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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

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CULTURE AND FREEDOM

The Indian Congress for Cultural Freedom, which met in Bombay from March 28 to 31, went a good way towards answering a need which is the most immediate and vital in the context of the massive anti-cultural forces attempting to destroy from without and frustrate from within the aspiration and labour of the evolving human being in countries not yet cut off from God's light by the Iron Curtain of totalitarianism. This immediate and vital need is to organise and consolidate the intellectuals of India in the task of presenting a dynamic front against the totalitarian threat and thereby helping the vast bulk of the common people to realise the difference between the two parts into which the world is at present divided: the democracies headed by the U.S.A. which, for all their defects, are fired with the ideal of freedom and the regimes that have been forged by the ruthless hand of Stalin to pander to the materialistic interests and imperialistic ambitions of his own clique whose centre is the Kremlin.

The fact that the Congress, though it opened its doors to sympathisers from several spheres, was a move essentially of creative writers, artists, educationists, philosophical or social or scientific thinkers and not of politicians or capitalists is highly significant. For it takes us at once to the most basic problems of man's existence on earth—the problems of his ever-growing spirit and of his passage from animality to divinity. All these fundamental problems are roughly gathered under the term Culture. The crisis of the modern world is, at bottom, not one of governmental set-up or economic arrangement but of cultural outlook. The primary decision to be made is about the status of the human soul and about its cultural possibilities. Is this soul to be allowed its many-sided development and its diverse self-expression or is to be beaten into a rigid pattern subserving an ideology based on a denial of the integrity of the individual and a negation of the godhead felt to be potential in man who is always the seeker of a varied and progressive perfection?

Another fact of high significance is that the Congress was a move primarily Indian. India at present is of critical importance in two respects. First, she is the inheritor of the richest and most direct spiritual experience in all history. Of course, spiritual experience is not India's monopoly. Every country has had its sages and seers and saints. But here at the foot of the Himalayas there has been a soaring up of sagehood and serhood and saint-hood in the greatest and most spontaneous abundance as if they were no sublime freaks or else eminences attained through an arduous overcoming of nature but rather focuses and fulfilments of a general and wide-spread sense of a more-than-human reality hidden within our frail flesh. Culture in the highest connotation—that is, an integration of the whole person in terms of the loftiest possibility of consciousness open to him—is the goal towards which India is most fitted to lead the world. And a Congress such as was convened lately has almost an inevitable place in our midst as at least a dynamic beginning of a concerted effort by a number of Indians to bring, in however general instead of specifically spiritual a form, their Indianness into play on the world-stage.

But India's importance in the march of culture is critical not only by reason of her extraordinarily effective spiritual experience continued from before the days of Sri Krishna down to the age of Sri Aurobindo. It is critical also because she is a country of immense man-power and material resources, a country of extreme strategic value *vis-à-vis* the fearfully militarised Soviet bloc covering eastern Europe and northern Asia. The critical importance is therefore both physical and spiritual.

But this double importance is being considerably wasted by a strange turn in the field of common thought and action. Owing to quite a medley of factors a turn towards what has been aptly called neutralism has become nearly habitual with a considerable mass of people in relation to the clash between the democratic mind and the dictatorial "double-think" that is

Stalinism. A host of honest Indians find themselves unable to make an inner choice. They do not—indeed they cannot—overlook the gross cultural regimentation practised in the Soviet world and the excessive brutality caused by it in the shape of vast concentration camps of slave labour. But they are obsessed also with the shortcomings that persist in the democracies as a legacy mainly of the era of capitalism and colonialism through which the entire world passed during a couple of centuries and from which it has but recently emerged on the way to a more fraternal and unifying consciousness. Not only rank Communists who wish to create disorder everywhere, overthrow the Government and deliver a disrupted enfeebled India to the Kremlin but even many sincere non-Communists believe that if there can be no absolute guarantee that in a very brief time the democracies will perfect themselves in matters that in some form or other concern the proletariat of Asia we should not immediately be interested in aiding those democracies to check the growing menace of totalitarianism. The neutralist attitude fostered by people like these severs to an effective extent India's spiritual and physical powers from the concourse of the democratic consciousness in the West towards a free and cultural future.

It is most necessary that the Indian mind should awaken to the enormity of the folly of neutralism. It may not technically align itself with any country, it may observe a sort of political neutrality, but its eyes must be wide open to the central issue and it must be ready to take right action if the call comes. The central issue is really that though we must not blink deficiencies in any quarter there is no time to lose in comparisons; the danger is at our very door and it is such that it bears no relation whatever to the injustices we may fear from the still imperfect though evolving West. What we have to burn into our being is the realisation that even if there were by some impossible twist of fortune a new imperialism practised by the West, a new economic exploitation of Asia by the Atlantic powers, we should still not have anything remotely comparable to the living hell that would be ours under the domination of Stalinist Communism.

Out of any conceivable ill-treatment by the imperfect democracies there is ever a way of escape, freedom can ever be found from any bonds they may bring, for whatever they may do at their worst would be still against their own best conscience and against the increasing tide of the spirit of fraternity and unity sweeping over them today. What is more, not even in the imperialistic past were these western countries so tyrannical as to gag the Asian mind and stifle constitutional agitation and so the worst that can be feverishly imagined for the future must fall infinitely below the absolute extinguishment of cultural freedom and of political liberty that will be our fate under the colossal State-capitalism that is truly the Soviet collectivist system cynically masquerading as the economic saviour of the common man. Slavery will be complete and it will be imposed as an entirely legalised institution against which there can be no appeal.

The cultural incommensurableness of the forces ranged against each other in the contemporary world and the extreme urgency of abandoning neutralism of mind in a world-context in which all culture worth the name is in danger of being stamped out were admirably driven home by the Indian Congress for Cultural Freedom. Thanks for this achievement, which is a preliminary to a long-range co-operative action, are due to enthusiastic representatives of culture from our own midst and eminent delegates from abroad and a general group of the intelligentsia. The blow which, on the plane of ideas, was sought to be struck for Cultural Freedom could not have been more effective. The public meetings were memorable, the several sectional conferences and the later committees were the scenes of a vigorous and nimble exchange of fructifying opinions. There was ample freedom within these very meetings, conferences and committees. Several schools and shades of thought found a chance of expression. And from the impact of views a broad majority declaration emerged which, whatever the criticisable points here and there, serves commendably the immediate

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purpose behind the Congress.* We may quote it in full:

1. Culture has both an individual and a social content. Individual culture is an attitude to life on the part of a human being who seeks awareness of himself and of the world. Social culture results from the integration of the culture of the members of a community and of the social relationships emerging in the geographical environment and historical tradition which define the community. Neither individual nor social culture can be complete unless it rests on the underlying unity of mankind.
2. Culture can only flourish, find its best expression, and be secure in a free society. A society is free in which the integrity of the individual is recognised and respected as a primary ethical value, with all the guarantees of social justice, including equality of opportunity, which this principle implies. All spiritual pursuits and attainments arising from culture are rooted in this fundamental principle.
3. While culture has a universal basis, its expression is as particular and varied as the communities themselves. This variety is inherent in the creative genius of peoples and enriches the content of human experience on which universal culture is based.
4. Each concrete social unit which has a geographical environment and an historical tradition, must enjoy independence and be able to evolve its own culture and afford and maintain the necessary freedom for its members and for their individual cultural progress.
5. It is the duty of the individual to protect and develop the conditions, mentioned above, necessary for freedom of culture.

Freedom of cultural pursuits is of intrinsic significance not only for the individual but for the community as a whole.

6. The best expression of a free culture presupposes an attempt to widen, deepen and perfect the individual's awareness of himself and of the world. In modern times civilisation has been mostly governed by an undue emphasis on externalities and a tendency towards standardisation of human life. Totalitarianism, an extreme expression of this evil, has carried it into the social and political fields.
7. At no period of time and in no region has perfection of cultural freedom been attained. But the recognition of the integrity of the individual as a primary ethical value provides the basic condition for the march towards perfection. While social tyranny has existed in the past and continues to exist in greater or less measure today, it is obvious that a society where the basic political, economic and social conditions of individual freedom are accepted and respected culture may develop, while in societies where these basic conditions have been denied or destroyed, even the possibility of a contemporary culture ceases to exist. The effect of modern tyranny is more insidious and destructive than any tyranny in the past, inasmuch as the modern tyranny of totalitarianism seeks to dictate not only the form in which truth may be expressed but truth itself. In such a tyranny truth itself ceases to exist and have meaning: it is made subservient to political belief, economic advantage and expediency.
8. The new tyranny founded on the theory and practice of totalitarianism is the gravest challenge man has faced in civilised history.

The defence of cultural freedom is, in the main, the defence of free society against this challenge.

Indifference or neutralism towards this totalitarian tyranny amounts to a renunciation of the Indian tradition and our human heritage, and a betrayal of all spiritual values.

Yes, this declaration finely expresses the immediate aim of the Congress. The sole major criticism possible is that the few pointers which it has beyond that aim are left a little too vague for a Congress which called itself Indian. Thus, though it is well that the word "spiritual" is employed, the two places where it occurs do not give it any definite connotation. "All spiritual pursuits and attainments arising from culture" is a phrase equally applicable to art, literature, philosophy, ethics, religion, science and statesmanship, without in any way implying that in all these pursuits and attainments the essential, even if not always recognised, drive is of the inmost soul which is a spark of the Infinite, the Eternal, the Divine. The phrase "all spiritual values" is perhaps less general and it was an act of inspiration to end the document with it and let it go on sounding in the reader's mind like a culminating note in which the significance of the whole declaration is somehow summed up. But it cannot escape the charge of being still indefinite on account of a lack of preparation of it. At only one place—Number Six in the series—there is a movement towards what India means fundamentally by the terms "spiritual". The words "an attempt to widen, deepen and perfect the individual's awareness of himself and of the world", collocated with the words "an undue emphasis on externalities and a tendency towards standardisation of human life", tend to open a window upon essential spirituality. But enough space is not made for the genuinely

Indian vision and the direction of our gaze is soon shifted and what we were beginning to see is fused with a glimpse of what totalitarianism does and there an abrupt end!

We should not really find fault with the bringing in of the totalitarian theme. After all, this theme is central to the declaration, and even the quick fusing of views is not quite reprehensible since the central theme may not be kept out for long; but the final turn is such as to preclude development. Surely, the opening sentences were not meant to end with a mere statement of what totalitarianism has done by being an extreme form of the evil of undue emphasis on externalities and a tendency towards standardisation of human life. They were meant to show that if totalitarianism is an extreme form of an evil whose seeds are in our own democratic civilisation, then the great need is to foster those influences which luckily are in this civilisation to prevent the seeds from leading to the extreme form reached in countries where those influences have been eradicated. The influences in question emanate from the urge to widen the consciousness, the push towards finding an ever deeper poise of inlook and outlook, the straining towards some ideality, some luminous perfection; in short, the *nisus* towards deity. No hidebound religiosity is here implied, but a clear yet intense, a concentrated yet multiform aspiration to experience the eternal One who is all things and fulfills all things by the beatific truths It carries of them in Its harmonious being and manifests in Its progressive becoming. No anti-scientific reaction is here demanded: the call is only for correcting the overstress the enormous scientific intellect of modern times has laid on the outer growth of man and of his institutions. The analytic scientific mind is not to be thrown away, but it must be taught its proper place in a life orientated from within, from the inmost psyche which possesses an intrinsic sense, an inherent awareness of the unity of the world and of the supreme secret Perfection which on some peak of undiscovered consciousness awaits its hour of manifestation in every part of our multiple being. The presence of the inmost soul is what the initial sentences of the sixth paragraph incline in the most general way to invoke. The generality is not to be blamed: in a Congress not directly for Cultural Fundamentals but for Cultural Freedom it is perhaps best to keep out any language that may cause unnecessary controversy on a philosophical score. But certainly an indication is possible of the evolutionary movement required of the human consciousness for going to a basis that would give no standing ground to any development which may allow the rise of the totalitarian tendency in social and political existence. The Steering Committee of the Congress might have kept intact in idea, however they might have polished in phrase, the really irreducible minimum of the statement as originally submitted. The original version was: "The best expression of a free culture presupposes an attempt to widen, deepen and perfect the individual's awareness of himself and of the world. In modern times, civilisation has been mostly governed by an approach leading to an emphasis on externalities and to the domination of the machine over the personality. Totalitarianism has exaggerated this approach and extended it to the social and political fields. The crisis caused by this must be met by, among other things, a reorientation of our outlook in the direction of a synthetic and integral awareness of life brought about by free individuals—a reorientation which does not deprecate technological development but unifies it with and assimilates it into what is felt to be the essence of the best culture as exemplified by great spiritual figures."

