
Dhugri, a spell he sings.
Let the cane fall, stripe and lash—
The flesh it smarts and stings!
(TAGORE 1974b, 282)

Alternating lines of tetrameter and trimeter. This rhyme is not about one boy but about a group of schoolchildren in a village schoolhouse. It does not appear in any of the sources used, but is quoted, along with two other traditional rhymes about learning, as the last set of entries in the final section of Abanindranath's fantasy novel *Bhut[a]patrir desh[a]* (certain of the rhymes in this section are also in the printed sources) (TAGORE 1974b).

Abanindranath's *The Condensed-Milk Doll* neither quotes lines nor uses words from the rhyme, but simply refers to a village schoolhouse, schoolmaster, and cane, but it is likely that these references are related to the above rhyme or one like it (TAGORE 1974a, 46). A dialectal or very colloquial form of the word for pupils, *poro*, is used, hence "scholards" in the translation. The judgement is that of a *Kazi*, a Muslim word for judge. *Dhugri* seems to be a nonsense word, probably used here as a rustic name; it may be a dialect form of the word *dhari*, which inevitably goes with *buro*, to mean "large/stout chap"; hence "Lumpkin" might be an appropriate translation. "Spell" here translates *mantra*. "Stripe and lash" and "smarts and stings" attempt to replicate a parallelism in the original.

THE LITTLE GIRL

The generic Little Girl is Khuku, Khuki, or Khukumani (Girl-Jewel) or Puntu and its variants. Rhymes relating to a girl's wedding are placed in this section.

10) Little Jewel's wedding (*Khukumanir biye*)

> To wed in Hurley-Burley Land, our Jewel, she shall go—
> The Hurley-Burleys grow (like grain) the cow and buffalo,
> And Hurley-Burleys brush their teeth with diamonds rare, which glow.
>
> To market here come fish and greens, of these there is no lack.
> And Jewel's Mother sits with these—on all she turns her back,
> Guarding Jewel's Elder Sister, who sits in the corner-nook,
> "I've nothing else!" says watchful Ma, to those who snatch a look.
>
> (BASU and DATTA 1985, 16)

Irregular lines and feet in the original. The land is called "Hatta-mal"; *hatta-gol*, with the same initial morpheme, is a colloquial word for melee, hence the translation. The rhyme actually says that the speaker will give Jewel in marriage in that land. The fish is carp, the greens are spinach. Growing "like grain" is an addition, as is the "glow" of the diamonds. Mother turns away from others to keep a sharp watch on her precious marriageable elder daughter and on those who try to look at her, for fear of the evil eye. In a variant (no. 126 in DATTA 1973 [46]) the girl is "Khuku-rani," the Hurley-Burleys are "Haptamalas," and the rhyme ends with the mango and jackfruit groves and fried crisp rice to delight the mother-in-law from the versions of rhyme 7.

11) The unhappy bride (*Dalim-gachhe Prabhu nache*) (The dancing Lord)

Neath pom'granate branches the Lord dances—
Tom-tom-a-tom drumbeat enhances.
[Oh Grandmother, do you know me?
Serve me rice—come and show me.]
Oh, Cream of Milk, Rice-Plenteous Mother,
I go next day to the house of another.
If his son slaps me one day
To Uncle's house I weep my way.
[He gave me a bridegroom old and grey!]
"Oh, Uncle, I beg on my knees,
Take me back to Mother, please!"
[A thin conch-bangle—gave my Mother,
A sari—Father gave, but oh!
A ringing blow—he gave, my Brother—
"Back to your in-laws' house you go!"]

(No. 39 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [35]; BASU and DATTA 1985, 10; MAJUMDAR 1963 [35], without the first four lines)

The Lord (god) dancing beneath the pomegranate tree is obscure; it is probably a reference to a folk myth. The printed sources use more uncultivated forms ("Par[a]bhu" and "Pira[a]bhu") for the word "Prabhu," which appears in Abanindranath (TAGORE 1974a, 47). "Rice-Plenteous Mother" is a translation of "Annapurna," the name of a Saivite/Shakta goddess; the cream of milk, probably referring to her complexion, is an appellation for her. "On my knees" is actually "falling at your feet." The lines in brackets occur only in the first printed version, which has a few other minor variations as well. It is unclear who is asking for rice. The last four lines are faster than the rest and rhyme *abcb*, rather than in couplets or triplets. The girl herself is called "cream of milk" in a variant rhyme that describes the wedding and husband's ill-treatment (no. 26 in DATTA 1973 [10]). The lines on the gifts of (or like) the conch-bangle and sari and the leaving also appear in other rhymes (nos. 8 and 20 in DATTA 1973 [3, 8]).

