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 realm of our cultural heritage. The Congress was not only a conscious attempt to stem the tide of cultural chaos which threatens our civilization but also a recognition of the need for a united front against the forces of reaction and reactionism both inside and outside India. The Congress was an expression of the growing awareness of the need for a cultural renaissance and the necessity of cultural freedom as a corollary to political freedom.

Another fact of high significance is that the Congress was a move primarily a move, for its success, was a move essentially of creative writers, artists, educationists, philosophers 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 the free Volker of spirit and the manner 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 arrangements 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 beait into a rigid pattern submerging 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?

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 and a country of extreme strategic value seen in the face of 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 trend in the field of common thought and action. Owing to quite a medley of factors a turn towards which has been sadly 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—and indeed they cannot—overlook the gross cultural regimentation practised in the Soviet world and the excessive brutality of such an ideology in the shape of a few dictatorships 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 rigfthes that have been forged by the ruthless hand of Stalinism in the service of imperialist interests and imperialist ambitions of his own clique whose centre is the Kremlin.

Out of any conceivable ill-treatment by the impericratic 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 rising tide of 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 feared is that for the future may fall infinitely below the absolute extinguishment of cultural freedom and of political liberty that will be our fate under the colonial State-capitalism that is truly the Soviet collective system cynically masquerading as the economic saviour of the colonised man. Shackle will be complete and it will be imposed as an entirely legalised institution against which there can be no appeal.

The cultural incomparableness 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 planks 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 committee meetings were the scenes of a vigorous and lively exchange of fruitfully opinions. There was ample freedom within these meetings, 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 critical points here and there, serves commendably the immediate
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CULTURE AND FREEDOM —Continued from page 1

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 publishing of views is not quite reprehensible. But it is not to 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 been done by being an extreme form of the cultural purges. One has to make even more extreme the rejection of the idea of total emancipation 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, the Great Need is the same and the influences which are in civilization to prevent the seeds from leading to the extreme cannot be found in countries where these influences have been eradicated. The influences in question emanate from the urge to widen the consciousness, the push towards finding an ever deeper point of view and the straining towards some ideality, some luminous perfection: in short, the vision towards deity. No hidebound religiousness 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 hecatistic 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 over stress the enormous scientific intellect of modern times has laid on the growth of man and of his institutions. The real threat is that the 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 inherent sense, an inherent awareness of the unity of the world and of the secret perfection which on a grand scale gives form to a society. The Congress 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 report directly on such fundamentals but for Cultural Freedom it is perhaps best to keep out any language that may cause unnecessary controversy on a philosophical score. But certain 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 report has kept in mind the idea, however the discussion of 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. This..." but for Cultural Freedom it is perhaps best to keep out any language that may cause unnecessary controversy on a philosophical score. But certain 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 report has kept in mind the idea, however the discussion of 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, civilization 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 may perhaps be achieved by a creative and supportive development and which unifies it with as and assimilates into it what is 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 phrase..."great spiritual figures"—a suggestive pointer to a particular kind of embodiment 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 illuminated 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 hold on a modernisation in which both India and the West could be one. 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 instrument 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 worldwide, it is perhaps that some such broad and deep and fine 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 justifying ground has to be done to the Congress for having taken the trouble 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 clan 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.

4 The version was evolved after a lot of discussion aimed at generalising, summarising and making admirable to several groups certain statements submitted by Dr. Indira Sen of SRI Aurobindo's Ashram, in one of the Socialist 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 an Oxford education. Lewis, Auden and Spender especially were repeatedly grouped together, and the Oxford "Mauve Triumvirate" seemed to be a formable 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 "showed the talent" and while the dust 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 caring Adalies and Petronellas 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 Stairs (1933) and Look Stranger (1936). The phenomenal success of Auden'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. 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 Ireland (with Isherwood; 1941), For the Time Being (1945) and The Age of Anxiety (1945) 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 Experiments in Extravagance (1928) was followed by Twenty Poems (1930), Poems (1931), Trial of a Judge (in the wake of Murder in the Cathedral and The Ascent of F6; 1936), Poems from Spain (1939) and The Still Centre (1939). An interesting critical essay, The Destructive Element (11096) and a political pamphlet, Forwards from Liberalism (1937), came in between bursts of creative activity. Spender had visited Spain, and in 1931 Auden identified himself with the Republican side; yet he returned from Spain a confirmed fascist. Brought up in the Liberal tradition, he had found it insulated in the years of the Confession of Community; 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. "Citizen 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 (1943), in the "Searchlight" Books, was an eloquent restatement of the function of poets and poetry in a society pressing forward to the furthest horizon, and it appeared opportunely when what was probably the most critical year of the war. Nor was the poet hushed by the exigencies of the war; rather the poetry acquired a deeper purpose and an even surer articulation than before. Rains and Visions (1942) and Poems of Delicitation (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 parallel lines during the last two decades. Like the others who have a place in "New Signatures", Auden and Spender too were poets jerked into a trap which they neither liked nor desired. The "Great War" had come and gone, leaving the world a veritable "waste land"—

This is the dead land
This is no country
Here are the stony images
Are raised, here they receive
The apocalypse of a dead man
Under the twinkle of a fading star.