In the above version, for all its insufficient explicitness for the mystic thinker, a broadly acceptable line towards spirituality is traced† and in the final phrase—"great spiritual figures"—we have a suggestive pointer to a particular kind of embodiments of culture. Finely cultured though they may be, neither a mere scientist nor a mere philosopher nor a mere poet nor even a mere ethicist can be called a great spiritual figure: the hint is definitely of the intuitive sage, the illumined seer, the ecstatic saint, the God-realised rishi.

It is a pity the Congress could not incorporate the substance of this version in its final declaration. The scope it had chosen and delimited could have admitted such a substance. The Indianness of the driving force behind the Congress would have been more perceptible without losing any hold on a modernness in which both India and the West could meet. But a truce now to criticism. Indianness is not entirely absent in the declaration; and even if it apparently were, the declaration would still be a worthy document in a worthy cause. The evolving human being on his path of individual and social and universal culture is evident in it, and when a Congress was convened to mobilise the intellectuals of India and of sympathetic countries against the lowering shadow of a barbarism whose menace is world-wide, it is perhaps that human being in his most common highest figure that has to publish a manifesto of the mind. That precious manifesto the Congress has not failed to publish and, even though a brighter sign was possible of the fact that Cultural Freedom finds its strongest justification when there is an *élan* towards the deific, we must not hesitate to subscribe to the noble and dynamic ideas that are here burning to inspire every necessary action in order to save from a titanic threat the liberty without which even that *élan* would not be able to make itself creative.

* A number of Resolutions were also passed and embodied in a separate document of far-reaching humanitarian force.

† The version was evolved after a lot of discussion aiming at generalising, summarising and rendering admissible to several groups certain statements submitted by Dr. Indra Sen of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram in one of the Sectional Conferences. These statements are published on page 4.

AUDEN AND SPENDER

By K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

It seemed natural to couple the names twenty years ago, and habit couples them still. *New Signatures*, edited by Michael Roberts, came out from the Hogarth Press in 1932. Among the "new signatures" were Cecil Day Lewis, W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, William Empson and John Lehmann—names very well known today. Empson and Lehmann were Cambridge men, the other four had had an Oxford education. Lewis, Auden and Spender especially were repeatedly grouped together, and the Oxford "triumvirate" seemed to be a formidable combination indeed. Lewis, being three years Auden's senior and five years Spender's, acquired presently a status of his own, while Auden and Spender became the Antony and Octavius of the triumvirate. They too "separated" in due course, and while Auden has been for some years a naturalized American, Spender is still British to the core. The Atlantic divides them, and they are now labelled apart; but it is pardonable to revert to the familiar habit of naming Auden and Spender together, the careering Achilles and Patroclus of the nineteen thirties. Both of them are in India at the moment; they came as delegates to the Congress for Cultural Freedom which was held in Bombay from the 28th to the 31st March. Lovers of poetry have offered a hearty welcome to these two knight-errants who have fought many a brave battle and achieved many a notable triumph on the contemporary literary scene.

Wystan Hugh Auden, son of Dr. G. A. Auden, School Medical Officer at Birmingham, was born in 1907. Having graduated from Christ Church College, Oxford, Auden worked as a teacher near Malvern. Pedagogy didn't however stifle the poet, and *Poems* (1930) and *The Orators* (1932) were followed by *The Dance of Death* (1936), *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935) and *Look Stranger* (1936). The phenomenal success of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) paved the way for *The Ascent of F6* which Auden published in 1936 in collaboration with Christopher Isherwood. Auden had definitely "arrived", and he was awarded the King's Poetry Medal in 1936. The Spanish Civil War gave a jolt to Auden, as it gave to other intellectuals of the time, and he made a trip to war-ridden Spain and summed up his agonized impressions in a poem which in the context of the Korean War acquires a fresh significance today. Shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, Auden migrated to America and has since remained there. *Another Time* (1940), *New Year Letter* (1941), *Letters from Iceland* (with Isherwood; 1941), *For the Time Being* (1945) and *The Age of Anxiety* (1948) are fairly representative of Auden's work during the last ten years. He has besides edited one or two anthologies of verse as also a new selection of Tennyson's poetry.

Stephen Spender, son of Harold Spender the famous journalist, was born in 1909, and joined University College, Oxford, but left without a degree; returned later and graduated in 1931. The paper-bound self-printed *Nine Experiments* (1928) was followed by *Twenty Poems* (1930), *Poems* (1936), *Trial of a Judge* (in the wake of *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Ascent of F6*; 1938), *Poems from Spain* (1939) and *The Still Centre* (1939). An interesting critical essay, *The Destructive Element* (1936) and a political pamphlet, *Forward from Liberalism* (1937), came in between bursts of creative activity. Spender had visited Spain, and like Auden identified himself with the Republican side; yet he returned from Spain a confessed defeatist. Brought up in the Liberal tradition, he had found it insufficient and cantered in the direction of Communism; but facts were to prove stronger than fancies, and the prodigal was destined to return home at last. During the Second World War, Spender was for a time a member of the National Fire Service, and later worked in the Foreign Office. *Citizens in War—and After* (1945) is drawn from Spender's war-experiences, and it is thus a veracious and urgent document. *Life and the Poet* (1942), in the "Searchlight" Books, was an eloquent restatement of the function of poets and poetry in a society pressing forward to the furthest horizons—and it appeared opportunely during what was probably the most critical year of the war. Nor was the poet hushed up by the exigencies of the war; rather the poetry acquired a deeper purpose and an even surer articulation than before. *Ruins and Visions* (1942) and *Poems of Dedication* (1946) contain the best of Spender's war-time poetry.

These few biographical details will serve to show how the lives of Auden and Spender have run roughly along parallel lines during the last two decades. Like the others who found a place in "New Signatures", Auden and Spender too were poets jerked into a trap which they neither liked nor deserved. The "Great War" had come and gone, leaving the world a veritable "waste land":—

*This is the dead land
This is cactus land
Here the stony images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand
Under the twinkle of a fading star.*

The major poetic powers and influences of the nineteen twenties were the Victorian Jesuit, Hopkins, the war casualty, Wilfred Owen, and the ambiguous Anglo-American T. S. Eliot. New sounds were being heard, new harmonies were being forged. Success and victory draped themselves in the robes of gloom and disillusion, and despair shrieked with a hilarity that gave one the creeps. Ganga was sunken, thunder rumbled in the air although there was no rain, prickly pear was much in evidence, and one awaited the phoenix hour in vain. The bubble of inflated boom and artificial prosperity burst; chaos and old night descended. Liberalism Limited looked before and after and pined for what was not. Japan invaded Manchuria, Hitler rose to power in Germany. The World Disarmament Conference, the last and best hope of the time, broke on the rocks of mutual fear and suspicion. Italy invaded Abyssinia, Franco raised the banner of reaction in Spain. Hitler's Germany rearmed at a terrific pace, and the armament race began in dead earnest. Munich followed in due course, and a year later Hitler ordered the invasion of Poland and thereby started the Second World War.

Such was the mouse-trap in which Auden and Spender and Lewis and MacNeice and the men and women of their generation found themselves—and wriggle as they might, there seemed to be no way of escape. They could not forget their present plight, and so they became politically and not alone poetically self-conscious. Eliot had no doubt a way of putting things, he had a way of prodding you with a pin as you lay in a mass within the mouse-trap,—yet Eliot didn't seem to know how to smash the trap without destroying the trapped. The hoped-for deliverer was actually moving away from the mouse-trap,—what a shame! Yet, perhaps, that was the better way, the way of prayer and redemption, of death and resurrection. At any rate, Auden and Spender and the rest of the younger poets, trapped as they were in a situation not of their own choosing, had to work out their destiny and achieve their salvation in their own way.

From Hopkins and from Owen the younger poets had learned many things—various verbal tricks and graces, certainly, but also the art of cunning and intricate texture in verse. From Eliot too they learned many things—the trick of humorous juxtaposition of diverse categories, for instance. Especially did they learn from Eliot, to quote Cyril Connolly, "not to be ashamed of borrowing and to assimilate what we borrow". Like Eliot, Auden made a disconcerting mixture of ecstacy and banality, lyricism and boredom, plain statement and impenetrable obscurity; but the style of *The Orators* in time gave place to a more traditional form of utterance in his later poetry. Auden has thus outgrown Eliot, even as Eliot has outgrown his own earlier poetic self. Spender, on the other hand, exhibits fewer violent fluctuations in his style than either Eliot or Auden, although he has been influenced by both in his development. If Auden was the Hopkins-cum-Eliot of the thirties, Spender was the purer lyricist, and he has been variously described as the Shelley of the thirties, the Rupert Brooke of the Depression, and the Wilfred Owen of the Peace.

Technique, after all, important as it is, is of less moment than the emotional and intellectual content of the verse. In the thirties, Auden and Spender were alike engaged in discovering the clue that would guide them out of the labyrinth which encompassed them all round. The land was barren, the situation was bleak; yet they wouldn't surrender to despair, they hoped against hope that something would grow on the soil, that the mists would clear somehow. What if a whole city has been razed to its foundations? May not a new one be reared in its place? May not disaster itself prove a fruitful ground of opportunity? It is against self-deception that the younger generation has to guard itself:

*And bravery is now
Not in the dying breath
But resisting the temptations
To skyline operations.*

The trouble is with the superannuated men, the dying who demand that in their favour the living shall die. The Old Gang

*ordered light
But had no right,
And handed on
War and a son.*

Things have grievously miscarried, yet there is no hushing up the hollow men. Auden therefore roundly tells them:

*Shut up talking, charming in the best suits to be had in town,
Lecturing on navigation while the ship is going down...*

Spender too disliked the Old Gang, their talk got upon his nerves, their

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movements grated upon his sensibility as if they were but the rattle of bones; and the shadow that sprawled across the wonderful possibility and the ugly reality made him exclaim:

*We have come at last to a country
Where light equal, like shine from snow, strikes all faces,
Here you may wonder
How it was that works, money, interest, building, could ever
hide*

The palpable and obvious love of man.