Another version (no. 1 in DATTA 1973 [1]) omits the first two lines about the Lord and the two lines about the grandmother, includes the line about the grey-haired bridegroom, and changes the lines about the brother's blow to have the brother ask the mother to bid the girl farewell quickly, for the chariot to take her away is coming. It has six additional terminal lines, which sound like an independent rhyme—three lines on the procession and three on comforting the sorrowing mother.

12) Puntu dances (*Puntu nache*)

Where does Puntu dance so light?
'Midst the lotus blossoms bright.
What does she there, to fleet the hours?
Spread out her hair, and pluck the flowers.
(BASU and DATTA 1985, 10)

Tetrameter. The "light" dancing, the "bright" lotus, and the "fleet the hours" are my own. In an additional line, she can also jump into the water and catch fish (no. 260 in DATTA 1973 [85]). She is called "Nunu" in a variant (MAJUMDAR 1963, 3). Girls spread out their long hair to dry it. Abanindranath does not use this rhyme; I have included it here to exemplify another rhyme that has engendered variants, for this one also has a variant in which the Little Boy is doing various things (DATTA 1990b [12]). Sometimes, in additional lines, he is in the sandalwood grove breaking the branches and plucking the flowers, or in the mud catching fish (nos. 213, 339 in DATTA 1973 [72, 112]; MAJUMDAR 1963, 4). And sometimes the protagonist is not a human at all, but an otter, dancing and catching fish (no. 290 in DATTA 1973 [96]).

13) The rain pours down (*Bishti pore tapur-tupur, nade elo ban*) (Lord Shiva's brides)

The rain pours down, drip-drippetty-drop, in the rivers there rise the high tides,
And Shiva the Lord, he takes three little maids, as his blushing and bashful new brides.
The first maid, she cooks and serves dainties; the second, she eats them besides—
The third one gets none and gets peevish—off to Father's house! There she abides.
With the hair-oil so sweet, the cosmetics so red, with the gardeners' blooms at your home,
With rare art I will coil and adorn your black hair, 'twill be priceless—
My sweet maiden, come!
(No. 10 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [13]; BASU and DATTA 1985, 17; DATTA 1989 [10];MAJUMDAR 1963 [26], without the last lines; no. 22 in the second part of MUMTAZI 1967 [63])

Heptameter. The first line occurs in more than one rhyme, and also serves as the first line of a famous poem for children by Rabindranath Tagore. The high tides are the tidal bore. The marriage of the god Shiva referred to is not mentioned in myth. The line about the third girl varies, so that in some variants she simply goes home without eating (as in the first printed source), while in others she returns because of an unspecified grievance (as in the latter two printed sources) or because she is given nothing to eat (as in TAGORE 1974a [47], and as in the version told by my grandmother, who was from the Midnapore district). The translation combines these. The last two lines are optional, and take a different set of rhymes from the others. The red cosmetic referred to is *sindur*, the vermilion powder placed in the parting of the hair to signify that a woman is of married status; "priceless" translates the Bengali for "worth a thousand rupees," and signifies only the great beauty of the hair-do. The East Bengal Muslim version (MUMTAZI 1967) starts with the cooking and serving, using another word for the girls and omitting Lord Shiva and the first lines entirely. Another rhyme on beautiful hair has similar hair with a similar priceless garland in it (no. 9 in DATTA 1973 [3–4]; see also no. 298 in DATTA 1973 [97], MAJUMDAR 1963 [33], no. 21 in the second part of MUMTAZI 1967 [62]). In a variant there is an extra terminal couplet that takes off from the word for "pricelessness" (no. 335 in DATTA 1973 [111]).

RURAL REVELS AND IDYLLS

14) Ag-dom bag-dom (The drums of Kamalapuli)

Ag-dom bag-dom horse-dom splendid
Drums beat, thund'rous rumblings blended.
Beating drums, the drummers go—
To Kam'lapuli, as we know.
In Kam'lapuli, a knavish one,
Who's son and heir of Uncle Sun.
(Kam'lapuli popinjay,
Uncle Sunny's wedding-day!)
Rattling bones, black-cumin's power,
Leaf of betel, garlic, flower.
Come! We go! To Clove Fair hie!
Sharp-tasting sweetmeats there we buy.
These sweetmeats round, they poison yield,
The flowers bloom in the paddy field.

