CHAPTER IV

NATURE IN SRI AUROBINDO'S NARRATIVE POETRY

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo's lyrical poetry is the song of spiritual evolution of the self by way of dynamic harmony with the Cosmic Self. In his lyrics, of Vedantic vision, faculties of Science and poetry come together for the perception of Reality (as 'Sachchidananda'). But his narrative poetry describes Nature dramatically as the passion play (or leela) of the Supreme Creator. It shows that there is an inherent consciousness of the Supreme in His Creation with inherent dramatic conflicts (of His leela) between light and darkness, life and death, and 'vidya' and 'avidya' which rage in human as well as Cosmic Consciousness. Nature is portrayed in it (narrative verse) as the passion play or creativity principle which is evident in the primordial creative love relationship (i.e., unity) of Purusha and Prakriti. But this creativity is beset by a thwarting sense of inertia in existence at lower levels of consciousness. Ignorance or inertia in human consciousness often causes tragic pain and suffering. Death, darkness, discords
and contradictions come in conflict with soul's light and hinder evolution of human consciousness and man's vision of reality. Due to limited perceptivity man feels insecure and struggles to survive in the face of death and darkness and other consequential conflicts manifesting in the sub-stratum of consciousness of the being. As such his narratives seem to dramatise this story of human struggle for survival in the field of Nature where a direct conflict is seen going on between the spirit of love and light in man on the one hand and the dark forces of death, evil and division on the other. The poet seeks to remove all these conflicting limitations of inertia and ignorance in the human consciousness by waking it to its unity with the Supreme Self.

His protagonists, always in love as man and woman, after basic principle of love and unity of Purusha and Prakriti, invariably free themselves of all barriers and limitations and defeating tendencies of ego and 'maya'. In love they transcend all limitations of ego and illusion of death, and ascend into a state of super-consciousness where death loses its illusory meaning. Sri Aurobindo's narrative poetry thus treats the natural conflict in leela between Light and Darkness or Love and Death.
Nature in Urvasie is treated as an evolving principle. Pururavas first sees Urvasie when he goes 'Eastward' at the end of the titan conflict of the Mahabharata. Sri Aurobindo introduces her as:

The golden virgin, Usha, mother of life,
Yet virgin, In a silence sweet she came,
Unveiled, soft-smiling, like a bride, rose-cheeked,
Her bosom full of flowers, the morning wind
Stirring her hair and all about her gold.1

Metaphorical Nature imagery describing Urvasie the "golden virgin", rose-cheeked", Usha, with "her bosom full of flowers" is used to project the creative unity of human self with Cosmic Self or earth and heaven. In seeing dawn as virgin mother of life, the poet recalls the Vedic concept of creation as Effulgence in the dark Void. In viewing dawn as alive as a bride in nymph, Urvasie, the poet is underscoring the view of immanent (light) consciousness in Nature. Consciousness being Purusha (in Vedanta) awakes inanimate matter to life-consciousness. Purusha in Prakriti as 'ardhanarishwara is immanent in Nature. But darkness tries to thwart this creative relationship of love and light (of dawn) which is the root cause of creation:
In the far north-west
Heaven stood thick, concentrated in gloom,
Darkness in darkness hidden; for the cloud
Rose firmament on sullen firmament,
As if all brightness to entomb.2

In its role of thwarting creative unity of earth and heaven, existence and spirit, darkness is viewed as evil. Christian concept of Satanic evil and Vedantic concept of darkness as evil are deliberately synthesized in the characterisation of Cashie. According to the Vedantic conception, Cashie epitomizes darkness. Pururavas personifies consciousness force of the divine soul. Charged with the spirit of love he is seeking light in Urvasie. At the same time Cashie bears a close resemblance with Milton's Satan. Sri Aurobindo's description of Cashie and the use of epic simile recalls Milton's Satan being hurled by God from heaven. The Himalayan setting, too, reminds of Eden. Sri Aurobindo's account of conflict between Pururavas and Cashie also recalls Milton's treatment of the battle in heaven between Satan and God. But Sri Aurobindo's concept and treatment of evil is neither Miltonic nor Christian. It is Vedic. Cashie is essentially a phenomenal apparition of darkness. The love relationship between Pururavas and Urvasie recalls the Vedic
seers' love and reverence for Light. Milton does not show any such conceptual reverence to creative Nature. Rather Creative mating of Adam and Eve is punished as sin. Sri Aurobindo is thus treating Nature in the Vedantic way even in this early narrative poem of the Baroda period. Light for the Vedantans is reality. Darkness is cover or illusion hiding reality. Cashie as such is just an illusion. This illusion vanishes at the outset of the inner Light of Pururavas's 'atman'. Pururavas refuses to recognise it in his aspiration to the recovery of heavenly Light in Urvasie. Cashie is conceived here as an egoistic spirit which is present in Nature's darkness and overcasts light. But as darkness disappears at the onset of light, man can also undo evil (of 'maya'-ego) both within and without through a spiritual effort like Pururavas. When the latter puts up a spirited fight against Cashie (trying to capture Urvasie i.e. Dawn) it immediately vanishes from the scene. Evil can thus be overcome and removed by spiritual enlightenment of human consciousness. This treatment of evil is Vedic. According to the Vedanta, as the Source Self of all existence is Divine, evil can have no permanent existence in Nature's evolution towards its Divine Source. Cashie here is symbolic of evil
as darkness ('avidya') which disappears before the soul's light:

But with more formidable speed and fast
Storming through heaven King Pururavus
Hurled after him. The giant turned and knew
The sound of those victorious wheels and light
In a man's face more dangerous to evil
Than all the shining Gods.3

Evil cannot block the evolving vision of man. Use of metaphors like "light in a man's face" and "the shining God" in contrast with dark imagery used in the description of Cashie has a counterpointing symbolic significance. Goodness associates with light and love; evil with darkness, disruption and disharmony. In this symbolic conflict Pururavus emerges victorious. Spirit of Love and Light and life prevails. Darkness vanishes at the outset of light, making room for union of Purusha and Prakriti. By implication, light, life and hope are the goal of the Cosmic evolution.

