

# ANTIDOTE



*Experience of a Spiritual Energy*

*Collected by Salamah Pope*

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● WE LIVE in perhaps the most dangerous, sick and socially abnormal world that humankind has ever endured. And yet in general we do so without too much fuss. We go on living, loving and working, forgetful of the human condition and the possibility of imminent obliteration. It almost seems as though we were waiting, fatalistically, for the end, doubtful that some Great Something would ever come and rescue us from alienation, the erosion of social responsibility and other symptoms of the modern sickness.

Yet the editor of this book believes "There is an antidote to the present world situation, not through complex technological systems or political antics but through the deeper process of human change."

Although this Antidote is an intangible "force for the good" it can be experienced by individuals and is described here by 20 people of different religions, living in different parts of the world.

Have we been offered a "a new dispensation" at the eleventh hour? The reader is invited to investigate for himself.

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**EXPERIENCE OF  
A SPIRITUAL ENERGY**

COLLECTED BY SALAMAH POPE

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## *To the Reader*

THIS is a collection of stories written by people of different races, religions and social backgrounds who feel the presence of God, as a spiritual energy, working in them and in their daily lives.

I began it with a purpose – to show that there is an antidote, I believe, to the present world situation, not through complex technological systems or political antics, but through the deeper processes of human change. And I believe that this change is brought about through the timely arrival on our earth of a spiritual force for the good, be it called the Supreme Life Force, the power of God, the Holy Spirit, or just (as I myself prefer) ‘a spiritual energy’, that is available today in full measure to anyone who asks.

I also began this book with two simple facts in mind. First, that although I was brought up the compleat atheist, I am now a convinced religious. This means that I have been able to experience, as realities, many of the truths in the great religions. Not just read or ‘believed’ them, but, as I say, *experienced* them. Secondly, that a similar process of profound transformation has also occurred to many, many other people and through the same agency: the spiritual training that is found in Subud.

If such a transformation has any value today, then the method by which it came about deserves wider recognition and application. Hence this collection of stories, written by people who follow the training, by the spiritual energy, in the Subud latihan. (And for the meaning of these terms you will have to turn a few pages on to the Glossary.)

I chose the title *Antidote* because I am convinced, after some 30 years of having followed it, that this spiritual energy is some kind of divine force for the good and that it can limit and constrain the viler aspects of humanity. Though I can offer no proof of this conviction, at least these stories of the working of the Energy add the evidence of others who have experienced the same thing, whether through the latihan or some other path.

Looked at objectively, these tales are not fantastically wonderful. They vary from the mundane to the five-star miracle, as does the experience of their writers. But at least they are descriptions of the truth as they see it, and not the product of mass suggestion, emotion or imagination.

*Salamah Pope,  
Wisma Subud,  
Jakarta*

## Introduction

AS a whole Subud has, you might say, four 'parts'. The core and essence of it is the latihan, the spiritual training itself. Around this is wrapped an organisation, and then come the business enterprises. Finally there are the tangible fruits of the other three, which include cultural, humanitarian and philanthropic projects.

The latihan is the *sine qua non* of Subud; without it there would be no organisation, no enterprises, no welfare projects, nothing. What the latihan is, then, is the crucial question – and Subud being what it is, there is no definitive description.

To many, the latihan is a miraculously fine and gentle energy, with which we are put into contact by being 'opened' to it, thus 'joining' Subud. The energy itself does the training; all we have to do is to relax and receive it in ourselves, and allow it to work us over. Then, gradually, it trains us: purifies us, puts us in touch with our own nature, our own authentic inner Self: and brings us spiritual comfort, guidance for our life, and an inward security.

There are no words in the training, no teaching, no exercises, no rules and no rituals. Nothing except the feeling, the *experience*, of a gentle vibration inducing movements and sounds in us. The latihan thus seems to be some kind of super-human or divine force, and many people eventually come to believe it to be the power of God. I could be wrong with this label, but I cannot doubt the experience of this fine energy working in me, in my body, that – given the chance – dispels evils great and small, erases bad feelings and anti-social thoughts and dissipates tensions, stress, human conflicts, illness, and so on.

The snag lies in the phrase 'given the chance'. The energy is so gentle (usually) and so fine that we have to be openly receptive, and actively consent to its working in us before it does so. We have also to allow ourselves to respond to its prompting. If we do this, if we submit ourselves to *its* purposes, rather than our own, then it works in us. It opens the unconscious mind and gradually proceeds to clean, heal and re-form its contents. The most constructive attitude towards the energy is probably expressed in the old saying from the Bible, 'Thy Will, Lord, not mine', and in Islam as the admonition 'Surrender to the Will of God'.

What actually happens is that men, or women (the sexes follow the training in separate rooms) may sing or dance, shout or cry, pray or even laugh aloud. There is no compulsion, though; no hysteria or trance is involved. No emotional highs (or, rarely, at any rate) either; this energy seems to work from *behind*, as it were, the human heart and mind. If I ever feel that the latihan is nudging me too hard or too fast or in a direction I cannot tolerate, I open my eyes and stop being moved by it. It is as simple as that.

In short, if one does not willingly consent and surrender to this force, nothing happens. If one does, then anything may. And no-one can tell beforehand what an individual will receive or feel or be 'made' to do: because we are moved from within, by a Power beyond our understanding, which time has shown knows better than we do what we need and what we ought to be doing.

So everyone's experience of the latihan is different, and unique, because each and every one of us is different and unique. To each, this spiritual energy, be it given the names the Power of God, the Spirit, or the Great Life Force, gives what he or she needs. There are thus, as I said, no instructions, no directions from anyone. Only God knows what is right for you and me, and once the contact with His power has been made, we need no teaching from any human man or woman.

There are 'helpers', in Subud, but they are not a priestly caste or a body of spiritually enlightened people: they are merely men and women who, by virtue of their longer experience of the latihan and their commitment to a decent (conventional, moral, if you wish) way of life, have been delegated to perform certain necessary functions. Subud is, above all, a democratic institution. Some of the helpers may be more spiritually evolved or purified than some of the other members – but then again they may not, and no-one can tell. It is quite on the cards, therefore, that some new members may receive better and be more 'advanced' than some of the helpers. And 'advanced', I venture to say, may well lie only in a person's ability to experience and follow the inward guidance of this spiritual energy.

Purity has gone out of style these days: it is old-fashioned, discarded, almost a dirty word; but on it depends our ability to follow, and our ability to receive, direct guidance from the power of God in the latihan. Hand in hand, therefore, with the spiritual training in Subud goes the personal effort to keep to the traditional morality of one's own religion or personal belief system.

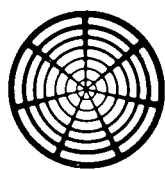
Subud itself is not a religion. It has been labelled a sect, a cult, an esoteric group and so on. But all it is is solely a means of receiving Grace and a consequent process. Yet through the latihan we are brought into contact with a divine spirit or natural energy that is greater, wiser and more conscious than we are. Whether we name this God, or Allah, Brahman, Buddha, Christ, Mahadeva or Yahveh is immaterial. The religions of the world, to me, are all different paths up the mountain. The energy that we receive in the latihan simply gives us the power and the strength to follow better whichever of those paths we choose; it is, I believe, the experiential 'juice', the inner reality, behind and within all of them.

Nor do I think that the Subud latihan is unique. There seems to be a

general out-pouring of the Spirit today; and, to me, the spiritual training that one gets in Subud seems merely to provide the easiest, the simplest and the most direct way of contacting that spiritual energy, the presence of the Spirit, in my daily life.

In these apocalyptic times, I therefore believe that we ordinary people have been granted a new dispensation, a divine light in the world's present darkness. For an old atheist this may be a rash statement. In the final assessment all I can say is that I know, for myself, that the Subud latihan works, and changes things *profoundly*; and that I am convinced, now, of the existence of an Ultimate Arbiter of Justice, and that a new way of accessing this power which passeth all understanding has been granted to us today.

For those who wish to join us, and benefit from the experience of the spiritual training in Subud, you will probably find a telephone number under 'Subud' in the directories of most of the major cities of the world; (there are active Subud members in about 70 countries.) In the meantime, you might find this collection of Subud stories, written by Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and others, worth reading.



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*Epilogue*

## *Glossary*

- SUBUD** (Pronounced '*Soobood*', with the accent on the first syllable, as in the English word 'throughput'.) A contraction of the Indonesian words *Susila*, *Budhi*, and *Dharma*. *Susila* means living a morally good life; *Budhi* means the divine spark, soul, inner essence of a person; and *Dharma* means the duty, obligation and the work of individuals to bring the first two together through the experience of submission to the power of God.
- LATIHAN** ('*Lahtihahn*'). An Indonesian word meaning training, practising, becoming accustomed to something. Used in Subud to denote (a) the spiritual 'training' that people experience in groups; (b) for the individual, the feeling and experience of a gentle power, a vibration, force or energy in the body; and (c) the long-term overall process of spiritual development that the training induces.
- BAPAK** ('*Bah-pa*'). Common Indonesian word meaning father, or 'respected older man'. Here the word refers to the Javanese-born founder of Subud, the man who first received the contact with the energy or power of God experienced also now by others in the latihan. While on this earth Bapak travelled extensively, giving explanations of the latihan to Subud members. He repeatedly said, however, that he was just an ordinary man, not a teacher or guru: that we could only find out each for ourselves the reality of God's power, the spiritual path. Bapak's full name is Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo; 'Subuh' is the name of the Islamic dawn prayer, so has no relation to the word 'Subud'. Bapak was born on 22 June 1900 and died on 22 June 1987.
- OPENING, THE OPENING, BEING OPENED.** The first time a person attends the Subud spiritual latihan, when the contact is first made, the unconscious begins to be opened, and the process of change is set in motion.
- TESTING** This has a special meaning in Subud. It denotes a method of finding answers to questions which cannot be answered satisfactorily by either reason or common sense. Questions are submitted to the spiritual force itself, and the answers are experienced either by physical movements or in the feelings or, more occasionally, in the understanding direct.

Note: When the authors are writing about the 'force' or 'forces', they are referring to higher-than-human forces or powers. Lower forces, the forces of nature and of humanity itself are specified as such in the text.

PART I

# Beginnings



# A Worm's Eye View

*Hartley Ramsay (UK)*

**O**f all days, there is one above and beyond the rest that I would describe as the most important day of my life.

Coombe Springs, that holiday Monday in 1957, was crowded with followers (dedicated and otherwise) of the teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. Like myself, they had been invited there to meet someone called Pak Subuh.

Who Pak Subuh was we had no idea, but as we gathered on the lawn and in the downstairs rooms of the house there was a flutter of expectancy that was almost tangible. This was increased by a request from John Bennett that he would like to see us in groups of 30 in his study for a preliminary briefing. So, as we climbed the stairs all external chattering ceased. Mr B, smiling, awaited us in his big chair (he was a *very* big man) and when we had settled he spoke the first words all of us were to hear of Subud.

Memory cannot recall the fine detail, but the gist of the matter was that Subud, a precious gift from God, had come to England, and Bapak (Pak Subuh), the first to receive this gift, this contact with the power of God, had an appointed mission to share it with all who asked for it, regardless of race, creed or colour. Truly, God was no sectarian. Subud was for mankind, to rescue our world from the rising tides of materialism and return us to the Source from whence we came.

To receive this contact no special training, preparation or study was needed, simply a sincere wish to worship God. There was not much more to it than that. In all, about ten minutes' worth, yet a very moving and bewildering ten minutes and, like most things Subud (as we were to learn in due course), totally unexpected.

John Bennett looked round the circle of faces. If any present, he said, wished that evening to receive the contact, they should put their names on the list now being circulated.

A piece of paper and a pencil arrived in my hand. I signed and passed it on. 'What have we to lose?' I heard someone say. Fishermen in Galilee 2,000 years ago may well have asked the same question when they heard 'Follow me' spoken softly in their ears.

We trooped downstairs in a manner far different from that of our ascent, numbed at first, then thawing as we turned to each other for corroboration of the facts, sparse as they were. 'How could this be?' everyone seemed to ask. The credo of the Work we had been following was 'conscious labour and intentional suffering': in that context there had been no free lunches, no payment without effort. Yet this Subud was free for all for the asking, something for nothing, which was near to blasphemy. I added my pennyworth – with nil effect – to the debate, which for many of the Gurdjieff old guard went on for months, even years.

Two hours later we sat on the floor, without shoes, ties, rings, watches or glasses, outside the dining room where Bapak and his Indonesian helpers were opening people at the rate of 30 every 40 minutes or so, behind closed doors. The sounds that came from within did little to ease our mounting apprehension. We were next.

The evening sun shone brightly, but the dining room curtains were drawn. Chinks of light filtering through revealed three or four shadowy figures by the large bay windows. Bapak was one of them, we knew now for certain. He was smoking a cigar.

We were spread out in a wide oval, an arm's length apart. Bapak moved into the centre and spoke a few words in Indonesian which his assistant Icksan translated. I shall never forget them:

'Close your eyes. Relax. Hold on to no thought. Believe in God. Begin.'

I closed my eyes, as bidden, and was filled instantly with a joy I had not known before or since. Words were shouted exultantly inside my head: 'I am going home, I am going home' and were repeated without stop as I began to weep tears of relief, remorse, gratitude, wonder, worship. 'I am going home' – every particle of my being responded to the notion.

Around me I heard strange cries and thuds of falling bodies, stamping and singing and shouting and the sounds of running feet – but I had more than enough to contend with to take much notice. Time lost all meaning. Then, suddenly it was over. A voice called 'Finish'.

We were now all members of Subud, thanks be to God and thanks be to Bapak.

Expectations for my second latihan, naturally, were high. But there was no repeat. Nothing happened. And likewise for the next 40 latihans, or so it seemed. 'Going home' was going to be a longer journey than I had imagined, a lot of it uphill in lousy weather, with no signposts that I could decipher. I had no road map and no American Express. But I'll say this: it felt good.

Lists were always a feature at Coombe, as they are in any civilised community, from Compostella to the House of Commons. Six latihans a night (at least) and 30 members to each latihan gave a total of 180, not including late-comers and queue-jumpers. Quite a congregation. So six lists were put up on the notice board in the entrance hall and members were asked to put their names to the latihan of their choice.

The reasoning was acute: if the first latihan started at 8pm, the last could finish at 11pm. Thus would order prevail, if everything ran to time. But Subud time is not Greenwich mean time, as we now all know.

Further, at least 50 percent of the attendance at any one evening

wanted unfailingly to be at the 8pm latihan (perhaps their wives insisted). Consequently when the lists went up, there was always a rush to the board to be in the first 30, or even the second or third 30. The narrow hallway within seconds became a rugby scrum – at the bottom of which would usually be a member from Manchester with a biro that wouldn't write doing his best despite the rush to insert on the early list the names of 15 of his friends who would be along later.

On occasion there were threats of lynching.

It is doubtful if Subud organisation at this level has ever been surpassed in the UK.

There is a story in Varindra's beautiful new book *A Memoir of Subud* where Bapak explains that God's help is nearer than we think, perhaps only six inches away – but we have to stretch for it.

Touched, as I read, by the reality behind the words, I seemed to relive at Coombe again an experience which I had almost forgotten, during those mad, hectic, exciting days when all the world seemed to be beating a path to Bapak's door. After a rousing opening latihan, mentioned previously, I stood like a statue for several weeks, while everyone else danced like dervishes, sang like saints or fell about like clowns. I began to feel forsaken, an outsider, or like the fifth man in a quartet.

Then during a latihan in the 'huts' (ex-army pre-fab structures purchased to cope with an escalating membership) I saw myself on the edge of an escarpment, looking across wide plains to a limitless horizon, luminous and serene.

At one point I glanced upwards and saw a huge golden disc high in the sky. Involuntarily I raised my arms. As I did so the disc came towards me. I stretched myself and it approached nearer, becoming smaller as it did so, seeming to accommodate its scale to mine. When the disc was no more than several feet in size, it hovered at a point just beyond my fingers. By now I was on the very tips of my toes and straining every nerve and muscle: as I reached up yet again, the disc came even closer. And at the very moment when my fingers finally grabbed the edge of it, I uttered my first latihan cry.

In shock and surprise my eyelids flicked open. And there, directly in front of me, stood Bapak, his face only inches away. This produced another shock, another cry, and Bapak moved across the room.

Yes – when Bapak said God's help is six inches away, he meant six inches. I have been singing in the latihan ever since.

In five years of Gurdjieff not once did I raise my voice to contribute to the sharing of 'work' experiences which was so necessary a part of group life. Now, in the Subud latihan I became so vocal that I was deported to 'O'

group, which consisted of members whose latihans were so noisy that they disturbed other members. At the time it seemed to me a particularly English (or perhaps Coombe) way of dealing with the problem, if indeed it was one. No other Subud country that I knew of had 'O' groups; it was as if the English equated worship exclusively with churches and cloisters, or were excessively sensitive (which I doubt.)

To outsiders, certainly, 'O' group must have sounded like bedlam, but not to 'O' groupers. We came to recognise each other's music across a crowded room with rare discernment. One 'O' grouper, I recall, said my latihan utterances sounded identical to those of the disturbed and retarded children he had in his care during the day – while I fondly imagined myself as a Scottish Sinatra.

My relationship with Coombe Springs before Subud came had been ambivalent. There were times when I could not bear to enter the gates and would often turn away. Yet it was the personal kindness of the people who lived there who helped me during my early days in Fleet Street. Not least of these was John Bennett. He it was who suggested that I have tea with him in his study once a month.

I found the house during week days a far different place from what it was at weekends, when work groups gathered and every corner was filled with meaningful activity. In the silence and the empty garden one seemed to take more notice of the profusion of flowers and the ancient trees and the faded charm of the house, worn a bit now at the edges, where King Edward VII was reputed to have romped in his heyday. Coming straight from London into this setting was a rare treat, and to listen to Mr B enlarge on topics close to my heart – Chartres, Rumi, Saint Teresa – was an experience for which I am ever grateful. Had it not been for such moments very likely I would have quit the Coombe groups and thus missed the opportunity of joining Subud and of seeing and hearing Bapak speak many many times.

Once when I arrived the study was empty, yet I could hear Mr B's voice. He was outside the window, lying flat out on the balcony and almost completely covered with white doves, which were feeding out of his hand. When he rose to greet me, the doves rose too, a fluttering circling mass of beating wings, catching the sunlight and sending shadows careering across the ceiling. He scattered a last handful of grain to the air.

'Look,' he said. 'Look what someone has given me for my birthday.'

Mr B. lifted from the table an etching yet to be fitted to its frame and held the print, mount and glass together to give the effect. It was 'The Circumcision' by Rembrandt, an intimate family scene where Joseph holds the crying babe in his lap for the attentive old man who is carrying out the

operation. Mary prays by their side. With a few scratches on the copper Rembrandt had penetrated the very heart of the matter.

A very special day.

When the *Subud Chronicle* started Mr B called me (and others) to help out, and this became a steady chore for many years. The pigeon holes in the entrance hall became my first call for copy when I came to the latihan; and slowly over the months links were formed across the world with Subud brothers and sisters in many countries who took the time and effort to report on the coming of Subud into their lives, and of the drama and excitement (which Coombe knew only too well) when Bapak came to visit.

Those early *Chronicles* had many failings, but often possessed a freshness and innocence which is perhaps not without value. The means at our disposal were minimal (as they are to this day) – but it was essential to establish some sort of communication channel across an expanding Subud world. There were as many bonuses as brickbats; I was forced to take a more active interest in all that was going on around me. Names and faces and stories rise up in random recall:

– Bill and Eddie, old mates of Glasgow days and long-suffering companions on the *Evening Standard* – and Marius too, among the first to be made a helper by Bapak at Coombe. He later withdrew from Subud for nearly 20 years, then telephoned one day with excitement in his voice to tell me that the latihan still works, as he had discovered the day before. 'Where,' he asked, 'can I find a group nearby?' – then gentle Frank who loved the latihan so much he never wanted it to stop, still producing carefully worked pictures of the Passion of Christ – and vegetarian John who wavered on the sidelines, then turned away because Bapak ate meat – and dear Charles, first editor of the *Chronicle*, book lover and born lexicographer whose briefcase was forever stuffed with countless slips of paper on which were written in his distinctive script Indonesian words with their English meanings – and Eddie's friend Norman who had a growth in his head the size of a small orange which disappeared after Bapak (in Australia) appeared at Norman's bedside (in a hospital in England) and had latihan with him.

Then, of course, there was the beautiful Eva Bartok whose 'miraculous' cure brought the nation's press to lay siege to Coombe where, for several traumatic weeks, photographers and reporters popped like sparrows in and out of the bushes – and then the sudden emergence of Sjafrudin the portrait painter who could not draw hands or feet, so he stood his figures in knee-high grass with hands in pockets or behind their backs – and not forgetting Ike, now a learned professor in Oz, the greatest guitarist in the world; and Paul who was possibly the worst – and Maria and

Olivia, dearest sisters of all.

Bless 'em, every one. For my money, every Subud opening is an extraordinary Subud story.

When I heard that Bapak was to return home to Indonesia, I had but one wish, one thought – what must I do to make sure that the latihan would continue in me, and that I would have the good sense to stay with it. Such was my level of understanding.

