

CHAPTER THREE: CHANGE, CHANGE, CHANGE!

Outer changes begin with promotion ; intuition and my need for outer “confirmation”; a missed opportunity-still regretted decades later; a new Sudbury group; more experiences and Guidance; personal growth.

When Subud “exploded” into my life, I was 32 years old: old enough to have a settled home-life and to be established in my career. I was living in a beautiful Suffolk village with my little family and working as a teacher in a modern open-plan school about 20 minutes drive away and on the bus route which was handy when my wife started back at work or needed the car on an occasional day before then. Life was busy but to all outward purposes good and going well. Beneath the surface, there were discontents, of course, but I accepted these as normal. It was not until many years later that I realised “normal” life could actually mean so much more. The changes to make this possible began soon after I began practising the Subud latihan.

The Latihan And My Job

First to be affected was my job. In the year before I joined Subud I had applied for promotion to a small, local school. I did not even get an interview. I had been told I should attend more meetings and such like in order to “get my face recognised” if I was serious about “getting on in my career.” This did not feel right to me; I guess I was idealistic and thought that promotion in teaching should not depend on such a superficial thing as “getting your face recognised.” When no interview came, I accepted that perhaps I had gone as far as I was going to go in my career. I took some comfort and satisfaction from the feeling I had that the people who worked with me- other teachers- respected me and I clearly got on well with most of the children and their parents. I remember once I saw a little girl at the edge of my classroom just about to have a paint tub hit her on the head and in my anxiety to warn her I shouted across the room. Just after I heard a girl from my own class say to her neighbour: “Who was that man who just shouted?” This made me laugh but also made me realise that I was able to teach without loud- mouthedness: my discipline was more than just unsubtle bullying, at least!

I did not bother to apply for any of the jobs that came up immediately after my first failed application. Then the latihan intervened. In one latihan I had an image in my mind of this old-fashioned sailing ship; it was on the rocks and unable to sail out into the wide open sea. I felt that if it stayed there, it would eventually fall to bits and sink into the sea

without a trace. Then I suddenly realised that the sailing ship represented my job! If I stayed where I was, my career would sink without a trace. I also realised that the ship had all it needed to get off the rocks: its sails and everything were intact. So it seemed to me that my career was ready to move forward: I did actually have all that was needed to ensure this. All I had to do was make a bit of effort and the ship of my career would sail off the rocks.

I found this interesting, to say the least, but I have to say I was not convinced by it. I have never been a person with “faith” in anything other than reason or “common-sense.” Inner feelings alone have never been enough for me. This has, I now think, been a good and a bad thing. Good because I have always looked for some outer “confirmations” of my intuitions, feelings or receivings (sometimes deliberately setting them up and-surprise surprise!- nearly always getting them!) Downright bad in only one instance now I come to think of it. That was the Christmas just over a year after I had been opened when I felt this strong urge to go to Indonesia where Bapak lived. I kept “seeing” Bapak’s face, smiling and encouraging, in my mind. At first I just dismissed it but it became so insistent that I set up a test: if it was right to go to see Bapak in this way then I would get the money somehow. Well the money did not come through the letter box, so I dismissed the idea and I did not contact Bapak about it or anything. It seemed a madcap idea anyway. Surely I could not abandon my family in this way- especially at Christmas time. In the light of later events that turned out to be a misplaced notion (they were to abandon me anyway!). Worse, I later realised that now my wife was at work and paying half the bills, I had the money already, waiting in my bank account. Alas, I just could not take the idea seriously; it seemed completely “wild” and somewhat irrational. Now I realise all too clearly that it was none of those things and I could so easily have gone! In fact, I now see it as probably a bitterly wasted opportunity for me to actually meet this person I had heard so much about: to meet him and give him my unasked-for criticisms of Subud etc. I would surely have learnt so much! I say “probably” because I have no idea if the trip would have come off anyway. It could all have been a fancy on my part. I think the only way to have really tested it would have been to have contacted Bapak and seen what would have happened. Oh dear, it still feels like a wasted opportunity! It shows so clearly my complete lack of faith. I recall that wonderful story that Varindra Vittachi tells in his “Reporter in Subud”. It was the time of great civil unrest in his native Ceylon (as it then was); a truly dangerous time. Varindra was in the heat of it all, busy reporting the fast-changing events. Then he suddenly gets a call from Bapak telling him to leave immediately and go to Bapak in Indonesia. I

am amazed: Varindra does this unquestionably, with NO REASONS being given. Thank God he did. Straight afterwards a gunman was caught in Varindras's garden intent on killing Varindra! I guess if that had been me I would not be here to tell the tale today!