(No. 57 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [60]; BASU and DATTA 1985, 19; DATTA 1989 [8])

Tetrameter, lines 4–5 probably dimeter. A traditional nonsense verse, which stresses rhythm over sense and which is recited alone by little girls, while bouncing a ball, or while engaging in other such rhythmic activities. There are at least eight variants (see DATTA 1970, 9–13; see also nos. 14 and 15 in DATTA 1973 [6–7], MAJUMDAR 1963 [45]). It is probably the most famous rhythmical nonsense rhyme in Bengali, and Rabindranath Tagore's very famous short story "Kabuliwala" [The money-lender from Kabul] alludes to the little girl-heroine reciting it. It is clear that Kamalapuli, city of the goddess of good fortune, Lakshmi (Kamala), is a place of festivity.

"Dom" is the name of a low caste, and the first line probably means "Doms ahead, Doms behind [*bag* is a dialect word for "beside" in, for example, the Birbhum area], Doms of horses dressed up." The first printed source has *aga dom baga dom* and the doms on the horses, but the three words are sometimes said as *agdoom-bagdoom-ghoradoom,* which cannot be made to fit this interpretation. *Ag-dom-bag-dom* seems also to stand for a loud, resonant, reverberating sound and for topsey-turveydom; there is a similar word, *aikam-baikam*, in another nonsense rhyme (BASU and DATTA 1985, 18; DATTA 1989 [2]), and I have heard *ag-ram bag-ram* used to mean "at random," "mishmash." I have therefore left the meaning unclear. "Horse-dom" is a happy coincidence. "Splendid" is "splendidly arrayed and prepared," which can refer to either or both the horses and the Doms.

Abanindranath mentions a greater number and variety of drums and cymbals than those printed sources that have different versions of line 2. (TAGORE 1974a, 47); more interestingly, he uses a simple oral substitution of *d* for *dh* to turn the drums and drummers of line 3 into a palanquin carrying the one to be wed (see rhyme 15, line 6). "Kam'lapuli" can be pronounced approximately "Komm-la-poo-li" or "Kumm-la-poo-li" in the translation here. Kamalapuli has a *teta*, which seems to be a nonsense word relating to the son (*beta*) of Uncle Sun in the next line; the translation has taken liberties with the term, since *teta* is a word for harpoon, *tetan* is a word for knave, and *theta* means roughly "churl; obstinate, ungracious person with whom one is not on friendly terms." However, other versions (e.g., GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992) have "The *tiye-ta* [parrot] of Kamalapuli/The *biye-ta* [wedding] of Uncle Sun," which is just as nonsensical, so this variant of the lines also appears above.

There is an ailment, similar to ague or malaria, that is called the bone-rattling disease; "leaf of betel" is actually the receptacle for betel and its spices; cumin-seed translates *jire*, in the context of the garlic of the next line, but *kele* (which precedes *jire* in the original) is unclear. There is a seed called *kalo jire* (black cumin), though, and *kele* can indeed be a rustic form of *kalo* (DATTA 1989 lacks lines 7–8). if not associated with *jire*, though, it could be

a form of the word *ḳala*, banana, which would fit quite as well with the other things. "Fair" is a free translation of a word meaning a market ground in which vendors set up temporary stalls; the sharp peppery sweetmeats are small rounded globules.

15) Little Boy's wedding (*Khoḳoner biye*)

Today let Little Boy prepare, upon the morn he'll marry,
As I take him to his wedding, in Wind City we will tarry.
The local girls, to bathe they go, into the stream right down,
They spread their radiant tresses out, so glossy, blueblack-brown,
The blood-red gems upon their necks could sit on any crown,
Bright are the checkered saris, around their bodies wound.
At the river's sides, two carp float high up, near the ground.
One, Venerable Teacher took, and Parrot took the other—
And with a reddish loincloth, there married Parrot's mother!
Fig leaf and Coriander—
Lass Gauri the bride yonder—
Lad Naka is her groom—
His home's at Charak-danga,
And the drums go droom-droom-droom!
(Second part of no. 55 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [56–57]; BASU and DATTA 1985, 29)

Heptameter (last three lines irregular). The first source has this as the second part of rhyme 18 (cf. also the variant, no. 90 in DATTA 1973 [35–36]); the latter source has it as an independent entry. The preparation (*adhibas[a]*) involves religious ceremonies pertaining to the marriage of Little Boy, to whom the first source gives the name "Subal." Most of the rhyme, however, is about the doings at Wind City (or Open City), which is a free translation of Ding-nagar (as the collection has it) and Dig-nagar (as Abanindranath has it [TAGORE 1974a, 44–45]); the two forms are variations of the same word. *Dig* means roughly "direction"; the naked Dig-ambar Jain monks are called "Clothed in the Directions" (also rendered as "Clothed in the Winds or Air"), hence the translation here. The first source uses a slightly different verb for going down to bathe than the second; Abanindranath uses the same word as the second source. The printed sources have a word meaning "glossy" for the girls' hair, whereas Abanindranath uses the word "black" (variegated here only because of the exigencies of rhyme). The sources use slightly different words for the girls' hair than Abanindranath.

