

A WORLD CONGRESS

Anugraha...What an impressive place this was! With its ancient English stately home facade intact, there arose behind it a huge, modern, eye-catchingly transparent dome, dominating the roofline. Just to the left was another, smaller dome with armchairs, sofas and coffee tables in: a light airy place to sit with a relaxing drink, perhaps, and a pleasant snack, admiring the green English countryside outside. Yes, it was a truly beautiful sight in the heart of “England’s green and pleasant land.”

For the next 2 weeks, this place was to be a hive of Subud activity. There were meetings about just about everything of interest or concern to Subud members, including enterprises, work, meetings for architects, writers, poets, youth and those in education, mental health, engineering and science. There were concerts, various art and craft displays and exhibitions of projects going on all around the world at that time. The latihan was going on just about all the time. There were large and pre-planned latihan and smaller more impromptu ones. All over the place people were testing all sorts of things, personal and of general interest. At the same time, there were lots of working parties where people shared their stories and discussed issues like: the latihan and daily life, Subud and mental health, Young People etc. Often these were arranged there and then by interested members. And while all this was going on, there were more formal meetings usually in the main tent when various reports were read to the membership, covering such issues as Subud publications, Fund-raising, Welfare, the work of Subud charities and so on.

The 2 weeks of the Congress went quickly and fascinatingly by. A number of highlights stand out for me even now, 3 decades later.

The latihan, sometimes with between 6 and 12 men, sometimes with hundreds of men, were strong, often very noisy and physically active and, as always, I could not doubt their authenticity. One memory particularly stands out. It was of this huge, strong-looking man, with massive, hard-working hands who spent nearly all of his latihan on his knees, crying like a small child. Outside the latihan, this man looked so strong, so masculine, a man who you would feel could perform super-human feats of strength. Here in the latihan he seemed to be just as vulnerable and

weak as the rest of us. The front he habitually wore had been stripped away completely in the latihan. How close I felt to that man, too: yes, I knew his pain as my own. Whenever I saw him after this, strolling around the grounds or at meal times, I felt warmly towards him. In the normal run of things I would not have thought he would be my “type”; as it was, he became something of a friend- an example of prejudice being over-ridden by something deeper: the latihan. Once again, I saw how deceptive appearances could be and how important- and real- the inside story was.

Enterprises: Bringing The Inner And Outer Together; Subud “Spirituality”;

One of the key ideas in Subud is that God exists in action and not just in the peace and quiet of prayer or contemplation and that the latihan can actually enliven and inspire actions of the body and mind.

So the idea of enterprises, so often talked about in Subud, was nothing short of being something like a “*religious observance*”, it seemed to me; something then that we should all do as a way of benefiting ourselves and the world around us. Unlike some religious paths, Subud encouraged passivity in the latihan, yes, but **ACTIVITY** in the world. One speaker defined it thus: “The human will is a tool given to us to use to change the world. We should not just be passive. You can and should pray to be shown the right way to act but remember God has already given you the tools to act in this world: the body, thinking, feeling, willing etc.”

It struck me, too, that this view of living from the latihan with the body, mind and feelings etc. being allowed to naturally move, change, develop etc. (because that is what they were made for) was in itself like the experience of the latihan anyway. Then one felt the latihan inspiring all sorts of body movements and sounds and all sorts of “experiences”. Perhaps the ideal was to live like this- in a state of latihan with the body and mind going about its business at the same time in something of an inspired way!

Clearly, enterprises were meant to be a way of “putting what we receive in the latihan into practice in our daily lives”. **WHAT WE RECEIVE** is, therefore, very important to what we **DO** in the world. “For this we might need to be prepared for **CHANGE**. The latihan may change you and your private enterprise may then be to use your will to bring about other changes”. I understood also from this workshop

that enterprises were not simply about making money; they were also about people finding activities and work in the world which was in accord with their deepest selves or, in Subud terms, in accord with a person's true "talents". And it was clearly understood that a person's true talents might be in work and activities that were artistic, cultural, humanitarian etc. etc. and not just in highly profitable businesses and ventures like Anugraha, e.g.

