

LATIHAN WITH BAPAK...AND ABOUT 100 MEN!

Within the first year of my joining Subud, I found myself speeding along the A12 to a hotel in London for a large latihan with Bapak. It was to be a highlight of my life and remembered clearly nearly 40 years later. After a couple of hours, hurtling along in a little green Citroen 2CV with the doors rattling whenever we exceeded 50mph., I found myself in the relative quiet of preparing for latihan ...

Then the latihan got underway. Immediately the peace and quiet was gone as there arose a tremendous sound : this huge crowd of men seemed to begin shouting and running around almost all at once! Wow, I thought, what a racket! Then suddenly I seemed to be aware of two views...From the outside all seemed to be chaos! (literally!) From the inside? These appearances of disharmony- of sounds and movements- were, in fact, experienced for me as the varied expressions of a BEAUTIFUL, JOYFUL, TOTAL, INNER HARMONY!!! Wow! My spirit soared (again!) in the real, joyful experience of this Inner Harmony which was somehow in myself. I realised in this experience that there is an INNER HARMONY in life!! What a discovery this seemed to me: life was not just how it seemed. Whatever there was on the outside, in appearance, there was also an Inner story and this Inner I now knew to be full of harmony and great happiness. My latihan continued with this feeling of real joy causing me to sing and dance: I had not experienced before such prolonged happiness coming simply from within myself. I felt I was now experiencing life more deeply than I had ever done before and I had discovered for myself that at the heart of life, life at its deepest level, there was great happiness, joy and (most surprisingly to me) absolute harmony.

Next came the realisation that the disharmonies of worldly life- the wars, the greed, the violence, the selfishness etc. etc.-were like the movements and noises of this large latihan! They were TRANSIENT MANIFESTATIONS OF INNER HARMONY!! They were but one side of experience and not the whole of it! The trouble was that until now I had only been aware of Outer disharmony and not the other side of the coin of experience: this wonderful, blissful Inner Harmony! It is hard to communicate this but this Inner Reality and Harmony was so real in this latihan that I simply could not doubt it! And it was so joyful...Had I ever felt this happy??

Then when people moved near me with their varied experiences of the latihan:

some singing beautifully, some shouting brutishly, some passing by quietly etc. etc. it was like the varied experiences of life which continually came and went. This included the shocks, surprises, fears, anxieties, joys etc of life. All of these came from the same place: from that same PROFOUND HARMONY that I now knew was the basis of life. Somehow it felt now as if I would never again be at the mercy of whatever happened in my life. I now knew there was *Something More* to life than I had known before: a depth which I had missed *until now*. I felt sure now that anything that life brought me would not be so overwhelming or unbearable or as all-important as before. Whatever life brought, it was but the changing expressions of an Unchanging harmony whose existence I could no longer doubt.

Finally, came another surprising understanding as I then realised that the movements, singing, noises etc of my own latihan were my contribution to the world's chaos! I felt that they just could not be anything else. In other words I saw- not for the last time- that I simply could not be perfect. I would also contribute to the world's misery, ugliness, chaos! As a human being I could not help it. I could try not to, of course, and that, too, would be right but I could not expect too much of myself. Clearly, perfection was elsewhere- at the Heart of Life: in the Inner. I was simply part of the chaos- a rightful part! And what a relief that was!

I was to have experiences like this in both my latihan and in my Quiet Times in the years to come but this was the first and one of the most intense. In fact, I was to experience this joyful, Inner harmony at its most intense and sustained only a handful of times. Two especially stand out: on this occasion and, later, at a testing session, again with Bapak but this time with only 3 other men (and not 100 as this time!)

The long journey home simply flew by. Although we were not to get home until the early hours of the morning I was too elated to be tired. This Subud, I thought, was truly a breath-taking experience! I remember we saw a fox run across the lonely Suffolk road at one point: how beautiful he looked! How wonderful the whole world seemed! Yes, I was really getting on with this Subud: really learning a lot. How grateful I felt to this man called Bapak for being the catalyst for this evening. I knew I would never forget it. And I never have.