For a time Auden and Spender, like many another young poet, succumbed to the allurements of the Communist philosophy. A stupendous experiment was going on in Russia. Utopia was being turned into History. Liberalism Limited only gave rise to Fascism Unlimited. Auden went to Spain and became an ambulance-driver on the Republican side; Spender followed suit. The Republicans were some of them very fine idealists, no doubt, and there were quite a few professed Communists who were human beings first and political animals only afterwards. Nevertheless, the adventure in Spain was to prove an eye-opener to Auden, Spender, and their English friends. They returned to their homeland sadder, but wiser men. They had made a valiant attempt to hitch their poetry to the current popular political waggon,—but with what consequences! “The intellectual”, confesses Spender, “having given politics his support, became an Orestes pursued by Furies of Ends and Means, Propaganda and Necessity”. Political parties are made up of either “enthusiastic simpletons” or “adroit hypocrites”—the proportion varies, the constituents never. As the poet cannot remain a poet were he to join either category, it follows that the poet should eschew party politics if he cares to save his soul. Politics is not the aim of life,—it is but one of the many means to the end we have in view, which is the health of the human society. And health includes both the material and spiritual halves of our existence. The politician is tied to the revolving wheels of Party; but the artist, the poet, has the vision and faculty divine, and he mustn't make the mistake of rendering unto Caesar the gifts that are meant for God. The poets of Britain, led by Auden and Spender, realized in time that Communist Myth and Soviet Reality were two entirely different things; they were shocked; and they turned away from the God who had failed.

When the Second World War came, Auden in America, and Spender in England, met the crisis with courage and humility. The day of easy solutions was long past. Man's liberation had to be achieved on the material as well as the spiritual level. Outer change would have no purpose if it did not synchronize with an inner transformation. In *Spiritual Explorations*, a sequence after the manner of *Four Quartets*, Spender writes:

*The tower we build soars like an arrow
From the earth's rim into the sky's,
Upwards and downwards in that blazing pond
Climbing and diving from our life, to narrow*

*The gap between the world shut in the eyes
And the receding world of light beyond.*

And Auden's testament of faith is nearly as categorical:

*For the new locus is never
Hidden inside the old one
Where Reason could rout it out,
Nor guarded by dragons in distant
Mountains where Imagination
Could explore it; the place of birth
Is too obvious and near to notice,
Some dull dogpatch a stone's throw
Outside the walls, reserved
For the eyes of faith to find.*

In his speech at Madras on the 25th March, Spender rightly declared that “what is basic to the freedom of culture is that it should not be at the service of materialist aims or of political leaders.” The manifold virtues of regimentation are often enthusiastically detailed, but it is forgotten that regimentation is the royal road, not to a fuller life, but to immitigable death. The wonderful passivity of sleep, said Sancho Panza, for all its attractions dangerously reminded one of the silence of the grave. We have therefore to guard against the temptation to standardize and routinize everything. The politician, of course, aided and abetted by the bureaucrat, will try his hand at universal regimentation; but if the poet and the artist still dare to call their souls their own, if the intellectuals still cherish their freedom and are not afraid to think, and if men of goodwill are still vigilant enough to resist cruelty and wickedness of whatever kind, there is no doubt humanity will save itself in spite of the politicians and rise to new heights of striving and achievement. Man cannot live without bread; bread then is the basic need; but to stop with bread is to ordain the starvation of the spirit. We need bread and cabbages to be able to live; but we need no less wine and roses and dance and song and prayer and ecstasy to make life worth living. The ideal then is not to live, but live as men, and to find ways and means of even outgrowing our present human limitations and achieving, in the fullness of time, a veritable supermanhood on earth. In trying to change a situation where men are obliged to live as pigs, we should not create a situation where pigs try to live like men. The poet is half a prophet and half a creator; by presenting a vision of Possibility, he half-creates it and starts the splendid process of Becoming. A great burden is thus cast on the poet, and if he is to carry it manfully, he must be free from shackles and he must be assured of an atmosphere free from all forms of political tutelage and regimentation. To silence the poet is to reject even the possibility of a fair, just and happy future; and that way lies not only madness but the death that follows madness. To conclude in the words of Spender:

*No spirit here seek rest. But this: No man
Shall hunger: Man shall spend equally.
Our goal which we compel: Man shall be man.*

CULTURE AND THE CRISIS TODAY

Some Statements Submitted to the Indian Congress for Cultural Freedom

By DR. INDRA SEN

Culture is a progressive perfection of human life, individual and collective, and at the present stage it is the enjoyment and expression of intrinsic values. The perfection must evidently comprehend the whole of the human personality—the body, the animal propensities of man, the human *differentia* of rationality and the higher ranges of spiritual, religious and artistic experience. The modification of the environment in interaction with which the personality lives will also naturally be comprehended in culture. These various factors admit of an arrangement in a hierarchy. The ideal culture would seek a progressive perfection of all these factors in their proper relative valuations and in this connection it is possible to suggest an alternative formula: Culture has a threefold status—the essential experience of intrinsic values, their expression in literature, art, social relationship, etc., and their effect on the environment.

Since the dawn of the modern era and the rise of science the governing factor of our cultural life has been more and more an intellectual approach to external nature. This has led to a greater and greater development of the analytic powers of man and the creation of a civilisation based on scientific inventions on the principle of the machine. Totalitarianism is the latest and a direct lineal development of the same state of civilisation and an extreme working of the same approach. Finding the principle of the machine so successful in the control of the external environment, it has extended it to the

regulation of social and political activities. And the crisis which we witness today, resulting evidently from an attempt at a total mechanisation of life, seems to be an urgent call to re-examine the premises on which the culture of our scientific age rests.

We believe that the real solution will have to be found in the discovery of a new approach to life, an approach wider than the analytic and intellectual, an approach synthetic and integral. Such a large perception is forcefully demanded by the antinomies of present-day existence and it alone can release the power to overcome and resolve them. Our duty then is to realise the limitations and the true place in human life of the intellect, the intellectual approach, scientific invention and the principle of the machine and learn to recognise the greater scope that the cultivation and enjoyment of intrinsic values, a free exercise of good will, love and an integral perception must have in life. To this end the undue extension of the principle of the machine must be checked and an ever larger freedom created. And while we must now resist and check the threat of mechanising our life and create more and more social freedom, yet obviously the true salvaging of our civilisation will depend on the power of a growing number of personalities who will realise in themselves intrinsic values and demonstrate in very flesh and blood the synthesis and integrality needed today.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE ARCHITECT OF A NEW WORLD ORDER

By RISHABHCHAND

The Two Possibilities

To all right-thinking men who are not wedded to certain rigid theories or irrevocably committed to certain fixed lines of action, the state of humanity today appears as precariously poised between two imminent possibilities—one of extinction or at least a maimed and gangrened degeneration, and the other of renovation. It is patent that the present order of life, the present culture and civilisation and the present system of values have proved egregiously bankrupt—they have failed to lead mankind to any haven of light and happiness and they have failed to minister to the perfection and fulfilment it is irresistibly impelled to seek. Their progress has meant for man an exile from the centre and source of his existence, a forgetfulness of his own real and eternal self and a bewildered involution in the dim mazes of life's arcane forces. They have perverted his thought, warped and withered his feelings, blinded his will and reduced him to a machine, probably to something worse than a machine—a machine without any rhythm and regularity of movement. If he could only pause for a moment in the midst of his frantic drift and try to recollect himself and take stock of his present state, he would be crushed under the weight of his despair and dismay. It is best he is swept along. A return tide, if it sets in in time, will restore him to his source, or else the darkness of the abyss will claim and close upon him for evermore.

The other possibility is of renovation. If humanity is to be saved, it cannot be by the ingenious devices of his mind; for, his mind has already been clouded and perverted and lost what little clear light it possessed for his guidance. Even its best prescriptions cannot but be temporary palliatives, shoddy make-shifts and a random patchwork. A socio-economic reconstruction, an educational over-hauling and a political security and unification, were they at all feasible in the present circumstances, would not touch the root of the evil and cannot, therefore, be a complete and permanent remedy. The evil is too deep and pervasive to be tackled successfully by such a tinkering treatment. Something more seemingly profound, something more embracing and effective and fundamental to the psychological constitution of man, has to be seized and made dynamic in his life and nature, if the present resurgence of his primitive barbarism is to be repelled, the barbarism itself stamped out and the latent divinity released into creative expression. It is a new birth that is needed, a reversal of the present poise of the being of man, a basic and integral renovation, not a shuffling series of superficial reforms.

Man's problem is man himself, and not what he has made or marred; and so long as he remains what he is or continues in the direction in which he is driven, no panacea can cure his life and society. The repeated failure of the prodigious labour and energy he has been expending on adjustments and re-adjustments, reforms and revolutions, plans and schemes and elaborate programmes, testifies to the fact that he is in the worst predicament of his earthly existence and does not know how to get out of it; he fumbles and founders, snatches at any nostrum that his muddled mind suggests to him and fails to discover the one thing that can deliver him—his true self and the Self of his self, which is also the Self of all selves.

Man's problem, we repeat, is man himself. He must change if he wants his life to change. He must remove the darkness and confusion which reign within him, if he wants to remove the darkness and confusion which reign in his outer life and society. An inner renovation, an inner transformation, an inner new-creation alone can remould and perfect his existence on earth and render it harmonious, free and creatively opulent and blissful.

Consciousness and Its Change

But what do we mean by change of man? Is it a change to be achieved by an enlightened and catholic education or by the strenuous pursuit of an idealistic ethic or scientific psychology? Will religion bring about the change and, redeeming man from his ancestral animality, make him divine? What sort of change has man to undergo for a new birth, a total conversion? What will be the nature, scope and process of the change?

These questions lead us to a consideration of that in man which is the central truth and essence of his being; for, it is clear that if a radical and permanent change has to be effected in him—and nothing short of it can save him from the present peril—it must be effected in the basic stuff and principle of his existence, and not only in what is auxiliary and instrumental to it. Man is not only a composite of mind, life and body; there is something in him which is more essential and immanent in his whole being, something which is the central cognitive and dynamic agent, independent of the instruments and faculties it creates and commands—it is his consciousness.

It is here, in the tackling of the central truth and essence of man, in the solution of the root problems of human life and nature that Sri Aurobindo stands in an unchallenged pre-eminence—solitary and supreme. His vision is not mental, but spiritual, in which truth is known by identity and

not by any sense-bound empirical methods of observation, deduction, imagination and inference. An eye of unbarred knowledge sees man and nature and the world in their essence as well as in their spiral of evolutionary manifestation and, unflinching, watches their rise and fall, their victories and defeats, beckoning them to the eternity of triumphant sunshine and creative splendour, which is their ultimate destiny. His voice commands the greatest trust and confidence and implicit obedience because it is the voice of truth itself promising deliverance and divine fulfilment to struggling humanity.

