

How to Read Bapak's Talks and How Not To

by Sjahari Hollands

There are many misconceptions about Bapak's talks: what they are, what they mean, and what their intention is.

In my view, the most common mistake members make in approaching the talks is to read them as if they are a discourse, or a teaching; as if there were something in them that could be assimilated, learned and understood, evaluated, and accepted or rejected on those grounds. Many people reading the talks in this way find little more than a compilation of ideas derived from the Islamic religion, combined with ancient Javanese and Hindu myths. Others find a set of instructions or teachings which they begin to follow religiously. Both of these practices are mistaken in my view.

There are scholarly research articles in which Bapak's talks are analyzed, and there are Subud members with a background in Javanese mysticism who write commentaries on the talks from this point of view. Looked at in this framework the talks contain within them little which is new or unique. And in fact their orientation is very foreign to Western ways of thinking.

Reading the talks with this framework, you might begin to understand the cultural history which influenced Pak Subuh as a man. You might understand more about his background and orientation. However, you will not end up with an appreciation of the spiritual value of the talks. And it is this which is their primary intention and purpose.

By giving the talks Bapak did not intend us to become experts in the Javanese belief system. Nor did he intend them to be used as religious teaching and dogma containing truths about the Universe. No. The talks have a totally different purpose.

How then *should* we read them? What is their intention? What is their purpose? How should we approach them?

We might want to first listen to Bapak himself on this topic because he addresses these questions frequently. The first thing he emphasized was that the talks are *not* a spiritual or religious teaching. He said this over and over and over. The next thing he emphasized is that Bapak himself is *not* a guru or a prophet, or even a teacher. And therefore it is not useful to approach the talks as if he were.

But obviously he was a teacher. Aren't we all? As parents to our children we are teachers. At times do we not all have a turn at being tiny prophets or gurus? We are all of us in that role at one time or another, as was Bapak. The point here is that Bapak's *primary* role and purpose in Subud was *not* to be the leader/teacher/prophet/guru. No. Bapak's primary and sole role was to be the facilitator for the latihan. The conduit. He emphasized over and over that there is only one teacher, and that one is *not* Bapak. Our teacher is within. The latihan itself is the place we find our inspiration and our guidance. We are *not* to look to Bapak for this and he insisted that we should not. His role was simply to prepare the conditions and the circumstances within which each of us is enabled to have our own individual

experience of the latihan.

In my view, Bapak is about the latihan, and only about the latihan. Subud is about the latihan and only the latihan. Bapak's talks are not separated from the latihan process. The talks are nothing more than an expression of Bapak's latihan. By listening to the talks we join him in the latihan. And by participating in this process there is an opportunity to come to a deeper understanding about the latihan we are experiencing ourselves.

So this is the starting point. This is the mindset to have before you turn on the tape recorder, or open the book of Bapak's talks. You are not listening to a prophet or guru and you are not reading a religious text. There is no one here but you and your own latihan experience.

The next step is to approach the talks with the right kind of receivers on. And the wrong ones turned off.

Just as when you do your latihan, the receiver you should turn off immediately is your thinking, analyzing mind. If you use that mind you will not have the kind of latihan experience that is possible. In fact you will probably manage only a few pages before you reject them for all the same reasons that are so eloquently outlined on the Subud Vision site by several authors.

And you will have missed the boat entirely.

For many Subud members the latihan itself is all they need. They don't need the talks. They don't need any of the other appendages that Subud can provide. However for many of us, as the latihan begins to penetrate all the different areas and corners of our lives and being, we find that we are struggling to understand the process we are engaged in. It is at this point that Bapak's talks might possibly begin to have a role and function for us.

For some people the talks are a support to understanding. For myself this has certainly been the case. For others the talks are only a source of frustration and confusion. The only way to find out which is for you, is to try it out. *But* if you are going to try it out you have to be in the right inner state, otherwise, you are just going to be totally wasting your time!!!

In approaching the talks your first orientation should be towards your own latihan. Enter a latihan-like state within yourself. Try to find inside yourself that deep but active quiet.

Read Bapak's talks in a similar way to reading poetry. Bring that kind of non-judgemental sensitive approach to bear. Listen to his talks as you would listen to music. Hear the tone of his voice. Be aware of the changes that are occurring in your own being at the same time. Don't try to jump on words and figure them out. Don't try to judge them based on a set of standards. Just let them be there. And most of all, read the talks while you maintain a sense of your inner connection to the latihan.

Personally I have found that in order to relate to the talks I have to use a different kind of understanding facility. It is something intuitive and deep within me. I have to just let it be and let it find itself.

A variety of things will arise as I am listening. Thoughts. Feelings. Energy states. I

can follow these or just let them go. As in the latihan, I don't get too caught up in trying to figure it out. I just try to let it flow.

While listening in this state, follow your own inner guidance. No one can tell you what to understand from Bapak's talks, just as no one can tell you how to do the latihan. Let it be.

You might notice a sudden understanding of something you have been struggling to understand. I have had this happen to me. Many of us have. You might find that you are now in touch with your inner guidance on a certain topic.

Personally, I believe what Bapak said: that he was in a state of latihan when he was talking. These talks were not planned out in advance with some particular intention in mind. He is following the images and thoughts and feelings expressed through words as they arise in him. And if we listen to him in a latihan state ourselves, then in a sense we are simply doing latihan together with him. We are riding with him and sharing with him the deep well of understanding available to all of us. We get a taste of what it is all about. We get a taste of our own individual potential. And we may begin to have an understanding of the purpose and importance of these talks for our own lives.

There is only one thing in Subud: the experience of the latihan. There are not two things. There is only the latihan. The talks are a part of the latihan. By going to the talks we can participate in the latihan with someone who is coming from that place in himself.

We all know that we shouldn't be influenced by each other while doing the latihan. We do not copy each other's latihan. We each follow our individual guidance, but together. This is the same point of view to have in reading Bapak's talks. Do latihan with Bapak but don't try to copy his latihan or memorize his latihan. In other words don't try to grab onto what he says with your thinking mind and memorize it and imitate it. Don't try to search there for instructions and teachings to follow – or to reject. Simply appreciate how the latihan is moving and acting in him. If this touches an understanding in you, all well and good.

Many people cannot relate to Bapak's talks even when they approach them in this way. All this means is that the talks aren't for them, at least at this point in their lives. However, the only way you are going to find out if they are of value to you is to approach them in the latihan state. If you use your analytical mind you will never find out if there is something of use to your spiritual life within them.

Reading them as Javanese and Hindu mythology might be a learning experience for you if you are interested in that sort of thing. Reading them to get an idea of the personal and cultural background of Pak Subuh as a man will also result in some rewards but they won't be in the spiritual realm. Reading them in order to find religious teachings will also be a total waste of time.

In my view, if you want to experience the true value of Bapak's talks, you have to use a deeper, more intuitive kind of receiver. You have to use the understanding that arises while you are in latihan.

For me personally I find that there are only a few times and places where I can read the talks. It is only when I am in a quiet state that I can read them. It might be at a retreat. It might be during a fast. It might be on a holiday where I don't have anything

else to engage my mind. During these times I can be in the state I need to be in to read them or listen to them. It doesn't happen all the time. Only at intervals.