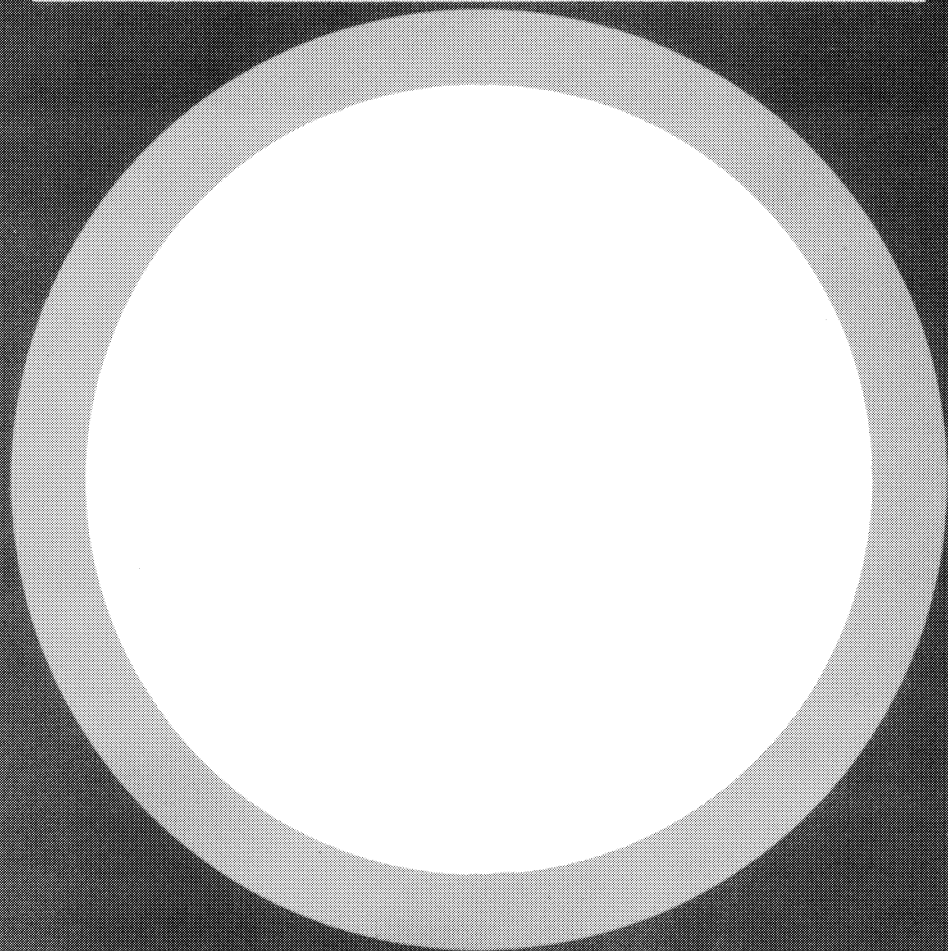


Robert Lyle

SUBUD



with a foreword by
Varindra Tarzie Vittachi

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Deputy Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York

Subud first became known outside Indonesia when its founder, Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, visited England in 1957.

Its basis is a spiritual exercise, consisting of movements awakened in us by the power of God at the moment we surrender ourselves completely to him. As we follow these movements every part of our being is gradually cleansed and brought to life.

Through the exercise, which is our worship of God, we receive guidance for our lives – each in accordance with his individual nature and needs.

This book is a straightforward introduction to Subud using wherever possible the words of its founder.

The author Robert Lyle was born at Leatherhead, Surrey, in 1920. He joined Subud in 1960.

ALSO FROM HUMANUS

A LIFE WITHIN A LIFE. *An introduction to Subud*

Talks by Bapak Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, compiled and edited by Dominic C. H. Rieu


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by

Robert Lyle

with a foreword by
Varindra Tarzie Vittachi


HUMANUS

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Contents

Acknowledgements	6
Foreword by <i>Varindra Tarzie Vittachi</i>	7
1 The coming of the latihan	11
2 The nature of the latihan	14
3 The spread of Subud	23
4 The spiritual and the material	33
5 Marriage and children	46
6 Education and work	56
7 Politics and economics	66
8 Social work	77
9 Culture	85
10 Subud and religion	91
Bibliography	100
Sources	101
How to contact Subud	104

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ROBERT LYLE

Foreword

We live in a world in which fear and a deep sense of alienation are the predominant features of people's daily lives. People are fearful of not being able to find a job or of losing the jobs they have, of being poor, of not being able to afford food, medication, education and shelter for their children, of being discarded and lonely in their ageing years – especially since the span of life even in the poor world is being stretched – and, most of all, fearful of the possibility of catastrophic war which could make the survivors – should there be any – wish they were dead too.

Fear is not an unfamiliar feeling in human history, but at no time in the past have so many people consciously felt so remote from the power centres where decisions which affect their daily lives are taken and, consequently, powerless and helpless to influence those decisions. So profound and pervasive is our alienation from the structures of society, from outer reality and meaning, that more and more of us have begun to look for reality and meaning within ourselves as our forefathers and mothers did, and to seek guidance and sense in the ancient teachings they followed. Thank heaven, there is a great deal there, but our minds dissipate this wisdom in disputing its message. And our will to follow true guidance, even when we are sure we have found it, soon loses purpose and direction, or we feebly fall into the beguiling mesh of superficial rites and practices devised by our ancestors to support their faith, paying habitual lip service to the glory of God while living our lives as though God did not exist.

All along, somewhere in our minds, there is a sense that contemporary life has lost its meaning because we have lost touch with something essential to human nature, some inner source of clarity, quality, ability and good sense which has become heavily overlaid with the influence of those material forces which control our outer lives. We no longer have access to its power and

FOREWORD

guidance to help us understand what is happening in our lives or to enable us to improve their quality. And since our inner capacity to receive God's guidance has atrophied, it is necessary to find a way to renew contact with the Great Life Force and thus give our inner being the opportunity of becoming sensitive once again to divine power and grace.

Such an opportunity is here. Indeed it has been here since 1924 when a young man in the town of Semarang in East Java received that contact. In time it became clear that the contact he had received was not just for him but for everyone who asked for it with sincerity.

Because it can be transmitted by those who have received it to those who ask, it has spread in a chain-reaction from Java to other parts of Indonesia, and in the past twenty-five years thousands throughout the world have been 'opened' or initiated into the experience. The young man from Semarang, named Muhammad Subuh, is now eighty-one and lives in the suburb of Cilandak near Jakarta – when he is not visiting members of the Spiritual Brotherhood of Subud, the association of people around the globe who practise the spiritual exercise through which they continually refresh their experience of the contact and increase and broaden their capacity to receive God's guidance.

This book is the story of Muhammad Subuh and the gift sent through him to all men and women who wish to find meaning in their lives and proof of its validity in their own experience. It is not easy to convey in words what Subud is, since it is a personal experience and not a teaching but a learning. It is easier to say what it is not. It is *not* a religion. People of every faith have received the opening and practise the spiritual exercise we call the latihan or 'training' while following their own religious practices, perhaps with more sincerity and understanding than they previously found possible. It is *not* a set of doctrines offered by its founder. Muhammad Subuh himself is a Muslim and says over and over again that all the spiritual knowledge we need has been given to us by the great religious teachers, and that what Subud offers is a chance to experience within ourselves the truth of those teachings. Subud is *not* a system but a technique of developing our innate ability to receive God's grace. It is *not* a form of meditation but a way of submitting or, simply, of letting go of our thoughts

FOREWORD

and desires which impede our ability to stay in touch with the Great Life Force.

Muhammad Subuh is not a guru, a master, a teacher or a healer. Subud people call him Bapak (Father), but that is because in Indonesia all older men are respectfully addressed as Bapak or Pak. To those who would regard him as a latter-day prophet or a saint, Bapak insists: 'I am an ordinary man. If I put my hand in the fire, it will burn.' So it will. He is an ordinary man, but it is also true to say, from my own experience of him, that he is an extraordinary ordinary man. The man who received the responsibility of receiving and transmitting such a renewed contact with God's grace in our time is not likely to have been picked at random. Muhammad Subuh, to those of us who often turn to him for advice when we are in state of confusion – a common enough experience for us Subud members, who soon learn that our responsibility of choosing between good and bad conduct is not taken over by the contact – is an exceptional man, but, as he himself says, a man withal.

He accepts the reality of human existence on this planet and the appropriateness of human beings living their lives here as well as they can, because death is not an end, not even an interruption, but a portal to another life. Spiritual life is to be lived in villages and in cities, in our homes, in our work places and not in deserts or mountain retreats. It is not an escape from the 'real' world, but a way of living in it well, as befits a human being dwelling among other human beings. Spiritual growth is a process that brings our inner and outer lives into balance and harmony. I recall Muhammad Subuh acting out the work of a bank teller who has achieved this state, counting a bundle of notes: 'One, two, three, four, Allah, Allah, Allah . . . fifty, Allah, Allah, Allah, sixty . . . And it comes out right.' The laughter with which this explanation was received is characteristic of the lightness that he brings to gatherings of Subud members. It is also a way of reminding ourselves that those who follow a spiritual path should be 'normal'.

Many years ago Muhammad Subuh advised us not to try to spread knowledge of Subud through propaganda, since that kind of proselytizing was impelled by our own will rather than God's. However, there is nothing wrong in making information about Subud available to those who are seeking it. Robert Lyle's book

FOREWORD

has been written for that purpose, and its special value is that it uses Muhammad Subuh's own words (in translation) to convey the meaning and purpose of Subud to readers who may not yet have received the contact. It is therefore an authentic, and timely, first-hand account of Subud based directly on the experience of its founder.

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I

The coming of the latihan

In 1924 in Semarang, a town in East Java, one of the employees of the municipality was a young Indonesian, Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo. In addition to his work for the municipality, Muhammad Subuh was studying bookkeeping three evenings each week. It was his habit on these evenings to study until midnight, or even later, and then, after putting away his books, to take a walk to clear his brain.

On one such occasion there happened to him something altogether strange, unexpected and momentous. Suddenly, just in front of the hospital then under construction and known as the *Centrale Burgerlijke Ziekenhuis*, there came a light from above. Muhammad Subuh was astonished. It was a brilliant light, illuminating all around as though it were the middle of the day. He looked up and saw what appeared to be the sun falling down upon him. He felt his body shaking violently and a trembling in his chest. He thought it was the onset of a heart attack and was extremely shaken. Fortunately he was only about 300 metres from his house and so he hurried home, thinking he might be at death's door.

When he reached his house he knocked on the door and his mother came to open it. She saw that something had happened. 'Why are you so pale?' she asked. 'It is nothing,' he replied, and went straight to his room. There he prepared himself, lay down on his bed and surrendered himself to Almighty God, not knowing what might be going to happen. When he was ready he fell asleep, but remained conscious. To his surprise he did not die;

instead he saw that his whole self was filled with a radiant light. Although he did not understand what was happening to him, he was not frightened but puzzled; he could see the light inside him not only in the parts of his body which his eyes could reach but also in his head. The light remained only a minute or less, and then disappeared. When it had gone he awoke.

'What has woken me?' he asked himself. But he felt no fear; only a feeling of happiness and peace.

'Awake – rise – walk.'

Muhammad Subuh got to his feet, but not by his own will. It happened that there was a room in the house used as a study which did not contain much furniture or many objects. To this room, where he usually said his prayers, he was made to walk. When he entered it he said the Muslim prayer; afterwards he was made to turn around and continue walking. He wondered who was making him walk, but he felt no fear.

On returning to his bedroom Muhammad Subuh felt quite normal once more, and he went back to bed and to sleep.

Of course Bapak* felt that something strange was happening to him, because he had never felt like this before, but, even so, he was quite calm and conscious in his feelings and not at all frightened or worried; on the contrary, he felt truly surrendered to the power of Almighty God.¹

So it went on, night after night. In fact Bapak has said that he experienced a thousand nights of latihan** like this. 'So, if you ask what is the origin of Bapak's latihan kejiwaan,** whether Bapak had a human teacher, it was not so at all, brothers and sisters. Bapak did not obtain this from any man . . . '

This experience – which Bapak later referred to as his 'opening'*** – was the first manifestation of what has come to be known as the 'latihan kejiwaan of Subud' or the 'spiritual exercise

* The Indonesian word for Father. Bapak speaks of himself in this way, in the third person, and Subud members address him and refer to him by the same title.

** Latihan is the Indonesian word for drill, training or exercise; kejiwaan means spiritual. Hence latihan kejiwaan means spiritual exercise.

*** ' . . . the opening means that the door of your inner self has been opened' (*Pewarta Kejiwaan Subud*, Vol. 10 No. 1, p.5).

THE COMING OF THE LATIHAN

of Subud'. It is to this experience that the Subud Spiritual Brotherhood (which has spread to over seventy countries) owes its origin; and it is, in brief, the story of how the latihan kejiwaan of Subud came into existence.

. . . a story which, of course, is closely related to Bapak himself who, by the grace of God, is willed to be a channel for God's grace to every adult of the various races and religions who is willing to receive and follow the way of the latihan kejiwaan of Subud.

In the beginning, Bapak himself did not expect that he would be able to receive so great a grace from Almighty God because, according to the stories told about man, this can be received only by prophets and messengers of Almighty God, whereas Bapak is just an ordinary man, born in this present century. Therefore what happened to Bapak, as related above, is something to be left to God who is all-knowing about all things. And since this was brought about in Bapak by God, Bapak is only obliged to persevere and receive God's gift, which it is fitting for Bapak to receive with patience, trust and sincere submission.²

2

The nature of the latihan

The name Subud* is an abbreviation of three Sanskrit-derived words, *susila*, *budhi* and *dharma*. *Susila* comprises a man's character, conduct and actions which are truly human and in accordance with the will of God. *Budhi* is the inner force present in all creatures, including man, which tends to draw them towards their proper path, the path that leads to God. *Dharma* denotes the sincerity, surrender and submission to God awakened in man by the will of God himself.

The name Subud is therefore a way of describing the state of a man or a woman (or a group of men and women) who has, or hopes by the grace of God to have, the qualities of *susila*, *budhi* and *dharma*. In Bapak's own words these are 'the qualities needed by man in order to receive the gift of God in the right way . . . the qualities of a man who is able to receive the commandments of God and the gifts of God, both for the needs of his life on this earth and also for his life after death. They are the very qualities bestowed by God upon man in order that he may be able fully to receive all that God has ordained concerning human life on earth.'¹

So all those who follow the latihan kejiwaan belong to the Subud Brotherhood or, in legal terms, the Association of the Spiritual Brotherhood of Subud; and the spiritual exercise or latihan kejiwaan of Subud, first received by Bapak himself, is its core and *raison d'être*.

* The term Subud bears no relation to Bapak's own name, Subuh.

Bapak has described the principles and purpose of the Subud spiritual exercise as follows:

These spiritual exercises of Subud are in truth the worship of man towards God, awakened in us by the power of God at the moment this same power arrests the interference of our thinking minds, our hearts and our desires. This means that the spiritual exercise we have received has been awakened in us only by the will of the one Almighty God whom we worship. Since the exercise comes from God and by his will, it follows that this, of itself, will lead us towards God who wills it to be so. And since all this comes by the will of God, we can be certain that the principles of the spiritual exercise are in accordance with that which is intended by God for mankind as a whole.¹²

Then, after explaining the meaning of the words *susila*, *budhi* and *dharma*, Bapak continues: 'These principles and aims of Subud can be summed up by saying that it is God's will that we should dwell upon earth, worship God and return to God.'¹³

The word 'exercise' is associated in our minds with something that is done or practised, either in obedience to the instructions of a teacher or in response to our own will or desire. The spiritual exercise of Subud, however, is not at all like this. The latihan kejiwaan arises in man freely and spontaneously, under certain conditions, namely that man sets aside his own will, his own thinking and desires and surrenders himself completely to the power of God. This exercise is therefore not practised or performed: it is received. And the course which the exercise takes is not determined by the one exercising (or by any human teacher) but by the power to which he has surrendered.

In order that the exercise may begin to operate, it is first necessary to make contact with this power. How this comes about has been explained by Bapak in the preface to his poem *Susila Budhi Dharma*:

As is evident, God is powerful and far excels man in all things; for in very truth he is the Creator of mankind and of heaven and earth. So man as he really is, then, is just a created thing, powerless before God.

Necessarily, since this is his real condition, man cannot

with his heart and mind understand or reflect upon the nature and power of God. This is why whenever people try to find a way that may lead to contact with the Great Life, many are stranded on the path or, if not, are impelled – not having a conscious *jiwa** – to stray in other directions, directions which in reality are mirages of the imagination, heart and mind.

So man, in seeking the nature of worship that can make contact with the Great Life, needs above all to stop the welling up of his imagination and thinking. For by doing that he really paralyzes his *nafsu*** and surrenders his human ability and wisdom; that is to say, the human being obeys and submits with complete sincerity to God who rules within him.