Bapak had been so close to all of us over the past months that I could not bear the thought of his departure. His last talk during the first stay at Coombe was held in a newly-completed hall, packed to capacity, with many members overflowing into the cloakroom downstairs, where they would hear Bapak's voice through an open door. I arrived early and took my seat in the middle of the fourth row directly in front of Bapak's chair, determined not to miss one single word of instruction or whatever. The message came through loud and clear:

'Attend to your latihan sincerely and regularly twice a week,' said Bapak, 'and God will do the rest.'

When Subud was firmly established in us it was permitted to have one latihan each week at home. An experience at this time proved in salutary fashion for me the truth of those farewell words of Bapak.

It was a chill evening. I switched on the electric fire in the bedroom and began the latihan. Initially there was a flood of thoughts, in dialogue form: lately there had been pictures and images of Jesus appearing in the latihan, and I seemed to question their validity. Was I deluding myself? Was it imagination run riot? Especially Jesus as a figurine exquisitely fashioned in alabaster, surrounded by white birds – surely this was altogether too fanciful? As my doubts proliferated, they were suddenly checked. I was pushed to the floor on my knees, and from deep within me came the reply, expressed with astonishing emphasis: 'It is Jesus, it is Jesus!'

I became as a stone: rigid, chill, inert, lifeless, immovable. Something apart in me viewed the experience with great clarity and no emotion: hell must be like this. So it proved. Before me, as on a panoramic screen, there then appeared the mouth of a monstrous toad, from the corner of which dangled a frail human leg. A typical clip from Hieronymous Bosch – not painted, but *real*. I drew back in horror. As I did so I was given to understand that I must go down to hell many times until even this vile toad was redeemed.

As the latihan continued I became aware that the mundane little bedroom where I knelt was now filling with radiant white light from a source beyond. I sat back on my heels, eyes tight shut yet opened wide.

The light dazzled, and seemed gradually to take the form of some immeasurable and mighty presence that towered over me, through the roof and far into the night sky above.

Again I touched the floor with my forehead and there came a dawning (and unbearable) realisation – that I was at the feet of Jesus. There, in front of me, within touch, yet I dare not. I was lifted up, and my arms were outstretched. Then I passed out.

I am obliged now, in the coolness of time, to beg forgiveness for any self-delusion or self-puffery (to use Varindra's apt term) that cannot be excluded whenever words are used. Because asked, I have tried simply to bear witness. Nothing more.

When I was able eventually to tell Bapak (on his next visit to Coombe) something of what took place during that early latihan at home, his reply put my poor head and heart at rest:

'You see Jesus when you are truly repentant.'

Thirty years on, June 1987: again a time of departure, this time for the Subud brotherhood worldwide.

Without knowing what was taking place in Indonesia, I retired to bed with a profound conviction that I was going to die. It was unlike anything I had ever experienced. A leaden weight lay on my spirits and would not be shifted. I awoke in the night, convinced the end would be soon. But I rose in the morning and breakfasted as usual. Later in the day Olivia rang to tell me that Bapak had died.

I took the news calmly, but realising with a kind of chill surprise what my experience the night before had been all about. I went upstairs and the latihan started and continued for some minutes. The words came out in a rush, unbidden:

'God bless Bapak, God bless Bapak, God bless Bapak.'

# The Teacher of all Teachers

*Vicki Gordon (UK)*

I was into the guru thing, not so long ago. I had a teacher, an Englishman actually, who had once been a pupil of a guru, and he had himself a very powerful and charismatic character. For two years I sat literally and metaphorically at his feet, devoted to him, doing everything he told me to and absorbing everything he said. He taught me a lot, and I am still grateful to him, but he wasn't God, and one day it began to dawn on me that he wasn't infallible either.

Another year went by, and I began to feel an itch to look around – was this a test of my loyalty I wondered? For all his goodness and his strength I became more and more aware that he was only human, and therefore in some ways pretty much like the rest of us. The shine went out of my eyes, and his aura of sanctity and unquenchable spirit imperceptibly faded as I began to think for myself. His once impressive truths grew to seem little more than clichés and his enormous self-love became disquietingly obvious. And one day at last I got the feeling that he, too, was a little bored and lonely. But by then it didn't matter because I had found Subud.

It didn't seem much at first, just a thing one went to twice a week, and the people seemed uniformly dull – but for some reason I couldn't keep away.

Finding my guru had been a sudden and marvellous Event. I had gone to some lectures and had fallen in love immediately with the whole thing: mysterious, romantic, the hundreds of other young people all around him, the interesting clothes and beads they wore, the hard physical work we did together at weekends, the solemn group meetings and the ritual morning meditations. I had loved it all – and had *belonged* to it. It had been a great learning experience and a wonderful way of life. Until I had begun to think for myself.

My introduction to Subud was, in comparison, uneventful. It was only gradually that I realised I was a free agent. No one was telling me what to do, or even expecting me to do anything. The trappings – the people and the place and the helpers were all so ordinary and suburban and unattractive that I felt no attachment to them. I went to latihans in spite of them rather than because of them.

And I went on going, drawn there by some invisible thread that plucked at my coatsleeves every Monday and Thursday evening and got me on the train. They were confusing, those early days when I was new in Subud, and the things the helpers said were so contradictory that I couldn't believe a word they said. But I just kept on going.

Many years later I am still going, and I still dislike the set-up. I dislike the dingy halls, the smugness of some of the helpers and platitudes of other members; but at least I now know that I have what I had been searching

for all along: direction, support and guidance in my life, and a living feeling of the power of God inside me.

The force, it was called, in Star Wars. It's in Subud; it's good, and it works. And I am on my way: my own path, tailored exclusively for me, by a gentle Spirit, and not a human teacher.

I suppose the days of the gurus are numbered, now that individuals can get into contact with their *own* teacher, inside themselves, and the power of Almighty God, the Teacher of all Teachers.

# In Search of a Feeling

*Edwin Gussenhoven (Holland)*

I come from an old Catholic family in Holland. Among my ancestors were priests and nuns and prolific missionaries who worked in China and Brazil. My interest in religion and a sensitivity to places where authentically spiritual things had occurred were probably inherited from them. As a child, I felt a spiritual power in the Catholic Church, especially during Holy Communion.

As I grew older I gradually lost the ability to feel this power, but it never quite left me entirely, even as an adult. When I was about 18 I went through an intensely religious phase and spent some time in different monasteries. At one time, during the Christmas holy days, I missed all the fun and the party-life going on at home; but this, however, re-awoke my childhood convictions of the existence of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Spirit of Christ. I longed for more.

Not long after, my brother visited me and announced, 'Edwin, I believe in God, again, deeply, truly, as never before.' I was utterly surprised. 'How come, all of a sudden?' I asked him. 'I have found something,' he said. 'It is a group of people who say wise things and are good to be with.' But I was consumed with a need for the feeling of the presence of Christ, not just for people, however wise they seemed. So I tested him: I asked him if he genuinely felt this Christ feeling was there, among them. He couldn't really answer that one, so I forgot about this group of people.

I found nothing for myself, though. My brother appeared to be content with his Subud group and some time later insisted on taking me to their house in Rotterdam. There, on entering, I chanced to hear somebody singing, very beautifully, Alleluia, Alleluia! This singing was so pure that it touched me, almost physically, and I recognised that feeling of something spiritual which I had experienced often as a child, in church. But although the atmosphere in the house was indeed nice, and the people were friendly and open-hearted, it all seemed so ordinary, too ordinary to be what I was in search of.

I did not go back for nearly a year. Still I had found nothing. But there came a moment when I longed so strongly to have that same feeling again, the one that I had experienced at the Subud house, that I decided to go along again and join those people, to have that feeling again. That, I now know, is the latihan.

I have been in Subud for seven years now, and I can truly say, for myself, that I have found not only the place where I belong, but the confirmation of the truth of my religion. Considering the reality and the perfection of Christ, and the feelings I had had earlier of this, I find it all corresponds fully with the content of the Spirit that is found through Subud.

# In the Muslim Way

*Hameed Sourjah (Sri Lanka)*

The life I was leading before I came into Subud was a far cry from that intended for man. I was drinking and proceeding thirstily downhill. I knew little of my religion, Islam, and did even less about it. In short, at the age of 44 my life was headed for disaster. I recognised that I was at the universal crossroads, confronted by the question of questions: what is life all about? Where on earth am I going? At the very least my wife and three boys deserved better care and a better example from me.

In a deliberate effort to find a new direction, I turned to my religion. In Sri Lanka, this is a very normal thing to do. By immersing myself in its practices I determined to give up drinking. Having once made the decision, I overcame the temptation, even at social gatherings. The effort involved was, thankfully, bearable. It led to a little more consciousness as to the shape of my life and the needs of my family. I began to do the Islamic prayers five times a day, observed the fasting month of Ramadhan, and constantly prayed that God would show me the true path that would lead me to genuine righteousness.

A short while later a good friend happened to bring up the subject of Subud. He offered me some literature on it, which I read with growing interest. As a result, he arranged for me to meet a Subud helper at his home one evening.

As soon as we arrived, our host began talking about Subud he talked eloquently and continuously for about an hour and a half without a single interruption. During all this talking I found that something rather extraordinary was happening. I had gone there with various questions to ask him; yet here were my questions being answered, one by one, without my ever voicing them. This convinced me that at last I had been shown the spiritual path I should follow. There and then I asked to be opened.

Like everyone else I had to wait the standard three months before being opened. During that time things occurred which I at first assumed to be coincidences. But when these 'coincidences' continued far beyond probability I began to realise that the way was being paved for me to accept Subud completely.

Eighteen years ago I was opened. I awoke the next morning with (for me) a novel feeling of buoyancy and relief, as if a tremendous burden had been lifted from me. A feeling of wonderful calmness filled me, and for the first time in years I went off happily to work. I knew somehow, even then, that through my opening, through the receiving of the *roh ilofi* (the Holy Spirit in Christian terms) my old way of life had ended for good.

This is quite an ordinary story, experienced by many, many people in Subud. But through the latihan I have been given the strength to fuel my quest for the right life, in the Muslim way. That is all I have ever wanted to find.

# My Path to Rebirth

*Abdus Salam Molla (Bangladesh)*

I too, am a Muslim by birth, though from Bangladesh. My parents were particular about the ritual performance (the *shariat*) of our religion and my father took special care that his children should grow up like him. He engaged an Arabic teacher who used to come in the mornings, and my brothers and sisters and I would sit before him with Arabic alphabet books. Thus we learned how to read the Holy Koran, though none of us was taught how to write or speak Arabic. Nor did we understand it. It is the belief of our people that just to know how to recite the Holy Koran in Arabic is itself beneficial to us in life and in the after-world.

During Ramadhan, which is the fasting month, my father used to go every evening to the mosque for the night prayer. This is a special prayer named *Tarabi Namaj*. The whole Koran is recited consecutively every evening during the 30 days of Ramadhan. Usually it is finished by the 27th or 28th night of the month, during the 'Nights of Power.' During the prayer people stand in rows and listen to the recitation of the Koran by the imam, and then follow him in the further ritual of the prayers. By 10pm it is over.

My father used to take me with him during Ramadhan daily to the mosque for this prayer and the Koran readings. And I remember that while standing in the rows for a long time with the other people, with closed or half-closed eyes, I would stir like a coconut leaf in the breeze.

After finishing school and college, I went on to university. Like my parents I was still regular with the five daily prayers and other ritual formalities of Islam. However, a major problem now began to make itself felt: the question 'Why?' Are my prayers meaningless? If so, why do I go on with it?

These questions shook my belief in my religion. It was a dark time in my life, when disbelief pervaded all my thinking. But I could not avoid it. I began to search for reasons, for answers.

So I became interested in the people who are spiritually developed Muslims, or 'Sufi'. I met with them and asked them many questions which arose in me. But none of their answers satisfied me. Some of them advised me to pray more and more, and late at night. Some told me to repeat attributive words to myself, such as *Allahu Akbar*, or *Sobhanallah* or *Alhamdulillah*, or all three of them at times; others advised me to do *dhikr*.

I was supposed to follow all this advice blindly, without questions. But my pain was somewhere else: this they could not diagnose and could not reach. What I wanted was to feel a response from the other end when I prayed.

Why should there be no response from my creator when I called him? Was it that I was not actually calling Him with the right devotion or attitude? But, if this was so who would teach me to pray properly so that

He would respond to me? Or was there none to respond? Were all my prayers made to an empty nothingness? Was what I had been brought up to believe by my father all wrong? If this was so, though, why then had millions upon millions of people prayed to God from ancient times until today? And why and whence had there come to earth so many wise messengers of God, the prophets, calling people to pray?

I was at a total loss. I just did not know what to do. So I began to travel to different Sufi shrines in different places to find answers and a way to satisfy myself. In Bangladesh there had come at different times many Sufis from other Islamic countries, and there are many shrines where people go for prayers, to ask for the help they need. During this dark time I visited most of what are considered the holy places in Bangladesh, but still I found no answers to my questions; nor did I have any peace of mind.

In 1971, when I was still a student, the Liberation War against the Pakistani regime began. I joined the war without the permission of my parents, because I knew they would not allow me to go and fight. I, however, thought it would be a rare chance in my life to take part in my own country's struggle for liberation; I also believed that the war against the Pakistani rulers was just. If I did not fight in this war I would be ashamed of myself before the next generation.

A man who sets out to war gets a taste of the bitterness of life, and this is never erased from his mind. I saw my own life very objectively for the first time, and with new insights. I saw that both the human feeling for the friend who died in the war beside me, and the brutal feeling to kill other people whom we consider our enemies, live together in the same heart, within the same blanket of the body. One bullet makes everybody equal. The man who a few minutes earlier could laugh, sing and dance, becomes quiet and cold forever. War reduces the feeling of human life to desolation.

After the war, when the country was free, I went back to university again, finished my studies, and took a badly-paid temporary job. Still there reared up in me undecided questions; whether I should pray to God or not particularly troubled me.

In this state of confusion one morning when I was in a hurry to get to the office, I saw a very small advertisement in the newspaper about Subud members. Although it was an unremarkable notice, my eyes stopped there. If I remember rightly, all the advertisement said was, Subud members, please contact PO Box No...

The word 'Subud' created a very strange sensation within me. Questions popped into my head. What is this? An organisation like the Red Cross? Or a political organisation only wanting to forward their own self-interest? I grew very curious about this little advertisement, and the word 'Subud', and this made me decide to write off to the box number address.

But somehow I didn't. The next day, at the same time, in the same column at the same corner of the newspaper, I saw the same advertisement. I was astonished: why did my eyes get caught there? This time I noted down the box number, and wrote to it that morning. After three days I had a reply, which read:

*Thank you for your letter of 10th March. Actually Subud is a spiritual brotherhood. I am newcomer to Bangladesh, and I placed the notice in the newspaper hoping to trace some people who were members of Subud several years ago here. In answer to your question: Subud is an association of people who follow the spiritual exercise called latihan. The aim of Subud is towards the perfection of human society united in the worship of God.*

*Subud is not a new religion, nor does it have any teaching. There is nothing to learn or do in the latihan. Subud is an experience. All that is required is complete surrender.*

*The only qualification of a prospective member is the serious and sincere intention to follow the Will of the One Almighty God.*

*Rashid Rogers*

The letter interested me. The very word 'latihan' was completely new and intriguing. I became very eager to find out what latihan was. I wrote back to Rashid Rogers asking him to spare me some time, so I could meet him and ask more about the words 'Subud', 'latihan', 'worship' and so on. Rogers wrote back and said he would meet me.

The post-liberation political situation in Bangladesh was so disturbed then that within me I had a deep-rooted conviction about foreigners working in Bangladesh. I believed them all to be political agents, in various shapes or forms, so I could not meet Rashid Rogers frankly; rather, I suspected his motives. When we met, therefore, I asked him a lot of different questions from different angles, covering political, social, religious and spiritual subjects, in order to get a clearer impression of what sort of man he was.

When I got home I thought about him, and his answers, vividly. What he had said seemed to be similar to my own ideas, and I found them not unacceptable. But my suspicions were not entirely done with so I met him again, and again I questioned him. I found the idea of Subud, that one surrenders to the Power of the One Almighty God, the Creator of everything, to be the basic belief in Islam, my religion! So I asked to join the latihan. He gave me three months to wait, a period of time in which to think things over, and to ask whatever questions I still felt I needed to.

It was obvious that he was not eager to impose his own ideas upon me. Instead he was rather reluctant - so I grew all the more interested. And,

two and a half months later, he agreed to open me.

The day fixed for me to be opened, the weather was foul and the city was chaotic in the storm. In spite of these natural turmoils I reached his house on time and, with full faith in my own religion, I surrendered as completely as I could to the Power of God.

Within the first week of doing the latihan, I received at last my answer as to why I should pray to God. And, to my heart-felt satisfaction, I feel that I was then reborn a true Muslim.

# Out of Chaos

*Laura Bonnanno Hill (USA)*

As a child, until about the age of 16, I had been a devout Catholic. But as I grew up I had tired of dogma and dictates and had decided that the God the Catholics spoke of did not exist. At times, I bordered on complete atheism, but had somehow come to the conclusion that, although there was a 'Power' of some sort in the universe, it just wasn't working in my favour.

And now it was 1969. I was living in Venice, California, a single 30-year-old who was somewhat mixed up, and always felt lonely even in a crowd. I had been a non-resident member of the local Synanon group for about a year. Synanon was a self-help group; the 'game' is akin to group therapy – everyone sits around talking about their problems with other members of the group ('tribe') giving their opinions, suggestions, and generally being constructively critical. I had, I felt, made some progress: I could act as if everything was going smoothly. But deep inside, underneath it all, I knew that something was missing from my life.

One hot night in July, after doing some volunteer work at the Synanon until around midnight, I came home and went to bed. A week or so before there had been a prowler outside my bedroom window. This night I had a feeling that again someone was outside but, as usual, I paid no attention to my instincts.

I had been asleep an hour, when I awoke. For a split second I realised that there was someone standing by my bed. I don't remember feeling the blow to my head. Some time later I awoke again, this time face down on the living room floor, with my mouth gagged, my hands tied behind my back, my legs tied together, and bleeding profusely from my head. My first thought was, 'What the hell did I get myself into *this* time?' I had been raped and robbed; I was alone and under the threat of death if I moved before I counted to a hundred. As I counted I listened for the usual squeak of the front door which would tell me that the rapist had left. But I kept passing out and losing count, so never did hear the signal.

At some point I moved slowly to find out if the rapist was still in my home; he had left. Thank God for my neighbour! Generally she went to bed early but on this night she was up very late, waiting for one of her children to return. She had just got into bed when she heard my feeble knock at her door. She called the ambulance and the police and I was taken to hospital.

A day or two later I awoke with two doctors peering at me. I had one finger in a splint, and my head was half shaved; brain surgery had been performed to remove debris and shattered fragments of skull bone caused by the blow on my head. The doctors told me later that they were surprised I had survived.

This incident was in some way a blessing in disguise, a turning point in

my life. It started a process of change in me. Life began to look different. In spite of myself I was glad to be alive. The awareness that something was missing became stronger; it was as if the 'big bang' to my head had opened another part of my brain – the psychic area. Premonitions, which had been a part of my life for many years in the form of dreams or flashes, became stronger – only now I began to take notice of them.

I began reading with great fervor about how to develop these powers – trying to find out if this would help me put my life in some kind of order. Yet whenever these books began to talk about 'the spiritual life' I got bored. My only interest was to develop the 'Power'. Looking back I realise that I was hoping to develop these powers partly in order to control people, since I still did not have a handle on my own life.

It is difficult being in the world knowing that there is something missing, but now knowing where it is or how to go about finding it. At that time there weren't too many people I could talk with who understood what I was really saying. I should have felt satisfied because I had my health, no ill effects from the rape or brain surgery and a good job with decent pay. I was still involved in the Synanon, playing the 'game', still doing volunteer work, and hanging out a lot.

But no matter how much I tried to convince myself otherwise I just didn't feel satisfied. Underneath it all, underneath the Synanon 'act as if', I was unfulfilled; I realised that for many years I had been lying to myself. Although changes in my behaviour and attitudes *had* taken place, the changes were basically superficial and had not touched my in-most self. I did not have the spiritual thing that would give my life balance and 'inner meaning'.

Around this time, Bill, a member of my Synanon tribe, joined me at the front desk of the Synanon house to do volunteer work. I had known Bill for about a year. He was married, but his wife did not come to Synanon. There was something about Bill that was special. Many of us could never figure out why he was there to begin with – he really seemed much more together than the rest of us. On Sunday mornings there wasn't much to do at the front desk, so Bill and I discussed what we did outside Synanon. He was a piano tuner. We talked about 'spiritual things' which was quite unheard of in the Synanon environment. He was quietly knowledgeable, and I really enjoyed talking with him.

One Sunday afternoon several of us, including Bill, were sitting drinking coffee and the conversation turned to how I had changed for the better since the rape. Several people had noticed changes in my attitude, my appearance, my insight and ability to play the Synanon 'game'. But when I said I was still unsatisfied and mentioned my search for 'inner meaning' I got blank stares; only Bill was to understand what I had been

trying to say.

Once the conversation had been diverted away from me, Bill, murmuring in my ear, told me that he belonged to a group, a spiritual group, the core of which could help raise my vibration level (whatever that meant – it *was* the 60s!) He offered to take me to this group any time I wished. I visualised people kneeling in white robes before an altar, though he gave me no description of the group.

