

## **CHAPTER 16: WHAT MANY OF US LOVE ABOUT SUBUD- WHAT IF WE SIMPLY CELEBRATED THESE ASPECTS ABOVE ALL ELSE?**

*The Subud That I and 3 Other Groups Of People Would Not Leave-In Bapak's Own Words! One Change Needed In Order For Subud To Become Truly Inclusive; So Many Groups Who feel Excluded; Can We Trust The latihan? A Practical Example; Helpers "Channels", Not Instructors; Bearing Witness: To Each Other And To Other People*

*What I love About Subud*

To many of us when we began looking at Subud, the things that particularly impressed us were that:

- 1. A person's own experience is of paramount importance- and one is always *personally responsible* for one's own decisions, beliefs and choices.**

This was said to be so, right from the beginning. For example, talking of people first coming to the latihan, John Bennett says in the book that I bought for 20p and which led to my coming into Subud:

"Nevertheless, the principle is... that one must first ask oneself the question whether one truly wishes to receive, and only after receiving *from oneself*, an affirmative answer, to ask *from another* that the contact should be given." (the italics are the author's. pp 96, 97 "Concerning Subud")

To me, the important thing in Subud is to find, and live by, one's own Inner voice ***and critical intelligence*** and not, therefore, to depend on any outer voice - unless it has the support of the former.

I am reminded here of the saying attributed to the Buddha : "Work out your own salvation- with diligence"

The world is full of "outer authorities": Subud is intended to be different from this.

- 2. There is no need to believe what one has not experienced for oneself.**

In his talk in Chicago in 1959, Bapak clearly says:

“Bapak does not want you to believe anything you have not experienced yourselves; *so he hopes that you will not blindly believe his explanations-it is necessary that you yourselves should experience what can be found in the latihan.*”

### **3. No advice, theory or ritual are required.**

Again in the Chicago talk Bapak says:

“In Subud, therefore, there is no more need for advice (!), for theories, for rituals for the worship of God, for God Himself will guide you as to worship as well as to leading the right kind of life in this world.”

And again, in “Subud And The Active Life”, Bapak says:

“In Subud there is no theory – there are theories already in existing religions – but only receiving. And if people ask you what is taught in Subud, the answer is: “Nothing.” If they then ask why so many follow these spiritual exercises, the answer is: “The nature of Subud is receiving. No one is given any theories; as soon as he starts the Latihan, he will receive.”

### **4. Words are not *that* important!**

Again, Bapak makes this clear in a talk he gave at the Friend’s Meeting House in London in 1959:

“At present times men no longer believe in words, but look for facts...It is deeds that count, not words...The Latihan is important. *It should have priority and be regarded as fundamental for all of us, so that we may be able rightly to accept the Power of God within us.*”

Again, Bapak said in “Subud And The Active Life” p.p.63-64:

“...the man of today cannot be asked simply to have faith; he wants proof. Subud brings proof, but this cannot be given by words; it can only be given by the reality within you, which can attract others, and by the transmission

of the contact, which is only possible by being near to them.”

- 5. Propaganda is unnecessary for Subud.** How refreshing this is! For once, there is something that is not about active recruitment, advertising, selling itself etc. How unusual and appealing in this day and age!

In “Subud And The Active Life” (largely a collection of Bapak talks from when he first came to the West) Bapak says:

“If we attempt to sow the seed of Subud as this is ordinarily done in the world – that is, by means of our thoughts and desires – not only will our efforts to penetrate into human society be obstructed, but they will be fraught with danger; opposition and hindrances will stand in our way, so that instead of making progress we shall find ourselves stranded among conflicts and enmities. Attempts to act in this way will bring us into competition with our fellow men...”

He also says at a talk given at the Friends’ Meeting House:

“When you have the qualities arising from such (latihan) experiences, the qualities of Subud, present in each one of you, you do not need to follow the way of propaganda, for people will of their own accord become attracted; not because they are influenced by anything you may say or do, but because they will see and recognize the presence of truth within you.”