This in fact is nothing new, for men of old followed this path and found a contact of this quality they could feel within them. Why, then, are there not many people like that in our own time who still have that contact? The reason is simply that conditions on earth for mankind keep changing as generation succeeds generation, and many people are easily affected by the influence of these ever-changing conditions that face them. Especially has this been so as the human mind has progressively developed its science. This has, as it were, increasingly opened the way for the inner feeling to fall from the realm of inner peace into the realm of thought. In consequence the human self gradually comes to be ruled more and more by thought, instead of by the quietness of the inner feeling or the inner self, so that in the end man's emotions and brain are always busy and his inner feeling has almost no opportunity to be at peace.

Certainly men must think, for thought is an important tool with which they can strive to fulfil the needs of their life on earth and so make their existence here an orderly one. But to become aware of the *kejiwaan* and make contact again with

* *Jiwa* (usually translated as 'soul') is the inner content or quality of a living being; hence *kejiwa-an*, 'spiritual'.

** *Nafsu* signifies the passions, greed, anger, etc. The word comes from the Arabic *nafs*, meaning 'lower soul'.

the Great Life men do not need to use their minds. On the contrary, they should stop the process of their thinking and imagining. For only by so doing can a person receive something from beyond his reach that at length attracts a vibration of energy felt within the self. Clearly, then, the sole way to make contact with the Great Life, or with the power of God, is for a man to surrender sincerely and earnestly. And this surrender must not be in word only, but must penetrate throughout his inner feeling until he truly feels that he believes in, praises and worships no one but God Almighty (Allah).⁴

So, it may be asked, what is the nature of this exercise that is received (or arises spontaneously) when contact with the Great Life is made? And what is the Great Life? How do we know that this force or power is indeed the power of God? At a talk given in Eindhoven in Holland on 4 October 1957 Bapak explained:

The latihan and its contents, as you have received them, are in the nature of movements and vibrations felt throughout the body, movements which awaken and arise from within, that is, from the *jiwa* of man. As to that which makes it possible for the human soul to awaken and to move, the fact is that, after the passions and the thoughts have been deprived of their power, the human *jiwa* and the fine inner feeling can then spontaneously make contact with the force that envelops all life. This great and awe-inspiring life force, unlimited and boundless, exists by the will and power of Almighty God. In truth it permeates and embraces everything, the visible and the invisible, both on this earth and on other worlds or planets which you can see in this solar system: all is embraced and permeated by the power and greatness of God and man cannot know, nor will he ever comprehend the extent or the nature of this, God's power. Man can but acknowledge that even so are the nature and order of the universe; even so was Creation ordained . . .

Man, then, can make contact with this power (which will then work within him for his good) if he is 'a man who has become able to still his inner feelings and to have inner peace, a man who has become capable of patience and obedience towards God.' 'Only

such a man can be offered and receive the grace of God into his life.'

It is to achieve this contact that individuals and groups all over the world have, for centuries, striven to still the working of their hearts and minds. The latihan is not new, since there have always existed men who have achieved inner peace and patience and submission to the will of God. Only the circumstances and the conditions under which it may be received are new. In order to make this contact, no more is required of man now than his submission; the remaining conditions are then fulfilled 'automatically'. And it is in this fact that the grace of God towards man is evident in these difficult times. Speaking of present times and existing conditions, Bapak said at the same talk in Eindhoven:

There are many human beings who attempt by various ways to reach a state in which they may become able to receive the gift of God, by stilling their hearts and their desires and thus achieving peace of mind, for such is the state or condition in which alone a man is able to receive the divine grace. It is therefore quite extraordinary, and ought to amaze us that we, in a state which is by no means of this kind, are yet able to receive the gift from Almighty God as we have received it in the latihan. But, in truth, the movements and the awakening which have come to you, have their origin in the human soul and in a climate of calm and quiet utterly beyond any interference by the thinking mind. Therefore you should rid yourselves of any feeling of apprehension that any other force able to harm us in our true worship of God may have entered us.⁶

Support for this statement and evidence for the authenticity of the spiritual exercise of Subud will be looked for in the results obtained; that is, according to the infallible test. 'By their fruits ye shall know them'. In this respect Bapak says:

... no theory is to be found in Subud but only a fact which works and grows and goes on by itself. We receive and experience this working; our hearts change, our characters change, our physical health changes, that which was wrong in us is put right – all this is the working in us of a powerful force of Life, which cannot be known by our ordinary

instruments and organs of perception. The work of the Life Force within us – the elimination of our faults and the development of what is good and true and real – requires no assistance from our thinking minds, our hearts or our desires, for the mind and heart and desires of man have no power to work any change in his nature. To make straight the soul and the nature of man is not in the power of his heart and desires, but pertains to Almighty God alone, who wields a force immeasurably beyond the grasp of man.⁷

The latihan, therefore, can be put to the test. It provides, as Bapak has said many times, *evidence* for anyone willing to make the initial act of surrender. Because there is no theory or teaching, no method or system, no ‘fixed exercise’ in Subud, the working of the latihan is different for each individual and is suited to his particular condition and capacity. It may be asked why such a latihan should appear on earth now. Why did it not come before?

. . . all mankind is now under very heavy pressure from worldly influences and cannot resist them. This pressure of the world upon man, and its hold over him, are so dreadful that he has, by his own actions, thrown the world situation into a state of chaos. This is the reason why Subud has only now come upon the earth, for God knows when the time is ripe for man to receive his gift in the right way.⁸

In fact, as Bapak has explained, all that man needs in the way of teaching has already been given to him by the prophets, from Abraham to Muhammad, who have appeared on earth. But man cannot keep the Commandments and continually ‘falls under the sway of the world around him’. All too often, what has been given to man remains something that he must take on faith; it does not become a part of his being.

Ever since the days of the prophets, man has obviously been given more than enough teaching; but, although this good counsel is available to him, he still lacks the strength to put it into practice. Everything that has come down to him has become, and remains for him, only material for thought. He merely thinks about what is needed for this life. He depends entirely upon thoughts and with his thoughts he assimilates

everything. Since all teaching thus stops short in his mind and never gets any further, he is unable to put it into practice, unable to make it real. There are many who occupy their whole minds with theological speculations; they ponder them for years and years and in the end both their minds and their feelings are lost in bewilderment.

Now, with the coming of Subud and that which by the grace of God we have received in Subud, it is God's will that the way should be opened for mankind, through the practice of the spiritual exercises, to live in a manner that accords with all that has been taught by the prophets. None of us, including Bapak, should make too definite statements about Subud; still, the evidence of our own experience, and the state in which we find ourselves when receiving, prove to us that Subud is a way of receiving which does not depend upon our desire, our self-will or our thinking mind, but rather that this way opens for us when everything within us has been stilled, and comes by the will of God, which is above and beyond our human understanding. That it is so means that it is God himself who works upon the being of man, since man no longer responds to teaching received from without, and since it is quite impossible for him to change the content of his own nature unless he is helped by a power infinitely greater than his own.⁹

To sum up, the latihan is the grace of God granted to mankind today under much easier conditions than ever before. It was received in the first instance by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo. It has as its aim the pure worship of God by men having the nature and character of Subud, that is possessing the qualities of *susila*, *budhi* and *dharma* or, in a word, by true human beings. But men are, for the most part, far from perfect and so the latihan has a twofold aspect; the worship of God and the purification of the worshipper. To begin with our latihan must be intermittent and impure; but as our purification proceeds our latihan becomes purer, moving towards its true aim, the worship of God by man according to God's will:

This gift of which Bapak is speaking has the nature of a process of purification by which man is cleaned of all kinds

of impurities, all kinds of sins, all kinds of faults, both those which have accumulated within him during his own life on earth and also those which he has inherited from the lives of his forefathers. After he has thus been purified from every stain, every fault within him, he will be able to do the will of God, that is to say, the will of God for his own good and happiness.¹⁰

This latihan, or Subud, must not however be thought of as a new religion; it is no more a religion than it is a method or system. (For this reason Subud is open to members of all religions, or none.) Bapak has described it as the technique of religion, in that it is a renewal of the inner content, or the reality, of religion:

The latihan which you have received must not be misunderstood or misinterpreted: it should not be taken, in thought or feeling, for a new religion. Its true nature is that of a renewal of the grace of God given to mankind.¹¹

The latihan has become necessary because with the tremendous development of science and technology, man has abandoned or become cut off from his inner being, in which flows a current which, if he could only contact it, would supply him with the guidance that he needs. This is the reason for the decline of faith which we lament in ourselves and criticize in the world around us:

Subud is not a new religion, but a renewal of the help to mankind against sliding too far into forgetfulness of the glory of God, for such forgetfulness would finally lead to the most terrible catastrophe for the being of man.

For a man without faith in God will not trust his fellow men either, and eventually men will look upon one another merely as animals, and between them there will no longer be any feeling of compassion and love, for they will only exist as animals. When such men gain power, they want more and more power and, without mercy, oppress those whom they conquer and these, once defeated, are pressed downwards lower and lower, deeper and deeper, for from man's inner being the feeling of love has vanished.¹²

We have lost our faith through thought, and no amount of thought will restore it to us:

What Bapak has received and what you, too, have received is truly the gift and grace of God to man. It is now at work within us in our spiritual exercises, in a way that lies beyond our thinking, wishing and willing; do not neglect it, do not let it slip, do not turn away from it, ever again, for if *this* is not present man will continue living in confusion, as the search for God is not easy. No, it is not easy for man to know God.

Let Bapak illustrate it thus: God in his power, his greatness and his true being embraces every world and every heaven. He pervades all there is, even the very clouds which we can see by day or night. But how could we possibly take in his greatness and his glory as it pervades all heavens? Surely it is impossible for our knowledge to grasp this immensity. God embraces all; he is beyond all. Therefore it is impossible for man to grasp God, unless God himself wills that man should be guided and brought back to him.¹³

3

The spread of Subud

In answer to prayer, Bapak in due course understood that the latihan which he had received could be received also by anyone who sincerely surrendered to the power of God in his, Bapak's, presence. The only condition laid upon him was that he should not seek aspirants: the latihan could be received only by those who came unsought and unsolicited, of their own free will. Not long afterwards this very thing happened and, in Java, the first group of people worshipping God through the latihan kejiwaan came into existence. During the years that followed the numbers slowly grew and groups were formed in various parts of Indonesia. This growth was made easier by the extraordinary fact that to receive the contact – to be 'opened' – it was not necessary to surrender in the presence of Bapak himself. The contact could be received if the aspirant sincerely surrendered in the presence of anyone who had himself already been opened. It proved to be a kind of spiritual chain-reaction.

Bapak made the condition that the openings should be performed only by men and women (who exercise separately) authorized to do so by Bapak himself. The term 'to open' is somewhat misleading. In practice, the 'opener' does no more than his own latihan; he is, as it were, only the witness to what happens in the person being opened. No one is asked to take on faith that the latihan and its transmission are as they are described here. Anyone who sincerely wishes it, and is prepared to surrender in the way described, may put all this to the proof for himself. Even Bapak wished for proof of the truth of what he had received:

In the past Bapak did not want to speak about his receiving, for Bapak still needed proof of what he had received. In fact, Bapak should have trusted whatever he had received but, be that as it may, Bapak still had doubts before seeing the proof.

According to Bapak's receiving in the year 1932, there would later be a second world war and at the end of this war Indonesia would become a free country. Bapak would then have to travel round the world to bring what Bapak had received, namely this latihan kejiwaan, to people who had the wish to follow the way of the latihan kejiwaan.

At that time Bapak was still working as a civil servant of the municipality of Semarang. When Bapak received that he would travel round the world, Bapak felt that it would be impossible for him to do so, for at that time Bapak was an ordinary employee and had no money, and Bapak really felt that there was no possibility of accomplishing this. Bapak felt that it was not even possible for him to travel round the country, let alone round the world. Therefore Bapak kept this matter to himself while waiting to see what situations might arise that would prove the truth of what he had received.

After the power of God had brought Bapak into the sphere of the latihan kejiwaan, it became necessary for him to give up all his work. During the year 1933, in the month of March, Bapak requested his release from his position as an official of the above municipality, and he also gave up all his work in side-jobs with private companies, although Bapak's income from these occupations was not small. When Bapak had given up his work he was without employment in the outer sense, but it was willed that Bapak should continuously receive the latihan kejiwaan.

Bapak obeyed this command, even though it was hard for him, but he stopped all his work because he had been given an understanding of what was to come. Bapak felt rather despondent when he was no longer working or earning any money, not even a cent, especially when he was out walking and saw things which he had previously been able to buy for the needs of his family. Bapak felt a heaviness of heart rising and falling within him. But, thanks to God, who had

strengthened Bapak's inner self, his inner feelings, which were sometimes weak, were transformed and became strong, so that the feeling of heaviness in his heart soon disappeared. In short, Bapak passed through many trials at this time of his life but, by the grace of God, the All-Loving and All-Compassionate, he felt as though all these things were of no importance. Furthermore, Bapak's endurance was increased by all that happened in the latihan kejiwaan. Therefore at that time and from then on, Bapak only attended to the brothers who wished to follow the latihan kejiwaan as Bapak did. As for the food and clothing which Bapak needed for life in this world, by the grace of God Bapak was just able to manage.

By the grace of God Bapak and his family were able to survive in these circumstances until the year 1945, that is, until the Second World War ended and Indonesia became a free country.

In 1945 Bapak and his family moved to Jogjakarta, where Bapak worked in the Government as chief of the financial section of the Army Medical Corps, and every Thursday and Saturday, in the evening, Bapak opened brothers who wished to follow the latihan kejiwaan. At the beginning of 1948 Bapak asked to resign from his position, because he felt that working as a soldier did not accord with Bapak's *jiwa*. Bapak then set up an enterprise as a building contractor, assisted by brothers who were experts in this field and who had received the latihan kejiwaan. . . .

In the beginning of the year 1954 Bapak felt that he had to move to Jakarta and so Bapak moved immediately. . . . Only after Bapak had moved to Jakarta did the expected time come, that is, the time when it really became possible for Bapak to go abroad and there open and guide people who wished to follow the latihan kejiwaan. Bapak made several journeys abroad with the result that the latihan kejiwaan of Subud spread widely and was followed by brothers and sisters of various races, countries and religions.¹

At a time when there still seemed to be no possibility of Bapak's making a journey outside Indonesia, he nevertheless felt that

someone might appear and provide the necessary means. This is exactly what happened:

... after the Second World War such a person did appear, a man who was simply used by God as an instrument. What happened was not because of the man himself; it all came from God.²

The man in question was an English Muslim called Husein Rofé. He had come to Java in search of someone who would give him real knowledge; the knowledge provided by religious teaching – in his case Islamic – did not satisfy him. What he sought was evidence. While conducting his search he supported himself by giving English lessons. One of his pupils spoke to him about Bapak and Rofé asked to be taken to meet him; he was introduced to Bapak and told him of his quest. ‘I have no knowledge,’ said Bapak. ‘The knowledge is God’s. I am merely someone who can give you this contact if you truly desire it.’³

So Rofé was duly opened and began to practise the latihan in Java. A few months later he moved to Hong Kong where he wrote an article about his Subud experiences in a magazine which circulated in Turkey and Cyprus. In Cyprus there was a group of English people interested in spiritual matters, and one of them, Meredith Starr, read Rofé’s article and at once wrote to Bapak asking him to come to Cyprus and teach him, and offering to pay Bapak’s expenses if he would visit Cyprus. When Bapak received this letter he remembered that Husein Rofé wanted to return to England, and so he sent a copy of Starr’s letter to Rofé in Hong Kong, and wrote to Starr to tell him that Rofé could return to England via Cyprus and could open the people there on his way.

Rofé agreed to go to Cyprus and there opened Meredith Starr together with the other members of his group. Soon afterwards Rofé wrote to Bapak saying that he was going on to England and that Starr and the others would be following him there. They hoped that Bapak would accept their invitation to travel to England, and they sent Bapak his expenses.

That was the beginning. Bapak accepted the invitation, which clearly signified that human beings would provide Bapak with money and not God. That was how it was; as there was

no way for God to give Bapak money, the power of God induced people to do so.⁴

At the time Bapak arrived in England a seminar was being held at Coombe Springs, Kingston-upon-Thames, under the direction of John Bennett, for people who followed the Gurdjieff system of self-development. To attend this seminar people had come from North and South America, Holland, Germany, France, South Africa and Sri Lanka. Bennett invited Bapak to stay at Coombe Springs and was himself opened there. Many of those attending the Gurdjieff seminar became interested in the Subud latihan and asked permission to receive the contact. Bapak gave his permission, 'as the latihan is indeed for all mankind', and during the following months people were opened every evening, until more than a thousand were practising the latihan. Bapak had to extend his visa and remain in England for seven months in order to cope with the influx and 'to make sure that the people from outside England really could in some degree receive and understand what the latihan kejiwaan of Subud was. After that Bapak went home again.'⁵

When those who had been opened returned to their own countries Subud began to spread around the world (a process that has continued ever since) until the latihan came to be followed in all continents and in over seventy countries. The diffusion of the Subud latihan has so far been geographical rather than numerical, as though it were first necessary for the latihan to be received over as wide an area of the earth's surface as possible. Those who receive and follow the latihan are not very numerous as yet in any country, and indeed the number of people in Subud has not appreciably increased for many years. Bapak has given the following explanation on the spread of the Subud latihan:

Those of you who have already received the contact may wish to see many others receive it also. Some of you may wish to see a million members in England in the next six months. But what about this million if they cannot be looked after? That could not be done, because those of you who should look after them have not yet had sufficient experience. Although a million people may wish to worship God you are as yet unable to give the right explanations and so your wish is quite useless. Proceed slowly, therefore, little by little; a

hundred, a thousand, two thousand, so long as they can all reach maturity and become complete. In this way we shall proceed at the right pace, realizing the obstacles and difficulties that may lie in our path.