Bill and I made arrangements to get together after I had moved to another apartment. I had moved of course from where I was living at the time of the rape; I was moving again now because I had been burglarised twice in the last month. It had been quite some year!

One evening Bill picked me up from work. On the way to the Subud hall (he had finally told me the name of the group) he explained some things to me, about talking to the helpers, and the strong vibration that I would feel, and a little about Bapak. Nothing made much sense to my head, but something inside me seemed to respond. The moment I walked into the Subud house, I knew with every breath, with every thought, with every ounce of myself that I was 'Home', and that I had been guided to the Universal Power through all the troubles of my life, every inch of the way. Three months and two days later I was opened and since then I have never felt lonely or alone. I have found my way back to God, and at last I can say I am truly a different person living in the same body.

# Getting Ready for Subud

*Livingston Dodson (USA)*

One evening in January 1960, I parked our car across from the old Odd-Fellows Hall on South Hope Street in downtown Los Angeles, and my wife, Vita, and I walked across the street. We held hands, to support each other in the face of the unknown experience that awaited us. I was aware that, in crossing the street, we were very likely also crossing an important threshold in our lives. I said to her, 'It's going to be OK. I'm sure Subud is what we have been looking for.'

On this night we were to be opened, after having waited six months as applicants. Vita disappeared with the women and I found some seven other men who, like myself, were to be opened, sitting with five men helpers. We were given the chance to ask any last-minute questions: anything that might not have occurred to us during the waiting period.

I did have one. It had occurred to me that I might not, in fact, perceive any influence or force or have any experience at all, during the 'opening'. My intuition told me that, if this happened, I should not make any judgements about Subud or about myself because I had been told that the latihan is a gradual experience that unfolds with time. So I told the helper that I felt that, if I felt nothing this first night, I should just lay that aside and return for more latihan later. 'Is this the correct attitude?' I asked. When he replied, 'Yes, you will be opened whether you are aware of it or not,' I felt relieved; *I did not have to feel anything*. There was nothing of consequence riding on my own perceptions of the process. I was now ready to go into the latihan hall with the other men.

One thing that had given me a certain confidence in the reality of the force involved in the Subud latihan was an experience I had had as an applicant. One evening I had sat having coffee after the applicants' meeting with two helpers: Earl Robinson, elderly and distinguished-looking, president of his own company, and Karl Schaffer, a bachelor in his early thirties.

I do not remember what we talked about; what I do remember is that early on in the conversation I had become acutely aware of an influence or force which seemed to emanate from these two men, although they gave no sign themselves of being aware of it. This force had something in the nature of a delicate perfume, except I sensed it not with my nose, but with my whole being.

I gave no sign of there being anything unusual, but simply followed the conversation. Through this influence, though, I felt very close to these two men, as though the force allowed a deeper communion of our respective inner beings. Since we were 'in communion' there was no need or even desire to speak of it, as long as it was going on. The sensation of this influence or force seemed to tell me all I actually knew already about Subud; it communicated information, somehow, which is more than can be

said for regular perfume.

Some months after I was opened I finally got round to telling Earl about this experience, and asked him if he had been aware of it at the time. 'No, not consciously,' he replied, 'But it sounds to me as though you were receiving the latihan force through us. It goes on in us all the time, whether we are aware of it or not.'

It had in fact taken me six months to get opened – instead of the normal three. As an applicant I had been told that the waiting period itself was very important, being a preparation for Subud. Some changes in a person take place during this period, they said, to make him or her more ready for the eventual experience of the latihan. In my case I could certainly vouch for this; I considered I was a more difficult case for God to make ready than most people. Most of my six months were spent just trying to be an applicant.

What had happened was this. In mid-1959 I found a book in a bookshop near Los Angeles. My attention was drawn to it because I was acquainted with the author, John Bennett, from his previous writings on the Gurdjieff movement. I was mystified, however, as to the meaning of the book's title, *Concerning Subud*. Nevertheless I bought the book and started to read the jacket blurbs in an attempt to discover the meaning of the word 'Subud'.

Eight years earlier, my wife and I had had a brief encounter with the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky group in New York city. We had learnt something of what this movement was and knew the 'taste' of life while following such an esoteric way. We had also reached an early decision that it was not our way, and departed. In the meantime we had learned about John Bennett. Even back then he was considered something of a maverick and rebellious type by the more conservative 'establishment' of the Gurdjieff system. Still, he was very much one of the leaders, and had his own devoted following of pupils in England. Now here he was, eight years later, on the jacket of a book, announcing that some new sun had risen, and that the dew on the grass that was Gurdjieff's work was evaporating in the process.

My lunch hour over, I returned to my office – but I had not yet cracked Bennett's book itself. I knew, though, that whatever this thing Subud was all about, it was exactly what my wife and I had been actively looking for since 1951. I got a certain feeling just from looking at the word 'Subud'. It felt like blue sky, emptiness, purity, and something else – the feeling you get when you meet a stranger and yet realise that somehow you have known him for a long time, but know not from where or when.

Suddenly I felt a short tingle of fear: fear that, though This Is It, I didn't have any idea of how to approach it, or how to find it for myself. I

hopped out of the car again and went back to the bookstore on the slight chance that the clerk who sold me the book might know something. He did, which amazed me. 'Oh, yes,' he said, quite matter-of-factly, 'There is a group right here in Los Angeles that practises the latihan. I have their address. Here it is.'

Two nights later Vita and I sought out this address and as we approached the house there were two men out front who put us at ease by asking in a friendly way, 'Are you looking for Subud?' This was the first time I had heard the word pronounced, and realised that I had been thinking 'Soo-bud', but they were saying it 'Soo-bood.' I thought the way they said it was much better.

Thus we got to attend our first applicants' meeting. There were about 30 people there, who were the audience asking questions of five or six others, who were apparently already in Subud. Some answered individual questions while others gave little speeches of testimony about their experiences in Subud so far. All of them had been doing the latihan less than two years, and some of them for only a few months.

When the session broke up I approached one of the helpers with a problem in connection with my joining Subud. I explained that this was the first time I had come and that I did not see how I could continue, since on that very day my company had informed me that I was to be sent to Pennsylvania on a new contract for an indefinite length of time. (Needless to say, I thought God was being unfair to me.) The helper said, 'Well, you can always pick up your applicancy when you get back.' I thanked him, and then I asked him what he 'thought it all meant'. I was struck by his reply: 'It is looking more and more, to some of us, that it must have been much like this for the early Christians.'

Vita and I moved to Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, so that I could start work on a new contract with the Naval Supply Depot. My manager told me, 'You can go home as soon as you finish the job. So it's up to you when that'll be.' Because of my great desire to join Subud I was motivated to work as hard as possible; I was literally working my way back to Los Angeles. It was as though I had been swept away from shore by a tidal wave and must now fight my way in life to regain the beach.

In that time I took a train to New York, where I had been told that Bapak was giving a talk. But when I finally found the building, I was told that Bapak only sees people who are already opened. I thought, 'God, now I know that you are trying to keep me away from Subud.' There seemed to be nothing to do except go back home and continue working my way back to Los Angeles. It seemed very 'dark' to us in Pennsylvania and we felt very much alone.

Finally, my work was finished and we returned expectantly to our

home in California. With great excitement we found out the time and place of the next Subud applicants' meeting; our probation period, we thought, could now actually begin and in three months we would be opened.

Very quickly, though, it dawned on me that it still might not be all that easy. We set out for the meeting in downtown Los Angeles but, on a freeway that normally regards 60 miles an hour as a speed suitable only for the slow lane, traffic began to slow to a crawl. 'What is going on?' we asked each other. By the time we were already 15 minutes late for the meeting, the traffic had stopped moving altogether. There were miles and miles of stationary cars both ahead and behind us. There was nothing we could do but wait.

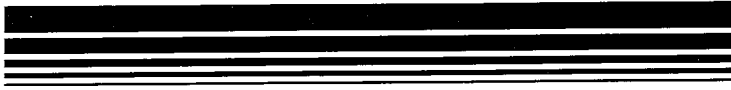
I sat behind the wheel, and we talked about the things that kept happening to us. 'It's uncanny,' we agreed. 'We're not going to make it to the Subud meeting, and we will be lucky just to get home tonight.' At that moment I had my first real insight into the Subud process. I got there by following a train of thought that went something like this. 'God, I can see that by willing alone, I am unable to get a jot closer to Subud. From now on I am going to stop willing this. If You wish me to join Subud, and if it is, in fact, Your will for both of us, the *You* will have to arrange it. Because I quit.'

The following week it was time for the next applicants' meeting. Magic! We didn't care any longer what might happen, and so nothing untoward did happen. Moreover, the helpers were moved to pity our plight and waived the necessity of our being applicants for the next three months. We could be opened the following week, they told us. It was only later that I found out that Subud means 'Surrendering to the will of God'. We had been applicants all along, but once we reached the point where we experienced 'surrendering', we were, at last, ready to be opened.

At the opening, after the word 'Begin', various helpers began to sing or utter unintelligible words. There were harmonies of sound that rose and fell, broke off, began again, or were interrupted by silences. So far as I could tell without opening my eyes, all of us applicants were quiet. I did not feel anything special, but I was not bored; I just felt confident, relaxed and happy. It seemed to go on for an eternity. Eventually, someone said 'Finish', and I opened my eyes and looked around at the others. My first latihan was over. The helpers came up to us and said, 'Welcome to Subud.' I was presumably, and finally, open.

PART II

Experiences:  
Tastes of Things to Come



# Contact with The Life Force

*Miriam Althea Snow (UK)*

**A**t last the day of my opening came. It was March 1964 and I was joining the Cheltenham, England, Subud group. I stood within a circle of about 12 women listening with closed eyes to the words being spoken by one of the helpers. 'We are helpers in the spiritual brotherhood of Subud, and we bear witness to your sincere wish to worship Almighty God.'

At first nothing happened quite as I expected. From all quarters of the room I heard odd noises and calls, thumps and sighs, and none of it seemed in the last bit holy; yet before long I found myself kneeling down on the carpet. Near me a helper whose voice I recognised was groaning and wailing in distress, and I was aware feeling dismay, that it was because of *my* sins and mistakes. Close behind me I heard a shocked little voice like the White Rabbit's saying, 'Oh dear! Oh dear!' and 'No, no, oh no!' At this, something in me roused itself and told me, as it were, 'But this is not the way – to shrink back. Be open, and responsive! Say yes, not no, to God.'

I had, of course, no intention of saying any such thing, I just tried to be 'open and responsive'. Then, suddenly, I heard my voice calling out loudly, again and again, 'Yes. Say yes to God! Say yes to God!' while a great wave of warm and benevolent power like gently tingling electricity poured strongly into me and my arms were opened wide to receive it, flinging themselves back and forth of their own accord. The lovely singing of the same helper now voiced my joy and happiness and I had no idea how long it was before the call to 'Finish' came, for I was cradled in inward bliss. Afterwards someone remarked, 'You were opened almost right away,' and I vaguely wondered how she knew.

I reached home in the same exalted and happy state. My husband and his mother were both out, and I was glad to be able to sit alone for a while, without thought or desire, still bathed in this completely new feeling of absolute contentment and peace. I remember touching the cat and dog with an unfamiliar tenderness, and I hoped the feeling might last. But, by the end of two hours, the state of blessedness was ebbing away. I was back to normal. I could not analyse my experience; all I knew was that something of eternal significance had happened to me, though what it was and where it would lead I could not tell. I was 'in Subud', and that was enough.

To my surprise nothing much did happen to me at the next latihan a few days later, except that I was well content to rest in this new atmosphere and the half hour went by with surprising swiftness. It was the same in latihan for the next three months. Sometimes I found myself humming while all the singing and noises of the latihan went on around me. I would have phrases from the psalms running through my head, or find myself in a Muslim posture of worship on the carpet, or sometimes lying prone,

comfortable and relaxed, not wanting to move a muscle. I made no involuntary movements, felt no vibrations (whatever they were); I was just happy and becoming more used to the strange noises of some of the people doing the latihan-though I appreciated most of the times when they all stopped and we were suddenly wrapped in a deep quiet together.

Early in June, my husband and I went on two weeks' holiday to Cornwall. We took our border collie with us, enjoying the lovely coves and cliff walks between Lamorna and Land's End. For the first time I tried doing the latihan on my own. Now I had entire quiet; but still nothing much happened. It was like pressing into a dark emptiness. But at the end of each half-hour, which seemed to time itself, I would look at my face in the bedroom mirror and see reflected there that something interior had indeed happened. My eyes told me so. And for a moment or two I would feel my feet tingling with a dim echo of the Power I had once felt, at my 'opening'.

My first participation in a Subud gathering was at a conference centre at Swanwick in Derby, in the summer of 1964. It was only a small, informal gathering of 50-odd Subud members, lasting five days. I knew only a few people there, but there was much friendliness and it was a delight to me to look at the faces of so many new Subud sisters and brothers and to see a light and glow, a radiancy, in some faces and eyes which were verification to me of the inexpressible and the desired.

At the first women's latihan in the chapel, I found myself on my knees with all the strange new sounds of others singing and shouting and chanting swelling around about me, and suddenly to my surprise tears started streaming down my cheeks. With this came a feeling of great release and blessing. It seemed that I knelt before Someone who knew all about me, and the thought came, 'Was it like this with Mary of Magdala when she found herself in front of the man from Nazareth, overwhelmed by a love she had never come upon before?' For the rest of the time in the latihan I found myself assuming a most complicated attitude, almost standing on my head, yet with no strain and an almost triumphant feeling of something very right and satisfying having been achieved.

On the third afternoon I decided not to join one of the outings but to listen, for the first time, to a tape in the library, of one of Bapak's talks. Up until then I had wondered what good it would do to sit and hear a lot of unintelligible Indonesian, with only brief translations into English in between. Why not just the translations? But I had a surprise coming. The tape had already started, as I opened the door and slipped into the quiet room where a dozen or so people sat relaxed; and then I heard the rich, wise voice of Bapak speaking for the first time.

Hearing that tape marked something new, for me. Until then I had

tended to feel that rather too much respect and homage was paid to Bapak and to his explanations on spiritual matters. Now I understood inwardly, secretly, and rejoiced.

In spite of this, some of the time at this, my first experience of a Subud gathering, I found myself feeling somehow unsettled, almost lonely and hungry for something, doubtful and out on the fringe of things. Nothing very much seemed to happen to me at the latihan after that first one in the chapel, and I came out wondering how all this noise and commotion could possibly be called 'worship'.

I suppose I was overtired after a strenuous hike in the swirling mist of the Derbyshire Dales. I know I came away from the chapel unhappy and full of doubt. I hid away in a little grotto, pressed my head against the cold rock, gazed on the quiet green fields, and gradually felt better. But in my room I prayed from my heart, 'If Subud is right and good and holy, please show me for sure. Give me a sign. And if it is not, I will leave it, just like that. I promise.' Then I forgot about it and was cheerful again.

After the evening latihan the next day, when we were again all sitting quietly and at peace on the chairs lining the chapel walls, one of the helpers suddenly said, 'Would you all like to try some testing, before we go?' and there was a general murmur of agreement. I wondered whether I was supposed to take part in this mystery, being so new; but anyway I stood up with the rest of them. When the helper asked us 'How is it when the answer to a question is Yes?', I wasn't even quite sure what was meant, but my arms seemed to, because they rose a little, in a gesture of acknowledgement with a feeling of lightness. For 'No', I just stood rigid with clenched fists. Having taken us through various paces, she asked whether we had any questions or problems that we wanted tested. Suddenly I found that I had something of utmost urgency to ask. And, rather stumblingly, I did: 'This Power in Subud – is it the Christ Power? Is it the Light Power?'

Very kindly, the helper said, 'Come into the middle, and ask for yourself.' So there I stood, and asked my big question, almost ashamed at my daring, but passive and open to whatever might be. Instantly I was seized by the same great benevolent energy that had manifested at my opening, only this time it made my arms flail up and down at terrific speed while my lungs pumped air in and out in uncontrollable gasps so fast that I felt like some little fish pulled out of the water and dangling helplessly, drowning in a new atmosphere. I remember beginning to think wildly, 'Why doesn't she do something to stop it?' And then, just as suddenly, I was released and set down, rather dazed and tottery but with all my doubts resolved and joy and relief seeping in to fill me full. I had my answer, and it sufficed.

For the next three months the regular twice-weekly half-hour latihans

continued their uneventful course.

October 7th, 1964, is a date which will always stand out in my Subud memories. One of the women helpers at latihan that evening was back from Wolfsburg where she had attended talks given by Bapak on his world tour. Right away I felt a difference among us, a new flow of life and energy at work. It helped to make me relaxed and responsive; and in a half-kneeling attitude I found myself swaying rhythmically from side to side, more and more strongly. And suddenly, to my utter astonishment, a flood of strange utterances in some foreign tongue came from my throat, and someone filled with arrogance and mighty power leaped to his feet and swaggered about the room in the gathering dusk, declaring his supremacy and stupendous strength and his joy in the material world – a goliath mockingly challenging the helper who stood quietly like the boy David with his little sling and five smooth stones.

The sensation of exuberant life and unlimited power was intoxicating and glorious; I was no longer myself – a small-statured English woman of 47 years – but a timeless man, dark-skinned, nearly naked, about seven feet tall and of tremendous strength and physical vitality. It was like the coming back to life of ‘myself’ of hundreds of years ago. And I enjoyed it terrifically, quite oblivious to the 20th century or anything else. I recall holding out my arms and calling someone ‘Bwana...m’Bwana...’ with joy, delight and reverence.

And then it was over; I was five-feet-and-half-an-inch tall again, and shivering from reaction, saying half-laughingly, half-accusingly to the woman helper who had returned from the Continent, ‘*What* did you bring back with you from seeing Bapak?’

Well, it never happened quite like that again, but from that time on I had my own latihan language (which I couldn’t understand with my mind, though I sometimes sensed a meaning.) And something different occurred each time thereafter when the latihan took over. At last the barrier in me had been pierced, I was truly opened, and I marvelled at the incredible difference between movement and speech from my own will and brain, and movement and speech which by-passed that and arose from the soul alone. Who would have guessed it would be like this?

# To See Oneself

*Harris Smart (Australia)*

I was opened in California in 1969 when I was 27 years old. Although I am an Australian, I was at Stanford University, California, at the time. I knew a Chinese-American called Husein Chung. He was running a business in psychodrama and encounter groups in Palo Alto, near San Francisco, and after a while some of us who got involved in the psychodrama learned that he practised something called Subud and we were curious. I went to him one day and asked him about this Subud. He was pretty evasive but finally said: 'Well, if you really want to find out about it, you might as well come along and see how you get on.' He told me a time and a place to go.

When I got there I found that it was a shop front in Los Altos, a nearby town. I went inside and found that the space was divided into two by a heavy curtain hanging across the middle of the room. I saw Husein and asked him: 'What now?' He said, 'Just sit down there and I'll talk to you later.' He pointed to a chair near the curtain. Shortly after that he and the other men who were present went behind the curtain. I sat there on my chair and everything was quiet for a few minutes. Then a terrific din broke out from behind the curtain, all these men shouting, laughing, crying, moaning, singing, praying – and all in an apparently chaotic cacophony. This went on for about half an hour and then it was quiet again and the men came out from behind the curtain, looking perfectly normal.

Husein explained to me that what happened behind the curtain was called 'the latihan'. Men and women did it separately, he said, and they understood that it was a direct contact with the power of God. It caused feelings and sensations to arise in them which led them to utter spontaneous sounds and make movements which were purgative. If I wanted to join, I had to wait three months and then I could be 'opened', which meant receiving the contact with this power for the first time.

I said I'd like to be opened, and after that I came back every week and sat in the chair by the curtain. Other people were also waiting to be opened and we all sat together and listened to the latihan.

After a while, I perceived that despite its surface cacophony the latihan did have a kind of form, or pattern. The noise would gradually die down and become quieter, even peaceful. I could also feel, through the curtain, a sort of power or force coming from the latihan and how at the end there was a deep calm feeling.

After about six weeks of this I had an unusual experience. One night after sitting at the latihan place, I was with some people when I was overcome by a strange feeling of tension and isolation. It was so severe that I could not even begin to articulate it. I went outside and found myself shaking and uttering some rather strange sounds which seemed to have the effect of opening a place in my stomach or solar plexus. A warm sort of

energy flowed out of this place and through my body, through all my nerves and veins. I could feel it flowing into even the tiniest capillaries of my fingers, forcing a way inside them, opening them up.

When this was finished my body felt wonderfully alive and all my senses were very sharp. I could see things with extraordinary clarity and detail. I was also sensitive to people's feelings. For instance, I went to a restaurant and was distinctly aware of the feelings *in* the people around me.

I supposed that I'd been spontaneously opened a little ahead of time. I went to see Husein about it and asked him if I could join the latihan behind the curtain right away. He thought about it for a while but then said, 'I think you had better wait the full three months.' At the end of that time I was officially opened and began to do latihan with the group.

That somewhat informal introduction I had had is not how it is done these days. Applicants today have no close contact with the latihan before they are opened. It was typical then, though, of the rather free-wheeling way that things were done in California at the time.