Words like these have meant that Subud members tend not to be concerned about consciously or actively seeking new members: the onus is on new people finding Subud themselves. So there are no recruitment drives, no advertising and no obvious attempts to attract members. Subud members tend therefore to focus more on their own latihan and lives, leaving others free to follow their own paths.

However, Bapak has also made it clear that this should not mean a complete indifference to the spread of Subud. On p.139 of “Subud And The Active Life” he says:

“So our work in the spreading of this Subud should be fairly energetic but not too much of a drive. Do not go slowly and tell yourself: “Ah well, it is

not necessary; and then go happily to sleep.”

So, complete passivity is to be avoided!

So, what does it mean to be “fairly energetic” but not advertise and make propaganda?

I see no contradiction here. I think it simply means having basic information (these 11 core points, e.g) about Subud simply available to anyone interested without trying, in any way, to influence people to be interested. This could be done in the normal way: by setting up websites and making introductory pamphlets, books and information available in the usual “public information” places (libraries, noticeboards in our halls and other public information places, “What’s On” in our local publications etc.) without making any claims about it in order to promote it. Just putting them there is not the same as advertising or making propaganda- it is just making Subud accessible for people to find for themselves should they wish! Not to do these obvious things, just results in it being virtually impossible for anyone to simply know that Subud exists! By doing this, Subud widens its availability to include:

- Personal encounters. Some members do join in this way.
- Finding information through books, leaflets etc. Many members joined after reading a book about Subud. As time passes these books have become increasingly hard to find. Perhaps some reprints and some new books are needed?
- Or there is the easier option of making leaflets, pamphlets and websites available for them to find.

## **6. Subud is not a new religion.**

In “Subud And The Active Life”, Bapak says:

“Subud has not come to destroy religion; it has come, by the Will of God, to bring harmony into all religions, so that in their totality they may represent one human family, one aim and one God.”

And at the Friends' meeting House, he said:

“In the Latihan there is no distinction of race or religion, for any distinction between men closes for them the way which leads to God.”

And this applies to *everyone*. In “The Path Of Subud” Rofe writes:

“Subud does not discriminate on religious, political, racial or other sectarian grounds. Serious applicants are never rejected...If they happen to be atheists or Communists, this will in no way affect their admission...Adherence to Subud demands no allegiance to any particular belief; it does not even require faith, for a spirit of enquiry may equally well yield results” (p181)

So that's how Subud can be for all of humankind! And I think this should be reflected in our introductions to Subud so that our pamphlets etc are not limited to religious language (as they are now) but simply state these 11 essential points.

## **7. Subud makes no claims.**

At the Friends' Meeting House, Bapak says:

“...we should base everything upon the available evidence...We should not talk about anything for which there is no evidence. It is useless to speak in glowing terms of Subud, for what is needed is the experience. That is the basis upon which to reach the conclusion that, in truth, that which we have received clearly comes from a stream that – although we are incapable of understanding it – is beyond the power and influence of our thinking mind, our heart and our desires... For the same reason, it is pointless to say that we receive this from God, for none can say this save God alone.”

Bapak even says in “Subud And The Active Life”:

“...there may be those among you who will say: “I have been theorising for a long time, and yet I do not find reality in my theories. Is it true that in Subud one can find something real?” To that the answer is: “About that I cannot say yes or no. You must try it for yourself, for all that is there ...is received by your own being, neither more or less.”

At Vienna in 1959, Bapak made it clear that we cannot make any claim to be better than anyone else, either. He says: “Concerning the high attainments and the perfections of the spiritual life, let us not say that we are better or more perfect than others – it may well be otherwise. We merely have the conviction that what we have received is true direction and guidance, so that we can become aware of, and understand, what the life of man really means, our life on earth as well as after death.”

## **8. Bapak claimed no special status for himself.**

In “Subud And The Active Life”, he says:

“Bapak never claims to be a saint, a prophet or anything like that – never. Pak Subuh is only Pak Subuh.”