Line 5 is a free translation. There is a slight variation in the meaning of line 6 about the saris (see pages 83–84 of this article). The first source has an additional line that mentions the girls wearing sacred conch-bangles like (dark as) clouds, which gives the girls four rhyming lines rather than three (the irregularity is retained here). The "Venerable Teacher" might be a reference to Brihaspati (the planet Jupiter), the preceptor of the gods; the relation of the red loincloth to the wedding of the parrot's mother is unclear. In one variation, which takes Elder Brother to be married via Dig-nagar, two elephants with bells around their necks come into the field and there is a garland; none of the other details are present (no. 202 in DATTA 1973 [69]). The same carp, Venerable Teacher, Parrot, and Parrot's mother's wedding occur in the middle of yet another rhyme, preceded by three lines on the arrival of a lame son-in-law, and followed by three lines on the red loincloth and a sari (no. 85 in DATTA 1973 [33]). The same company plus the parrot's daughter appear with a red sari, which tears as the daughter dies (no. 199 in DATTA 1973 [68]). No. 302 in DATTA 1973 (98) has Elder Brother seeing someone's grey hairs and the carp floating up, and a great deal more is said on the red sari and Parrot's Mother. Elsewhere, two sandalwood-adorned foxes join the company and are seen by Elder Brother, who hurls a stick; the two carp float up; and other figures take the fish and marry (no. 89 in DATTA 1973 [35]). In a completely different rhyme (no. 89 in DATTA 1973 [89]) the only elements are the carp and Elder Brother hurling something. In no. 303 in DATTA 1973 (99), Elder Brother hurls a weapon, the necklace, and the girls go down.

With the introduction of the fig leaf the meter changes drastically. These lines may be part of what was originally a separate verse, particularly as the groom is no longer Little Boy but Naka, a rustic name. "Fig leaf [the leaf of the *aswath(a)* tree] and coriander" translates an unclear, possibly nonsensical phrase of no significance, though the large fig leaf may correspond to Naka and the small coriander leaf to Gauri; the phrase can also conceivably mean "with the wealth of the fig leaf." Gauri is a name of a fair Shaivite/Shakta goddess; Charak-danga is a place named after Shaivite practice. The translation inverts the order of the last two lines for the sake of rhyme. In the middle part of another rhyme these five lines are varied, without the figleaf and the drums, with a pot full of coriander and two different locations for Naka's place of work and residence; these lines are preceded by two other lines and followed by four (no. 81 in DATTA 1973 [31–32]).

This piece shows not only the possibility for gender transposition in rhymes but also the way that rhymes and parts of rhymes can flow into each other, for it is part of a group of related pieces with initial lines (of the rhyme itself or of relatively independent sections) having the structure, "Today let Little Boy/Little Girl/name—prepare/another verb—tomorrow—(s)he will

marry//(S)he will go/I will take her (sometimes to Father-in-law's house)... by way of...(place)." One such rhyme gives the little girl the name Jamuna, who travels via Kazitala; this rhyme too has two fish floating up (with a slightly different verb), the Venerable Teacher taking one, and someone else taking the other (no. 51 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [51]; also as no. 312 in DATTA 1973 [102]). In another rhyme the girl is named Durga, who goes, but not via anywhere in particular; the rest of the rhyme is about the relatives' mourning and their gifts (no. 52 in GOSWAMI/ TAGORE 1992 [52]). A third such rhyme consists of the second nine lines of rhyme 16 (not translated here), which follow the first seven lines but are not always included with them. In these lines Elder Brother will marry tomorrow and go via Bakultala (no. 53 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [53]). A similar version (no. 248 in DATTA 1973 [82]) has Elder Brother putting (something down?) rather than viewing the scene. In another (no. 278 in DATTA 1973 [92]) he sees a quite different scene and hurls an instrument. There are also other variants (e.g., no. 154 in DATTA 1973 [54], which also has the elephants).