When Pururavus rescues Urvasie from the clutches of darkness personified in Cashie, the poet observes that:─

A warm rich splendour exquisitely outlined
Against the dazzling whiteness, and her face
Was as a fallen moon among the snows.4

Splendour of Light "outlived" the darkness of cloudy Cashie in the background of dazzling whiteness of Heaven. Urvasie's
radiating face (as the Dawn) is like a silver lining in the dark-cloud of veil i.e. ignorance ('avidya'). This idea of conflict between light and darkness leads to the perception of conflict between life and death. It leads to its resolution when Reality is seen in its larger - Cosmic context.

The snow clad white Himalaya is seen as earth's door to Heaven. It is the meeting ground symbolizing the highest consciousness-temple of God-where the mortal can see the Immortal Spirit. When Pururavus takes leave of the nymphs, Pururavus's car descends from the Himalayas to enter the doors of the earth :

His car
Through those mute Himalayan doors of earth
And all that silent life before our life
Solitary and great and merciless,
Went groaning down the wind.5

The phrase "life before our life" refers to the inconscient (i.e. lowly conscious) state of matter as well as plant and animal consciousness where consciousness is still dormant and inert or less evolved. These lines bring out Sri Aurobindo's belief in the possibility of ascent as well as descent of the human consciousness. Tilottama's advice to Pururavus reverberates the poet's belief in the evolutionary
ascent of man :-

"O King, O mortal mightier than the Gods!
For Gods change not their strength, but are of old
And as of old, and man, though less than these,
May yet proceed to greater, self-evolved.
Man, by experience of passion purged,
His myriad faculty perfecting, widens
His nature as it rises till it grows
With God conterminous.6

With potentialities to grow "greater self - evolved" than
even Gods man can rise "with God conterminous" by perfecting
his "myriad faculty" and evolving his nature and by
"experience of Passion purged". In other words, the goal of
human evolution and, for that, Nature's evolution is to
grow "with God conterminous" by resorting to a dynamic
harmony of the spirit within with the Spirit Without.

Tilottama enunciates Sri Aurobindo's idea of evolution of
human consciousness.

TREATMENT OF LOVE AND EVOLUTION OF NATURE

Love, in this account of union of Pururavus and
Urvasie, is the evolving principle of Nature as a creative
unity. Love unites Vishnu and Luxmie (as Purusha and
Prakriti) and the same (cohesive) Love principle unites
Pururavus, purusha i.e. earth consciousness, with the heavenly
Light of Urvasie (i.e. illuminated Prakriti). It is not a mere coincidence that Urvasie playing as Luxmie names Pururavus in place of Vishnu in Bharuth's divine play in heaven, which drama in itself is a replay of 'leela' of cosmic creation. Pururavus is raised to, in Bharuth's play, to the level of Vishnu in a (deliberate) mistaken reference. This heavenly spirit of Love descends to the earth and evolves the self to higher levels of consciousness of heaven and then ascends heavenwards again when it has completed the process of transformation of Pururavus's consciousness to the higher levels of divinity.

When Urvasie, heavenly Spirit of beauty, descends to the earth in response to (the call of) Pururavus's (loving) ascending soul, terrestrial Nature gets the glow of divine consciousness from the radiating light of her dazzling beauty. The two lovers spend the first year on the Himalayan peaks which assume a celestial aura under the "dawn" or heavenly light (of harmonious love) and divine beauty of Urvasie:

So was a goddess won to mortal arms;
And for twelve months he held her on the peaks,
In solitary vastnesses of hills
And regions snow-besieged.
Images as 'Peaks', "solitary vastness of hills" and 'regions snow besieged' signify Pururavus's ascent in unity with celestial Light in Urvasie and in harmony with the (cosmic) regions of snow-white Himalayas. And the poet goes on describing the beauty of Nature:

There in dim gorge
And tenebrous ravine and on wide snows
Clothed with deserted space, o'er precipices
With the far eagles wheeling under them,
Or where large glaciers watch, or under cliffs
O'er-murmured by the streaming waterfalls,
And later in the pleasant lower hills,
He of her beauty world-desired took joy:
And all earth's silent sublime spaces passed
Into his blood and grew a part of thought.

'Earth's sublime spaces passed/Into his blood' and became a part of his consciousness. This harmony of the inner (micro-cosmic) self with the outer (macrocosmic) Self (of absolute Nature) leads to the evolution of the microcosmic self towards the macrocosmic Self. There being no border line between the inner - self and the universal Self, there can be no space or gap between the human self and Nature's cosmic Self. The subjective and the objective, the within and the without are one and consciousness of this oneness or unity evolves the human mind. Love brings about this oneness between Pururavus and Urvasie which is analogous to the unity of 'Aditi' and
Ritam, Brahma and 'maya', Purusha and Prakriti and results in the divinization of Pururavus's inner-self-consciousness because of its being in dynamic harmony with Nature as the dynamic evolving principle of the becoming of the Being.