To spread Subud by means of propaganda, simply because we live in an age of propaganda, is not the way. Propaganda is used everywhere today, but people are becoming tired of it. They see that one may be a clever talker but incapable of practising what one talks about. One can speak of riches without becoming rich oneself. One can also talk about how to be a good man and pure in heart and about how to behave in order to possess the qualities that one ought to have, but without experiencing any change of nature in this direction within oneself.

Such claims are boring for people to hear and Subud should not, therefore, follow that way. Just do your work while in Subud so that it can become an example. We should not make use of propaganda, but there should be evidence in ourselves for others to see. If, for example, before you started Subud you used to go to the cinema or the theatre every evening and to a football match every afternoon and then, after starting the exercise, you began to go only once a month, people would say : 'Ah, he is changed now. Before Pak Subuh entered Subud he went to the cinema every evening, but now he only goes once a month.' If it is like that, it is a good example. It is no good if Bapak says: 'Don't go to the cinema', when he himself goes every evening. That is not done.

Today mankind in general does not want to hear propaganda; they want proofs, because there are so many clever men who confuse the minds of others until their heads spin. This is the situation at present and because of that proof is demanded. Each proof should be a real one, representing the reality of the spiritual life. It should be shown clearly that this is a life which can rightly be an example, because it can be put into practice, and the proof which people demand is there. It is in truth the will of God for man that he should understand and be aware of his real self and of his eternal life, without in any way lessening the

ordinary understanding and awareness of his heart. God wills that man should come to an understanding and awareness of his real life, with tangible proofs according to his [God's] will, and that all men's functions should be purified by the working of the power of God.⁶

So Subud does not use propaganda and it does not seek publicity or the limelight of the media. If the latihan is the grace of God sent to help man, then its development and the progress of Subud are in God's hands and guided by his power. Man cannot comprehend it, let alone direct it. The latihan is the essence of freedom, and those who follow it have the chance to become truly independent. They will wish to share this grace but, equally, they must respect the freedom of others:

If we are affected by the attitude of other people, it is inevitable that we shall always find ourselves in a state of anxiety, for human nature is such that man is very easily swayed by honour and position and other worldly matters. This feature in him gives rise to a feeling of anxiety and he sees other people's actions towards him for the improvement of his inner condition as a threat to his position and standing in the world – for even though these may not be based on any reality, yet they have brought him satisfaction and the respect of ordinary people.

If we attempt to sow the seed of Subud as this is ordinarily done in the world – that is, by means of our thoughts and desires – not only will our efforts to penetrate into human society be obstructed, but they will be fraught with danger; opposition and hindrances will stand in our way, so that instead of making progress we shall find ourselves stranded among conflicts and enmities. Attempts to act in this way will bring us into competition with our fellow men.

The nature of man is such that although he may recognize and be aware of his own faults, and of the shortcomings of his outward behaviour, yet is it impossible for him to admit these deficiencies to others and to give up that which by now he has come to enjoy.

This, as Bapak has said before, is why it depends on the will of God alone whether the truth of Subud will make

progress and spread in the world or not, since Subud comes by the will of God and is beyond the knowledge, the expectation and the power of man. . . .

If Subud is the work of God in the being of man, then God in his power will accomplish this work and it is only for us of Subud to follow after him. That is all that is required of us; to follow the guidance we have received from God in our own inward being. Because God is omniscient, he knows the present situation of mankind; he knows that man in general will not relinquish honours and position, the enjoyment of his desires, his heart and his thoughts, and God also knows that all this is the result of domination by the lower forces* of man. These lower forces dominant within him have the effect of strengthening his desire for honour, for the praise and admiration of his fellow men, even though his basic condition is not as it should be. It is impossible for such a man to admit his faults, since this is tantamount to suicide for the lower forces, and they will not consent to kill themselves. This is quite obvious.⁷

To proscribe propaganda and proselytizing also implies the proscription of those special claims to divine favour upon which such activities are based:

We should never seek for men to call us wise or to acknowledge Subud as first among movements for the good of mankind. Never! Say only that Subud is as other manifestations of the power of God – even to those who know nothing of God, because it is God who knows. This is why Bapak never claims to be a saint, a prophet or anything like that – never. Pak Subuh is only Pak Subuh. For it is God alone who knows how Pak Subuh stands before God, and it is not possible for men to know it, so there is no need to say that Pak Subuh is a man who is close to God.⁸

At the same time, if we are sincere in acknowledging the omnipotence and omniscience of God, far from pressing our own claims, we shall be willing to respect the claims of others:

The nature of a man who is Subud, who has in him the

* See page 37.

qualities of *susila*, *budhi* and *dharma*, may be found elsewhere than among ourselves; there may be many such among Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and also those of no particular faith. We cannot know all this, but it is known to God. We should therefore never make any special claims for Subud; we should say that we are trying to practise and come to the worship of God in such a way as truly corresponds to his will. What, then, is required before everything is that we ourselves should be of the qualities of *susila budhi dharma*.

We should not wish to find fault with others; we seek our own truth. For instance, Bapak seeks his own truth and does not wish to find fault with other people. But if other people wish to follow us, we accept them. We do not wish to persuade them to join us, or criticize what they have been doing – we seek only our own truth and needs. For if we find fault with others and try to correct their shortcomings, our chance of correcting ourselves is extremely slender. Again, therefore, seek the truth of your own being and do not look first at what is wrong in others. This will add to the steadiness, speed and clarity of your own receiving.⁹

The whole question of the spread of Subud depends therefore upon example, upon the fruits.

When in this way we walk aright, many people will eventually come to Subud. Many brethren will come, not because they are attracted by an outward show, but because they are touched in their inner feeling by the example you give . . . ¹⁰

All growth, including individual growth, depends upon the will of God, and man's true role and highest aspiration must be to be an instrument through which the will of God may be manifested. This means no less than the surrender of all desire and all self-will. It would not be surprising, therefore, if many years were required to produce even a handful of such 'instruments'.

We should keep ourselves to the principles of *susila budhi dharma*, for these are the qualities which men should have in order to receive commandments and gifts from Almighty God. *Susila*, *budhi* and *dharma* are the qualities of a man who is truly human. This signifies that he respects and values the

being of his fellow men; he knows that there should be mutual help and true love between men; he is touched by the suffering of his neighbour; in short, he realizes that human life on earth should be harmonious, so that mankind can come to the worship of God. And that is how human life should be according to the will of God: we should live harmoniously together.¹¹

. . . we do not seek benefits or profits for our lives in this world; we seek the mercy and the love of God. These he will not bestow, nor will men receive them, unless they abide in the qualities of true human behaviour; in the right inner state and in complete submission.¹²

4

The spiritual and the material

Traditional religion (including those mystical movements which have grown up within it) has generally been associated with an attitude of 'otherworldliness'. It is assumed that religious people, in theory if not always in practice, look upon life in this world as a necessary evil. Even if they do not despise its material content to the extent of turning their backs on it, they are thought to regard it with suspicion as the source of sin and peril. Those who have seriously sought 'salvation' or 'enlightenment' have usually retired from the world in an effort to free themselves from its influence and avoid the snares of the devil and the flesh. Traditional spiritual disciplines are almost all devoted to overcoming and subjugating man's lower nature through the practice of strenuous asceticism and the exercise of will.

Subud, however, does not belong to this tradition. The latihan does not encourage such attitudes in its followers except, perhaps, initially or in times of 'crisis' (a term applied to sudden and unusually intense periods of inner purification). In this respect it is already possible to observe a certain development in Subud even in the comparatively short period of its expansion outside Indonesia. To begin with, Subud members were preoccupied with their receiving and with their adjustment to the mystery of the spiritual exercise, and so at first Bapak's explanations were concerned with this adjustment and the nature of the receiving. But quite early on Bapak began to stress the twofold nature of Subud, insisting that man has two equally important duties; the first towards God, and the second towards his life in this world.

Right from the very beginning a certain degree of organization was required in order that the latihan could be received in a regular and orderly way (men and women always exercise in separate groups). At the Subud International Congress at Coombe Springs in 1959 Bapak explained:

Regarding organization, it is impossible to have any one international form uniting all the various centres and branches, since the laws, conditions and customs of each country differ one from another. The Brotherhood of Subud is not in reality an organization, but a brotherhood of mankind throughout the world. That which is usually referred to as an organization of Subud is not an organization in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather the administrative structure necessary to serve the needs of the Brotherhood. That which gives unity to the Subud Brotherhood is the latihan, which comes from God and by means of which we worship God, and this cannot possibly be organized like some worldly undertaking. In truth it is God alone who directs, leads and guides the common worship of all mankind, and therefore this Subud Brotherhood of ours, standing before God, is beyond the reach of any human regulations.

None the less it is necessary to have some form of administrative machinery and records for this Subud Brotherhood of ours, to maintain external relationships between its members in such a way that harmony, mutual understanding and mutual help can be established.¹

Already, at this early stage, Bapak was giving indications concerning the future development of Subud.

Bapak hopes and recommends that those who sit on the committees will find a way to establish enterprises to provide the financial means to meet the needs of the Subud Brotherhood in various places. Apart from this, money thus acquired can also be used for other purposes, such as establishing schools, hospitals and homes for those in distress, who cannot see or find their true way of life. Members with some experience can be put in charge of such establishments, to guide these distressed people towards the

point at which they can themselves become aware of the right way for them to live in this world. This kind of undertaking also serves to accustom us to working in this world while continuing in our worship of God. For this is indeed the will of God, that man should worship him without in any way shutting himself off from the world or neglecting all the needs and abandoning the activities of worldly life.²

Many of us with spiritual aspirations have a deeply rooted contempt for, or fear of, the world, and for such people Bapak has repeated his explanations concerning this matter many times:

In the latihan or, in other words, while carrying out the latihan, you are reminded not to remain involved in thinking, heart and desires. This detachment is necessary so that you may learn how to use them.

But this does not mean that thinking, heart and desires should be discarded or abandoned; by no means! They remain with man and he needs them, for in them he has a force with which to pursue what is useful for his life on earth as well as for the hereafter.³

In Bapak's explanations a very clear distinction is drawn between the two parts of man's life: his passive role before God and his active role before the world.

Let it be clear then; what you have been receiving is the work of God alone and not the work of man. On the other hand it is ordained and willed by God that man *should* make use of his intellect, his will, his emotions and desires; that he *should* make use of his ambitions and abilities to provide for his needs while living in this world.

This is the truth: in the life of the creatures of this earth, and in particular in that of man, there are two ways, that is to say: first, the work of God within every creature he has made, particularly man; and, secondly, the work of man himself, the way in which he ensures his livelihood on earth by making use of his thinking, willing, desiring and every kind of wishing that is within him.⁴

In advising us to render unto God the things that are God's and

unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, Bapak exposes the fundamental reason for the split in man's consciousness and for the separation between religion and science. At the same time he also explains the essential difference between the spiritual exercise of Subud and conventional spiritual disciplines:

In the ordinary way, when a man thinks about God and about the life after death, he directs the whole of his thinking and feeling towards God in the attempt to understand the world beyond, and in this way he forces himself into a position of isolation from the ordinary conditions of life in this world. There are quite a number of people who in this way are more concerned with, and attach more importance to, the life after death than to their lives in this world. In this way they hinder progress here on earth, where it is indeed very necessary that it should continue.

That is why there are so many people – especially intellectuals – who advise others to make no effort to follow any spiritual discipline, saying that this can only lead to a miserable life in this world. And so it comes about that many people of high intellectual ability scorn religion; they pride themselves on their cleverness and despise those who follow the spiritual life. The intellectuals taunt the followers of religion and the spiritual ways, saying that they should ask their God to supply them with their worldly needs and to send them money from above so that they need not exert themselves to work. . . .

Those who are thus mocked and despised by the intellectuals have the attitude that happiness and success in this world are of little value, whereas happiness and position in the life after death are infinitely to be prized. These people hold that misery in this life does not matter and that we need take no thought for this life; it is better to die so long as we are sure of paradise.

There is something right in both points of view, but it should be understood that if man were not intended to use all of his various parts, God would never have created them. If man were not intended to use his thinking and his feeling, God would not have equipped him with these instruments,

while if he were not meant to walk and write and handle objects, God would not have created him with hands and feet. It is clear that God has made all these parts of man for a purpose, and that they should be used in a proper way. In truth it is a sin in the eyes of God if man does not make use of his endowment, for this means a refusal to put to use that which God has bestowed upon him. It is the will of God that man should use and work with everything he has – his brain, his heart, his emotions and everything else – provided that he will remember to be always vigilant in his use of these instruments and thus be able to use them in a proper manner and in accordance with the work he undertakes.⁵

In order to understand the uses to which man's faculties should be put it is necessary to understand how and of what we are composed. Through the practice of the spiritual exercise both the forces that make up the being of man and the forces that influence his character and conduct are gradually revealed to him in their true nature and way of working. As most of those who follow the latihan are, as it were, beginners, Bapak has referred to these forces many times in his explanations in order that those who receive may not be confused or alarmed:

Besides the instruments with which man is familiar – that is, his senses and all the members of his physical body – there are also the life forces which Bapak describes as the material, vegetable, animal and human forces; and also those forces which are higher than the human and which can influence men in such a way that they come to know and understand the life after death. All these forces exist in the Great Life around us and also within man himself.

These life forces, which fill every creature and especially man, enable man to direct any particular force into its own particular channel. For example, where a man works for a material aim, such as earning money, he should be able to be in a position to know that it is the material forces within himself that should be active. In this way, the material forces are directed towards material objectives. But a man who does not understand this, and who is not yet able to receive it, will also use the material forces in his endeavour to come to God

and enter paradise, although for this purpose it is the perfected human forces that are required; he uses the thinking mind, which should be employed in the affairs of this world, in his attempt to reach those states which belong to the heavenly realms and thus a distortion results. The corrective to this situation can be found in our Subud exercise, because in these spiritual exercises we are purified by the power of God so that we may become aware of the right way to work and to deal with whatever presents itself to us.

It is a fact that the forces which have the power to organize, deal with and use material objects are the material forces. In the same way the vegetable forces are able to organize and have contact with the vegetable world and everything connected with plant life; and the animal forces are able to control and organize animal life and everything which concerns it. In the same way, it is the human forces that can deal with and bring order into the human elements. Thus each force meets with its own kind – material with material, vegetable with vegetable, animal with animal and human with human. By means of the spiritual exercise the power of God will work within your inner being in such a way that you will eventually be able to understand and distinguish within yourselves the working of each individual force which is active in you, so that finally you will be able to work in the right way.

If a man is not in this condition of being able to distinguish the forces within him, then his physical body and his emotional feelings are subject to harm, and since what causes the damage is the action of various fine forces – finer even than the finest forces of the heart and mind – the damage done within man is itself of a very subtle nature.

This subtle and intangible damage will appear in the character; in fact we have come to accept these defects of character and to say that a man acts in this way because it is his nature to do so. These faults and defects within man are so complex and so subtle that it is impossible to correct them save only by the help and guidance of God, in the way you have already received in yourselves in the exercise. . . .

THE SPIRITUAL AND THE MATERIAL

In Subud you have now begun to know how to work and act in the world without neglecting your worship of God, so that in this way you will eventually cease to be influenced by what you are doing. When this transformation is complete, you will be able to work honestly, with a pure heart and in the worship of God.

The reason why a man who devotes himself entirely to money-making has no time for the worship of God, and lacks the inner serenity that comes from a feeling of thankfulness towards him, is because the whole of such a man's being is completely dominated by material forces. It can be said that for such a man material forces are his god. But those of you who have begun gradually to be able to distinguish between the various forces acting within you will become aware by degrees and feel the way in which material forces should be associated with material objects. You will also see how vegetable forces go with the vegetable world, animal forces with the animal world, human forces with the human world and that the perfect human soul – the *rohani** – goes straight to God and worships him.

So long as you have not reached this point at which you can really be aware of this relationship of all forces, you may still feel anxious and rather doubtful about it. In the meantime, until you are able to receive this awareness, it will be quite sufficient for you if, while you do your ordinary work, you never neglect your spiritual exercise of the worship of God; because it is in the exercise that you are purified and set free from whatever material forces remain in you.

As day follows day, month follows month and year follows year, you may be able to receive and experience for yourself what Bapak has just been speaking of, so that you will become true Subud men and women who obey the commandment of God; that is, people who are able to do their work and fulfil their obligations both in this world and in the hereafter.