In Calcutta, he said:

“Bapak is not like a clever person, no! Bapak is not like someone called a mahatma, no! Bapak is also not like a scholar, no! Bapak is also not a wise man, no! Bapak is the same as you all.”

Finally, and this is a favourite of mine, in August 1959, Bapak said these memorable words:

“In all this Bapak’s function is like that of a school servant, who sets out the books, opens the door, clears the rooms and arranges the tables and chairs. When you are all in the classroom, the teacher will come and give the lessons; and the teacher is not Bapak, but God Himself. Bapak is not a teacher, but only the servant of God. This is in truth Bapak’s position in this spiritual work of Subud; under the Power of God and in His hands.” I wish those helpers who make much of being “Bapak’s helpers” could see themselves more as servants like this than teachers having some sort of spiritual authority to instruct and lead others!

## **9. Subud can be described as “the path of the ordinary person”, living an ordinary life.**

“...the Latihan should not be regarded as a kind of mysticism in which the term is commonly used involving the withdrawal from all worldly

activity...we are also fully able to carry on our usual activities in the course of our worldly affairs. In order to follow the right way of development, there is, on one hand, the path of fulfilling our worldly obligations, and on the other hand the path to God.” (Eindhoven talk 1957)

And, again, in Vienna 1959, Bapak said:

“As regards our thinking, our emotions and desires, with these we must work for the welfare of our life on this earth, which means to work for food and clothing, for the needs of our family, always provided that we do nothing to harm other people. *Outside the latihan, we must make use of our thinking power, our emotions and desires. Do not neglect them! Do not let them fall into disuse!*”

**10. Subud is something NEW and suited to modern life and modern people who seem more and more unable to simply accept the traditional religions and values.**

More and more people now seem to be looking for real evidence, FACTS (as Bapak rightly says) and Subud would seem to be for those sorts of people who otherwise might be left with no religious guidance in their lives at all (because the whole business of religion seemed so untrustworthy to them). The time of religious faith seems to lots of people to be gone – hence Subud, perhaps. Also, I was excited by the view that modern life had become so precarious with the advent of nuclear power that, maybe, Subud had come, even as a last chance, to be a real help. It seems all too easy to look around at the state of world and see something new from God as being necessary! Bennett’s words again:

“I believe that a great blessing has come to mankind, not through the mighty deed of some mighty original genius, but by the will of God.” (“Concerning Subud” p.11)

Bennett says that he had seen “various indications which seem to me to show that the coming of Subud has been predicted and expected for a long time.” (p.7)

As a follower of Gurdjieff, he was naturally impressed that Gurdjieff should speak of “a Messenger who was to renew the hope of mankind” and spoke

of him as “having links with the islands of the Malay Archipelago.” (p.35)

Also, Bennett says he met a Sufi Sheik, Emin Bey Chikhov, who “assured me that I, John Bennett, was destined to be an opener of the way for Western people, and that when the chosen one arrived I was to stand beside him and be one of the witnesses to the authenticity of his mission.” (p.42) No wonder Bennett got so excited by the dramatic events he found himself involved with as Subud came, somewhat miraculously, to the West. Bennett was certainly a key figure in this: a true “witness” to its early “authenticity” and, without a doubt, a major influence in Subud’s early spread in the West. The idea that Subud was not just for oneself but in some way of benefit to others, or in this case, to the “world” could be seen as one of its most important ideas. To me, this also gave a rationale, too, as to why the latihan should not just be a pleasant subjective experience of love, contentment, Bliss and so on, like some forms of meditation could be. It was because the Latihan was to do with the WHOLE of life and all the conditions of life. In other words, it was easy for me to see the craziness of my latihan to have something to do, not just with my own personal craziness, but also something to do with the craziness of the world, too, of which I was a part. This link between the latihan and others might also explain why, sometimes, my latihan could be so very different with different people, even changing the moment someone new came into the room! And there were those few times of Oneness, superb latihans when I no longer felt to be just my ordinary, limited self but rather felt so close to the people around me as to feel at one with them...

