

**SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATION
&
EXPLOITATION**



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SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATION & EXPLOITATION

IN THESE days we often hear a statement to say that all spiritual organizations are dangerous because they are instruments of subtle exploitation. It is also suggested that membership of such organizations and the living of a truly spiritual life are utterly incompatible. Spiritual organizations are supposed to be based on authority, hierarchy and discipline. Since spirituality is a condition of naturalness and spontaneity, and since disciplines, authorities and hierarchies are conditioning factors of psychological life, there cannot be any common ground between the two. We have either to reject the naturalness of spiritual life or to renounce all connections with spiritual organizations and the conditioning

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factors which they inevitably imply. That spiritual life is natural and spontaneous is a statement which rings utterly true ; for an affected or a consciously cultivated life has so much of motive—and, therefore, selfhood—involved in it that it cannot come any way near to what may be described as truly spiritual. To be conscious of a virtue is indeed to negate that virtue. A truly virtuous life is natural and spontaneous and not a product of conscious effort. The question therefore is : Is membership of a spiritual organization compatible with the concept of spiritual life mentioned above ? In other words, has one to give up one's membership of a spiritual organization in order to live a truly spiritual life ?

In order to examine this question, it is necessary for us to understand what we exactly mean by a spiritual

organization. It is stated that such an organization implies authority, discipline and hierarchy, and it is these that seem to go contrary to the essential nature of spiritual life. Thus, it is necessary to examine the implications of a spiritual organization.

Now, it is quite evident that organization is an integral part of human existence. There is organization everywhere in nature as well as in human society. Nature seems to be moving in an organized manner. The recurrence of seasons, the rising and the setting of the sun, the movement of the heavenly bodies, the electrons whirling round a nucleus, the flowers and fruits that appear on trees, the variation in species—all these and many other factors to be observed in nature indicate the existence of organization. Nature does not move in a chaotic manner but obviously

according to some plan or design. The human body itself is an example of a complex organization with a perfect adjustment of parts. Man's day-to-day existence depends upon organization. Without organization he cannot move about in society either in train or in ship or in an aeroplane. Even his walking in the streets becomes possible because of an organization—or a network of organizations. Living in society, he is surrounded by numerous aspects of organization. Renouncing human society he is surrounded by nature's organization. In other words, to exist is to be related, and relationship is only another word for organization. One cannot step out of an organization as such stepping out would mean the end of existence. When we say that Life is relationship, we imply that the parts of existence are related to each other.

An organization is fundamentally concerned with the adjustment of parts to one another. And if parts are not rightly adjusted existence would become impossible.

Now, in every organization there is bound to be a hierarchy of functions. The more complex an organization, the greater is the need for this hierarchy of functions. A hierarchy of functions suggests a division of labour and, therefore, specialization of organs. A simple organism, like an amoeba, does not possess any specialized organs, and, therefore, there is no division of labour in the parts of such an organism. But the human body, being an extremely complex organism, shows forth specialization of organs and a division of labour between these various organs. A complex human society such as ours, with all its technological advance, cannot go

on without specialization of functions and division of labour. A business firm, a railway, a banking corporation, an educational institution, a colony or a community cannot function without division of labour and, therefore, without specialization of functions. If all the component units of an organism want to discharge the same functions there would be chaos. If we grant the necessity for specialization of functions, we have to accept thereby the reasonableness of a hierarchy of functions or, in other words, the gradations in functions. In a human body, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, nerves, brain, etc., discharge different functions. Here the brain functions as an executive head giving directives based on the reports given by the nerves.

But no particular function in a human body is more important than the other. The specialized organs are

inter-related and, therefore, can function only in close co-ordination. The same is the case in any human society or in any business or technological organization—nay, in any organization or association where human beings come together. Thus, if there are different functions to be discharged, there has to be a co-ordinating organ. Such a co-ordinating organ may be a President or a Secretary or an Executive head or there may be another name given to it. In a business firm, there has to be a co-ordinating agency in order to see that there is perfect adjustment between the various departments. When a bridge is to be constructed, there has to be a final co-ordinating authority giving necessary instructions so that parts may not cause, by their functioning, any disintegration in the technological organization. Even in an

ordinary meeting or a discussion group of students interested in philosophical or other matters, there has to be a functionary who co-ordinates and, sometimes, even takes an initiative, so that the functioning of such a meeting or such a group may be effective and there may not be a wastage of time or energy. Thus, organization, specialization of organs, hierarchy of functions—all these go together. We recognize their necessity in the world of business, in the realm of technology, in the field of any organization where people come together either for work or for recreation. A hierarchy of functions and an authority for co-ordination are implied in all organizations.

