

Presence in the World

By Lusijah Rott

Subud's presence in the world is a focus these days in the Subud world. A key part of this idea is—why has Subud not grown?

Related to this is a comment that every Subud member has heard: “The spread of Subud is in God's hands.” I have heard and read about this many times from Bapak's talks, Ibu Rahayu's talks, and talk by old-time members. Bapak spoke about the spread of Subud and the importance of the latihan for the world; how it was God's will that many people practise the latihan. One could also say confidently that God's will is for mankind to live harmoniously. We don't have world peace and Subud is not growing. So where is the disconnect? If it is God's will, why has it not happened?

I believe the missing piece is how we as Subud members have interpreted this idea. I have heard, especially from long-time Subud members, that since the spread of Subud is in God's hands, we don't need to do anything, suggesting that if we even want to do something—this wish is arising from the lower forces. I see that Subud has not grown with a passive, “leave it to God” attitude. As a pragmatist, I would like to challenge this mind set. It seems clear from the condition of the world now and throughout history that God's will is never something he imposes on mankind but is rather a direction for human beings to follow. I propose that, as with world peace, there is some contribution that we human beings need to make to see the fruition of God's will.

Throughout history, big changes have started with the commitment of one person—to a receiving, in the case of the prophets, or an idea, in the case of works that benefit others. To extend the inspiration from that first person, many others are needed to follow, join in, endorse, and become committed to furthering that mission by giving their energy, time, money, and talents. Accordingly, in Subud terms, it takes work (use of the lower forces) to bring the initial inspiration into a tangible reality. Good works throughout history could not have come to fruition without this second component.

The mission of Subud can be divided into the core mission, which is the practice of the latihan, and the broader mission—loosely, the manifestation of the latihan in the world. Bapak spoke many times about what would be considered the fruits of the latihan as a natural extension of the practice. People with true human qualities are able to see beyond their own needs; they experience a wish to be charitable, to help others. Likewise the area of creative expression—human culture—is an outgrowth of the latihan. The impulses that arise from the practice of the latihan have the potential to provide tangible proof of what the latihan can do and touch others.

I suggest that there is a lack of consensus on how Subud manifests the core and the broader missions of Subud. The historical view, in my opinion, has been that resources should be directed to membership needs and purchase of Subud Houses. As far as I know, we have never asked the question: what is the full scope of the Subud mission and how do we get there? How is the presence of Subud in the world

best served? How do we invite more people to experience the latihan? Should we be anxiously watching the pot of money, or should we rather support activity that manifests the fruits of the latihan, that touches people and benefits others beyond our small community? How do we use our time, money and talents in the way that best serves Subud, its growth and its presence in the world? Should assets be kept safe in a brokerage account; should resources be used simply for producing income; should under-utilized Subud houses be kept when there are few members doing latihan in those houses? Should there be any organizational effort to encourage activity that falls within the broader mission of Subud?

I believe manifesting the fruits of the latihan is ultimately what Subud members individually and collectively need to do to make headway with the growth of Subud and Subud's presence in the world. This does not diminish the core mission, worship of God through the latihan. Rather, it is putting human, horse, and cart in a workable order or relationship so that we can move forward.

Worship of God:

Understanding our responsibility and role on this earth as people of God. Giving of ourselves to reflect the light of the latihan outward as a way of giving thanks to God.

Working together with others:

Everyone can have a role according to their own personal gifts. Some are the idea people; some are the nuts and bolts doers; some have specific talents to offer; some have no time, but resources; some have an angel's touch that helps make others' jobs light (dear brother Hamid Camp—that's you); some can use their hands; some can touch others through arts and education; some can just show up. All are extremely important and necessary roles.

One very good and successful example of the manifestation of the latihan beyond our own community is "Tuning In", which takes place at Seven Circles Retreat. This program was developed by three Subud members who are very gifted educators (Mahalia LoMele, Emmanuel Williams, and Sulfiati Harris) and it has touched hundreds of children through creative expression that fosters a joy and a belief in oneself. The local community around Seven Circles has a very good feeling about Subud as a direct result. As Emmanuel Williams, one of the founders of "Tuning In" has said, people are touched and appreciative when a program does good for the children in the community. "YES Quest" is another program that has touched Subud youth and adults and could benefit older youth and adults outside of Subud. These programs need more people and financial support for the programs to fulfill their potential.

I believe that the focus should not be on why Subud is not growing or even on how Subud can have more presence in the world. I believe that there needs to be some exploration of the breadth of the Subud mission and how that is best served. Is Subud to be an inward-directed organization only intent on the needs of its own members? Or is Subud's presence in the world better served by putting effort and resources into support of individuals or projects that, guided by the latihan, do good works that go beyond our own community. I think an important aspect of an expanded Subud presence in the world is the manifestation of the gift of the latihan outward, beyond the Subud membership.

