

## **WE MEET... AT LAST.**

So here we are then! I have waited so long for this moment. Shall we simply shake hands and say “Hello”? Or, perhaps, hug each other like long-lost friends?! Shall we now get to know one another after all this time...*really*? I am hoping so but we shall just have to see... I guess we should not get ahead of ourselves. Oh, how often have I stood like this with a book in my hand, wondering if I should take it home, hoping for an enjoyable read. How undecided I often felt, especially if money was involved! Perhaps you feel like that now? If so, I will try to help. Let’s begin by being oh so practical... One of the first things I have learnt is not to trust the beginnings of books- they often promise far more than the book actually delivers. And I have got such high hopes for this book and you! So, although I hope you read all of this introduction, I recommend you also read 4 or 5 pages from here and there throughout the book before you decide. That should give you a fair idea of the sort of book this is! Having said that, now let’s see if I can put you off (whoops! I should have said: “attract you”) with the rest of this introduction.

There are memorable moments in all of our lives and this book is about some of mine. So, this is a sort of auto-biography but it is odd in that it begins when I reached the grand old age of thirty-five. It was then that I encountered something called “*the latihan kedjiwaan of Subud*” (see Appendix 1 at the back of this book for some brief definitions- or better still ignore them for now and let things be revealed...) As a result of this discovery some completely unexpected things started happening to me, both in my psychological experience and in my outer life of people, places and activities in the world. Their effects have been remarkable, sometimes dramatic and always life-enhancing. I could never have imagined as a young man that they could have been so far-reaching as to include just about every aspect of my life. Now, as an old man, I can take proper stock and I invite you to join me in the pages that follow.

But why should you be interested?

*Well, it all began for me with a random picking up of a book like this one.*

So, perhaps something similar could happen to you? Be warned this book may not be for the faint-hearted! Some of the changes in my life have been so huge I

just have to allow myself a little- almost unnoticed- smile at this point! I wonder: would you be up for some changes (huge or otherwise) in your life? I cannot promise you them. What I can say for sure is that what happens to you will be what is right and good for you and in your own best interests. I am convinced that I have earned the right to say this and I am confident you will agree should you decide to continue reading. In my case it meant big changes; in your case it may not. The way described here is very much an individual affair. That may become clear to you later. Shall you read on? Are you *sure*?

I can give you some reassurance, I suppose...

One of the first things I learnt all those years ago- and have been consistently reminded of ever since- is that there is nothing remotely “special” about me. If someone as ordinary as me can experience the things that I have here recounted, things that have had such a beneficial effect on my life, then clearly so can you (if you wish). This book could be instrumental in this. My life has had its usual share of the ups and downs of these times. I have known the pain of early loss ( my father tragically drowned when I was 6 years old and I watched this); I have suffered marital breakdown; I have caused marital breakdown; I have been so low as to be in despair: I have known what it is like to feel unloved, unwanted and miserably alone; I have felt the ghastly grasp of depression, anxiety and so on... Yet, through nearly all of this I have felt the reality of *Something More*, so that I have not been solely at the mercy of the horrible things that have happened to me. Through the experience of the *latihan kedjiwaan* (ok, better to refer to the definition at the back of the book if you must!) *a Force I had previously been unaware of*, has often helped, guided and supported me- and sometimes amazingly so, as this testimony will show. I do not call it God but I suppose you could... To me it is simply the latihan.

So, truly then, I see myself as living proof that *the latihan kedjiwaan of Subud* is for the ordinary person of these times. Is that you? You do not need to be a paragon of virtue; you do not need any special qualities; have any faith (religious, or otherwise, at all- but you may if you wish!) or have any heroic self-will to experience what it has to offer. Just the opposite, in fact: I consider myself as real proof of that. Whatever mix of good and bad you are, this way is open to you.

This book is not one of the many “tragic life stories” currently on offer because it is also the record of some of the most joyous experiences of my life. Their

memory alone has been an essential part of my day to day life ever since and I also share them. They have been the most complete and life-affirming experiences of my entire life. They, too, could happen to you and if they do, I promise you will never forget them and, like me, you will be so grateful for them. So this book is also a record of them.

Are you still with me? I will continue then.

It might be a relief for you to know that you do not need to read the whole of this book! Even though I have condensed a lot, there are still years of detail here. I expect some chapters will appeal to you more than others. True, there is a chronology to this book but that has been as it has happened in my life: it is not essential that you follow it! Much of this book is about my personal experiences and some of it my emotional and intellectual struggles to explain what has happened to me which you may find less interesting. I have a whole chapter on Jung, for example, which may not be for you. Just leave it. I do also get rather critical of the “spirituality” I see around me, so be prepared: this book is a warts- and- all tell all. The best advice I can give you is to just take that which is meaningful and interesting to you and skip over the rest. It may be that the first part of the book will be more important for you. I will not be offended if you read only half the book! It might be all I could reasonably expect. Nonetheless, I want to say that the whole book has been both truly lived and deeply felt by me. And I believe the day to day reality of the latihan is evident in any chapter you should care to look at and in whatever order you fancy reading them!