This unity of the subjective (Purusha) and the objective aspects (Prakriti) of Brahma manifest in the creative play or 'Leela', leads to the realization of Divine Bliss and results in new creation. This truth of creation is testified in the unity of Pururavus and Urvasie as narrated in the lines given below:

The green tremulous groves,
And solitary rivers white with birds,
And watered hollow's gleam, and sunny boughs
Gorgeous with peacocks or illumining
Bright bosom of doves, in forest, musing day
Or the great night with roar of many beasts, -
All these were Eden round the glorious pair.
And in their third-flowers-haunted spring of love
A child was born from golden Urvasie.9

References to Eden are deliberate to imply an analogous affinity between Pururavus and Urvasie and Adam and Eve. As a result, a certain incompatibility creeps in. Neither the flora or fauna nor birds like peacocks and doves belong to the Himalayas. But on the whole the idea is that the essence of Nature's creativity principle is love. Love can transform earth into heaven without love can be worse than earth:
O earth made heaven to Pururavusi!
O heaven left earth without sweet Urvasie.10

Since Urvasie is summoned back to heaven, King Pururavus leaves his Kingdom to the cares of Ayus (Urvasie’s son by him) and releasing his soul from all lower interest ascends the ladder of spiritual evolution to the Himalayan peaks. Goddess Luxmie advises him to perfect himself (in oneness with Nature). On his having done so, she grants him reunion with Urvasie and says:–

"Sprung of the moon, by grandsire’s fault in thee Yet lives; but since thy love is singly great, Doubtless thou shalt possess thy whole desire."11

"Grandsire’s fault" is another oblique reference to the original sin of Adam and Eve which is again incompatible with the Vedic, Samkhyan and Vedantic view of Nature which is creativity principle of the unity of male and the female after the primeval relationship of Purusha and Prakriti. Real synthesis of the Indian and the Western world views is achieved only in Sri Aurobindo’s perception of evolution of the self (according to the Indian view) in harmony with the cosmic evolution (according to the Western view). These two – spiritual concepts of self evolution and the Western idea of
cosmic evolution get reconciled in Sri Aurobindo's poetry of integral vision of reality. And therein lies his contribution to human thought and perception of reality. Man having many a weakness and drawback is far from being perfect. Yet the spirit of love can redeem any human being. Love helps Pururavus in attaining reunion with Urvasie. Love coheres Purusha and Prakriti and inheres all existence as preserving Satvic guna or (Vishnu) tendency i.e. cohesive and sustaining tendency of Nature. Satvic Love sustains, Rajasiv energy sprouts the seed while tamasic tendency or inertia is the cause of disintegration in Nature in the Indian view. Indian conception of Divine Trinity of Vishnu, Brahma and Mahesh is based on these functional aspects of Nature. Love must reunite Pururavus and Urvasie. Luxmie grants their reunion for the sake of their perfect mutual love is treated as the principle of universal unity, bliss and continuity.

TREATMENT OF MAN — NATURE EVOLVING RELATIONSHIP

The last part of this lyrical narrative poem is preparatory for the ultimate reunion of the mortal and the
immortal or, to put it differently, for the transformation of Pururavus' consciousness into consciousness of immortality. Pururavus has already transcended the immediate impediments and limitations of lower consciousness through dynamic pursuit of Light in Urvasie. Evolving himself he goes free of all sorts of material shackles. He (as Purusha) is so single-mindedly devoted and true to his better half (illumined-evolved Prakriti) in love that he can now commune and associate with gods, goddesses and spirits or (Super) Nature and attains supramental - consciousness of Ultimate Reality as a result of self - ecolution. In response to his ascending and evolving self, goddess of Aryasthan descends to listen to him.

Sri Aurobindo's descriptions of Super - Nature closely resemble the splendid aspects of terrestrial Nature. For example, the description of the goddess of Aryasthan, Luxmie manifests the divine spirit in Nature:

In a wild faery place where mountain streams
Glimmer from the dim rocks and meet the lake
Amid a wrestle of tangled trees and heaped
Moss-grown disordered stones, and all the water
Is hidden with its lotuses and sways
Shimmering between leaves or strains through bloom,
She sat, the mother of the Aryans, white
With a sublime pallor beneath her hair.
Musing, with wide creative brows, she sat
In a slight lovely dress fastened with flowers,
All heaped with her large tresses. Golden swans
Preened in the waters by her dipping feet.
One hand propped her fair marble cheek, the other
The mystic lotus hardly held.12

This picture of Luxmie is Nature divine. Luxmie is viewed
as Mother Nature, Prakriti, the consort of Vishnu (Purusha)
the sustaining female and male principle of Nature. They
symbolize the male and female aspects of 'Ardhanarishwara'
emanating Creation and manifesting the Supreme Self in it.
The next goddess described towards the end of the poem is the
'Mighty Mother' the creatorix, 'Aditi', who is seen (only)
when Pururavus has taken the "wonderful water of the lake"
in his evolutionary ascension:–

He drank,
And understood infinity, and saw
Time like a snake coiling among the stars;
And earth he saw, and mortal nights and days
Grew to him moments, and his limbs became
Undying and his thoughts as marble endured.13