People who join Subud usually feel that they have found something for which they have been looking all of their lives – and this was certainly true in my case. I'd had a feeling since my early teens of being lost and out of place. I'd rejected the religion I'd been brought up in, but continued to hanker for a religious way of life. I had looked for answers in the usual places, in literature and in brief flirtations with things like Zen Buddhism, but none of these things worked for me. Curiously, I'd once even been drawn to look in Indonesia, which is the place where Subud originated. I went to Bali in fact but soon realised that the answer for me was not there, that the religion of Bali arose out of a culture of which I was not and never could be a part. When I joined Subud the Balinese experience, like so much else in my life, fell into place. My sense of something to be found in Indonesia had been right, although the particular place I'd looked in had been a mistake.

One characteristic of Subud which makes it accessible to everyone is that it has no cultural content. While it originated in Indonesia, the latihan contains no Indonesian forms or rituals. One experiences what is contained within one's own individuality, and which is pushed to the surface.

In my early days in Subud, I had various experiences which seemed to have to do with putting things in my past right, which had been wrong. For instance, I woke up one night to an inner voice telling me, 'Get up and go for a walk.' I tried to ignore it, but it kept on and finally, feeling completely ridiculous, I got up, got dressed and started walking. I don't know where I was going, but my feet seemed to be guided. When I came to a cross-road or a corner, my feet felt directed to go in a certain direction. I walked for a

long way to a part of town I'd never been in before, wondering where this was all going to end. Then I came to a church and it felt like this was meant to be my destination. I went inside the church and what I experienced was a feeling of reconciliation with the religion in which I'd been raised and had rebelled against so strongly.

I read a great deal about Subud, both the talks and writings of Bapak, the founder of Subud, and also books by other Subud members such as Ronimund von Bissing's *Songs of Submission*, which I still think is a great work of mystical literature by any standards. It is full of vivid images and insights which helped me make sense of my experience at the time, and have continually proved worth remembering. For example:

'It is much more important in following the spiritual way than in following the worldly way that a man should not take himself seriously. If a man takes himself seriously, he cannot be taking God seriously. If he takes God seriously, he certainly cannot be impressed by himself.'\*

After I had been doing the latihan for about 18 months I returned to Australia. At first things were difficult. My free and easy life in California had unfitted me for most of the encumbrances of ordinary existence such as regular employment. But gradually I settled down and became part of the Subud group in my home town of Melbourne, and started to earn my own living. In 1974 I decided I would visit Cilandak, the suburb of Jakarta where Bapak lived in Indonesia. Over the years a community had begun to grow there of Subud members from all over the world.

This visit to Cilandak was important to me in many ways, but of the many stories I could write I will tell you just one. It is an example of how Subud is constantly correcting and instructing one, not by any other person but by the latihan and by life itself. Sometimes these instructions are profound and awe-inspiring; sometimes they are a good reminder – about not taking oneself too seriously.

I was very serious about my visit to Cilandak. One thing I did was buy myself a new suit. It was a grey suit, the first I'd ever bought, but I wanted to look neat and presentable in Bapak's home at Cilandak. I wore my suit to the airport on the day that I left for Indonesia. While I was waiting for my plane to be announced, I went to the bookshop to buy something to read on the flight. It was difficult to choose a suitable book. My usual reading matter on planes, like *Rolling Stone* magazine and James Bond

\* Ronimund von Bissing, *Songs of Submission*, p.121. (London 1962, James Clarke and Co.)

novels, did not seem appropriate to the spiritual nature of the journey on which I was embarked.

I chose *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. This rather soppy fable about a seagull's quest for enlightenment was much in vogue at the time. Its vague mysticism seemed appropriate to the moment. I went back to the departure lounge wearing my brand new grey suit, and clasping my copy of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*.

Now, there was in our group in Melbourne a certain Subud brother that I did not get along with at all. Once we had a physical fight; well, it was more of a scuffle really, but it was indicative of a lack of love between us. He was a person whose good qualities I could appreciate at a distance and with whose problems I could sympathise when I was not actually with him. But when we were together he was a test of brotherly love that I constantly failed.

As I was sitting in the airport departure lounge, all ready to leave for Indonesia, who should walk through the door but this very brother. I cannot imagine any person I would have been less pleased to see, for I sensed at once that he, too, was going to Cilandak, that fate had decreed we must leave together on the same plane. A whole month in his close company! No doubt the open-mouthed dismay I saw on his face was mirrored on my own. We could not pretend we didn't know each other. We had to greet each other, and he had to sit beside me.

We did not know then that not only would we have to be in Cilandak together, but that we would also have to share a room. We could not then foresee the endless disputes we would be having about the one key to the room, culminating in yet another scuffle. I did not know, then, that a very large part of my experience in Bapak's home at Cilandak would be the exploration of myself in relationship with this brother.

All I knew at the moment was that he, too, was wearing a new grey suit and clutching a copy of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*.

# What's in a Name?

*Salamah Pope (Indonesia)*

One of the absurd things about me (and there are several) is my name. So religio-centric are both Christians and Muslims, though, that no one I know has ever remarked on it. In fact the only time there has ever been any appropriate response to it was when I was paged once at Kennedy airport, and a group of immigrant workers from Pakistan burst into huge guffaws and thigh-slapping delight.

I was actually born Jennie Stewart, in a quiet suburb of London. Respectable, was what they called it; nothing eventful ever happened there. I left school, became a secretary, got married, and became Jennie Pope.

Two years later we were opened by Bapak and his wife Ibu, and things began to happen. We emigrated (with borrowed money) to the States, and met Bapak there again. In San Francisco my husband went upstairs to Bapak's sitting room and bravely (this was before it became fashionable) asked for a new name. He was pronounced Thomas. 'And what about Jennie?' asked Bapak. Primed beforehand, Thomas explained that I did not want a new name, thank you Bapak.

Pause.

'It is necessary,' said Bapak briefly. So when Thomas came downstairs again I was Vivien Pope.

Over the next few years I became aware that having the name Vivien was changing me. A hard and somewhat bitter shell around me was softening, and I began to feel more feminine.

Two countries and some seven years later, sitting at home in New Zealand one day, I *knew* in a quiet moment that I was no longer Vivien. Whatever the 'necessary' reason had once been, it no longer was. 'So what do I do now?' I thought, 'I'm not Jennie, and I'm not Vivien.' I came to the simple conclusion that it didn't matter all that much; I knew who I was inside, and what's in a name, anyway? So I forgot about it.

A few months later, Thomas had to return to Indonesia for a two-week visit which, perhaps inevitably, was extended. While I waited for him to come home to New Zealand he in Indonesia embraced Islam. This time it was he who didn't want a new name. However, he duly became, reluctantly, Abdullah – Muhammad Abdullah. Pope.

I arrived a month or two later and, feeling wifely, embraced Islam, too. I had been brought up as a mildly socialist atheist and, even with the Subud experience of God's existence (and constant interference) in my life, I had never considered becoming a Christian. I could not have let me father down. But becoming a Muslim was different; and besides, I would get a new name. So I made my Confession of Faith and became, officially at least, a Muslim: easily, without thought. After all, religions must be OK really, as God had sent them all, hadn't He?

Thus, in 1967 I became Salamah, 'Siti Salamah' Bapak gave me. And I liked that. It confirmed my intuition that the 'necessary' effect of Vivien had already done its job – changed me – because, if it hadn't I would have been Faridah, or Fatimah, the nearest vocal equivalent of Vivien.

I am still Salamah, but that wasn't the end of the story though, not by half. When I asked Bapak what Salamah meant for me, a message came down the pipeline that it would help me with my bad temper, and that it would help me 'to feel like others, not better.' Bad temper I admitted to, cheerfully; but 'to feel like others'? What did that mean? It took me three months even to see what Bapak was getting at. And when I saw, I realised that, ah yes, I was *British*, wasn't I, in spite of all our traipsing around the world. And as I was British, of course I naturally felt I was better than other people. Of course.

That, and some other similar insights, were not among my most pleasant experiences in Subud. Salamah, I kept repeating to myself in agony, Salamah, Salamah, 'Peace'. You're *worse* than everyone else, because the whole thing is a sham. You're just as bloody-minded as they are. (It took me even longer to start thinking in terms of 'we', rather than 'they'.) And so, what with one thing and another, and the relentless non-stop action of the force of the latihan, I came to see my natural arrogance and realise its total vacuity. My past, ingrained, assumptions paraded themselves before my eyes and horrified me; but I suppose because they were aired, like that, they gradually faded. I have rarely felt 'British' since then.

But for now, following a religion for the first time in my life, I began reading about them, their origins, development and history. Someone lent me a book on the essence of Christianity. The author had been demoted as a priest, but his book had a depth and a quality that moved me – and I went through, first, a period when I felt devoutly Christian. I felt the birth of the holy baby, I wept for Christ, and rejoiced with Mary and her purity and her Grace. But, even as I was considering revoking Islam and becoming a Catholic I knew that this somewhat fervent Christianity was simply a part of the total process, of my own, internal, spiritual, development. Thanks to those inward experiences of Christianity, I learned what it meant to be a woman, and what it felt like; and I knew that at last I had become one, inside.

As that faded, that conviction, that knowledge, of Christianity, I found myself, almost without volition, becoming a Muslim in earnest. I experienced, as utterly true, the global brotherhood of man, and our equality in the sight of God, and the masculinity of the prophet Muhammad. I felt reborn, *re-ligio* – retied to the Source, to the path of the prophets and the direction of God. Then the sword of Islam, the Spirit, became for me a living symbol

of ethical striving, for truth and eternal values. My 'Christian experiences' had taught me, perhaps for the first time, Love; but as Bruno Bettelheim once said, 'Love is not enough'. Paul Tillich capped that nicely when he said, 'The highest form of love is Justice'. Two black American Muslims gave me insight into the *fact*, shocking, unknowable, and ineffable as it is, that the essence of authentic Islam is justice, democracy, and truth.

And Siti Salamah, my name, a derivative of the same root as the word Islam, reminds me that I, once little Jennie Stewart of no-man's land, suburbia, am now a faithful member of the brotherhood of those, from all religions, who surrender willingly to the One, Almighty, God.

What's in a name? Quite a lot, it seems. After all, if I have my *right* name, perhaps I will be able to answer God when he calls me.

# Experiences as an Addict

*Machmud Fiedorowicz (UK)*

I was addicted to narcotics, mainly heroin, for seven years. In England, the addict could register and be given a small dose of narcotics each day – enough to keep you out of trouble such as stealing or prostitution. For six years I didn't realise I was an addict, until I began to have fits. A friend told me; he said it had been happening for about six months, although I hadn't noticed. I asked a doctor and he said I was dying. The more I told him how worried I was, the more drugs he gave me. His strategy succeeded and, at last, I went into hospital. I had been in prisons and mental hospitals previously but this time it was different. I was dying.

In hospital, I was asked not to take drugs, left alone in a room, asked not to eat, not to sleep – although the drugs I needed were available. After three days the doctor came to see me. I couldn't move at all. I couldn't speak. He helped me to lie on another bed and asked me to relax and express how I felt. At first, I could not feel a thing. My therapist encouraged me to relax more; I slowly began to cry. Then I suddenly found myself screaming, and then laughing, and then crying again. This lasted for an hour or two and after it was over I got insights into Christianity, into the Old Testament, Adam and Eve, and the meaning of surrender and submission. I later realised that this 'process' was similar to the latihan.

There were two people who were close to me during this hospitalisation, one was an alcoholic who is now a Methodist minister, and the other was a therapist who later became a drug addict himself and later a minister in the Evangelical Church. The three of us ended up religious. But for now, these experiences in the hospital happened daily for about six weeks. I left the hospital feeling alive – I could feel, I had experienced no withdrawal symptoms.

I was under the misapprehension that I was normal, now. But then I realised I was not like everybody else; I experienced several times that I was moving spontaneously and involuntarily, especially in the evenings. I would wake up at night and move around the room, sometimes singing, sometimes crying, sometimes dancing – and often just sitting, being aware that I was in a state of prayer. This went on for about six months.

All this time I was living with my brother who is now in Subud. He could accept this apparent madness, having seen me in various states as an addict. In some way he must have protected me. I was very vulnerable and would speak to anyone who would listen about my inner experiences. In this way I came into contact with a woman who was in Subud – and she suggested that I should be opened. After I was opened the crisis which I was experiencing decreased, but it had been that painful experience that brought me into Subud.

Recently, I went through a difficult period in my personal life, and felt myself with absolutely nothing. Everything I had worked for seemed to

have disappeared or been taken away. I tested with some helpers and I received that I should work on a Subud farm building in Edinburgh, Scotland. I began going to this building at weekends. At first, many people worked with me there, but gradually fewer and fewer people came to work, until one weekend I found myself working alone. It was a very cold day, it was raining, I was smashing concrete with a sledge hammer, my hands were cut, bleeding and swollen and I felt utterly depressed.

At this point I decided to leave Subud. I felt fed up with Subud, with the latihan, with Bapak, with Islam, the lot. I went into the latihan hall and lay down to sleep, determined to go home and forget the whole thing afterward. I woke up to a knock on the door. I got up, answered the door, and there was no one there. I began to tingle inside and I searched around the farm, finding no one. I was frightened.

I sat for a while staring at the open door. I saw a vibration, a shimmering, like hot air in the doorway, but I thought I had been staring too hard. The heat wave, if that is what it was, came towards me and then it seemed to pass straight through me. Then I heard a voice. The voice was of someone who had been with me all of my life, but who I had in the last few years almost forgotten. It was very calm, very sensible, and very ordinary.

The voice said, 'Machmud, stand up', so I stood up. 'Now put your hands in the air, be honest, how does it feel?' I said aloud, 'If I am honest, it just feels like I have my hands in the air.' The voice said, 'Now move your finger. How does that feel?' and I replied, 'It just feels like I am moving my finger.' The voice continued, 'Next finger, how does it feel? Next finger,' and so on, right through my whole system, my body.

Then I stopped, and the voice said, 'This is the latihan kejiwaan which is completely normal; you are completely responsible for every movement you make in your life. The latihan has been with you 100 percent from the time you were opened. Stop waiting to be moved, move in any direction you choose, the latihan will be there, guiding you.'

Then the voice said, 'Machmud, experience Susila.' Here I felt nothing special – simply being normal, and healthy. 'Now experience Budhi.' Here I felt a slight difference. I became aware of something greater, something outside of myself. Then the voice said, 'Experience Dharma.' Here I felt a real difference; the only word I have to describe that is 'incredible'. I began to move around the room, giving everything I had, until there was nothing left. I wanted to stop but the voice said, 'Keep going, find people, ask them what they need, and help them find what they need.' Then, for the first time, I felt who Machmud was.

The voice continued, 'This is Susila, Budhi, Dharma: Subud. In Christianity is known as Faith, Hope and Charity. Susila is Jesus, a man of perfect faith, the Son. Budhi is the Power of God the Father who fills the

Universe, before whom you can only hope, and the Holy Spirit is the power of love, charity.

'Machmud, how many Gods are there?' 'One,' I said. 'No, Machmud, be honest, how many Gods are there?' I said 'One' – and became afraid. 'Machmud, don't be afraid, be honest: how many Gods are there?' I answered, 'None' – and then felt, within me, Allah, Allah, this is God, God IS.

The experience ended there. It had lasted three hours. A little later many of the group came to work on the property, and I took a rest. I was rather shaken.

At home that night I had a dream about Bapak and his grandson Mas Adji. Bapak was seated in the corner of a room, with a look of concentration on his face. There was a powerful light shining onto Bapak and the room was filled with a golden rain which enveloped Mas Adji and myself. Mas Adji and I were looking at each other until he said, 'Machmud, talk fast.' I began to talk, and he began to talk, and we both talked until it became just jibberish. Then Adji said, 'No more talk – now we work.' We didn't know what we were doing. We just worked until the sweat poured off us.

Then Mas Adji said 'Now, Machmud, no more work; think.' Our minds became one mind, we thought the same thoughts at the same time, and we made the right movements for that thought, together. I entered a state of consciousness which I can't recall now. I looked at Bapak and saw the light was shining straight into him still, but the 'rain' of gold had disappeared. Bapak was smiling and relaxed. I looked at Adji and saw the light was shining directly into him and I looked above myself and saw a light shining into me. As I looked back at Bapak, I felt: Now, at last, I understand.

That morning I got up and began to say my prayers, being a Muslim. It wouldn't 'work' in that I couldn't think or use my mind in any way. I experienced in myself the sound of counting very slowly. I couldn't stop counting! I thought I would die counting. It went on and on – first I thought it would stop at 100, then 250, then 500, 750; by then I gave up and just went along with it. It stopped finally at 1001, suddenly. I felt, after this, that I could not neglect anything in my life – *every little thing is really important; you can't reach the end until you have covered every detail*. I then received the image of a bridge; I received I would travel the world, that I would have something to do with Adji, and something to do with young children or young people.

I went back to college, after this. The intense period of experiences seemed to have ended. I knew it wasn't imaginary, but I didn't see how it could possibly have been real. There was no possibility of these things

happening to me. Yet they had. And the things I had received about the bridge, and the future – they could not possibly come true!

A few weeks later, I saw an advertisement in the National Subud Newsletter for an international coordinator for youth work. I remembered my receiving about young people, tested for this, and it was right. I became the Subud Youth Coordinator and as such I had to travel to Europe. On my return it was suggested that I go to Indonesia, and then around the world. Suggestions were one thing, but again there seemed no possibility of my being able to do this. Again, I tested, remembering my receiving – and it felt that it was right I should do it. But it still seemed impossible.

My circumstances then altered in a way that I could not have foreseen and I did indeed travel, round the world, talking with other young people in Subud in Indonesia, Australia, the United States and so on. There was the bridge! And after an interview with Bapak it appeared that Mas Adji is going to be the president of the International Subud Youth Association, so here was the fourth part of my receiving coming into being, and we would work together.

So that is where I am. I don't know what will come next. The work we do is our latihan, and that is all that is important to me.

# Drugs and Anger

*Mardi Arquette (USA)*

My husband I joined Subud together in California. It was in the days when no-one told us not to use drugs or alcohol while doing latihan. Who knows whether nor not I would have listened, but the latihan itself showed me. Little voices, at first, then strong feelings.

Early on, I had a strange experience. I was walking in the park with my little boy, one and a half and newly walking, and my dog, a basset hound with a large bark. As had been my way in life for many years, I started the morning by smoking a joint of marijuana on the hill while my child and dog remained in my sight. This morning, however, I 'spaced out'. I came round, looked around: no dog, no baby. There was a lagoon in the park where several children had nearly drowned. I turned to head for my baby there; but then I heard my dog's distinctive bark on the other side of the hill where the highway cuts by.

Instinctively (I'm still ashamed of this) I turned and ran after the dog. Just as I got near to him though, I felt my baby was in the lagoon. The latihan, which was new to me then, (though I had followed it twice a week for a few months) seemed alive in me – 'Oh, God, forgive me, save my baby,' I thought, 'Let me get there in time and I promise I will give up drugs.' I got there just as a kind lady was pulling my baby out. I understood from this that, for myself, marijuana allows the wrong forces to determine my behaviour.

My whole life in the 60's had been theatre, political activism, drugs. Drugs were a social connection. Drugs had been the common ground between myself and my husband. Still I gave them up. Immediately. This was not easy. Not only did my friends think I was kidding myself, but my husband and I could not relate. I had begun to feel sick, annoyed, heavy, when anyone smoked marijuana around me. Then, when anyone who smoked marijuana kissed me. Not great for married life. I became allergic to my husband. Whenever he came into the room I would have what we called a sulphur attack, this terrible smell from every orifice, the runs.

I could not be in the same room as my husband: I spoke to him from the bathroom. I went to a psychiatrist; I went to the doctor. Nothing changed. My husband, an actor, took a job on Broadway. I stayed in Chicago. We were separated for months: no recurrences of sulphur. He came home for Christmas: boom. We separated again. But by now he was feeling more involved with Subud. He kept taking apartments closer to the Subud House in New York. At that time I never associated any of this with the latihan. My husband did, though. He began testing with the helpers in New York. Can I go home yet? They said, when the time is right you will know.

That's what happened, and it happened strangely. He tested once again to come home. It was good. He decided to surprise me. I was living

in a garden apartment in Chicago. As my father-in-law was a celebrity then in vogue, a reporter had published a story about us, the children of the famous. One night I got a phone call at 11pm. A young man's voice said, 'I just saw ...' (he used my husband's old name.) I said, 'Who are you?' and the voice said he had gone to school, Hollywood High, with my husband, that he was an actor too, and that my husband had given him a package for me. Stupidly, I said, 'Oh fine, when do you want to come over?'

At that same moment a key turned in the door. It was my husband, home without telling me, a surprise! 'You won't believe this,' I told his friend, 'He's here now – from New York! Speak to him yourself.' The man stayed on the phone just long enough to hear my husband's voice. Then he hung up. My husband had to get quiet while he did latihan in the next room. He tested and received that the man was a drunk, and was actually relieved that he didn't have to go through with my kidnapping! And, thank God, I have never been sulphur-prone since.

