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Latihan for All Humanity

By Léonard Lassalle

For quite some time now, I have been wanting to share with Subud the radical change in my way, as a Subud helper, of helping people access the latihan and easing the spread of the latihan in my own neighbourhood and region.

So many of us, the older generation, are slowly returning our bodies back to the earth. This is a good thing, as we are leaving more space for the younger generation to take over.

I hope that they will not follow our footsteps but be more inventive, discover their own ways to spread the latihan. It seems to me that we have not been such brilliant examples of doing this in our local communities.

My reason for sharing my experience is to encourage the younger generations to be freer, to follow more their receiving and not to be so bound by the many regulations that we have tied ourselves to, regarding the approach to newcomers.

We call them applicants or probationers; is it really necessary to label them as such?

Would it not be better to keep the words that crystallise a situation out of our vocabulary, so as not to label anyone? Could we not invite the newly interested friends into our homes for tea or even a meal, allowing ourselves to listen to what they have to tell us, thus start to be attentive to their terms and expressions, and then use their language when we talk to them about the effect of the latihan in our lives?

To me the priority is not to spread Subud, but to make the latihan accessible to as many people as possible. We have too often 'sold' Subud, instead of simply being an example through our loving behaviour. People come to the latihan not by what we say, but by how we are. They respond to our care and love; it touches them and opens their feelings.

Is it really so important for people to become members of our Subud organisation right at the time when they start latihan — by making them fill in forms — and even in some countries produce a photograph?

Let the friends who have just started, first really feel the latihan deeply, experience its benefits for themselves, in their time, not in ours, in their space, at their speed. Then, if the practice of the latihan satisfies them, they will naturally become curious and want to know more about the Subud organisation.

During the past ten years or so, I have not been following what the great majority of Subud helpers consider to be the norm. Most of the people who have received the contact in our local community have received and practised the latihan, and like ourselves, are still benefiting greatly by it.

Some of them have felt the need to join the organisation officially, others have not, for reasons that fit their situation. Is not the latihan for the world at large?

If the Subud organisation wanted to keep the latihan just for Subud 'members', then that would be a sad thing and would then bring me to wonder whether I would really want to belong to this organisation.

The reflections that follow are part of my experience and I hope that they will contribute to clarify what I am saying: I have noticed how new-born children are totally connected to their inner presence. The expression of each feeling, each movement, seems to be moved by impulses that come from the depth of their origin, as if they were programmed and guided by a cosmic Intelligence.

I have been amazed at the speed of their development, how quickly they learn to cope, not only with their own growth, but also with all the things and emotions that surround them.

This divine connection must equally be present in any newborn. Would the fast, harmonious growth be because of their total letting go, in full trust? Following whatever comes from within, with no resistance whatsoever, without doubting it or questioning it?

Letting sounds and movements freely out. Is that not similar to what we call the latihan? If so, it must mean that the latihan is latent in all human beings. If the latihan is for the whole of humanity, then it must belong to all, not just to the 'Subud organisation'.

I am getting on in age now, over fifty years with the latihan, and I am realising that there is an urgency to loosen up our official approach when being with people interested in the latihan.

Most parents and teachers are rarely aware of the fragility of this Divine Natural Process, and tend to enforce their ideas and traditions, thus often blocking the way for this unique process to continue to evolve in us.

These blockages end up by completely obstructing the natural guidance from within. It seems to me that through parental and school unawareness, the child/person slowly begins to lose this original connection; this inner breath of wisdom becomes less and less present until it is completely forgotten.

How can we refuse the latihan to anyone when it is not ours? Are we like the unconscious parents or teachers who are not aware that the vibration of the latihan is already latent in the people that form the society around us?

Times are changing, together with language, and I find that I am continuously adapting my use of words to whoever I am speaking to. At the time of witnessing the first latihan of a brother, I rarely read Bapak's words now, but follow what my inner tells me is appropriate to say, so that the new member will feel completely relaxed and comfortable.

Bapak's religious language can be offensive to some and is not always appropriate. How can we mention the word God or any religious words to someone who has suffered because of religious practices and who finds them offensive? If we do, we will act like the unconscious parent, resulting in the closing of their inner door, and putting further away their possibility of coming into contact with the vibration of the latihan.

We are responsible for creating the silent space that people need to open their feelings to us and share whatever they need to share so that they can feel at ease. Love and care is what I feel will spread the latihan. The latihan is not ours to

possess, it belongs to all who ask.

What I have written is about my own realisation and I hope that it will be well received.

Excerpt from a recent letter by the author to a Subud Vision editor:

We have started what one could call an 'experimental group' (about fifteen souls). First of all we have adapted our vocabulary to today's reality: i.e. the terms 'opening', 'helper', 'three months waiting', 'Almighty God' (except if talking to a converted Muslim), and a whole necklace of 'Subud' set words are out. Instead of using that ambiguous word 'opening', we call it simply 'the first latihan' — which is the first step to a new spiritual awareness through the practice of the latihan.

The word 'helper' causes many misunderstandings; it creates a kind of difference between the ones who carry that name and those who do not. In our thriving group, we do not use that word that so often is misleading about the reality. We have found that the enquirer, if not directed to a 'helper', will turn towards the person that he or she feels is most likely to give the answer he or she needs to hear. The enquirers will use their feelings to turn to the person they feel they can trust the most. Thus, there will be a kind of natural selection.

The waiting period: we do not have a waiting period. With the person wanting to do latihan, we simply feel with them when the best time will be to take their first latihan.

We do not talk, except of course if asked, about Subud and its organisation. We first listen to the person interested and give him or her explanations only when asked and always from our own individual experience of the latihan.

The words 'Almighty God' and the word 'God', we only use if enquirers use these words themselves. Of course, before their first latihan, we only receive spontaneously the words that will help to quieten the feelings of the person so that they are completely relaxed. What counts is the human contact. We continue to care and love the people who come to know about latihan. But we let them approach it in their own time, without any hurry or pressure to talk about 'Subud'.