11 May 1951

Mother reads the passage about Mahakali (pp. 28-30) from The Mother by Sri Aurobindo.

Are the stories told about the image of Mahakali true?

What stories? Hundreds of stories are told, my child. Which stories are you speaking of? Which Mahakali? The images made of her, the statues? This is the human way of seeing things. She is not like that.

I believe I have already told you once that there are the original beings in their higher reality and these are of a particular kind; then, as they manifest in more and more material regions, nearer and nearer the earth, they assume different forms and also multiply in a strange way. If you like, the beings Sri Aurobindo speaks of here belong to regions quite close to the Supermind, they are still in quite a clear and conscious contact with the supramental origin. These beings manifest also in what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind and there the form becomes as it were more marked, a little more precise and at the same time reduced in power and capacity. Then, from the Overmind they come down into the human mind, the terrestrial mind and there... Take for instance this poor Mahakali; you have a multitude of Kalis, one more horrible than another; some are absolutely terrifying and horrifying, and they sometimes become quite repulsive beings who are exclusively human formations, that is, the outer form is given by human imagination, by the human mind's capacity of formation. There may be within that a vague reflection of the force of Mahakali, but it is so diminished, deformed, dwarfed, brought within the range of human consciousness, that truly she can very well deny that it is she! I have seen all possible horrors by way of images representing
Mahakali. Of the images we won’t speak. If great artists have made them perhaps some beauty is still left, but as they are generally daubers, nothing remains. As for the images (statues or pictures) which have to be installed in a temple, a religious ceremony is performed, and if the priest or the assistant is a man with occult powers, even limited ones, he can, with his aspiration and through the ritual, bring a supraterrestrial consciousness into these forms. That is the principle; you are told, “This is not a piece of wood, this is not a stone, this is not a picture; there is within it a force which the religious ritual has brought down and to this you may speak.” This is right, but the nature of the priest must be known, his occult knowledge and also the forces with which he has an affinity. So, there may be many things in there.... There is “something” (unless it is a stupid ignoramus who has performed the ceremony, one who has no power at all, has brought down nothing, made only a show — but this is rather rare; I can’t say it happens frequently, it is quite rare), generally there is something, but then the nature, the quality of this something, you know... this varies infinitely and it is sometimes a little disturbing. I gave the example of Mahakali, because the conception of Mahakali in the human consciousness is especially horrible. When one goes to other divinities like Mahasaraswati, for instance, to whom all kinds of artistic, literary and other capacities are ascribed, it is no longer so terrible. But Mahakali particularly... Their conception of power, force, warlike energy is so terrible that what they bring down is indeed a little dangerous for those who worship it. I have heard innumerable stories since my coming to India. I have been put in touch with innumerable images and have known many people who had in their homes a Kali they worshipped and to whom, sometimes, quite dreadful things had happened. I always put them on their guard, I told them,“Don’t think at all that Mahakali is responsible for your misfortunes, for she is not responsible for them. But it is likely that the Kali you have in your home must be harbouring some vindictive being, probably one very jealous, extremely wilful and
with a very strong spirit of vengeance, and as you have faith and as it is generally a vital power, there may be truly dangerous consequences.” I have known people who, after having had all kinds of unfortunate experiences, have taken the statue of Mahakali and thrown it into the Ganges. If at the same time they could acquire a certain freedom of spirit, all the damage would disappear, but some of them are so frightened of what they have done that the bad effects continue.

These things should never be touched unless one has at least the first elements of occult knowledge. Unfortunately, in religions — all religions, not only here but everywhere — knowledge is never given to the faithful. Sometimes the priests have it (I don’t say always), but when they have it they take good care not to give it to the faithful, for that would deprive them of their authority and power, and that really is the evil behind all religious institutions.

Anyway, this is a digression. Let us come back to our subject. In the earth atmosphere there is indeed a Kali who deals with earthly things and is somewhat, one cannot say independent, yet not quite the expression of Mahakali; but she is altogether obedient to her and has her major qualities. They are diminished in power and efficacy, but they exist, and the beauty of her nature is there. Perhaps some of you have had relations with that Mahakali. She does not avenge herself, she never does harm to those who love her, she does not strike with epidemics the countries which do not show her sufficient respect and consideration. But she likes violence, she likes war and her justice is crushing.

Now, another question.

