

Notes from an Old-timer

By Old-timer

I qualify for the term Old-timer because: I was opened forty-six years ago, have been local, regional, national and international helper, traveled with Bapak, lived in Cilandak, etc.

I cannot supply you with chapter and verse but Bapak did say, “Don’t believe what I say without your own evidence.”

□ “Don’t believe what I say.” This is an important statement, because it lets everyone off the hook—especially the new people in Subud, and the second and third generations. It throws the experience of the latihan back at them, as something they have to verify for themselves. It’s much harder that way, of course. Choosing, for example, not to read talks or explanations (because of the ‘inflammatory, sexist, old-fashioned, culture-bound, elitist content’) means that they’re going to have to stumble around and find some answers for themselves. Or maybe not!

Another reason why this statement is important is because it should shut everybody up. No need to complain about ‘Bapakists’ or whatever other distasteful label is being handed out, —because we have been given a choice by Bapak himself, to ‘believe’ or not to believe what he has said.

So what is all the fuss about?

The fuss is about us Old-timers. We are the ones who have wanted to be believed. “Believe us, and you’ll be doing the ‘right thing’. Follow our rules, and you can’t go wrong. Carry the old culture, lock, stock and barrel, into the future, and you’ll be rewarded.”

There’s a fine line we have to watch out for. Subud has not grown, and I am still partly convinced that this has nothing to do with us, that it is indeed God’s will (and this without quotation marks). The fact is, I don’t know.

But I do know one thing: something doesn’t feel right.

The latihan has not yet become available, as a normal occurrence in everyday life, for everyone on the planet. I used to tell my kids, “Latihan is like brushing your teeth. You just do it. You don’t say, ‘I’m not sure brushing my teeth has any value’ or ‘How about if I just don’t do it’ or ‘I can’t be bothered.’”

Many of us Old-timers, steeped in the Old Culture, have had our feelings hurt by disrespectful comments from the young: repudiations, scoffs, verbal middle fingers. So let’s ask them: “What have you got to offer? How would you do it?”

How do you introduce the latihan to your peers so that it is something they’ll want to taste and ingest? And having done so, how will you ‘close the deal’?

I throw this gauntlet to all young Subud members. Where is the new *Concerning Subud*? Where is the new *Stairway to Subud*? Where are your new pamphlets, flyers, zines, web pages, blogs? Come on! For God's sake, share it, the SY's and you local guys, in a language, a context appropriate for this world, at this time. Don't just indulge in spiritual masturbation! There, I've said it. Apologies.

We have failed, okay? Except for the brave souls who have 'boldly gone' and brought the latihan to foreign shores for the first time. To them I raise my hat.

I dream of a day when a Latihan Room will be located beside the Workout Room, the Yoga Room, the toilets, the newspaper stand, in every airport of the world, and in every mall, in every hotel. When the businessman at JFK will latihan beside the janitor and the Ethiopian Ambassador. When the CEO of a large company stops by the Latihan Room after his lunch break or before his morning coffee, he will know the latihan as an unexpected taste of bliss, a source of guidance. It will be nameless, country-less, culture-less, without any association for him. (Oh, he might have a membership card; I'm not saying no organization at all.) It will be a part of his life. He will do latihan there at work and in his latihan room at home. That's how common it will be. Like brushing your teeth.

For now, let's disengage from the 'Culture' in our introduction of the Subud latihan to others. Let's remind them of a Universal Receiving. A Universal Training. As deeply respectful as I am of Bapak, let's speak of him later on in the process, or—unless specifically asked—after the new member has been doing latihan. Let us remove cultural, religious, and mystical terms from our introduction to Subud. We have no choice, at this time in history, but to clear the board of past associations in our discourses—no choice, because the old approach is not working!

As Ibu Rahayu has suggested, introduce the educational, developmental aspect of the latihan. Also, the works of SDI and the Wings as they become better known examples in their own right. The key word is 'example'.

The above are some of my personal reflections on introducing Subud.

To the Helpers, I give this advice: "Above all, do no harm!"

And for our 'younger members' on whom our future stands, I mean it. Bring a brochure, a flyer, a film, something, to the congresses. Show us what you've got.

God bless us all.