

Triptych

Travelling Nowhere Fast

by Hossanah Diver

An image came to mind of children grouped in a forest glade, shafts of sunlight filtering through the tall trees directed on them. There was something fairy-like about the scene, protected and idyllic. It was a moment which could have been encapsulated for the eye of an artist. Perhaps the real world was roaring away at a distance of a few yards, but this idyllic place, this Elysium, was filled with peace and undisturbed.

I had just returned to group latihan after a few months away, and perhaps this was why the imagined scene played before my eyes. In the group space there was no discussion of national and international events from the non-Subud world, no discussion about pressing world problems, no news about work or enterprise or charitable events in which people were involved but, rather, reportage of problems which members were going through. Charity was exhibited as caring for those in the group who were experiencing difficulties. Whilst being aware that I myself had frequently been a recipient of kindness and testing sessions, I now thought about widening this charitable perspective to include the world outside. Looking at my feelings objectively, it seemed as though, rightly or wrongly, I had certain expectations which were not being met. Had we climbed into a hole, not even tentatively lifting the lid to peer out?

From the central theme of my imagination, my thoughts roamed on to the young people of this world, those who are growing into an ever materialistic and tumultuous society without ever experiencing the benefits of the latihan. If they were exposed to information about Subud, would they find the word itself strange? Would they find it incongruous that many members had Moslem names without practising the faith? Would they find the frequent references to out of context quotations from Bapak talks difficult to grasp? Then, on further inquiry, would they conclude that we used testing about anything and everything, even financial matters when our God-given brains were quite adequate for the task? Would they find a 21st century religion when they sourced the world Subud site? I have found from conversations with friends in Subud that feelings of reticence are often experienced when introducing the topic of Subud into conversation with outsiders. Is this because our terms or jargon are not “user friendly”?

In the third visual scene in this triptych of images which my mind seemed to be creating was a scroll with a list of enterprises which had been started up, shut down or at least thought about. This was our endeavors to put into practice the gift of the latihan. I mentally imagined free and supportive discussion for members who had embarked on this path--a difficult journey fraught with trials, along which many could stumble, needing encouragement to continue. Groups had become something other than mini-centres for helping people with personal problems and were sharing and energising the hopes of people who were also bringing their latihan inspired work out into the world.

In conclusion, I dare to ask whether we, who have been in Subud for more than half a lifetime, are now in a time warp so that we cannot step aside and view Subud as outsiders would. Church and state change over the years, and surely we have now reached a time when we could experience expansion within ourselves and accommodate a viewpoint of how Subud could make a pathway into the world? We have been guardians of the sanctity of Subud for many years, but is there fear within us, fear of losing what was given to us, and fear of accepting the new? Surely it is time to acquire clarity and assess where we are going and look at Subud from the outside in. I personally do not feel that the latihan was sent for us to create an idyllic, comforting zone around ourselves.