Moreover, in all organizations, there is naturally involved an element of the continuity of pattern. This does not rule out modifications in the

pattern to be introduced from time to time—but this modification too seeks to maintain the continuity of organization. For example, language is a particular type of organization brought into existence by man for the purposes of communication. If this communication is to be intelligible, there must be a continuity in the general framework of a language. This element of continuity holds good with reference to all organizations, whether temporary or permanent. The maintenance of a continuity of pattern is indeed the discipline involved in any organization. In all business firms, the functionaries have to maintain a continuity of pattern as otherwise no effective work can be done. There would be an enormous waste of time and energy of all concerned if this continuity of pattern were to be abrogated. If a teacher uses a

different language-pattern every day, he would not be understood by his students. There is a continuity in nature too which may be described as Nature's discipline. Thus, in every organization are involved: (1) a gradation or hierarchy of functions, (2) an authority or instrument for the co-ordination of functions, and (3) a continuity or a modified continuity of pattern which may be described as its discipline. The factors of hierarchy, authority and discipline by themselves do not seem to be irksome. They do not seem to hamper the movement of an individual with reference to his effectiveness in work. In other words, at the level of work we are agreeable to maintaining these factors which are implicit in all organizations. In fact, if any one were to suggest that gradations of functions, authority for co-

ordination and continuity of pattern are harmful and, therefore, should be abrogated in all organizations functioning at the level of work or business, we would consider such an individual as utterly ignorant of the realities of life. But, then, why are these factors which are so essential in business organizations considered as harmful in what are called spiritual organizations?

What is really meant by a spiritual organization? If it seeks to *organize* the spiritual life of its followers, then certainly it is meaningless—nay, positively harmful, for spiritual life is an individual matter and, therefore, cannot be collectivized. If by a spiritual organization is meant an organization which guarantees 'spiritual salvation' to its adherents, then it is most assuredly absurd, for spiritual problem has to be solved by each man for himself. What

then is meant by a spiritual organization? It means an organization of men and women who are interested in what may be called spiritual aspects of life. But, then, why should they form themselves into an organization? Obviously, the purpose of such an organization can be study and research, and the sharing of the fruits of such study as well as research. Spiritual problems, or more truly psychological problems, have to be observed and studied. Spiritual organizations are obviously associations consisting of persons who are interested in an objective study of, and research into, psychological problems. Men and women gathered in these organizations would naturally like to share their findings with others—as also to listen to the observations of others with reference to psychological problems of life. This indeed is the

basis of a spiritual organization—to share with perfect freedom and to listen with absolute openness. Now, any rules framed for the continuance of such an organization would form its discipline. As psychological problems have a vast field for their manifestation, the students forming a spiritual organization may divide up the whole field into various sections for the purposes of study and research—this would constitute division of labour in such an organization. With division of labour there arises a need for co-ordination of functions. Such co-ordination may sometimes call forth initiative on the part of the co-ordinating authority. Thus, in a spiritual organization too, just as in business and technological organizations, the factors of discipline, hierarchy and authority become essential, and there is no reason why they should be regarded

as irksome or dangerous in a spiritual organization any more than in other organizations.

It may, perhaps, be stated that the problem is not so simple as is made out in terms of the above argument. It is pointed out that authority, hierarchy and discipline are positively harmful in dealing with spiritual matters, for they cause psychological conditioning of the human individual and, therefore, are instruments of subtle exploitation. Why should these factors become instruments of exploitation in a spiritual organization? Are business and other organizations free from this exploiting process?

It may be useful for us to examine as to when hierarchy, authority and discipline become dangerous. It should be obvious that this happens only when hierarchy of functions becomes hierarchy

of status ; when authority for co-ordination becomes authority for control, domination and dictation ; and when discipline instead of remaining a process for continuity of pattern becomes discipline for regimentation and mechanisation of thought and action. Thus hierarchy, authority and discipline are not by themselves harmful—for in organizations of business, of technology, of work and of recreation, they are extremely useful—they seem to become harmful only in a certain background. In other words, in a particular setting they become instruments of exploitation.

