Sweet Mother, does the worship offered to the goddess Durga and to Kali have any spiritual value?

That depends on who offers the worship. It is not that which is of importance for the spiritual value. For the integrality and the complete truth of the Yoga it is important not to limit one’s aspiration to one form or another. But from the spiritual point of view, whatever the object of worship, if the movement is perfectly sincere, if the self-giving is integral and absolute, the spiritual result can be the same; for, whatever object you take, through it — sometimes in spite of it, despite it — you always reach the supreme Reality, in the measure and proportion of the sincerity of your consecration.

That is why it is always said that, no matter what aspect of the Divine you adore or even what guide you choose, if you are perfect in your self-giving and absolutely sincere, you are sure to attain the spiritual goal.

But the result is no longer the same when you want to realise the integral yoga. Then you must not limit yourself in any way, even in the path of your consecration.... Only, these are two very different things.

Spiritual realisation — as it was formerly understood, as it is still commonly understood — is union with the Supreme in some way or other, either within you or through some form or other; it is the fusion of your being with the Supreme, with the Absolute, almost the disappearance of your individuality in this fusion.¹ And that depends absolutely on the sincerity and

¹ Later a disciple asked Mother: “Why did you say ‘almost’? Isn’t then the disappearance complete?” To which Mother answered: “Somewhere, I believe it is in ‘The Yoga of Self-Perfection’ [The Synthesis of Yoga], regarding those who wish to merge in the Supreme, Sri Aurobindo says or rather hints that this cannot be done, for the Supreme
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del the integrality of your self-giving, rather than on the choice you make of that to which you want to give yourself. For... the very sincerity of your aspiration will make you cross all limitations and find the Supreme, for you carry Him within yourself.

Whether you seek Him outside, whether you seek Him within, whether you seek Him in a form or without form, if your aspiration is sincere enough and your resolution sincere enough, you are sure to reach the goal.

But if you want to make the complementary movement of which Sri Aurobindo speaks, that is to say, to return to the outer consciousness and world after having realised this union in yourself, and transform this outer consciousness and world, then in this case you cannot limit yourself in any way, for otherwise you will not be able to accomplish your work.

Essentially, you must be able to find this oneness with the Divine in all forms, all aspects, in every way that has been used to reach Him. And you must go beyond that and find a new way.

So, the first point to clear up in your thought — and it is a point of capital importance: you must not confuse the integral yoga with other spiritual realisations, which may be very high but cover a very limited field, for theirs is a movement only in depth.

You may pierce a hole, you see, with your aspiration and make a movement in depth through anything at all. All depends on the intensity and sincerity of your aspiration — on the sincerity, that is to say, on how far your self-giving is complete, integral, absolute. But it does not depend on the form you have chosen: necessarily, you will have to pass through in order to find what is behind.

wants it otherwise. But Sri Aurobindo says it without saying it, it is just an allusion in passing. The idea is that beyond Being and Non-Being, the total Summit necessarily includes a form — what might be called an essential form — of the individuality, which no longer contradicts or is even distinct from the One, but is included in the One without any separation. But the words at our disposal mean nothing! And one is reduced to giving a childish explanation. That is why I said ‘almost’.
1 August 1956

But if you want to transform your nature and your being, and if you want to participate in the creation of a new world, then this aspiration, this sharp and linear point is no longer enough. One must include everything and contain everything in one’s consciousness.

Naturally, that is much more difficult.

Mother, what is this “divine element in human nature” which always demands symbols for the completeness of its spiritual satisfaction?

What?

Which demands a form, an expression in form.

Oh! what I have just read to you today?  

