

THE WAY FORWARD

So Bapak's Advice And Guidance For Helpers has been withdrawn as a result of the public outcry over the St. Anne's Project at Lewes. Now what? Will the intention to issue a revised Handbook which focuses only on what Bapak says about the Latihan, and nothing else that can be construed as "teachings," be honoured? If so, many of us would see this as a huge step forward!

Alas, I have to say the early signs are not encouraging. I have heard too many Subud officials and members who are active in the Association express their strong displeasure at the idea of it and I am sure there will be a strong pressure group of these people doing everything they can to hold on to the very things that the non-Subud public find so abhorrent. If they succeed it will take another Subud foray into the modern world by another group like Lewes to bring the thing to a head again. The only way, surely, for Subud to avoid this happening is for it to withdraw more completely from having contact with the non-Subud world into a more cult-like status in which an ever decreasing number of members hang on until the bitter end. At the moment Subud is most clearly in decline in more places than it is growing and as it holds more fiercely to an outdated belief system, so it must become more alienated from the very world it says it has come to help!

But we are not there yet- although to many of us it has come perilously close. Events at Lewes could clearly be a wake-up call! What, then, could this mean?

If we lost the teachings, the millions of words, in Subud what would be left?

We would be left with that which is described as the "essence, or core of Subud," of that which Bapak says should be "fundamental to all of us": the Latihan. How often did Bapak warn against "words" saying they "divide" whereas the "latihan unites."

By focussing on what is necessary for the practice of the latihan, Subud then becomes capable truly of engaging with all beliefs! How else can Subud be for those with all religious beliefs and none?! In fact, the experience of the latihan, says Bapak, can help you understand your beliefs *better!* He says the latihan by itself will bring out whatever is within yourself. And it will do this through your own unique, or at least individual, experience of the latihan. How often Bapak

stressed the need for individual experience rather than conformity or imitation or inauthenticity of any kind. We could be more individual, not less, and more tolerant of the human diversity this entails. How else could Subud be for “all of humankind?”

So what then would be the teachings that would be “lost”?

First, the announcement that seems currently to be taken as so obvious to so many Subud officials –and others- that it does not need spelling out: “There is a God and Bapak is his Messenger for these times.” From this follow other teachings: about gender, Gays, the Forces, sex and death, eg which come from seeing Bapak’s words as being “divinely inspired” ie not one human being’s advice to another but holy writ binding on all! There is, of course, no mention of the latihan here.

It means going back to the position Subud had originally when Bapak was stressing that he was an ordinary man and not to be imitated etc. When John Bennett first encountered Subud, e.g he spoke to Bapak about “already having a Guru” and Bapak replied that he (Bapak) was *not* Bennett’s Guru and that, through the latihan, Bennett “would understand his Guru better.”

Here the emphasis is again put back on the Latihan. So the important priority is not to get people to agree with official Subud beliefs or anyone’s belief-system but to help them to experience the latihan as fully and deeply as possible. Once the latihan is established in a person, he/she is free to follow an individual path under its influence and guidance and, of course, Bapak’s words will remain freely available but clearly viewed as advice, not as “rules.”

If after receiving the latihan clearly and strongly you found yourself agreeing with these teachings what then? Well, you would be free to do so and to tell others you do so *as long as you do not require others to agree with you if their experience has led them to different beliefs etc.* Mutual respect would lead to you latihanning together with no attempt at forcing anything on to anyone else, subtly or otherwise.

Further Effects

Established Subud members would have a more listening role with newcomers and less of a teaching role. For some this would be revolutionary! With less official teaching to impart, helpers and others would be more concerned with imparting the essential facts of Subud (as in the first article) and focussing more

on the individuals in front of them and what their thoughts, feelings, concerns etc were. Because it is so important to share the experience of the latihan to anyone who asks for it, matters of procedure etc are less of a priority. So newcomers would not be required to believe in God, wish to believe in God or anything else: as Bapak originally said no-one has the right to refuse anyone who sincerely asks for it. Sincerity for Bapak was shown by simply being prepared to wait 3 months after asking.

Whatever one's life-style, newcomers would be asked simply to not mix the latihan times with other practices (meditation, eg,) or influences (alcohol, drugs eg) but to let it reveal itself as itself at those times!

The Spread Of Subud

Personal example remains highly valued. So individual members would have concern for the evidence of Subud in his/her own life. This could entail periodic personal reviews, testing and focus on what Bapak has advised for "widening and deepening our latihan" (See Article 33). There would be much more talk about the Latihan in an atmosphere of mutual support.

Information about Subud needs to be more visible in public places-noticeboards, libraries, information centres, local lists of groups and where they meet etc. Leaflets etc need to be about the core essentials (see first article) simply told with no attempts to persuade.

Personal testimonies and new writings, inc books, need to be encouraged with the possibility of setting up a fund to help publication.

St. Augustine famously summed up Christianity as "Love and do what you will!"

Some of us would sum up Subud as: "Latihan and believe what you will!"