

# Towards a Subud Renewal

By Michael Rogge

When I look at the present situation of Subud in Holland, I see new members and older ones leaving. This is nothing new but a situation that has existed since Subud was introduced. There is apparently a dissatisfaction with what Subud has to offer. A few of the reasons being:

- A. Although new members have the expectation that they will have experiences following the opening, they feel nothing in subsequent latihan.
- B. 'Explanations' are too far removed from daily life, from a modern view of society and from the psychological insights gained from more than a century of clinical experience.
- C. Personalities within the group do not instil confidence and make people wonder what benefit they can expect from the latihan.

## Types of applicants

In order to change Subud we have to examine the basics of what we have to offer and to whom? There are many types of aspiring members, each with their own kind of motivation:

- A. First of all there are the ones who have been moved to join Subud out of a genuine spiritual aspiration.
- B. Other applicants may be searching for a way to make sense of the dreadful aspects of life around them and for an escape.
- C. Some people are wrestling with an unacknowledged psychological problem for which they are unconsciously seeking a solution. They may be experiencing inner conflict, a feeling of emptiness, or a lack of purpose.
- D. Then there are those who are suffering from feelings of isolation and loneliness. Lacking true companionship, they may have a longing to be accepted into a fraternity of kindred souls.
- E. Others have already been members of other movements and have read up extensively on disciplines and their accompanying philosophies.
- F. For younger people Subud may be an escape from having to enter into a harsh materialistic society. They are searching for something spiritual beyond it.

## What is our basic approach?

The difference between Subud and most other spiritual movements is that we do not practise a discipline, a set, pre-conceived method (such as in yoga and meditation) leading to a focused mind. Instead we hope to reach the same objective and more by relying on a process of inner healing and attunement.

In fact we have faith that deep within us is an integrating power, a dormant healing process akin to the automatic healing of bodily ailments on the physical level. Bapak called this the Great Life Force.

We hope to awaken this process by placing our trust in it, even when we have not experienced it yet. That trust or belief is a necessary precondition for the process to work.

As I see it, the liberating effect of releasing tensions in the latihan leads us to a way of submission and surrender. We attune ourselves to spiritual forces that may lead us to a state of grace and contact with the Divine. What we need is to develop an inward sense that can feel the state of our body and mind. The next step is to submit any felt disharmony or 'heaviness' to change. Once the fragmented mind has reached some kind of wholeness it is capable of sensing and tuning in to intimations coming from deep within. Then spiritual forces may awaken and fill our being to a level beyond intellect that is indescribable. This may sound vague and remote and maybe shouldn't be mentioned initially as the experience is rather personal and different for everyone.

Normally, in explanations the emphasis is laid upon the uniqueness of the latihan. It is maintained that a spiritual force touches the person being opened. I have come to doubt that statement. There are a number of movements all over the world in which similar manifestations take place, although their practice may differ from ours. In my opinion all that happens is that we submit to a power, dormant within us, that can reintegrate our being and make us aware of the spirit reaching out to us. Holistically, the individual mirrors all of existence, and may develop to become more and more in touch with it.

I question the idea that God has a preconceived Will for man to follow. (I happened to watch Subud TV coverage of the Christchurch Congress and specifically the answers visitors gave to interviewers. It was striking that they all hoped to become aware of the Will of God and God's guidance). My feeling is that we all have free will and that we should aspire to a state where we would be aware of the right action to be taken in any given circumstances. With a clear untroubled mind we may grasp all aspects of a situation and consequently the way to meet the challenge.

### **Subud in daily life**

More emphasis should be laid on practising awareness or mindfulness during the day: not necessarily doing latihans at home but setting apart moments of reflection, of turning inside, opening oneself up to receiving, possibly at a fixed time and in the same place. We should try to feel our inner state and transcend it to establish inner contact again. We may not always succeed, but it's important to make the effort.

Latihans are fine but they are not directly linked to external conditions. Only in practice, in daily activities, in meeting and dealing with turbulent situations and emotional states, can inner development take place.

### **Testing**

Testing should be more geared to the needs of the applicant. That is to say, to his immediate psychological problems. Not to hypothetical situations such as, how would the population of a country be affected if a great number of its inhabitants did the latihan, or how is it for each of us if we invest in this or that Subud enterprise? Nor to questions that can be solved with the mind. This sort of thing is done in pendulum divination and should be left to clairvoyants.

Appropriate questions might be: How do I feel when scorned? And how should my attitude be in such a situation? In this type of questioning, human frailties such as jealousy, envy, anger, impatience, or feelings of being worthless, hopeless, or desperate, could be subjected to a test. The aim being to develop a technique to deal with situations arising out of uncontrollable, instinctive feelings and urges.

### **On following Bapak**

Finally, making improvements to how Subud is presented and explained should not be seen as a criticism of Bapak. Bapak himself was keen on listening to people who dared to come out with their opinions. He even said that one can learn much from critics.

His background was Sufi-style mysticism as practised and taught on Java. His greatness is the grace manifesting in him which could be transferred to people who asked for it. If we had this gift to a similar degree we might have the same effect, but judging from the numbers of people who leave, we do not have enough of that grace to impress outsiders.

Being aware of this should humble us.

I realize that the above is a personal approach. I am interested to hear other opinions.