Now, the process of exploitation has two aspects—the exploiter and the exploited. It is, however, interesting to note that it is the desire to be exploited that brings into existence the exploiter. And the desire to be exploited

is the desire to derive some benefit, the desire to satisfy some vested interest. Such a desire may be for spiritual objectives or may be for material objectives. Whenever such a desire arises in a person, whether as a member of a spiritual organization or as a member of some business or technological organization, there comes into existence an exploiter who utilizes hierarchy, authority and discipline to stabilize his own power and position. Thus, the exploited seeks security through the attainment and satisfaction of some benefit and the exploiter seeks security through the exercise of power and through the display of his position. And so it is the desire for security, material or spiritual, that transforms hierarchy, authority and discipline into instruments of exploitation. Thus, hierarchy, authority and discipline are not harmful by themselves;

they become instruments of exploitation in any organization, be it technological or spiritual, if the members thereof are motivated by a desire for security. The danger, therefore, is not in any particular type of organization, but in the desire for security. The exploiter plays upon the desire for security existing in the mind of the exploited, and the exploited plays upon the desire for security existing in the mind of the exploiter—thus it is that the process of exploitation continues, using for its instruments hierarchy of functions, authority for co-ordination and discipline for the continuance of pattern. It is the individual who brings this exploitation into existence, and so the solution lies not in leaving a particular type of organization or in condemning it, but in examining one's own motives or the activities of one's

own mind seeking security.

It should be remembered that organization is only man's field of action, and man cannot refrain from action even for one moment. If he leaves one field he will have to operate in another field, for an action needs a field for its operations. To quarrel with the field is, therefore, meaningless ; it is the motive for action which needs to be investigated. When one is caught up in a repetitive action, the solution lies not in discarding the action, but rather in discarding the element of repetition. For, if the element of repetition remains and the action is discarded, it will appear again in another field or mode of action. There is nothing wrong either with technological or spiritual organization so far as exploitation is concerned—for exploitation arises from man's desire for security, whether material or spiritual.

When an organization becomes—over and above a field of action—a mirror for observation, then is one able to discover one's motives, or one's desire for security. When this motive drops out, the organization becomes a pure field of action. Thus, the impurity which appears in an organization has been brought by the individual through his desire for security. The most important thing, therefore, is to deal with this impurity brought by the individual. When this is removed, the correction or the improvement of the field, if necessary, can be done easily. To leave the field, keeping the desire for security untouched, or, to strive in the direction of improving the field without dealing with the psychological impurity brought by the individual, is to evade the fundamental issue. In fact, both these processes are mere escapes from the realities of a situation.

Let man observe himself in the mirror of organization, let him observe his reactions to hierarchy of functions, to authority for co-ordination and to disciplines for the continuation or modified continuation of a pattern, and he will find through such observation what motives and desires he has projected upon these. In this very observation, the projections will drop out and the field of action will become clear and pure. The root of exploitation is not without, not in an organization—it lies within, in what man projects into the organization in which he works. He who seeks security through an organization makes that organization, whether technological or spiritual, into an instrument of exploitation. And he who runs away from an organization because it is an instrument of exploitation is still caught up in the movement of security. One

man seeks security by remaining in an organization; the other person seeks security by running away from that organization. The solution lies in standing still *where one is* so as to observe oneself in the mirror of one's environment—organizational and otherwise. Any action that emerges from this point of observation will be right action. such right action may result in man's continuing in an organization or in his leaving that organization and taking up some other field of action. It is necessary for us to remember that both these actions may be right provided they arise from the observation of oneself and not from the condemnation or justification of one's organizational environment. He who thinks that he has to choose between leaving or not leaving an organization is engaged in immature thinking. One can be free from the

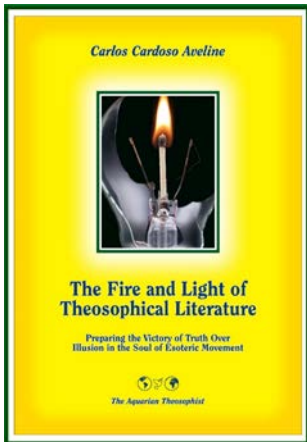
process of exploitation by looking at oneself where one is—not by moving either to the right or to the left. The action that naturally and spontaneously arises in this background is the right or spiritual action. In such an action there is, on the part of the individual, no condemnation of, or identification with, anything that is external to him. He is utterly free either within or without an organization. And such freedom indeed is the essence of true spiritual living.

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The End of “Spiritual Organization & Exploitation”.

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On the role of the esoteric movement in the ethical awakening of mankind during the 21st century, see the book “**The Fire and Light of Theosophical Literature**”, by Carlos Cardoso Aveline.



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