* The *rohani* is the level of the perfected human being (the word comes from *roh*, which means spirit). It is the level above that of the ordinary human being, the *jasmani*.

This is quite different from the situation of a man who concentrates entirely on the life after death. For us in Subud it is necessary to fulfil our worldly obligations while we still live on earth, and at the same time we receive in our soul, our being, our feeling, what is the will of God. Thus, when we come to die we continue to live through the change in condition. This can be compared with the retirement of a man who has someone else to take over and carry on his work. The work should therefore never be carelessly abandoned upon retirement, with no one to carry it on. In the case of death, it is the other being of the same person that has to continue to live and work in the next world. This can only be accomplished if the division of work has been completed during his life on earth; that is, if material objects were dealt with by material forces, if the vegetable world and vegetable food were met and dealt with by vegetable forces, if animals and animal food were met by animal forces, if bodily human contacts were made through human forces and if all that concerns the life after death was done by the perfect human soul. When these forces in man have worked together harmoniously during his life, then his obligations in this life will end with his death.⁶

However, the fears of our forebears – and of religious seekers in general – in relation to the material world and the making of money were not unfounded, because in most cases it is only the action of the latihan that makes it possible for men to pursue material activities without being dominated by the forces they must use and with which they must make contact. This is particularly so in modern times when the contact with and use of material forces and objects is so widespread. There is a great difference between a commercial enterprise undertaken in the ordinary way and one undertaken by business men who follow the spiritual exercise, provided they have followed it long enough to be able to recognize and make use of (as opposed to being used by) the material forces with which they must work.

Although money-making may be included in the field of our activities and although to all outward appearance this may be just the same as any other similar concern, in reality it is

quite different. In the ordinary way it is the nature of those who are engaged in making money to be dominated and influenced by it, whereas we, when we work with money, are not overpowered by it but are its masters and it is we who have power over it.⁷

This solution* to an age-old problem is of great importance to man's life in this world. In his explanations over the years Bapak has constantly returned to the matter, explaining it in greater detail as the understanding of members deepens with experience; yet there are still many who find it difficult to reconcile their spiritual experience with the necessities of life in this world:

You should not feel anxious or suspicious that you might become involved in and influenced by material forces because you engage in money-making enterprises, for it is indeed the will of God that we should do our work in this world like everyone else, provided that we never neglect our worship of God.⁸

So men who wish to return to God must at the same time be realistic; they should accept that God who created them and put them to live in this world also provided them with the means to do so.

The things you can do and the things you need in this world must be made to correspond with the things that belong to this world. Don't try to make them correspond with the things that are not of the world. Don't think, for instance, that it is unnecessary to work, that the Lord God will provide you with a livelihood by spiritual means: that is the talk of dreamers.⁹

But this does not mean that the two aspects of man function separately and independently of one another, resulting in a kind of schizophrenia. Because each part fulfils its rightful function, so all the parts can contribute to the right functioning of the whole. The two aspects are related as the vessel and its content. About the content we can do nothing (apart from surrendering everything in our worship of God) but the vessel is very much our

* The word 'solution' is used on the understanding that it is subject to the test of experiment.

concern, for new wine cannot be poured into old bottles. We can assist the process of receiving by preparing a suitable place, and this is done by work, by effort, and by using and developing all our talents and capabilities to the fullest possible extent:

So we specialize in reality, brother and sisters. We are the Spiritual Brotherhood of Subud, who specialize in facts, for without evidence nothing will be believed. This applies even more to the people of Europe.* There they believe nothing without evidence. If they are merely told to believe, they cannot believe.

Of that I indeed approve. Don't be credulous. You must be thoroughly critical. This and that must be questioned. Don't imagine that when the time comes everything will happen automatically. Don't do that. Unless efforts are made, it is not possible to receive.

Proof of this is to be seen in the case of people who live in the heart of the jungle, or those who come into the same category as those who live in the jungle. They do not think much. They do not think about this or that; they merely think each morning of hunting for food. Once they are fully fed, they go to sleep . . . there are no questions that are really important to their inner selves, to which they require answers. Because they do not ponder about anything, they cannot receive anything. For they make no effort.¹⁰

Obviously any spiritual movement that sets up commercial enterprises does so in order to raise money for its own financial support and to realize its social aims. In Subud money is needed to hire or buy or build premises for the latihan, to pay for journeys by the Spiritual Guide, for publications and to finance undertakings such as schools for difficult or retarded children, homes for the elderly and other institutions which may benefit society in general.

In Subud however there are other equally important reasons for setting up enterprises.** It is not simply a question of making

* Bapak was speaking to Indonesian members.

** Bapak has explained that the word 'enterprise' should not be interpreted in a narrow sense. It does not mean that everyone who enters Subud must become a business man. It means that each one should do his work or use his talents in a special way and to a special

money; those in Subud should not only follow the spiritual exercise but also work in an enterprise, because only by developing both aspects of his nature can man fulfil his obligations as a human being.

This is Bapak's explanation of the significance of enterprises in the context of the material situation prevailing in the world today:

The world of today is ruled by the glory of the material forces. If you look at the world nowadays you cannot deny, you cannot but admit that everywhere it is the material forces that are in command or that hold the rudder. In truth the material forces are always in contact with man's mind, and man's mind has made incredible progress in recent years, to the extent that it has invented many tools of tremendous power, including such things as nuclear devices and so on. But because man is influenced, because man's mind which has created these things is under the influence or subject to the action of the material forces and is accompanied by a *nafsu** which wants always to win and to come out on top, all the signs indicate that all man's inventions, all the greatest and most powerful of man's inventions, will be used to oppress others, to restrict the freedom of others, to reduce the degree and standing of others, as opposed to the group that happens to control these tools and devices.

So from that we can conclude that if it happens that in the world today mankind collapses or is wiped out, then it will be thanks to the action of the material forces. It will be the material forces that kill man in this world. But however that turns out, in our case we have already received the power of Almighty God, we have received God's guidance which envelops us both inwardly and outwardly; and for us there will be a way in which, no matter what happens around us, we will be guided inwardly and outwardly. This is the importance of the latihan kejiwaan for us, because it is as a

end. It means that those who work for others should set up enterprises – if they can – in order to become independent; and that those who have no settled work should start working in this new way. But a doctor, a violinist or an architect already has an 'enterprise' in the practice of his profession.

* See page 16 footnote.

result of the latihan kejiwaan that we learn how to work in this world, how to use our heart and mind and yet not be influenced by the lower forces. This is why Bapak always encourages us to do enterprises, because for Subud members an enterprise is an arena for practising how not to be influenced by the material forces. In other words, an enterprise is a test, an exercise, that in everything we do, in our everyday work that we need to do in this world, we are always shadowed and guided by and aware of the movement of the power of God which is within our being. So then the lower forces, the material forces, do not use us, overpower our brain and our heart, but we are able to use them in the way that we need.

This is what Bapak always advises us to do. Some Subud members still feel that enterprises are something to be afraid of, to shy away from because they will somehow reduce our spiritual standing or make difficulties for our worship of God, for our spiritual life. It is just the opposite. It is through doing enterprises that we can learn how not to be influenced by the material forces and all the other forces, the other life forces that Bapak has described.¹¹

This practical application of what is received in the spiritual exercise is a new element in man's life; it is natural, therefore, that it should not be easy to carry out:

When we do enterprises as Bapak has described, we must remember that we will certainly encounter difficulties, because the enterprises which Bapak advises us to do, or which exist in Subud, are something that is completely new for mankind in this world, because until now all the enterprises that have been undertaken by men have always been moved by the will, that is, by the *nafsu*. So that once they progress and, let us say, become very wealthy or very powerful or very successful, then that power and wealth and success are all the fruit of man's working under the influence of the material forces and the result of that wealth is that man is subdued by the material forces so that he becomes their tool. In other words, instead of worshipping Almighty God, man then worships the material. The difference in our

case is that when we undertake enterprises, and we are truly following the guidance of God as we have received it in the spiritual exercise, then we find that, when we are successful, or when we obtain wealth from that enterprise, then that wealth is not the fruit of the material forces manipulating us but, on the contrary, is obtained by the *service* of the material forces. . . . In the past, and throughout the world until now, men have only done enterprises and business from the power of the passions, and have been and are therefore entirely manipulated and controlled by the material forces. That is why in religion it is always taught that man should not seek wealth, nor pay any attention to material wealth, money and so forth. Well, that is all very well if it is done in the wrong way, as Bapak has described it. But if, on the other hand, we can carry out enterprises as Bapak has indicated, in accordance with the spiritual exercise, then the result is something that we greatly need, because in this world we need money. It is perfectly right and necessary for us to pursue wealth because we need wealth, we need money for our life in this world. The important thing is that in obtaining this money we must not be manipulated by, or be under the influence or be the puppets of the material forces. On the contrary, we ought to be the masters, so that whatever we achieve is truly the fruit of our own behaviour. In this way, then, we begin to understand that the teaching of religion is really something necessary and something real, because we are able to experience for ourselves, once we have worked in Subud enterprises, that instead of the material forces becoming an obstacle to us, they become the helpers who fulfil all the needs of our life in this world, thus making it possible for us to worship God. Then we understand the pattern: Almighty God creates the material forces, he creates the material world and the material wealth which can become our instrument, which then permits us to worship Almighty God. So that it is as Bapak has said: 'From God comes the material and then the material returns again to God through us.'¹²

5

Marriage and children

Before discussing the relations between men and women, it would be as well to begin with Bapak's explanation concerning the nature of man and the various forces which go to make up a human being. This is what he said in a talk given in London in August 1959:

The cosmic order, by the decree of Almighty God, comprises different levels. Each level is a sphere or world of its own; beginning with the lowest, there are the world of the material life forces, the world of the vegetable life forces, the world of the animal life forces, the world of the human life force and the world of the life force of beings superior to the human beings of this world. These are only the first five levels, but it is not necessary to take them any further.

On its own level each of these life forces constitutes a world of its own; for example, the material world contains millions of souls analogous to the souls of human beings in this world. The souls of each of these worlds tend to be drawn towards and enter certain focal points of attraction wherever these are available. Such focal points come into existence through the union of male and female. The vehicle, which acts as a magnet to draw a soul towards it, is produced by the union of husband and wife; although it appears merely as a fluid, this may well be called the water of life, able to retain the life force which causes it to move, function and develop to completion.

Since the vehicle has come into existence through the union of husband and wife it is derived from the essences of these two beings of opposite sex. It acts as a kind of lens to focus the approaching soul which will enter it. And if the thoughts of this couple have been constantly occupied, before and during union, with the affairs and pleasures of this world, then the drop of fluid can serve only to focus material forces and nothing higher, so that if a new being comes into existence it will be capable of containing only material forces and the soul of this child will be a material soul.

This new vehicle, this mere drop of fluid which is filled by a material soul, will gradually grow and develop in its mother's womb until it is completely formed as a human being and ready to be born into this world. Whatever the soul within the child, its outward form will be human; its body, organs and limbs will be human and therefore he will think human thoughts and entertain human desires. He will hold things in his hands and walk upright as human beings do; in short, all his manifestations will be those of a human being.

This can be compared to the striking of a gong; whether it be struck by a child or a learned man or a beautiful woman, the metal still produces the same sound. Whoever may strike it, the nature of the metal remains the same, and it will always produce the same sound. It is the same with souls; whether the inner content of a man, which governs his whole being, may be a material, vegetable or animal soul, nevertheless his outward manifestations will be those of a human being.¹

Today, especially in the Western world, traditional morality and the teaching of religion concerning the relations between men and women have been largely repudiated, in practice if not always in theory. What is received in the spiritual latihan of Subud does not, in general, encourage Western permissiveness but a return to more traditional values. Upon these, however, it throws a new light, because it provides an understanding – or an experience – of the meaning of the old teachings and of the reason why current

practices are not right for man or for human life on earth.

If we again quote Bapak's explanations, this is because his receiving is the clearest, the most complete and the most profound, and may be said to embody the true essence of the Subud experience. Bapak's explanations do not constitute a teaching; as Bapak himself says, 'Bapak is only a channel, an intermediary to convey to you what Bapak receives for your needs.'²

In the first place marriage – the pairing of male and female – is fundamental to the existence of life on earth:

. . . in fact marriage is something essential, something willed by God, so that all his creatures – material, vegetable, animal and human – are required to be matched, required to pair off. For it is through their pairing that the world is truly filled, in accordance with God's will.³

The purpose of marriage is not only to populate the world, but to bring into it the right kind of being and, in particular, human being; for it is in the relations between men and women that the human – as opposed to the material, vegetable and animal – forces manifest themselves. In the form of words spoken by God to Adam, Bapak says:

When your feelings are strong and your heart firm and you put your trust in God Almighty, then in time you will not easily be obstructed by anything; so your marriage will yield children, descendants, of the best kind. Children, that is, who feel a wish to love their fellow men, who feel a wish to help those needing help, a wish to explain things and to make them clear to anyone who is in the dark. And they will be willing and able to bring harmony to people who are quarrelling and disagreeing with one another.

Acting like that, those children will make their community peaceful, eminent, harmonious, even though it spreads wider and wider as time goes on.⁴

So the institution of marriage is not for the purpose of simply producing children but for producing children who possess the true human qualities, so that this world may be a place of peace and harmony. Such an aim is not easy to achieve: 'Truly, when people marry and take a husband or a wife, it is a test in life, every day and all the time, if they wish to have offspring who really will

be examples to their respective communities.⁵ Marriage must not be entered into lightly, because a human being must be responsible for his actions:

You must be good at taking responsibility. If you are fearless enough to marry, you must be fearless enough to uphold your wife. If you are fearless enough to act wrongly, you must be fearless enough to accept the responsibility. That is how *satria* or a man of quality behaves.⁶

Apart from this assumption of responsibility, there is another and deeper reason for the sanctity of marriage, and this is that it represents – or ought to represent – not only the union, or making one, of male and female, but also the union, or meeting and manifestation, of human forces.

Man, however, is weak and sinful. He cannot live in this world without committing sins, and these sins, in turn, debase his inner content, and so 'prevent him from being able to feel and be aware of his worship of Almighty God.'⁷ As we have already seen, this situation can be corrected, and man's content raised to its proper level, by surrender to the power of God in the latihan. But this benefit could also be received through sexual union, if we only knew and understood it:

Now the possibility for man to correct this situation, or feel his relationship to Almighty God, can only come about . . . if he can receive something at the moment when he is not influenced by the lower forces. And, actually, the moment when a human being is not influenced by the lower forces is the moment when he unites with the opposite sex. In other words, at the moment of union between man and woman. Because at that *moment* when we experience the union between man and woman, at that moment we are not aware of our needs in this world, of our worries, of our problems and so on. We only feel at that moment the bliss of our being. . . . It is at that *moment* that we have the opportunity to remember our Creator, or to feel a bond with our Creator. But usually it is not like that. Usually, at that moment, the man is only aware of the woman, and the woman is only aware of the man. But, in fact, that moment is provided in order that they can both be aware of God. So,

for the man, the existence of the woman at that moment is only the equipment, or what he needs to be aware of his connection with Almighty God, and vice versa for the woman.⁸

It is clear from this that the union of male and female, the sexual act, is in reality an act of worship, a sacred act, and it should not be considered as merely a source of physical pleasure, or as only an expression of mutual love and desire:

As Bapak said before, the union of husband and wife is a receiving or a kind of latihan. So the men who are already married perform a life-latihan when they unite with their wives. Don't feel or accept that the characteristic of the union of husband and wife is pleasure. That will preclude finding the right way . . . the union of sexes makes worship of God easy for you. Your feelings become pure, you have compassion and pity for your fellows.⁹

Nor on the other hand should the sexual act be repudiated in the interests of 'holiness':

. . . the moment of union between male and female is the opportunity for all creatures to feel their connection with their Creator because at that moment they are free from the influence of all extraneous forces. This is something that is very much in line with what we receive in the latihan kejiwaan. Therefore, the latihan kejiwaan is actually a source of knowledge and understanding whereby all the secrets of life can be opened up and become clear and understandable to us.

This fact . . . is something that is particularly understood or emphasized in the religion of Islam, that is, that man really must *not* put aside the experience of the union of man and woman. But the trouble in Islam is that this is sometimes taken too far, and people only imitate it outwardly – that is, they do not really understand the purpose or the real meaning of the teaching of Islam. So it is important for us to understand that for us this is a secret: that we can know, that through this we can experience that which is meant by worship of God, by the words 'worship of God' for *man* which is, in fact, the union of man and woman.¹⁰

From this we can understand why marriage is fundamental to human life, why it must be undertaken in all seriousness, why it can never be merely a civil or legal contract, and why divorce can only be an ultimate recourse, in the spirit of the *hadith** of the Prophet Muhammad: 'That which is legal, but which God abhors, is divorce.' In fact if the marriage is a true one, is a marriage, then divorce is precluded.

