

# Subud, Spirituality and the Body Electric

By Paul O'Brien

I was opened in 1980. My latihan were never tremendously strong or active, but as I looked about me they seemed average enough and gave me some degree of peace. I noticed some improvement in my life as far as feeling more connected to inner guidance. Whatever I got, it was enough for me to do latihan faithfully for the next twenty-two years. Over that time, though, I began to notice a disturbing trend emerge. Increasingly (I can't pinpoint exactly when it started) I had less and less tolerance for testing, e.g. I would feel overwhelmed after two testing questions and couldn't continue. My receiving was also becoming almost non-existent as the years progressed, so that I formed a negative attitude about testing in general. I didn't know what to do about it, as it seemed testing was the only recommended approach for dealing with a problem of this kind.

Around 2000 I fell into a state of anxiety and depression, something I was only able to combat through hypnosis and then by finally going back to a religious focus and attending a church. In my second Subud year I had received a deep Holy Spirit experience at a church but had left after six months due to belief conflicts I couldn't reconcile at the time. Going back to church lifted me out of the depression very effectively – where the latihan seemingly could not – and catapulted me into some wonderful experiences. Out of all that I made a decision to stop doing latihan. Surely part of the reason for this at the time was that I wasn't sure this latihan thing was really 'of God' while what I was tapping into through the Pentecostal vein seemed to be the real deal. The weakness of my latihan was undoubtedly another factor. The only kind of receiving I was capable of at that time was heavily influenced by my church experiences and I understood I was to 'give everything else up' for following Jesus. So I did and wouldn't return to the latihan again for seven years. (To be precise I did do about five latihan after roughly four or five years, then quit again.)

About five and a half years into this 'no latihan' phase, I came to the realization that I was feeling very tired all the time. Life had really lost its zing and it felt like I was just going through the motions. I was fifty-five at this point and it just didn't make sense to me that I was so exhausted all the time. For this reason I decided to go to a local health exposition where a fellow named Denie Hiestand was giving a talk. Denie had written a book called *Electrical Nutrition* that I had read years ago at the urging of a fellow Subud member who was seriously trying to get his health on track. I had liked the book but had not felt desperate enough to commit myself to diet changes that would eliminate some of my favourite foods.

Now I was more desperate. It turned out that I also liked Denie's energy, his vitality and the fact that he had spiritual healing gifts to offer. I went to a session with him hoping for a healing energy boost, but instead he told me I was like a dead battery and that he couldn't channel any healing energy to me until I got my body mineralized, cut out all grains and took lots of digestive enzymes to get my rotten digestion working again.

I should explain a bit about what he teaches: the idea is that we are electrical beings more than chemical and that our bodies need food that effectively converts into electrical energy through the digestive process. From this perspective foods that sound good chemically don't always make the grade. Most grains and all processed foods should be eliminated and the emphasis should be on protein and natural fats as the best source of electrical health. He points to nature and how the vast majority of animals rely on protein for their food (with some exceptions like cows and other animals that have huge digestive systems designed to handle the breaking down of vegetation). Denie is firmly against vegetarianism, which makes him pretty controversial, but I think his main point is that you need to eat food that is as raw and natural as possible and get your nutrition primarily from protein and natural fat.

However, the really big foundation of his diet is getting a regular supply of whole food source minerals into your body. Minerals form the foundation of a healthy electrical body. Minerals serve many essential functions, not the least of which is helping the body deal with stress. Our foods have lost a lot of their mineral content over the last hundred years due to soil depletion and a general decline in healthy eating. Without minerals our bodies lose their electrical functionality and nothing else we do nutritionally or otherwise will be of any benefit.

I should add that Denie also teaches week-long courses where he incorporates spiritual practice into his diet concepts, thus making very clear the connections between the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual spheres of life, all based on the workings of electrical energy in the body.