The major poetic powers and influences of the nineteen twenties were the Victorian Jennis, 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 disfasion, and despair shrieked with a hilarity that gave one the creeps. Ganga was sunk, 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; social and old night descended. Liberalism Limited looked before and after and seven hundred and fifty thousand of Japan invaded Manchuria, Hitler rose to power in Germany. The World Disarmament Conference, the last and best hope of the time, broke on the bubble of inflated boom and artificial prosperity; Italy invaded Abyssinia, Franco raised the banner of reaction in Spain. Hitler's Germany learned 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 all 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 as they became politically and not alone poetically self-conscious, Eliot had no doubt a way of putting things, he had a way of prowling 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, a 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 texturing in verse. And 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 current 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-sum-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 blank; 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 brevity is now
Not in the dying breath
But resisting the temptations
To skylime 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
For and a year.

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
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 most evidently comprehended the whole of the human personality—the body, the animal propensities of man, the human differences 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 relationships, 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 civilization based on scientific inventions on the principle of the machine. Totalitarianism is the latest and a direct linear development of the same state of civilization 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 resulting evidently from an attempt at a total mechanization 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 create the truth in human life and the true place in human life of the intellect, the intellectual approach, scientific invention and the principle of the machine and learn to recognize 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 be on the lookout and check the threat of mechanizing our life and create more and more social freedom, yet obviously the true salvaging of our civilization will depend on the power of a growing number of personalities who will realize in themselves intrinsic values and demonstrate in very flash and blood the synthesis and integrity needed today.
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 marked and generalised degeneration, and the other at renovation. It is patent that the present order of life, the present culture and civilisation, in which the present system of values has proved egregiously bankrupt—they have failed to lead mankind to the 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 the existence, a forgetfulness of his own real and eternal self and a bewildered isolation in the dim mazes of life’s arcane forces. They have perplexed his thought, wraped and withered his feelings, blinded his will and reduced him to a merely passive, driven creature—incapable of 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 will not do. 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 any order of engineering treatment. Something more seemingly profound, something more embracing and active 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 a true barbary itself stamped out and the latent divinity released into creative expression. It is a step that is needed, a reversal of the present poise of the being of man, a basic and integral renovation, not a shuffling of superficial reforms.

Man’s problem is man himself, and not what he has made or marred; and he will, probably, realize 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 prodigal labour and energy he has been expending on adjustments and readjustments, reforms and revolutions, plans and schemes and all the ingenuity it affords, to satisfy to the least point the indigence of his earthy existence and does not know how to get out of it; he fumbles and founders, matches at any nostrum that his muddled mind suggests to him which 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.

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 darkness and confusion which reign in his outer life and society. An inner renovation, an inner transformation, an inner new-creation alone can remodel 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 cathartic education by the strenuous pursuit of an idealistic ethic or scientific psychology? Will religion bring about the change and, redeeming man from his animal ancestry, make him divine? What sort of change has man to undergo for a new birth, a total conversion? What will be the nature and character of the change and process of 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 state—it must be 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 motive and dynamic agent, independent of the instruments and faculties it creates and commands—it is consciousness.

It is here, in the tackling of the central truth and essence of man, in the removal of the root-sources of human life and nature that Sri Aurobindo stands in an unchallengeable 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 seen man and nature and the world in their essence as well as in their spiral of evolutionary manifestation and, unfinishing, watches their rise and fall, their victories and defeats, becomimg them to the eternity of triumphant sunshine and 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 fulfillment 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 posse of its own constituting consciousness; for as the consciousness is, so is the force. Where the consciousness is consciousness of 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, self-generated. 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 incommunicant, unaware of what it contains, containing immeasurable power to fulfill 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 fulfill itself without: knowledge of what is going on in other centres and of its relation to others, aware of things and forces yet 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 made around us; it will be a clash and intertwining of individual lives seeking each its own fulfillment 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 necessary interdependence and so that the various elements of that Unity behind which is expressing itself through them and in which their discord must cease. But where the Consciousness is in possession of how 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 will be the unity of the same nature: it will be a Life that consciously obeys the law of Unity and yet fulfills each thing in its diversity according to its proper rule and leading in the knowledge of universal unity, the mind of man is constitutionally uncapable of apprehending the truth and harmony of the infinite existence and realizing 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 and demands 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 of this nature which, drunk with the desire of force and driven by inconstant desires, tend to forfeit their claim to humanity. This is the encouragement of the mind lets lose the lower passions and propensities which sway our being and renders our existence so unhappy and difficult. Even if the mind rebels itself and tries to counteract life, it finds itself hopelessly limited and imperfect; it does not know how to deal with the problems of life with its half-lit knowledge and a very meagre fund of force. Moreover, its force is not always consonant with its consciousness on account of the disabling divisions and discord in the being it falls