. . . don't believe and feel that the union of husband and wife is a means of gratification. Feel it as a way to know life, a way whereby you can have the *nafsu mutmainah*.**

Hence Bapak says that if you are really like that there is, of course, no question of divorce – none. . . . For God's will is not that a marriage relationship should end in divorce. No, it ends only in death, which is a different matter. You have to be mindful of that from first to last, from beginning to end, and never reach the point of disharmony.¹¹

Obviously infidelity in marriage is also wrong: '. . . it is *very* much forbidden [in religion] for a man to have relations with a woman *other* than the woman who is his wife, because if he does that he will not be able to obtain the reality of the union of man and woman.'¹² This reality, as Bapak explained in the same talk, is the becoming one of the man and the woman: '. . . there becomes one human being – one human being who worships Almighty God.'¹³

There is another reason for avoiding promiscuous sexual encounters and that is the influence that men and women exert upon each other through the sexual act. When a man and a woman unite sexually there is always an interaction and intermingling of the forces which make up their inner content. If, in both cases, it is the human force that fills them, then we have an ideal situation.

In reality, however, quite a number of people, although men in outward appearance, do not yet have in them the *jasmani*

* A reported statement of the Prophet Muhammad, as distinct from what was revealed to him in the Qur'an.

** The good, or human, passion.

or human force. Therefore, in . . . the connection of *jiwa* with *jiwa*, the woman's self is filled, of necessity, with a male force that is not human.¹⁴

The real meaning of traditional and religious prohibitions can be grasped only if we can truly understand what happens when these rules are disobeyed; when we are moved only by the lower forces of desire, we can cause and receive a harm to our inner selves that has serious and lasting effects:

For a young man who has behaved wrongly before marriage . . . the possibility of experiencing so good a state of affairs (a good and happy marriage) can scarcely be said to exist. His errors have been such that sexual relations with him cause havoc to the content of his wife's inner feeling, which also finally meets a fate like her husband's.

Thus does it happen that their hopes for their life to go well in the future are dimmed. This is the reward of a man who acts only from desire, debasing what should be a good state.

Inevitably the low, depraved forces flowing from the husband have a terrible effect on his wife, soiling and degrading the once clean and pure content of her inner feeling.

The husband does not think of his behaviour as corrupting, for his heart has become an instrument of the low, debased forces which entered into him before marriage, when he took pleasure in associating sexually with women filled with such forces.

So although in reality his conduct is destructive, nevertheless he feels it only as right and worthy.¹⁵

Since so many of us are filled, to a greater or lesser extent, with forces below the human level, we cannot really be blamed for our harmful actions, since these forces influence our hearts and our minds so that we contrive to justify all that we do. How then can we become conscious of and rectify this situation?

A man not yet aware of his inner feeling supposes that, however he behaves, it is bound to stay clean and unchanged. So, feeling only pleasure and enjoyment, he associates with attractive women who have often and for a long time mixed

with all sorts of other men. Such are the circumstances of a man's life, including what goes on within him. So be assured that thought cannot possibly be used to find the truth about this.

In sum, then, to be able to know the truth of this to the point of having real understanding, there seems to be no alternative so easy as a way whereby the self is trained without having to arouse thought and imagination.¹⁶

The training referred to is, of course, the spiritual exercise. Experience suggests that the latihan can make it possible for a man or woman to become aware of his or her faults, and of his or her real situation, and, if they can truly submit to its action, to correct them.

But wrong actions resulting from a low or faulty inner content of the self do not only damage those who perform them and their marriage partners: they also affect the children of the marriage. When a man is in the grip of forces below the human level, then every part of him, body, heart and mind, is affected: 'So later on, when he begets a child, his child will also be swayed by those low forces and will have a character very different from that which his father had when still young and pure.'¹⁷

The character of a child is determined at the moment of conception, and this depends upon the inner content and the actual state of the parents at that instant of union. Did they come together moved by lust or desire; or by tenderness and mutual love; or in a spirit of surrender and true worship? Were they themselves pure or had their inner content been affected by earlier experiences? Had they quarrelled before union? Or were they at peace and in harmony?

So that they may be in the right state to become one and, if God wills, to conceive a child, those who already follow the latihan are encouraged to approach sexual union in the same state as that in which they carry out their worship, because

. . . the obstacle to the perfect union of the content of the inner feeling of man and woman is . . . not the nature of man's body but the low forces which that body comes to contain.

Likewise, what can isolate the influence of all those low

forces is not the body nor the man, but the great power that is felt to be in contact with the inner feeling after the mind stops working.¹⁸

So we can see that the well-being and happiness of a couple, a family, a community and, ultimately, the whole world depend upon our attitude to marriage and children, and on the way we fulfil our responsibilities towards marriage and towards ourselves.

By marrying . . . God's creatures can multiply until they fill the world with their kind, that the world may be busy, may prosper and lack nothing. Such is God's will. This is both what the world is for and what human beings are in the world for.¹⁹

Besides being an essential part of our worship of God, marriage is also essential to our own development into true human beings:

. . . the union of a man and a woman forms a true human being; *manusia*. Bapak is not saying that someone who is still single is half a person; no, but a person who is still single, not yet married, is an ordinary human being, not yet able to feel the perfection of the true human being. Even when people are married, but do not yet have a child, they cannot yet be called perfect, because they are not yet what is called *tritunggal*, three in one; a trinity of *karso* (will), *roso* (inner feeling) and *kenyataan* (result). That is why the child that arises from its two parents shows the nature of their union. That is why when and if people are harmoniously married, if they are in agreement – though, of course, they will sometimes disagree in the course of their lives – if they are harmonious in their lives they will give rise to children who are truly the children of a real union, the children of two parents who have become one. That forms the *tritunggal*, three in one.²⁰

To achieve this trinity the couple need to become one in feeling: If the hearts of man and wife have become one in feeling, their child will be the child of one person. If husband and wife are always disagreeing, their child will be the child of two people, not of one. That is all right unless the husband is

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

the embodiment of the material life force or the wife is dominated by it. Then the child will be the child of the material, not a human one. And if a parent is filled with the animal life force, the child will have an animal nature in a human body.²¹

Marriage is not easy; indeed, it is a hard way. Yet the patience and fortitude needed to make a success of it have their reward:

Husband and wife have to face many things in order that their marriage may truly be worship of God and their union produce children whose feelings are united with their own. If that can come to pass, the close-knit unity of feeling between husband and wife will also exist between parents and children.

That is the true importance of the latihan kejiwaan of Subud – to train and guide you towards unity of feeling, so that there will always be a firm bond between you and your parents, you and your children.²²

6

Education and work

Bapak has repeatedly explained that a newly born child is still in contact with, one may say centred in, his *jiwa* and has very little contact with the outside world into which he has been born. As time goes by, however, and as his senses develop, he relates more and more to the outside world and less and less to the inner world of the *jiwa*, until finally the inner self of a human being becomes shut off or closed:

The latihan kejiwaan is an awakening of the inner self, which already begins to be closed up in childhood by the *nafsu*, that is, by thinking.

And through more and more thinking and learning the inner self is closed still more. So studying or learning closes a person's inner self. However, it can still be open at times, namely when he is able to be calm, that is to say, when his heart and mind are cleansed.¹

Conventional education, therefore, has the effect of shutting a person off from the life of the inner self and centring him in the activity of the heart and mind which are continually being developed.

In an ideal world, education would be based on the perception and development of a person's innate or true talents.

Recognition of . . . children's talents scientifically, from outside, is made by observing the children's progress in the various subjects they study. By this means their talents can be recognized.

But finding their talents through Subud, through the latihan kejiwaan, is not like that, for the talents recognized by a scientific approach are talents of the mind and outer nature, not of the inner self or inner nature.

So you have two ways of observing. Besides the ordinary way, usually based on the children's school marks, you need also to observe by means of the kejiwaan. The way of testing* by the standard of the kejiwaan is not influenced by thinking, by passions. In testing, you only surrender to Almighty God. By this approach you can recognize the children's true talents.

This is what Bapak would like you to do later when you have schools, beginning with the lower and middle schools and going on to the higher schools. Once you have established through testing that 'this is right for the child', it only remains for him to continue on that course.

Through the mind one cannot really understand a person's inner self, for this demands patience and being empty of thoughts.

Clearly, only Almighty God can lead and guide one to receive and understand about the inner self of another person or child.²

This does not mean, however, that ordinary methods of teaching should be discontinued; rather, it means that guidance is received from within as to the direction in which these methods should be applied. Still less does it mean that the teacher should try to teach or change the inner self, for this is not within man's competence:

If you try to get a child's outer and inner to match – that is to say, if you try to improve the child's *jiwa* – so that the vessel or body may be used as extensively as possible and produce good results, this is indeed difficult.

Not only is it difficult . . . it is impossible to change the inner content, the *jiwa*, from outside, by means of the vessel. This is something that simply cannot be done by a human

* The word 'testing' refers to what is received in the latihan in response to a specific question.

being; it is not possible. The one who can change the *jiwa* is Almighty God.³

The nature of a man's inner content is determined at the moment of conception, and no amount of subsequent teaching or education can alter this. So if we wish for a child to return to his former pure state

what can be done? Seen from the *kejiwaan*, he needs to be opened or to receive the *latihan kejiwaan* at the age of eighteen, when the world's many influences that prevent his feelings from receiving in the *kejiwaan* have accumulated in him.⁴

As far as our own efforts are concerned, education should be based upon the application of sound educational principles, guided by what is received concerning the true inner nature of those we are teaching. Addressing himself in particular to those who might be teachers in future Subud schools, Bapak has explained how education may be transformed through guidance received in the *latihan kejiwaan*:

In these schools you will need to recognize and know how the pupils are. Bapak has already said that this should be done through testing. Although, for instance, a child's *jiwa* may be of a material kind, its brain and heart and everything else is healthy. You cannot say that such a child will not be as clever as others. No, of course not. Many people with a material *jiwa* are in fact very clever . . .

Now here is what you need to do in the schools – besides teaching the pupils there as usual. As the schools have their guidelines, you may not deviate from the regulations laid down by a country's education authorities. You have to abide by them, you may not disregard them.

Now, if you have pupils, you should observe where their capacity for study lies and where their weakness lies. Then you will know that a child is weak in this or in that respect. This is why it is useful for school teachers to be helpers, as through testing they can observe the children's capacities and enable them to study accordingly.

Arithmetic is not the only study to make a child's life happy. Other subjects too can do this. Some people can

obtain happiness by studying literature; and there are people, and not a few of them, who find happiness and nobility in their lives only through their sense of humour and their joking; and others, through drawing. So you can test where the children's strengths or abilities lie, and also where their weaknesses lie, and thus be able to lead them in a direction in harmony with their capacity and strength.⁵

A child should not be forced along a path which does not harmonize with his true nature:

. . . do not lead him along that path, but along one where he can work in accordance with his inner nature or inner self.⁶

Bapak then gave the example of a child who was forced by his parents to train as an engineer. He made so little progress that they felt he must be stupid and lacking in ability. They asked Bapak's advice, and Bapak advised them to send him to another school where he could study the social sciences – where he immediately began to make good progress. Another parent wished his child to become a lawyer. But he was a quiet child, weak in speech and self-expression. Bapak advised that he study technology and he has since become an engineer.

So through the latihan it is possible to get to know a child's true talent, which is the expression of his or her inner self, and which will bring him not only success but contentment and fulfilment in his life. If we think of the innumerable people who are tired or listless, frustrated or discontented, because they are doing jobs they do not enjoy and only do because their training leaves them no alternative, we can see that the coming of the latihan has opened up immense possibilities in the field of education and choosing one's work in life. It is now possible for us not only to guide the young towards the fulfilment of their true and usually hidden potentialities, but also to receive guidance ourselves concerning our own true talent or vocation. This has important and beneficial social implications, since when men and women do the work they are truly and innately fitted to do, no social stigma – or status – can be attached to their occupation or situation in life.

The latihan underlines the extreme importance of work, in addition to worship:

The latihan kejiwaan which you receive and follow provides proof that your senses and all the parts of your body have begun to move or be moved. This means that the whole of you should be active and has to work.

Clearly then your life in this world is not to be devoted just to the kejiwaan; the basis of your worldly life has to be work. So as well as taking part in the latihan kejiwaan and receiving and following its course, you must be active and strive to provide for your needs as long as you are living on earth.

Thus the latihan kejiwaan of Subud, which is essentially worship of the One God, makes you realize that you have to work as part of your worldly life, besides following the latihan. Providing for your livelihood depends upon using and working with your whole self. And, to avoid difficulties and hardship, and to ensure the happiness and well-being of your lives, your conduct should be especially good.⁷

Sooner or later, the action of the latihan affects every part of the one who follows it: body, senses, heart, mind and consciousness, so that we are gradually able to distinguish between actions, movements, thoughts and impulses which arise from within, uninfluenced by the desires of the heart and mind, and those which are so influenced. In this way it becomes possible to find work to do which is in harmony with our inner feeling (the *jiwa*) and to receive guidance from the power of God in everything we undertake. And this possibility also brings other benefits for the individual:

With the *jiwa* accompanying and sharing in your actions, they will not be constantly influenced or dominated by the passions. When they are, the desires have no limit. You will always wish for all kinds of things. For example, you may hope for a small house or a certain amount of money before you have either. But, when your hopes have been fulfilled, and you have a small house and a little money, you will not stop at that but will want still more.

And so it goes on, without end. That is the nature of the *nafsu* (passions) when they continuously dominate your inner feeling. So you are indeed fortunate to have the

guidance of the inner feeling, pointing the way so that you can avoid excesses that would be harmful to others as well as to yourself.⁸

This possibility of working under the guidance of the inner feeling, rather than being impelled by the forces that manifest themselves in the heart and mind, has wider implications:

In dealing with people of other nationalities or races, you will be able to work together to get things done, because your actions are based on the *jiwa*, and the *jiwa*, not being influenced by the *nafsu*, is not affected by differences of nationality.

Such is God's will, brothers and sisters, in order that people may live harmoniously in this world. For whether the state of the world is good or bad depends upon its inhabitants. So if we are really to put into effect what God has decreed for us, if we are really to prove that we can make good use of our true talents, then we have to be active and work . . .⁹

Those who follow the latihan are able to distinguish between the usual impulses of the heart and mind and the inner guidance that is received, and to combine them; but this 'is something you cannot possibly attain by means of the mind. It can only be given by the grace of God.'¹⁰

So ideally, from the time we finish our formal education and start working to provide for ourselves and our families, we should know what to do and how to do it. Yet many of us have not found our real selves, and lack even an animal's ability to provide for itself through its instincts:

Why do so many of you become stranded, coming to a dead end in your lives, as though you acted in the dark? It is because you are not yet able to be aware of the grace of God, cannot yet receive it, and hence cannot understand your real self and your talents.

That is the great benefit of the latihan kejiwaan for you who have been able to receive. Your lives in the world are truly provided for, ensured. By whom? By you yourselves.¹¹ 'By you yourselves.' This brings us to one of the main points

Bapak constantly emphasizes in his explanations: the need to be independent, and to stand on our own feet, inwardly and outwardly.

Everyone who follows the latihan receives what is right and appropriate for himself and, as everyone is different, everyone receives differently. If we imitate others – either in our worship or in our worldly lives – we block our own progress:

There is a saying, brothers and sisters, that however fortunate someone may be who is not close to God, someone who is close to God is more fortunate still. God is close to you, so why are you not fortunate? You go about things in the wrong way . . . Your lives are always difficult. You do the wrong things; you make mistakes. What is the reason for that? It is because you always imitate other people in your work. If your friend is selling *kwaci* (salted melon seeds), you sell *kwaci*. If your friend is selling hamburgers, you sell hamburgers. If your friend is wearing clothes with a skirt reaching to here, you wear a skirt reaching to here. If your friend is wearing a bikini, you wear a bikini. Well, what is that? It wholly lacks what the Dutch call *standvastigheid*, there is nothing stable or lasting in it. You are doing the latihan kejiwaan; you are being trained to become people who hold fast to their own ideas . . . there is, of course, some progress among you, but it is too slow. What causes that? It is because you copy other people. You just imitate other people. If your nature is all imitation, then your life is synthetic; it is all artificial things . . . ¹²

The latihan, then, encourages each person to find and to be himself, to stand on his own feet, 'do his own thing'; and, as far as our worldly life and work are concerned, it means that as far as possible we should become independent. Hence Bapak's insistence that we should do enterprises. The term 'enterprise' embraces not only a business or worldly project undertaken jointly with others, but also any work that is in accordance with one's true self and true talent, such as being a clown or a composer; a surgeon or a trainer of horses; or an architect or a chef.

Many of us, however, still lack the opportunity (or perhaps the courage) to strike out on our own; or we have not yet discovered

our true talent. For people like this, working in a Subud enterprise may open up possibilities of training and self-discovery as well as providing a livelihood. Subud enterprises also help (by contributing part of their profits) to finance the Subud organization and Subud's social projects in the form of schools, homes and hospitals.

