

The Latihan Place

By Hossanah Diver

I have been thirty-five years in Subud and during that time I have belonged to seven different groups in Britain and Ireland and have done latihan in many others, as well as visiting European groups abroad when attending Zonal meetings. The first Subud-owned house I had experience of had latihan rooms carpeted in celestial blue for the women and brown for the men. Latihan was followed by tea and chat and the whole evening was a pleasurable experience. That was the early days. In the following years, in many hired halls, I latihan on shiny school floors, floorboards with splinters and lino that had been spared a clean. Finally, comforts lessened to such a degree that even the tea or coffee was no more. In the space of thirty-five years it seems that our energy to follow Bapak's advice and obtain our own premises has slowly dissipated and in many places we now have a rushed quiet before and after latihan and then it's "down tools" and make for home.

I have fond memories of those early years with the leisurely socialising after latihan and even, in some groups, a few hours of work on the group house. Recently I was reading a 1980s issue of *Subud World* and was reminded of the positive surge of energy that was with Subud at that time and the buoyant optimism that was almost a banner of those days. Now doubts quietly stir in my mind. Can I expect life-changing results from my latihan experience in a drab hall with a rushed quiet before and after the latihan? How would an applicant view our sombre hired surroundings? Bapak urged us to find a home for the latihan: a place where we could pursue plans for group events, whether kejiwaan or social; a place where we would be uninterrupted by other people's activities.

We were told that the optimum number of latihan per week with the group is two and yet many are only able to visit the group once a week. There have been occasions—zonal gatherings, kejiwaan weekends, congresses—when, for me, the power of the latihan has been very apparent and the concentration of latihan over several days has had a powerful effect. Grievances have almost become extinguished and memories of past discontents have had no focus. I have felt that if I could achieve this state once a week or even once a month I would feel I was travelling somewhere. Where we own our own latihan premises, or at least rent on a permanent basis, we are enabled to have this concentration of latihan if we so desire.

On occasion, friends have asked me where our Subud meetings are held. I would like to be able to describe a place which is well cared for, Subud symbol on the door, and inside an interior that is both welcoming and peaceful. However, the reality is that our rather drab hall hardly seems a suitable backdrop for the latihan, which is, in my opinion, a precious gift for mankind.

Having got so far describing the benefits of a group-owned premises, I now

recall visits to Subud houses where, like a shadow on the wall, I could have made an entrance and an exit without a greeting either way. There was no recognition of the need for a degree of welcome for visitors. This for me is of an even higher importance than owning our own property.

In this decade of haste and efficiency perhaps we need to look afresh at the place where our latihan is held and ensure that it is a welcoming space for ourselves and for those who in future may join us.