16) The Noton doves (*Noton-noton payra-guli*)

> The Noton doves, they strut about, crests fluffed out like a crown—
> To bathe at the stream's further side, the children have gone down—
> On each side of the river, a carp has floated high.
> Who's seen them, who has seen them? Elder Brother did them spy.
> Elder Brother held a pen, and it at them he's hurled
> —Ooh, the worst hurt in the world!
>
> (first part, varied, of no. 53 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [53]; BASU and DATTA 1985, 12; DATTA 1990a [9])

Heptameter, the last line trimeter or tetrameter, following the second two sources. I am informed that the "Noton" is a variety of dove. The strutting is an addition. It is not clear whether "the worst hurt in the world" was to the carp, to Elder Brother's feelings as the pen slipped off the fish in the water, or to the speaker as the pen landed on him by mistake. A completely different rhyme ends with another instrument in Elder Brother's hands, followed by the hurling and the exclamation of hurt (no. 53 in DATTA 1973 [20]); a variant has him hurling a gun (MAJUMDAR 1963, 79). The initial seven lines of the rhyme form its first part; as noted above, the second part consists of another nine lines on Elder Brother's wedding to be held the next day. The original order of elements in the rhyme is: the doves; the Elder Sahib's *bibi*s (wives) coming to bathe; a slight verbal variant of the two fish floating up

(see rhyme 15, above, and no. 51 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [51]); brother hurling his pen; two girls going down to bathe and shaking out their hair (see rhyme 15, lines 3–4); and brother seeing—with no hurt mentioned. The untranslated nine lines have a couplet on flowers, garlands, and a game (varied in no. 51, GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [51]), a line on the shining sands of Chitpur Field (just possibly alluded to by Abanindranath [TAGORE 1974a, 47]), and a final line on a gold face reddened and sunburnt (see rhyme 17).

17) Come a-fishing, band of boys (*Ai re ai chheler pal*)

> Come a-fishing, band of boys, come to the riverside!
> Has a fish bone pierced your feet? A palanquin we will ride.
> In it a myriad cowrie shells—we'll count them as we bide.
> Two conch-shell bangles, large and small—jingling, jangling, turning,
> With three cowries, red paste I buy, as red as Durga burning.
> The waters of this river swift, so turbulent they run
> —It blushes now, your moon-face fair, darkened by the sun.
>
> (No. 20 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [18]; BASU and DATTA 1985, 33; MAJUMDAR 1963, 44)

Heptameter. This, the most obscure, disjointed, and rough-hewn of these rhymes, seems to fall into three sections. It is not a rhyme about the generic little boy. In the first section, "palanquin" is a translation of *dola*, a small two- or four-seated vehicle for children, borne manually. "Myriad" translates six *pan*, a unit not in current use but found in another rhyme that mentions the same number of mosquitoes (BASU and DATTA 1985, 12); hence a large number. Cowrie shells are small shells that were once used as small units of currency.

The second section seems to shift from the voice of a band of boys to that of a woman or women. In Bengali the same word is used for the material out of which conch-shells are made and for the white bangles fashioned from this material that women wear to signify married (rather than single or widowed) status. Since the rhyme refers to a jingling sound, I assume that in this case the word refers to bangles; but only one bangle is usually worn, so the reference to one large and one small conch-bangle is unclear. The red paste is *khayer*, used in spicing betel leaves. Durga is one of the warlike forms of the Shakta Mother-Goddess.

The third section seems to be the voice not of a group, but of a mother talking to a child. I have inverted the order of the blushes and the sunburn for the sake of the rhyming. The phrase about the sun touching the moon

face (i.e., causing sunburn) also appears in another rhyme (BASU and DATTA 1985, 36), where the reference to blushing (blood rushing to the face) is replaced by a similar phrase about pomegranates bursting (see also the explanation to rhyme 16 above; see also no. 90, l. 13, and no. 137, ll. 5–6 in DATTA 1973 [35, 49–50]).

A variant (no. 38 in DATTA 1973 [14–15]) uses a different word for catching the fish, says that if a fishbone pierces the feet they will ride in a palanquin where they will count two *pan*s of cowries, the amount of *khayer* is different, the burning takes place near a body of water named Durgohanu (and is not of the goddess Durga), and the line about sunburn is replaced by three lines describing the giving of a girl in marriage.

