

RENAISSANCE REDUX

Theme: The Mother Divine

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BhāratShakti

Sri Aurobindo Society



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BHĀRATSHAKTI

INDIA – FROM PAST DAWNS TO FUTURE NOONS

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The Mother Divine

Beloo Mehra

Greetings! And warm wishes to our readers on this special day of the Mother's birthday!

We are happy to bring to our readers Volume 2 of the *Renaissance Redux*, our quarterly journal that brings to you some of our cherished selections from the voluminous *Renaissance* journal which has entered the seventh year of its publication in January 2026. The present issue features the Mother's explanation of how we may become open to the working of the new Supramental Consciousness. Nolini Kanta Gupta speaks of Sri Aurobindo Ashram as the golden temple of the Mother Divine; and Shobha Mitra's account opens us to a profound lesson in humility.



As always, we offer this work at the Lotus Feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Ever in gratitude.



The New Consciousness and the Human Attitude

The Mother

Editor's Note: In this conversation with a disciple, dated 2 May 1956¹, the Mother explains clearly what it takes to perceive the working of a new consciousness in the earth-atmosphere. She reminds that if want the new supramental consciousness to transform us, we must open ourselves and make effort to progress. The disciple's questions are in italics.



*Only the like can know the like,
only the supramental Consciousness
in an individual can perceive this Supermind
acting in the earth-atmosphere.*

The Mother, CWM, 8: 127



Sweet Mother, you have said: The Supramental has descended upon earth. What does that mean exactly? You have also said: "The things that were promised are fulfilled." What are these things?

¹ The Mother, CWM, Vol. 8, pp. 126-130

Ah, that's ignorance indeed! This was promised a very long time ago, this was said very long ago—not only here—since the beginning of the earth. There have been all kinds of predictions, by all kinds of prophets; it has been said, "There will be a new heaven and a new earth, a new race will be born, the world will be transformed...." Prophets have spoken about this in all the traditions.

You have said, "They are fulfilled."

Yes. And so?

Where is the new race?

The new race? Wait for something like... a few thousand years, and you will see it!

When the mind descended upon earth, between the time the mind manifested in the earth-atmosphere and the time the first man appeared, nearly a million years elapsed. Now it will go faster because man expects it, he has a vague idea; he is expecting in some sense the advent of the superman, while, certainly, the apes did not expect the birth of man, they had never thought of it for—the good reason that they probably don't think much. But man has thought of it and awaits it, so it will go faster. But faster means still thousands of years probably. We shall speak about it again after a few thousand years!

(Silence)

People who are inwardly ready, who are open and in contact with higher forces, people who have had a more or less direct personal contact with the supramental Light and Consciousness are able to feel the difference in the earth-atmosphere. But for that... Only the like can know the like, only the supramental Consciousness in an individual can perceive this Supermind acting in the earth-atmosphere. Those who, for some reason or other, have developed this perception, can see it.

But those who are not even conscious of an inner being—just slightly within—and who would be quite at a loss to say what their soul is like, these certainly are not ready to perceive the difference in the earth-atmosphere. They still have a long way to go for that. Because, for those whose consciousness is more or less exclusively centred in the outer being—mental, vital and physical—things need to take on an absurd and unexpected appearance for them to be able to recognise them. Then they call them miracles.

But the constant miracle of the intervention of forces which changes circumstances and characters and has a very widespread result, this they do not call a miracle, for only the mere appearance is seen and this seems quite natural. But, truly speaking, if you were to reflect upon the least little thing that happens, you would be obliged to acknowledge that it is miraculous.

It is simply because you don't reflect upon it that you take things as they are, for what they are, without questioning; otherwise every day you would have any number of occasions to tell yourself, "Really, but this is quite astonishing! How did it happen?" Quite simply, it is a habit of seeing things in a purely superficial way.

Sweet Mother, what should our attitude be towards this new Consciousness?

That depends on what you want to do with it. If you want to look at it as a curiosity, you have only to watch, to try to understand. If you want it to change you, you must open yourself and make an effort to progress.