Another experience. I was a person who repressed anger. As a child I had been physically punished and had never fought back or talked about it. My own latihan seemed slow and sleepy next to everyone else's in the group. The only thing that seemed to happen to me, besides being pushed down to the ground to sleep in a chill, was to receive the words, 'Express your anger'. In those days, though quick to snap or even (God forgive me) hit my little girl, I never talked back to my husband. Not in six years. 'Express your anger,' I would receive. Then I started to receive poetry, vicious, angry poetry. I would (inadvertently) leave it around. My husband never spoke of it. I never showed it to anyone, but I would be woken up in the middle of the night: 'Write'.

One night we went to a party given by people we knew very slightly. The host's poems were obscure, but he wanted my comments. At the end of the evening he said offhandedly, 'Oh, give me your address and phone number, will you? I'd like to read *your* poems.' The next day his truck broke down in front of our house. Right in front of it! He knocked on the door. He called a garage, but it was to be two hours before the tow truck came. 'I'd like to see your poetry,' he said. My husband answered, 'I'll get it.' I felt a rainbow of heat. After the man read them slowly, with my stomach somersaulting, he said, 'Well, you have won.' This man, Bryan Boyer, turned out to be judge for the Chicago Poets and Writers Association, then about to award a grant and a reading to a new poet.

A few weeks later in a very formal event attended by three Pulitzer prize-winning poets I had an inaugural reading. While I read my poems I felt my latihan, and when it was done, I received instantly, 'Now this purification is over.' People were extravagant with praise, as they are at such events, but I had also received, 'Do not publish these poems again.'

All the passions you stir up in people will accrue to you.' I was able to feel when I wrote, after that, 'where' I wrote from.

Well, that was some years ago now. My life now is very normal. I still doubt sometimes my own testing and receiving, but I have faith in God to show me the truth. Recently, thank God, I've been writing again, poems, and I have a book coming out. Poetry, only half vicious.

# Ordinary Experiences

*Garrett Thomson (UK)*

I would like to tell you some of the things that have happened since my opening and try to explain why, despite my natural scepticism in other matters, I remain convinced of the great importance of the latihan of Subud. The things and changes that have happened to me are in no way special or unique: they are common to many Subud members. Some people in Subud have extraordinary mystical experiences; I, however, wish to convey the more bread-and-butter nature of life in Subud.

At first during the latihan I felt only boredom and a slight tingling in my fingers. My first strong experience was quite unexpected: my arm shot up of its own accord. Up and down. There was no doubt that this was not my own doing. The only way to arrest this involuntary movement was to come out of latihan, that is to stop that relaxed, peaceful state of surrender. Whenever I returned to it the movement continued of its own accord, without me wanting it to.

Something was inside me, and it was alive. It moved my body and could be felt inside my arms, like a mixture of pins and needles and electricity. Slowly, at each latihan, the force crept further up my arms. Later I could feel it in my feet, legs and eventually in my chest. The latihan had its own peculiar feel or flavour, which could be recognised when I relaxed and quietened myself during the day.

It had been explained to me that I should follow whatever movement and feeling came to me in the latihan, and that I should surrender to this force and not think about the origin of the movements. In that way the latihan would itself change my life, the helpers said. Sometimes I felt like running, shouting, singing, crying and praying. Although I followed these inclinations, it was not always beyond doubt that the movements were not perhaps due to my imagination, rather than the force of the latihan. At times, however, the movements were so strong, clear and immediate as to wipe out my doubts.

Sometimes they were so strong I became scared. They were unexpected and powerful and I was genuinely surprised by them. These movements were not of my own making. I felt helplessly in the grip of an incredible power. Yet as soon as the fear appeared, the latihan ceased, leaving me feeling somewhat regretful that I was not yet ready for such strong experiences. Clearly the force of the latihan was stronger than me.

The most incontestable evidence of the benefits of the latihan is, I find, the contrast between days spent close to the latihan and days spent in neglect of it. Days spent without feeling the latihan are at worst days of worry, bad temper and the resulting incapacity to enjoy myself, treat others with kindness or myself with humour. At best they are blank non-events which pass without meaning. The more I neglect my latihan, the more problems build up.

Of course, days when I am intermittently quiet, in tune with the latihan, are not immune to problems. I've still missed the last bus, spilled coffee and found myself in temper-arousing situations. The difference is that the problems do not pile up to weigh me down and clog the pores. Through the presence of the latihan, they tend instead to be diffused and washed away.

Through the latihan I have found, spontaneously, the right attitude towards other people. As an Oxford postgraduate in a narrow and competitive field, I once met an acquaintance who had secured himself a good academic job. On a bad day, my immediate reaction would have been, 'Why does *he* deserve it?' and I would have had to mask my jealousy, muster some hollow warmth and congratulate him. Horrible. Instead, I felt pleased for him, instantly, without a strand of jealousy, and my congratulations were sincere.

Perhaps you know the feeling when a friend is kind or you simply want to respond with a warm smile, but just cannot. Somehow the smile is smothered from within. Days without latihan can be like that: responses are blighted by moods or emotions. If you ignore this even further, you begin to feel unclean and to lose your self respect. When the latihan is firmly in your breast pocket the outlook is quite different. You can find the smile inside you.

I do not wish to represent the latihan as a magical cure-all. But if just a little seasoning of the latihan force can be added to the everyday soup, the effects can be quite dramatic. For instance, two days before an academic conference at which I was due to give a paper, I began to feel nervous and worried. So I quietened myself and felt the latihan; my worries lifted away like fog. Now, whenever I can, I do a very short latihan just before teaching; experience has shown me that this helps my fluidity and confidence.

I mention these tangible benefits because, first, they are most easily seen to flow directly from the latihan without involving any self-deception or imagination; and secondly, because they constitute one of the most important facets of day-to-day living in Subud.

The latihan is a guide. Often when faced with an apparently insoluble problem or task, I have forgotten the difficulty, putting it on the burner. Having set a task to one side, the solution has appeared later, almost without effort. This is a common experience; thinking often has this inspirational quality where answers just pop up like toast.

The most solid demonstration of this is 'testing'. We test a problem or a question by asking to receive an answer in latihan. Testing can provoke such clear, unambiguous indications, so forcefully received, that it would be utterly misplaced to chalk them up to auto-suggestion or mere imagi-

nation. A simple example: I once asked in testing what attitude I should have towards my work – which was then at low tide. My own preconception was that I should be working harder.

In fact the testing made me feel relaxed, happy and even made me laugh! The feelings and movements came not from my will but from the latihan, and there was no doubt that the answer to my question was that I should worry less rather than work more (which was not of course prompting laziness!) Subsequent experience verified this answer.

In fact, in many obvious ways latihan testing has changed my life. It has saved me from making several bad decisions, like choosing a university course that, with hindsight, I can see would not have suited me. Testing showed what attitudes to adopt towards difficult people and difficult situations. It has helped me to improve relationships and encouraged some of my strengths while overcoming some of my weaknesses.

The crucial feature of testing, for me, is that I should be able to feel the answers to the questions myself and feel that the answers came from the latihan and not from my own imagination. Moreover, it has been vital that I prove to myself the benefits of testing by putting the results into practice – even if reluctantly!

In these ways the latihan has had a practical relevance to the quality of my life.

# The Hidden Formula

*Livingston Dodson (USA)*

The situation was this: after finally penetrating the boundaries of membership in Subud, as described in an earlier section, I had spent two years doing the latihan without yet having laid eyes on Bapak. My wife and I were still living in Los Angeles where we were originally opened. It was 1962, and I was still working a defense analysis firm.

Two things occurred then that were to colour my life for the next few years. First, I had written Bapak a letter, as had many of my friends, to ask some trivial question, like what is my real vocation. (Secretly, my real motivation was not so much to know the answer to this question, as it was to have a letter from Bapak that I could store away for my grandchildren to read.) He had answered with a letter that completely ignored the question, and which said quite simply, as though it should have been obvious, that I should live in New York. I was slightly stunned, but had enough sense to just put the letter in my desk, and not worry about what it meant. At least, not yet.

The second event concerned my work. I had become dissatisfied with the analysis techniques that my co-workers and I were habitually employing in trying to analyse and predict the outcomes of very complicated information processing systems. I was therefore on the look out for something new, but it did not yet exist. I began to wonder if I myself could not formulate some new approach.

This had been circling in my head for about a month, with no results, when one day I came home from work and lay down on the living room couch. My head continued to concentrate on this problem. I was drawing mental diagrams and trying to construct the right question in terms of the drawings when the event happened.

At first I didn't know that I had been removed into some other kind of space. I was still just concentrating on my drawings; only they now appeared sketched on a wall about six feet high, and I was standing upright and pacing back and forth in front of the diagrams. I still was not getting anywhere, when a voice said to me, 'Go around the wall'.

I felt I had nothing to lose, and anyway, I then saw a gate just to the left of the diagrams. I went through the gate. There I saw a whole landscape that was breath-taking in beauty in contrast to the limited dullness of my wall and its scratchy drawings. I found myself on the top of a hill that sloped down to an ocean beach. What I really liked about it was that the ocean was wine, not water, and that it stretched away to the horizon.

Between me and the beach was a vineyard, and it was towards this that I now started to approach, walking downhill. On the way I noticed a charming little old fashioned cottage. Out of this came a little old woman who didn't seem to mind me poking about, and just carried on with her

work without saying anything.

I reached the vineyard, which seemed about two acres in extent, and grasped a grape that I wanted to sample. With grape in hand, I started to re-ascend the hill. While walking, I put the grape in my mouth, and ate it. Soon, I found that I could think whatever I wanted to think. I could formulate any problem my fancy chose, and immediately see the answer, no matter how complicated. After realising this, I began doing one experiment after another, exulting all the while that such a thing should be possible.

Then the voice returned and said, 'Anything is possible to those who have faith in the Son of God.'

Like Alice in Wonderland returning to her house through the mirror, I was startled to find myself back on my couch in the living room of my house. I got up in a great state of awe and happiness. It did not bother me that I could not remember the details of the problems I had just seen and solved. I was satisfied with being able to remember all the scenery and what had been said.

Over the course of the next few weeks it started coming to me, slowly, how I could actually construct a new theory, with all kinds of applications in my field of work. This was done, on the side, in addition to my assigned work. I started to write a preliminary paper.

Before this was finished, my company was visited by two men from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) who worked there for the Air Force as directors of research. They stated that they were on a somewhat unusual mission. They were touring the country to visit all universities and private research companies to seek out new approaches in mathematics concerning how to build systems, because they were convinced that the standard techniques were woefully lacking. I was aghast when I heard this, because that is just what had been driving me for the past months. Cautiously, I waited to see how my company would respond to this.

Our management stated that there was nothing they could think of that corresponded to this in our company. But after the meeting had ended, I approached them privately and took them through a quick tour of my thoughts, indicating some of the possible applications of the general theory. They announced to me, and later to my company president, that this was what they were looking for. If my company and I were to write a formal proposal of work, they would seriously consider funding new research along these lines.

This is exactly what we did, and they responded with a contract for a year's worth of pure research for me and one other colleague. In the meantime, other things were happening. Our president was in the process

of creating quite a vast expansion of our little Los Angeles company. The vice-president called me in one day before work on my research contract was due to begin. He said that the company was trying to open two new offices on the east coast, and they needed someone initially to open and manage the Washington DC office. Would I be interested? I asked, out of curiosity, what was the other site on the east coast, for which they already had a manager. 'Oh, that is to be a small office near New York City, in New Jersey.'

Now, Bapak's letter, which had made no sense at the time, came to the fore of my memory. 'You should live in New York.' So I mumbled something about much preferring to move to New York, even though they didn't need anybody to move there. Although the vice-president persisted in trying to persuade me to move to Washington, I decided that would go all the way, for whatever reason, to follow Bapak's advice. Perhaps I would later realise the reasons. I replied, 'Well, it's this way with me. I would really like to live in the New York area, and since I just brought in this new contract whose work could be done in any location, how about letting me move to New Jersey?'

Exasperated nearly beyond bounds, the vice-president finally said he would authorise me to move as requested. End of interview.

Today, if I may intrude from my present perspective, the Washington office of this company owns its own building which is enormous, and dominates all the other locations of the company which grew in an unprecedented way all over the country. The New Jersey office no longer exists, and it never grew beyond the initial four-to-five-man size it started out as. Bapak's advice had nothing to do with me becoming a millionaire. 'Ah ha,' you say, 'Bapak was concerned that this man not become a powerful executive and succumb to the various temptations of materialism. Maybe he wanted to make sure he developed into a humble, though famous, scientist.' In the remainder of the story below, I will undeceive you on that point also.

At last, we were living in a beautiful house in the New Jersey countryside, and I was driving about 20 miles every day to work. There awaited me that miracle contract and freedom to do significant research for a year.

The problem was, I was utterly incapable of doing this work, or any other you could name, and I had somehow to not let any of my co-workers know this. I also, somehow, actually had to produce and deliver on my promises to those good Air Force people. In short, I was experiencing a full-blown crisis at this time (although it was far from its maximum manifestations.)

But I was learning something about how to cope. For example, I

learned that if I struggled with my will against the state I was in, in order to return to some kind of normalcy, the act of so doing would cause all kinds of complications and disruptions in my environment. But if I didn't struggle, and just had faith that nothing untoward would happen to me, then nothing untoward did happen. This was somewhat amazing to learn. Other people reacted to me as though I was a regular person, as far as I could tell. I could talk, alright, and walk around, go to lunch, and that sort of thing. What I absolutely couldn't do was think. And that was the very one thing I was trustfully being paid to do.

One night I had a dream that seemed to explain a great deal about my condition: I was in the bathroom, cleaning under running water something in the washbasin. It was my brain. By some miracle, it had been removed from my head. It didn't seem to trouble or shock me too much. I understood, however, that this was a confirmation of what I had been suspecting: my brain was shut down, except for the most rudimentary requirements, for major repairs and cleaning.

I had hired a friend of mine, who was a mathematician, to assist me with the research contract. By this time I had evolved the strategy of going through all the motions of doing the work (like sitting down at my desk with paper, etc) and letting what happened, happen, whether good or bad. So a typical day would consist of us first talking over where we were at the time, and deciding what each of us would undertake next. Then we would go our separate ways until we had a result worth talking about.

To my amazement, I found that after we would separate and I was at my desk, I would receive, out of the blue, mathematical proofs of the next theorem necessary to support the theoretical structure we were building. We went through the whole year's work this way, and nobody learned that I *could not think*. My head was in permanent, 24-hour latihan; but mind you, just the head, from the eyebrows up, not the rest of my body. For the body itself, I had to attend latihan with the New York City group.

The final report was delivered after that year to the Air Force sponsors, and they declared that it was what they were hoping for. They then distributed it into the network of contractors and defence-related agencies.

In 1964 Bapak toured Europe, and our little committee, the international Subud committee – to which I had been elected the previous year – decided that we should take the opportunity and join him on part of his trip, in order the better to coordinate our efforts. We had a wonderful time doing this, listening to his talks, and meeting Subud members in France, Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

It was in a beautiful chalet, belonging to one of our members, in the Swiss mountains that my next step in going over the brink into the real part

of my 'crisis' occurred. I was going about the chalet doing some small committee task when I passed the door of the room in which Bapak was sitting. He motioned for me to come in. Then he sent one of his assistants to find other people in the house to also ask them in. He wanted to tell us some stories.

About 20 people assembled themselves about the room, and Bapak started. There were stories about Adam and the first, primitive, language, which Bapak said was indeed universal, and more about ancient civilisations. Then Bapak said he wanted to do a little test with us: 'What does your brain feel like when it is whirling clockwise?' Then, 'How is it when your brain is going counter-clockwise?' None of us felt that we had received the smallest iota during the test. We just resigned ourselves that we were not yet up to it.

Back home in New York things were still happening with developments concerning 'The Hidden Formula'. I was invited to attend numerous symposia where my work and the related work of others, was discussed. Of course, I had to sit in my 'heavenly fog' during all of these, and must have appeared like a real jerk to my colleagues. One conference was especially prestigious, with about a 100 scientific leaders from government and industry invited to spend a week in an isolated southern spa discussing the next steps in research. I did not give a paper, although there were several papers given based on my work. The major surprise: the theory gave every indication of really working in practice on real problems.

As a result there were more contracts let, some of which I participated in, with my original colleague. One day I was really flabbergasted when an unknown person arrived at my office from a college near New York City. He said that he admired my work so much that he had got his college to create a new department of science which would be devoted to developing further applications of my theory. He thought that it was only appropriate to ask me to be the first chairman of the department. Money was to be no object. What did I say to that? My first vision in front of the new department and looking like a complete fool, which I then knew myself to be, although I wanted it kept secret. I said, 'Let me think it over, and I will get back to you.'

Fortunately, Bapak was now on his way back home and stopped over in New York City. I took advantage of this to seek an interview, and asked him something like this: 'My company has been trying very, very hard to get me to move to Washington DC. But I have been resisting this, and at most I have been willing to commute to Washington, because of the work on the committee in New York. Should I continue resisting?' I fully expected him to say 'Yes,' but he said, 'Now you should move to Washington.' I didn't tell him about the flattering college offer, because he

added, 'Under no circumstances should you work near New York.'

Overpowered by all of this, and secretly relieved, I told the nice man from the college that I could not accept the kind offer. (He must have felt that his hero had turned against him.) I moved my personal self to Washington and commuted to New Jersey on weekends. Bapak had now saved me from becoming a famous scientist, as well as from becoming a millionaire.

But of what could I complain, which I didn't, since the whole thing was not of my doing in the first place? I just wanted to walk around and be silently happy with my now super-comfortable brain. Although it didn't work, it was becoming fun to live with.

PART III

‘Bless Thee, Bottom.  
Thou Art Translated’



# Writing About Myself

*Stephen Thomson (UK)*

I was there when Subud was brought to England. I was *there* when on 23 May 1957 Bapak arrived, and so, being in the right place at the right time, I was opened. I received my contact with the Power of God. I was enabled to take the first step into the spiritual world while still living.

People to whom this blessing has been given do not normally talk much about it or of what Subud has done for them. I think this is right. To verbalise a gift from God is perhaps to reduce it to the level of our own minds. Yet it is very natural for others to ask: what is the dividend? Where's the pay-off? I find progress in the spiritual life is clearly recognisable by actual results. There is nothing vague nor airy-fairy about it. Things either happen to you or they don't. You either receive from Almighty God or you don't. It's no good pretending, no good imagining, no good indulging in wishful thinking. The reality of spiritual experience is unmistakable.

I believe that from the moment of the opening we experience the miraculous; something happens to us, which is beyond the limits of daily human experience. Every time we do latihan and move not in the ordinary way but by being *made* to move or shout or sing or cry by the Power of God – that, to me, is a miracle. The latihan is an utterly natural phenomenon yet every time we submit a question to God in the 'testing' and receive a true answer, that is another miracle.

These are not small things – even though after more than 30 years in Subud I treat them as commonplace. And perhaps it is as well that I do, because otherwise I might think I was very special. I am not special; I have simply been unbelievably blessed.

Naturally, there is the inevitable Department of Signs and Wonders in Subud. I know very little of these things, but many other Subud members have spoken privately of truly wonderful experiences which transcend all logic, all known natural laws, and all conceivable expectation or likelihood. Such experiences serve to remind us who are still in the shallows that the grace that can be given to one person truly and completely surrendered to God is not dependent on the length of time he or she has been opened in Subud. But, being by nature and upbringing a rather limited, 'stuck' sort of person, I can recount nothing like this. Perhaps I can give you a hint of it, though, with two little stories.

I was walking one morning down London's noisy, crowded Regent Street, minding my own business, probably thinking such sublime thoughts as what I was going to have for lunch or where I could buy a pair of socks, when the noise of all the traffic and the clip-clopping of those hundreds of shoes on the pavement was suddenly silenced. All I could hear was the distant sound of one single set of footsteps on the other side of the wide street. I crossed over, for that seemed to be what I was being guided to do,

and I heard those footsteps approaching me. I came face to face then with someone I hadn't seen for 20 years. He was in a bit of trouble, and I could help, that was all. It gave me my first staggering realisation that through the latihan I could be guided through life in very ordinary, humdrum ways – as well as perhaps later in greater ways.

Then one day my left hand came to life. By that I mean that my hand suddenly acquired an independent life of its own. It started to be able, for instance, of its own accord to open a book, any book, however thick, at precisely the page I needed. I could go to a card index and it would pick out the required card without my looking. Whenever it did that, (which was never if I thought about it) I started laughing. People thought I was somewhat peculiar. But in fact I was laughing – for joy – that through the latihan one small part of me had become aware of the true life that exists within our ordinary life, and could act in obedience to the will of God for it.

Over the years in Subud I have learnt the essential attributes of being patient, to accept that the process of my purification will, in my case, take probably a very long time. Is there ever instant salvation? We seem never to be given more than our innate capacity to take. Our spiritual Romes are not built in a day or even 1,000 days (as Bapak's was). Nor does a tree fruit before it has grown large enough to bear the fruit. Yet I have found along the way I have become gradually aware that I *am* being guided, sometimes without realising it till afterwards; it happens in all sorts of amazing ways, large or small, through a power, a little voice, a nudge, a something inside that has its origin beyond this earth.

And the comforting thing is that on this long journey I have been given little presents from time to time to keep me going. I, who could never sing a note in tune or indeed at all, can now sing without people moving away. I can go to sleep at times seeing colours around me, such vivid arrays of light and colour that I seem to be in another world. Or I can go to a Subud meeting feeling tired and irritable and emerge totally happy and full of beans. I even remember one lazy siesta afternoon in Wisma Subud my long-dead father coming to me and telling me he was now at peace.

