

APPENDIX 5: ROFE AND THE LATIHAN

“ I realized that every part of my body was being subjected to a new impulse...After a few weeks the physical movements would often stimulate postures of prayer and I was struck by the odd mudras which my hands would involuntarily assume and which corresponded to ancient religious ritual. There were times when this involved what I could have known about previously; at other times I had to search for some while before I discovered what historical or racial behaviour corresponded to the pattern I was presenting.

It was not long before the content of the exercise developed into a dance- not of the Western type, but the traditional slow postures and gestures of classical Eastern dance. I found that I could recapture and demonstrate these experiences sometimes, though much was only obtained under the control of an inspiration, which I could not command.

Being curious about the dance I demonstrated it to Prince Teidjokusumo, the greatest expert on the classical dances of Java. He said there was nothing of the kind to be found in Indonesia...later it was recognised by a Sinhalese as being almost identical to the sacred temple dances of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), which I had never witnessed. According to Pak Subuh, the classical dance was a form of prayer obtained under Divine Inspiration. I thought of the Dancing Siva and of David dancing before the Lord.

A more interesting series of experiences involved the voice, both in speech and in song. Suddenly one night I sang involuntarily some ancient Eastern chant which was also suggestive of India, and this was to be followed by others of Jewish, Islamic, Javanese, Chinese and other types I could not identify....fascinated I noticed how parts of my throat came into play which had never consciously moved before, while my voice followed naturally the difficult Oriental scales with which I was unfamiliar.

All these songs appeared to be ancient and of a devotional type. The Javanese listening in the next room told me one night that I was singing the old melodies of Modjopahit with a typically Javanese voice. In Japan I was to be told that the hymns I intoned were almost identical with the traditional norito songs of Shintoism. At times when my voice was exercised I began to stammer out syllables with the ineptitude of a babe. It seemed one had to grow again as a little child. In the exercises I had to learn to speak all over again; I never used my own language. As with the songs, the words which I eventually formed belonged to ancient Eastern tongues and were connected with religion and the Mysteries. Often they were the names of gods known to me at the time. For example, one evening I clearly heard myself repeating the word “Terminus.” It

is a familiar word in the English language, and in Latin appeared to mean only “The End,” so I could see little point in its repetition. But some months later I came across a book with the names of classical gods and I learned that Terminus was the Roman god of boundaries.

All this was showing me that there was a source of knowledge within, of knowledge never absorbed before... Another time I repeated the names of several towns and paused to write them down. When I checked them in an encyclopaedia I found they were colonies of antiquity, chiefly those founded by the Greeks and the Phoenicians. Especially striking was the fact that some of them were the centres of the earliest colonization of Sicily by the Greeks, a movement apparently connected with the mystic teachings of Pythagoras.... It was strange enough to speak in many tongues. They were never the ones I used normally, although I would recognise words still used today from classical Greek, Sanskrit, Arabic or Akkadian...

My observations of the experiences of other pupils and myself showed me that among the many types of spontaneously generated phenomena certain words, postures, melodies and visions seemed to be classical archetypes. They had their parallels in some ancient culture, perhaps one of which the pupil had no previous knowledge” (The Path Of Subud)

And all this had come to Rofe simply through the Latihan! It is significant, too, that he finds himself using Jungian terminology to explain his experiences (e.g “classical archetypes.”)