Will people profit collectively or individually from this new manifestation?

Why do you ask this question?

Because many people who have come here are asking, "How are we going to profit from it?"

Oh!

And why should they profit from it? What are their claims to profit? Just because they have taken a train to come here?

I knew some people who came here quite a long, long time ago, something like—oh! I don't remember now, but very long ago—certainly more than twenty years ago, and the first time someone died in the Ashram, they showed considerable dissatisfaction, saying, "But I came here because I thought this yoga would make me immortal; but if people can die, why would I have come?"

Well, it is the same thing. People take the train to come here—there were nearly a hundred and fifty more than usual this time, just because they wanted to "profit". But

perhaps this is just why they did not profit! For That has not come to make people profit in any way whatever.

They ask if it will be easier to overcome their inner difficulties.

I shall repeat the same thing. What grounds and what right have they to ask that it should be easier? What have they done, these people, on their side? Why would it be easier? To satisfy people's laziness and indolence—or what?

Because when something new happens, people always have the idea of profiting from it.

No! not only when there is something new: everywhere and always people have the idea of profiting. But that is indeed the best way of not getting anything.

Whom do they want to deceive here? The Divine?... That is hardly possible.

[...]

Mother, when mind descended into the earth-atmosphere, the apes had not made any effort to change into man, had they? It was Nature which provided the effort. But here...

But it is not man who is going to change himself into superman!

No?

Just try! (*Laughter*)

That's it, you see, it is something else which is going to work.

So, we are...

Only—yes, there is an only, I don't want to be so cruel: Now MAN CAN COLLABORATE. That is to say, he can lend himself to the process, with goodwill, with aspiration, and help as best he can. And that is why I said it would go faster. I hope it will go *much* faster.

But even so, much faster is still going to take a little time!

(*Silence*)



Sri Aurobindo Ashram – The Golden Temple of The Mother Divine

Nolini Kanta Gupta

Editor's Note: Nolini Kanta Gupta describes² how Sri Aurobindo established the Ashram, the golden temple of the Mother Divine, in Pondicherry, amidst the pathetic deadness of then Pondicherry and the conspiracy and serious attacks from the British government. He also brings out the connection of Sri Aurobindo's yogic aim with the yoga of Vedic Rishis.



Then Pondicherry, a city of the dead

Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry in 1910³. The place was so quiet that we can hardly imagine now what it was really like. It was not quiet, it was actually dead. They used to call it a dead city. There was hardly any traffic, particularly in the area where we lived. And after dusk there was not a soul stirring. **It is no wonder they should say, "Sri Aurobindo has fixed upon a cemetery for his sadhana."**

It was a cemetery indeed. Whilst the Indian nationalist movement had been flooding the whole country, nothing of that regenerating flood could find an entry here, except for one or two individuals who had felt a touch. It was like a backwater of the sea, a stagnant pool by the shore. There was here no such thing as a public life or a youth movement or any kind of collective effort or an experiment in educational reform. There was no sign whatsoever of an awakening to life.

A cemetery it was no doubt, but one with its full complement of ghosts and ghouls. In the first rank of these ghouls were the ruffian bands. Such creatures can appear only in