11. Finally, I would like to quote **Bapak again on organisation:**

“That which is usually referred to as the organisation of Subud is not an organisation in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather the administrative structure necessary to serve the needs of the Brotherhood (now called “Association”). That which gives unity to Subud is the Latihan, which comes from God and by means of which we worship God, and this cannot possibly be organised like some worldly undertaking. In truth, it is God alone who directs, leads and guides the common worship of all mankind, and therefore this Subud of ours standing before God, is beyond the reach of any human regulations. None the less it is necessary to have some form of administrative machinery and records for this Subud of ours, to maintain external relationships between its members in such a way that harmony, mutual understanding and mutual help can be established. Since the whole of the administrative and financial side of



the work must be related to the national laws and customs of each country, Bapak always recommended that all this should be done entirely in accordance with the local conditions. In this respect Bapak recommends that each country should be autonomous...

It should be clearly understood that the committee and the organisational side of Subud are no more than an instrument to serve our brothers in the worship of mankind towards God. **Subud should never be allowed to crystallize into organised forms, for this would subject our worship of God to manmade rules, as if God Himself were to be organised by man.** (“Subud And The Active Life” pp. 26-29)

Many of us would say that these are the key ideas that are the core of Subud. They are the *strengths* of Subud and are the things we should be celebrating with the world at large. They make Subud different from, and compatible with, other groups in the world. These, then, are clearly what we should be emphasising and sharing with the whole world! And I have been left in no doubt that many, many people who have left Subud, or rejected Subud after being initially interested, still value and support them: they have clearly and firmly told me so!

*Anything more than this becomes a matter of personal experience and choice.*

This, therefore, means that there is absolutely no obligation or pressure- however subtle and unspoken- to sign up to any one set of beliefs etc no matter who holds them! One is required to be true to one’s own experience and mind; one is free to find one’s own way: the only other shared commitment is to the practice of the Latihan which is “the essence of Subud”.

I know from talking to them that emphasising these ideas would be welcomed by 3 groups of people known to me:

- Long-standing members who have left the Association
- Those who have rejected Subud after being initially interested and
- Those who have left soon after joining because they have found “Subud in theory and practice to be two different things”. In other words they did not find the above ideas being put into practice in the way Subud

officials and helpers conducted themselves.

### *One Big Change*

The one real change that could make all the difference is to take the focus off anything else that Bapak says that is not directly related to the Latihan and could be construed as teachings. What is unique to Subud is the latihan; so much else can be identified as Bapak's own personal, cultural conditioning. This means that they are but one explanation amongst many across the world and history. Because of this they can be divisive rather than making for unity. When Bapak speaks very much like a Javanese Muslim where does that leave all those who come from a different background?

### *"The Latihan Unites; Words Divide"*

When the talk in Subud goes beyond the essentials enumerated above, the dangers of division and rejection are all too real. Therefore, Subud officials and especially the Helpers who are given so much responsibility in Subud, should be wary of what they say and how much they say. Dependence on words- both Bapak's and the Helper's own- is NOT the thing in Subud! Rather, they are better remembering that it is the latihan that must come first- their own and that of the people around them. Instead of trying to persuade anyone of anything, the Helpers should focus more on making the Latihan available to those who wish it. And it is clear to people like myself that the Latihan does not depend on us believing anything in particular about Bapak or the nature of men and women or on even on the importance of "big" words like "God"- or any beliefs at all, in fact! I have shared strong latihans with people who believed Bapak was "in the line of the prophets," some who believed he was "an ordinary person, sometimes inspired" and others who did not believe anything about him at all! I have also shared latihan with a closet but open-minded atheist! I have also for a number of years (and this better be said in a hushed voice!) taken part in regular mixed latihans.