Sri Aurobindo says that if man is to be redeemed, his consciousness has first to be changed; he has to rise to a higher consciousness. Consciousness is the basic reality and principle of his existence, and "all life depends for its nature on the fundamental poise of its own constituting consciousness; for as the consciousness is, so will the force be. Where the Consciousness is infinite, one, transcendent of its acts and forms even while embracing and informing, organising and executing them, as is the Consciousness of Sachchidananda, so will be the force, infinite in its scope, one in its works, transcendent in its power and self-knowledge. Where the consciousness is like that of material Nature, submerged, self-oblivious, driving along in the drift of its own force without seeming to know it, so will be the force: it will be a monstrous movement of the Inert and Inconscient, unaware of what it contains, seeming mechanically to fulfil itself by a sort of inexorable accident, an inevitably happy change. Where the consciousness is divided in itself, as in Mind, limiting itself in various centres, setting each to fulfil itself without knowledge of what is in other centres and of its relation to others, aware of things and forces in their apparent division and opposition to each other but not in their real unity, such will be the force: it will be a life like that we are and see around us; it will be a clash and intertwining of individual lives seeking each its own fulfilment without knowing its relation to others, a conflict and difficult accommodation of divided and opposing or differing forces and, in the mentality, a mixing, a shock and wrestle and insecure combination of divided and opposing or divergent ideas which cannot arrive at the knowledge of their necessity to each other or grasp their place as elements of that Unity behind which is expressing itself through them and in which their discords must cease. But where the Consciousness is in possession of both the diversity and the unity and the latter contains and governs the former, where it is aware at once of the Law, Truth and Right of the All and the Law, Truth and Right of the individual and the two become consciously harmonised in a mutual unity, where the whole nature of the consciousness is the One knowing itself as the Many and the Many knowing themselves as the One, there the Force also will be of the same nature: it will be a Life that consciously obeys the law of Unity and yet fulfils each thing in the diversity according to its proper rule and function; it will be a Life in which all the individuals live at once in themselves and in each other as one conscious Being in many souls, one power of Consciousness in many minds, one joy of Force working in many lives, one reality of Delight fulfilling itself in many hearts and bodies."¹

The Plane of Mind

All our nature comprising mind, life and body with their multifarious faculties and functions is but a means and instrument of our essential Consciousness which creates them for its self-expression in the material world. Consciousness has two aspects; one of awareness and the other of force. What it becomes aware of as a possibility in itself, it has the force inherent in itself to realise. In man mind is his consciousness, and mind being limited and ignorant, the force it can command is also limited and ignorant. Therefore, human life is a chequered career of stress and struggle against forces and circumstances which prove overwhelming to the mental consciousness. Circumscribed, separated from others, self-divided, and lacking in the knowledge of universal unity, the mind of man is constitutionally incapable of apprehending the truth and harmony of the infinite existence and realising it in life. And, besides, mind is not free to seek the truth and follow it in a detached and disinterested way; life dominates it with its desires and passions, attractions and repulsions, and clouds or perverts its perception. The little light it has is submerged under the smoke of the vital, and man cannot help manifesting the beast in him. All love, sympathy, harmony, beauty and security are banished from a life and nature which, drunk with power and driven by insatiable desires, tend to forfeit their claim to humanity. This encroachment of life upon the mind lets loose the lower passions and propensities which sway our being and renders our existence so unhappy and difficult. Even if the mind asserts itself and tries to control life, it finds its consciousness hopelessly limited and imperfect; it does not know how to deal with the knotty problems of life with its half-lit knowledge and a very meagre fund of force. Moreover, its force is not always commensurate with its consciousness on account of the disabling divisions and discords in the being; it falls

1. "The Life Divine."

SRI AUROBINDO—Continued from page 5

short of realising the ideals the mind erects in its imagination.

All this proves that human life led by the mind cannot progress far, nor can it keep its progress long intact. Greece rose to a certain limited eminence and fell, so did Rome, and so does every nation or race which is not either linked or open to a higher consciousness. But if the mind wanders completely away from its own depths and loses hold of its own inner light and, turning materialistic, pre-occupies itself with the mere externalities of life, human existence becomes, as it has become to-day, an unlovely episode of immitigable savagery.

Sri Aurobindo's voice is the only voice in the world to-day calling man to a higher plane of consciousness, a plane where unity, not division, harmony, not discord, light, not darkness or semi-darkness are the Law and the constituting principles. And it is not a mere call from afar, but the whole spiritual power of Sri Aurobindo is harnessed to this evolutionary ascent of man and his eventual transfiguration. Mind, says Sri Aurobindo, is not the summit of man's evolution, this mind of doubts and divisions and stumbling half-knowledge; as he has risen from matter to life and from life to mind, so, inevitably, by the very force of his evolutionary *Élan*, he will rise to that level of consciousness where, delivered from ignorance and suffering, division and discord, he will live in Light and Bliss and fulfil the divine Will on earth.

Realisation of the Supermind

What is that plane of consciousness to which Sri Aurobindo has been labouring to lift mankind? He says that above the human mind there is a hierarchy of consciousness, four principal worlds of light which, though essentially mental, do not labour under the limitations of the human mind. They are worlds of unitarian consciousness and knowledge, a radiant fullness and harmony of being and an infinite, ineffable delight of existence.—they are in successive, ascending order, the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuition and the Overmind. These are the luminous ranges of the Mind to which man has to ascend in the natural course of his progressive evolution; but though they are spiritual in their nature and working, they are not the term of his pilgrimage. Knowledge and Force, though vast and irresistible, are not supreme and sovereign there, bliss, though oceanic and unceasing, is not the authentic bliss of the Bliss-Self; unity and harmony, though constant and dominant, are not the very texture and rhythm of dynamism—it is a developing multiplicity, manifoldness and diversity that predominate more and more, though still without actually losing the basic oneness, as these worlds descend towards the dividing ignorance of the mind.

There is a plane of consciousness above and beyond these four, beyond cosmic Time and Space, far beyond the highest flights of our vision and imagination, where the Supreme Truth sits enthroned in its plenary Light, governing and guiding the universe it has created in itself and out of its own substance. Sri Aurobindo calls this plane the Supermind. It is the plane of the sovereign Truth-Consciousness hymned by the seers of the Vedas and the Upanishads as the Truth, the Law and the Vast, or the *Vijnana* or the Golden Purusha. It is the Creator Consciousness, the womb and origin of all that exists, the Lord and Ruler of the universe. It is transcendent, and at the same time immanent in the universe, initiating directing and consummating all its movements. It is, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, the Real-Idea, the Archetype, the sole Progenitor of all that have assumed names and forms.

According to Sri Aurobindo, man's destiny is to ascend to this Supermind and be a superman. His consciousness, which is at present limited, imperfect and ignorant, will, at the culmination of his evolution, identify itself with the infinite, all-comprehending consciousness of the Supermind, and his integral being—his soul, mind, life and body—will be supramentalised by the transforming descent of the Supermind into it. Washed clean of all impurities and imperfections of his ignorant individuality, and yet retaining the indestructible Spirit-kernel of that individuality, transfigured in mind, life and body, united with the Supreme in all ways of his being and fulfilling His Will in his terrestrial existence, man will live as a divine being in the material world. Shedding his mortality and even the last remnants of his animal inheritance, he will act in the world as a dynamo of the supramental Force and a pulsing channel of the supramental Light. Infinite existence, infinite consciousness, infinite power, infinite bliss, infinite peace, infinite freedom and harmony will replace the ego-bound littleness, weakness and tormented insecurity and servitude of his present self. His life will be a rapturous play of Light, his nature an individual revelation of the Supernature; even his body a transparent vesture of the Divine. All discords and divisions will vanish for ever in that unvalled dominion of the supramental harmony, and a common consciousness will create and consolidate a common life of prolific unity, harmony and loving mutuality.

If the chimpanzee had been told that one day he would become man and use his developed reason and imagination to build a complex social life of progressive culture and scientific efficiency, sail the seas and discover the secrets of the stars, fly in the air and succeed in almost annihilating time and distance, he would have found it perhaps as difficult to understand and believe in such an eventuality as the modern materialistic human mind, conversant only with the surface values of things and tethered to its sense perceptions, finds it to understand and believe in the glory and greatness of such a supramental conversion as the crown of his earthly

evolution. That he, the self-divided, blinkered biped, torn by passions and worn out by cares, living only by mutual conflict or a difficult accommodation with others, should one day be a divine and immortal being, knower of himself and the world and the Author and Master of the world, evolve a new culture and a new order of life in which unity and harmony, and not division and dissonance, will be the law and basic principle, and manifest God in his transformed nature in the material world, passes his highest imagination and provokes a sneer of cynical incredulity. But "if there is an evolution in material Nature and if it is an evolution of being with consciousness and life as its two key-terms and powers, this fullness of being, fullness of consciousness, fullness of life must be the goal of development towards which we are tending and which will manifest at an early or later stage of our destiny."²

A Synthetic System of Spiritual Culture

Sri Aurobindo has evolved a synthetic system of spiritual culture, called the Integral Yoga, which, preparing and purifying the entire being of man, carries it to the Supermind and, by a descent of the Supermind, effects its integral transformation and divinisation. Liberation is only its initial achievement, its final aim is the dynamic perfection and divine fulfilment of man upon earth. Recognising the immense hold of the Subconscient and the Inconscient on the life of humanity, the long and stubborn resistance they offer to its spiritual progress and the implacable veto they oppose to the descent of the supramental Light, the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo seeks to plunge into their depths in the course of its transforming action and achieve a complete conquest, illumination and conversion of all their dark and obscure elements. This conquest of the Subconscient and the Inconscient can be called the most revolutionary contribution of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga to the spiritual culture of humanity. It is precisely this that makes his Yoga a world-transforming Yoga; for the conquest and conversion of the very basis of human life can alone ensure an unhampered outflowing of the Divine in human collectivity. The labour is perhaps long and difficult, but the inevitable outcome is unimaginably glorious.

If a true and abiding change has to be accomplished in human life, it cannot be done without a change of human nature; and a change of human nature can only be possible if the whole consciousness, including the submerged obscure ranges of it, undergoes a total and radical transformation. "An entirely new consciousness in many individuals transforming their whole being, transforming their mental, vital and physical nature-self, is needed for the new life to appear; only such a transformation of the general mind, life, body nature can bring into being a new worth-while collective existence. The evolutionary nisus must tend not merely to create a new type of mental beings, but another order of beings who have raised their whole existence from our present mentalised animality to a greater spiritual level of the earth-nature."³

This new order of beings will live and act in a new world-order of spiritual unity and harmony, of which the seers and prophets of all ages and climes have spoken in glowing terms. The present night, however dark and wild, will pass, and a new dawn break with the promise of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. The supramental is the world-order of the future.

2 and 3. "The Life Divine" by Sri Aurobindo.

Love, Every Time . . .

Love, every time You come to me
And say you've come to stay,
I put on my brief ecstasy,
And then I run away.

You ask too much, my heart's afraid
To give up all,—it flies,
Resumes its old safe masquerade,
And hugs its old sweet lies.

In patient trust You wait and call,
And wait for many a day;
But when I don't return at all,
You quietly go away.

And all my heart's a stone of pain,
I curse me that I fail:
But when, O Love, you come again,
I still repeat the tale.

TEHMI

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME

By DILIP KUMAR ROY

CHAPTER VI THE ASHRAM: SOME DISCIPLES

(Continued)

After Sethna it was Chadwick who came to impress me most. But I have not said one thing about Sethna which is too important to be left out—a particular quality of his which I could never admire sufficiently and which, I believe, Chadwick also appreciated especially because he himself had much of it: the aspiration after perfection in everything one writes. I well remember how Sethna used in the olden days to type out the poems that had made an impression on him. When he showed them to me he would take great pains to explain why he admired them and which lines stood out. His intellect, sharp as a razor-blade, was always critical and wakeful but he did not let it get blunt or complacent with the laurels he went on winning. Rather he whetted it more sleeplessly as he evolved and one of the reasons why he admired Sri Aurobindo so fervently was the fillip he always gave to this aspiration after perfection which was congenital with him. I recollect how Sethna's eyes used to fasten upon those parts of his poems which Sri Aurobindo had underlined and how it made him see, in minute detail, the relative inferiority of those which had not been so marked. I for one had not scanned the difference very well before Sethna told me but when I saw what he meant it gave me not a little clarification if not illumination. Now that he has already amply fulfilled the prophecy of H. G. Wells who had remarked on seeing an early essay of his that "this young man will go far", I cannot help feeling a real joy which I stress thus because it is not nearly as personal as it looks. For every aspiration after perfection of a seeker belongs to all in the sense that all true seekers can claim not only to share in it but also to profit by it. That is why all who appreciate such aspirations must delight in Sethna's clear thinking and his striving for perfection as the savour of its fruit improved continuously with time till all doubts were put out of court. This is not a mere tribute of a friend who may be a little partial but of one of the most eminent judges of mental clarity and deep insight—Krishnaprem—who wrote to me only the other day about Sethna's contributions in *Mother India*: "He writes brilliantly. I sometimes think that his editorials are the only clear-thinking ones being written in India. But what a world we live in! 'Darkness at noon!' If we didn't know that nothing can escape from Sri Krishna's hands the prospect would be one of utter blackness."