"Wonderful water of the lake" is the love i.e. elixer of
Nature which removes 'avidya' and leads to 'vidya' i.e.
knowledge and consciousness of Ultimate Reality. Infinity
is understood. Pururavus has covered the whole distance in
time and space in evolution from the plane of the physical
to the consciousness of the spiritual unity of all creation.
The mortal becomes conscious of immortality and Divine unity of all in One. Water (that Pururavus drank) is a traditional symbol of depth, growth, virility, purity as well as creativity. Pururavus's soul after the removal of all dross of lower consciousness can transcend the barriers of Time, which is depicted as death dealing in the image of the "snake", and sees Ultimate Reality as Infinity and Eternity in this newly acquired vision of supramental consciousness through contact with Nature. Pururavus moves up the ladder of evolution, as these lines (above) mark the progressive illumination of his mind, in pursuit of the Divine Light in Urvasie. Water as the purifying agent has washed off the veils of ignorance from his eyes and his love-charged soul can see through the mysteries of Reality. The purified mind and the illumined vision and the loving soul of Pururavus can now see the 'Mighty Mother', the Divine Creatrix. The whole scheme of cosmic creation is unfolded to Pururavus's ascending self. He has almost attained to perfection. At this final stage of self-awakening, self-illumination and self-realization and in soul's seeing of Cosmic Unity and at this stage of the soul's return to its Source (the Soul of Heaven) and as a
result of this last step evolving the self to perfection, Pururavus achieves 'Vidya' i.e. Super-consciousness through love for Urvasie, the nymph of the dawn, the divine light of Nature. In his reunion with Urvasie he fulfils his destiny by way of realization of Divine Bliss in an experience (of love relationship) like that of the Purusha and Prakriti, Vishnu and Luxmee, Brahma and 'Maya'. In this totality of merger of the male and the female, purusha and prakriti, lies the realization of consciousness of existence as Sat-Chit - Ananda or Sachchidananda. But this is not cosmic transformation. This is the transformation of only one individual. Pururavus has left his Kingdom to its own fate. He succeeds in perfecting his own self in love in sweet Heaven, but terrestrial existence has been abandoned to struggle on :-

Then Love in his sweet heavens was satisfied. 
But far below through silent mighty space 
The green and strenuous earth abandoned rolled.14

Thus Pururavus, an evolving soul, at longer last, through various stages of spiritual evolution in harmony with Nature, can attain to Divine perfection or salvation of his ascending soul in fulfilment in love or in realization of
unity with Light. Urvasie symbolizes brightness, beauty and Divine light of the dawn of Nature. Pururavus’s soul, engaged in dynamic (loving) pursuit of this light, is enlightened in the end.

NATURE AS ETERNITY - UNITY - INFINITY OF PURUSHA AND PRAKRITI

While marriage of the soil and sky is the central motif of Urvasie, the riddle of death is tackled in contrast with principle of love, (in the light of the Veda and Vedanta), in the wide cosmic context in Love and Death. The Vedic seers have viewed Divine Light as the source of life (as Effulgence in the dark Void) and knowledge in contrast with darkness which causes the blockage of vision (by covering the Light), or ignorance (avidya). His Light reveals Him; darkness envails Him. Light is Real. Darkness is mask or illusion of His Maya. Light is infinity of His Life; darkness is death. Death as such is mask, illusion of Maya. It is nothing. It has no existence. But those who do not see Him in His Light take Death and darkness as ultimate Reality and suffer. Death as mask or illusion of Maya of surface existence (at the Physical level) is the cause of such
suffering in contrast with love which, as source of Bliss and universal consciousness, is creativity principle. It (love) thrills the soul in every way and at every level physical as well as spiritual being the root cause of creation as the passion play or leela.

NATURE AS CREATIVITY PRINCIPLE

The poem begins at the physical level treating Nature as creativity principle of the Divine's Passion play or leela and evolves up to higher consciousness of Ultimate Reality of the Supreme Light where death's illusion is removed. Transformational movement from the physical to the spiritual continues in Nature where:

In woodlands of the bright and early world, When love was to himself yet new and warm And stainless, played like morning with a flower Ruru with his young bride Priyumvada.15

Syntactic pattern in the above quoted lines shows an involved and complex structure bringing out a wider scale and range of vision in this poem than what was seen in Urvasie. Principle clause and the subject Ruru are placed in the last line while a string of phrases on Nature and one adverbial time clause, suggesting time's role since the deep past,
precede it in the first three lines. Six epithets introduce the four protagonists, namely, Ruru, Priyumvada, Love and Nature, in these four lines. Ruru is compared with morning playing with a flower as "played like morning with a flower Ruru with his young bride Priyumvada". Such frequent use of qualifying epithets, found common in the lyrics, sonnets, and Urvasie and prevailing in this poem, marks Sri Aurobindo's intensity of quest for comprehending the quality and nature of things. Intensity of expression marks the depth and earnestness of approach. Ruru and his young bride Priyumvada are deliberately described in a simile depicting them playing together like "morning with a flower". As in Urvasie and Savitri, morning in this poem, too, symbolizes the dawn of creation and the flower is the symbol of creation. Ruru and Priyumvada as Purusha and Prakriti emerge playing together like the light's dawn (Effulgence) and flower, the symbol of creation. Together they manifest His play (Leela) at two levels. This narrative analogously reminds of the Vedic seers'vision of creation as the Absolute's Effulgence in the Void.
In this narrative of creation as passion play flowers, men, women, love morning woods and the world, all are seen related to one source, Nature, in an integral universal vision. And the story of Life and Death or Love and Death begins at the very beginning of creation in the "bright and early world / When love was to himself yet new warm / And strainless . . . . " By implication, love is the root cause of all creation and it prevails 'strainless' in the world of Nature where Ruru (Purusha) played (leela) with Priyumvada (Prakriti) as morning (Purusha's dawning Light) played with flower (Prakriti or creation).

From the forest Ruru turns "homewards" yearning for Priyumvada's love :

And near his home emerging from green leaves
He laughed towards the sun: "O father Sun",
He cried, "how good it is to live, to love!"

Ruru emerges from "green leaves and talks to the father sun". "Home" has double meaning. It refers to the earth which is man's home and it refers to the first home, the Source, which is referred to in the image "green leaves". "Sun", as the first principle is the father, earth, the
mother. Sun and earth, symbolically, recall Vedic and Samkhyan concepts of 'Aditi' and 'Ritam' and Purusha and Prakriti, respectively. Living and loving in Nature in Oneness with existence, is being at "home". Therein lies the Bliss. The Source of Bliss is unity of Purusha and Prakriti and experiential consciousness through spiritual realization of unity of all existence.