The essence of Subud is the Latihan and this is where the focus should be. Anything else is an optional extra and certainly not a requirement. So, truly Subud becomes open then to those of all beliefs and none. What other organisation can say that! Here is the uniqueness and universality of Subud. If Subud could put this Latihan above all words then its appeal would be much larger than at present where the emphasis on everything Bapak has said has made it a limited and narrow organisation. So much, in fact, of what Bapak has said can all too easily become a

means whereby a number of varied groups of humankind may feel – or are actually- rejected from membership. Here are a few significant examples:

### *Meditators*

Bapak has spoken disparagingly of meditation thus repelling a huge group of people for whom the practice is an essential part of their daily lives: Buddhists, Hindus, and the many people in the West, especially, who have no religious affiliation and have found the practice to have many benefits- benefits that have been thoroughly researched now so that GPs, Counsellors and other health professionals will encourage the practice. It might be instructive for the Latihan to be the subject of an equal amount of research! I recently came across an example of this when I talked to a Subud man who was suffering with anxiety and depression. I mentioned to him how effective modern research had shown “mindfulness meditation” to be for these (and other problems) “Oh, I couldn’t meditate,” he said “because Bapak has said we shouldn’t”! In my opinion, a more sensible piece of advice would be to just *ask* people not to meditate during the Latihan itself (because this is a time for being willing to follow whatever the latihan brings rather than imposing anything wilfully on the latihan ourselves) rather than sweeping aside a practice that is so important- and beneficial- to so many people.

### *Those Who Belong To Other “Modern” Groups (which Subud calls “Mixing”)*

Bapak has talked much of the dangers of “mixing” other religious or psychological practices with the latihan in Subud. He is positive about the established religions but anything else is dangerous or unnecessary. So now that vast array of modern religious groups and therapies and the millions of people who practise them is rejected! Again, to stress that the Latihan times be free of them is all that should be reasonably asked.

### *The Non-Religious*

Non-religious, agnostics, atheists and the ever-growing group of “don’t knows” will have an impossible task with Bapak’s talks because they are full of religious language and unquestioned religious assumptions that are difficult for more and more modern people to take on trust. Bapak shows no understanding of the non-religious approach to life of so many modern people, so immersed is he in his Islam. Yet, these are the very people he says Subud has come to give “facts” to!

They are clearly an ever-increasing number in the modern world, too. Apparently, Hindus have a 101 names for God and Christianity says “too sacred for utterance” (“hallowed”) is Your name”, yet too many helpers are insisting that people being opened should say “God” and are not allowing any other word to be used! So many people have complained to me about this that I see it as a case of the “letter of the law” superseding “the spirit” in a way that it should not. I think people should be free to use their own, or even NO words, should they choose. Personally, I favour an appeal to “That Which Is The Highest Available To Me Now”- but that is just my quirk!

### *Feminists*

Feminists are, of course, another large group of people who would not wish to associate with Subud because of Bapak’s teachings about men and women. It needs to be stressed, in my opinion, that these teachings are not part of any creed that has to be accepted in order to be a Subud member or helper.

### *Those Concerned About Equal Opportunities And Non-Discrimination*

And not just feminists. The roles of men and women are undergoing a revolution across the world now and the old religious views that Bapak espouses are being rejected as unfair and out-dated by more and more ordinary men and women, particularly of the Western world but also elsewhere now. Other views of men and women than Bapak’s, or the religious, are not to be a barrier to being a Subud member and are clearly- and experientially- no barrier to receiving the latihan either *because people holding different views have, and are, receiving strongly in their latihans right up to the present day!*

### *Those With Mental Health Issues*

Then there is that large group of the world’s population in danger of being denied the latihan because they have, or are experiencing, mental health issues! As these are now reaching almost epidemic proportions across the modern world, this is a lot of humankind! Obviously, Subud members are right to be concerned for such people but, because there is the hope of healing in the latihan (some have experienced this, particularly it seems in Subud’s early days but also sometimes now), would it not be better to make sure that the normal support systems are in place for these people? Eg that there is someone in the family or close to the person who can be available should help be needed. Obviously, that person would

need to be informed about Subud. And it would seem a good idea that the contact details of the many support groups for those with mental health issues that exist already in the community are readily available to the people who may need them. Some Subud people seem to think they can only offer the latihan to people they can personally care for should the need arise ! This, whilst good intentioned, is obviously unrealistic. Can you imagine doctors, counsellors etc feeling they had to offer that? There would be no help! Counsellors , e.g, offer their hour long sessions regularly but do not assume that they will be looking after their clients much outside of those times. If help is needed then there are other support services available.