To set an example Bapak himself initiated an enterprise in Indonesia which involved the construction of a fourteen-storey office building. When this building was half-completed, Bapak addressed some words to the workers employed on the site. He told them that they ought not to regard themselves as mere employees, as casual labourers, content to receive their wage packets but otherwise having no interest in the project on which they were working. On the contrary, they should look upon the project and work at it as though it were indeed their own. In this way they would begin to train themselves to stand on their own feet and, in due course, be capable of undertaking work on their own initiative and so become independent; become, perhaps, employers instead of employees, but at least their own masters.

There is another purpose behind this emphasis on the need to work hard in this world. This is the need to give our hearts and minds an occupation which is in accord with *their* nature. For if heart and mind are idle, or inadequately employed, they wander and occupy themselves with fantasies, imaginings and speculations for which they are neither intended nor fitted. In particular, they may try to concern themselves with spiritual matters and even with the nature of God:

The power of God is something that cannot possibly be reached or understood or achieved by the heart and mind of man, because the heart and mind are related to and influenced by things that exist in this world. . . . This is the reason why it is so difficult for man to know and understand the power of God. This is why men are always looking and trying to understand and to feel how they can receive and how they can know the power of Almighty God. In trying to achieve this, their own thinking confuses them. In this effort to reach an understanding of God's power . . . their own thinking overcomes them – or, there is a kind of revolution

in their thinking, and so they force themselves to do something which is really not at all right, or completely out of place.¹³

What, then, of the heart and mind? 'The heart and mind are something that we must use – we must use them for what they are intended; that is, the needs of our life in this world.'¹⁴ They should certainly not be neglected or despised:

Do not . . . deliberately negate the zeal of the heart and mind, thus weakening your efforts to live a life of the best kind here on earth. The root of the problem is this, that you need to understand the differences in kind between the forces associated with your life and the force of man's inner self. Once these forces have been put in order, people will be able to conduct their lives as befits human beings called noble creatures.

There is nothing wrong in having a well-developed mind. On the contrary, as many people as possible need to acquire advanced and wide-ranging knowledge, provided such knowledge really becomes a means for them to live as God ordains and a means to better the lives of their fellow men. Doing this will enable them to reach the level of creatures who can broaden the scope of their life to benefit society.

That is the use of men of ability, so that with their knowledge they may fill the whole world with all the arts and skills helpful to human society, and that the light of these, shining radiantly, may enable society to live in peace and prosperity.¹⁵

For those who follow the latihan kejiwaan, heart and mind and their accompanying forces should no longer be masters, but good and useful servants, occupying their rightful place in the scheme of things:

As a result of having received the latihan kejiwaan of Subud, when we use our heart and mind to make money, to do business and so on, and to work in the normal way in this world, we will yet remember humanity, so that in our outer life we will not misuse the fruits of our endeavours. So, supposing we become rich and make a lot of money – we will remember the poor, we will remember to give

instruction to those who are not as intelligent as ourselves. We will remember to look after the needs of our fellow human beings. This is what is known as the *nafsu mutmainah*: that is, the *nafsu* that is truly good and likes to live in harmony with the rest of society and to share whatever it has with others. This is completely different from the results of the work of other people who are only motivated by the [ordinary] *nafsu* and the lower forces, who, in other words, have not yet received the latihan, because they, if they do well, if they become rich, will always use their wealth to pursue more wealth, to increase their greed, to increase their power over others, more and more to become cleverer than others, always to win ahead of other people. And such people, although you may say that they are truly powerful, are respected in society and have authority, yet such people are truly hated by the rest of society so that their lives are never peaceful, never satisfying.¹⁶

So we must work hard in this world, using all the faculties and talents that God has given us, both to fulfil our own needs and also to contribute to the well-being of society:

Don't have doubts, don't fear that the growth of the *jiwa* will be hindered by doing worldly work. That will not happen, for what you have received is beyond comprehension, beyond fathoming. As Bapak has said, anything existing which is unfathomable and beyond the comprehension of your mind is outside the worldly sphere. It is from God, from the power of Almighty God.

So, brothers and sisters, do the latihan kejiwaan as usual . . . And then you have to work as men usually do while on earth. If you really do that, you will always be guided about how and where you should work.¹⁷

7

Politics and economics

Politics are defined as the science and art of government, and the way the Subud organization conducts its affairs may be said to have political implications. However anyone seeking ideological support from what is received in the latihan will be disappointed: in this sense Subud is apolitical. It is already a matter of experience that those who follow the latihan incline to avoid extremes of fanaticism, and tend towards a 'middle way' or, in very general terms, towards what might be called 'social democracy' Lest this term – although Bapak has used it – be thought too particular, it may be noted that Bapak, in conversation with Varindra Vittachi, has said, 'Democracy is common feeling.'

In this sense Subud is thoroughly 'democratic' in its attitudes and practices. On paper there may appear to be a hierarchy in the practical organization, with its local, regional, national, international and zonal committees, each one to some extent 'subject' to the one above; and similarly on the spiritual side, with its local, regional, national and international helpers.* But as far as the practical organization is concerned the officers are elected, and for limited periods of time only, while on the spiritual side Bapak has repeatedly stressed the equal status, in practice, of all helpers:

Another thing about which Bapak wants to remind you has to do with the helpers' organization. As you know, there are

* Helpers are members authorized by Bapak to open new members (see page 23) and whose 'particular obligation is to take care of matters concerning the kejiwaan.'

national helpers, regional helpers and group helpers. Bapak warns you to be very careful not to have a feeling that the national helpers are people who are very high, that the regional helpers are half-high and that the helpers in the groups are somehow very low, because this sort of feeling is actually very much out of place. The organization of helpers – that is, at national, regional and group levels – is simply a division of labour which Bapak has introduced for convenience and to reduce the burden on the group helpers . . . any feeling of superiority, any action that signifies that we consider that we are more than other people is actually a very great danger, because through that we will be brought to a state of darkness, and it will cause the downfall of our spiritual level . . .

In the case of the helpers' organization, Bapak wants to make it quite clear that this division of responsibility is only a division of function, at which Bapak hopes everyone will get an equal turn . . . ¹

The democracy which emerges from Subud is democracy with a difference; it is democracy with access to the latihan kejiwaan. This means that when working on worldly concerns, people who follow the latihan tend to rely on inner guidance rather than copying other people. It also means that particular problems can be resolved by 'testing' (page 57): for example, the selection of people to occupy various offices and perform various functions:

Where making these selections is concerned, you should do it for yourselves. Provided that you truly surrender everything to the One Almighty God, you will then obtain a picture for yourselves of who among you is capable of doing this work . . . ²

So in Subud democracy there is a higher authority – the power of Almighty God as manifested in the latihan – which can be appealed to in case of need. This cuts out the need for a lot of discussion and, more important, enables decisions to be arrived at without fear that they will arouse resentment, jealousy or discord. In short, it makes possible that 'common feeling' which is the hallmark of real democracy.

But if we ask what is the Subud position in politics in the

outside world, then the answer must be that it has none: politics are concerned with worldly matters and are the domain of the heart and mind. Theoretically therefore it is possible for a Subud member to belong to any conceivable political party, or to none. In practice, the attitude to political matters is influenced by certain principles which emerge from the latihan, and the most important of these is that 'You will not restrict anyone's freedom or reduce the happiness and security of other people's lives.'³

But the way in which this principle is applied in any particular set of circumstances is an individual matter. Subud as such, as an association or brotherhood, is apolitical and does not take sides; nor does it inquire into the political affiliations of actual or would-be members; nor does it take part in political activities. The latihan has been sent down to all men, to all mankind. If it has any effect in the sphere of politics, it can only be through transformation from within, the transformation of the individuals who make up the body politic:

Bapak says that at this present time, brothers and sisters, it has become usual for clever people to be spun off their feet by their own cleverness. Rich people are made giddy by their own riches. Clever people like to amuse themselves by playing games with the lives of the stupid ones and deceiving them, and the stupid ones, because they are stupid, are very easily influenced by anyone who can cause a stir in the community. This is a sickness of the mind and heart. This is a sickness of the passions. What is important and necessary for human beings is the fact that God has decreed that they should make this world prosperous and peaceful, so that it can be filled with people living in harmony with one another. But people are unable to rule their minds and their passions through their minds and their passions; on the contrary, it is the other way round and human beings are used as tools by their minds and by their passions, until it often happens that they quarrel with their own brothers and sisters; and it even happens that parents quarrel with their own children. This is what happens when people do not really understand the progress of human civilization in this present era. They are not aware of their situation in this world, or of the fact that

they can make the world prosperous and peaceful, while at the same time following the commandments of God. That is the way for human beings to worship the One Almighty God.⁴

Many of the faults in society, and many of the injustices which we are all so anxious to see remedied, stem from the inner condition of man today. No amount of legislation can alter this situation appreciably because, as we have seen, the inner content cannot be transformed from without:

. . . many rich people, just because of their wealth, look on others not so rich as themselves as inferior. This is caused solely by the influence of the material force which has been absorbed into their feelings.

This leads to tensions and conflicts between rich and poor. True, the two associate at times, but that is because the labour of the poor is needed for the pursuit of profits, not through feelings of love and brotherhood.

So they just part company when the labour of the poor is no longer required. Thus whether their association will last depends entirely on the influence of the power of matter.

Rightly understood, however, wealth or material things are simply and solely aids needed for organizing human society in the best way, so as to bring order and prosperity to that society.

Men do indeed need material objects as aids and everyone has to have them. The more a man has and the greater their variety, the better. But it has to be remembered that he must be aware of their use and how to manage them; he must not allow them to become objects of worship.

It is to be hoped also that a man will not be influenced by material things; on the contrary, he has to be able to control them. The way for you to realize this is by doing your latihan patiently and sincerely; for from the training will come evidence, little by little, of how the material force works in your feelings, so that you may channel it in its rightful direction. This awareness will then lead at length to your self and the material force working in co-operation – though with different duties – so that you will not need to discard or avoid possessions.⁵

In the political sphere today we suffer from two predominant manifestations of the material forces: social injustice and war.

In the case of social injustice, legislation can achieve very little and much good work is threatened because it is economically unsound or impractical. Violent methods have also been tried, usually with disastrous results. In Subud, however, the possibility exists of changing society through the changing of man's inner being, brought about by the sincere practice of the latihan. It is no longer a question of simply 'giving to the poor' but of imbuing every action and activity with a compassionate content:

. . . in Subud we are trained and we are taught to worship God in our everyday life. In other words, we are trained to worship God in the normal state, in the state we are in when we do our work, when we do our business, and so on . . . that is the content of Subud. For the farmer who is sowing his land, that is the worship of God . . . for the lawyer who is defending a case, that is his worship of God. That means that when he defends his case, when he is working as a lawyer, because that is his worship of God, because he is guided by his *jíwa*, he will know how not to allow the regulations and the laws to manipulate him to go wrong. On the contrary, he will know and understand the real content and the essence of the law, so that he can . . . solve the case in a way that is right, in such a way that the result is truly just and truly right and not just a manipulation of the law in order to produce a result that is wrong or harmful.

Similarly for an architect or a builder. When he builds a building, that is his worship of God, the result of which is that he doesn't build that building to extort money or to oppress the person who will buy it from him, or the person who will occupy it. On the contrary, he will build it in such a way that it will help or bring happiness to the person who will live in it.

If we own properties, we will not set our rents so high as to cause suffering or hardship to the people who live there – on the contrary, we will strive and work and arrange things in such a way that we can fix the rent at such a level that those who live there will benefit from it; that by living there their lives will improve . . .

So in everything that we do there will be a balance. When we sell something it will not just benefit the seller, it will also benefit the buyer, so that both buyer and seller will be happy and be benefited by what we do.

This is the fruit that we can look forward to – the guidance from the *jiwa* which is always close to the power of God. The results of that, or the direction in which it takes us, is a society which is harmonious, united and prosperous, where people are close to each other and where they take the responsibility together for everything that happens . . . ⁶

So society can be changed for the better when men change for the better; when those who make money are moved to help those less well off, rather than despising them; when those who are intelligent are moved to help those who are backward, rather than exploiting them; when those who are strong and powerful are moved to help those who are weak, rather than oppressing them.

Our society is as we make it, and it reflects the inner condition of the individuals who make up that society. Hitherto all mankind's efforts (arising from the heart and mind) have failed to bring social justice to the greater part of humanity, or even enough to eat. We have been trying to raise ourselves with our own boot-straps. But now, with the coming of the latihan, a new way has been given to mankind by Almighty God – the way of surrender to his will.

When we think of the vast sums that are now being spent on armaments while the greater part of humanity is living below subsistence level we have an obvious example of how the material forces have come to dominate mankind. Bapak has spoken about the influence that the material force exercises upon man through weapons. In the following quotation he is talking about a knife, but the relevance of what he says to modern weapons is clear.

Rightly, this is only a means to repel approaching danger, not in the least an instrument for killing people. But when the possessor of such a weapon is heedless or incautious, the influence of its force, transforming his feelings, is truly dangerous for him. For it makes him feel strong and more than naturally powerful, with the result that he is ready to

use his weapon not to ward off approaching danger but against anybody he wishes to overpower or master.

Such is the effect of the material power of weapons on a man who is so incautious or heedless that, whether he wishes it or not, his feelings are in fact channelled or carried over into the insensible realm of matter. And further, such a man habitually enjoys quarrelling with other people even though they are not his enemies . . .

Even so, because he still has a human nature, he will still have a chance to improve his condition if he finds a way that can train him to reach his inner self. The pressure of the material force will then grow weaker and weaker with the strengthening of his human *jiwa*, which can then correct his bad habits . . . ⁷

The problem is that we are now concerned with governments rather than with individuals, or perhaps one should say with a few individuals who wield huge and disproportionate power. How can the latihan begin to touch such people? How can the latihan begin to work upon them, in order to reduce the influence of the material force upon them, and so reduce the probability of wholesale destruction? In order that such people may be able to relate to Subud, Subud must speak to them in a language they can understand:

The need to set up . . . charitable enterprises is really this: that we must bring to mankind not only the completeness of the next life – that is, bring people to the worship of God – but also bring people completeness in this life, helping them in their everyday life in this world.

The benefit of this, among others, is that Subud will be seen as an agent for good, for assisting mankind and society. The result will be that those countries which have felt and sensed the help and assistance which Subud has given to their people will give to Subud the facility and the opportunity to grow, to spread, to develop in that country. We will really experience that an opportunity is opened for our Brotherhood to grow. What is the purpose of this? What is the use of spreading Subud? Well, primarily, brothers and

sisters, it concerns the work that people have come to call the association of nations, or the United Nations.

The concern of the United Nations generally, at this time, is how to bring peace to mankind; how to bring peace to the different, warring, competing interests of different countries, of different groups; how to ensure that war does not break out, and how to limit the use of destructive weapons; how to make sure that the weapons of tremendous power and destruction which have been invented by mankind – that is, nuclear bombs and guided missiles and so on – are never used. Well, the hope of achieving this aim is to attract to Subud people whose responsibility it is to work in this capacity, in these negotiations; people who are responsible for the use of destructive weapons for waging war, and so on. If these people can feel and get to know and be filled with the power of Almighty God, with the guidance of Almighty God that we experience in the latihan, there is a very great hope that these weapons that face mankind today will not be used and that the war and the strife between nations can be avoided or minimized. For this it is necessary to establish enterprises.

For us, enterprises are a way of attracting to Subud people who normally do not care about the spiritual; it is through the existence of enterprises that we can interest people in the latihan, people who normally do not pay any attention to the spiritual. In fact, not only such things as war and international problems, but also other negative situations in the world today, which tend to ruin the life of man and society, can be avoided if statesmen can be attracted to Subud. People who normally do not pay any attention to spiritual matters can come to feel the power of Almighty God and his guidance . . . ⁸

Apart from enterprises founded and conducted by Subud members in various countries, two major enterprises are already established which were initiated by Bapak himself to aid the work of the Brotherhood and to set an example to its members (others are under way). The first is a Subud bank – the Bank Susila Bakti – which was founded in 1974, and the second is a large office block

in Jakarta, the S. Widjojo Centre. This was largely financed from investments made by individual Subud members; it was completed at the end of 1980 and is now fully let to firms of international standing and to other organizations such as American Aid and the British Council.

These two enterprises, and others in process of completion, are 'capitalist' enterprises; written into their statutes however is the obligation to pay 25 per cent of their net profits to Subud, and the intention is that this money should be used to finance charitable projects set up by the Brotherhood.