1. "The Life Divine."
short of realizing 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 essence and fell, so did Rome, and so does every nation or race which is not either linked together to a higher order of Law. 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 empty and inanimate 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 fixed principles. And it is no 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 drive, 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 fulfill the divine Will on earth.

Realization of the Supermind

What is that plane of consciousness to which Sri Aurobindo has been labouring to lift man? It is a plane where 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. There is the Mind of Knowledge, a realizable 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 name and 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 assault or collision and 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 harnessed by the seers of the Vedas and the Upanishads as the Tao of the Law and the Vast, or the Vijnana or the Golden Purlusha. 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 and consuming the whole of 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. His two chief limitations, 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 Superreign 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 pulsating 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 magnificent play of Light, his nature an individual revelation of the Supernature; even his body a transparent vesture of the Eternal Light. All discord and divisions will vanish for ever in that unwaviled dominion of the supramental harmony, and a common consciousness will be created and consummated in 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 conversation as the crowns of our 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 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 mere of cynical incredulity. But "if there 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 divinization. Liberation is only its initial achievement, its final aim is the dynamic perfection and divine fulfillment of man upon earth. Recognizing the immense hold of the Subconscious 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 Supermind, 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 evolution of the very basis of human nature, the entire unhampered outflowering of the Divine in human collective and individual life is necessarily long and difficult, but the inevitable outcome is unimaginably glorious.

If a true and sheding 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 of many individuals transforming their whole being, transforming their mental and physical nature, 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 rumin 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 mentalized 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 new day of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. The supramental is the world-order of the future.

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.
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 fact, I believe, which Chadwick would never analyze 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 that he would choose 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 would never let him rest content with what he had written. He went on winning. Rather he whittled 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 he 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. I still remember how... out when I saw... it meant and gave 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 so 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 greatest eminent judges of intellectual 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 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 vague to possess English poetry profoundly. He too in his turn wanted to profit by my little; little could I 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, Musicians:

Splendour beyond conceiving
leave against wave
of swirling light upward their sinuous crests
and are thrust forward in a seething form of melody
within the listening covers
and over the unrod sandalpufs
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 he 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 the sun forever (but the performers were faulty).
Haply the high-flashing fountains of song
Play still in Superior Eden.

And the air is a diamond undimmed by Time's misadventures.
The Melbourne sun on One, enamished in the warmth-purifying, Build all the colours of the soul.
And the speechless telling of mysteries
Leaves them in the song-hidden heart of Light.

And I remember well the story 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 petting 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 daily with the sea". "It's the Supranatural Chadwick used to whisper to me in a muck-solemn tone. And I used generally to retort something irrelevant about the Supramental looking very much like leaving us in the lurch, at which he and others would laugh and grieve like a tomb.

"But I ought to repent if not tremble, Dilip, since see believe in blasphemy, if you don't!" Then more seriously: "But I do like this, you know, your cracking jokes with Gurudev!"

Once I showed him Gurudev's reportage. A sampler:

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 bleeat faith and humility like a trembling lamb and not rear doubts like a dancing lion."

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

And how Chadwick longed for 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 eggs. "But it's all said…" I say. Not necessarily what I said about the deplorable state of the world to which "we also were contributing", as Chadwick used to remark. But that just was why he worshiped 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, petted by petal unfoldings,
Which through the mists of this 'avicle' looms,
Victor of the Sun, sunshine withholding
The light we lack in Maya's nether glooms.

