The Androgynous Visual Piety of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and St. Clare and St. Francis

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Abstract
When one critically compares the Mother and Sri Aurobindo of Pondicherry, India with St. Clare and St. Francis of Assisi, Italy, one notices that the women are essential to manifesting the work and lives of the men. In fact, these two couples ultimately model a unity of gender, power, love, and work that is quite rare in any time or place. The theme of androgyny, therefore, emerges as an important lens through which to interpret their work together as celibate spiritual partners. As I will demonstrate, the theme of androgyny is seen, not only in their written texts, but equally and to some degree more powerfully in their shared use of fashion, art, architecture, and visual culture.

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After having met the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, he decided to join the Ashram along with his wife, who was renamed "Lalita", which is a name of one of Radha's companions. Sethna received from Sri Aurobindo the new name "Amal Kiran", meaning "Pure Ray". As a first work Sethna was given the task of managing the Ashram stores, looking after the various practical needs of the members. Much of his free time he dedicated to developing his poetry, regularly sending his numerous creations to Sri Aurobindo for getting his opinion and corrections. In 1936 Sri Aurobindo started sending him his handwritten...