In worldly financial matters, as in politics, Subud is flexible, practical and pragmatic. The organization of Subud business ventures depends more upon ethical principles arising from the practice of the latihan than upon any economic theory. Subud members should be independent; they should stand on their own feet and respect the freedom of others. While fulfilling their own needs, they should consider the needs of others and be prepared to sacrifice a part of their gains in order to help their fellow men. These are early days, and these aims have not always been attained. Bapak himself has criticized some prevailing attitudes in Subud. After speaking of following the 'guidance that comes from the *jiwa*', which will result in a harmonious society where 'people are close to each other and where they take responsibility together for everything that happens', Bapak continued:

That is, in general. In particular, it will mean that in this Brotherhood of ours, in Subud, we will truly care for each other, we will truly feel for each other, we will truly know each other's state. For example, if it happens that one of our enterprises fails, everyone will share that failure, will help and try to support the people who have lost out. Not as now, when your enterprise fails and everybody turns the other way. Nobody cares. The people who have lost money have lost money. Those who used to work there don't care - 'We didn't lose money, we just worked there.' Later on, when we are truly moved from the *jiwa*, those who work in an enterprise which has lost money will feel responsible towards the people who put their money in. It is not like that just now. The people who have run the enterprise and have lost

the money don't care, whereas the people who have put up the money – they have to carry the burden. So their attitude is, 'OK, I have lost my money, but I'm not going to put any more into a Subud enterprise – that's the last time I'm going to finance a Subud enterprise, because all that happens is that they take more and more of my money. Next time they can look somewhere else.' That is the situation as it is now* but Bapak hopes that that's not how it is going to be.⁹

It is not the form that is important, but the content; not the theory of money or of labour relations that is at issue, but the attitude to money, to one's fellow men and to oneself:

If the different parts of the body could understand . . . actually, the success of one is the success of all – that is, each member of our body can only make progress, can only be successful if the whole body is successful, if they all cooperate and help each other. Even though the leg cannot eat, suddenly it will be aware: 'How come that I am getting fatter suddenly?' Or maybe the cheeks, who never do much work, suddenly become round like that, and they only know that things are going better. So this simile illustrates that the success of each part is the success of the whole. . . .

The simile of the physical body illustrates the justice of Almighty God . . . that God knows what we have done and we will reap the benefit through the success of the whole, through the success of our enterprise, through the success of our Brotherhood. So, then, the one who succeeds is the whole. What we have to be aware of is that we are working together and each one of us is responsible for that success. Quite frankly, if your enterprise has failed, if you have done an enterprise and it has gone down the drain – that is not the fault of any but those who have been working in the enterprise . . . Because the success of the whole is the success of the parts, and the failure of the whole is brought about by the failure of the parts.

What is important for us in our enterprises is to remain always aware that we are members of one Brotherhood and

* December 1977

we are dependent upon each other, and that God, in what he bestows upon us, is completely just, and God will bestow on us according to what we have done, for God is aware of the work we are doing no matter what it is . . . If we serve God through enterprises, we must be able to show the results in the form of social justice or social results. That is, when we do enterprises it is not for ourselves, it is not for us alone to become rich, but it is for the benefit of all. That is, for the benefit of our brothers and sisters, and also so that our Brotherhood can produce the necessary funds and the necessary wealth in order to be able to do something outside our Brotherhood – in the direction of social justice for the whole of humanity.¹⁰

8

Social work

As we have seen, social work in Subud is in practice closely related to the activities and results of Subud enterprises. To undertake social work is indeed a duty, but the impulse to undertake it should be based upon the inner feeling:

What you have received . . . which is in the nature of a training, shows that your movements and actions – both your visible actions as well as those which take place in your inner feelings – indicate an awakening of the *jiwa*. They indicate the presence of a life that exists within your life. You are alive; of course you are alive but, in the ordinary way, your life is lived because of the passions. Thus, if you are not full of food, you cannot move. But the *jiwa* moves . . . That means it is alive. That is your life, which was alive before you came into this world and which will live on after you leave this world.

For that reason, what remains for you is in what you do and how you act. That is why you have to act and to do the best you can in your lives. That means that, if you can avoid it, you should not cause trouble for other people and also you should live in harmony amongst yourselves and feel compassion for everyone, for all your fellow creatures. That is the reason why people should give . . . alms for the poor . . . That giving really arises and grows out of your own inner selves, for it is necessary that this giving of alms be truly sincere. So you must not look upon your almsgiving as

giving; no, it is indeed a human obligation to share one's possessions with other people.¹

At the same time social work should be discriminating:

This is why in Islam there is a saying to the effect that one should help those who are worthy of help, but not those who are unworthy. Of course, you love your children, and if you have money you give a lot to your children. That is permissible and that is what parents have to do for their children; but you should not give indiscriminately. If it is necessary, then give it, but if it is not necessary, do not give it, for a gift that is out of place is, on the contrary, dangerous. The children will then use the money for unnecessary things. That is by way of an example.

That is why it is necessary to make donations . . . but you should make them where help is needed . . . This is how it should be, brothers and sisters, and so Bapak is making a start in Subud to enable us of the Spiritual Brotherhood of Subud to establish a body to carry out social work. This is now beginning to operate in a small way, and there is what can be called a social undertaking in Jakarta, the Usaha Mulia . . .²

The Usaha Mulia undertaking was initiated by Bapak himself, and since results speak louder than good intentions, the Usaha Mulia can be described in detail as an example of how social work develops when moved and guided by what is received through the latihan. However, Bapak has said that

charitable undertakings are much wider in scope than the activities of Yayasan Usaha Mulia. They embrace all kinds of charitable undertakings such as schools for retarded or disturbed children, old people's homes, hospitals and so on, and these charitable undertakings are not only to be established in Indonesia but all over the world . . .³

Yayasan Usaha Mulia ('Foundation for Noble Work') was started in Jakarta in 1975. Its first project was a hospital for the very poor at Cengkareng, and it exhibited all the basic principles of the foundation which, according to its prospectus, were to

emphasize the establishment of social projects for socio-economic development. One of the foundation's key

concepts is the provision of integrated medical, social and occupational care and rehabilitation to the destitute in order to prevent their re-entry into the poverty cycle. Programme participants acquire new skills and self-confidence as well as remuneration for their work before they are released from care. The foundation also aims to demonstrate how free or subsidized hospital and welfare services for the destitute in developing countries can be at least partially self-supporting through on-site development of profitable small business enterprises such as market-gardening, fish and poultry breeding, milk production and small-scale manufacturing.

Salamah Pope visited the Panti Usaha Mulia Hospital at Cengkareng and gives this account of it:

The city of Jakarta has grown along the edges of a sleepy river on the low-lying north shore of Java. Only a few degrees south of the Equator, the air is warm and steamy as the sun high overhead pulls up the vapours from the swampy land around. This damp heat is so relaxing that one sits back in it, physically and mentally, aware only of eternal truths and oblivious of the ugly present. . . .

But walk through the bamboo gates of the Panti Usaha Mulia Hospital and immediately this atmosphere changes. There is a crisp feeling of hope in the air, of positive, constructive activity. Hammers are banging, chisels chipping plaster or stone. Little boys are feeding rabbits and chickens, and people on the land at the side of the simple buildings are planting, weeding, watering. This at three o'clock in the afternoon when normally everyone succumbs to a snooze in the shade. Certainly the place is different!

This small, modest compound . . . houses the essence of a scheme to revitalise village life in Java – perhaps even further afield – and to overcome the tropical blight of humidity, poverty and apathy. This is a pilot project.

The story starts with an Indonesian welfare organization, the Rosa Vernans Foundation . . . The Rosa Vernans people called in Father Herman, a Dutch Franciscan priest, as a mediator to try and sort out the mess. Sister Rina, a medical sister, came to help him, and finally Ibrohim Wessels. All are Subud members.

When I went to see the place, Ibrohim said: 'For me, it all began at the end of Ramadhan 1973. I am a painter, I was living at Cilandak and I felt something new was going to come for me. Testing disposed of several interesting possibilities – until Herman approached me to work with a small hospital for derelicts and incurables. And this was IT for me . . . '

A few months later work really started, when Bapak gave the project a name and his blessing. They received an immediate donation from a Subud sister in South Africa, and with that they bought a generator – 'and we moved in with light.'

There was a lot to do. The sleeping quarters for the patients needed flooring tiles and bathrooms. All the walls had to be whitewashed in and out . . . A new kitchen was built and a separate pavilion for the tuberculosis patients and houses for old people and children . . . The main object, the concept behind the whole scheme, is that people – sick, healthy or indifferent – should learn how their own communities can become self-supporting.

For instance . . . a little boy was busy by the chicken run when we went to see the newest building, the Children's House. I noticed his hand. He had a newly-healed stump of a hand – fingerless. They had found him on the railroad tracks. He had been living there and, one night in his sleep, had flung his hand over a rail. A train came along and chopped off his fingers.

'The point,' Ibrohim explains, 'is not that we have to take care of a hundred sick people: but that we are experimenting here to see if some of the *social* problems in the world can be solved.' So the fingerless child and two other orphan boys are being given some rabbits to look after, as well as the chickens – and the meat and eggs they produce will be sold. And the children, from roaming the streets as beggars, become productive. . . .

'So we try to help by exploring ways as to how a community can become self-supporting. . . . The villages *must* become self-supporting. What is going to happen, otherwise, in the world?'

So experiment they do. . . . Ibrohim set up a cow-shed and bought a bull and twenty cows. Now they have 130 litres of milk a day, some of which the patients drink, and the rest is sold – or traded. A water pump they badly needed but were unable to afford was given them by a shopkeeper in exchange for one litre of milk a day for a year . . .

The land around the buildings . . . was marshy and good for nothing except weeds and mosquitoes. So fish ponds were dug out, and with the soil they raised the level of the rest of the land. This land, made fertile with manure from the cows, chickens, rabbits and so on, now grows yams, peanuts, cassava, taro, and banana and papaya trees. The ponds were stocked with tiny fish, bought for Rp.1 each – and these thrive and grow huge on the bathroom waste of the children and the healthy old people. About one fifth of the meat, fish and vegetables that are produced is eaten by the patients and workers, and the rest sold. With this money there is enough to pay the wages of the workers, and to buy most of the medicines and even some of the building materials.

I saw another small boy wandering around, looking into rooms and gently touching everything. I asked who he was, because he seemed a bit strange – he had the face of a forty-year-old man. 'He doesn't know who he is or where he comes from,' Sister Rina told me. 'We found him living on a garbage heap, eating banana skins and rotting scraps. He's only been here a couple of days and he hasn't settled down yet. But soon he will be earning his keep, like the others.'

'So this is not charity,' Ibrohim went on. 'It is social welfare work, hand in hand with small economic projects, together. And it only takes small amounts of money. . . . We have to create other centres for people to work in, like this one, but out in the villages. So the problem is not so much the money – because it is not too difficult to find small sums of money for setting up little enterprises like the goats and chickens and so on. The real shortage is of people who will go out into the villages and get these things going.'

On the hospital side, I talked to Rahman Mitchell, the

English doctor who lives at Wisma Subud and goes once a week to see the difficult cases. He said: 'When Father Herman and Sister Rina took over the hospital, there were about forty-five patients, all in awful condition. . . . It was a place where sick people who could not pay – or whom no one wanted – got dumped, to die.'

Many of the patients respond to proper care and treatment, and some of them have been able to go back to their villages. But many have nowhere to go, so they stay on and work there – on the land, for instance. About 25 per cent get completely well. . . . When they are well, they then have to be found a place to live and a job – otherwise, what is the use? . . .

To see the gradual rebuilding of self-respect that a man experiences when he is producing something again, helping his family and his community, is to witness not a divine miracle but the fruits of human planning and human care for others.⁴

The story of Marsani is the story of one particular Indonesian befriended by Yayasan Usaha Mulia:

When the local police reported a sick man believed to be dying in a hut down the road, one of our workers searched in the dark and pouring rain and found a rotting hut, beside the railroad track. Inside, the rain came through the decaying roof, and a young girl was trying to cover her father's body against the incoming water.

The man was in his sixties and very ill – in fact, unconscious. He was taken to hospital and was found to have five lethal diseases in his body. He was given intensive treatment at YUM's expense, and within a month was pronounced well enough to start life anew.

Representing Usaha Mulia, the social worker asked the man (whose name was Marsani) what he would like to do now that he was well. Marsani said that he would like to borrow enough money to start a small business – a food stall by the roadside.

Our man told him that he could borrow Rp.15,000 (approximately \$25 US) and when he had repaid it he could borrow twice that amount.

Marsani built his food stall near a new bridge still under construction, and was successful enough to repay the loan within three months and then borrow Rp.30,000. With this new loan he expanded his stall to a coffee shop, with a cigarette and sundry stall operated by his son. His many little children helped in the business, and so the whole family went busily about the earning of their bread.

Within six months, Marsani returned the Rp.30,000 and borrowed Rp.60,000. With this he bought a handsome awning to cover his shops and make them one unit. . . .

The day arrived when the new bridge was finished and the government declared all the food shops had to go. Marsani came back to YUM and returned Rp.30,000 of his loan and asked if he could keep the other Rp.30,000 to rent seven paddy fields in an outlying area.

YUM agreed and Marsani built a small hut for his family near the paddy fields he intended to work. . . .

Soon other people came and built their huts close to Marsani's and began to look to him as their leader. He built a small mosque and led the people in prayers.

The government heard of the growing village and built a school in the area.

After two years Marsani returned to us and said he was a happy man. He no longer rents the paddy fields – but now he owns them.

Can helping one man make a real difference? We think so.⁵

In Subud the impulse for social work arises from the inner-feeling and the grace of God. When men's feelings are working as God wills, there awakens in them a love for their fellow creatures:

. . . you will be willing to help your fellow creatures – of course, when you already have enough for yourselves. That is why it is that in religion . . . there arises a feeling of being willing to give, willing to help one's fellow creatures and have compassion upon them. That is what is called *zakat* and *fitroh*.^{*} Thus *zakat* and *fitroh* arise automatically. That is a sign that someone's *jiwa*, your own *jiwa*, has been trained to

^{*} Almsgiving after Ramadhan in the religion of Islam.

SUBUD

understand and to develop along the lines of the working of the power of God, who has purified you inwardly.⁶

9

Culture

During a world tour undertaken in the summer of 1972, Bapak visited Wolfsburg in West Germany. During this visit the members of the Subud group gathered together in Bapak's presence one day and sang German and Javanese songs. Bapak also sang, receiving both the melody and the words, of which the following is a translation:

There is a way for you, which is excellent, whereby all of you can worship Almighty God. This is the good fortune that has befallen all of you. This is a blessing of Almighty God upon all of you, so that all your lives are peaceful and happy all your days.¹

Bapak's explanation of this was as follows:

Brothers and sisters, that which is expressed in songs – in singing – is actually a part of what is called culture or, in Indonesian, *kebudajaan*.

Now culture or *kebudajaan* is a movement or an action of the *budhi*, or the inner nature of man, which, in other words, can be called the *jiwa*. So, in the olden days, when people used to sing or perform, that which they did had the nature of a latihan. It had the effect of awakening the *jiwa* of those who listened to it. And that which came out, which they did, was entirely something that they received, that they were moved to do from their *jiwa*, from within.

But this is not the situation today, because nowadays people attach more importance to their heart and mind, to

their pleasure, than they do to their *jiwa*. So that today the culture which used to be a living culture is now a dead culture. In fact, people nowadays sing in order to sell what they sing. They pay attention merely to the heart and mind and to their own pleasure. So that, in fact, we human beings are now beaten by the animals. When animals are happy, when they feel joy, they demonstrate their closeness to their Creator by singing – [At this point a nearby bird began to sing and Bapak continued:] – as, for example, the birds. The song of the bird is still a demonstration of its closeness to its *jiwa*. But that is not the case with us men. What has happened to us, what we have received in the latihan kejiwaan, is something that can bring us back to the place where we were, to the closeness of the *jiwa*, which we used to have in the olden days.

This is why it is really necessary for us to awaken culture, or that culture should awaken again within us, the culture which truly originates in the human nature and represents man's worship of Almighty God.

Later Bapak will show you . . . that in all sorts of movements that you do, if you are dancing or something like that, these movements can also be worship of Almighty God, exactly the same as if you move like this [Bapak raised his hands for prayers and bowed]. So within us there is a way – there is a guide within us, there is the guidance of Almighty God – which makes it possible for us to act in this world according to the will of Almighty God.

We have to learn always to be in touch, always to be close to our *jiwa*, and to act because of our *jiwa*, so that what we do is God's will for us in this world; that is, that we return once again to Almighty God. Because God has not created us in this world just like that and then left us to our own devices. God has given us the way to return to him, and the way to return to him is to act rightly and not to act wrongly in this world. This is made possible by the latihan kejiwaan which we have received.²

The latihan moves those who follow it in the direction of integration – the integration of outer and inner, of culture and

CULTURE

religion. True culture and worship are one, not in any limited, sectarian or formal sense, but essentially. True culture is the expression of an inner feeling that has been brought to life, and is closely related to self-knowledge and the realization of a person's true talent, made possible by the practice of the latihan:

. . . you will soon become adept at doing work that is in tune with your *jiwa*, and this will certainly make your life happy, for this skill will stem or grow from your human *jiwa*, which will have brought to life your whole inner feeling . . .

It is that which is truly called culture, for its source is the human *jiwa* and it is received in an inner feeling that has risen free of the sway of the ancillary forces. It is a culture filled continuously with the life force. That is why the work you do will be a means for your worship of the Almighty.

