

## Let's celebrate....The Latihan!

First, by taking time to remember how important- or, at least, *potentially* important- this latihan is.

Some years ago, a buzz went quickly around the Subud world: Bapak was going to deliver an "important and special message" to Subud members everywhere. This was rather exciting because it was so unexpected and unusual. Many made a special trip to London especially to hear Varindra Vittachi relay it to UK members. And what a dramatic and worrying message it was! Because of the especially "dangerous world-situation" Bapak wanted all Subud members to "stay close to the latihan" and to return to it ("taste the latihan") as often as possible "throughout the day." Such was the importance Bapak gave the latihan! Why, he even spoke of the latihan as being something of a "last chance for mankind."

Some weeks ago, I spoke to a visiting International Helper about the lack of growth in Subud membership in many places and what, if anything, could be done about it? "No activities," he said, "Just Latihan, latihan, latihan."

In "What Is Subud?" (p50) van Hien says: "The Latihan is the most important force in Subud. Submission to its workings is, for the world at large, the really new element in man's spiritual struggle."

A personal experience now which taught me something of the latihan's importance for me...Awhile ago, I was walking along a crowded street thinking of the latihan, when all of a sudden I *saw* this huge diamond in my chest! It was so *real* to me that I got anxious that passers- by (there were many) would also see it and there would be a commotion! It really was a relief to discover that it was unnoticeable to others! But to me it remained huge, beautiful and carrying with it a feeling of real joy. Within moments I realised that a worldly diamond millions of times smaller than this would be hugely valuable and how glad I would be to own it! How much more valuable to me, by comparison, was this huge inner diamond! Later, I discovered that the diamond has often been used in religious life as a symbol for the "soul"- from the *diamond body* of Buddhism to St. Teresa's *crystal heart*. Jung, also, sees it as a symbol of *individuation*, which is the goal of Jungian therapy. I had no doubt in my own mind that my diamond was the latihan in me! I could not fail to see from then on how hugely important this latihan was for me, personally.

The trouble is, I think, that it is all too easy, as our years in Subud go by, to forget all this. Why, we can even get side-tracked in our Subud lives into losing the latihan as our primary focus. I felt this particularly strongly at the end of my Lent this year and I felt as if my inner was urging me to not only focus again on my latihan, but to really celebrate it. I would like to invite you to do the same!

But how?

Well, I think we should remind ourselves often of how important this latihan is: perhaps at the beginning of the day, especially on group latihan days and, also, most especially, just before the start of the latihan. Sometimes it is enough to take seriously what Bapak said above and just to think: ***What if Bapak was right and the practice of the latihan was really able to influence the state of this seemingly always troubled old world of ours?*** What if giving more time to the latihan could *really* have some beneficial effect here?! Given the state of the world now, what if more latihan moments could help? Wow! Maybe we should try it?!!

There are other important ways, too. The quiet time before the latihan is, I am sure, especially significant and I know from my own experience how beneficial it can be to give serious and focussed attention to it. On their recent visit, the International Helpers tested with us how it was to feel grateful for the latihan at those times. That also helped my latihan. Whenever I have tested about deepening my latihan (and I have done this several times over the years) just about every time I receive how important it is to prepare in a special way for the latihan: by relaxing mind and body and being as “empty” as possible of “me” and open to whatever experience may, or may not, come; then, as I get closer to the latihan I get less concerned with thoughts or self-willed efforts of any kind- they have their place earlier.

So now I:

think of the latihan often (sometimes just the *word!*) and, especially on latihan days

remember some of the experiences it has given me-with a feeling of gratitude

have moments when I can of pre-latihan quiet in my day

have moments of latihan when I can in my day

am prepared to talk and listen more to other's talking about their experiences and thoughts etc about the latihan

read Bapak's words about the latihan frequently

remember that the only true unity we have in Subud is in the latihan. "Words," Bapak said often, "divide, latihan unites." So I don't look to others to agree with me- or even amongst themselves- as long as we can share this amazing latihan!