

EARLY CHANGES

It was only a matter of weeks after I began these regular latihan that I began to notice changes in my ordinary life. These were small things at first and to do with my attitude towards myself and my reactions to the people around me, some of whom I had known for years. First, I began to see things about myself that were definitely not very flattering. I began to be aware that often I had a sense of “superiority” towards the people I knew! At first that felt shameful but gradually that feeling gave way to one of relief as I realised just how ordinary I was: I saw I was special but only as everyone was special! I was no better than everyone else and, probably, no worse. It now looked as if I had somehow been struggling previously to maintain an illusory, a wrong, sense of superiority. Now I did not have to. In fact, I could now accept some less flattering parts of myself. We all had them: it was all part of being human. At last I could feel some compassion for myself- something I had not been able to do before when I was struggling to be “perfect.” What a relief to be freed from this impossible burden!

Immediately, all this seemed to change my relationships with some of the people around me who suddenly, for no obvious reason, now began opening up to me about themselves and their lives. A friend and work colleague whom I had known for years began telling me about his being a mason and what that meant to him. All the years I had known him and I had not an inkling until now about his “secret life.” Another close family member began telling me about his wayward youth, when he had been a thief and he explained that his thieving was more for the “excitement” than for his wish to have the stolen things! Again, what an unexpected revelation!

In all there now seemed to be a greater sense of authenticity in my relationships, a greater honesty which I very much liked. This was not always easy, however. Sometimes, I was to become rather too painfully aware of some thoughts and feelings in others which were being “hidden” and were at odds with how they were acting and appeared. At first, this could be extremely confusing for me and I did not know how to handle it. I began to feel that I knew when people were lying to me, or were just trying to manipulate me into doing something for their own ends which were clearly not the reasons being given to me. I began to get to know people in a way which I could only describe as “from the inside” This was not always so but when it involved people I had known for years, it could

be shocking. A visit from old friends now had an added interest! This one, I felt, was irritated, sometimes beyond measure, by my tendency to butt in on a conversation before a person had finished saying their bit (quite right!); this one was angered by the way I brought up my children (not so fair!) and, most surprisingly, I felt this work- colleague's dislike for me! When I was able to share these feelings with those friends who were interested in this kind of honesty and intimacy, they were always authenticated; at other times I just did not know for sure. More experience over the years has given me a greater trust in these subjective experiences. In fact, some of my most inwardly painful relationships have been with those very controlled people who, for various reasons, believe in keeping their feelings hidden and put on an act with other people. Of course, this may sometimes be the most expedient thing to do, I suppose, but the dishonesty of it can be very uncomfortable for me as to sometimes become well-nigh intolerable. I prefer to talk to that "inner person" rather than play, what to me, are games with a variety of dubious motives! I guess for the same reason I find the million and one varieties of "small talk" tiring and after a while mind-numbing!

I suppose the biggest "revelations" for me at this time were to do with my wife. This was to become something of a story in itself and I will come back to it as my Subud story continues. Suffice to say, at this early stage of my Subud life, I had been married 11 years, had 2 children (a 5 year old boy and a coming up to 5 year old girl) and, whilst I was plainly aware of big differences between my wife and myself, I now hoped that Subud would add its magic and make things better between us "one day." As it was things were to go so badly wrong between us that, for a time (too long!) my life was to feel a hellish thing, so much so that I came to see that my early dramatic and long latihan as nothing short of a preparation for what was to become an horrendous separation from my wife and children- something I still feel these many years later, I could not have borne as I did without the latihan. But a lot more was still to happen before then. At this time I can now see I was being prepared: I read back in my journal of this period at words received in, or shortly after, the latihan, which were wiser than I realised at the time:

First, two months after I was opened: "The deeper the hurt, the more strength she has for change. What is debilitating is just to go on and not DO anything about it. She cannot, and will not, verbalise, or attempt to talk about it: she has to *do*. She is seriously considering building a new life for herself and the

children: the lack of challenge, excitement, the isolation is so painful for her that the practical (and other) restraints are not faced. At the moment the decision to go is enough.”

Then one year later: “I feel separate from my family. It feels as if new influences are coming into our lives and that we are heading for some sort of cataclysmic change: that my daily life, the people around me, are all about to change. I cannot say this is definite: I just feel it. It is sad because I would have these people involved in my future life”

I do not think I really believed these at the time (perhaps because I did not want to believe them?) Maybe, though, they were to find a place in my unconscious so that in two or three years time they were to somehow help for I believe now that they were some sort of preparation for what was to come. Anyway, that was all ahead of me. Meanwhile my Subud life was continuing as excitingly and interestingly as ever...