To come now to Chadwick. His temperament accorded in many ways with mine, and he always helped me by correcting my English poems which he liked very much, he said. His deep mastery of the technique of English poetry left a lasting impression on my mind eager to possess English prosody. He too in his turn wanted to profit by what little I could tell him about our music which he came gradually to love, so much so that one day after hearing a few hymns to Krishna which I sang for him he wrote, in his poem, *Musician*:

*Splendour beyond conceiving
wave against wave
of swirling light uprear their sinuous crests
and are thrust forward in a seething foam
of melody
within the listening coves
and over the untrod sandways
of the heart.*

Once a friend of mine, Madame Miller, visited the Ashram. She was a Viennese and a famous opera-singer and we sang together a song of Chopin: "In mir klingt ein lied". Then she sang a number of solos. Chadwick was intoxicated and immediately after the music wrote a lovely poem and dedicated it to her:

*Subdued the light at the gray evenhush,
As the shadowy helmets of night's vague host
Make dim the East and the North and the South.
Spendthrift day keeps but a dwindling heap of gold
Low on the westward margins of the sky.
Spirit with wings of light and darkness
Sail through the fast-closing gates of the West
And bear me out of the world;
The world that is frozen music (but the performers were faulty).
Haply the high-flashing fountains of song
Play still in Supernal Eden
And the air is a diamond undimmed by Time's misadventures.
The unchanging light of the One, enmeshed in the murmuring spray,
Build all the colours of the soul.
And the speechless telling of mysteries
Leaves them in the song-hidden heart of Light.*

And how he loved to talk of Sri Aurobindo. He was sick, he used to tell me, of the European civilization and had definitely turned his back on its message of science and materialist rationalism even though his mind was grounded in the scientific and mathematical philosophy of the West. Nevertheless he wrote to Sri Aurobindo such humble letters almost petitioning him to shed light on his super-brilliant and yet avid, famished

mind. Few people know how deep was his reverence for Sri Aurobindo's achievements in poetry even in the thirties when we used to hear only tantalising rumours of *Savitri* still in deep purdah. Chadwick and I once reminded him of it in concert but Sri Aurobindo only wrote back that he wanted to revise it thoroughly but had "no time to dally with the Muses." "It's the Supramental", Chadwick used to whisper to me in a mock-solemn tone. And I used generally to retort something irreverent about the Supramental looking very much like leaving us in the lurch, at which he would chuckle in glee. And then, becoming grave like a tomb: "But I ought to repent if not tremble, Dilip, since we believe in blasphemy, if you don't!" Then more seriously: "But I do like this, you know, your cracking jokes with Gurudev!"

Often I showed him Gurudev's repartees. A sample:

I had written after a talk with Chadwick about the Christian conception of the sheep (parishioners) and the Shepherd (the pastor, I believe): "Well, Guru, since Chadwick has driven me to the wall (how can I cope with him in argument?) I will try henceforth to bleat faith and humility like a trembling lamb and not roar doubts like a dying lion."

To which Gurudev answered: "Good, especially because one must be the lamb of God before being his lion."

And how Chadwick laughed! His English sense of humour and his mischievous chuckle always refreshed me after I had had my fill of the sombre faces around me. It was thus that our affection grew through levity, music, poetry and day to day struggles with our egos. "But it's all *maya*, Chadwick," I often told him, specially when we felt gloomy about the deplorable state of the world to which "we also were contributing", as Chadwick used to remark. But that was just why he worshipped Sri Aurobindo to whom he dedicated an exquisite poem. I simply loved it and read it out to my friends and posted copies of it to our enemies, because the tribute here was from a brilliant Englishman and not a lack-lustre Indian:

RED LOTUS*

(Sri Aurobindo's Consciousness)

*That living Lotus, petal by petal unfolding,
Which through the mists of this 'avidya' looms,
Vicegerent of the Sun, nowise withholding
The light we lack in Maya's nether glooms.*

*O puissant heart amidst whose raptured shinning
A nameless Love is garbed in Name's disguise,
Last metronome to mortal things assigning
A fadeless rhythm wrung from Dawn's echoing skies.**

"A nameless Love is garbed in Name's disguise"—the line came to me in a haunting strain in those days for a twofold reason: first because he weaved with the magic of his rhythm and psychic emotion, vigilantly controlled by his English austerity, an aura round Sri Aurobindo which was as real in its beauty as it was opulent in its mystic implications and secondly, because he expressed with his exquisite diction an adoration which was even more potent for its rich suggestiveness than for its immediate content of meaning. Every time I read his poems I realised anew as it were what he had meant when he had once said to me half-apologetically: "Do not think that the English as a race balk at emotion, Dilip. Quite the contrary. We are a race with a rich background of profound emotion, the stuff poets are made of. But we are shy. What I mean is that while you, Bengalis, sail exultantly on the crest of your emotion—we, English, don't like to be caught expressing our feelings too vividly. If you do not understand that you miss something very important about our inner make-up."

But there was something else which was borne home to me through his poems which I must attempt to describe as it opened to me a new vista, as to speak, especially when he recited them with his delicately cadenced inflexion: I got rich glimpses through his authentic English pronunciation—with its accent, caesura and cadence—of something akin to a revelation about the capacity of melody inherent in English poetry. To explain this I shall have to go back a little.

It so happened that at the time Sri Aurobindo was graciously experimenting, at my request, with some Bengali poems of mine and giving me, day after marvellous day, exquisite English counterparts to the samples I sent up. The poems he composed showed an astonishing correspondence, in lilt and accent, with the samples I sent him of our Bengali bases. (I was just then experimenting in the converse direction—which he encouraged and enjoyed to the full: I was trying to transcribe English bases with their modulations and stresses into Bengali about which I shall have more to write later on.) In the course of such researches I once claimed that Bengali was richer in melody and variety of metrical structure if not in suggestiveness and substance. Whereupon he, after warning me that my "estimate was marred by the personal or national habit" and conceding that "the English language is not naturally melodious like the Italian and Bengali—no language with a Teutonic base can be", added that "it is capable of remarkable harmonic effects and also it can, by a skilful

* I have quoted only two out of the four verses he wrote. See his "Poems" p. 177.

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from page 7

handling, be made to give out the most beautiful melodies."

I was still a little unconvinced about this, naturally—as I was to realise later—because I had hitherto neither made a serious study of English verse nor developed an ear for what Sri Aurobindo meant when he wrote to me that, unlike Bengali and Italian, "English is difficult and has to be struggled with in order to produce its best effects, but out of that very difficulty has arisen an astonishing plasticity, depth and manifold subtlety of rhythm." This was borne home to me by Chadwick's poems and, incidentally, made me realise how inept my remarks had been. For I remember that in the beginning I could not vividly feel the beauty of his poems, but as I was in those days writing English poems myself under his, Sethna's and Gurudev's tuition I was thrilled to discover one fine morning that I had grown richly alive to the lovely melodic effects he wove in many of his poems—so suddenly that I was reminded of a letter of Sri Aurobindo's in which he consoled me for my inability to be similarly receptive to painting.

"Don't be desperate," he wrote in a colloquial style, "about your incapacity as connoisseur of painting. I was far worse in this respect: knew something about sculpture, but blind to painting. Suddenly, one day, in the Alipore jail, while meditating, I saw some pictures on the walls of the cell and lo and behold! the artistic eye in me opened and I knew all about painting except of course the more material side of the technique. I don't always know how to express, though, because I lack the knowledge of the proper expressions, but that does not stand in the way of a keen and understanding appreciation. So, there you are: all things are possible in Yoga."

I labour this point because Chadwick himself achieved a somewhat similar feat in poetry—"struggling and striving to listen with the inner ear"—till one day something opened in him, as he told me once, and he went on producing one after another his lovely lyrics which delighted all of us, as e.g. when he wrote his poems on Laelia on which Sri Aurobindo bestowed superlative praise:

*For the moon-pale feet of Laelia the still night sheddeth dew,
Or at noon in the white-rose garden—domed with a trance of blue—
Blossoms with jade-white petals before her feet are shed
And fall from the dreaming rose-trees, with never a leaf of red.*

*Your name is fading music upon my worship's mouth;
It spills in languorous fragrance from lilies of the South;
It is the odorous night-flower wherewith your locks are bound,—
Or the moon-pale soul of roses caught in a mesh of sound**

I experienced something akin to ecstacy when he used to recite: "Your name is fading music upon my worship's mouth;" as it made me realise in a new way what Sri Aurobindo termed "psychic inspiration" in a letter to me in 1931 when I tried to translate Shelley's famous lines:

*I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the heavens reject not,—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,—
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?*

I must quote his letter in full as it will partly explain why he bestowed such lavish praise on Chadwick's poems.

"Your translation of Shelley's poem is vulnerable in the head and the tail. In the head, because it seems to me that your words are open to the construction that human love is a rich and precious thing which the poet in question unfortunately does not possess and it is only because of this deplorable poverty that he offers the psychic devotion, less warm and rich and desirable, but still in its own way rare and valuable! I exaggerate perhaps, but, as your lines are open to a meaning of this kind, it tends to convey the very reverse of Shelley's intended significance. For in English 'What men call love' is strongly depreciatory and can only mean something inferior, something that is poor and not rich, not truly love. Shelley says in substance: 'Human vital love is a poor inferior thing, a counterfeit of true love, which I cannot offer you. But there is a greater thing, a true psychic love, all worship and devotion, which men do not readily value, being led away by the vital glamour, but which the Heavens do not reject though it is offered from something so far below them, so maimed and ignorant and sorrow-vexed as the human consciousness which is to the divine consciousness as the moth is to the star, as the night is to the day. And will you not accept this from me, you, who in your nature are kin to the Heavens, you, who seem to me to have something of the divine nature, to be something bright and happy and pure far above the sphere of our sorrow? Of course all that is not said but only suggested, but it is obviously the spirit of the poem,—and it is this spirit in it that made me write to Amal (Sethna) the other day that it would be perhaps impossible to find in English literature a more perfect example of psychic inspiration than these eight lines you have translated... As to

the tail, I doubt whether your last line brings out the sense of 'something afar from the sphere of our sorrow'. If I make these criticisms at all, it is because you have accustomed me to find in you a power of rendering the spirit and sense of your original while turning it into fine poetry in its new tongue which I would not expect or exact from any other translator."

