

All Of Humankind Or An Exclusive Sect?

The essence of Subud is the Latihan and this is where the focus should be. Anything else is an optional extra and certainly not a requirement. So, truly Subud becomes open then to those of all beliefs and none. What other organisation can say that! Here is the uniqueness and universality of Subud. If Subud could put this Latihan above all words then its appeal would be much larger than at present where the emphasis on everything Bapak has said has made it a limited and narrow organisation. So much, in fact, of what Bapak has said can all too easily become a means whereby a number of varied groups of humankind may feel – or are actually- rejected from membership. Here are a few significant examples:

Meditators

Bapak has spoken disparagingly of meditation thus repelling a huge group of people for whom the practice is an essential part of their daily lives: Buddhists, Hindus, and the many people in the West, especially, who have no religious affiliation and have found the practice to have many benefits- benefits that have been thoroughly researched now so that GPs, Counsellors and other health professionals will encourage the practice. It might be instructive for the Latihan to be the subject of an equal amount of research! I recently came across an example of this when I talked to a Subud man who was suffering with anxiety and depression. I mentioned to him how effective modern research had shown “mindfulness meditation” to be for these (and other problems) “Oh, I couldn’t meditate,” he said “because Bapak has said we shouldn’t”! In my opinion, a more sensible piece of advice would be to just *ask* people not to meditate during the Latihan itself (because this is a time for being willing to follow whatever the latihan brings rather than imposing anything wilfully on the latihan ourselves) rather than sweeping aside a practice that is so important- and beneficial- to so many people.

Those Who Belong To Other “Modern” Groups (which Subud calls “Mixing”)

Bapak has talked much of the dangers of “mixing” other religious or psychological practices with the latihan in Subud. He is positive about the established religions but anything else is dangerous or unnecessary. So now that vast array of modern religious groups and therapies and the hundreds of people who practise them is rejected! Again, to many of us just to stress that the Latihan times be free of them

is all that should be reasonably asked.

The Non-Religious

Non-religious, agnostics, atheists and the ever-growing group of “don’t knows” will have an impossible task with Bapak’s talks because they are full of religious language and unquestioned religious assumptions that are difficult for more and more modern people to take on trust. Bapak shows no understanding of the non-religious approach to life of so many modern people, so immersed is he in his Islam. Yet, these are the very people he says Subud has come to give “facts” to! They are clearly an ever-increasing number in the modern world, too.

Apparently, Hindus have a 101 names for God; Judaism and Christianity says “too sacred for utterance” (“hallowed”) is Your name” and Buddhists do not believe it is helpful to use this word at all, yet too many helpers are insisting that people being opened should say “God” and are not allowing any other word to be used! So many people have complained to me about this that I see it as a case of the “letter of the law” superseding “the spirit” in a way that it should not. I think people should be free to use their own, or even NO words, should they choose. Personally, I favour an appeal to “That Which Is The Highest Available To Me Now”- but that may just be my quirk!

Feminists

Feminists are, of course, another large group of people who would not wish to associate with Subud because of Bapak’s teachings about men and women. It needs to be stressed, in my opinion, that these teachings are not part of any creed that has to be accepted in order to be a Subud member or helper.

Those Concerned About Equal Opportunities And Non-Discrimination

And not just feminists. The roles of men and women are undergoing a revolution across the world now and the old religious views that Bapak espouses are being rejected as unfair and out-dated by more and more ordinary men and women, particularly of the Western world but also elsewhere now. Other views of men and women than Bapak’s, or the religious, are not to be a barrier to being a Subud member and are clearly- and experientially- no barrier to receiving the latihan either *because people, like me and many others, who hold different views have, and are, receiving strongly in their latihan right up to the present day!*

Those With Mental Health Issues

Then there is that large group of the world's population in danger of being denied the latihan because they have, or are experiencing, mental health issues! As these are now reaching almost epidemic proportions across the modern world, this is a lot of humankind! Obviously, Subud members are right to be concerned for such people but, because there is the hope of healing in the latihan (some have experienced this, particularly it seems in Subud's early days but also sometimes now), would it not be better just to make sure that the normal support systems are in place for these people? Or that there is someone in the family or close to the person who can be available should help be needed. Obviously, that person would need to be informed about Subud. And it would seem a good idea that the contact details of the many support groups for those with mental health issues that exist already in the community are readily available to the people who may need them. Some Subud people seem to think they can only offer the latihan to people they can personally care for should the need arise ! This, whilst good intentioned, is obviously unrealistic. Can you imagine doctors, counsellors etc feeling they had to offer that? There would be no help! Counsellors , e.g, offer their hour long sessions regularly but do not assume that they will be looking after their clients much outside of those times. If help is needed then there are other support services available.

And, of course, such people might well need professional expertise and few Subud members could claim to offer that. Personally, I cannot see why it has to be all or nothing: the latihan can surely be offered along with the ordinary worldly support services. The only times the latihan might be refused *might* be when the professionals (GPs, Psychiatrists, etc) advise against it or, when the newcomer is incapable of making rational decisions for him or herself (and this can be witnessed in other areas of their lives- are they capable of coping with ordinary life at all, looking after themselves in the obvious ways, making *any* of their own decisions ?). Even then Subud may owe it to the newcomer to talk to them and the professionals to ensure the most clear and fair understanding possible. Ultimately, as with so much else in life, and *in general* any decisions to be made are the person's themselves if the person is at all capable of making decisions (as shown in other areas of their lives).

Drug-Takers

Another ever-growing group at the moment who will be refused the latihan are those who admit to being, or are known to be, drug-takers. This affects so many

people and for a complex number of reasons. Again, because the latihan has a potential for healing and might help at least some of these people, I would urge a more flexible approach than is often the case at the moment. Again, the request not to come to latihan under the influence is all that should be reasonably asked.

The list of exclusions has grown quite long: meditators, inc Hindus, Buddhists and others; the non-religious; new age and other “mixers”; feminists and equal rights believers; those with mental health issues, drug-takers... And even if you don't belong to one of these groups you may still have to suffer “trial by testing!” The practice has grown up in some quarters of testing if a person should be opened! Asking with sincerity may no longer be enough as an “authoritative” group may withhold it from you anyway!

Is Subud Just Another Group Amongst Many?

How then could such a Subud be possibly for all of humankind when the latter is so full of such disparate groups? It has failed because to date it has set itself up as yet another clearly defined group (around Bapak's teachings) standing apart from all the other groups. No wonder it has a small membership. *For this to change it has to get away from its reliance and primary focus on Bapak and what he says and be more attentive to the Latihan.* Many of us have shown that we can live our lives creatively with the latihan without believing all these things. True, most people with such views as mine seem to have left the Association but not all have.