And, of course, such people might well need professional expertise and few Subud members could claim to offer that. Personally, I cannot see why it has to be all or nothing: the latihan can surely be offered along with the ordinary worldly support services. The only times the latihan might be refused *might* be when the professionals (GPs, Psychiatrists, etc) advise against it or when the newcomer is incapable of making rational decisions for him or herself (and this can be witnessed in other areas of their lives- are they capable of coping with ordinary life at all, looking after themselves in the obvious ways, making *any* of their own decisions ?). Even then Subud may owe it to the newcomer to talk to them and the professionals to ensure the most clear and fair understanding possible. Ultimately, as with so much else in life, any decisions to be made are the person's themselves if the person is at all capable of making decisions (as shown in other areas of their lives).

### *Drug-Takers*

Another ever-growing group at the moment who will be refused the latihan are those who admit to being, or are known to be, drug-takers. This affects so many people and for a complex number of reasons. Again, because the latihan has a potential for healing and might help at least some of these people, I would urge a more flexible approach than is often the case at the moment. Again, if a person is living an otherwise normal life, then the request not to come to latihan under the influence is all that should be reasonably asked.

The list of exclusions has grown quite long: meditators, inc Hindus, Buddhists and others; the non-religious; new age and other "mixers"; feminists and equal rights believers; those with mental health issues, drug-takers... And even if you don't belong to one of these groups you may still have to suffer "trial by testing!" The

practice has grown up in some quarters of testing if a person should be opened! Asking with sincerity may no longer be enough as an “authoritative” group may withhold it from you anyway!

### *Is Subud Just Another Group Amongst Many?*

How then could such a Subud be possibly for all of humankind when the latter is so full of such disparate groups? It has failed because to date it has set itself up as yet another clearly defined group (around Bapak’s teachings) standing apart from all the other groups. No wonder it has a small membership. For this to change it has to get away from its reliance and primary focus on Bapak and what he says and be more attentive to the Latihan. Many of us have shown that we can live our lives creatively with the latihan without believing all these things. True, many have left the Association but not all of us have.

### *Can We Trust The Latihan?*

Varindra Vittachi gives a good example of what I mean about trusting the Latihan to be a force for change and guidance *by itself* without the need for instruction or even advice from anyone else. Varindra was a wonderful storyteller with a very good eye for an instructive real-life story that came from his own experience. One he recounts is particularly telling, I think. A Subud group he knew had a problem with one of its members: he seemed to be rather too fond of alcohol! He would turn up to the Latihan “smelling of booze and some members grew extremely concerned about this.” They knew that Bapak had warned about the dangers of coming to the latihan under such influence and felt something should be done about the man because “it was wrong”. I believe one or two members tried talking to the man gently- and presumably not so gently- but all to no avail. Some members got really stressed about the situation but nothing changed for a long time. To the group’s credit the man was allowed to continue attending the latihan, although some were very unhappy about it. Then one day it was noticed that the man was no longer drinking. What on earth had happened? Well, it had turned out that the man’s attitude to alcohol had changed *by itself*. For no obvious reason he noticed that he started being sick (literally) every time he had a sip of whisky until in the end he stopped altogether. As Icksan, one of Bapak’s Indonesian helpers, used to often say: “Latihan say stop, it stops!” Anyway, in this instance it was felt that when the latihan said to stop drinking, the man stopped as the easiest and most natural thing to do! The latihan could do what others- however well-meaning, well-informed, knowledgeable or dictatorial etc-could not.

Perhaps now is the time for all of us to put more trust in, and attention on, the Latihan in our ordinary lives?!