Still one mistake in 23 years is not too bad is it? And I comfort myself with the thought that if I was REALLY meant to have gone, I would have done anyway! It helps a bit...

I suppose the real "problem" with my lack of trust in the Inner like this is that it has often delayed things for me and made it an extremely tortuous process to get me to change things or to do quickly what I should do. I am simply a critical person. I think I have read too much of the dangers of following intuition or inner "guidance". I may not have trust but neither have I been led into the foolishness of blindly following a leader (into suicide e.g. or gassing people or giving up all my money to a "rolls-royce" fund or being brainwashed into thinking all my family and friends outside of my group are "evil" ETC. All this and more are fairly recent examples!) Anyway, in this instance of my sailing ship image, I had no such problems. All I could do was simply wait and see what happened. Sure enough, it happened no more than two weeks after the inner experience. My wife and a friend both told me, within a week of each other, of a job that had just come up that "was just right for me". Now I took their word for it and immediately applied for it. For me to do anything "immediately" was something of a novelty! Anyway, shortly after this, the Head of the school I was working at came up to me at break time one day and, believe it or not, said to me: "John, I have just been talking to the head of that school you have applied for and it sounds ideal for you. She says she wants a "family man", who is a good teacher, and who will not want to use the school for his own quick promotion." Well, I got the job.

I knew I would before I went to the interview. Every time I had doubts about it and sometimes at other times also I would get the song "Greensleeves" running through my head! Oh dear, songs again! For some reason, which I do not understand, this song has come to mean separation and leaving to me. This was the first time I experienced it. I can remember it suddenly starting up one night as I walked across the school field to catch my bus home and I just knew it meant I was leaving this school and that could only mean I was going to get my promotion. I was to "receive" this song at other times in my life when I was to move house or people were to go out of my life for some reason or other.

Usually, it would occur before there was any evidence for it. I guess it simply got me to look out for such a change and, more, it helped prepare me for it. Once or twice it helped me to make a decision: the song would occur over and over and then I would find myself needing to make a decision (Is so-and-so (a member of my staff) going to leave? Should I be planning for someone new coming in? This was particularly useful when I had a member of staff absent with long-term sickness!) So convinced was I that I was going to get this job that I told my wife and suggested she make the “necessary arrangements (for the children and herself) because I would need the car when I started because this school was not on a bus route!

So within a few months of becoming a Subud member I was promoted in spite of not even being interviewed for a similar job in the previous year! And it was to come about through both inner and outer indications- that I find is the most convincing way Subud works for me. This is not so for all Subud members, of course. Subud clearly works in an individual way. I think everyone has his or her own story. This is simply mine. I hope that it can be seen as evidence of Subud’s authenticity, power and even relevance to a modern person-me!! Anyway, I was to discover that my new job was to give me some of the best evidence I have for the reality of Subud and of its potential for change in a person’s life: change that is in one’s working life and at the same time in one’s capabilities and personality. Again and again, my job was to put me into challenging situations that I simply had no doubt that BY MYSELF I could not cope with. Sometimes the Higher Power brought into my experience by the latihan felt almost tangible to me. At first, however, I had a brief honeymoon period when I could not believe I was in such a quiet, well-run, orderly school. It was so much easier than my last school where there were a high proportion of “social problems”. My challenges were to come later...

Some More Members: A New Sudbury Group

Meanwhile changes were happening in other areas of my life. At about the same time as my job-change, some new people were coming into my life and this was to lead also to some very surprising developments. It all began with an apparent deterioration of my relationship with my next-door neighbour (the one with whom I had many discussions with about books etc. mentioned at the beginning of my story). I suddenly realised one day that I had not really had a decent conversation with him for months -much longer than we had ever left it before. He knew about my interest in Subud and I wondered if that had made a difference? I was

unsure what to do about this, so I asked the latihan for help. I simply went upstairs into the bedroom on my own, did a few minutes latihan and then asked: "How are things with C---- and me? And should I go into his today for a coffee as I used to do?" I received that things were O.K between us and it was not necessary to go in for coffee. I was a bit disappointed with this because I thought it would mean the non-contact between us was likely to continue indefinitely. I then decided to go for a walk. When I came back from my walk, a surprise was waiting for me. My wife had a message for me: C--- had been in for a chat and would come back when I got back from my walk! Well, we then spent over an hour talking about Subud and continued the conversation that afternoon when we were down at the swings, pushing our daughters up into the sky! It was the longest talk we had had for months! The upshot was that sometime later C---was to sit in the car next to me on one of my journeys to Ipswich. He met the little group and I was amazed when he was asked outright: "So, are you thinking of joining the old Association then?" To which the answer was "Yes!"

