

# Promoting The Latihan

By Ragnar Lystad

*Synopsis: Yes, we can do something to promote the latihan, but not in the way things usually are promoted.*

A Norwegian Subud member, a highly respected professor of mathematics, once held a series of introductory lectures about Subud at the university. Only a couple of the students later turned up at the Subud house, however, and none of them even came so far as to start the probationary period. The reason? We could not promise that they would develop the same mathematical genius as their professor.

Others have also tried to give public lectures in Norway; they were without response except at two occasions in 1958. This is obviously not the way to do it. The Subud enterprises haven't led to an influx of new members either, and even the humanitarian projects have not – as far as I know – brought such results.

Bapak has, however, given an example (retold after memory – if not fully correct, it illustrates an important point anyhow): when you sit quiet, e.g. in a church, an acquaintance leans forward and asks, "Why is it that I feel so quiet and peaceful when I sit beside you?" Then you can explain.

Is this the only way to promote Subud? It seems a bit passive, even a little aloof, so it is natural to ask if that is the only way, and whether there is anything else we can do. After all, we have gotten a lot of personal benefit from doing the latihan, so we may feel that it is our duty to introduce it to others so that they can have the same opportunity.

Actually, if all we do is to be quiet, responding to direct questions only, it is not just very little, it is much too little. What we of course always must do, as befitting a human being, is to actively show attention, consideration and gentleness whenever the circumstances are right. Sometimes perhaps to give help, but always to at least show an active interest in persons you happen to meet. One may say that this has nothing to do with promoting the latihan. It is no more than behaving like a decent human being. This is right, but it is also no less than that, so it is actually quite a lot. Maybe we can, by this, give an example or demonstration of the effect of the latihan.

Some close contacts could develop this way. Then, of course, may we grasp the opportunity to speak about Subud and the latihan. Or? Of course not.

Coming to latihan must be based on a free and independent decision: first, the decision to be opened, and then when it comes to doing the latihan every time afterwards. This is different from what is customary in daily life: we often do something because we are persuaded to do it, or influenced in some way, e.g. when we feel we should do something because others do it, out of loyalty to friends, because we feel it is somehow our duty, or that it is morally right. This may be appropriate and work well in many situations, but not in the case of the latihan, simply because nothing can be received unless there is a genuine wish to surrender to the force working in the latihan. If there is no such wish, felt as really coming from one's own free will, the force cannot come through. It is a force that does not force itself upon anybody; on the contrary, it can work only when there is a conscious, active acceptance. If the latihan is done reluctantly, there is no latihan. So if we do not know that the other has such a genuine wish, we cannot recommend the latihan.

We also have to consider that the latihan process is often painful; actually it can be said as a rule that it cannot be without pain. This is also logical: to be changed means to surrender something of the personality that we always cling to. That cannot be taken away without a measure of suffering. But how can we know whether another person is able or willing to go through that? We cannot know, maybe not even with a supernatural insight that a few of us have.

It is a sad fact that we are exposed all the time to such a wealth of disturbances that we are less and less able to feel what our real wants and needs are. Ideally, all decisions should be taken from one's own inner, and uninfluenced by all these disturbances as much as possible. This is essential as regards to the decision about whether or not joining Subud. The decision must be really free, just as in the latihan itself, where one is always completely free to continue or stop. Therefore, our primary aim must not be to influence, but *not* to influence. Then we will at least not add to the disturbances. Personal kindness and friendship can perhaps even lessen them a little bit. But our primary duty must be to help other people to find room for the quietness that must be the basis for free decisions. That this will lead to an interest for the latihan is not likely, because doing the latihan is simply not an actual alternative for most people. This does not matter, of course, as the important thing is that the decision will be as free as possible, so that our friend, relative or acquaintance can make the best personal choice. What is really wrong is to persuade someone to join in the case where there is no real willingness to surrender to the latihan power, as it will then be a mechanical ritual with no positive effect.

What is suggested here is more than just being quiet, as in the example above. We cannot deliberately try to persuade anybody to try the latihan, not even recommending it. The best we can do is to behave as a real human being, and at the same time give people the chance to feel as free as possible in their relation to us, whether we are parents, friends or a chance acquaintance. It is actually a rare thing to meet somebody who shows kindness and attention without any personal agenda attached, so if we can do that, it is remarkable and can have a high value no matter what. This way, the latihan is not promoted, but a gate may be opened for those who are able and willing to go through the latihan process.