*A Way Forward: Could Not Subud Become More Like A Latihan Association?*

First, we need to get away from all these teachings that have been given too much importance in Subud so that they seem to identify what Subud is. *Please Do Not Misunderstand Me Here!* I am **not** saying that you should not believe that Bapak is an infallible man of God and that his words are always divinely and originally inspired. It is in the spirit of Subud that you are free to believe whatever makes most sense to you. What I am saying is that you do not have the right to expect me to believe what you believe if it does not seem right to me. Beliefs are just not the big thing here: the Latihan is- and the Latihan is uniquely constructed to work independently of what you, me or Bapak believes! How wonderful that people of opposing beliefs can come together to experience the Latihan. I wish that Subud was more focussed on being identified by the Latihan rather than all these other things that have been added on to it and make up what is called Subud.

Second, we should, as helpers and Subud representatives, be simply concerned with removing the barriers to anyone who sincerely wishes to experience the latihan. Bapak came up with a simple test for sincerity: to ask an enquirer to wait three months after expressing a wish to be opened and to use that time to meet as many Subud people as possible and find out as much as he or she can about the latihan. This would usually mean visiting other groups, reading the literature, talking about other people's experiences, asking different members questions and so on. If a person has this sincerity and wishes to experience the latihan still, then any barriers of language, terminology, belief, words or procedures should be removed through discussion and negotiation between the newcomer and the old hands. The big change would be that the Helpers would not see their role as fitting the newcomer into an established, pre-set, one-size- fits- all procedure. It would be more about listening to the wishes and needs of the new member and accommodating them so that the latihan can begin its unique process for each new and different individual.

*What About Subud Meetings?*

At the moment, a great amount of emphasis in time, meetings and publications is given to the outer aspects of the organisation. There are separate Subud groups, or

“wings”, responsible for Youth, Culture, Human Welfare etc etc. There is surprisingly not one for Latihan Development ! I, personally, *would* like to see meetings being more concerned with Latihan related topics ( see last chapter, e.g.)

In fact, in my opinion a Latihan Association need not be identified at all by all these outer groups that Subud currently has. If people want to meet for these reasons that’s ok but they would have less of an emphasis than now. I think there is an argument in fact for Subud *not* separating from the rest of the world with its own various “wings” etc- the world is already full of these anyway! In fact, why don’t those interested in these activities get involved in the groups that are already formed in the world and thereby take their Subud presence more clearly into the world instead of separating from it into their own little Subud groups?

Currently, just about every Subud meeting will begin with a latihan and sometimes end with it. Almost always there is no obvious link between the latihan and the meeting: it seems to be something quite separate. Very occasionally the beginning latihan will end with some testing about the day ahead and that would seem to me to be a very good idea and one that could be usefully encouraged. I would also like to see the latihan brought into a greater focus by it becoming a more common practice to:

- Build more time into the meeting for some sharing about the latihan! I have been to many meetings involving the same people, yet I know next to nothing about their latihan lives- how they came into Subud, how the latihan went with them, what makes them value the latihan, how things are currently, what problems, if any, they are having etc. I often look around at the wealth of experience around me and wonder how I can tap into it! Easily the best meetings for me have been when someone, quite by chance, has been prepared to share some of their experiences. This has happened to me all too rarely and always outside of the meeting. I would wish to encourage this by making space for it at most, if not all, meetings.
- “Bearing Witness” in similar ways to this has long been seen by some religious groups, e.g., as being invaluable and I think it would benefit Subud, too. In my experience the real strength of Subud is not in the outer organisation at all but in the individual experiences of its members. I would wish for this to be more openly shared, talked about and celebrated. Once again, it would seem to be important to emphasise the strengths of Subud



and individual experiences are a distinct strength. But we do not seem to be encouraged to share them with each other let alone with the world at large!

- As well as being encouraged to share our latihan lives at our meetings (should we wish) I would like to see more written testimonies also that could be collected into an ever-growing Book of Latihan Experiences. And some of these could be put into leaflets, pamphlets etc and simply put into libraries, halls and other public places so that interested people may find them.