I was surprised at this because the reaction of the Ipswich group to C---'s coming to see them was the complete opposite of their reaction to seeing me for the first time. To me, they had been very low-key. "If it is right for you to join us you will know in yourself. It is completely your decision," they had said to me. So I could not believe how direct they were with C---. Subud truly tailored to the individual, huh? I could not believe C---'s equally direct and clear-cut reply: "Yes!" because, first, I knew him to be as cautious and reflective about these things as I was and, second, he had his own way of seeing life which I thought was enough for him. He had a number of friends who shared this with him and I always thought them an intelligent and stimulating group of people. I, honestly, never thought he would join Subud but that is what he did and soon we were driving down to Ipswich together!

There were other surprises involving other people at this time also. The most dramatic involved St--- an ex-policeman who had recently separated from his wife, who was living in a sparsely-furnished house with no heating or warm water (!) and was trying to make a living as a potter which had been something of a dream of his. One day there was a knock at my door. I had only just got home from teaching and, as all teachers will recognise, I was in that near shell-shock state that follows a day's teaching. Certainly not in a state to socialise! My wife knew from experience (!) that all I could cope with when I first got home from work was a cup of tea and a quiet sit. I was best left alone; then I would gradually become "human" again! So, on this occasion, I was horrified to

hear her say: “Oh, hello St---. You haven’t met John have you? Come on in and say “Hello”. I simply could not believe it. I was sure she knew better. Anyway, within moments I was confronted by this rather large, bearded man who seemed to fill up the room. He quickly made himself at home, pulling out a well-sucked, droopy pipe and putting it into his mouth, happily without lighting it. He was easy to talk to, though, and I quickly liked him, especially as he laughed readily with a real, chesty laugh. Suddenly, he spotted a book on my bookshelf. It was John Bennett’s book “Witness” which I mentioned earlier. “Well, I never!” he said, “I’ve been looking at this guy’s books in Cambridge this morning. Are you a Bennett fan?” I explained that through reading John Bennett I had recently joined a group called Subud. I asked if he had heard of it... Nothing could have prepared me for what happened next. Suddenly he stood up, whereupon I automatically stood up, too, and, to my utter amazement, he got me in something akin to a bear hug and said: “I have been looking for a mentor and, at last, I have found him.” And there we were standing in my front room, hugging each other. I felt I had known him all my life! In fact, I had known him less than an hour... Soon he was to be sitting in the car travelling the 32 miles to Ipswich with C--- and myself!

His opening was like the man: memorable! There were about 6 of us there and it was a loud, free-flowing latihan. He and I sang a duet at one point in, what was to both of us, a completely new way. It was loud, sustained and truly full-bloodied! This latihan had everything: from profound laughter at the beginning to tears of gratitude at the end. I felt it was a real privilege to be a part of it all; truly a gift from God. I ended this latihan thinking: “If only we could give this wonderful thing to the whole world...” St---, himself, stayed still-in one place-for the whole latihan and at the end of the ½ hour or so, we looked on the floor where he had been standing and there were 2 perfectly-shaped and rather large footprints made out of sweat! By this time St-- was outside the hall, puffing like mad on his pipe, saying over and over again: “Amazing! That was amazing! I have never experienced anything like that before!”

Through St--, some more “local” people were to hear of Subud and it was not long before I received a phone call one evening from a young woman who lived a couple of miles away, asking if she could come to talk to me about Subud. She turned out to be a beautiful, young lady with obvious intelligence and a real enquiring mind. I, again, found it very easy to talk to her and she obviously liked what she heard because I had another phone call from her a day or so later, saying that her parents wanted to meet me! I was not expecting that one! I laughingly told myself that

perhaps they had misunderstood and thought I was asking to marry their daughter or something like that (chance would have been a fine thing!) When I thought about it, though, I was impressed. A---- was at least 18 but her parents were obviously still looking out for her. There had been, and I guess still is, lots in the media about strange groups “brainwashing” people, and worse, so I liked this response. Goodness knows what they would make of us or Subud. The latter (certainly not the former!) could certainly seem strange but we could be totally confident that everyone’s freedom was in no way compromised by it. So C--- and I went off to see A---’s family.