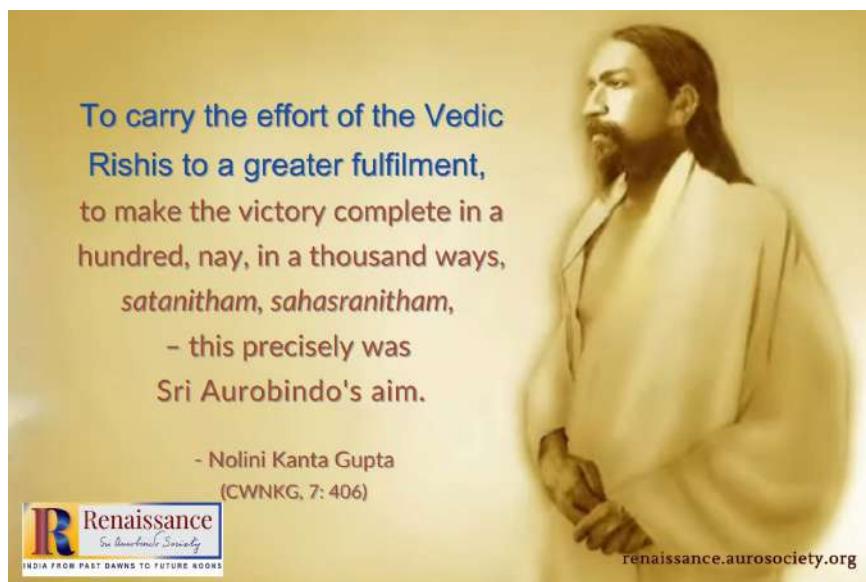
² Excerpted from the essay titled 'Pondicherry – 1', *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 7, pp. 400-408.

³ We might say of course from another point of view that it was Sri Aurobindo who gave shelter to Pondicherry within his own consciousness. But why this city in particular? There is indeed the usual view that he retired into French territory to escape the wrath of the British bureaucracy. But actually, all he wanted was to find a quiet spot where he might give himself to his own work undisturbed.

a highly tamasic environment. For, the greater the depth of inertia the more is the need for keen rajasic excitement followed immediately by the silence of sleep. **Pondicherry of those days had a still more notorious reputation for its cheap wine shops and its rowdy tipsies.** Of this type of ghouls there was a regular invasion from outside every week-end. [...]

Soon after Sri Aurobindo came, he realised that a firm seat must be established here, an unshakable foundation for his *sadhana* and *siddhi*, for the path and the goal. He was to build up on the ever-shifting sands of the shore a firm and strong edifice, a Temple of God. Have we not read in the Puranas and other scriptures that whenever and wherever a sage or a Rishi sat down to his meditation and *sadhana*, there rushed upon him at once a host of evil spirits to break up his work? They seemed to have a special liking for Rishi's flesh.

Those who tried most to stop Sri Aurobindo from settling down and were ever on the alert to move him from his seat were the British authorities. The British Government in India could never accept that Sri Aurobindo had come away to French territory for carrying on his yoga. Religion and spirituality, these to them were a mere subterfuge. They thought they knew what Sri Aurobindo was – the most dangerous man in all India, the source of all the trouble. Pondicherry was the place from where were supplied the necessary instructions and advice and perhaps even the pistols and other weapons. Here was the brain-centre of the Indian independence movement. That Sri Aurobindo had been the mainspring of Indian independence they had been told by their life-instinct, although the superficial sense in which they understood it was not obviously the whole truth.



Sri Aurobindo's Unbudging Determination

At one time, they made up their minds that Sri Aurobindo should be kidnapped in a car with the help of one of the chiefs of the local "bandes". We had to patrol all night the house in which Sri Aurobindo lived, lest there should be a sudden attack. I gather the ringleader behind this move showed repentance later and said that to act against a holy man and yogi was a great sin and that a curse might fall on the evil-doer himself.

Nevertheless, force having failed they now tried fraud. An attempt was made to frame a trumped-up charge at law. Some of the local "ghouls" were made to help forge the documents – some photographs, maps and charts along with a few letters. These were to prove that we had been engaged in a conspiracy for dacoity and murder. The papers were left in a well in the compound of one of our men. Then they were "discovered" after a search by the police. The French police had even entered Sri Aurobindo's residence for a search. But when their Chief found there were Latin and Greek books lying about on his desk, he was so taken aback that he could only blurt out, "*Il sait du latin, il sait du grec*" – "He knows Latin, he knows Greek!" – and then he left with all his men. How could a man who knew Latin and Greek ever commit any mischief? [...]