O puissant heart amidst whose raptured dashing
A nameless Love is garbed in Name's disguise,
Last metempsysos to mortal throns singing
A fadless rhythm unwung 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, vigirantly controlled by his English austerity, an aura round Sri Aurobindo which was as real in its beauty as it was opulent in its mystical implications and secondly, because he expressed with his esquisite diction an adoration which was even more potent for its rich suggestive 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 bsuk at emotion, Dilip. Queer in this country. We are a race with a rich background of 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 me to 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, caunsura 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 day, marvellous days, day by day I asked him to show me the songs I sent up. The poems he composed showed an astonishing correspondence, in lint 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 it out to the full. I was trying to transcribe the 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 subtlety and richness and subtlety. More recently, however, I was 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—torturous image with 'rasa'", added that “it is capable of remarkable harmonic effects and also can, by a skilful
SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME

*Continued from page 7*

handling, be made to give out the most beautiful melodies." I was right, but I was wrong, too, because you have an inherent beauty of substance—this, naturally—as I was to realise later—because I had hitherto neither made a study of English verse nor developed a ear for what Sri Aurobindo meant when he wrote to me that, unlike Bengali and Italian, "English is difficult and has to be negotiated in order to produce its best effects, but out 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 steep my remarks had been. For I remember that it was 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, Sthana's and Gurudeva's tuition I was thrilled to discover one fine morning that 4 had grown richly alive to the lovely melodic effects he was so fond of in his Adyam and that was reminiscent of Sri Aurobindo's in which he conceded me for my inability to be similarly receptive to poetry as a devotee," 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 material, the 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 struggling to listen with the inner ear of my music"—something opened in him, as he told me once, and he was producing one after another lovely lyrics which delighted all of us, as e.g. when he wrote his poems on Laelion on which Sri Aurobindo bestowed superlative praise:

For the moon-fate of Laelion the still night sheds a deep light,

Or varied as a woman's face in a mesh of storm.

I expect to return to the mantras when he was asked to recite:

"Your name is fiding music upon your 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 will thou seep not?

The worship the heart lifts above

The heavens report 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 is different. 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 keep from us. The Indian origin of Sri Aurobindo's work is so far below them, so mained and ignorant and sorrow-veiled as the human consciousness which is to the divine consciousness as the moth is to the star, as the night is to the dawn. And I accept this from you, who, in your nature are kin to the Heavens, you, who, with your knowledge of things divine, 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 suggest- ed, but it is obviously the spirit of the poem, and it is this spirit in that made me write to Ams (Sthana) 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 I have become so conscious of 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 focusing 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 spirit and sense for his country, family and even his English habits and cleave unwaveringly to the lead given by Gurudeva—even when he knew that his days were numbered. But before that I must speak of another side of his nature which also characterized him, Sri Aurobindo's sense of humor 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 emphasize often with a subdued accent of repentant admiration Sri Aurobindo's "oecumenic 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 to fanaticistic which cries, My God, My Incarnation, My Prophet, My Gurus 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 and 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 Devatas in all others, united all Avaritas in the unity of Him who descends in the Avatar, weld the truth in all teachings into the harmony of the Eternal Wisdom."

"I realize, 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 introled 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 and when you talk as though there were little difference between him or Russian 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."

"What prophetic he was had been amply attested within a few years when, after the fall of Dunclark, England stood alone in the whole year against the triple alliance of Germany, Japan and Italy while Russia standing had made that infamous pact with Hitler. But in those days (before 1939) Hitler being still in the offfing, we ignored him, the more because we didn't know him. Such was the British tyranny that the majority of many of us could not but respond to Chaddick's justified abhorrence of totalitarian imperialism. I remember also how I led the British imper- ialism with all my heart. So once or twice there was a strain between us when it was I who was to be in the right and so failed to really 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 re- finement and British reserve. But I confess I truly realised only this 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, Krishnawpun (also Ronald Nixson) and Chadwick. Of these Chadwick was distinctive in a peculiar way. For while Russell remained British and Krishnawpun 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 indi- viduality must have found not a little difficult to understand. How strongly this love had taken root was expressed in his poem entitled Totalitarian which made him fully alive, for the first time, to the Infernal horror it represented. In 1939 when it was published it seemed to be literally true subsequently, during the dark days of the Hitlerian bell-ringers, must testify to the authentic power of vision that made him see where most of mankind were blind."

Night was closing on the traveller

To the empty eerie courtyard

With no name.
SRI AURIBINDO CAME TO ME—Continued from page 8

He spoke8 insistently and blusted every now and then. He said, "I don't 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. 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 built of the stuff light is made of it—" 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 gave just an upstart answer. I, feeling of disappointment. Besides, he looked very sincere and ingenuous—almost guileless! I told him a good deal about her and her sweet personality. But I ended with a friendly warning.

"But you see, here is a personality that grows on one," I hazarded diffidently. "For I have known several persons on whom she had made a little impression at the start—but who, with time, have come to widen the very ground of the impression."