18) The fabulous Janti-tree (*Janti-gachh*)

On the river's further bank, large Janti-tree fruits round—
I eat the fruits and oh, my heart! it sinks down to the ground.
My soul feels restless, troubled; my throat grows numb and dry—
To Haragauri's Field I'll go, my Brother, by and by.
There Sisters-in-law and I enjoyed ripe betel-leaves with lime,
One betel leaf was lost, and I told Elder Brother that time.
I call out "Elder Brother!" and he has gone away,
I call out "Subal! Younger One," and he's at home today.
(first part of no. 55, GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [56])

Heptameter. I am informed that the word I have transliterated as "Janti" (an East Bengal word) may be a corruption of *jayanti*, and so might be better transliterated as "Jainti"; I am also told that its leaves are used in medicine, and that it probably has fabulous connotations. The original nine lines were reduced to eight by conflating two lines on the betel leaves.The text here is the first part of a longer rhyme, the second half of which is a version of the rhyme presented above as "Little Boy's wedding" (rhyme 15). One source lacks anything from the Janti-tree to the betel leaves, starts with the last two couplets about Elder Brother and Subal, and continues with a variant form of rhyme 15, with Elder Brother going to be married at Bakultala (MAJUMDAR 1963, 61). The two sections are given separately because of the sharp break in meaning between them. Abanindranath cites both parts, but in different places, so I have taken the two segments to be independent rhymes (TAGORE 1974a, 47 for the tree, 47–48 for the wedding).

The initial line about the Janti-tree and its large fruits on the other side of the river is echoed in other rhymes, one mentioning sesame growing on

the river's further side (no. 40 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [36]; rendered as two lines) and another telling of a red chili plant on the river's near side and a troubled soul (no. 33 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [29, lines 3–6]; rendered as four lines). The comment about the throat going dry is echoed in related rhymes (nos. 51 and 53 in GOSWAMI/TAGORE 1992 [51, 53]). The speaker is a woman, for her sisters-in-law include her husband's sister (and her words to her "brother" might just as well be addressed to a female friend). She asks a question about how long it will be before she goes to Haragauri's Field; Hara is Shiva and Gauri is his consort, and there is obviously a fair held in the field named after them. The lime is a white paste smeared on the betel leaves to spice them. The last two lines follow a parallel structure and rhyme with the same word, "home." Subal is obviously Younger Brother, who, although not specifically addressed as such here, is the generic Little Boy going to his wedding in the rest of the rhyme.

19) Dance! (*Dhei dhei Khokon nache*)

Hey! Hey! My Lordling dances—
His two fresh tender little hands
Upraised—My Lordling dances.
Your pets see, and each understands.

The monkey dances in the branches
The peacock dances, the dog dances
In the forest the fox prances.
Dances hard the cockatoo

And dances the parrot, too
At the pond's edge the frog dances—
Hand upon his head—halloo!
Hey! Hey! Hey! My Lordling dances
Hey! Hey! Hey! My Lordling dances.
(no. 238 in DATTA 1973 [79])

Irregular meter and rhyme scheme: *abac aaa defe aa*. The first and last two lines use the word *dhei*, an energetic sound used to mark the beat in dance. The tame animals (or a tame cat) see the boy's dance and follow suit. Line 8 in the source (with the cockatoo and parrot) seems more properly to be two lines, and has been divided thus here. "Halloo!" is an addition (see rhyme 5). Another three-line rhyme has similar animals dancing in the trees in the

first two lines, and a daughter-in-law washing clothes in the third (no. 47 in MUMTAZI 1967 [30]). Abanindranath very probably alludes to this rhyme when he mentions the child's delicate little hands whirling about in dance, and possibly in one allusion to parrots (TAGORE 1974a: 46, 47).

20) Falling asleep near Shashthi's shrine (*Nidashuni dashumani*)

Sleepyhead, go to bed, like the stones, trees, and leaves,
At her shrine fall asleep Goddess Shashthi's own slaves.
By the stables fall asleep cats and dogs in a nook,
In the kitchen falls asleep the old fat Brahmin cook,
In Ma's lap falls asleep the sweet Lordling—just look.
In the palace falls asleep the King's Little Princess,
On the bed falls asleep my sweet Golden Highness.
(no. 238 in DATTA 1973 [79])

Tetrameter. Shashthi is the goddess of childbirth and children. "Sleepyhead, go to bed" only approximates the first phrase; the leaves are added by association with the variant, which includes them; "sweet lordling" renders "Paban Thakur," a little boy named after the Wind-god. "Nook", "old", "fat", and "look" are additions; the princess may have the queen beside her as well: the golden "highness" is literally the golden magic-jewel, a boy. In a similar shorter rhyme of two couplets (no. 237 in DATTA 1973 [79]), the leaves of the trees, the old one at Shashthi's shrine, the black dog, and the little boy-lord fall asleep. In another, the order of appearance is the trees, the horses and elephants, the (washerman's) dogs, Shashthi herself, and the Boy-Jewel (sometimes with a name) in his mother's arms (nos. 157 and 165 in DATTA 1973 [56, 58]). Abanindranath might have had any or all three rhymes in mind when he depicted the people in the kingdom around Shashthi's shrine falling asleep (TAGORE 1974a, 45). A different rhyme refers to a good child, a "son of Shashthi" (no. 325 in DATTA 1973 [107]). This and the following rhyme have been included in this section to keep the Shashthi-related rhymes together, though this rhyme is a rhyme of sleep, and the next is a song of mother-love.