Much as I would like to, I cannot enlarge further on Chadwick's poetry for exigencies of space as also for the fact that I must not in focussing too much light on his poetic achievements lay myself open to the charge of throwing into the shade a much more important aspect of his personality, namely his spiritual aspiration which made him leave his country, family and even his English habits and cleave unwaveringly to the lead given by Gurudev—even when he knew that his days were numbered. But before that I must speak of another side of his nature which made him love Sri Aurobindo: his love of liberty which made him abhor all forms of dogmatism, fanaticism, and collective tyranny which the devotees of dictatorship so admire the world over. He used to emphasise often with a subdued accent of rapturous admiration Sri Aurobindo's "oceanic tolerance and catholicity of spirit" which made him write in his *Synthesis of Yoga*:

"The *sadhaka* of the integral Yoga will make use of all these aids according to his nature; but it is necessary that he should shun their limitations and cast from himself that exclusive tendency of egoistic mind which cries, My God, my Incarnation, my Prophet, my Guru and opposes it to all other realisation in a sectarian or a fanatical spirit. All sectarianism, all fanaticism must be shunned; for it is inconsistent with the integrity of the divine realisation.

"On the contrary, the *sadhaka* of the integral Yoga will not be satisfied until he has included all other names and forms of Deity in his own conception, seen his own *Ishta Devata* in all others, unified all Avatars in the unity of Him who descends in the Avatar, welded the truth in all teachings into the harmony of the Eternal Wisdom."

"I realise, Dilip," he used to tell me now and then, "how hard it must be for you to be fair to us, Englishmen, the more because we have been far from fair to you. But, believe me, the real Englishman abhors nothing so much as an inroad into personal liberty. Russell is an instance in point. I consider him great—in spite of his obvious limitations—because he typifies in him two great traits of the English character at its best: love of fairness and love of individual freedom. That is why I feel often a trifle sad when some of you talk as though there were little to choose between the Nazi or Russian tyranny and the British. Don't misunderstand me. I cannot, as you know, possibly agree with our imperialists who talk of the empire and Rule Britannia. But I tell you that if the British were capable of responding to the philosophy of Marx and totalitarianism, the world today would soon cease to be a fit place for any man who calls himself civilised." How prophetic he had been was amply attested within a few years when, after the fall of Dunkirk, England stood alone for a whole year against the triple alliance of Germany, Japan and Italy while Russia stood by, having made that infamous pact with Hitler. But in those days (before 1939) Hitler being still in the offing, we ignored him, the more because we disliked the British tyranny so much and knew of Hitler so little. No wonder many of us could not fully respond to Chadwick's justified abhorrence of totalitarian imperialism. I remember also how I loathed the British imperialism with all my heart. So once or twice there was a strain between us when it was I who was to blame in that I was intolerant and so failed to realise fully the innate greatness of his nature which had made him cut away from his moorings in spite of the opposition of his friends and relations, and the deep discomfort he stood up to in choosing to stay with those who so often lost sight of his noble nature because of the veil of his shy refinement and British reserve. I must confess I truly realised this only after his death in 1938. I was not then in Pondicherry; when I returned I was told how resolutely he had refused to return to England for better medical treatment. "I would die in India where my Guru is," he said and he did, not wavering once from his vow even when he was desperately ill.

When I look back in retrospect I see that I have come to love the British primarily because of three men: Bertrand Russell, Krishnaprem (alias Ronald Nixon) and Chadwick. Of these Chadwick was distinctive in a peculiar way. For while Russell remained British and Krishnaprem became out and out a Hindu, only Chadwick combined in him the rich, aristocratic refinement of the British at its loftiest as well as a responsiveness to an Indian outlook on life and on the Guru which his love of individuality must have found not a little difficult to undersign. How strongly this love had taken root was expressed in his poem entitled *Totalitarian* which made me fully alive, for the first time, to the infernal horror it symbolized. That what he had seen in 1936 (when it was composed) proved to be literally true subsequently, during the dark days of the Hitlerian hell-regime, must testify to the authentic power of vision that had lain latent in his nature, a power which opened in him under the aegis of Sri Aurobindo. With this much by way of introduction I shall now give the poem:

*Night was closing on the traveller
When he came
To the empty eerie courtyard
With no name.*

*I have quoted only two verses to economise space, as well as because to quote too long poems in prose is undesirable. But lovers of melody in English poetry must read his poems on Laelia and Moon inspired by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from page 8

Loud he called; no echo answered;
Nothing stirred:
But a crescent moon swung wanly,
White as curd.
When he flashed his single sword-blade
Through the gloom,
None resisted—till he frantic,
Filled with doom,
Hurling his weapon through the gloaming,
Took no aim;
Saw his likenesses around him
Do the same:
Viewed a thousand swordless figures
Like his own—
Then first knew in that cold starlight
Hell, alone.

Sri Aurobindo was greatly impressed with this poem and considered it as, among other things, strikingly original. On learning this, Sethna invited his comment on it *vis-à-vis* Walter de la Mare's poem *The Listeners*, to which it seemed to bear some affinity:

"De la Mare's poem has a delicate beauty throughout and a sort of dainty fanciful suggestion of the occult world. I do not know if there is anything more. The weakness of it is that it reads like a thing imagined—the images and details are those that might be written of a haunted house on earth which has got possessed by some occult presences. Arjava must no doubt have taken his starting point from a reminiscence of this poem, but there is nothing else common with De la Mare—his poem is an extraordinarily energetic and powerful vision of an occult world and every phrase is intimately evocative of the beyond as a thing vividly seen and strongly lived—it is not on earth, this courtyard and this crescent moon, we are at once in an unearthly world and in a place somewhere in the soul of man and all the details, sparing, with a powerful economy of phrase and image and brevity of movement but revelatory in each touch as opposed to the dim moonlight suggestions supported by a profusion of detail and long elaborating development in De la Mare—of course that has its value also—make us entirely free ourselves there. I therefore maintain my description 'original' not only for the latter part of the poem but for the opening also. It is not an echo, it is an independent creation. Indeed the difference of the two poems comes out most strongly in these very (first eight) lines.

*The faint moonbeams on the dark stair
That goes down to the empty hall . . .
The dark turf 'neath the starred and leafy sky. . .*

are a description of things on earth made occult only by the presence of the phantom listeners. But

*. . . the empty eerie courtyard
With no name*

or

*. . . a crescent moon swung wanly,
White as curd*

are not earthly, they belong to a terrible elsewhere, while the latter part of the poem carries the elsewhere into a province of the soul. This is the distinction and makes the perfect successfulness of Arjava's* poem."

But I must come now to his deepest aspiration which impelled him to turn to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and made him "on wing of faith mount up toward the solar fire" as he put it in his poem entitled *Wings*.

I put the name of the Mother first as in his case (unlike as in my own) it was she who gripped him first. It came about like this.

One morning as I was experimenting with a new metre in Bengali—it was in 1930 I think—I was told by someone that an Englishman, one Professor Chadwick from Lucknow, wanted to see me.

He came with a letter of introduction from my old friend Professor D. P. Mukerji. There was something striking in his face which drew me at once to him, the more so as he looked rather delicate and walked with a limp.

Before I give the substance of our conversation, I must remind the reader that I am concerned with giving but the gist of what passed between us as I cannot possibly remember all that we talked about on that day.

"I came to India," he said, "in quest of a spiritual wisdom in which she is rich and of which Europe is definitely bankrupt today."

"And then?"

"Well, I am going back—home."

"But you are still a professor in Lucknow, I understand?"

"Yes," he smiled, "but I am going to resign directly. Because . . ." he added, "I came here to learn—not to teach."

I was reminded at once of Krishnaprem whose name I mentioned.

"I know him," he nodded, "and he has got something, I felt. But not I."

"Have you read anything of Sri Aurobindo?" I asked after a pause.

"Not yet," he answered almost apologetically, "though I have bought some of his books here. But," he added after a pause, "it is not books I thirst for. I want something more—concrete."

He spoke hesitantly and blushed every now and then.

"I quite understand," I said blandly. "But Sri Aurobindo does not write books for the pastime of word-spinning. He throws out rich clues to the concrete. Here, at least, I speak from experience, not booklore."

"I am afraid you have misunderstood me a little," he flustered again, "I didn't exactly want to convey that—but never mind. The point is: I am disappointed. My fault, I suppose. But then," he smiled shyly, "I am perhaps too English to the core and therefore a little opaque, inevitably, to what you in India call the light of the spirit."

It was my turn to feel embarrassed now.

"I didn't mean it as a reproach," I pleaded. "But perhaps you have also misunderstood me a little. I wish you had come here when Sri Aurobindo could be seen. For to see him is to cease to be 'opaque.' For he is built of the stuff light is made of and it is a light that speaks."

"I wish so too," he said ruefully. "For I have heard so much about the radiance that resides in him. But it is not to be. I am sailing soon."

"And you won't come back?"

He shook his head. "Not likely. Why should I, since no light has spoken to me, so far?"

A silence fell.

"Would you care to see the Mother?" I suggested at a venture, for something to say.

He gave me a quick look.

"The Mother? Who is she?"

In those days (in the 'thirties) Mother was very little known outside. So I chased away an upsurge, a feeling of disappointment. Besides, he looked so sincere and ingenuous—almost guileless! I told him a good deal about her and her sweet personality. But I ended with a friendly note of warning.

"But you see, hers is a personality that grows on one," I hazarded diffidently. "For I have known several persons on whom she had made very little impression at the start—but who, with time, have come to worship the very ground she treads." No sooner had I made the last remark than I blamed my impulsiveness.

"I thank you very much for telling me," he said. "And you may be sure I would like to see her very much. But the point is would she care to see me?"

"Well, I can at least ask her," I answered. "Only—"

He fixed me with a steady scrutiny.

"I will be frank with you," I said with an awkward smile, "though Mother says I am often a wee bit too frank with the wrong kind. But as you are different—"

"Oh, thank you," he laughed. "I hope I won't let you down."

That decided me. For though normally he looked rather taciturn, his face changed entirely when he laughed. It cleared up the atmosphere instantly.

"It seems unlikely," I said returning his laughter. "But listen, it's like this. I came here only the other day, so to say, and know very little of Yoga and its occult wisdom and perhaps understand even less Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's ways. For instance, I have seen Mother take certain decisions but her reasons have, as often as not, left me guessing. Naturally I am drawn to her—otherwise I would not be able to stay here even a month, not to mention a year—but my acceptance of her being hedged about with uncertainties I do not know how far she tallies in reality with my mental picture of her. But I hold her in high esteem for all that, and therefore must make one request to you: in case you are disappointed please keep it to yourself as otherwise you would be hurting the feelings of us all who owe her loyalty because she is, in effect, as much our Guru as Sri Aurobindo, if you know what I mean."

He gave me a patient hearing and looked grave.

"I understand," he said with his characteristic refined shake of the head, "and you may be sure that I shall not only approach her with humility but give her all the respect that is her due."

"I am much relieved," I answered cheerfully now. "You must let me tell you something else. I said just now that I know very little about Mother and Sri Aurobindo. But this I do know that they are made of a very different stuff from even the best of men I have met. To give just one instance. I have met many Gurus. They invite eminent disciples, generally speaking. But not Mother and Sri Aurobindo.* In fact Mother has given us to understand that we are not to persuade anybody even to see them, far less to accept them. And," I went on to add a little hesitantly, "I have a feeling that they are none-too-eager to invite the merely-curious or the complacent *intellectuals* who want to have easy interviews to be able to air their opinions on things utterly beyond their ken."

He took in the sting in the tail unflinchingly. Then he lowered his eyes shyly as was his wont and smiled as it were to himself. Then suddenly he lifted his eyes to mine. His face was flushed again.

