On Early Translations and Poems

Translation of the Meghadut

I did translate the *Meghadut*, but it was lost by the man with whom I kept it — so mention of it is useless. 28 January 1931

*The Hero and the Nymph and Urvasie*

On an old advertisement page of the *Arya* I find: “*The Hero and the Nymph*, a translation in verse of Kalidasa’s *Vikramorvasie*."

Yes, I had forgotten the *Hero and the Nymph*.

Our library hasn’t got this translation, nor your poem *Urvasie*, both of which are out of print.

I don’t think I have the *Urvasie*, neither am I very anxious to have this poem saved from oblivion. 5 February 1931

*Love and Death, Urvasie and The Hero and the Nymph*

Was *Love and Death* your first achievement in blank verse, or did a lot of trial and experiment precede it? Was the brilliant success of your translation from Kalidasa its forerunner?

There was no trial or experiment — as I wrote, I did not proceed like that, — I put down what came, changing afterwards, but there too only as it came. At that time I had no theories, no methods or process. But *Love and Death* was not my first blank verse poem — I had written one before in the first years of my stay in Baroda which was privately published, but afterwards I got disgusted with it and rejected it. I made also some transla-
tions from the Sanskrit (in blank verse and heroic verse); but I
don't remember to what you are referring as the translations of
Kalidasa. Most of all that has disappeared into the unknown in
the whirlpools and turmoil of my political career. 4 July 1933

The Hero and the Nymph and Baji Prabhou

It is curious how you repeatedly forget that you have so won-
derfully Englished Kalidasa's Hero and the Nymph. Surely it
cannot be that you want it to be rejected and forgotten? Its
blank verse is excellent, and I shall be very much obliged if
out of the three typed copies of it I sent you a couple of years
ago you will kindly let me have one. Was this work composed
before Love and Death? Does Baji Prabhou also antedate the
latter?

Baji Prabhou was written much later. I do not remember just
now about the Hero and the Nymph — it might have been ear-
erlier, but I am not sure. I shall see about the typed copy of the
translation. No, I do not reject it. I had merely forgotten all
about it. 5 July 1933

Urvasie

On Sunday also I shall look at the Urvasie. It is a poem I am
not in love with — not that there is not some good poetry in
it, but it seems to me as a whole lacking in originality and
life. However, I may be mistaken; a writer's opinions on his
productions generally are. 5 April 1935

Love and Death

Those that buy books like Love and Death do so to get the
yogic knowledge — the mystery of death solved. I bought it
for the same reason and was disappointed to find it is a story!

There is no Yogic knowledge there. It was written before I started
Yoga.
The other day Arjava told me that he considered the long speech of the Love-god Kama or Madan about himself in *Love and Death* one of the peaks in that poem — he as good as compared it to the descent into Hell. Somehow I couldn’t at the time wax extremely enthusiastic about it. Except for the opening eight or ten lines and some three or four in the middle, I couldn’t regard it as astonishing poetry — at least not one of the peaks. What is your own private opinion? I need not of course, quote it to anyone.

My private opinion agrees with Arjava’s estimate rather than with yours. These lines may not be astonishing in the sense of an unusual effort of constructive imagination and vision like the descent into Hell; but I do not think I have, elsewhere, surpassed this speech in power of language, passion and truth of feeling and nobility and felicity of rhythm all fused together into a perfect whole. And I think I have succeeded in expressing the truth of the godhead of Kama, the godhead of vital love (I am not using “vital” in the strict Yogic sense; I mean, the love that draws lives passionately together or throws them into or upon each other) with a certain completeness of poetic sight and perfection of poetic power, which puts it on one of the peaks — even if not the highest possible peak — of achievement. That is my private opinion — but, of course, all do not need to see alike in these matters. 10 February 1932

*Chitrangada*

Months ago I typed out, from the last two numbers (I think) of *The Karmayogin*, part of a poem by you called *Chitrangada*. Is it possible to get the whole of it from you, so that I could type it for you as well as for the library and myself?

The publication of *Chitrangada* was a mistake. I wrote the poem hastily — a rough draught, intending to rewrite it and make it worth something. But the rewriting was never done. I am not

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very anxious for the thing to survive in its present crude form.

21 May 1931

Was Chitrangada ever finished?

It was certainly finished, but I suppose the MS is now lost.

24 June 1937

Am I to conclude either that your Chitrangada is not worth revising because it is a fragment or that whatever of it we have is already perfect poetry? Else why have you shelved the question of revision?

It is under consideration and will probably remain so for some time. As for perfect poetry, I don’t know that it can be made into that — some revision here and there at the most is all that is possible. But this is not the moment.

25 June 1937

Ilion

Ilion is a fragment — and by no means ne plus ultra — only the verse is good; I imagine I have found the solution for introducing the hexameter into English verse which others have tried but, till now, without success. That is all I can say about it at present; we shall see hereafter.

19 September 1931