In addition to force and fraud, the British Government did not hesitate to make use of temptation as well. They sent word to Sri Aurobindo which they followed up by messenger, to say that if he were to return to British India, they would not mind. They would indeed be happy to provide him with a nice bungalow in the quiet surroundings of a hill station, Darjeeling. He could live there in complete freedom and devote himself to his spiritual practices without let or hindrance. Needless to add, this was an ointment spread out to catch a fly and Sri Aurobindo refused the invitation with a "No, thank you."

Afterwards came a more serious attack, perhaps the one most fraught with danger. The First World War was on. India had been seething with discontent and things were not going too well abroad on the European front. The British Government now brought pressure on the French: they must do something drastic about their political refugees. Either they should hand them over to the British, or else let them be deported out of India.

The French Government accordingly proposed that they would find room for us in Algeria. There we could live in peace. They would see to our passage so that we need have no worry on that score. If on the other hand we were to refuse this offer, there might be danger: the British authorities might be allowed to seize us forcibly.

I can recall very well that scene. Sri Aurobindo was seated in his room in what was later called “Guest House”, Rue Francois Martin. We too had come. Two or three of the Tamil nationalist leaders who had sought refuge in Pondicherry came in and told Sri Aurobindo about the Algeria offer and also gave a hint that they were agreeable. Sri Aurobindo paused a little and then he said in a quiet clear tone, “I do not budge from here.”

To them this came as a bolt from the blue. They had never expected anything like this. In Algeria there would be freedom and peace, whereas here we lived in constant danger and uncertainty. But now they were helpless. Sri Aurobindo had spoken. And they could hardly act otherwise. They had no alternative but to accept the decision, though with a heavy heart. [...]

The Ashram has of course been subjected to fresh attacks later. . . But by then the Ashram had its foundations well laid and the edifice had risen high. But in the days of which I have been speaking there was no such thing as a foundation yet.

Ashram – The Location of Ancient *Vedapuri*

Today the Ashram stands like a banyan tree with head erect and branches spread all over. Its body is solid and immovable. The roots go deep and strong and firm. An attack may dislodge or even break a few leaves and branches, but, nothing more serious can happen. But in those days there was a possibility that the whole tree might get uprooted. And such attempts too were there.

The whole endeavour then was to find a standing-room. **Sri Aurobindo wanted, as the Vedic Rishis before him had done, to find a footing where there was none, *apade pada-dhatave*.** In those days there was in the College de France in Pondicherry a French professor named Jouveau Dubreuil. Later he became quite a well-known name – who had been engaged in research in ancient history and archaeology. We knew him quite well. He was at that time working on the early history of Pondicherry.

From a study of the ancient documents and inscriptions he discovered that the city of Pondicherry, which I have called a city of the dead, had at one time been known as a city of the Veda, *veda-puri*. That is to say, it had a centre of Vedic learning. And this Vedic college, our professor found from ancient maps and other clues, was located exactly on

the spot where the main building of our Ashram now stands⁴.

According to ancient tradition, Rishi Agastya came to the South to spread the Vedic lore and the Aryan discipline. [...] The legend goes that as Agastya journeyed South, the Vindhya mountains bent low to give him passage. And that they have remained low ever since and would continue in that posture until the Rishi came back. In connection with this story about the Vedic Rishi Agastya, one is almost automatically reminded of the endeavour of Sri Aurobindo.

Like Agastya, he journeyed South and set up a permanent seat here to emanate a new Light. He was even known in these parts as Uttara Yogi, the Yogi of the North. In his lines of work and sadhana too we find a strange affinity with Agastya's effort, at least in one respect. Agastya had been for years driving deep into the earth, in the abyss of the subconscious, for he nourished both the worlds, earth and heaven. He along with his companion Lopamudra had been striving for victory here upon earth itself. In their battle and the sacrifice with its hundred fiery tongues, *jayavedatra satanithamajim, yat samyañca mithunababhyajava*; for the effort that had the protection of the gods could never, fail, *na mrsa srantam yadavanti devah*.