"You have put it well," he said, laughing once more. "Perhaps a little too well, if you will pardon me for saying so. But," he added a trifle ironically, "though I can't deny my past and so must be labelled an

* Well-known or unknown has absolutely no importance from the spiritual point of view. It is simply the propagandist spirit. We are not a party or a church or religion seeking adherents or proselytes. One man who earnestly pursues the Yoga is of more value than a thousand well-known men.
This he wrote subsequently in a letter, in 1935.

* The name Sri Aurobindo gave to Chadwick. It is a Sanskrit word meaning simplicity, straightforwardness.

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME—Continued from page 9

'intellectual' as you put it—believe me I didn't come here to *stay* what I am. For I came here to win a passport, if I could, to your time-old wisdom of the spirit—and that as a seeker, not a critic."

I was impressed by the note of transcendent sincerity in his delicately-cadenced voice and strikingly-intellectual physiognomy. Besides, his face looked so emaciated and pale that it touched a chord in my heart.

I went straight to Mother. She gave him an appointment the next morning in our library downstairs.

He was shy—to the point of being tongue-tied and did not ask many questions. The few he did ask I do not remember. I only remember when Mother put to him some questions on her own.

"I understand from Dilip that you want spiritual wisdom", she began in her characteristic manner—simple and direct yet sympathetic and interested.

He flushed—almost fidgeted—under her calm scrutiny. "That's right."

"Why?" she asked.

He looked at her, reddened once more but then answered in a low voice:

"Because I find life void of meaning and am persuaded that only spiritual wisdom can fill the void."

"I understand," Mother answered in a kind tone. "And then?"

He lifted his eyes to hers just for a split second.

"I came to India to find it. But—I didn't find it."

Mother smiled, then said:

"One receives in the measure of one's receptivity." He winced. A little after, he queried:

"How is one to grow in receptivity?"

"By sincerity and trust. Sincerity in one's seeking and trust in the Divine Grace." Then after a pause: "Sincerity you have. Only you must accept this that you can get the response you want in proportion to your trust in Grace."

She spoke with such an utter simplicity, that my heart misgave me. How could an intellectual of his type respond to such a simple call, I wondered! Surely it was not for this he had crossed the seven seas.

I went to see him off at the station that evening. Before the train left he just made one remark which I shall never forget.

"Why did you feel so diffident about her? I have never been so overwhelmed by anyone as I was by her this morning."

His stress on the word "overwhelmed" I found overwhelming! Why, Mother had hardly had a real talk with him!

And yet that one brief interview changed the whole course of his life. A few months afterwards he wrote to me a letter, from England, asking me very simply if Mother would accept him. She did and he came a month later and stayed with me for some time. Then he wanted more solitude. Mother gave him a flat where he lived in an almost cloistered seclusion, day after lonely day, writing poetry and meditating. Occasionally he visited me to help me in poetry or else to listen to my music which he loved passionately.

One morning he called on me and showed me a letter he had just received of Gurudev. And he read it out to me in great delight:

"As for acquiring the sense and the power of rhythm, reading the poets may do something, but not all. There are two factors in poetic rhythm,—the technique (the variation of movement without spoiling the fundamental structure, right management of vowel and consonantal assonances and dissonances, the masterful combination of the musical element of stress with the less obvious element of quantity) and the secret soul of rhythm which uses but exceeds these things. The first you can learn, if you read with your ear always in a *tapasya* of vigilant attention to these constituents; but without the second what you achieve may be technically faultless and even skilful, but poetically a dead letter. This soul of rhythm can only be found by listening in to what is behind the music of words and sound of things. You can get something of it by listening for that subtler element in great poetry, but mostly it must either grow or suddenly open in yourself. This sudden opening is what can come in Yoga if the power wishes to express itself in that way. I have seen both in myself and others a sudden flowering of capacities in every kind of activity come by the opening of consciousness,—so that one who laboured long without the least success to express himself in rhythm becomes a master of poetic language and cadences in a day. It is a question of the right silence in the mind and the right openness to the Word that is trying to express itself—for the Word is there ready formed in those inner planes where all artistic forms take birth, but it is the transmitting mind that must change and become a perfect channel and not an obstacle."

I congratulated him.

"So that is why you have so suddenly blossomed into a poet, have you?—because 'something suddenly opened in yourself'?"

"Well, I have been turning out verses," he laughed, flushing. "But a poet—it's not nearly so easy, you know. I have to concentrate hard to produce a single poem."

"Yes, Nirod told me about your British doggedness once, I think."

"I mean to persevere," he answered, "the more as Sri Aurobindo has been kind enough to encourage me."

"He always does," I agreed. "He has taken no end of trouble for me; has even translated some of my Bengali poems into English, fancy that!"

A few days later he met me in the Ashram and told me that he had again a present to make to me: another letter from Gurudev.

I invited him to tea in great joy.

"I have got something which will delight you, Dilip," he said, as I handed him his cup. "For he has paid the Christian back in his own coin, if you know what I mean."

(We had had a debate, a few days before this, on Christianity *versus* Hinduism.)

His humility always moved me—the more as I was myself very sensitive and never could smile if and when Gurudev or the Mother frowned. Then he read it out to me:

"Arjava,

It is especially difficult for the Christian to be of a piece, because the teachings of Christ are on quite another plane from the consciousness of the intellectual and vital man trained by the education and society of Europe—the latter, even as a minister or priest, has never been called upon to practise what he preached in entire earnest. But it is difficult for human nature anywhere to think, feel and act from one centre of true faith, belief or vision. The average Hindu considers the spiritual life the highest, reveres the Sannyasi, is moved by the Bhakta; but if one of the family circle leaves the world for spiritual life, what tears, remonstrances, lamentations! It is almost worse than if he had died a natural death. It is not conscious mental insincerity—they will argue like Pundits and quote Shastra to prove you in the wrong; it is unconsciousness, a vital insincerity which they are not aware of and which uses the reasoning mind as an accomplice.

"That is why we insist so much on sincerity in the Yoga—and that means to have all the being consciously turned towards the one Truth—the one Divine. But that for human nature is one of the most difficult of tasks, much more difficult than a rigid asceticism or a fervent piety. Religion itself does not give this complete harmonised sincerity—it is only the psychic being and the one-souled spiritual aspiration that can give it."

"How beautifully he writes, Dilip!" he remarked. "How crystal clear! Not a trace of haziness anywhere. No abracadabra, wanting to show off and yet how luminous—shedding light without heat—like his eyes!"

He talked like that. Never effusive but always conveying something he deeply felt.

He told me once that he was not going to last long. I don't know still the nature of his last ailment, but his health had been undermined by shell-shock and he had always been nervous by temperament. Also he suffered much and long whenever there was a friction between him and others. And every time this happened he retired into a deeper seclusion till in the end he became almost a recluse. I met him indeed in the Ashram where we went daily to have Mother's blessings. But though he always greeted me cordially, he looked more and more distant. I used to feel a little pain at his deepening retirement, but when I read his poems which he sent me from time to time, I felt amply compensated. He had indeed blossomed into a fine poet! Also he showed me some of the letters that passed between him and Sri Aurobindo relating to English metres. I was overjoyed as these helped me not a little besides making me realise how much he had profited by Gurudev's craftsmanship and mastery over the intricacies of the English metre. He used to go into ecstasies over Sri Aurobindo's new experiments in quantitative metres!

But I am afraid I am tending to grow "prolix"—an epithet he often used in disapproval. So I must now come to the end of my story.

When his health deteriorated I felt a little anxious and one day when he came at my request to read out to me some of his latest poems—it was for the last time—I asked him why he looked so pale and emaciated.

"I haven't been keeping good health lately, Dilip," he said simply. "But it's no use worrying. And then I never had your robust health, you know. What energy you have! I envy you!"

"Never mind about my energy," I deprecated. "But why don't you go out for a change?"

"No. Whatever is to happen must happen here. I will not go back to my people though they are writing letter after letter. No, Dilip, let's talk of something more worth while. What have you been writing of late?"

"I have been translating some poems. Here is one from a Hindi song of Abul Hafiz Jalandhari* Sri Aurobindo has given it special praise."

He read it and suggested just one or two minor changes; then said: "You have now learnt to handle iambics, Dilip. Congratulations."

"But wait a minute—where are your poems?"

"Well, here are two I wrote last month."

And he read them out beautifully of which I shall give only the closing verse of each:

*O hearts that are empty of giving,
Lips that lie famished for song,
How you hiddenly hunger for living
And dream to the star-born throng.*

And then:

*O running of Light in the Silence
O silvery morning star,
May the Dawn be the wordless answer
Of beauty no loss can mar.†*

* The poem is entitled "Pledge" in my book "Eyes of Light."

† "Poems" by Arjava: pp. 285-6.

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from page 10

"Beautiful," I said, "though a trifle sad."

"But life is not very jolly, Dilip—never has been."

"But it will be."

"I'd like to believe that," he said after a pause, "and only because..." he looked at me and added: "because I came to know them—him and Mother."

After his passing away in 1938 his poems were sent to Krishnaprem. I feel there can be no more fitting epitaph to the great departed than his beautiful foreword:

"It must be now twelve years since Chadwick and I sat together on the banks of the Ganges at Benares, talking far into the night of dreams that lay close to our hearts, dreams that had brought us together as they had brought us both to India. Of his past I knew little save that it included a fellowship at, I think, Trinity College, Cambridge, and that a distinguished Cambridge philosopher entertained great hopes from his brilliant abilities in mathematical philosophy of the specifically 'Cambridge' sort. Somewhere between the chinks of his academic career I surmised an initiation into the Kabalistic tradition and there was that in his eyes which showed unmistakably that it was not for the sake of a professorship in a provincial university that he had left his friends at Cambridge and crossed the seven seas.

"Once more we met in a university bungalow at Lucknow, a background that I think we both found to be an utter irrelevance, and then we departed, I to the North and he to the South where he had found his Guru in Sri Aurobindo. There in the Ashram in Pondicherry, he lived for the last ten years, shedding at the feet of his Guru the burden of all that the world counts valuable in order to find the hidden treasures for which most men have no eyes.

"Of his life and *sadhana* there under the name of Arjava it is not for

me to speak. That it brought about a profound psychic transformation in his nature is clear from the fact that he, whose language had hitherto been limited to the arid propositions of intellectual philosophy, became a poet and, with the aid of poetry, entered the inner worlds of which, till then, he had but dreamed.

"Traditionalists and those who take a narrow view of *sadhana* will perhaps wonder what poetry has to do with Yoga. The truth is that the reintegration of the psyche that is brought about in *sadhana* has the effect of releasing unsuspected powers that were lying latent in the heart of the *sadhaka*, as indeed, they are in the hearts of all. We read in books of Yoga that 'by meditating on Her who shines in the Root Lotus with the lustre of ten million Suns, a man becomes a Lord of Speech and, . . . pure of heart, by his deep and musical words, serves the greatest of Gods.' The truth of such words, nowadays too often assumed to be mere empty praise, is witnessed to by these poems left behind by Arjava when, at what seems to us the early age of forty, the Sovereign Dweller in his heart decided to withdraw to inner worlds.

"The mere literary critic will admire the delicate dream-like beauty of these poems, but, unless his insight is more than merely literary, he will go no deeper, for they deal with the mysteries of the inner life and only he who can read their symbols will be able to penetrate to their heart. For Arjava, as is shown in the poem entitled 'Correspondences', Nature was a shrine in which each form seen in the flickering firelight of the senses was a shadow of realities that lay within, shining in the magical light of the secret Moon which was the Master-Light of all his seeing, the central image of so many of his poems.