LOVE CONFRONTS DEATH

Ruru and his beloved, Priyumvada live happily like Adam and Eve in Eden. In their blessed life Death (as the riddle) is the villain who disrupts their blissful living in Nature. The poem proceeds in the face of this challenge of death, to solve the riddle of its mystery. The hero, Ruru, takes on Death to 'prove what thou art and what man'. So determined, he moves into Nature, writhing with pain:–

And his heart cried in him as when a fire
Roars through wide forests and the branches cry
Burning towards heaven in torture glorious.
So burned, immense, his grief within him; he raised
His young pure face all solemnised with pain,
Voiceless. Then fate was shaken, and the Gods
Grieved for him, of his silence grown afraid.

The syntactical pattern in these lines showing
complexity and involved structure bears out the further
development of the poet's vision and insight into human
predicament in all its complexities. Human grief of death
is projected in terms of the visible phenomena of Nature.

Gods, are moved at the anguish of human heart and 'Agni'
descends from heaven to lie latent in Uswutha tree:

For the grief grows in Ruru's breast up-piled,
As wrestles with its anguished barricades,
In silence an impending flood, and Gods
Immortal grow afraid. For earth alarmed
Shudders to bear the curse lest her young life
Pale with eclipse and all-creating love
Be to more pain condemned.19

The issue of threat to human survival in the face
of Pain and Death is brought up to the fore. In the lines
quoted above, image of the 'flood' is juxtaposed against the
metaphor of grief 'piled in Ruru's heart. The flood is
visualized as wrestling with its "anguished barricades"
for freedom. The human heart, filled with grief is then
compared with the flood wrestling with the barricades and
limitations for freedom. Earth 'alarmed shudders to bear
the curse' of human grief and pain of death. Images of the
shuddering 'earth' and raging 'flood' for freedom are
then juxtaposed against the image of "eclipse" on Nature's
young life turning it "pale". From this contrastive pattern of imagery a picture of raging conflict in Nature emerges. On one side is 'yong life' in man's loving heart. On the other hand is Death eclipsing all life to darkness and a meaningless pale end. Ruru is the leading protagonist involved in this conflict between the bright forces of love and life on the one hand, and malignant forces of death and darkness, clogging human consciousness, on the other. This conflict is raging within the human consciousness counter-pointing a similar conflict simultaneously raging in external Nature. Gods, bright forces of Nature, decend in answer to human call to help redeem human predicament.

When 'Agni' descends from heaven and takes shelter in the Uswuttha tree, Ruru comes there dreaming as if Priyumvada were alive. Nature showers affection on his grief stricken heart:

Slow the Uswuttha-tree bent down its leaves, 
And smote his cheek, and touched his heavy hair. 
And Ruru turned illumined. For a moment, 
One blissful moment he had felt 'twas she.20

Nature (its divine Agni) touches and illumines Ruru's pain stricken heart. The mother extends her warm hand of
protection. Relationship of the inner self with the outer
Prakriti is projected in the 'Agni's' smiting Ruru's cheek
and touching his "heavy hair". Immanence of divine Spirit
in Nature and its sympathy and love and protective care for
man and other creation is articulated in this description
of 'Agni's' (Nature's) consoling action as she "smote his
cheek" and he felt "it was she". Warm love of Nature and
Priyamvada for Ruru is indistinguishable. Death on the other
hand hides in darkness and comes masked daring out to face
light and love. Addressing Death, Ruru challenges the kill-
ing god to face love :-

O Death
That showest not thy face beneath the stars,
But comest masked, and on our dear ones seizing
Fearest to wrestle equally with love?21

Death is a mask. It is a mystery shrouded in fear.
It is opposed to love which is capable of defying death.
Ruru, the lover, invokes the love - god, Kama :-

"Whoe'er thou art,
O thou bright enemy of Death descend
And lead me to that portal dim. For I
Have burned in fires cruel as the fire
And lain upon a sharper couch than swprds."22

In response to this impassioned appeal for help and
justice Kama appears from the divine heart of Nature :-
Leaned upon a tree
That bathed in faery air and saw the sky
Through branches, and a single parrot loud
Screamed from its top, there stood a golden boy.

The image of "the tree that bathed in faery air and saw the sky" underscores the affinity of gods and other objects of Nature according to the unity principle of all things (as One in all). The image of the "single parrot" that screamed from its top is used as an objective correlative of Ruru's screaming heart. It suggests the universality of consciousness of love in all things and brings out the pangs which are caused by separation of the male and the female aspects of oneness of creation. Tree, bird, man and Kama, embodiments of love, are eternal emblems of continuity of life through love - god Kama's immortal spirit and consciousness. The same love - consciousness prevails in the visible and the invisible, the animate and the inanimate. The invisible can be seen in the visible and vice versa. In Sri Aurobindo's world-view love is the first cause; it is the sustaining principle of life in Nature. It evolves consciousness from the physical to the spiritual.

Sri Aurobindo's gods, like the Vedic gods emerge from Nature. Kama the love God describes his own character in
"Mortal, I am he;
I am that Madan who inform the stars
With lustre and on life's wide canvas fill
Pictures of light and shade, of joy and tears,
Make ordinary moments wonderful
And common speech a charm: knit life to life.\(^{24}\)

In this characterisation of love - god, Madan, accent
lies on his functions and not appearances. Spirit of love
knits life to life, earth to sky, body to soul and soul to
body.