And so I could go on. I could mention the dawn of peace of mind, the beginning of the loss of my fear of death. I could mention even marriage (others will) and the transformation which the latihan can bring about in the relationship between a man and a woman. Mary and I are so close these days it's ridiculous. We hardly ever need to open our mouths. We too often say what the other was just thinking. This may sound dull: believe me, it isn't. Human love has many mansions.

In the end, I still think that the best way to describe what Subud has done for me is to recall, if I dare, what I was like before; to remember my

privileged arrogance, my unkindness to others, my total atheist estrangement from God, my conceit, my fears and dreads, my profound ignorance of the purpose of my life, and my lack of moral fibre.

I won't be foolish enough to pretend it has all gone. But I know with a certainty which nothing in this world can destroy that, with care and watchfulness of my own behaviour, I can live the rest of my life within the protection of Almighty God. Can anyone conceivably ask for more?

# New Life for an Older Woman

*Vita Dodson (USA)*

**B**apak sometimes asks people to show what has been the result in their lives of following the latihan. Yet, although I know a remarkable change has occurred in me, and in my life, I am reminded of the expression, 'The road not taken does not exist.' I cannot say for certain what, had I not done the latihan for over 20 years, my life would be like now. Nevertheless, I see changes that, considering tendencies in my younger days – before I encountered the latihan – seem quite unexpected.

For one thing, and most importantly, I became a far more devoted mother and enjoyed my children far better than I, or anyone else knowing me, would have thought possible. I had, previously, found children rather boring. I think that perhaps Subud children attract a better fate than that of having an indifferent mother. At any rate, for 20 years I happily absorbed myself in family and home.

Recently I have begun to turn my interests and energies to outside activities, just when the children are ready to try their wings. So I instead of mourning 'the empty nest' I am now busy looking ahead instead of backwards at what was.

Perhaps what started all these changes was a small thing, years ago. When I received my Subud name I didn't really like it, so I tested how it was for me to be called Vita. I think for the first time I laughed aloud in the latihan. That convinced me! When I was told that Bapak said it meant 'Courage through the Power of God,' I thought, 'How could he know that cowardice and fear were my besetting sins?' I hardly knew it myself. I still lack courage but, convinced by now that the power of God guides my steps, I feel I can do almost anything, if it is right that I do it, and that I can face the vicissitudes of life, shaking only slightly, but sure of help.

Over the years I had always performed at school or at home fairly well: rather middling, I would say, but never the best, or top of the class. I never attempted anything that seemed to require real effort, such as learning languages, or doing an art project several times over until I got it right. Nor had I trusted my own instincts, or tastes or ideas, if they seemed to go contrary to the accepted norm.

I believe I lacked any deeply-felt principles or convictions with which to guide my life and behaviour. After doing the latihan for some time, though, this began to change. An inner change must take place, I discovered, before there are outer results. The inner change can only be effected by the power of God.

Slowly, then, my life became different. For one thing, I simply became more energetic, more hard-working. I learned to live in the present. Work, as such, became interesting and fulfilling, and the end seemed less important than the work itself.

Cooking is an example. I had always been able to turn out edible food

from a recipe, if I had all the right ingredients, but slowly I became able to look at what was on hand and produce an original dish which was well received by the family or guests at my table, but for which I could never provide a name when asked, because I had never seen it before myself. Now I can taste 'in my mind' how a recipe will turn out, and what to add that would improve the results.

Again: some years ago I took up needlework and crafts. I had done this sort of thing before, using others' designs, but then I began to design my own things and then I began to find a small market for them. Jewellery was the next step, and, much to my surprise, I sold the very first piece I made. Soon I found I could sell as much as I had time to make. This is not to say that it was easy, though. I spent hours and hours, and would stay up late at night getting the finished piece just right.

It was this success (small as it was) that led to my return to college. What gave me the conviction that I could earn a Master of Arts degree was this sense of accomplishment, the feeling that I could succeed, and even if I didn't succeed at first, I would in the end. For some time I had felt I should go back to college. Yet I didn't know where, and definitely not why, or what, to study. I even kept telling myself 'I don't have time,' 'I don't have the money,' 'I don't know what courses to take.' But, somehow, over several months, everything began to fall into place. Well, not everything, but the first step became clear.

And that is another thing; I have learned to take the first step and to know that the next one will appear when its right time comes. Whenever I have been tempted to give up, I have felt depressed: but when I have moved ahead, obstacles have resolved themselves in unexpected ways.

The best part of my life in Subud, though, has been what has happened inside me: and this is not possible to write about because it cannot be captured in words. But I can say, at least, that I have begun to know who I am, to find myself, and to find also great joy in learning, in work, and in a growing sense of confidence in myself, and faith in God.

# The Oneness of it All

Dominic Rieu (UK)

**M**y wife and I caught Subud from friends who came to live in Canterbury, or perhaps Subud caught us.

The changes that Subud has wrought in me centre around *kesatuan*, the ‘oneness’ that Bapak often spoke about – oneness with one’s wife, with one’s children, one’s ancestors and descendants. It has been only by slow degrees that I have come to understand something of what oneness means – and doesn’t mean – and by slower degrees begun to achieve it.

## Oneness in Marriage

I married out of attraction, love and shared interests, feelings and opinions. But what most disturbed our marriage were feelings and opinions we did *not* share. Many of my opinions were strongly held and many of my feelings strongly felt – about poetry, people, high heels, house decorating and so on, and I used to voice them. If my wife expressed an opposing view, or even conveyed her disagreement by silence, I felt aggrieved. These differences – apart from unkind words and wrong actions – were a frequent cause of friction.

Eighteen years of latihan have gradually reduced my insistence on agreement; we now agree to differ. ‘Oneness’ therefore does not consist of complete identity of thought and feeling, but rather a contented awareness of differences. Harmony can exist without unison. We very rarely quarrel now.

Something else has contributed to this harmony – Bapak’s words about Muhammad and love. He said, ‘With Muhammad a new possibility was added for man to worship God, for the union of Muhammad and his wife became in truth an act of worship towards God.’\* And again, ‘At the moment of union there becomes one being who worships God.’ Many of us who were brought up as Christians are afflicted by the tangled feelings about sex that bedevil Christian theology. The history of the world might have been different in some respects if it had been God’s will that Jesus should marry. However, be that as it may, how many of us, were it not for Subud, would have been able to untangle our feelings? Can we be anything but glad that we have learnt that the act of union can be latihan, that the *jiwa* and the *nafsu* can work happily in harmony.

There is another passage that runs as follows: ‘If Bapak sees a woman who is pretty, because that woman is no use to Bapak – she’s not Bapak’s wife (laughter): she’s the wife of somebody else – Bapak’s eyes automatically turn away. It is not because Bapak wants to, but because the power of God is already contained in, is one with Bapak’s seeing. And this is something you can experience yourself. If you are married, a wife need no

\* SUBUH, Muhammad, *The Meaning of Subud*, p16. (1960, Subud Publications International, London.)

longer concern herself about her husband, about what her husband will do when she's not looking, because there will be in him the power of God's will – his behaviour will be arranged and will be limited by the power of Almighty God to what is right and what is proper for him.'† I try to live by that.

### **Oneness with one's children**

A man's oneness with his wife, Bapak says, should lead to their oneness with their children. I had thought, perhaps because as a headmaster I was always dealing with teenagers, that I was succeeding better than most in avoiding the friction with my children that comes from criticising their hairstyles, their clothes, their make-up, their tastes in friends and music. All the time, however, an allied fault had been creeping up on me unawares, fostered perhaps by my very desire for oneness – I began attributing to them beliefs and feelings of mine that they did not have, assuming that they shared my enthusiasms and expecting them to take a keen interest in all my activities.

Even since starting to write this article I have come to a sharper awareness of this weakness. I realised it was enshrined, in a disguised way, in a verbal habit I had contracted, using 'one' instead of 'I' in sentences such as 'One prefers the BBC to ITV'. The use of 'one' may of course be less egotistical than the use of 'I', but not so in my case. It was self-centredness that was causing me to try to compel their agreement. The use of 'one' in this way does not make for oneness, rather the opposite; it drives apart, it creates annoyance.

### **Return to religion**

I turn temporarily from relationships to religion. I am deeply steeped in Christianity. The name my parents gave me, Christopher, and the name Bapak gave me, Dominic, are both associated with Our Lord. In the latihan I am more inclined to chant 'Allelujah' and 'Allah, Allah'. For some years I was a Diocesan lay reader in the Church of England. But Christianity lost its hold on me.

Now I am gradually returning to the religion of my birth. Every morning before breakfast I say Morning Prayer, by heart, and every evening before, or as, I got to sleep, I say Evening Prayer. I use the language of the 1662 Prayer Book, as it has been familiar from boyhood, and not the modern version. I try to say the prayers in a state of latihan. Bapak has recommended that we go back to our own religion. In the great

† SUBUH, Muhammad, *Pewarta Kejiwaan Subud* ('Subud Spiritual News Bulletin'), No 8, p184. (Subud Publications International, London.)

hymns, in the Canticles and the prayers it's all there, what one – I – need for living. Consider Cardinal Newman's hymn,

*A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came.*

Or the *Te Deum*,

*To thee all Angels cry aloud: the Heavens and all the Powers therein.  
To thee Cherubin, and Seraphin: continually do cry,  
Holy, Holy, Holy: Lord God of Sabbath.*

Or this Evensong Prayer –

*Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great  
Mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the Love of  
thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ*

### **Ancestors and Descendents**

Lastly I come back to relationships, and oneness. Bapak has said we can help our ancestors through the latihan. This became a reality for me the day after my father died, a few years ago. With a helper I did a latihan that was the most emotional latihan of my life, a catharsis, a long act of mutual forgiveness. I kept calling out: 'It's all right! Never mind! It doesn't matter! It's all right!' This was a great, great boon to me. Because of it I grow closer to my father and mother every year that passes.

On June 21, 1981, in New York, Bapak delivered one of his, to me, most remarkable talks. For days and weeks after listening to the tape of it I could think of little else. We hear Bapak's testing of a man and a woman, testing for them to try and verify what is the state of their deceased fathers. Bapak then goes on to say: 'If in the end it is possible for you after you die to go to heaven you will not go to heaven alone but you will bring with you all your ancestors. And similarly if in this world you can truly become clear and clean and have a good heart then it will have an effect on your descendents.' What a soaring concept! What a daunting but exhilarating aim and hope! It seems that the eventual redemption of the world, retrospective and prospective, is not left to Christ alone to achieve; there is a possibility we too can play a part in it all.

# Time

*Salamah Dick (Indonesia)*

**I**t was when I was first in Subud, and throughout my experience since, that I have become more truly aware of time. I have begun to witness that there are such things as material time and spiritual time, and that they are seldom simultaneously experienced.

My own awareness was piqued when I heard of Bapak's early experience of receiving that Subud would become a reality throughout the world, as the latihan was for all of mankind. Bapak had also received that a man who spoke many languages would come to help him; and Bapak waited many years before this man (Hussein Rofé) was sent to him by the Almighty.

My own learning process began in small ways, sometimes in the latihan, sometimes in dreams, or even in feelings wherein I would experience a situation that would show me directly the difference in time. And I realised that a situation can have one reality now and another in five years. For example, I would become 'aware' of meeting a friend – how it would happen and all the details surrounding the situation. My immediate reaction was to expect this to happen that day. To my great disappointment the friend didn't show up. Then perhaps one week later, when least expected, the meeting would occur in all its detailed prediction.

Slowly I was shown that certain major changes in our lives would occur. Again the test of patience would be there. I wanted to act immediately; however, my husband with his gift of patience would remind me that I needed to wait for the right time – this often meant that the change was not translated from the spiritual to its material happening for a long time and perhaps never.

Slowly as I began to be patient, I came to understand that what I dreamt or realised inside myself is translatable in time to a physical reality; I was shown also that it could have both a spiritual and material reality. For example, a dream (my particular way of receiving) could have a spiritual reality: a lesson to be learned, a forewarning of a change, a growth process – and a material reality: that in six months, a year, two years, the physical experience also happens.

I once dreamt that one of my deaths would be through the peeling off of a layer of skin from my arms and legs. I understood the significance of this for myself – then a year later I had a skin problem on my arms and legs. The skin peeled off, of course, and the doctors were not able to cure this even though they tried very hard. When I remembered the dream and its significance everything was fine.

To this day there are situations that are pending. They may occur in actuality but maybe not. They have given me their spiritual significance. Not every dream need be translated into a reality in this world. It is my feeling that time is a continuum, that many things touch on it and that God

may choose to give us experiences anywhere on this continuum. At one moment we can be shown how it is to be a perfect parent, for example, and we know that this will probably not happen, but we understand its importance.

I understand now that there is God's time, which is infinite, and my time, which is the here and now; and that I can experience something which is on one level but not on the other. To try to ask God to confine His time to mine is presumptuous. My entire life is but an instant in the infinite spectrum of time and I must, therefore, not try to limit my expectations to a moment in this finite place.

# Leukaemia, a Gift from God

*Melinda Lassalle (UK)*

Illness for me, is a gift from God.

There was a time when everything in my life had been building up on top of me. I was a helper, on call from Subud people; but a tiredness and aching in all my body seemed ever-present, and constant nausea with sharp pains bothered me. The continuous pressure of demands from my family and others was largely my own fault because I could never say no. I took on too much, and things got out of hand – so that eventually I began to pray for it all to stop; I simply couldn't stop it for myself, nor could my very caring and loving husband.

We had had seven children and I had developed hernias during my last two pregnancies. Some years later I had an operation for hernias and then it all *had* to stop. During the operation the doctor noticed the state of my blood and had it examined. It was leukemia. Still dozey from the operation I was taken to a clinic, a big country estate deep in fields, with only the sound of cows and pheasants.

The days passed. I did nothing and wanted less. I slept and slept and drifted and slept some more. Sometimes I ate a little fruit or salad. Days turned into weeks and I never wanted anything, just to be alone and to sleep. Leonard, my husband, came, and went again, and still I wanted nothing and missed nothing. I seemed to be in a sort of in-between place, hovering, half here, half there, half nowhere. I couldn't even understand why I didn't really want to go back home to my family and friends. I just took what the staff told me and, uncaring, did what they wanted.

After several weeks in this utterly passive state I was lying one day on a massage table, alone, the masseur having left the room for a while. Quietly, and without surprise I could see little flames all around the table. I was surrounded by them. I wasn't afraid, just gently amazed. I watched. They grew, and grew yellow, and orange, then they grew bigger and bigger, till they were huge and red and white and on all sides of me – yet overhead I saw brilliant purples and blues.

I was even more amazed when I then heard a very deep, strong voice coming from somewhere. It said, 'May the disease in Melinda's blood be cleansed;' slowly, then, the fire and the flames died down and I felt the latihan surge through me. I was singing, by then; louder and louder, I sang on and on, and after what seemed like a long time it stopped, by itself. I got up, went back to my room, and fell asleep.

The next morning I awoke feeling radiant and clear and as if something had totally changed. I was full of life: I wanted to live! When I saw my doctor a few hours later, and told him so, he laughed, and said I had taken an awfully long time to decide to live, but now that I had, he could begin to strengthen my by now terribly weak body. He understood, and I felt really good for the first time for I don't know how many years. Everyone in the

clinic noticed that something had changed, and now, when I got the full treatment of diet, massage, exercise and so on, I could feel it all helping me and making me better.

I went home, as the doctor knew that I was now longing to go back. He didn't try to stop me although I was terribly thin, weak and vulnerable to everything and everyone who came near me. I felt transparent, terribly sensitive, but so very much alive. I knew now I would live. I promised him that at home I would follow his diet and his very strict routine for a year: exercises, hot and cold baths, two rests a day, in bed by nine – and the diet as well. This was confirmed by Bapak when I asked him; I should eat just fruit and raw vegetables and a little fish, nothing much else, and no meat, alcohol, coffee or even tea.

It wasn't an easy time to arrange everything, but our seven children were all marvellous and friends were kind and helpful. Leonard managed to be in five places at one time, keeping everything going including his business, and slowly I got stronger in my body. I felt so happy all the time! So many things had dropped away from me, experiences of my life when I was younger, and so many questions, anxieties and guilts simply were not there any longer. I felt as if I had been relieved of a tremendous burden; I felt incredibly free.

Now, as I write this, I am in Cilandak (where Bapak lives) for the first time. I have looked forward to coming ever since many of our friends left England in the 60's to come and live here. It is a joy to be here. I know that when I go back to England next month I shall have a new directive and, once again, there will be a lot to do. But I shall be able to do so much more, now that I am free of the past!

And for this I have to thank my illness, and thank God for it, for leukemia has been a blessing and a way to reaching some other place in myself, from which to live.

# Good Health

Anon.

Few people in Subud talk about their experiences of the effects of the latihan on their health. I think perhaps there's a bit of superstition left in us, or is it just a healthy respect for the unknown, unseens? At any rate, a friend of mine called Sophie was cured of cancer – though she still won't talk about it. And there was the original case of Eva Bartok's miracle baby and all the publicity early on in Subud. Everyone seems to have some fantastic story – if you push them hard enough to tell you. Unfortunately, though, few people living through these things ever documents them. Miracles happen, and one learns to shrug one's shoulders and accept them, gratefully.

Today I enjoy good health. It hasn't always been that way, though. Many periods of my life have been spent enduring long, drawn-out illnesses. Not much pain, thank God, but plenty of discomfort and weeks in bed. For years after I was opened I seemed to get sick all the time; periodically I had asthma attacks, fevers, bronchitis, pneumonia, and my skin was subject to endless nasty infections. Finally I ended up with hepatitis and diabetes. Like the writer in the last article, I attribute many of these to the workings of the latihan process in me. Not their beginnings, of course, because these were inherited tendencies and weaknesses: but their reappearances after I was opened – and their eventual disappearance.

*'You have to get worse before you can get better.'* This seems to be a general pattern in Subud members' experiences of illness. In my own case, as a child I had weeks off school every winter with asthma and other bronchial problems. My father died eventually of diabetes – and in my thirties I developed that, too. For years, even when not definitely 'sick' I was listless, lethargic and prone to catch everything going. After a full-term pregnancy I bore a still-born child, probably because of the diabetes.

That was too much. I was sick of begin sick. I got hold of some 'natural health' books and others on nutrition that I had ignored as cranky, and became a full-time crank myself. It didn't do me much good though. I still caught everything going and 'natural health', even with the latihan, seemed an illusive dream. Somewhere along that road, and feeling very sorry for myself, I realised that I'd just have to accept ill-health as a fact of my life and do what I could to be gracious about it.

Today, at 55, as I said earlier, I am healthier than I have ever been before. And no, I don't jog, or take any extra exercise at all. 'Extra' exercise, you note – what exercise I do take is all during the latihan itself. I learned to let my body go, and do *latihan badan* (body training, literally) either at regular group latihans or sometimes in my bedroom if I feel stiff on waking.

In addition, after 25 years in Subud I have learned, at long last, to *use* the latihan: to use it to find out what I should, and should not, eat. So now

I 'eat well'. To me, this means three things. First, I use the latihan to tell me what to buy; I sort of feel whether *this* is the right thing, or *that* is the right thing, to buy today. Next, when I am preparing food, I can feel the latihan going on, in me, and 'pouring' vibrations into the food. And third, when I am actually eating anything, whether raw or cooked, I become aware again of the latihan in me – I connect up with it, again – and I *taste* the food, consciously, as I am chewing it in my mouth.

The latihan has sharpened my senses, too. I not only see people but I see into them; I not only hear voices but I hear behind the voices to what people may be saying unconsciously; I even smell things in odd ways! When women have been promiscuous they give off a faint, vile, foetid odour; when someone is perhaps psychotic, neurotic or even temporarily disturbed, there is another, subtly different, almost bitter smell about them. But then, to make up for all this, there are delightful times when wisps of light, flowery smells seem to emanate from people – people who have perhaps come through hard times, and have reached some purity or rightness in themselves. A good, trustworthy, person smells *nice*, on this odd wave-length of 'spiritual' smells.

This often can be quite startling to people when they join Subud. Soon after they are 'opened' and begin to practise the latihan regularly, they begin to find – at least I did – that they are not only plugged into God, but into other people, too. You feel what *other people* feel, headaches and all. It doesn't last, and it is not too unpleasant – but it is a nuisance to be sitting on a bus next to someone who has indigestion. Yet although it isn't always pleasant, to be so connected, it is a way of knowing other people inwardly, perhaps intuitively, behind the outer façade of appearances. This seems to be a natural phase of the latihan process – and it leaves most people, at least the cases of extreme sensitivity, after a while. But not for nothing do you hear people say, '*There are no secrets in Subud*'.

Another folk saying in Subud is that 'Everything in you comes alive,' meaning that each part of your body, separately and in its own time, receives its own special cleansing by – and in – the latihan spirit; it gets a sort of thorough 'spring clean' as it were – becomes sensitised, refreshed, and rejuvenated in an indescribable way.

I think the purpose of this process, glibly called 'purification', is for our bodies to become fit receptacles for the spirit. From the moment we are conceived we are subject to emotional and physical influences; and by the time we reach puberty we are a more or less fully formed and moulded human being. Fully formed and moulded in the likeness of our family and our socio-cultural background, that is! No wonder, as the phrase has it, we need to 'find ourselves'. And *this* the latihan induces in us – through the process of purification.