Denie appeared to me at this point to be someone who really understood the human condition, from the most physical level up to the spiritual, and I knew I had to listen to him. So, shocked by his 'dead battery' pronouncement, I signed up for this radical change in my eating habits. I had spent my whole life avoiding any kind of nutritional discipline despite leaning towards what most would consider to be a healthy diet. I had slowly drifted to a place where health-wise I was just keeping my head above water but was certainly not thriving. I applied myself diligently to this new lifestyle. Gone were the familiar cookie stops on my daily rounds. My diet was stripped down to some very limited choices. I ate far more dairy, eggs and meat and took enzymes to help digest it all. I started to feel more energy as the months went by. Within three months I lost two pant sizes and was back to the old familiar body shape that I'd had for most of my life. I went for more healings to Denie, three more visits over the next six months. At successive visits he would lay hands on me and tell me that my body was progressively becoming a better battery and that I could hold more and more of the energy that he was channelling. I started to see evidence of this. For example, there was one very memorable experience I had in our church's prayer group where I experienced a particularly powerful in-flowing of divine grace. It was different from anything I had ever experienced because every time I started talking to others about what had happened I would feel a jolt of electrical energy shoot through me and I would tear up. The truly amazing thing about this experience was that it never completely left me but has lasted in a lesser form to this day. Denie told me later that I had 'made contact' and that this was a significant sign of progress in my spiritual path.

So a year and a half went by. I was clearly much healthier now and had a lot more

energy. My spirits were better. Then on the heels of these changes came a few outer changes. I was inwardly guided both to drop my involvement with the church and then, not long after, in the wake of a Subud-related dream, to rejoin Subud. That was about three months ago.

This is where the story gets interesting. My latihan, after seven years' absence, was immediately very active and full of life in a way I had never seen in those first twenty-two years. I could do massive amounts of testing now, receive clearly, and not be blown away by it. I even had strong latihan on my own, which was *very* different from before.

I started wondering if there was a connection between the health improvements I had made and my renewed latihan. Something spoke to me strongly that I was on the right track whenever I brought this up to people. I had always recognized the latihan as a quickening, an infusion of life force into my being. I don't think it is far-fetched to say that the latihan may be quite literally a form of electrical energy being fed into the body, mind and spirit. Perhaps we need a strong enough body to 'hold' this energy and be a conduit for it. Maybe combining a mineral-depleted body with the latihan is like running electrical current through a house with old wiring.

I looked back on my previous discouraging experience with testing. Why was the whole process so much clearer now? Why could I now handle all that concentrated latihan energy whereas before I couldn't? What had changed? Was there really a connection between the spiritual and physical where the latihan was concerned and if so, how many others could be missing out on the spiritual blessing that the latihan could bring? Could it be one of the reasons why some older people who get opened don't stick around and don't receive very well? Could it explain why people reach a sort of plateau in their latihan and perhaps lose interest for lack of a sense that they are doing something worthwhile? I knew I shouldn't generalize from my own experience but couldn't shake the feeling that I was onto something.

So many questions arose from this potential discovery. Could it have been Denie's healing treatments, more than the diet, that had really made this shift in my latihan experience? I doubted that because I had only had three and the last had been a year earlier, though I don't doubt they helped accelerate my progress. Had my latihan made a quantum leap or was I just going through a phase? Do active latihan really matter that much? (I think they do.) Had I gone through other changes in those seven years away that would explain my revived latihan? Certainly my Christian experiences could have had a good effect but I think the handful of latihan I did a few years ago would have reflected that influence if it was there. There was nothing notable that I can recall about those few latihan and as a result at the time I didn't feel encouraged to persevere.

I keep thinking back to all the things Denie conveyed to me. His credibility is rooted in his amazing story. He clawed his way back from near death when he was a younger man, a self-admitted macho dairy farmer out of touch with himself, his health and life in general. Then through some miraculous circumstances he found his way to health, and out of this physical rebirth all his inner abilities rose to the surface. He didn't set out to be a healer and psychic, but rather these things just appeared when he became healthy. He seemed to be truly called and has been on a mission to help people ever

since. Denie is able to see what is going on inside people's bodies energetically. He is a sensitive who has been able to feel earthquakes before they occur, among other gifts. Through a combination of inner experience and outer research, he has seen clear evidence that we are electrical beings right from the most physical to the most spiritual aspect of ourselves. The finer life forces, with which he has become quite familiar, have spoken to him of this truth, not to mention his experience doing healings and consultations for around 30,000 people. I feel I have to take him seriously.