"In the midst of our personal sadness at his early departure let us remember that this path is one which leads through many worlds and that, as Sri Krishna said, *nehabhikrama naso'sti*, for him who treads it there can be no loss of effort."

An All-India Convention

is to be held in Pondicherry on 24th and 25th April, 1951. Its aim is to consider what steps should be taken to establish in memory of Sri Aurobindo an International University Centre at Pondicherry, with his teachings as its inspiration.

The scheme now in contemplation envisages the imparting of free education to students coming from all parts of the world. No department of education will be left out. The creation of enlightened and integrated youth will be the guiding motive.

Free board and residence in Pondicherry during the two-days' Convention will be arranged for the invitees.

Those interested in promoting the scheme should communicate at their earliest with:

S. N. Jauhar,
Secretary,
Sri Aurobindo Niketan,
P. B. No. 85, New Delhi.

Telephone:
Office: 7284, 8283.
Residence 42518.

Telegram:
"Mahotsava".
New Delhi.

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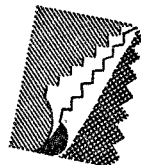
India's People and their Costumes

The KATHIWARIS are a people mainly engaged in dairy farming. The men wear a "kurta" which is a frilled shirt with ruffled sleeves, and loose fitting breeches. A turban made of cloth twisted into a tight rope is wound round the head.

The women wear attractive backless "cholis" or tight fitting bodices. They have a flair for combining contrasting colours such as parrot green and blazing red or peacock blue and yellow. The "ghagra" which is a skirt heavily gathered at the waist, displays bold geometrical patterns against a plain background. A "hodni" or veil, draped over the head flows down to the knees. This is usually of a rich rust colour with contrasting yellow dots formed into quaint patterns.

Textile Manufacturing—which is one of India's largest industries, has been the foundation on which many other of our industries have been built. The Tata Group of Mills, employing over 35,000 workers, together with the others in this industry seek today to meet one of the basic needs of all classes of people in the country.

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"THE TOWN WITH ELEVEN GATES"

By DR. DAVID ASCHER

*"There is a town with eleven gates
Belonging to the Unborn,
Whose thoughts are never crooked.
He who approaches it, grieves no
more,
And liberated becomes free."*

(The Upanishads, 2nd Adhyaya,
5th Valli, 1).

This is the time when states are being born or reborn. There is the great State of India, the Indonesian Republic, the State of Israel; other states are in the making or just in the stage of rebirth.

But it is a time of dying states, too. The old Russian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the German Reich,—they all died after a long and crowded life. But how did it come to pass that also young states, like Lithuania, Esthonia, Latvia died, a few years after their birth?

One reason is, I think, the fact that their existence was not founded on a great and new idea. They were states like many others,—that was all. They existed—for the sake of existence. They did not exist for mankind.

But is such a basic idea really necessary? Cannot a state exist for no reason other than its existence itself?

Yes, it can exist in this way, if it is an old-established visible expression of an old community on an old territory of its own. If millions of men are accustomed to live in the very same country for thousands of years, if they are used to speak the same language, and if they are used to have their own state in a traditional form for a long period, then, and only then, such a state may survive without a new basic idea.

But the new states of Asia are different. Either there is no old tradition of statehood; or the nation did just return to its country after an absence which lasted thousands of years; or there is no common language—all these new states need a basic idea, or they will perish as quickly as they came into existence.

Such idea must be super-national; it must exceed the narrow limits set by class or race, language or colour, religion or creed. Otherwise it cannot bring together people of different races, classes, faiths and origins. It must be human, and it must be humane.

And now look at the other, dark side, not of the moon, but of this our mother earth. All over the world, there are desperate, persecuted peoples; their possessions have been taken by a ruler, a ruling class, a ruling race; they were driven from their homes, or compelled to leave them, lest they be killed in gas chambers, tortured by a secret police, or banned to death camps in the remote wilderness.

What was their fault? They were different. Not more. Their skin differed from that of the ruling races; they held opinions slightly different from those held by the rulers of their country; they worshipped another deity than that worshipped by the rest of their fellows....

Should a new state give a general indiscriminate asylum to all the sufferers of the world?

I do not think so. People who were only persecuted, deserve our sympathy, of course. But, while the priest, the philosopher, the friend of mankind, helps wherever he can, a state cannot be founded on the principle of sympathy alone. These suffering people deserve help, but their deeds do not warrant their becoming active and useful members of a young and often still struggling community.

Or should a young state accept as

citizens all those who suffered for the cause on which this state has been built? Should a state accept all those who share the race of the majority of its citizens, and who were persecuted for the sake of this race? Should a state offer asylum to all those who share the religious belief of the majority of its subjects, and who were driven from their country for the sake of this belief? What about suffering members of a certain class?

It is human nature to kindle the flame of one's own hearth for poor and suffering members of one's own family, race, class or creed. But it is not sufficient to build a state on such a narrow principle.

Instead, I propose the following article to be laid down in the constitution of a young state:

"This State affords the right of asylum to everybody persecuted for defending rights of his religion, race, nation, class or family, or basic human rights, or for his scientific activities."

He who approaches such a state, *"grieves no more, and liberated becomes free."*

Free, not only from oppression and persecution, but to do something. That's the difference.

This *Magna Carta of Freedom* differs from the usual right of asylum. It grants this right under the following conditions:

- (a) The applicant must have been persecuted. The mere fact that he prefers the inhabitants of the said state or their creed to the people of his former country and to their creed, is not sufficient to justify his demand.
- (b) The applicant must have been persecuted for defending human goods and rights. He must show he was a fighter for truth and liberty, for his God or for mankind, not only a dreamer or passive sufferer. A fighter: that is, a man who drew the sword, who used the pen, who risked his life and fortune for his fellows. And only if such an active fighter was persecuted—and persecuted just for his fighting, not for something else—he may come and join the ranks of a fighting nation in the making. Or he must have been persecuted for his scientific activities,—not only for his being a scientist, but for his acting for the sake of science.

A man who fulfils these conditions, promises to be a useful member of any human society, and to such a man the doors of a young state should stand open at any time.

The state which lays down such a principle in its constitution, will soon become a really free state, a state of and for free people, a shelter and home for righteous and brave men. Righteous—that does not mean those who never committed a sin; for no modern state can be a Community of Saints. It does not mean those who merely suffered; for mere suffering is not yet a useful virtue. But righteous and brave are those who fought for a good cause, be it that of God, be it that of mankind or that of freedom.

I dare to forecast: The state which will grant the right of asylum to such persecuted fighters, will not only survive this time of troubles, but it will become a great and noble state, mankind's light shining in the darkness. This state will become "The Town with Eleven Gates", and its magnanimity will pay handsome dividends.

Don't say: "My country is too small" or "This country is already overpopulated" or "We must at first accept our own flesh and blood". For no man (and no state) has ever been penalized for being generous. On the contrary: He, the generous, gained most.

When the Netherlands offered a refuge to the persecuted Jews of Spain and Portugal, to French "heretics" and to numerous others, then they became themselves wealthy and happy. French Huguenots were received into little Brandenburg—and made, a few years later, of this tiny country the mighty Kingdom of Prussia. England opened her doors to Belgian artisans—and became thereupon the mightiest industrial country of Europe. And the United States received with open arms refugees from all the world, and they created the American Empire. Without these refugees, all these countries would still be as small and unimportant as they were before they received them!

It is written in the *Sutrakritanga*: *"They reach the goal by pious acts;*

*By their pious acts they are directed towards Liberation,
And they show the way to others."*

If one state breaks the ice, others will follow. "They show the way to others." And in some not too distant future, no government will dare to refuse such right of asylum to persecuted fighters, for such refusal will make it ridiculous, and ridiculousness kills the strongest man and the mightiest state!

But the more governments will follow the good example set by one, the less fighters for mankind will be persecuted. And those who will still be pursued, may find a haven in any one of many countries. At last, there will be no persecution at all; for a country cannot grant a refuge to persecuted people on the one hand, and persecute them on the other hand. So this one good example will create a peaceful and happy world.

But even now, so long as such an offer stands alone in a war-torn world, a state can afford to open the gate to all such newcomers if social and economic justice rules in the receiving state.

Why? Is there any connection between the capacity of a country to absorb immigrants and the social question? There is such a connection. Often enough, the Good Book tells us that prosperity cannot be based on justice, and that social and economic justice means a just solution of the land question:

"The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine, And ye are but strangers and sojourners with Me."

And these are lessons to be learnt from history:

India flourished under her great Akbar, Shah Jehan and Aurungzeb. But in about 1615, Francisco Pelsaert, the Dutch chief of the Agra factory, wrote "of the rich in their great superfluity and absolute power; and of the common people in their utter subjection and poverty—a poverty so extreme and so miserable that the life of the people cannot be adequately depicted and described. For here is the home of stark want, and the dwelling place of bitter woe... So much is wrong from the peasantry that even dry bread is scarcely left to them for their food."

And thus wrote Van Twist a few years later of Gujarat:

"The peasants are forced to surrender the entire profit of their land and the authorities are

unable in consequence to find peasants in sufficient number."

Bernier wrote to Colbert from India:

"Even a considerable proportion of the good land remains untilled for want of labourers." Want of labourers—in the densely populated India! Small wonder that India felt unable to open her doors to desirable immigrants!

Carter and Harwood ("Where Are We Going?"—American Institute for Economic Research, 1948) say that *social and economic injustice*, that is, a *wrong land system*, is the rot "that has made India a graveyard of human hopes and aspirations for centuries."

Now look at the words written by the same authors about densely populated Denmark:

"In the relatively short period of 100 years Denmark has been transformed from a nation of *vast feudal estates to a nation of independent, small landholders*. By *partial application of the single tax*, Denmark has achieved a transformation of society that has been approached only in the United States during the days of the open frontier.

Land values are taxed, but to a substantial extent *improvements are not subject to taxation*.

One result is that the population of Denmark enjoys perhaps the greatest degree of political and economic freedom found anywhere on the globe."

I repeat: Denmark is densely populated, and yet happy and prosperous! It is a fact that countries are able to support an all the greater number of inhabitants, and to welcome an all the greater number of immigrants, the more they practise land value taxation. The prosperity of New-Zealand, Australia, Western Canada and many other countries and cities proves this fact. The reason is clear. Land Value Taxation means taxation of the mere land, and exemption of the buildings and plantations. This makes the formation of privileged class of land-monopolists impossible, as it has been aimed at by the Biblical land system already; this tax compels everybody to make the best possible use of the land he occupies, and penalizes laziness and speculation, but not free and useful enterprise; as it is not levied upon buildings, it encourages building; in one word:

Land Value Taxation renders unto the Community the things that belong to the Community, and leaves to the individual the fruit of his own toil.

It is written in the Rig-Veda:

"The gods have not ordained hunger to be our death."

Hunger and want are not ordained; a wise land policy will enable even an overpopulated state to survive and also to give bread and shelter to all who want and deserve to live in such an enlightened state.

For it is also written in the Rig-Veda:

"Bounteous is he who gives unto the beggar who comes to him in want of food and feeble. Success attends him in the shout of battle.

He makes a friend of him in future troubles!"

And those-beggars who have shown that they were good fighters, will become valuable friends "in future troubles"; well fares the state which becomes the

"Town with eleven gates, and he who approaches it, grieves no more, and liberated becomes free!"