To carry the effort of the Vedic Rishis to a greater fulfilment, to make the victory complete in a hundred, nay, in a thousand ways, *satanitham, sahasranitham*, –this precisely was Sri Aurobindo's aim. Sri Aurobindo was in Pondicherry for forty years. The first few years were spent in establishing a seat. He had to select a suitable spot and make a permanent abode where he could work undisturbed. This point about selecting a “seat” occurs in the story of all great spiritual aspirants and in all the disciplines.

The Tantriks had need of their “seat of five skulls”, *pañcamundi*. Ramakrishna had his *pañcavati*, the grove of five sacred trees. But why this insistence on five? Perhaps the number stood for the five main elements in man and the five worlds that constitute the universe, – what the Upanishads term body, life, mind, supermind and spirit. The Vedas too speak of *pañcaksiti*, the five abodes, *pañcakrsti*, the five fields of culture, *pañcajana*, the five births or worlds. Sri Krishna's conch of *pañcajanya* may well occur to the mind. Lord Buddha too when he took his seat under the Bodhi tree is supposed to have said, “I do not rise from this seat until my aim is attained, even though the body dry up or fall” (*ihasane suyatū me sariram*).

⁴ According to some researchers, it is not possible to verify whether this was truly the case.



Ashram – The Divine Mother in Earthly Form

The site once chosen and the seat established, Sri Aurobindo had now to prepare the ground. There were, as I have said, shifting sands all around symbolising a changing world where all is in a state of flux, *yat kiñca jagatyam jagat*. All that had to be cleared and firm ground reached. He spent many long years, even as Agastya had done, in this spade-work. For he was to erect a huge edifice, a Temple dedicated to God.

He had once dreamed of a Temple for Bhawani, Bhawani Mandir, where he would install Mother India. Now too he desired the same thing, a Temple for Bhawani, a Temple-city in fact. That needed a solid, firm and immovable foundation. For this he had to dig into the farthest abyss, to fix, one might say, the “five supporting pillars”. All this he did single-handed during the first four years, from 1910 to 1914. Then the Mother came. And although that was for a short time, it was then that the plans were clearly laid for the thing that was to be and the shape it was to take, – this New Creation of theirs.

The work of building the foundation took him till 1920. From 1920 to 1926 he worked with the Mother in giving it strength, testing it and making it fit and adequate for carrying the future load. In 1926 there began the construction of the superstructure, and along with that proceeded the work of installing the presiding Deity. This work of installation took twelve years to complete and the next twelve were given to making it permanent.

His task done, Sri Aurobindo stepped aside, for a new task, for taking up another line of work. But to this foundation he lent the entire strength of his bare back, that his work and new creation should stand immortal and with its head erect. All that Sri Aurobindo had wanted to do with his body was to install permanently in an earthly form the Mother Divine.

This Temple we call the Ashram has grown through the Power and Influence of Her physical Presence, in order that She may manifest anew. The Divine Mother of the worlds has installed Herself here. In the golden Temple the living Goddess is manifest with all Her Powers of realisation. She has Herself taken charge of the Work now. And the power of Her Grace is working towards the goal that the entire earth and the race of men grow into a living manifestation of Herself.



A Lesson in Humility and Dissolving the Egoism of the Doer

Shobha Mitra



A true and sincere humility is our safeguard—it is the surest way to the indispensable dissolution of the ego.

(The Mother, CWM, 14: 153)



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Editor's note: Shobha Mitra (1933-2019) joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1952. A musician, composer and in-charge of the music section of the Ashram School, she also taught vocal music at the Last School in Auroville in the 1970s. She is especially remembered for conceptualizing a special musical programme titled *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on India and Her Future* on the occasion of Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary in 1972. In the same year, a collection of her musical compositions titled *Loving Homage* was released by Sri Aurobindo Society.