2 “In any cult the symbol, the significant rite or expressive figure is not only a moving and enriching aesthetic element, but a physical means by which the human being begins to make outwardly definite the emotion and aspiration of his heart, to confirm it and to dynamise it. For if without a spiritual aspiration worship is meaningless and vain, yet the aspiration also without the act and the form is a disembodied and, for life, an incompletely effective power. It is unhappily the fate of all forms in human life to become crystallised, purely formal and therefore effete, and although form and cult preserve always their power for the man who can still enter into their meaning, the majority come to use the ceremony as a mechanical rite and the symbol as a lifeless sign and because that kills the soul of religion, cult and form have in the end to be changed or thrown aside altogether. There are those even to whom all cult and form are for this reason suspect and offensive; but few can dispense with the support of outward symbols and even a certain divine element in human nature demands them always for the completeness of its spiritual satisfaction. Always the symbol is legitimate in so far as it is true, sincere, beautiful and delightful, and even one may say that a spiritual consciousness without any aesthetic or emotional content is not entirely or at any rate not integrally spiritual. In the spiritual life the basis of the act is a spiritual consciousness perennial and renovating, moved to express itself always in new forms or able to renew the truth of a form always by the flow of the spirit, and to so express itself and make every action a living symbol of some truth of the soul is the very nature of its creative vision and impulse. It is so that the spiritual seeker must deal with life and transmute its form and glorify it in its essence.”


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It is precisely that part of the being which is not satisfied with abstractions and with escaping from life and evading it and leaving it as it is. It is that part of the being which wants to be integral, wants to be integrally transformed or at any rate to participate integrally in the inner adoration.

In every normal being there is the necessity, the need—a absolute need to translate into a physical form what he feels and wants internally. I consider those who always want to evade life in order to have self-realisation as abnormal and incomplete. And in fact, these are usually weak natures. But those who have strength, force and a kind of healthy equilibrium in themselves, feel an absolute need to realise materially their spiritual realisation; they are not satisfied with going away into the clouds or into worlds where forms no longer exist. They must have their physical consciousness and even their body participate in their inner experience.

Now, it may be said that the need to adopt or follow or participate in a religion as it is found all ready-made, arises rather from the “herd instinct” in human beings. The true thing would be for each one to find that form of adoration or cult which is his own and expresses spontaneously and individually his own special relation with the Divine; that would be the ideal condition.

To adopt a religion because one is born in that religion or because the people one loves and trusts practise that religion or because when one goes to a particular place where others pray and worship, one feels helped in one’s own prayer and worship, is not the sign of a very strong nature; I should say it is rather the sign of a weakness or at any rate of a lack of originality.

But to want to translate into the forms of one’s physical life the inner aspiration and adoration is quite legitimate, and it is much more sincere than what is done by a man who splits himself into two, leads a physical life quite mechanically and ordinarily and, when he can do it, when he has the time or when it suits him, withdraws within himself, escapes from physical
life and the physical consciousness and goes to far-off heights to find his spiritual joys.

Someone who tries to make his material life the expression of his highest aspiration is certainly more noble, more upright and sincere in character than a man who splits himself into two, saying that the outer life is of no importance and will never change and must be accepted as it is, and that, in reality only the inner attitude counts.

(Silence)

My file of questions is increasing! And I must say they are not all equally interesting; but still, I could perhaps take one or two of them for the satisfaction of those who have asked them.

First, some of you have got into the habit of sending me questions without signing them, for fear that I may reveal the identity of the one who has asked the question! I shall never reveal it, you may rest assured; and even if I make an unpleasant remark, nobody will know who it is for! (Laughter)

There is another thing. Some of you don’t take the trouble of asking your questions in French. As I did not give you notice openly that I would reply only to questions in French, I have translated one or two of them for the moment; but in future, if you want me to consider your questions, they must be expressed in French. Even if there are many mistakes, it does not matter; I shall correct them!

Here is one which has been asked in English, to which the answer is very short. I am asked:

“What is the fundamental virtue to be cultivated in order to prepare for the spiritual life?”