This starts first (usually, that is – and there are always exceptions to the pattern) with the physical body and in the typical case – of which there is not one, I'm sure – moves on to the emotions and feelings, then to the mind and thinking. It is a very complex and subtle process, and what we ourselves experience individually seems to be the not always pleasant results and side-effects of that process, that spiritual work-out. In putting ourselves under the influence of the latihan, the spirit, we cannot expect to understand its workings – all we perceive is the foam at the edge of the ocean. In other words we experience the ups and downs, the apparent return of illnesses and the physical symptoms: but the greater, overall, unseen process of revitalisation of every part of our body goes on without our consciousness.

Good health means, to me, to be comfortable in my body, to be aware (but not excessively so) of my friends' and neighbours' states and conditions and moods – and above all to be sensitive to the promptings of the spirit in my daily life. In this way my body is a tool for learning about myself and the world, and for perceiving the workings of the spirit at large.

So for all those years of sickness I am, in a very simple way, *grateful*, because they enabled me to go through the processes of change that I needed in order to become whole.

# Battles Galore

*Salamah Pope (Indonesia)*

The Subud latihan seems to be a very *natural* thing. At least, it seemed like that to me at first: simple, easy, and natural. It felt – and still feels – ‘right’ and, to that extent, ‘natural’. But what Subud has done for me since I was opened has not been simple, nor easy to accept, and probably not even natural, either.

When I say ‘Subud’, though, I don’t mean the organisation or the people in it: I mean the gentle energy that I allow to work in me, in the latihan. This has given me the physical experience of the presence of the power of God; the strength – the ‘fuel’, as it were – over and over again, to do what I hoped was right. In effect, it has stopped me, often, from doing the *natural*, instinctive, thing and enabled me to do the *right* thing. My Subud story is therefore largely one of constant battles – within myself: battles not to do the natural thing!

Take our marriage for example. Few in this collection have more than mentioned the effect of the latihan on their marriages, yet for me this has been one of its major accomplishments. Given the right attitude (that marriage is a lifelong contract) it seems to me that the latihan can not merely ‘save’ marriages but completely rejuvenate them.

In our case, when Bapak first arrived in England in 1957, we had been married for two years, and before that we had been living together for a year or so. And before *that* I had been, ‘naturally’, fairly promiscuous. By the time we joined Subud, our marriage was on the rocks. I was sleeping with another man, and Hugh (my husband) was making preparations to do the over-land trip to India with another woman in search of a guru. We were still more or less living in the same flat together – but that was all.

We were polite to each other, though; we were English and we didn’t like nasty scenes and expressions of ill-feeling. Nor did we even seem to have any strong feelings about each other. We were just two totally different, and indifferent, people who happened to be living in the same place. I had once broached the matter of divorce to my mother, but she had said, ‘Well, you made a promise, when you got married. Could you break that promise?’ So there we were, still, not too unhappy, but stuck.

We were opened at the same time – and that was the end of our polite non-relationship. I began to yell at Hugh, and within a few weeks had become a vicious termagant. Hugh’s method of attack was simpler: always a quiet man he simply lashed out and hit me. The latihan had opened our Pandora’s boxes and the furies were unleashed. We were down to naked war. If it hadn’t been so agonising to see the mannerly English veneer removed and the violence and hatred revealed beneath it, it could have been funny. I’m even smiling as I type this – but at the time it was, literally, venomous.

By this time, though, hundreds of people were hearing about Subud

and wanting to be opened: and the organisation of Coombe Springs, never efficient at the best of times, was breaking under the strain, so we were terribly busy. And, too, with all the furies, there was Hope. There was a grand excitement in it all. The latihans were splendidly dramatic, there was talk of the New Dispensation and saving the world from materialism. There was a self-importance-boosting feeling of being in at the beginning of the Second Coming. Amidst all this, our personal problems seemed relatively unimportant. In addition, we had promised Bennett – and ourselves – that we would try this new thing, Subud, for six months, together, to see if the latihan would change things and bring us back together.

In the meantime, we managed to see something of Bapak. One evening after latihans were over, we plucked up courage and went upstairs to the sitting room and found several people sitting and chatting with Bapak. After a while, and feeling frustrated with all the chat, I looked around to see if Hugh wanted to leave. But just then, out of the blue and the cigarette smoke, Bapak asked at large, ‘Has anyone seen a *man*, in the latihan?’

I kept my head down. Everyone must have seen a man in the latihan, I thought – wasn’t that part of it? I certainly had. No one spoke, though. Bapak took another puff of his cigarette, looked around the room and, with a different emphasis this time asked again, ‘*Who* has seen a man, in the latihan?’ Now I looked around. Everyone was shaking their head, no, no. This was so unbelievable that I stuck up my hand and said, ‘I have, Bapak’, waving wildly from the floor. Everyone, including me, was surprised. Everyone (except me) began to laugh. I was hideously embarrassed, but I couldn’t take my eyes off Bapak. He was young, in those days, and beautiful. I was overwhelmed with the kindness in his eyes. ‘Who do you think it was?’, he asked.

I have to go further back now to what had actually happened. I was in the hall doing latihan one evening, a few weeks after we were opened, and I – or at least my body – was lying on the carpet writhing and, wrapped in a kind of hellish miasma all of its own, performing strange contortions. That was one part of me: that was my physical body. There seemed to be another part of me, though – which was also me – and this part was kneeling calmly, praying, in front of a man. He was just standing there, in front of me, white and shining and perfect, and I was kneeling there, adoring him.

I don’t know how long that lasted. It was one of those events when time seems to stop and you occupy some eternal dimension. And there I was, kneeling in front of this shining, glorious man, while my body writhed

and screamed on the carpet. It didn't seem the slightest bit strange. Nor did it seem strange when soon there appeared a third part of me, my critical mind, perhaps, that was looking on and saying, 'Who on earth is *this*?' Afterwards, I had decided it could only have been my father. He was the most wonderful man I had ever known. That satisfied me – us – all of me.

But it didn't satisfy Bapak that evening, though, when he asked who I thought the man was, and I answered, 'My father'. There was a pause. Then Bapak smiled broadly. 'No,' he said gently, 'Not your father: your husband, *him*,' pointing at Hugh. 'No, Bapak,' I declared, too loudly, in horror, 'It was *not* Hugh. It was my father.' Bapak shrugged his shoulders, as if to say: Have it your own way. And I did, for several years.

In those days our married life, such as it as, was not unbearable because we spent so little time together; there was just so much work to be done at Coombe. Even so, whenever we were together, we argued and quarrelled – and by that time we hadn't had sex together for two years. With the long eventful hours at Coombe our marriage seemed almost incidental. All the same, time was passing, and we had promised that we would give it – this new thing, Subud – a trial period, to see if it would help our marriage.

Six months from the day we were opened, we sat down facing each other across an empty table. Should we get a divorce, or not?

Hugh (miserably): What are we doing to do?

Me (irritably): I don't know. It's ghastly.

Hugh: Well, the latihan has changed things a bit.

Me: Yes, it's made things far worse.

Hugh: Well, it's stirred things up; but it may be better this way, in the long run.

Me (grudgingly): So you want to give it another six months?

Hugh: I think so. It might change things even more, and in some other way too. Let's give it that chance. Just another six months. If it goes on changing...

It did. We never sat down and talked about it again, though; it was obvious, even to me, that things were changing so much that *anything* could happen. And, anyway, I told myself, hedging my bets, I'm only 25, I can always divorce him later.

After that first six months, though, as the novelty and excitement at Coombe wore off, it became almost impossible to keep going. I needed a friendly hand, a shoulder to weep on, and one day when Icksan Achmad wandered into my office at Coombe I poured out my troubles to him. Icksan and his wife Ismana had come with Bapak and Ibu Subuh from

Indonesia and he was our age and marvellously normal. He listened to me, now, with a scowl of honesty on his face. His English was minimal and he couldn't have understood a tenth of what I said, but he obviously grasped the overall situation.

When I had run out of 'Hugh is impossible' stories, Icksan bent down and picked up a bit of dried mud off the floor. 'This, *you*,' he pronounced, putting it on my desk. 'This, *Hugh*,' he said next, picking half a dead matchstick out of the overflowing ashtray. Then: 'GOD', he said, making huge circling gestures in the air with his arms. I got the picture: I was a tiny bit of mud, Hugh was a broken dead match, and God – or whatever It was Out There – and (presumably) in the latihan – was a vast and omnipresent Something. 'God want you together, God bring you together' – Icksan nudged the two bits of stuff together. 'God want you separate, *God* separate you,' and he swept them off the desk with his arm. '*You*, do nothing. God do it.' That suited me very well. I was absolved from all responsibility for the decision. I sat back, content, and waited for Hugh to die.

Another evening we ventured upstairs to Bapak's sitting room and again sat as inconspicuously as possible on the floor. Bapak was talking to a friend of ours whom he had earlier advised to emigrate to America, and this friend was showing Bapak his airline ticket as proof that he was actually going. There was a lot of joking, and then into a pause I heard Hugh's voice ask, 'Should *we* got to America, too, Bapak?' Bapak's face collapsed into that relaxed state of quiescence that it did when he was receiving an answer. 'Go to California,' he said at last. 'Go to California, settle down, and work.' This was good news, for me. I had always longed to go the States, especially California, and I didn't mind going there with Hugh. Besides, I thought, hopefully, a new life, a clean sweep, and perhaps even a 'new' married life together.

It didn't work out like that, though. You don't leave your troubles behind you when you travel – and it intensified ours. Flung together in an alien environment, culture shocked and with no escape from one another, we spent our first weeks in New York in trivial arguments or sulky silences. However, I discovered Hugh's latihan was strong, so I began to respect him ... a little.

Some months later, settled in Los Angeles, one of the young couples we had become friendly with in the Subud group there asked us about their own marriage. They were on the verge of divorce. They asked us what we thought and felt about it. I have no doubt we offered them a great deal of advice we could not take ourselves. I do remember telling them the story of Icksan and the broken match and the piece of mud. 'So, if God wants you to stay together,' I concluded, 'You'll be given the strength to stick it out

till it comes good. If not God will separate you.'

Two weeks later, the husband was killed outright in a highly improbable traffic accident, while no one else was hurt.

It began to dawn on me that we were playing with fire, this latihan, and that I'd better be a bit more careful. Suppose God wanted *me* dead, and not my husband. All very well, this Subud 'better out than in' philosophy, and letting rip with one's feelings in the name of 'purification', but – was this *always* so? I slowly began to realise that I was, *by nature*, plain nasty. And that perhaps it was up to me to improve myself, somewhat. Try and curb my nature, so to speak.

At this stage I hated myself, I hated the Americans, I hated America, and I hated Thomas, as he now was. I saw all this hatred, and it wasn't only *in* me, it *was* me; there didn't seem to be anything else. So, although I still regarded myself as an atheist at heart, I began to pray. Not regularly, and not on my knees or anything, and certainly rather sceptically – but prayer it was. 'Get me out of this mess,' I prayed, 'Get all this hatred out of me. Please.' That was all I could bring myself to ask. Over and over again, when I remembered.

We had a cheap and ugly little apartment in Highland Park, Los Angeles, but it had a wonderful garden. One day I was sitting alone and bored and looking out of the window, quite relaxed, watching the little humming birds on the apricot tree, when the latihan came on me without warning. And without any drama or trauma I simply 'saw' that the sole cause of all our marital problems was me. I was not a woman. I was not in touch with my feminine self at all. So I wasn't Tom's wife but *his enemy*. I was trying to change him, make him into something he wasn't, and castrating him in the process. I was wearing – or trying to wear – the pants.

I saw, too, in the moment of revelation, that if I could bring myself to support him, and trust him, and become womanly, then all our problems would dissolve. Ah, at once it all seemed so simple! I got off the couch filled with a new resolve, and went to cook him some supper, as a start.

But after he'd been home from work for half-an-hour or so I was at it again. I couldn't leave him alone – let alone totally change myself overnight. Having seen what I ought to do was one thing: doing it was obviously going to take a lot of hard work – more battles with my own natural self. Looking back on it, I don't know how Tom stood it – or, rather, stood me.

The next pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that was our fractured married life was given to me by one the helpers. A couple we had known in Europe, Leonard and Irene James, came to stay with us for a holiday. I respected Irene; there was a quality of gentle 'authority' in her that I felt was genuine, and there was no hypocrisy in her. So while they were staying

with us I asked her what she thought it meant, to be 'a woman', and 'a wife'. 'Well, for a start, you must sleep with him,' she said. When I protested that I absolutely couldn't, she said firmly 'Then you have to force yourself. That's what a woman can do. If she can't, her husband has every right to look elsewhere.'

I saw the justice of that. I saw, too, that for several years I had put Tom through hell purely for my own benefit. I didn't want him, but no one else could have him, either. He had been looking after me – and I had been looking after me, too. That wasn't fair. So, I decided I would force myself to make love with him – and did! I found it was certainly possible, and not too unpleasant. And, along with the physical side, I tried to work at 'being a woman'. I didn't even know what that meant.

Three years later, and after our first child was born, we visited Indonesia – and there I found out what it meant, 'to be a woman'. Women, *natural* women, that is, were soft, and they were strong. They put up with things; they bore them. They bore children, and they bore their husband's short-comings, too. They didn't argue or quarrel with their husbands, or never in public, nor did they nag. If they saw room for improvement they prodded their men in more subtle, manipulative ways.

It was no more ethical than constant argument and nagging – but men found it a lot less unpleasant, and a lot less destructive of their manhood. Surprisingly (to me) these women were not repressed, or suppressed: they were just utterly different creatures from men, and functioned better in certain domains. They often worked, sometimes outside the home, and if there was enough money for the children and the home, then women went out and did welfare work in the community because they cared.

On the other hand, women could be malicious, too. With servants to do the housework there was plenty of time to sit around idly and discuss other people's characters and other people's business, behind their backs. To this day I see these two same feminine facets in me: the nurturing – and the destructive. Both are *natural*: both are transcended by the supra-natural impulses from the latihan – when we pay heed to them.

We had gone to Indonesia in 1962 for a three week holiday; we have been here, on and off, ever since. Unlike our entry into Subud, it hasn't been easy, it was never simple, and it is (for a Celt like me) entirely 'unnatural'. We were sick, constantly, in the first few years, perhaps due to the tropical climate, or the food, or perhaps it was purification. We were lectured, constantly, by the Indonesia Subud members that sicknesses helped to purify the sins of our ancestors – and our own. I didn't believe them, then, but I went along with it as if I did; given that we were living near Bapak, there wasn't anything that I wouldn't have put up with. And by this time I had no illusions left about myself anyway. I knew I was a

mess, a mass of nasty, evil even, impulses – and that there was nothing in me that I could pin and say was ‘I, my Self’ – but, I thought, so what’s new?

What was new, around this time, was a gradually awakening sense of the *reason* for at least some of this nasty stuff in me. I have always enjoyed the company of men. I had been fairly, but not wildly, promiscuous, before – and after – we were married, and had felt no guilt. On the contrary, as sleeping partners were rare in those days (the early 50s) I had been deliberately generous with my body, feeling at the time that I was doing some good in the world.

Now, 10 years later, I realised, in the latihan, that each and every one of those men had left his own distinct imprint on, and in, me. I was full of ‘foreign’ material. How, then, could I be myself? As the process of spiritual purification went deeper, it had to disturb those long forgotten imprints, and bring them up to consciousness again, before they could be erased, and purified out of me.

When that began to happen I became, of course, suicidal. I now had a child, though. I plunged into a period of total despair in which I spent with one vital question in me: would it be selfish of me to deprive her of her natural mother, or would it be noble of me to remove my befouled influence from here life? The helpers seemed uninterested in my state or, when they did notice my misery, laughed cheerfully and said, ‘Heavy purification, yes? That’s good!’ My agony was complete, my ‘dark night of the soul’ was on me. I was imprisoned in a cell full of excrement of my own gathering.

It didn’t disappear all at once, my darkness. There were no sudden flashes of light or beatific visions; and in fact it took months for my depression finally to lift. But from that moment on I knew that the *core* of the thing had gone, and that there was Hope, again, in the distance. All I had to do now was to work at it, to ‘work out my own salvation with diligence’, and endure *gladly* the suffering that I had, in years gone by, brought on myself. I found it difficult, especially the being glad bit; but as, one by one, traces of the men I had slept with were brought to the surface and erased by the latihan, it got lighter and lighter as time went on.

At the time we were unbelievably poor. Tom, an architect, was working for the Indonesian government and earning a government salary, about the equivalent of \$100 a month. After my various bouts of sickness seemed to have come to an end and the worst of my depression had lifted, I thought I’d look round for a job. We had a maid who could look after Maria, our infant, and bilingual secretaries were apparently in demand in Jakarta. Or I thought I might teach English for a change. When I mentioned it to Bapak, though, he didn’t seem to approve.

‘You can, if you want to, of course,’ he said. ‘But really, it’s like this:

the woman is the pillar of the family, the foundation on which everything rests. If the pillar is not there, or gets tired and wobbly...' I got the message – and I didn't go out to work. We lived, and went on living, in poverty. It seemed to be better that way.

Periodically, though, over the years and in between babies, I asked Bapak the same thing. And the answer was, invariably, that my main work, at this time, was to look after Tom and the children. This was my rightful function. After he'd told me this a good many times, over a good many years, I finally accepted it. I had absolutely got to look after Tom and *learn* to be a better wife and mother. Thus (so I reasoned) if I must do that, then I'd better do it properly instead of inwardly fighting it. So I threw my whole Tauran nature into it, then, and charged. My task, obviously, was to put Tom's concerns before mine, to cherish him as my son, as my brother and as my father, and to trust him, support him, and *follow* his lead. In short devote myself, fully, to looking after him.

Tom didn't know what had hit him of course. From being critical, nagging him still a lot, being argumentative and often just plain rude to him, and inwardly blaming him for everything that appeared to go wrong with us – once the decision was made everything changed. And I take no credit for this; it was 'done for me', so to speak. Perhaps, at last, it was time.

I learned to hold my tongue. That was the first big change. I learned to shut up and just keep quiet. The second thing I learned (or perhaps was taught, from inside) was to let him do the talking. If he came home quiet and gloomy I would try and ask him questions to make him talk; I learned to ask the right questions, and I was taught *how to listen*. Now that may not seem much, but for me, with a head full of ready answers always, it was a lot. Nor did the questions, or the listening, seem false: it was just something that began to happen in me, spontaneously.

I began to remember that Tom was an intelligent man – it had been so many years since we'd had reasonable conversations that I'd forgotten how clever he was. It was like a minor revelation, to discover that again. I began to like him a little better, and – very differently – to respect him more. Being stuck at 'home' (one room) all the time wasn't awfully interesting, so Tom's life, however harrowing he found it, became a source of wonder for me. I also discovered he had rather interesting views on history and politics; in fact whatever I could get him to talk about he produced what were, to me, novel ideas – and about all kinds of things. He wasn't a bore, after all: he was quite an interesting guy! I was constantly surprised.

We gradually became friends. I think that's the best way of expressing how we felt during that period; we liked each other now. That was a big change. Our sex life improved. We had another baby. We became

Muslims, and were given new names, and the weather seemed all set fair. Phew, I thought, our problems are over, hurrah!!!

It couldn't last, of course. The nature of the latihan seems to be that, once you've overcome one obstacle, either in oneself or in life, God presents you with another even bigger one. In my case it was sex again. I began to find first one, then another, of our men friends excruciatingly attractive. I was well aware this was lust, but it was almost as delicious as love, and the temptation to let go and give in to those feelings (not 'do' anything, of course, just thinking things through) was almost overpowering. Again I struggled and battled with my *natural* self. Nothing worked. In desperation I began to pray again: let me be delivered from this feeling, let me not show by a quiver of a finger that I am in anyway affected by this man's presence; let me get over this with my heart intact and my husband undisturbed.

Somehow or other, either with the help of the latihan – whether in answer to those 'prayers' or not I do not know – or because of my endless commands to myself to stay firm, I survived. No harm seemed to be done, none of the men ever appeared to notice anything untoward, and my battles with myself gained a new dimension. I kept myself intact in all but some actual passing sensations. And even they went. In fact, after this had happened with yet a fourth or fifth man, it began to be downright amusing! And, with that amount of detachment from one's (naturally) treacherous body and heart, one has a great deal more self-control. Metaphorically I heaved a sigh of relief and settled down again into a nice, quiet life.

By now it was 1970. We had three children, we had formally entered Islam a couple of years before, and Thomas was now Abdullah and I was Salamah. Things were getting ready for the fourth Subud International Congress in Indonesia the following year, and Abdullah was busy designing and supervising the building of the new latihan hall. We also had a little bit more money coming in from another job he had. I got pregnant again, and loved it, and retired into myself for the duration.

Two months after the congress the child was born dead, and exactly three months later (forgetting that, as I was not breast-feeding, I was not infertile) I got pregnant again. That one I lost at six months, in June 1972. Whatever the physical – or spiritual – causes (and we became aware of these), they were extraordinary experiences, filled with significance and meaning for both of us. And, in the time-span of their happening, Abdullah and I became closer than ever.