LIGHT OF LOVE AND DARKNESS OF HELL

Hell is the burden of consciousness lying \textbf{law} and this
consciousness is projected in imagination in this description
of 'Patala' — the under world of hell or Hades. At a higher
level the (same) stream of consciousness emerges from and
flows back to heaven. The Ganges coming from heaven to earth
and flowing to the 'Patala' guides loving soul to the "pit
beneath" the world. Here "terrible strong love / was like
a fiery finger in his breast / Pointing him on". Dark 'Patala
as the lowest point of the stream of consciousness is further
visualized in Nature imagery :-
Hopeless Patala, the immutable
Country, where neither sun nor rain arrives,
Nor happy labour of the human plough
Fruitfully turns the soil, but in vague sands
And indeterminable strange rocks and caverns
That into silent blackness huge recede,
Dwell the great serpent and his hosts, writhed forms,
Sinuous, abhorred, through many horrible leagues
Coiling in a half darkness.25

Hell is conceived as 'immutable' darkness after the Vedic poet's imagination of heaven as Light and hell as darkness. Life giving Sun and rain are absent from this blind cell for torture and ignorance. Neither creative action nor growth takes place in it. Barren sand and lifeless rocks fill its blackness where in dark caverns the great serpent Yama and other death forms dwell. The Snake King is the ruler of the under world of 'Patala' according to the Indian tradition of myth. The most remarkable thing to be noted about this conception of hell is that it is part of Nature; Sri Aurobindo calls it "Nature's night". Hell or heaven, joy or sorrow, truth 'Vidya' and 'avidya' are all in Nature. While path of evolution leads to light and heaven, the other one of tamasic inertia and hatred turns through hell. Love & hatred are the guiding energies to heaven or hell, immortality or morality, freedom or slavery, joy or sorrow, 'vidya' or and 'avidya' respectively.
In this story of Ruru's struggle for survival against death, love's 'flower' as symbol of creativity, immortality, and teleology of life saves Ruru from death and damnation. At last, Ruru reaches the throne of Yama:

On the wondrous dais rose a throne,
And he its pedestal whose lotus hood
With ominous beauty crowns his horrible
Sleek folds, great Mahapudma; high displayed
He bears the throne of Death.26

This description of Yama's throne supported on the lotus hood Mahapudma and, indeed, of the entire under world where pale girls, famous women and pale kings undergo all sorts of torture, arouses a sense of dread and black horror. But Love can help man survive through such horrors of death and darkness. In Sri Aurobindo's poetic vision spirit of love is Supreme. Love saves Ruru. A voice of hell pronounces:-

Love gave the flower that helps by anguish;
therefore
He chilled not with the breath of Hades, nor
The cry of the infernal stream made stone."
But at the name of Love all hell was moved.
Death's throne half faded into twilight; hissed
The phantoms serpentine as if in pain . . . .27

When love's flower blooms, hell loses its sting and venom

The implication is that love lets not death exterminate human race. The breath of hades cannot Kill Pururavus's love
warm heart. The cry of the infernal stream of hell-consciousness fails to stupefy him. Death itself fails to sweep off all human life from the face of earth. It only works a little here and there and its darkness and mystery half discovered and illuminated, fades into twilight. "Love the crowning spirit of life", makes the Yama's throne half fade away under the impact of its flame which is divine light from its original Self Source.

Hell is embarrassed at the name of love. Yama, hates love; he asks :-

"And what needs Love in this pale realm,
The warm great Love"]

Pale Yama asks Ruru why he brings the red flame of the spirit of love to the pale sphere of death. It acknowledges its warmness and greatness when it calls it "warm great love". Yama, weltering under the pressure of the flood light of love, admits its own paleness as he sees it doubly counterpointed in the gracious glow of love on Ruru's face. Yama has to yield to his single minded devotion and determination and love; saying:

"O mortal, O misled! But sacrifice is stronger, nor may law of Hell or Heaven its fierce effectual action supersede. Thy dead I yield."
Yama admits that sacrifice is stronger and none can ignore it and grants life to Priyumvada. Ruru recovers her from the armed guards of hell and they vanish like "ineffectual fears"!

At the touch of love, the silent, old and secretive knots of Hell are broken and the dread and pain of death and hell disappears and Priyumvada returns to life. Now the pattern of imagery changes. An atmosphere of love and light marks the shift in the scene from hellish darkness to the brightness, beauty and rhythm of life:

But when he woke, he heard the koil insist
On sweetness and the voice of happy things
Content with sunlight.

Images of "koil" and the "sunlight" suggest bliss, beauty, rhythm, warmth, light and song of love in Nature. Symbolically, the koil's song is the song of Nature of the Light of the Supreme Absolute (Atman). At the imaginative level the koil's song, emblematic of sweetness, rhythm, and harmony (with the voice of happy things, content
with sunlight), creates a bright atmosphere in marked contrast with the dismal hollowness of dark hell. Ruru comes back home in Nature and looks at its beauties afresh:

He looked and saw all grass and dense green trees, And sunshine and a single grasshopper Near him repeated fiervily its note.32

The images like 'grass', 'dense trees', 'sunshine' and singing 'grasshopper' project the poet's vision of beauty, bliss, rhythm, light, creativity and continuity in Nature. The image of Sunshine, making Nature a happy house of light and warmth, relates the Vedic idea of Nature as Effulgence of the Supreme revealing Nature in its dynamic evolutionary movement and rhythm. Viewed at the physical level, these notes of music, warmth of sunshine and the refreshing fragrance of green grass and dense trees being source of life, awake life-consciousness in Priyumvada's lifeless heart:

Sighing
With a slight sob she woke and earthly large
Her eyes looked upward into his. She stretched
Her arms up, yearning, and their souls embraced;
Then twixt brief sobbing laughter and blissful tears,
Clinging with all her limbs to him, "O love,
The green green world! the warm sunlight! and ceased,
Finding no words; but the earth breathed round them,
Glad of her children, and the koil's voice
Persisted in the morning of the world.33
The image of Priyumvada "clinging with all her limbs to him" recalls the Vedantic image of Purusha and Prakriti intertwined as 'Ardhanarishwara'. Idea of Bliss in consciousness of unity and beauty underlies this description of the scene. Nature is described in visual imagery of colour as 'green green world' and 'the warm sunlight' suggests continuity (of consciousness and bliss and beauty) of existence in sharp contrast with the darkness of the hell. The Vedantic implication that Nature is creativity principle, as Purusha in Prakriti, and is emanation of the Supreme as 'Sachchidananda', cannot be mistaken. Priyumvada's waking to consciousness ('Vidya') signifies love's victory over death's darkness ('avidya'). The poet implies that man can overcome death, darkness and ignorance in life with the help of Love, single-minded dedication to the pursuit of truth i.e. 'Vidya' for spiritual perfection in dynamic harmony with Nature.