"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 where 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 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 tsetsum, 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 confused. Naturally, I want to come to her—sincerely. But 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 that, and therefore I have no hesitations in informing you."

"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."

"But 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 was to himself. Then suddenly he lifted his eyes to mine. His face was flashed again.

"You have put it well," he said, laughing once more. "Perhaps a little too well, 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...

*Sri Aurobindo's frame of mind was very much like the Madras poet's. A visit to the two, however, was alike in its simplicity, straightforwardness.

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

9"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 of it is of more value than a thousand well-known men."
SRI AROUBINDO CAME TO ME—Continued from page 9

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 so 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:

"Azjava,

It is especially difficult for the Christian to be 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 practice what he preached in entire earnest. But it is difficult for human nature anywhere to think, feel, and be a natural death. It is not conscious mental insincerity—they will argue like Pandita 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 is the way nature moves. It is the most difficult of tasks, much more difficult than a rigid asceticism or a fervent piety. Religion itself does not give this complete harmonized sincerity—it is the psychic being and the one-souled spiritual aspiration that can give it."

"How beautifully he writes, Dilip!" he remarked. "How clear and vigorous! Not a trace of business anywhere. No abracadabra, wanting to show off and yet how luminous—shining 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 illness, 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 they helped me not a little besides making me realize how much he had profited by Gurudev’s craftsmanship and the intrinsic value 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 disparagement. 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 from 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 Hindu song of Abul Hafta 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 limbams, 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 only give the closing verse of each:

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

And then:

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

*The poem is entitled "Pledos" in my book "Eyes of Light."*
SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from page 16

"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 Krishnamrem. 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 Kabbalistic 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 values countable 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 sadhaks, 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 banquet of ten million Shesas, 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 those 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, naba-bhikrura na zasti, for him who tries 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: 7284. Telegram: "Mahotsava".

Residence 42518. New Delhi.

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 rolled 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 "choli" or tight fitting bodices. They have a flair for combining contrasting colours such as pink gown 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 "bhumal" or veil, draped over the head, draws 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 here 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 other six in this industry unit make up one of the basic needs of all classes of people in the country.
“THE TOWN WITH ELEVEN GATES”
BY DR. DAVID ASCHER

“There is a town with eleven gates, which by this time has already been built. Should a state accept all those who share the race of the majority of its citizens, and were persecuted for the sake of this town, and is the only gate for all those who share the religious belief of the majority of its subjects, and were driven from their country for the sake of this belief? What about suffering members of a certain race?”

It is human nature to kindle the flames of hatred and suffering members of one’s own family, race, class or creed. But it is not enough to build a town on such a narrow principle.

Instead, I would like to present 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 his rights of his religion, race, class, or creed, or for his human rights, or for his scientific activity."

He who opposes such a state, "grievous no more, and liberated becomes free."

Free, not only from oppression and persecution, but to do something to make the difference.

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

(a) The person must have been persecuted. The mere fact that one is a member of the state or its creed to the person of his former country and to their being not sufficient to justify his demand.

(b) The person must have been persecuted for defending human goods and 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 drives, who drives the world, who suffered, who risked his life and his property; not only if such an active fighter was persecuted—and persecuted for something else, which is not for science, but join the ranks of a fight against nationalisation in the making. He who is a man for his fellowmen for his scientific activities—not only for his being a scientist, but 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.

What is the principle? What is such a principle in its constitution, will soon become a really free state, a state of and for free people, a state for home and righteous and brave. Righteous—that does not mean righteous by the standard of our modern society. It means those who merely suffered; for mere suffering is not yet a use for fight; and poverty righteous; but those are fought for a good cause, and defend the rights of mankind or that of freedom. I dare to forecast: The state which will be based on the principles of such persecuted fighters, will not be a frightened, a timid state, but it will become a great and noble state, mankind’s light shining in the dark. This state will come "The Town with Eleven Gates," and its magnanimity will be its handsome dividends.

Don’t say: “My country is too small.” This country is already overcrowped? or “We must at first scatter our own flesh and blood.” For no man (and no state) has ever been penalized for being gene-

ous, and the contrary state offers safety to all those who share the religious belief of the majority of its subjects, and were driven from their country for the sake of this belief? What about suffering members of a certain race?

MOTHER INDIA, April 7, 1951

REGD. NO. 3553

Printed by K. R. Poddar at the Popular Press (Bombay) Ltd., 35, Tardeo Road, Bombay 7 and published by him from 32, Rampratm Bldg., Fort, Bombay.