21) Finding a child (*Shashthi-talai elo ban/Dul-te dul-te elo ban*)

The tides rose hard by Shashthi's shrine—
I found this Golden Moon of mine.

There I'll wend my way twice more—
And bring again another four.
Rippling, swaying came the tide—
I found a Moon of Gold, beside.
Their moon is this,
Whose luck is bliss.

(second part of no. 128, the whole of no. 205 in DATTA 1973 [46, 205])

Irregular tetrameter. The first variant, which mentions Shashthi's temple-ground, is preceded by four lines in the voice of a mother, about her boy, covered in dust, crying on the roadside and calling out for her; these lines have variants elsewhere (nos. 97, 140, 217 in DATTA 1973 [39, 50, 73]). The second variant (here second stanza), standing independently, does not mention the shrine, but its first two lines are very similar to those in the first stanza here. The question "Whose moon is this?" is answered by "Those, upon whose foreheads are (inscribed) good (destinies)." Abanindranath may have had either or both variants (or some combination) in mind when he depicted a little gold-moon boy being found at Shashthi's shrine (TAGORE 1974a, 48).

NOTES

*I am indebted to Srijukta Shephali De and Srimati Chandana De for bibliographical and linguistic help of the most practical kind; to Mr Arvind Kalia and Dr Anthony Burkitt of the Australian National University for bibliographical material; to Professor P N. Chakravarti of Bachelor College, Darwin, for linguistic and cultural assistance; and to Mr John Tung Yep for notation of a traditional melody for rhyme 1.

1. *Khoi* is "popped rice" as distinct from *muṛi*, "puffed rice."

REFERENCES CITED

BASU, Prabhat[a] and Mahendranath[a] DATTA, comps.
1985 *Chhotoder chhaṛa sanchayan* [The infants' collected book of nursery rhymes]. Illustrated by Samar[a] Dey. Calcutta: Mahendranath[a] Datta, Shishu Sahitya Sanshad[a] Pvt. Ltd. (first published circa 1960 [1366 B.S.])

CHAKRAVARTI, Prithvindra Nath, trans.
1971a *Chhaṛaa: Children's and women's verse in translation* (26 traditional folk rhymes and original rhymes from Jogindranath Sarkar). Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: Papua Pocket Books.
1971b Song of a palanquin. Translated from TAGORE 1974b with Ulli Beier. *Indian Literature* 14/3: 43–45

CHATTOPADHYAYA, Shakti, Ahmad[a] EKHLASAUDDIN[A], and Ashok[a]kumar[a] MITRA, eds.
1993 *Dui Banglar chhaṛa* [The nursery rhymes of the two Bengals]. Calcutta: Pratikshan[a] Pablikeshans.

CHAUDHURI, Amitabha
1971 *Ikṛi, mikṛi* [nonsense phrase alluding to a nursery rhyme]. Calcutta: Ananda Publishers

CHAUDHURI, Sukanta, trans.
1985 *The select nonsense of Sukumar Ray*. Calcutta: Oxford University Press.

DATTA, Bhabataran[a]
1970 [Bhadra 1399 B.S.] *Bangladesher chhaṛa* [Bengal nursery rhymes]. Intr. Sukumar Sen. Calcutta: Mitra o Ghosh[a].
1973 [Baishakh 1380 B.S.] *Du-parer chhaṛa* [Nursery rhymes from both sides of the river (West Bengal and Bangladesh)]. Calcutta: The Book Trust.