We feature an excerpt from her memoirs titled *Living in The Presence* (2013, Sri Mira Trust), which is an English translation by Maurice Shukla from the original Bengali version titled *Sri Mayer Divya Sannidhye* (published in 2012). The transparency and sincerity of her narration makes this writeup a profound lesson in humility for the readers. We also learn how the Mother emphasised for the disciples importance of cultivating humility and of dissolving ego and a sense of doer-ship of works.



The Hour of God: A Dance-drama

I had dramatized Sri Aurobindo's *The Hour of God* in English. At the beginning of 1964, myself and K, a friend of mine, decided to inform the Mother about this dramatisation and if she consented, we would put it up for the 1st December programme. I had divided Sri Aurobindo's prose piece into three parts. And each of the three parts was expanded by including extracts from other writings of the Master.

I first showed my dramatisation to Norman da to whom the Mother had, on several occasions, given charge of the theatre related and recitation items for the 1st December programme. Therefore, I first took Norman da's opinion on my dramatisation and whether it could be put up as the 1st December programme at the Ashram. He really liked the adaptation.

I then sent the script to the Mother and told her about our wish to put it up. The Mother asked us to show it to Nolini da. Then through Nolini da, the Mother sent us word that the 1st December programme of that year (1964) would be *The Hour of God*. Along with my friend K, we requested the Mother if she could record *The Hour of God* in her voice. She agreed. Sunil da composed the music for it and we began our work.

We first selected the participants for the three parts. Then the rehearsals started at the Ashram Theatre. Over a few days, I noticed that my personal contribution in this programme suddenly began to decrease. Besides practising for my own part in the programme, I did not have much else to do! K had taken over the whole thing! Norman da too noticed this. When this went beyond a certain point, Norman da suggested that I write a letter to the Mother about it. Let me simply share here with the readers my letter and the Mother's reply to it:

Mother Divine,

We have started our work on *The Hour of God*. We want our labour to be a true offering to You and to Sri Aurobindo.

Mother, I want to bring to your kind attention that this idea of dividing *The Hour of God* into three parts and developing each part with suitable lines from Sri Aurobindo is mine, although K has never thought it necessary to mention it to You. When it was necessary to divide the text, prepare the framework of the whole programme, K took my help because it was my idea and she did not know anything about it before. When that was done she started neglecting me completely. She began discussing with B and C, and has been deciding everything and occasionally letting me know. Sometimes she forgets to do even that. She perhaps thinks that this programme is part of her 'Saturday Programme' and has started organising it herself.

She contacted S, V, M etc. and instructed them on their parts. I felt bad, Mother, because, as You know I had an earnest desire to give expression to my own creation, which I could not. Anyway, I have not said anything to K so far. I took it as an opportunity to progress a step forward. Recently she has started behaving so rudely with me that it has become very difficult to work peacefully. She never informs me about the work, she does not even recognise me at times. Mother, pray remove this unfriendly feeling from us.

Mother Divine, I think you are well aware of the fact that S, K, B, and myself are organising the whole programme, that is — each one is composing or directing a portion of the whole. I feel, Mother, it is necessary to have one of us as a general organiser because there must be one person to connect all the different scenes. B and myself, we think that as S

is senior to us and the most experienced in stagecraft among us, she can be the general organiser of this programme. This will quietly avoid a lot of disharmony. Mother, pray for your approval.

My pranams at Thy feet,

Shobha

In the letter wherever I had spoken of 'I', 'my', 'mine', the Mother had underlined these in red ink and She wrote at the end of my letter:

**I suppose that now that I am informed of these important facts
your EGO is satisfied.**

Blessings

The Mother

The 1st December programme came to an end. I still had not been able to overcome my sense of ego, but kept quiet about it. I prayed to the Mother to help me change my nature.

My birthday arrived and the Mother gave me a card with a birthday message. There were some grass-flowers stuck on the front of the card. The Mother's spiritual significance of this flower is Humility! Inside the card was the following message in French which I reproduce here for the readers in English translation:

Happy Birthday to Shobha with my blessings, so that **you can keep humility in your heart, for it is this that takes you most certainly to the realisation of the Divine.**

The Mother

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