NATURE AS ENERGY OR FORCE (SHAKTI) OF THE CONSCIOUS BEING

Nature is viewed as 'Shakti' of the Supreme in poems like Baji Prabhou. When Shivaji assigns Baji Prabhou the
duty of checking the Mughal Emperor's great army at a 'tiger-throated' gorge, Baji Prabhou has fifty soldiers to fight a mammoth army of the Mughal Emperor. But blessed by Bhawani i.e. Divine 'Shakti' of Nature or the force or energy of Conscious - Being he can do the impossible and holds back the Mughal soldiers supported by the Rajputs, lays down his life at the behest of his leader Shivaji, in the service of his mother - land and fulfils in this way, his destiny in the general process of evolution and emancipation of man freeing consciousness from all lower matter's dross; its shackles, and entanglements. Baji Prabhou acts as a conscious force in consonance with 'Aditi' i.e. Mother Shakti like a Vedic god. He attains to salvation by playing his part through action or 'Karma' (like Arjuna in the battle field in the Mahabharata) in the fulfilment of Nature's goal of transformation and divinization of all existence through evolution of consciousness:

Baji
Or Malsure is but a name, a robe,
And covers One alone. We but employ
Bhavani's strength, who is an arm of flesh
Is mighty as in the thunder and the storm.34

Baji Prabhou's inner state of consciousness is in harmony with the "One" Absolute Self in this heroic action of evolution and emancipation : -
A noon of Deccan with its tyrant glare
Oppressed the earth; the hills stood deep in haze,
And sweltering athirst the fields glared up
Longing for water in the courses parched
Of streams long dead. Nature and man alike,
Imprisoned by a bronze and brilliant sky,
Sought an escape from that wide trance of heat.

As Nature "Sought an escape from that wide trance
of heat" of oppression, inertia and disorder, Baji Prabhou,
providing resistance to foreign hordes in super-heroic
action or 'Karma', was doing Nature's bidding by working in
unison with Nature towards the ultimate Goal, through freedom
of the spirit from the shackles of (that) inertia and dis-
order of its reunion with the Supreme Self of the Absolute.
Baji Prabhou spiritually joins Nature to fulfil that grand
design. He fights in the service of Mother Shakti - Bhawani
Mother Nature - Divine Power of the Conscious Being, ascends
to the highest levels of realization of cosmic Truth and adds
his mite towards the fulfilment of Nature's Destiny. The
battle is fought through the day, till Shivaji returns, in
the background of Nature's explosive mood for a dynamic
change from disorder to Order (as 'Rita'), and from Nature
to Super Nature.

Kinetic visual imagery and fast flowing linear movement
of the narrative facilitate the projection of Nature as 'Rita'
i.e. dynamic evolving principle of change from the old, obso­
lete disorder to freedom or salvation and order of the Abso­
lute Nature is also viewed as the force or energy of conscious­
ness producing and moving everything in the universe towards
perfection (in consciousness) for the realization of man's
Ultimate transformation (in unity with the Absolute) into
Superman. Baji Prabhou fulfils Sri Aurobindo's hypothesis
of divinisation of consciousness of existence and of man's
divine transformation into Super man. Baji Prabhou is Sri
Aurobindo's model of the Super man.

NATURE IN CHITRANGADA, ULOUPIE AND THE TALE OF NALA

Nature in these fragments of narrative poetry is
treated as the (Divine) passion play. When Princess Chitangada
is attracted towards Urjuna who goes on wandering Eastwards
after the battle of the Mahabharata, both fall in love. But
soon as Urjuna is about to take leave of Princess Chitrangada,
who, in a sad and melancholy mood, filled with nostalgia at the
prospect of his forgetting her in the company of new women,
comments on the male – female relationship in cosmic terms of
universal existence.
Men's worship, women's hearts inevitably
Will turn to follow, as the planets move
Unbidden round the sun.36

Male - female or 'Aditi' and 'Ritam' or Purusha and Prakriti relationship is the principle of attraction and order in Nature. This love - principle regulates the movement of stars and planets around the Supreme Absolute's Light manifest in the cosmic sun. This creativity principle produces and moves everything in Nature. Divine Love binding Purusha and Prakriti as One is at the Centre of Prakriti as Sun is at the centre of the planets. All move around the Supreme Source of Light, the Absolute One. The simile, "as the planets move unbidden round the sun", also conveys home the truth that love is the centripetal principle or Vishnu (cohesive) tendency of cosmic Nature.

