

## APPENDIX 1: THE LATIHAN

Van hien says at the beginning of “What Is Subud?” :

### **The action of the Latihan is beyond our understanding.**

For some people that statement is obvious and perfectly acceptable – and enough. Others will state that the Latihan comes from “God” and that is both meaningful and satisfying to them. Others have been more specific, seeing it as similar to the “action of the Holy Spirit” which first appeared at Whitsun to those early Christians. Yet others see it as originating from “beyond our Solar System” and a fifth group see it as originating from “within ourselves” - eg from the Jungian “collective unconscious”! As with so much in Subud, you are completely free to make up your own mind on the basis of your own experience.

What we might all share is a feeling of *surprise* when we first experience the latihan. I was amazed by my experience (see opening to my first book)

Other people have written of their first experience of the Latihan. Eg:

John Bennett who was to be a hugely important instrument by which Subud expanded into the West and across the whole world writes of his beginnings in the Latihan (Witness p324):

“I went and asked Rofe to perform the formal opening, or initiation...Rofe explained the contact as being analogous to an electric current that can be switched on and off at will. He said that I would feel its presence as a thrill or a vibration. He was entirely matter of fact and seemed almost perfunctory in asking me to make a declaration of faith in God and submission to God’s Will. I was not aware of any change that could be described as a vibration, but I did observe that the restless movement of my thoughts ceased, and that I entered a state of consciousness that I had supposed to be attainable only by a long well-directed effort. Soon I ceased to think at all but was aware of an almost unbroken consciousness, free from all mental activity and yet intensely alive

and blissful. I have no idea of how long this state endured, for I lost all sense of time. I heard Rofe say: “That is enough. You can stop now” and instantly I was back in my usual state, fully aware of my surroundings.”

Later he writes of being at the first latihan of about 50 or so men:

“I pronounced the formula usual at the opening, asked them to keep their eyes closed whatever might happen and commended myself to God. At that very moment, the hall was filled with a sense of Presence; an immense peace descended on me and I ceased to be aware of the others who were before me.

After 10 or 15 minutes, I opened my eyes and an extraordinary sight met them. Nearly all the men in the room were already responding to the latihan...In that moment, I became convinced beyond all doubt that the Power that works in Subud has nothing to do with me or with any other person. I could no longer question its real- that is, its objective presence. None of the men in the room had ever seen a latihan, nor heard any description of the reactions they might expect. And yet, I saw them responding in just the same way as I had seen men in England and Holland, in Germany and America.” (p332)

**The word *latihan* is an Indonesian or Malay word literally meaning “exercise” or “training.”** Both these words indicate the necessity of some effort or contribution on the part of the person who exercises or is doing the training, so such literal translations are, as van Hien says, hopelessly inadequate. On p27 of “What Is Subud?” he also writes:

*“The very essence of the latihan is that, of ourselves, we do nothing; it is different for each one of us; it cannot be learned or taught. Our only contribution is a willingness to submit to the action.”*

**We approach the latihan with a willing suspension of both belief and disbelief.**

**Bapak first received the Latihan alone but the majority receive it in the presence of, or near to, others in whom it is already established.** This is how

the Latihan usually spreads: by being transmitted from a group of people to an individual or from person to person.

Afterwards we are at first advised to allow the action (“to Latihan”) twice a week for approximately half an hour, together with other practitioners. Later we may add a third Latihan of about half an hour on our own.

The Latihan may take place in any hall or room hired or available for the purpose and large enough for the numbers likely to attend. In a Subud group’s early days the venue is often a room in a private house, with the furniture removed or shifted to the side.

Before the Latihan it is advised to remove watches, spectacles and any hard objects in your pockets, as a simple practical measure to prevent them from getting broken or hurting you.

When the latihan is about to start, you are advised to stand as relaxed as possible, with your hands normally by your sides. It is a good thing to close your eyes so as to be distracted as little as possible by what goes on around you. You should not try “to think” of anything in particular and you should not try “not to think”; in fact, you should do nothing but relax and be open to receive whatever comes to you.

### **What might happen in a Latihan?**

Some people may immediately make movements of the head, the body, the arms or the legs. Some people walk, some dance, some run and some lie down. Some people make noises, some talk, some shout, some sing, some laugh and some cry. These are some of the more common *outward* manifestations. Some people just stand and may feel nothing – patience may be needed.

You may be prompted to do these things or something similar or something completely different. You are always free to follow these prompts or not. Experienced latihanners will encourage you to follow whatever comes to you.

There is no merit or non-merit in receiving in a particular way and you should on no account try to copy others.

## **The Latihan is uniquely individual.**

It is true that movements may well, at one time or another, be the same for two or more people (there are certain movements which seem to be fairly common) but their significance is likely to be different for each person.

Whatever happens, or does not happen, to you remains uniquely your own affair.