The house was very impressive: timber-framed and highly polished wooden furniture with a huge log fire burning in the Tudor fireplace. It was truly enchanting. The lighting was subdued but pleasantly relaxing. The company was attentive and courteous: Suffolk hospitality at its best. We had a fine meal, goodness knows how many of us, sitting around this long, oak table. Conversation was unstrained and I particularly remember how easy it was to sit and be quiet with these people as well-better than talk for the sake of it, I think. Anyway, as I drove away afterwards, I thought it had been a particularly pleasant evening. I also realised that I had been surprisingly relaxed all through. This was not, by any means, usually the case with me: I was usually guarded and shy with strangers and in unfamiliar settings like this one. In fact, I could be quite ill at ease and strained with people I did not know or who were so obviously different from myself. Not so, on this occasion! I actually felt a clear sense of “all-rightness” in myself: a sense of inner completeness which seemed to be independent of where I was or who I was with. It was good for such a “gawky” person as myself to experience this. I could see that this Subud was clearly not just changing things around me but also changing me as a person. Why, I was acquiring social competence and ease at last! At 33, I felt a bit of a late starter here. Better late than never.

Well A--- and C--- both joined Subud. I remember experiencing a special moment during A---’s opening even though I, as a man, was not allowed in the same room as her or the group of ladies with her. The men, in fact, were in a completely different building about 25 yards away. Nonetheless, at one point about ½ way through the latihan I was almost overwhelmed with an inexplicable feeling of joy, real joy. This time I found myself wondering if there was a particular moment when this latihan either entered a person or became manifest to a person. If there was I was sure this was it! Through A--- another man joined our group. This was S---, second son of a farmer, who would meet us at Ipswich on his brand-new, glistening, shiny and very powerful motor-bike. He, like

A--- had been attending “The Essex School of Philosophy ”and was familiar with the ideas of Gurdjieff and John Bennett, both of which had been very influential in Subud’s early days. It was interesting to see the same thing happening some 30 years later. Strangely, I spent most of his first latihan sobbing- goodness knows why!

Well, from just me in the wilds of Suffolk, there were now as many, if not more, Subud members near where I lived than in the Ipswich group! Amazing that a year previously Subud was unknown in my part of the world and now there were enough there to start a new Subud group. My Ipswich days were now already over. 128 miles a week’s driving was now to give way to less than 50. Our new group was also to have a solid, stable core with the arrival of two long-standing members from nearby Essex. They were to remain for years. All sorts of things were going to happen to almost everyone else, though...

My New Job

Meanwhile, I had made a start at my new school. On my first day there, I innocently walked into my classroom only to find it full of parents, all waiting to see this new teacher. At my last school parents were fearfully kept out of the school “except by appointment only”! Here, they were very much a part of the school’s life. At first I found this somewhat nerve-racking but it did not take long to discover they were harmless enough and, in fact, in many instances they were unusually supportive and genuinely interested in their children’s education. Later, I was to find some real friends from these people and-eventually- my third wife! As I said earlier, I had a real honeymoon period at this school: it was friendly, enjoyable and clearly doing well by its children. I suppose the first thing I had to learn was to begin to relate to a school as a community of parents and other adults in their million and one varieties. After my first morning’s experience of a classroom of adults rather than children, then came the first school function: the Harvest Assembly. This, again, was unlike all the others that I had been involved in. The hall was packed, with not even standing room left, and all of a sudden I heard my name being mentioned in the Head’s introduction to the parents and this was followed by a real thunderous applause. Then it hit me: I was expected to get up and say something intelligible to all these people! I mumbled something and sat down as quickly as I could- the applause remained loud and welcoming: I had got through that! I was soon to meet many similarly challenging “public” situations that were to demand much more from me. In fact, I was soon to feel that many of my personality weaknesses were to be ruthlessly exposed by this job and this I found, in

many instances, to be agonisingly difficult. These have to come a little later in my story...Let me enjoy the memory of my honeymoon period just a little longer!