Seen from an ordinary or outer viewpoint, the nature of your work will not differ from that of normal work, but in reality it will be far different. For ordinary work and skill are acquired by learning from someone else – or from a group, and one is unable yet to determine whether or not the work is in harmony with one's identity. But the skill in work that you will acquire is of a quality whose source, as previously explained, is the human *jiwa*.

Later, therefore, in doing your work, your outer and inner can never be otherwise than in accord, and so you will certainly progress in your work in harmony with the advances and changes of the times in which you live. . . .

Plainly, then, the skill in work acquired through the latihan kejiwaan is truly a quality of genuine culture for, of course, it is born and grows because the human *jiwa* has become free of all the influence of man's ancillary forces. So for that reason this culture will neither destroy human knowledge nor close the way to man's worship of the Almighty, but rather is another requirement of that worship, for in reality of course it comes from God and thus to God it returns.³

On another occasion Bapak spoke in greater detail about the relationship between true culture and the latihan:

Brothers and sisters, the word *kabudajan* or *kebudajaan* (culture) comes from *budi* and *daja*. You know the word *budi*

already from the symbolic name of our Brotherhood, Susila Budhi Dharma. *Daja* is the force of movement or action, the working force.

Hence *kebudajaan* or *kabudajan* is really a force, a force of life expressing itself and manifesting outwardly, but originating in the *jiwa*.

But, brothers and sisters, we should not blame anybody because culture, whose real source is the *jiwa*, has now generally become enjoyment instigated by the influence of heart and mind.

So what is produced as culture has no lasting quality and comes to an early end. The original culture, which is still enjoyed and appreciated, is a different matter. And now it is beginning to be popular again, enjoyed by the general public, as in the instance of the *wayang* [the Javanese shadow puppet play].

Wayang was created through the awakening of the *jiwa* and hence truly comes from *kebudajaan*, that is, from *budi* and *daja*.

Bapak would just like to remind you that what brings in profit at the present time in America and Europe, and here too, are the so-called cultural performances that do not originate in the *jiwa*. If just for the sake of making money, giving this kind of performance is quite all right and fitting. But we do not only want to make money, brothers and sisters. We should be able to show real culture, coming from the *jiwa*, so that the performances not only attract the hearts of the onlookers but make them really aware of their lives. Thus, although they only watch and listen, they can learn to improve their conduct and change their wrong ways and behaviour.

This is true culture. Cultural performances produced from thinking, studying and other considerations are different. A person watching and listening to them can become quite confused. This is to say, he may forget about his home, a woman may forget her husband, the husband may forget his wife. The performer is also affected, and so may go astray, and when the play is finished the actor or actress may go off with someone who has watched the performance, or chase

after someone who has listened to it. That can be the result. Bapak says this only as a reminder, but maybe you have been able to receive and feel for yourselves that in your performances you have not been influenced a hundred per cent by the heart and mind, but already perhaps twenty or thirty or even forty per cent by the *jiwa*. If someone acts as a clown and this comes from his *jiwa*, then he will make people laugh if he just stands there. This is true culture.

Take an example of Indonesian culture – Indonesian dancing. In the old days, this dancing was done in a kind of *samadhi* [trance induced by meditation] so that when the dance ended, everything in the dancer – the movement of his blood, his blood vessels and inner feeling – had united into one flow, into a state of calmness, tranquillity and awareness.

So it is true to say, real culture had its origin in and was born of the spiritual, as for instance dancing, the Indonesian art of self-defence, and other arts. . . .

Bapak has spoken about Javanese and Indonesian dancing. Maybe there are brothers and sisters here who understand the movement of the Javanese dancing. [Bapak chants the introductory notes of the gamelan orchestra.] '*Ketuk kempul, ketul kenong, ketup kempul, ketuk gong.*' When the gong sounds, it means: be ready, that is, ready to face God. So again: '*Gatuk kempul, gatul kenong, gatuk kempul, gatuk gong.*' The sound of the gong symbolizes a feeling of bliss. Yes, the sounds have an inner significance.

Clearly the arts of dance and self-defence in Indonesia, and maybe dancing in Europe and America, including South America, also have an inner significance. But nowadays people no longer know this, because in modern life they are so very much influenced by what the heart and mind understand.⁴

Then Bapak went on to explain why it is that the violin has a certain shape, like the human body.

This signifies that it gives expression to sounds coming from the *jiwa*. So the voice originates from within, from emptiness. [Bapak makes sounds like a violin.] . . . But people do not understand that this sound comes from deep

SUBUD

within. The sound does not originate in this physical body. So look for that which is inside you. If you can find it you can make any kind of sound or note that you need.

You have already had the truth of that proved through the latihan which you follow or practise. If you come to a moment of quietness and emptiness, and let the latihan be active in you, then out of the emptiness can come sounds like this [Bapak sings a melodious sound]. . . . This great and high latihan kejiwaan is therefore a boon beyond price for you. Through the latihan kejiwaan of Subud you will be able to reveal whatever man requires.⁵

IO

Subud and religion

Subud is not a religion; it is a receiving. There is no dogma and no teaching. For this reason Subud is open to the followers of all religions and also to those who have no religion at all. All that is required of an applicant is that he believes in God, and even this is not necessary if he expresses a sincere *wish* to believe in God.

We do not join a religion unless we accept the basic tenets of that faith. But in Subud there are no such basic tenets; there is only surrender.

This is what we do in the latihan or spiritual exercise – we surrender ourselves completely, we do not make use of our mind, heart or desires – we simply accept and receive whatever God sends. So you will understand that Subud is only a symbol of that way of living for man in which he can fulfil and carry out the will of God for himself in this world and in the world to come.

Therefore, in the latihan of Subud we do not have a teaching; there is nothing we have to learn or do, because all that is required of us is complete surrender. A person who claims to know the way to God is really one who is anticipating God's gifts without having received them . . .

So this divine power, which works in us during the latihan, will bring to each person what is already in himself . . . the latihan of two people can never be the same, because everyone is different from everyone else. It is clear, then, that there cannot be a theory or a spiritual teaching in Subud because each person is different. Whatever he needs and

whatever he receives will differ from what somebody else needs and receives . . .

Every person will find for himself the right way towards God, and what may be the right way for one may be completely wrong for another. Therefore, you must not suppose that you have to follow or become like Muhammad Subuh. You must become your own self and you must develop your inner self if you want to find the way to God. You must not follow or imitate anyone else, because you must find your own way to God . . . it is God who will lead you towards himself and what really happens in the latihan is that you will be introduced to your real inner self – to the real I . . .

In Subud, there is no discrimination between the different religions because what comes to a person is really what is already there within him. So if a person is a Christian he will meet the real Christ within him, and if a person is a Buddhist he will meet the real Buddha in him. The same if he is a Muslim, he will meet the Muhammad within himself. And then, if you really know your inner self, in everything you do you will be guided by the divine power, because the divine power works in you through yourself, and whether you are in your office or driving a car or doing anything else you will be guided by the power of God, which is always working within you and also outside you.¹

However, this does not mean that religion should be abandoned or put aside:

Subud is not a religion, but it gives you understanding of the religion you are following and enables you to find yourself, your own inner self, so that you will be able to do the things God wants you to do, and to know your obligations, not only here on earth, but also in the life to come.

With the latihan kejiwaan you will be able to understand, and clearly understand, what is meant in whatever religion you follow and really to know the meaning of what is said in every religion.²

Subud members in fact are encouraged to follow their religions: . . . membership in Subud is open to all races and all creeds

and religions. One's acceptance of Subud is based on sincerity of heart, without being forced in any way. This means that each person entering Subud belongs to his own faith and religion, and therefore in the receiving of the latihan in Subud he will eventually receive the truth about himself, so that he will truly be able to follow the teachings of his religion.³

Subud does not claim to be the one and only way:

This does not mean that only people in Subud will be able to arrive at and receive the truth of their true selves . . . so that they will be able to follow truly the commandments of their religion, but even those outside Subud, if they truly surrender inwardly and outwardly to the power of Almighty God – why should they not arrive at the truth?⁴

All men should follow a religion:

. . . since religion represents regulations and a norm for mankind, in order that man should believe in God and his power.⁵

But even in ordinary religious practices, heart and mind should not be used:

If, in following the devotions, you mix into this the needs of the heart and mind, then your heart and mind will in fact become confused. The right way, and one which enables you to understand anything which is said in religion, is that, when you perform your devotions, you should maintain a feeling of patience, submission and sincerity.⁶

Practices other than those which are normal and usual in any religion, in other words esoteric practices, are discouraged because they require the concentrated use of heart and mind, and the exercise of one's own will as opposed to the complete surrender to the will of God.

[This] means that you lack faith in God, who knows all, and in fact you are relying more upon the strength of your own will than upon the power of Almighty God. The longer you do this the tighter you will be bound in the chains of passions and desires. Whereas the power of the passions will disappear of its own accord when you come to face death.

This is clear, and the difference between this and the latihan kejiwaan of Subud, which exists by the grace of Almighty God, is that the feeling of life that you experience in the latihan kejiwaan remains and becomes the inner feeling of those who are able to live in the hereafter free from the influence of passions and desires.⁷

It sometimes happens that Subud members – or people who are contemplating becoming Subud members – are troubled by the relationship between the latihan and orthodox religious practice. This usually applies to those who follow, or were brought up in, religions of the stricter or more dogmatic kind.

The following questions were put to Bapak on behalf of a group of Benedictine monks, one of whom was a Subud member. Bapak's answers to them throw light on the whole nature of the latihan kejiwaan of Subud:

How did Bapak become aware that he was in contact with the Great Force of Life?

Bapak had an intimate experience. He can say nothing about the source of this experience. Only God knows if it was a revelation. Bapak can affirm that he does not compare himself with anyone – with a prophet, for example. He only knows what he himself has experienced. He followed that which was indicated to him, because he felt that it was the will of God that he should do so, and this implies nothing that goes beyond the experience itself.

In speaking of the Great Force of Life, Bapak refers to a reality which is not included in our Western categories. What is the nature of this Great Force?

It is not God, but a primordial creature. It is that force which conveys into the creation the divine ordinances, or the commandments of God.

Is the Force of Life to be regarded as a person? Can one speak of it in the depths of one's heart, or is it an impersonal principle?

The Great Force of Life is not personal. It penetrates everything that exists, from the purest essence to the coarsest matter. The Great Force of Life is not a separate being, such as for example the Pure Soul, that of the seventh degree,

which can neither touch nor be touched by matter, but the Great Force of Life enters everywhere.

If someone who practises the latihan permits himself to indulge in bad conduct, does this interfere with the action of the latihan in him, and is he more culpable than someone who does not practise the latihan and succumbs to the same temptations?

A judge who commits an illegal act is more culpable than someone who does not know the law. In the latihan you receive a light which enables you to recognize the true nature of your own acts. If you act against this light, you are more culpable than someone who does not have the light.

If in the course of the latihan I have an experience which enables me to understand certain things, and which leads me to take corresponding decisions, should I follow this experience if it is in opposition to the authority of the Church?

In the first place it should be said that we should not accept indications which come to us in the latihan, so long as our own thought, our own feeling, and our own desires are involved. Long practice and considerable purification of the *jiwa* are needed before the *jiwa* is fit to receive valid illuminations. It is therefore better to put this aside and not concern oneself with indications that come to us whether in the course of the latihan or otherwise.

Furthermore, as for any contradiction that might arise between what is received as a private illumination and those things which have been received in the past and which have formed the doctrine of the Church, in principle, since they come from the same source, there should never be any contradiction. But we are men, and we can err. Therefore patience and obedience are necessary.

But if there comes an illumination which is truly from the Holy Spirit [*roh ilofi*], it will come in such a manner that it will be impossible to reject it. At the root of the matter, our obedience is towards the will of God alone.⁸

This brings us to the last and most important factor in the relationship between Subud and religion; within Subud, followers of all religions, or none, can join together in brotherhood, in work and in worship, in peace and in harmony – something that has never before been possible:

Through the latihan kejiwaan we can approach God, but this is only possible if we can have the feeling of oneness with all, that is, if we feel ourselves one with all people. Only then can we approach God, because then there is only one humanity moving towards God. Of this you will obtain proof in the latihan kejiwaan. We can already observe something of the sort in Sri Lanka. Before Subud, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Christian and a Muslim could not mix. There were always quarrels, they always fought. But after they came to Subud they indeed became closer to each other and it even happened that a Buddhist felt closer to a Muslim who was in Subud than that same Buddhist felt towards his own family who were not in Subud. So actually they are being taught by God, by the divine power, the real truth, which is that human beings are really one. This is not taught as man teaches, teaching others by way of blackboard and chalk and such things. It is taught in their own inner self, in their own hearts, that they are one. And what happens is that you really feel that your heart is taught by the divine power that we are one: not Muslims, Christians and so on, but that we are human beings.

So in the latihan kejiwaan not only diseases of the body will disappear, but also diseases of the mind. By being free of diseases of the mind you will become more aware of the truth that we are all human beings, that we are all going in the same direction, that is, towards God.⁹

It is common knowledge that the followers of all religions are commanded and expected to love one another. Yet we have only to think of the sectarian conflicts that mar the history of both Islam and Christianity to see that it has not been possible to practise this mutual love even within the boundaries of one religion, still less between followers of different religions. It is therefore wonderful and remarkable that in Subud followers of different religions, as well as members of different races, can come together in harmony, worship together, and feel as brothers:

Bapak has said that the latihan kejiwaan is not a religion. Bapak says this because it is evident that Subud can be

entered by anyone. Subud can encompass anyone no matter what his religion, no matter what his race or nationality. The reason for this is that in Subud, in the latihan kejiwaan, they direct themselves only to the one Almighty God who is one for all that he has created, including mankind . . .

Bapak says that he is surprised when he sees or considers the nature of the latihan kejiwaan. This surprise comes about because in all that Bapak has read about and all that Bapak knows of the history of the world, Bapak has never heard of it happening before – that there has been a human group or movement or association where people of different religions and different nationalities could become as one. This, as far as Bapak knows, is the first time that it has happened – among us in this Brotherhood of Subud. And when Bapak says that men and women of different nationalities become as one, Bapak is not talking about the outer only but also about the inner . . .

Brothers and sisters, this is something that Bapak would like all of you to be aware of – because, indeed, such is the will of God for mankind, such has always been the will of God, that men should be truly as brothers, that men should truly live with mutual love, loving each other, helping each other, respecting each other, irrespective of nationality, of origin or of religion. This is indeed the will of God . . .

Bapak referred earlier to the story of the Englishman who comes to Indonesia and can feel the inner state, or the inner situation, of someone who was born and lives here. But, brothers and sisters, it is not only from England that people can come and experience this. People from Latin America and North America, people from all over the world have had this same experience through the latihan kejiwaan. So, brothers and sisters, it is clear that the reason why it is like this is because we face the One Almighty God, and this Almighty God is the one who embraces the whole universe, so that from this life, from this material life which is the lowest stage, or the lowest degree of life, we are already taught to know each other, to be aware of each other, to understand each other.

We are trained to know and to understand the character of

people of other nationalities. We are taught and trained in the latihan to become aware of the character, of the customs, of the attitudes of people of different countries and different races, so that even here already, in this world, we are guided so that our understanding becomes broader. Through this guidance we gradually become people who are really useful in society here in this world. This understanding, brothers and sisters, is what everybody is looking for; this understanding can change us, can make us become people who are truly valuable, who are truly worth something in human society.¹⁰

Bapak has also pointed out that since mankind is in fact one and that this is as God wills, men (or at least those who follow the latihan kejiwaan and are therefore being taught to feel and experience the reality of this unity) must think from now on only of one humanity and never of races and nationalities.

Bapak has described Subud as both the 'technique' and also the 'content' of religion. First, those who follow the latihan are taught *how* to worship; second, the latihan provides the current which flows equally through all lamps, however they may differ as to size, colour or power. Our differences are outer differences, and stem from the heart and mind; within, there are no differences; there, all is one. But this cannot be understood through thought or desire; it has to be received, and this receiving depends upon the grace of God:

Brothers and sisters, the latihan kejiwaan of Subud is something that is beyond the mind; it is something quite out of the ordinary, for the latihan kejiwaan of Subud is a contact between your inner feeling and the Great Life which envelops the universe. It is present in the human self, in the selves of all of you, enveloping you both inwardly and outwardly. It is clear, brothers and sisters, that this latihan kejiwaan of Subud is from the One Almighty God, whom the Muslims call Allah and the Christians call God. Other people say God in their own ways – they all mean the same.¹¹

The brilliant light which descended upon one young Javanese in the middle of the night fifty years ago is already illuminating the whole world and the future of mankind with rays of salvation and hope:

SUBUD AND RELIGION

God is for mankind and mankind is for God, and you are for all mankind and all of mankind is for you. God and mankind are one and you are one with the whole of mankind, the whole human race.

This is our ideal: this is our objective in Subud.¹²

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How to contact Subud

If you are interested in joining Subud, or simply wish to know more about it, you should contact the helpers at your nearest Subud group. A list of addresses for your area or country may be obtained from the publishers of this book:

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