

The Closings

By Sahlan Diver

This article is a work of fiction. It was written In 2006, before the start of the Subud Vision project. Any resemblance to real persons or events is entirely coincidental.

Nobody knows for certain when the closings started. What is generally agreed is that the first recorded case was one John Kelso, a Subud member living in the Highlands of Scotland. A loner and a difficult character at the best of times, John lived in an isolated cottage fifty miles drive from the nearest group, attending group latihan but rarely. So it was not thought at all unusual when John telephoned the helpers to say that the latihan he did at home had suddenly come to a stop. He was advised to attend the group, where testing or a special latihan could then be done for him. The helpers, considering the matter now dealt with by their good advice, duly forgot about it.

Some weeks later John telephoned again, complaining that his latihan was still at a stop but that recovery from a recent bout of flu was preventing him driving the long distance to the group. Helper Rasjid McPherson was dispatched to visit John at his cottage. He found John to be strangely different. During latihan John remained absolutely still throughout and was unable to receive anything in the subsequent testing. However, he stated that the visit had revived his spirits, admitted that the problem was probably an indication he should make efforts to attend group latihans, and promised to do so as soon as his health recovered. Rasjid McPherson reported the results of the trip back to the other group helpers, who expressed their satisfaction. The matter now seemed resolved. That was until Rasjid McPherson's latihan also came to a complete stop.

It was a month after the visit to John Kelso when Rasjid asked his fellow helpers to test. During his last two latihans at the group and the one he did at home Rasjid had not moved at all—he felt as if he had lost the ability to receive. The helpers' testing revealed no conclusive answers. It was suggested that maybe Rasjid was going through a “quiet phase”. If it occurred to anyone that John and Rasjid's latihans stopping at the same time was a strange coincidence, possibly an *uneasy* coincidence, no one remarked on it. Three weeks later, when the entire men's latihan came to a standstill, the coincidence was inescapable.

The men would stand together, a helper would say “begin”, and then... nothing. No movement, no sounds, no quietened feelings, just ten men standing there like statues, wondering if anything was going to happen. It was as if they had had never been opened. In the absence of any plausible explanation for the phenomenon, and with the men's group now *en masse* unable to test, various wild theories and rumours started to circulate. The most popular was the “mixing” theory. It was suggested that John Kelso had been dabbling in some alternative practise, very likely black magic, in the privacy of his isolated home and that a malign force had been transmitted from him through Rasjid McPherson onto the men's group. This theory gained special credence when it was noted that the women's latihan carried on as normal and appeared to be entirely unaffected. To test the theory, two young members even went so far as to organise a “stake-out”, camping for six nights in the hills overlooking John Kelso's cottage. They observed nothing suspicious.

Much wilder theories abounded, the most outrageous one appearing on a Subud bulletin board. It was suggested that the men's latihan had been visited by aliens, who beamed themselves in through the windows of the latihan hall in order to steal the latihan and take it back to their own galaxy. Apparently the blame had been deliberately placed on John Kelso as part of a cover-up involving both the US and British governments. It was claimed that John Kelso was in fact a CIA agent, impersonating a Scotsman, whose job it was to keep the alien visitation secret. The proof offered for CIA involvement was the surname KELSO, which was said to be being a well-known CIA code word for "Keep Each Lie Supremely Original".

More seriously, the national helpers were called in to test at the group premises. That they were able to latihan freely showed, at least, that any malign influence had not lodged itself at the group's latihan hall, however much it might have affected the individual members. Again, the testing was inconclusive. It was noted that several of the group members and the national helpers would be attending the World Congress, due to start the following week, and it was decided to postpone further investigation until a special session could be organised there with the international helpers.

Had we known at that moment what we now know, the worldwide catastrophe that followed might have been avoided. The men in that Scottish group were probably the first Subud members in the world to experience "closure", a process that can be transmitted from one person to another in the latihan, in just the same way that the opening is transmitted. And just as in an opening a member might take some weeks to show any movement, the converse happens in closure—it might take some weeks for a member's ability to receive to be fully extinguished. Rasjid Mcpherson had been "closed" the moment he started to latihan with John Kelso. He subsequently passed on the closure through latihan to the other men in the group. The national helpers in turn had been closed when they did latihan and testing with the group. The attendees at the World Congress were closed in the general latihan at which the closed visitors from Scotland were present. Finally groups around the world were closed when the World Congress attendees returned home and unwittingly spread the closure onwards. The cruelty of the situation lay in the time delay between the actual moment of closure and the point at which a person was no longer able to latihan. Typically three weeks, this gave ample opportunity for the closings to spread unsuspected throughout the world. Nor were the ladies exempt. It seems almost certain that a husband and wife couple must have latihan together at the world congress, thus spreading the closure process to the lady members also.

Some members escaped being closed. They were mostly elderly men who through illness or infirmity had kept away from group latihan. These members were sought out and asked to come together in a special international meeting to test about the situation in the hope that the practice of the latihan could be saved. Unfortunately one of them had, in fact, already been closed, but attended in the expectation that his latihan might be thereby revived. His presence duly led to the closure of the last remaining hopes for the survival of the latihan. So it was that, within a few months of the first closings, there remained only a handful of people in the whole world still able to practise the latihan. These few kept very much to themselves, avoiding all contact with other Subud members, for fear of being closed also.

WSA and the Zones made a brave attempt to keep up what they saw as the "spirit of Subud" by continuing to promote international meetings that featured great atmosphere and an abundance of good feelings, but with mainly inconsequential conclusions. "Just like old times", members would say. However, without the influence of the latihan, the efforts of WSA to maintain unity failed and Subud very quickly factionalised along a number of inherent fault lines. A substantial number of members felt that the only option for moving forward was to take the knowledge of the lower forces that they had gained from the latihan and

continue to study these forces with the mind. Elaborate training courses were devised and the new movement, “Force Controllers Incorporated”, with its own self-appointed gurus, became an international phenomenon, spreading through a lucrative, pyramid-selling scheme which later branched out into health products and cosmetics under the “JiwaFoods” brand name.

Another group of members, averse to both the “head-stuff” and blatant commercialism of the Force Controllers, asserted that we desperately needed to get advice and guidance from our Subud ancestors, and started to meet for twice-weekly “satihans” centred round spirit contact with dead Subud members through séances.

A much smaller number reverted to practises that had been Subud’s historical antecedents: Gurdjieff, Sufism, and so on. Most quit in disappointment—feeling that these practises offered no substitute for the latihan. Some members left Subud and converted to Islam or Buddhism. Those who didn’t convert became more diligent in observing Ramadan or Lent, and practising prihatin.

Finally there were a few people, very much in the minority, who believed that the latihan had been taken away from us because we had kept it too much to ourselves and had felt no wider responsibility to spread the benefit of the latihan to mankind in general. In the absence of the former spiritual dimension to Subud, they tried to preserve and promote Bapak’s advice regarding talent development, culture, enterprise and so on, but their efforts met with apathy and even disdain, the notable exception being Susila Dharma, whose charitable projects continued to flourish. It became the only remnant of an organisation that otherwise passed into the oblivion of history. As its founder had warned, if the members did not show enough enthusiasm for developing Subud it was very possible that “...its progress would be limited to Bapak’s own lifetime.”