More Experiences And Guidance; The Urge Towards Personal Growth At My Age! The Latihan As Therapy

All this time my latihan were continuing to provide me with interest (at the least!), adventure, guidance and occasionally real insight. A lot of them were still helping me to see the truth about myself. It seemed important (and still does) not to get an inflated view of myself. Sometimes this was made clear in the latihan itself. For example, one latihan at Barnet with about 12 men gave me the odd sensation of having very tiny hands and I understood that I was but a child in Subud. On another occasion, I went to a latihan at Southend where one young man spent the entire time singing what to me was an incredibly beautiful song. It reduced me to tears it was so moving and by the latihan's end I just felt so unworthy. It was as if I had been allowed a glimpse of heaven without really being anywhere near worthy of it! Other latihan seemed to be urging me to be things I was most definitely not! At one point, at about this time, I felt that the latihan was "picking me up emotionally and urging me to stand up straight;" another gave me the image of a "weeble" which was a popular children's toy of the time (my daughter had a whole toy miniature playground of them). These were little egg-shaped, colourful characters designed to keep returning to the upright position no matter how you knocked them around: I felt I should be like one of those! Other latihan had the same theme, it seemed, making me feel that I needed to be more independent: more responsible for my own life. It was as if I should take more command of things- back came the image of the ship- I felt I should take more control and steer my life through rocky waters, out to the open sea, there to find the New World. At this time I could not say what the "rocky waters" were but, alas, that was all too soon to become clear to me. Latihan at this time seemed to urge me to avoid being swayed so violently by "upsurges of emotion"; to try to accept criticism, dislike, things like hostility and even embarrassment and, more, to resist the wish in me to run away from difficulties and actually try to simply "endure emotional negativity". I felt it was important to respect my personality with all its quirks and, similarly, to respect other people in the same way. Suddenly, I felt it was important to not let other people get "inside" me but instead to remain psychologically independent of them. These seemed strange advice at the time as I was enjoying so many new people sharing this Subud life with me. The latihan often left me feeling that I should be prepared to stand more alone

and I have to say that latihan on my own at this time left me feeling more my own person, dependent on no-one. This was a feeling that was soon to be sorely tested in my life but for the moment it was simply a feeling experienced in and immediately after latihan. On one occasion the latihan shocked me with the realisation that I suffered from moral cowardice! It was this that led me to keep my opinions to myself when they were different from the people around me; I would do this because I wanted to be liked or did not want to cause any ill feeling. Worse, I could be seen as a “Yes- man”. I was appalled. I immediately recognised its truth and I felt a wave of shame for it. I felt the latihan was clearly saying to me that I should be true to what life had made, and brought, to me: this was clearly different. This single insight was probably to bring me more difficulties with Subud folk later than any other but repeated testing over the years was to repeat the message over and over again, especially on those many occasions when I myself would also have preferred a quiet, unchallenging, harmonious atmosphere. I was to learn that harmony at the cost of “truth” was not really worth having-especially not in the long term.

It was really clear to me at this time that after 30+ years of being alive, life was suddenly demanding a growth in my personality. Things that I had not recognised as a part of me were becoming all too clear to me either in the latihan of Subud or in my thoughts immediately after. At first these “ideas” seemed to relate to my new job which came to demand changes in me in order for me to simply survive. “Be unafraid to be “on show.” Take a lead,” the latihan seemed to say, “Organise, and cope with, the outer world confidently. Put yourself more out there even in the face of criticism or dislike. Be prepared to make mistakes, to lose face or even the approval of others. Be true to yourself; accept yourself as having both good and “bad” qualities. You cannot wait until you are “perfect” before you act.” The effect on me was to make me re-think my whole approach to life and to strive to be a more effective in the world. It was obviously not right for me to be a shy introvert hiding away somewhere! Often that is what I would have preferred! Fortunately these ideas were not allowed to simply remain in my head. Things started to begin to make sense when the Head of my school suddenly announced that she was to retire early. Now I was to be thrown into more responsibility at the school than I could ever have expected so soon after becoming Deputy Head and I was going to be involved with people from the local community in a completely new way! I was soon to be taking assemblies, fronting meetings and organising a huge retirement ‘do’ - a whole day’s affair-involving just about the whole of the local Education Community and people who had been involved in our school from when the retiring Head

had first arrived, some 30 odd years ago! This was to be the biggest community event the school had known in years. Just about everyone came and I was at the centre of its organisation. I can remember now the real pleasure I experienced as I stood up on the school stage and gave a confident speech to a hall full of parents, Education Officials and other dignitaries from the local community and all over the place. At the end of the evening it I felt as if I had been at the school a life-time myself! I had been introduced to people from all walks of life and I got to feel I knew the school's history as much as anyone could. I was no longer just the new boy!