DATTA, Mahendranath[a], comp.
1989 *Chhaṛar chhabi* [Pictures for nursery rhymes] 4, 4th printing. Illustrated by Tapas[a] Datta. Calcutta: Deb[a]jyoti Datta, Shishu Sahitya Sanshad[a] Pvt. Ltd. (first published in 1984)
1990a *Chhaṛar chhabi* 1, 32nd printing. Illustrated by Tapas[a] Datta (although the artist's signature on the cover is that of one Pratul[a]chandra, in Hindustani rather than in Bengali script, as in the third pamphlet). Calcutta: Deb[a]jyoti Datta, Shishu Sahitya Sanshad[a] Pvt. Ltd. (first published circa 1950)
1990b *Chhaṛar chhabi* 2, 28th printing. Illustrated by Narendranath[a] Datta. Calcutta: Deb[a]jyoti Datta, Shishu Sahitya Sanshad[a] Pvt. Ltd. (first published in 1950)

(Only the second volume in the series gives the date of first publication and its registration as a textbook, but the first three were printed at approximately the same time in the 1950s; the fourth volume gives the date of first publication and was printed considerably later. The third volume is irrelevant here, as it seems to consist not of traditional material but mostly of translations of Hindustani rhymes and other modern though anonymous later ones.)

GOSWAMI, Nityanandabinod[a], comp., augmenting TAGORE (Thakur[a]), Rabindranath[a], comp.
1992 [1398 B.S.] *Chhele bhulano chhaṛa*, 3rd edition. Frontispiece by Nandalal[a] Basu, linocut by Bani Bhanja. Calcutta: Bishvabharati. (first published in 1949=1355 B.S.)

(The text is an augmented version of Chhele bhulano chhaṛa, *formed by combining "Meyeli chhaṛa" [Feminine rhymes; 1894=Ashwin(a)-Kartik(a) 1301 B.S.] and "Chhele bhulano chhaṛa" [Rhymes to delight children; 1895=Aswin(a) 1302 B.S.]. In* Rabindra Rachanavali 6 *[Collected works of Rabindranath Tagore 6; the folklore volume of the standard edition]. Calcutta: Bishvabharati, 1940.)*

HAQ, Sanaul
1969 *Chhele buror chhaṛa* [Rhymes for young and old]. Dacca: Bangla Academy.

MAJUMDAR[A], Kamal[a]kumar[a]
1963 [Baishakh 1370 B.S.] *Aikam baikam* [a nonsense phrase from a nursery rhyme]. Calcutta: Kathashilpa Prakash[a].

MUMTAZI, Muhammad[a] Sikander
1967 *Barishal-er chhaṛa* [Rhymes from Barishal district]. Barishal: Sulabh Pustika, Koran Manzil Library.

MANSUR-UDDIN[a], Muhammad[a]
1942 *Haramani: Loksahitya sangraha* [Lost jewels: Folk-literature collection]. Calcutta: University of Calcutta. (followed by at least six further volumes from the University of Dacca, Bangladesh)

RAY, Kamal[a], trans.
1972 [1379 B.S.] Shali dhaner chinre [Fried puffed rice from Shali paddy]. Calcutta: D. M. Library.
1984 *Alice in wonderland; Through the looking glass*. Calcutta: Cosmo Script.
SAHED[a], Saiyad[a] Mohammad[a]
1988 *Chharay[a] bangali samaj[a] o sanskriti* [The society and culture of Bengal in its nursery rhymes]. Dhaka: Dhaka Bishvabidyalay[a].
SARKAR[A], Jogindranath[a]
n.d. *Khukumanir chhara* [Little Jewel's nursery rhymes] Introduction by Ramendrasundar[a] Tribedi. Calcutta: City Book Society. (first published in 1899 [1306. B.S.])
SEN, Dinesh Chandra
1920 *The folk-literature of Bengal*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press.
SINHA, Shamser Bahadur, trans.
1961 *Ascharya lok mei Alice*. Delhi: Rajkamal[a] Prakashan[a].
SUGATHADASA, K. B., trans.
1962 *Alis dutu vismalantaya*. Colombo: Gunasena.
TAGORE (Thakur[a]), Abanindranath[a]
1974a *Kheer-er Putul* [The condensed-milk doll]. In *Abanindra rachanavali* [Collected works of Abanindranath Tagore] 2, 21–50. Calcutta: Prakash[a] Bhavan[a]. (first published in 1896)
1974b *Bhut[a]patrir desh[a]* [The land of ghoulies and ghosties]. In *Abanindra rachanavali* 2, 219–84. Calcutta: Prakash[a] Bhavan[a]. (first published in 1915)
1974c *Mahamash[a] tail[a]*. In *Abanindra rachanavali* 2, 443–45. Calcutta: Prakash[a] Bhavan[a]. (coll. posthumously 1954; magazine publication earlier)
1974d *Mashi* [Maternal aunt]. In *Abanindra rachanavali* 4, 127–70. Calcutta: Prakash[a] Bhavan[a]. (first published in 1945 [B.S. 1361], with a portion appearing in 1933 [1349 B.S.])