

Why Only Subud?

By Sahlan Diver

One sometimes hears it said that it is not possible to analyse Subud, because 'Subud is a receiving'.

Wrong! Subud is not a receiving — the latihan is a receiving; Subud is an organisation. Subud was the organisation formed to support the growth and practise of the latihan. As such it should be open to scrutiny: has it succeeded in its primary task? Is it likely to succeed in the future? Assuming that the answer to both of those questions might be 'No', the question I want to ask in this article is 'Why should Subud be the *only* organisation responsible for supporting the growth and practise of the *latihan kejiwaan*?'

Connected with the idea that Subud is a receiving is the idea that we should not worry about Subud's success in spreading the latihan because this is not dependent on us but is dependent upon God's will. The difficulty I have with this statement is that it is not proven. In fact it is a statement that is impossible to prove because we would have to know God's will to know whether it was so. It is therefore in the nature of a religious statement, a matter of faith. If individual members wish to add an element of religious faith to their experience of the latihan and hold on to the idea that the latihan can only spread when God allows it to, then they are of course, free to do so, but it should not be incumbent on Subud as a whole to be held back by articles of religious faith, since Subud supposedly does not require subscription to a specific religious philosophy. In fact, why not put the idea to the test, and find out whether forming a new kind of organization might be a better way to spread the latihan.

Some might greet with horror the concept of another organisation being formed to assist with the growth of the latihan. My suspicion is that resistance would come not so much from concern about what a new organisation might do with the latihan, but more from a feeling of regret that the cosy international family of Subud should be split apart and forced to choose between alternatives.

However, I am not suggesting a split, for the simple reason that I am certain that a split would not work — because only a very few members would be willing to desert Subud for an alternative. What I am suggesting is a new organisation that attracts a new membership of as yet unopened people, through advertising and publicity. And in answer to those about to accuse me of elitism and opportunism, of wanting to exploit Subud's current difficulties to create a rival organisation, let me say that I am not just proposing a single new organisation. I believe that more than one such organisation would be both possible and desirable. Ideally the core practise of the latihan in these organisations would be the same as in Subud, so it should be possible for all latihaners to latihan together, whatever organisation they happened to be primarily affiliated to.

If the core practise of the latihan in these organisations were the same, then how would they differ from Subud and from each other?

The new organisations would differ from Subud in that they would start with the advantage of being able to learn from Subud's problems and constitute themselves in such a way as to diminish the likelihood of those problems recurring. Of course, Subud itself can learn from its mistakes and reform, but my personal opinion is that major change is unlikely — members simply won't have the will or willingness to do it.

The new organisations would differ from each other in where they put the emphasis

in matters outside of the practise of the latihan. For example, there have been incidents where applicants with an alternative attitude to spiritual matters have been initially attracted to the concept of a spiritual exercise supposedly free of dogma, teachings or imposed beliefs, but have been quickly put off by the constant emphasis and reference in Subud to what Bapak says in his talks. So one such new organisation could promote and present the latihan free of these references. It might attract many new people, including Buddhists or people in sympathy with Buddhist philosophy, who at present are likely to be alienated by the many negative references to Buddhism and meditation in Bapak's talks. In fact given the worldwide popularity of this religious philosophy, a presentation of the latihan within that context, unburdened of its Abrahamic and Javanese religious associations, could spread like wild-fire.

A Subud member once wrote to me in an email that 'Subud was intended for all of mankind, not just a cosy clique'. Replace the word 'Subud' in that statement with 'the latihan' and I think he has got it spot on. It's time we put aside sentimental and rigid attachment to the Subud of the past and started to reconsider how best to achieve the spread of the latihan in the future.