That said, I'm not sure how much my experience applies to others. It could be that while I seem to have found just what my body needs, a lack of minerals may not be an issue for everyone. But I can't deny that what I am doing produces sound results and might do the same for anyone else who tried it. Few would argue against the wisdom of a holistic approach. In the end all I can do is offer up my experience and hope that perhaps it resonates for someone else. Anyone who has had a similar experience to mine, i.e. a latihan that has seemed to deteriorate over the years, a decreased ability to handle testing or to receive clearly, or even an increasing lack of physical vitality, might want to consider that the electrical integrity of the body, and primarily the body's need for a full spectrum of well-assimilated minerals, could be the piece of knowledge that will make a difference in their lives.

How much better is my latihan now? Well, some testing I did recently compared my latihan over the years to how it was when I returned three months ago and then again to the present time. It revealed quite a striking improvement, from before I quit to after the seven year absence, and then surprisingly even stronger in just the past three months. I do know for certain that I value the latihan now in a way I never did before and see it as a much bigger factor in my life. It is such a joy now and something I really look forward to (unlike the later period of my first twenty-two years). It's as if my whole self is engaged in worship, from tip to toe. It's as if all parts of my being are getting to participate in the experience. I can't convey enough the sense I have that my whole being has been rewired and nowhere does this get reflected more than in my latihan.

Has all this improved latihan made any difference in my life? The major difference I've noticed is that I am now getting inner guidance at times throughout the day instead of only for very big decisions. I am seeing signs that electrically, energetically, I am rising up like a Phoenix now that I am doing regular latihan *and* living a healthier lifestyle. I've come a long way in less than two years. Of course improving my physical health has not solved all my problems by any means. I still have to deal with all the same personality issues I've always had but at least now I feel I have a fighting chance to tackle what life throws at me. You can't do much if you're tired all the time.

I look back and realize that the whole process that led me to action was a type of receiving and I am thankful. I have been encouraged by my success and have adopted other health-related practises to further enhance my quality of life. I am now exploring Reconnective Healing, something Miranda Wilson did a workshop on at the New Zealand World Congress, and finding that it is bringing about amazing changes in my life experience.

How open are we in Subud to the idea that the latihan can be affected by the state of

our bodies? I'll admit myself to never drawing much of a connection between the two. In Subud, I think we tend to put the working of the latihan into a separate category, as if the whole process and the parts of us being affected by it are so otherworldly that nothing we do in the material realm could ever influence its overall effectiveness. It's easy to interpret the fact that we don't 'do' anything to receive the latihan to mean that the state of body/mind we bring to it has no bearing. Maybe this is a mistaken idea, a dangerous distortion of the truth. Not to say that Subud people ignore health, but I'm just pointing out that there might be an oversight here based on a simple lack of knowledge. I'm not aware that Bapak spoke much about looking after your bodily health and if he did I imagine it was only in general terms.

Don't think small. Don't shut your mind up into neat categories you've accepted from the past. If there's anything I've picked up from reading all the articles on Subud Vision's website, it's that we've put God in a box and kept Him/Her there and are paying the price.

I know it took a sense of desperation for me to be ready to take action. It isn't easy to change old habits. I realize how much I had just drifted over the years into a sense that I could do nothing and my increasing fatigue had just reinforced that feeling. I can only encourage you to look at your life, imagine how much better it could be and make that decision for change.

I feel deep inner support in sharing this with other Subud members and I hope it just might be the ticket for at least some of you who are wondering what happened to the life you had and the promise that you used to feel.

If you are interested to learn more about electrical nutrition, Reconnective Healing or some of the other things that I have found helpful I invite you to contact me at [fiddlerpaul@gmail.com](mailto:fiddlerpaul@gmail.com).

### **Update:**

Three months have passed since I wrote this article. Nothing new has come to my awareness that would alter my original conclusions. My latihan has continued to evolve, moving from very energized and outward expressions to a deeper, surrendered receiving. The bottom line is that they are still much more alive, which is what really matters. I am still able to handle lots of testing.