The second miscarriage, especially, induced a radical change in our relationship. Before the foetus was born I had had three months in bed, haemorrhaging profusely. I grew weak and sensitive, so much so that there were only two women I could bear to have come near me. Mariam Kibble

and Margaret Wichman used to come and do latihan with me twice a week, while I lay in bed, too weak even to sit up. I was 'seeing things', too, even outside the actual latihans. With two exceptions, this was the only time in my whole Subud life when I have seen full-scale, technicolour visions, and no questions about their authenticity. I felt burdens, both ancestral, inherited, and Abdullah's, lifting from me – burdens I hadn't even been aware of carrying.

For two months I was in a state of almost continual ecstasy. Physically I grew so weak I could hardly lift my head off the pillow but inwardly I was floating, bathed in bliss, and aware of angelic presences. Once the foetus was born, though, my health picked up quickly and within a month or so I was back to my ordinary, pragmatic self again. There was one big difference though: I was now *part of* Abdullah.

This is difficult to explain, and I found it somewhat odd at first. It felt as though I had no separate existence of my own any more. I was, for better for worse, no longer an independent person in my own right. My soul, or some other very interior part of my being, belonged to, and was actually an integral part of, Abdullah's being. That took a bit of getting used to: but, like it or not, it seemed to be an immutable fact of our life.

We were – and are – *one*. Not the same, not even similar: but two distinct and complementary opposites within a greater whole. Just as day and night, and yolk and white of egg, belong together inseparably as wholes, I now had no existence other than as Salamah-as-part-of-Abdullah. Then I understood, and full well, why a woman traditionally, and symbolically, takes her husband's last name when she marries. Well, we had now been married some 17 years, but, owing mainly to my almost incorrigible self-will, we were only now at long last, really man and wife.

Paradoxically, though, I was now free. Having at last been made, by the latihan, into Abdullah's wife and bound inextricably with him, I was, then *externally*, free. And, in its wake, this vast and profound change in our relationship brought within me a deep and lasting gratitude for all that had happened to us, through the agency of the gentle Spirit in the latihan.

And even that was not the end of it all, of course. In the years that lay ahead I had to learn how to handle that freedom wisely, in order to retain that new-found unity and purity, and with it, my own true inner Self. But for now, healed at least after so many years of fragmentation, both in myself and in our marriage, our marriage had become the wholesome institution that it is surely always meant to be. I actually enjoyed – and still do so! – being a wife; our sex life improved, and it has since then grown even more meaningful. Sex in marriage, we discovered, was the ultimate worship of God.

So, looking back now, in my fifties, to the torment of our once

impossible marriage, I know now that, given the commitment of submission to the power of God in the latihan, miracles and wonders of change abound. Bapak used to say, sometimes, that 'God can do the impossible'. Now I *know* he is right.

# Freedom to ask no more Questions

*Rusdi Lane (USA)*

**S**ubud has given me the chance to worship God, both inwardly and outwardly. This is a gift whose value I cannot measure. Imagine! From the sterility and desolation of my old ordinary life – imagine being put into contact with God – and having Him show me how to worship!

To be able to worship Almighty God in a spontaneous way where there is no rule or method, no rituals, where no-one tells me how to worship, where the experience is truly my own – this is a rarity in this world we live in. Here, in this thing called the latihan, is the possibility for me to receive guidance, objective guidance, free from the pressures of the everyday world that confront me constantly. What a blessing, to be free enough of myself and my thoughts to experience a tremendous Reality that arises from a place inside and outside of me at the same time. In that same freedom I can express myself spontaneously, and be free to expect the unexpected. This is, indeed, a Blessing.

Subud has made me realise this:

Yes, that I am here in this world, here and now; that I am a part of this world and that I am a member of the human race. My prayer has been and still is, to be an ordinary person and I figure it will take a lifetime. I have had bad times and I have had good times and I have come to accept that the bad are necessary and have meaning as well as the good.

So, to make a long story short, I'm beginning to live my life to the fullest – and it's a fantastic feeling to be a real part of this world. I no longer ask the questions, 'Why are we humans on this earth? Does God exist? and Why am I here?' I cannot honestly say that I have the answers but I certainly can say that I know that I am on my way – so I no longer ask the questions.

I am happy to be alive.

I am happy to know God is alive, too.

# Death, a Happy Event

Daniel Jannsee (Australia)

**R**eally I should go back to the time when I was 11, because that started me off on my path.

I was born in Indonesia, and when the Japs came all of us Dutch were put into camps. When I was 11 I was taken from the womens' and childrens' camp and put in the boys' camp. There were about 12 of us in one room, very simple, sleeping on mats. It made me physically ill, it upset me so much. I missed my home, my mother, the whole thing. I spent months sick, miserable and crying. All the time. I was so homesick: every time I even thought of my home and my family I would start crying again. Eleven, I was.

Then, one night, when this happened, I went out of the house and walked away a bit. There was a little stream near the house, and I sat down by it all alone and for the first time I *prayed*: let me get rid of this terrible feeling; it's no good, it's making me sicker and sicker; oh, help me get over it.

And it worked. As soon as I'd said that, prayed for it, really, it had gone. It was amazing – suddenly I was free of this thing that had been eating me up for I don't know how long. Gone, snap, just like that.

It showed me, conclusively, that there was God, or at least something much greater than I was, that could change things. That kept me going until I was released. Some years later, in New Zealand, I began to search because I knew there was *something there* that normally we didn't have contact with.

I read. I read everything I could lay my hands on. It took a long time: I didn't find it until I was 35. By that time I had my own business, a contract cleaning company; I had my own house, a nice garden, space, a workshop, it was a big house and it was mine. But all the time I was reading the usual sort of books; you know. Once a week my brother, Hank, another man called Jim and I got together and had long talk sessions, again the usual sort of thing – up all night, discussing what we'd read, even theosophy, the lot. Nothing touched me at all, though, until I got hold of Paul Brunton. That made a lot of sense to me.

In one of his books he takes you through the intellect, through the rational process of examining the intellect. At the end he says, this is as far as you can go with the mind. I followed completely his process of rationalisation so I knew, then, that he was right; and that indeed the intellect is limited. Brunton also says that what is *beyond* the intellect is the real stuff. What he did was to show me that the search for the spiritual, through the mind itself, is the wrong way to set about it.

So I threw away all my books and stopped reading. For the first time I now knew that, in a way, God, or whatever it was, had to find *me*; it wasn't up to me anymore. It had to come – if anything was going to come – from

outside me, so to speak. So I gave up, I consciously surrendered it, in fact.

The next sensational event was that I fell off a ladder. I had this big house, and I'd been trying to sell it for several months – but not really. I couldn't quite let go of *that*, yet. It meant my 'security', that place where I could fix things, do things, make whatever I wanted. So every time I found a buyer I told him I'd changed my mind and wasn't going to sell it.

Then I fell off the ladder. My wife and family were up the coast and I wanted to join them, but I had a contract to finish first so they'd gone on up there, and I was alone. When I came to I was in hospital. They'd let my brother, Hank, know. He had part of the business by now, and he came to see me with a book in his hand. He'd been cleaning that morning in the public library with the big floor polisher and he'd bumped into a book case 'by accident' when the book fell out. He'd picked it up to put it back, but had seen it was something that might interest me and our little discussion group, something we'd never heard of. He knew I'd need something to read in the hospital, so he brought it along for me. It was a book about Subud.

I'd read about 10 sentences when I knew it was what I was looking for, and that I was going to get out of that hospital quickly. Ten days, I told the doctor, I'll be out of here in 10 days. He laughed! He said it would be more like five or six weeks, if I was lucky, because I was pretty smashed up. Well, I *was* out of there in 10 days; I had to get to my family and tell them about Subud. And I did. The doctor was amazed of course, but I couldn't tell him what it was. He said that people just never did heal that fast – but, there you are, I had.

We wrote off to the address in England, and we discussed it in our little group. We decided we would all try it, and we did; there was a Subud group in Wellington. Later we moved to Brisbane in Australia.

When I was in hospital after that fall, I'd finally given up the house. They found a buyer and sold it quickly, so off I went just with my family. Once I had found Subud I didn't need the house: it didn't mean anything to me any more.

I'm now finally coming to the point. Eight years went by, and we suddenly got a letter from Jim's wife. Now she'd never been interested in Subud, and he had dropped out after six weeks, but he had had a stroke recently, she said. The letter didn't seem important to me, but it did to my wife Rosanna – we tend to work in tandem, you might say; she picks up on things that I miss and (not so often, mind you) I pick up on things she misses.

Well, she got something from that letter. 'Seems to me that you might go back to Wellington and see Jim,' she commented. I was not keen, but said I'd feel how it was in a day or two. I couldn't really afford it, and I was

a bit wary in case it might just be a big ego trip anyway, me thinking I had been specially chosen to help him. Tricky stuff this, to keep one's motives clear. One of the national helpers happened to turn up the next day and I mentioned it to him. 'I think you should go,' he said.

I arrived in Wellington on a Friday, and went to Jim's house. As soon as I got to the front gate spontaneous latihan started up inside me, strongly. Only then did I know that it was right to be there. Jim's wife showed me into the room where he was. He sat there all day long. The big moment in his daily life was to get up from the chair and shuffle to the mailbox to empty it. That was all he could do. He couldn't talk, or not properly, and then not without a lot of difficulty. He just sat there, all day, every day.

When he saw me – and this was after eight years, don't forget – he bent over and picked up a book from the table beside him. It was a Subud book and it lived with him. He'd been struggling to read it, but by the time he got to the end of a sentence he'd forgotten what it was all about. His mind had gone. But he'd kept on struggling with it; perhaps it was the only thing which kept him going.

I said I'd come back on Monday and do latihan with Jim if that was what he wanted, and he said yes. I wasn't a helper so I got in touch with the local helpers. They tested to find out if it was OK for me to do latihan with him every day for 10 days, the time I was going to be staying there; then I went back to my brother Hank's house – I was going to stay with him.

Hank was still very cynical and scoffing, thought I was a bit mad of course, and kept trying to argue with me about Subud. But he didn't mind that I got Jim to have latihan in his place, because I didn't want to do it in Jim's house – there was his wife there and I just felt more comfortable at Hank's.

The last latihan I had with Jim was interesting. I saw – well, you know what I mean by 'saw' – a man, I didn't know who it was, standing in the hallway of the house. He was looking at all the doors leading off it, apparently wanting to go through one of them but not able to chose which one. Wherever he looked all the doors were shut. That was the last latihan I did with him, and when I handed him over to the local helpers, so to speak, I said to them, 'I am sure you will have someone in this district come into Subud soon. I saw someone in the hallway, but the doors were still shut to him. He can't get in yet.'

My visit to New Zealand turned out to be much more meaningful than I realised at the time. The good time we had together, Hank and I, had got rid of some of the old conflicts there had been between us.

Three months later, on a Saturday morning, there was a phone call to tell us that Hank had gone into hospital. They had found he had terminal

cancer.

As soon as I heard this I received the explanation of what I had seen during that latihan at his place: 'That man in the hallway' represented my brother. He had entered the House of Subud but had not gone any further than the hallway. His *jiwa*, his soul, had known, so to speak, three months in advance, that he was going to die and was looking to be guided through the right doorway when the time came. Memories now started coming back to me that confirmed this: like the time when, a propos of nothing, Hank had blurted out that he wished he was like me – referring to my uninterrupted practice of the latihan and what he called my 'faith'.

Bapak once said something to the effect that when a Subud person dies it is not just something that happens ordinarily; but the event is somehow *marked*, somehow has importance. I was becoming dimly aware that I had begun to participate in such an important event three months before.

The next problem was to decide *when* to fly across the Tasman sea, because this thing might drag on for four to six months, according to the doctors. I could not go over there and sit around for months, of course, so I had no choice but to surrender the whole thing. By now I had become aware that I felt like an actor in a play that was being written at the same time as it was happening. All I could do was to surrender and go along with things as they occurred.

The following Monday I went down to the travel agent and asked for a ticket to Wellington that would get me there by 3pm on Tuesday. I didn't know why I asked for that but it seemed right. You might note the timing here because from then on everything became a close shave. They could only get me on a plane that would get me there four hours later, at 7pm. I just booked, gave them my phone number and went home. Half an hour later they rang to let me know that because of cancellations they could get me on the earlier flight. So I got to the airport at 3pm after all, and to the hospital at 5pm.

Hank had been in a coma for some time by now, but as I walked into his room he opened his eyes and said, 'I *am* glad you came. How wonderful to see you.' Believe me, he just wasn't the kind of man to put things like that, or to show his feelings. He was the intellectual of the family and more reserved than the rest of us.

Well, we had a bit of a chat and then he slipped back into his coma. He was never to speak again. It was obvious that but for God's hand in all of this I would have been hours too late – four hours to be precise.

No, I did not stay with him as you might think, I left soon after. I felt I should be with his family that night. So I left, but got back to the hospital at 10 past 10 the following morning. I had asked his kids not to come with me and as I entered the room it was obvious that it was time to do a latihan

with him. The conditions, however, were impossible. I prayed silently for help. Miraculously, the room emptied and the last nurse firmly shut the door on us. We were alone and I started to receive the latihan.

Suddenly Hank's arms lifted off the bedsheets up into the air. I thought that he was coming out of the coma, and perhaps wanted to say something, so I stopped the latihan to go over to him. As I did so his arms sank down again, and I realised that he was simply doing the latihan with me, from within the coma. I went on with the latihan. *And there was the man in the hallway with the doors off it – all of them closed – and he was looking at them, hoping to be guided through one of them.*

The latihan continued and we were back in the hospital. Hank's breathing was shallow and irregular. Briefly his breathing speeded up and then just stopped, and as it did so I knew that one of those doors had been opened for him and that he had passed through it and beyond. Hank was no longer in this world, *but I knew him to be alive.* I felt extraordinarily happy.

The latihan finished and I sat down beside the bed. Although I was vaguely aware that I had heard his breathing stop I was not particularly conscious of the fact that my brother was dead; the experience of the latihan somehow contradicted this.

I looked at my watch. It was 10.40. This marvellous event had all taken place in the span of half an hour. I now realised that my brother could have died any time during the previous night – but I felt he had waited, so that I would be there to share in this latihan with him. It had been his first latihan in nine years, and his last one this side of the door.

# This Life and After

*Deborah Bentin (UK)*

The Subud contact is, for me, an act of Grace; a gift that anyone may receive who is willing to surrender themselves and their lives to the will of God. When I received this Grace over 28 years ago, almost immediately I became aware of a quite new *inner* part of myself, a part that was quite separate from my body, mind and feelings. This new, or newly-awakened, part of myself was able to observe with delighted astonishment the movements that arose in my body, the feelings that stirred my heart and even the thoughts that momentarily entered my mind.

In my ignorance, I imagined that from there on I need never again be troubled; I had only to allow the latihan to begin in me and all would fall into serene order. It was like the first day at art school when I squeezed out the colours onto my palette and began my first oil painting: only the beginning; only the first taste, with many a hard lesson to learn and many a dark time to go through.

At the time of my opening in Subud I was already over 40, so I had a lot of pre-conditioning and many wrong habits and ideas to be corrected. For instance I was inclined to talk about the ego and to regard the ego as an enemy of all that was spiritual – something to be put down at any cost, if one were to have a chance of entering the kingdom of heaven.

Gradually I came to realise that, although the soul alone can enter and remain in heaven, while we live on earth the body, heart and mind are useful servants who should be treated well. The teachings of all the great religions point to this end – that the forces of body, heart and mind should be our servants and not our masters.

Hearing this, you might assume that after 28 years of Subud practice I would never ill-use my body, never give way to negative feelings and never be prey to uncontrollable thoughts. Well, alas no. But I can claim that I am now far more aware of these activities and am less a victim of them. I am perhaps like one of those wise employers who tolerate their servants' waywardness to some degree, since they are the best available.

When I first received this gift I naturally wanted to share it with those friends who I thought would welcome it. Several of them dismissed it as being 'too easy', others thought there must be a catch somewhere. I was reminded of the two well-to-do young men who took out 100 new one pound notes (in the days when a pound was worth something) and tried the experiment of giving them away in Piccadilly Circus. One or two children came up and asked for one; one or two people took one with a smile, as if to say: 'Of course, I'm not fooled.' But the majority hurried by dismissing the offer.

For most people it is as easy to receive the Subud contact as to conceive a child. The difficult part comes later. So why begin? Why have children? The instinct to ensure the continuation and evolution of the

human race seems to be fundamental in mankind. So too, I believe, is the need (at least in some) to reach upwards and outwards to that which is higher. To love, to worship, to express and to serve the highest when we see it, is the fount of all true art and religion.

Since Subud is not a religion, it brings about a natural ecumenicism in which all are united, while continuing to practice their own religion. A great delight for me in Subud has been to worship in the latihan in company with Christians of many denominations, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and those having no formal religion.

At the same time, a number of people have found through Subud a deeper understanding and experience of their own religion and in many cases have returned to its practice. Others, without a specific religion, have found one in which they have felt at home, while still others have been content just to follow the latihan. The goal is the same for all, but the ways to that goal are many and for each of us the steps are individual ones.

Christian mystics distinguish three stages on the spiritual way: purification (or purification), illumination and, finally, union. My experience has been that in Subud we receive as much illumination as we can cope with, followed closely by purification. It is the illumination that shows us our faults: these two alternate continually. We may even be granted a taste of union, but for most of us this state doesn't last – we are ordinary people, not saints, and I suspect it often didn't last for them.

As a Quaker, I worked very actively for peace for many years and I understand those who do so now. But I came to realise that, for me, the work must begin *in* myself; that eventually peace would come only when enough people were peaceful within themselves. Until that happens I believe that the world situation will remain desperate, not only in degree but in kind, and that without an infusion of grace the outlook is bleak indeed.

Subud works in the world through its members, both in the spiritual and the practical realms. Fortunately there are a lot of young people now in Subud, many of them following in their parents' footsteps, others drawn by their quest for a deeper reality than that of the everyday world. They have less to unlearn that we older people; they are simpler, more direct in their approach and in their receiving. Yet age is, on the whole, unimportant: in the spiritual life there is no generation gap.

I am now in my 70th year and can look back on a long and interesting, though far from easy, life. I like to revisit my past, but never to dwell on it. The present is what matters. I'm aware that I was blessed with a number of talents that I did not develop to their fullest extent – flitted too much from flower to flower – so I hope that in this preparatory world, I may use whatever time remains for me well and to the full.

This is important, not just for myself, but because however small a part we have to play in the eternal drama, it is vital that we play it correctly and to the best of our ability – on earth as in heaven.

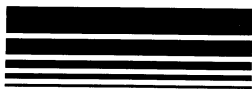
I believe I've had many tastes of that state we call heaven, in the latihan. It is quite beyond words to describe and is so infinitely more beautiful than anything earth has to offer that I can only look forward to it, almost long for it. This of course doesn't absolve me from working out to the full what I've been given to do here, however ordinary or insignificant it may appear to be.

As our bodies, together with our feelings and minds, form the vehicle for our life on earth, and only serve that life best when directed from a higher source, so it is certain that at death these vehicles must be discarded. They are of the earth and return to the earth. What goes on to the life after life is the soul, which will, quite naturally, be drawn to the place that it is fitted for.

I take to heart the advice Jesus gave his disciples: that when invited to a feast they should take a place at the bottom of the table, since it is much better to be asked to sit higher up than risk being requested to move further down. I don't know personally where my place is laid; I am only grateful to have been invited to the feast at all.

Meanwhile I (the 'I' that came alive those 28 years ago) look forward to the life after life with the pleasant, tingling anticipation of someone about to start a new adventure.

# Epilogue



**I**n this uneasy, stricken but beautiful world we live in, where material prosperity and ever greater technological mastery have come to dominate our culture and destroy the natural balance in our lives – in such a world the little stories in this book may have seemed nonsense to you. In one important aspect, that is precisely what they are: *non sense* within the limits of what our human perceptions are capable of realising.

Why is that? Perhaps it is simply because the source of the Subud experience seems to be light years beyond the level of our ordinary minds. Great mystics and saints have testified to this: that it is only through the suspension of man's reasoning power and the cessation of his everyday feelings that individuals can be open to receive the unknowable power of God. What that power can do for him and for all humankind is equally beyond our imaginings. Many of the stories perhaps affirm this in quite simple ways.

They demonstrate what their writers have experienced. That is, that there is a reality behind and beyond the limitations of human reason and understanding. That 'we are not alone'. When serious and scholarly people deny this, it is merely because they have not experienced it. Yet it is absurd to think that by nature we are all hungry just for freedom and 'bread'. That is to leave the human soul out of the picture altogether. The soul needs to worship the mystery of its life in the only true way, by total surrender to God. Formerly this state was granted through the ages only to a handful of men and women who, *while still in this life*, were taken beyond their human level to the realms of the divine.

So far as I can tell, the extraordinary and – historically – the unique thing about Subud is that the 'power' received in the latihan can be passed on to others, to you and me and everyone, just for the asking. This is 'the opening'. And, once you are used to experiencing this spiritual energy, you can find it within you any time and anywhere – again, just for the asking.

It is my understanding that the latihan of Subud is an undreamed of Grace from our Creator, who is all-powerful and all-knowing, and who, it seems, now wants us individuals to have this *antidote* to the present uneasy situation in our world.