I have said this many times, but this is an opportunity to repeat it: it is sincerity.
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A sincerity which must become total and absolute, for sincerity *alone* is your protection on the spiritual path. If you are not sincere, at the very next step you are sure to fall and break your head. All kinds of forces, wills, influences, entities are there, on the look-out for the least little rift in this sincerity and they immediately rush in through that rift and begin to throw you into confusion.

Therefore, before doing anything, beginning anything, trying anything, be sure *first of all* that you are not only as sincere as you can be, but have the intention of becoming still more so. For that is your only protection.

*Can this effort to cultivate this initial virtue be a collective one?*

Certainly it can. And this is what used to be attempted long ago in the schools of initiation. Even now, in more or less secret societies or very small groups, the collectivity seeks to be sufficiently united and to make a collective effort sufficiently complete for the result to be a group result instead of an individual one.

But naturally, that complicates the problem terribly.... Each time they meet, they try to create a collective entity; but for a virtue to be collectively realised, a tremendous effort is required. However, it is not impossible.

(Silence)

I have been asked another question which is a little more subtle, but it seems to me it has quite a special interest.... Somebody asks what is the true intensity for wanting the Divine, in the will to unite with the Divine. And then this person says that he has found within himself two different modes of aspiration, especially in the intensity of aspiration for the Divine: in one of these movements there is a sort of anguish, like a poignant pain, in the other, there is an anxiety, but at the same time a great joy.

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This observation is quite correct.
And the question is this:

“When do we feel this intensity mixed with anguish, and when the intensity containing joy?”

I don’t know if several or many of you have a similar experience, but it is very real, this experience, very spontaneous. And the answer is very simple.

As soon as the presence of the psychic consciousness is united with the aspiration, the intensity takes on quite a different character, as if it were filled with the very essence of an inexpressible joy. This joy is something that seems contained in everything else. Whatever may be the outer form of the aspiration, whatever difficulties and obstacles it may meet, this joy is there as though it filled up everything, and it carries you in spite of everything.

That is the sure sign of the psychic presence. That is to say, you have established a contact with your psychic consciousness, a more or less complete, more or less constant contact, but at that moment it is the psychic being, the psychic consciousness which fills your aspiration, gives it its true contents. And that’s what is translated into joy.

When that is not there, the aspiration may come from different parts of the being; it may come mainly from the mind or mainly from the vital or even from the physical, or it may come from all the three together — it may come from all kinds of combinations. But in general, for the intensity to be there, the vital must be present. It is the vital which gives the intensity; and as the vital is at the same time the seat of most of the difficulties, obstacles, contradictions, it is the friction between the intensity of the aspiration and the intensity of the difficulty which creates this anguish.

This is no reason to stop one’s aspiration.

You must know, you must understand the reason for this anguish. And then, if you can introduce just one more element
in your aspiration, that is, your trust in the divine Grace, trust
in the divine Response, it counterbalances all possible anguish
and you can aspire without any disturbance or fear.

This brings us to something else, which is not positively
a question, but a request for an explanation, a comment or a
development of the subject. It is about Grace.

I have said somewhere, or maybe written, that no matter
how great your faith and trust in the divine Grace, no matter
how great your capacity to see it at work in all circumstances,
at every moment, at every point in life, you will never succeed in
understanding the marvellous immensity of Its Action, and the
precision, the exactitude with which this Action is accomplished;
you will never be able to grasp to what extent the Grace does
everything, is behind everything, organises everything, conducts
everything, so that the march forward to the divine realiza-
tion may be as swift, as complete, as total and harmonious
as possible, considering the circumstances of the world.

As soon as you are in contact with It, there is not a second in
time, not a point in space, which does not show you dazzingly
this perpetual work of the Grace, this constant intervention of
the Grace.

And once you have seen this, you feel you are never equal to
it, for you should never forget it, never have any fears, any an-
guish, any regrets, any recoils... or even suffering. If one were in
union with this Grace, if one saw It everywhere, one would begin
living a life of exultation, of all-power, of infinite happiness.

And that would be the best possible collaboration in the
divine Work.