Major part of the poem is in the form of a dialogue between Chitrangada and Ujruna. Both Chitrangada and Urjuna express their feelings of sorrow and joy in terms of Nature:–

"When thou art far! And O intolerable,
The grey austere, uncomfortable dawn,
To which I shall awake alone!"37

The central metaphor of love as cohesive principle in Nature is summed up an Urjuna's departure when Chitrangada tells
Urjuna how she loved him:

With all myself
I loved thee, not as other women do,
Piecemeal, reluctantly, but my whole heart
And being like a sudden spring broke forth
To flowers and greenness at my sungod's touch,
Ceding existence at thy feet. 38

Chitrangada's viewing Urjuna as her sun god in the metaphor
"but my whole heart/And being like a sudden spring forth/
To flowers and greenness at my sungod's touch/Ceding existence
at thy feet", sums up the whole gamut of Indian thought and
theory of Nature. This metaphor reveals Sri Aurobindo's
vision of Nature that love, as the cohesive Spirit of Nature,
causes and sustains all existence, "The whole heart and being"
of Chitrangada is Prakriti. Urjuna the lover, the Purusha,
acts on the heart and body of Chitrangada as the sungod acts
on the heart and body of Prakriti. The net result of this
intercourse between the sungod or Purusha as Urjuna and the
body (Prakriti) of Chitrangada is articulated in the simile
"but my whole heart/ And being like a sudden spring broke
forth/To flowers and greenness at my sungod's touch/Ceding
existence at thy feet". The"sungod's touch" awakes the dorm-
ment life consciousness (Purusha) in Prakriti as matter and
at the touch of her Purusha Prakriti springs forth in flowers
and greenness. The Sun is the Supreme One's Light illumina-
ting the Void in Self manifestation.

In substance and form Uloupie bears close resemb-
lance to Chitrangada and interprets Nature as cosmic
creativity principle:-

Flowers die, beloved,
To live again; therefore hold fast to love,
Hold fast the blooming of thy life in love.
The soul's majestic progress moulding doom
Is with the frailest flower helped that blows
In frankness. Therefore is the woman's part
Nearest divine, who to one motion keeps
And like the fixed immortal planets' round
Is constant to herself in him she loves.39

The first line of the quotation above explains the paradox
of life and death. Flowers, the images of life, die but
to live again. Life does not stop death and vice versa.
Things live to die to live again. In Hindu mythology Lord
Shiva is deemed the creator because he is the destroyer.
Life and death are two aspects or two forms of consciousness.
When Sattvic guna combines with Rajas guna, consciousness
awakes in matter. When 'Tamas' guna dominates the other
two 'gunas', inertia or death results. But since the 'gunas'
go on striking new combinations, neither is death permanent nor can consciousness remain awake for all time. Life in one form and at one stage dies and at another stage in a new form it appears again. Matter progresses forward in love to its own Purusha. This is "The soul's majestic progress moulding doom". "Moulding doom" implies evolution from inertia towards Divine consciousness. Since Purusha and Prakriti in love continue progressing towards their single Source, woman can keep up with this movement (in love) by remaining steady and steadfast to her other - half. The simile of the planets revolving round the sun signifies the cyclic movement of all Nature in Divinity.

NATURE'S DIVINE BEAUTY AND HARMONY OF PURUSHA & PRAKRITI

The Tale of Nala, also picked up from the Mahabharata, describes the aesthetic beauty and divine essence of Nature. Nala, Nishadha's king, strolls by a beautiful river:

Which ran escaping from solitudes  
To flow through gardens in a pleasant land.

The images of 'solitudes and gardens' in "pleasant land" project a beautiful scene and illustrate the poet's aesthetic treatment of Nature as Divine Beauty i.e. Satyam, Shivam, Sundram.
The Beauty is revealed in the poem as the king goes walking on the bank of the river absorbed in a deep romantic reverie. Suddenly, a flock of swans comes floating down the stream:

Floating they came and preened above the flood
Their long and stately necks like curving flowers.
The water petted with enamoured waves
Their bosoms and the slow air swooned along
Their wings, their motion set a wordless chant
To flow against the chidings of the stream.

Use of kinetic imagery of colour as "curving flowers"
"waves", "preened above the flood" and of sound as 'slow air' 'swooned along their wings' "chant" "chidings of the stream", depicts the poet's sensuous love for the beauties of Nature which is represented here as a rich pageant of the Being's becoming.

The beauty of the swans is described further in even richer imagery of colour and sound which has an immediate appeal:

A song from heaven was that gliding grace
And hard to speak their beauty, what silver mass
On mass, what flakes and peacock eyes of gold,
What passion of crimson flecked each pure white breast!
It seemed to his charmed sense that in this form
The loveliness of a diviner world
Had come to him winged. Their beauty to tender greed
Moved him of all that living silver and gold.43

The pageant of sparkling beauty is described as "a song from heaven". "The gliding grace" is the grace of the Supreme Self gliding down from him into His creation. Pure whiteness is the predominant colour in this description suggesting the whiteness of the Supreme Self's Light. The song of the swans appears to be the gliding grace of heaven to the poet, implying the idea of unity of earth and heaven in Nature. "Silver mass" and golden "peacock eyes", and "white breast" of the swans create an aura of bright whiteness, the colour of Light of the Supreme's sun, and the King thought the "loveliness of a diviner world had come to him". This divinity, in fact, is in the beauty of the birds and sights of Nature is bound to get transformed and divinized in the long run.

Man and nymphs, swans and winds, streams and sylvan surroundings can be seen come alive linking earth and heaven and revealing the heavenly beauty of Nature and the direction of march of all existence to "diviner" consciousness of Bliss in its evolutionary movement. In his aesthetic vision of
existence the poet can foresee the ceaseless evolution of Nature into its original Spirit. Nature is viewed in this poem as a pageant of the Being's becoming.

Element of love between the earthly consciousness, Nala and the heavenly nymph, besides suggesting the relationship of the earth and heaven, the physical and the spiritual, the aesthetic and the divine; suggests the immanence of Divine - Bliss - Consciousness in all existence which has been described as "Sachchidananda in the parlance of Vedanta."
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