Latihan And Daily Life

The workshop I most consistently attended was the one called "The Latihan and Daily Life". I learnt a lot from this as various members told how they were helped to "remember the latihan in their ordinary lives" and the ways they had discovered of "staying close to the latihan" for more and more of their days.

Many said they had been most helped by remembering to have "Quiet moments" in their day- as often as possible. I tested about this and found that for me such moments would be "like eating a big, fat, juicy peach" i.e. a personally enjoyable experience! And if I remembered to take these moments (not easy, I was to find, in a busy working environment) then I would find myself dancing through the activities of the day- lightly, easily, energetically and with elegance and dignity! And I would deal with everyday problems in an alert and energetic way: I would be "like a firefighter coming down a pole ready to rush off to deal with another emergency!"

Everyone felt it was important to get quiet before doing anything important. And one member said: "Remember, you have to be in a good state to do an enterprise" and periods of quiet, as well as the latihan, could help us to achieve that "good state".

Another person said it was important to ask the latihan to tell you "what you are doing wrong. Say your problem, then just surrender it and then receive in the normal way. Then DO something- remember God helps those who help themselves." He had found this to be extremely beneficial he said. Another suggested testing "How do I feel when I am about to make a mistake in my life? How do I feel when I am making a right decision?" A third simply suggested "saying your name in daily life".

It was concluded that not to try to bring the latihan into one's daily life, in ways like these, was like "having a very sharp knife in a drawer and refusing to bring it out to use it"

A Moment Of Beauty

My most beautiful moment at this Congress was, surprisingly, not in my own latihan. It was one enchanting summer evening when the first stars were appearing in this huge, clear sky. It was comfortably warm and a friend and I were strolling through the archway of huge oak trees, with the imposing dome of Anugraha straight ahead of us. Directly above the dome, now riding high in the sky, and guarded by one or two crisp, sharp-twinkling stars, was this gloriously big, fully-rounded moon. It was such a breathtakingly beautiful sight that we decided to stop and simply admire it for awhile...And then there arose such a crescendo of lovely singing that it was like listening to a choir of angels. It really was! It was, in fact, the ladies' latihan which had got underway just after we had stopped. We were told there were about a thousand ladies doing latihan together in the main tent that night and we had never heard anything like it. There must have been all sorts of sounds going on in that tent but from our distant position what we could hear most was this central core of sound which swelled up to the sky like one heavenly chord. It really did sound *heavenly*.

A major part of the Congress for me and everyone there, I guess, was meeting so many Subud people from all over the world. I had never seen so many different nationalities in one place before. There were members from "50 countries and 5 continents." What was particularly interesting was to see the different nationalities up on the stage, giving their reports. I never realised how marked these characteristics could be. There were some real characters amongst them too. There was, for example, the Australian with his down- to-earth humour and no nonsense approach which woke everybody up and kept them on their toes; there was the Japanese man with his correctness and politeness which I found so appealing; then there was the Portuguese man with his liveliness and sudden bursts of loud, infectious laughter; and there was the man from Holland whose huge hands and arms seemed to hug you no matter how far away you were from him. One of the most moving moments came when a young man spoke about his experiences with young people in Subud. It was quite a shock to hear his account of the problems so

many young people in and out of Subud were facing with drugs, alcohol and what he called “other personality problems”. He captivated the audience with his own story: he had been a user of “hard drugs” and his discovery of the latihan and the subsequent experiences he had in the latihan had got him off drugs completely and given him his passion for working with young people who were having similar problems. He received a standing ovation! I guess there were people from most walks of life there and many professions, too. People in Subud did seem to be a fair cross-section and I especially liked that. If we could get along so well here maybe we could learn to do so outside in the big, bad world as well? Maybe, Subud was showing that this could be done...