

## TESTING WITH BAPAK- AND 3 OTHER MEN

Stepping into the main hall at Anugraha, I could not believe it: the huge room was packed. Tier upon tier of seats, ascending right up to the back wall, were already full. Little groups of people were aimlessly walking up and down the aisles looking for somewhere to sit. Then I noticed, right in front of me, a cluster of empty seats. They were right at the front, to the left of the stage, a few yards from where Bapak would be sitting. What a prime spot! "They must surely be reserved," I thought. I looked carefully down the line and I could see no notice, so the two of us sat down, nervously expecting to be moved on at any moment. But we weren't...

Soon Bapak appeared and I was immediately shocked at how frail he looked. He had come to London for an eye operation and he seemed to have become an old man, leaning heavily on a stick as he slowly walked across the stage to his chair. The whole place became reverentially quiet...The talk began. Suddenly the years seemed to fall from Bapak: he seemed to be young again, animated and energised. Early in the talk he called for 3 or 4 men helpers to come out in front of him for some testing. I looked at the wide open, carpeted space immediately in front of us and it looked so inviting. Alas, my friend and I were too slow and the big space was soon filled. The testing was about things that did not mean much to me ("Where was above? Where is below?" etc.) so I was not too disappointed at having missed that. Then Bapak called for some more men helpers and this time, even though we held back and were indecisive, it felt as if others were prevented from coming forward: it felt as if a huge arm was restraining them! It honestly felt to me that the space in front of our seats was reserved just for us. So there we were: the two of us with 2 or 3 other men standing ready to begin the latihan in front of Bapak!

"Relax..." he said, "Don't begin yet, be ready" and then just as I wondered where my friend was and whether I should keep an eye on him(!), Bapak said, as if reading my thoughts: "Don't worry about your friends...just relax in yourself... Ready...Now if you are in difficulties in your life, how do you feel?" Again I was shocked. I had come to this meeting feeling very low: I had more than enough difficulties in my life at this time. Did Bapak know this? Anyway, I received a feeling in this test of being really weighed down and surrounded by darkness.

“Now receive: How is it if you have no need for anything other than to worship Almighty God?”

This was a tremendous receiving! I felt an absolutely delicious, joyous, very pleasurable inner sensation. I felt as if I had not a care in the world. I just wanted it to go on and on. I had not felt so good for such a long time! “Yes,” said Bapak, this is truly guidance from Almighty God. There is no need for you to go to the sea (a favourite place for me when I was up against it!) or to the forests and mountains like a lot of people in India and Indonesia do (this had long been my idea of spirituality - withdrawal from the world. I was always being reminded of this by my latihan and here it was again! I thought: I’d better take this seriously!). Then Bapak said: “You don’t need to do these things. It is enough for you to live in your houses and to feel close to your families. The Power of God is everywhere.

Receive again: because it is not always God’s will that you receive difficulties in your life, receive how it is when you are in a state of well-being and healthy and happy” This was a wonderful feeling: one of almost overwhelming happiness and joy. “If you feel,” continued Bapak, “about the condition of the world, it seems very difficult ; it seems there is no way out for us except to experience suffering and burdens (exactly how I was previously feeling!) But you should always remember that where there is this sadness there is also happiness; and you should remember where it is that there is something to make you happy. It is not just by turning on the T.V. that you can make yourself happy; within yourself you have something which can also make you happy. It is in the latihan that you can really understand the breadth and enormity of God’s power. It is there you can achieve inner satisfaction.” By now I was convinced that Bapak was talking directly to me- these were all so much my concerns. And, boy, was I feeling happy!

I could not believe this testing was going on so long. And there was still more to come. Once more Bapak’s strong voice asked: “How is it if everything you need is supplied and all your wishes fulfilled?” Again, my latihan took off into incredible joy! Then came another surprise. “And if you have a feeling of happiness,” said Bapak, “you should laugh.” At this I was determined not to laugh: how could I laugh to order? Then this huge wish appeared in my stomach. I momentarily resisted it; I even bit my lips to do so. ..but it did not work...so...I laughed, as “restrainedly” as I could. “Go on,” said Bapak, at this point, “Laugh!” And I did, for what seemed like ages. Then it seemed to subside. “No,” said Bapak, “More!”

Then it really happened. My laughter flew and gushed out of me. ..all restraint left me! Soon my laughter seemed to fill the whole of this huge room and I began to hear some of the audience beginning to join in: a ripple here and then more from the other side of the hall. ..and then it seemed as if the whole room was laughing its head off! It was all so wonderfully happy that, again, I did not want to stop it or even inhibit it in any way. Wow, what an experience- and it seemed to go on and on and on! This was a tremendous experience for me. I will never be able forget it. In a time of sadness that had weighed me down on the whole journey to this talk and for days previously, I had experienced a happiness that was more complete than I could ever have imagined and it had come about simply through the power of this strange phenomenon called the latihan and with this special man called “Bapak”.

“What you have witnessed here today,” continued Bapak, “ represents only a small part of God’s power(!!) For God is Almighty and it is God who possesses the universe. So have no doubts, have no fear because this is really the time that God has willed His Power should be close to man. And you must return this favour by always staying close to the Power of God. And if the membership has this understanding, then Subud will be very strong and can become an example to the whole of mankind as to how people can live in peace together.”

Yes, in Bapak’s presence like this I could not doubt it...

As you may imagine our journey back home was filled with great happiness and excitement (they could not be more different from my feelings on the way down!) And so it was for many days afterwards. I just had to remember now, and in the future, not to go outside of myself, my inner, when I was feeling low or in the middle of any of life’s many difficulties (not to turn on any old rubbish on the T.V. in the hope of relieving these awful feelings, e.g as I had done previously) Now Bapak had shown me a different way: he had shown me how to turn to the latihan.

There was a delightful postscript to all this. Many years later my wife and I were at a National Congress at Ripon, in Yorkshire, and we both went to different working parties. She went to one for “new members” where one of the more experienced members spoke of once being at a testing session with Bapak and she reported that “she could not forget it because there was a chap there who tested with

Bapak and laughed so much in his latihan that everyone there joined in! It was a tremendous and happy time,” she said. I was really pleased that this testing session was not just memorable to me...