**What is the difference between an Avatar and a Vibhuti?**

We said the other day that “Vibhutis” are aspects, qualities (what are called in occultism emanations) of a being. They are like certain forces, powers, qualities, attributes which are put in contact with an outer form — a physical form, for instance
Questions and Answers

— and which manifest themselves through this form. This may be a human form. The Avatar (at least when understood in the true sense) is the incarnation upon earth of the supreme Truth. Now, many meanings are given to this word. There is even a word *avatar* in French which has a very special meaning! It is said that an adventurer has many *avatars*, that is, he changes his appearance, personality, occupation.... But originally (as it is said in the Gita, for example) when the Supreme decides to manifest himself upon earth for a particular reason and takes an earthly body, it is said that he is an Avatar. He may take many successive bodies according to the needs and circumstances, but it is always what could be called the “central being” which takes an earthly body. That is what is called an Avatar. I thought you knew that. Sri Aurobindo has explained this in many places.

“Imperial Maheshwari is seated in the wideness above the thinking mind and will....”¹ Is there a plane of will, as there is a mental plane, a vital plane, etc.?

I have explained that to you in connection with Sachchidananda. Sachchidananda exists at the very origin of the worlds, but there is a Sachchidananda behind all the other states of being. You could make a diagram (though that does not explain much, it is quite an erroneous idea, but it makes things more easily understandable), you arrange the states of being according to a scale. Then, you have the earth below and the Supreme above (it is not at all like that, I hasten to tell you! But anyway, it is easy to understand), you put the earth at the bottom and the Supreme at the top, and you divide that into lots of little parts each of which represents a state of being; that makes a kind of ladder. And then, you have as though behind it, behind your ladder, something which supports it, against which it leans. It


398
is not a wall but it is something which supports your ladder. And that is precisely the first principle of the universal form. In Hindu terminology it is called “Sachchidananda”. It is there, everything leans upon that; without that nothing could exist. It is that which upholds and allows existence. Then, if you enter a certain state of consciousness and find yourself, for instance, in the higher mind (for generally it is more easily there that this happens; you have started from the physical and climbed slowly, rung by rung, as far as the higher mind), but instead of continuing your ascent on the ladder you enter into a kind of interiorisation and try to go out of the form, you pass into a kind of silence outside the form. You pass in between the bars of your ladder and enter straight into Sachchidananda which supports everything from behind. And then you can have mentally the experience of Sachchidananda. I have known people who had it and thought they had reached the heights of the Supreme. For there is a similarity in the experience, a very great likeness, only it is limited to the mind, the mind alone participates in it. Well, for the will it is the same thing. Instead of being the support of the ladder it is a kind of force, a very powerful current which passes through all these states, starting from above — it is the supreme Will — and coming down into the physical manifestation. Hence, if you get into affinity with this vibration or this force, you can enter “the state of will”; that is, whatever state of being you may find yourself in — physical, vital, mental, etc. — if you enter a certain state of consciousness and force, you come into contact with this power of will: it penetrates into you and you can use it for any purpose. If your reception is free from all egoism, if you are pure, completely surrendered and accept only what comes from the Divine, and if you don’t mix anything with it, egoism or desires or limitations... well, it is a state a bit difficult to attain, but if you attain it, you receive this force of will in its original state, pure (for it comes down pure, it is only in its reception that it gets deformed), then, instead of being your will
it becomes an expression of the divine Will. And this happens \textit{without your leaving the physical body} — you can receive the force of the divine Will without leaving the physical. Only, you see, you must not change it and deform it, spoil it in the receiving. When you feel within you a kind of indomitable energy to realise something, when you tell yourself, “I shall do this whatever the cost, I shall go to the end and shall use all my will” (for you always say my will), well, you cannot be in that state unless you have come into contact with this current of will-force. Only, with your little personal reaction, naturally you deform it and use it all wrongly, and then you come into conflict with other elements. But if you are truly a yogi, you receive the current and nothing can stop the \textit{élan} of your action, even physically.

There are other things like that, other states, other forces, there are many of these. Fundamentally, if one studies very attentively, one perceives that there is nothing in the individual being which is not the expression or the deformation or diminution, reduction and lessening of something which has its origin in the Supreme and is of a universal nature. So, you see, all these ideas of “pulling”, “calling”, are not quite right. Essentially, the only thing one should do is to prepare oneself, make oneself worthy of this contact and, when one has had it, not deform it. And this excludes nobody. Even a very small child can, at certain moments in his life, come into touch with one of these great universal forces of divine origin, and use it for its childish needs. Unfortunately, there are added to it so many limitations, so much egoism, ignorance, stupidity, that it is often completely disfigured. It cannot be recognised, it is unrecognisable. But the origin of the force is the same, and that is why when one attains a certain state of consciousness, one perceives that if these forces were not there, one would be nothing, would not exist. And instead of saying with the usual self-complacency, “I do this, I do not do that, I have decided that, I want that thing, I shall succeed...”, all this goes away from you in such a way that you
can never again think like that; it seems to you so ridiculous — so ridiculous. As soon as the little “I” comes in, that means a deformation, a limitation, a degradation. In fact, all that you do not value comes with your “I” — you remove the “I” and all that disappears at the same time.