A whole host of new challenges were just around the corner for me but for the moment school had "stretched" me as a person, made me more confident with the sorts of people I would have "shied" away from in my recent past and given me the unexpected satisfaction of giving my retiring boss "a wonderful day that she would never be able to forget!" I am sure that the latihan had been "advising" and guiding me from within all the time. With its help I had been propelled into the foreground of school life and by the end of my first year there I had been "on show" in ways that scared the life out of me: giving speeches to adults, teaching "demonstration lessons" to various groups of people and I had even been a Sports Day commentator with my voice being projected across the little town all afternoon. School had certainly plunged me into the deep end of my feelings of lack of confidence, weakness and inadequacy and I had survived! I began my summer holidays with a real sense of achievement and amazement at what had happened in such a short time. If I STILL had any doubts about the latihan being able to be so obviously involved in one's daily life and in developing one's personality, future events at school and in my personal life were going to confirm this to me beyond all possible doubt. For the moment, I was enjoying my children, growing as a person for all to see at school and continuing to feel the benefits in understanding and actions from the latihan.

Sometimes this understanding was purely subjective and not related to present, or future events, at all. During one memorable latihan at this time something of the significance for me of the tragic death of my father was made clear to me. My father had drowned when I was 6 years old and ever since I could remember I had denied that it had any serious effect on me. I was to learn more about this from latihan every so often but in this one I learnt of one very surprising effect: my father's early death had affected me somewhat deeply because it meant a "loss" of my mother! What a surprising "revelation" this was and it did not take much to see how it could so easily be true. After having time at home with my mother

while my father was at work, now my mother had to leave me often with members of her own family while she, as a single parent, had to go out to work! I have many memories of staying with my grandparents at their crowded house and many memories of missing my mother, especially after she met the man who was to be my step-father... Then I saw, too, that my father's death clearly caused me to lose confidence. There was no doubt about this because towards the end of this latihan I remembered something I had not even thought of before: the Christmas before my father's death I was given a lead role in the school play; I was a king (I remember now standing in a suit of armour made out of silver milk bottle tops!) with loads of words to learn. A year later I had to be "hidden" at the back in the crowd so that I could go to the toilet as and when I needed! All this was something of a shock to me, to say the least. I did later –again because of thoughts inspired by the latihan- come to see that there were some positive effects for me because of my father's death but, for now, I was just amazed to see how wrong I had been when friends asked about this awful thing and I naively said time and time again: "No, I can honestly say I do not think my father's death had any great effect on me at all!"

The latihan had clearly shown me that it could act as some kind of deep "therapy"- and for free! It could give understanding of one's weaknesses, truth about one's character and, even more, strength to do something about it! I had already lost a bit of my lack of confidence and was much more effective as a leader in my school, although I knew at this time that there was still a long way to go with this. And, of course, school was going to make me go more that way later. I was also experiencing latihan that gave me times of emotional comfort, of psychological integration and a feeling of "all-rightness" in myself so that I felt generally confident for awhile after. These, I guess, were giving me the experience of the feelings that my life needed and which previously I had had no, or little, experience of. At the same time as seeing shortcomings and the need for changes in myself there seemed to be a compassion about this latihan because I was repeatedly made aware that we are all ordinary in the sense that we all have mixed qualities. A solitary latihan at this time made me clearly aware that one should not "hide" one's personality from the world, one should express it, but at the same time one should not expect everyone to love it, or even like it. In other words one should not be so concerned with other people's reactions if it inhibited or got too much in the way of one's own authenticity. One's personality seemed to be like a GIFT to the world--- but not everyone would want that particular gift! And I knew from before that there was no such thing as the "perfect" gift for everyone... All this seemed to give a

healthy place to personality. It did not deny it or demand unattainable perfection. It simply told the truth about it and allowed it its' rightful place-an understood place! -in a person's life. It helped me enormously.

As well as understanding, I was still getting those latihans that seemed inexplicably negative. These were latihans that showed me my weaknesses, sometimes in images that were to intrigue me. After one latihan I felt as if I had been dragged through barbed wire and my face was horribly scratched. I wrote after: " I feel so exposed; as if I can hardly cope!." After another latihan I felt "like a seal washed up on the shore- can I get back into the water or fend for myself on the land?" It was a question that was not to be answered until another strange development was going to take my life by surprise ...