It has taken me a long time to offer this book to you.

It all began more years ago than I care to remember with an experience in one of my latihans which gave me more than the usual surprise. Suddenly, without warning, I found myself having an unusual kind of dialogue with, and within, myself (i.e. no one else in the room was listening in!) It was as if one part of me suddenly announced that I should “tell others about some of my experiences in the latihan”. I did not like this idea. Until this time I had to be very sure of my audience before I would share anything so personal, so intimate, so self-revealing. The thought of sharing anything like this with people I did not know filled me with trepidation. I thought of my friends and colleagues and by far the majority of them were completely in the dark about this side of my life. I guess

I feared not only criticism (fair enough) but also ridicule and I did not want that. How could I expect others to value something so subjective and personal to me?

And, anyway, said another part of me, “no-one will listen to me”. Back came an immediate- and disarming- reply: “Yes, but you should tell them anyway!” The idea that I could tell something without worrying about being listened to was a completely new idea to me! But I was still only half convinced by it.

The argument seemed to go up a gear then as one of my inner voices pointed out to me, in no uncertain terms, that I was suffering from “moral cowardice by not being prepared to make public some of those experiences I would rather have kept secret!” When so many people were “coming out” with far more difficult things than was being asked of me I felt ashamed at the accusation. My defences were definitely weakening.

I am at my happiest with inner experiences like this when they find some sort of connection with the outer world of things, people and events. I usually look for some sort of confirmation there before I take them seriously enough to act on them. The Swiss analyst, Carl Jung called this sort of connection between the outer and inner “synchronicity” ( or “meaningful coincidence”) This has sometimes been very persuasive for me in times of doubt like this one. Well, at this time, two outer things happened which seemed to support these inner “prompts” of mine.

First, just after the dialogue in my latihan, I met, quite by chance, two mediums, on two separate occasions, whom I had never seen before and who did not know each other. I have mixed feelings about mediums and it takes a lot for them to impress me but these two immediately grabbed my attention. Within minutes of our meeting both started talking about my “writing” and both felt they “should insist that you get that book written!” One said: “Just DO it! Even if you just sit down and write 200 words a day, just do it” and added, somewhat intriguingly, “It is important for you that you do this and it could be so for other people, too. So, get on with it!” I found this really encouraging because I was sure that neither of these two could have known anything about me or my writing when I first met them.

And then, quite by chance, I read some words of John Bennett’s which had a big effect on me:

“the obligation to share with others what we ourselves value can only be discharged if we are ready to disclose our experiences. It is easy to shelter behind theories and what other people may have said or written (please indulge me in this instance!) but this does not pay our own debt.”

To Bennett, there is clearly an “obligation to make public one’s own – often very private- reasons for following a course of action.” Yes, I liked the sound of this. I felt convinced by it because it matched so closely what I was experiencing inwardly. Also, it was true that I did feel immeasurably grateful for the experiences that had come my way and the idea of being able to “pay back” in this way was (and still is) very appealing to me. I just liked the religious idea, also, of “bearing witness” (where individuals testify to their own experiences in their “faith”) I knew from friends how encouraging and valuable this could be.

Having decided to get on with it, the biggest obstacle now was finding time, in a busy professional and family life, to do it. At this point, Fate seemed to intervene and I contracted pneumonia which, for the first time in my life, necessitated several weeks of rest and recovery. Suddenly, I had a lot of time on my hands! I was surprised by how much I enjoyed, first, getting my many notes in order (I had begun taking notes after my dialogue latihan years ago) and then completing the first draft of this writing by the time I was well again.

So, what follows is my attempt to share with you some of those experiences which I consider to be the most valuable in my life. It is a hope of mine that they will help you to discover your own, if you should wish to do so.

Again, recently, in one of my quieter moments when I was thinking of this writing, an image occurred to me which seems so apt that I wish to conclude this little introduction with it. It is an image for this moment: I am at the head of a huge wagon train in the days of the “Wild West”, just about to start a pioneering journey, with a loud shout: “Wagons Roll!”

So, I see this as a pioneering journey we are about to make. We have all the supplies we think we need and, at last, this great, slow-moving wagon train is pulling away. Goodness knows what we will encounter: there will certainly be some adventures and maybe some dangers, too. Will you join us, then? Have you some of that pioneering spirit in you? If so, will you respond to my shout and come with me into unfamiliar territory? Who knows what awaits us...