



SUBUD IS A WAY OF LIFE

**Compiled and written
by Harlinah Longcroft**

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FOREWARD

This little book was first published in 1990. Since then there have been many developments in the field of Subud social projects, so this part of the book has now been updated.

The aim of this book is to give the reader a broad picture of what Subud is all about. Indeed, as I have already been in Subud for more than forty years, I should certainly be able to tell you all about it. But there is a problem. Subud is an experience or training which arises from within our own being – it is not a teaching or a system that is taught by one person to another. So, even with explanations, it is quite usual for people who come into Subud to say: “Oh! We never expected it to be like this!” And this is true, because what happens to us in Subud is different to something that can be described by the thinking. However hard we try to describe what happens, the experience itself is always somehow *different*.

I have written this book for people who have not yet experienced Subud, as well as for those whose experience of Subud is still very new. It explains the nature and aim of Subud, and the international arrangements that enable Subud members to participate, if they want to, in the outer or worldly expressions of their inner experience.

I have used material from various sources in this book. I now wish to thank the Subud Archives International (Australia) for providing me with some documents relating to Subud social projects. I also wish to thank all those whose descriptions of social projects, or of the Susila Dharma International Association, have been used or quoted by me. Because of the nature of this book, I have often had to shorten the original; however, to the best of my ability the substance has not been altered.

For all of us I pray that the Peace and the Blessing of Almighty God be with us.

Harlinah Longcroft,
March, 2005.

Right living according To the Will of God

This book is about Subud – and Subud is a way of life. It is a short book, but probably even this is longer than necessary because Subud is an experience – not a teaching. How can you describe the taste of sugar to someone who has never tasted sweetness?

If however, anyone looks up at the stars at night, they can see their light; and if they feel like doing so, they can read the works of astrophysicists who explain all they know about the stars and what is happening in them. That is precisely what this book tries to do for Subud. And it is always wise to remember that most astrophysicists do not yet know all the answers – and neither does the author of this book.

The word “Subud” is fairly new. It was first registered as the name of those who were “Subud”, with the Government of Indonesia in 1947, and is actually an abbreviation of three quite common Sanskrit words. These words are in everyday use throughout the Indian sub-continent, Malaysia and Indonesia, and they mean quite a variety of different things. Their meaning, in the Subud sense, is as follows:

Susila means to be able to live according to the will of God as really true human beings.

Budhi indicates that in every creation, in every creature of God, including man, there is divine power, which works within him as well as outside him.

Dharma means the possibility for every creature, including man, to surrender completely to the will of God, of whom man is only a creation and has, therefore, inevitably to submit to the will of his Creator.

Susila Budhi Dharma means to follow the will of God with the help of the divine power that works both within us and without, by the way of surrendering oneself to the will of Almighty God.

The word **Subud** is only a symbol for the possibility for man to follow the right way of living.

People who are Subud – Subud members – meet together, usually twice a week, in order to follow what is called the **spiritual latihan**. “Latihan” means to exercise or be exercised. In Subud we do not deliberately exercise, but we are exercised by the Power of God. All we do is completely surrender to God Almighty, and follow whatever arises within us.

What is it that we have to surrender to God? It is not our wealth, the ones we love, or whatever else we possess, because God has no need of these things. What we have to surrender is our mind, our heart and our desires, because those are the instruments that form an obstacle to our coming closer to God.

Indeed Subud people work in the worldly sense, unless, because of age or some disability, this is not possible. They do normal work in a normal way, and yet in whatever they do they try to follow the inner guidance which gradually they become aware of all the time.

Subud people also try to set up companies in which they can work together, so that they can support each other in trying to work in the right way. If a commercial enterprise set up by Subud members is reasonably successful, up to 25% of the profit after tax is given to and shared between social projects, charities and the minimal needs of Subud itself. In this way we work to support ourselves and our families, to provide for what is needed by Subud members, and also to help those who are not in a position to help themselves.

Furthermore, if our companies become strong enough, we seek to employ one or two people who have some problem or handicap, so that we can support their efforts to lead a useful life.

Lastly, our companies try to serve the community in which they are situated.

Therefore Subud is not something which makes people

withdraw from the world and their worldly responsibilities, but on the contrary Subud members try, within their own individual capacity, to be useful people integrated fully with the world in which they live.

Serving mankind

The Subud latihan or spiritual training seems to be some enormous outpouring of Grace, given to mankind at a time of disordered lives and chaotic values. Its function seems to be to bring sense where there was confusion and tolerance where there was strife.

When there is some sort of spiritual outpouring to mankind, there usually seems to be one person who is the first to receive it, and then from them it passes on to others. In all the major religions there are stories of this kind, however what is usually passed on is a teaching, or the modification of a teaching already received. The circumstances in which the Subud latihan was first experienced have a similarity to this, but what was passed on was not a teaching, but the ability to receive this Grace for oneself.

The first person to receive the Subud latihan was a young Javanese man called Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo. Throughout the Subud world he is usually called Pak Subuh, or Bapak. The word "Pak" is a shortened form of "Bapak". Both words are used in the same way as we use "Mister". But "Bapak" is also used in the same way that we use "Father".

Pak Subuh received his first two names in a curious way. The story goes that when he was born in 1901, volcanoes erupted in the area near his village in Java, and his birth coincided with the time of the Islamic dawn prayer. In that area most people are Muslims, and so it was also noted that the date of his birth was the same day as the festival to commemorate the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. At birth he was given the name "Sukarno".

The baby grew weaker and weaker and was sickly, and one day it seemed certain that he would die. The family gathered round to pray, and they were particularly distressed because this child was a first-born son. Then a stranger walked into

the village who had not been seen before, and was never seen again. He stopped at the house and asked why there was so much grief, and he was told that a child, a son, was dying. The stranger asked the name of the baby boy and on hearing that it was Sukarno, immediately suggested that it should be changed. He asked the day and time of the child's birth, and then he gave a new name – Muhammad Sub'hi. The word *sub'hi* is Arabic, and the Indonesians use the word *subuh* for the dawn, so the child was given the name Muhammad Subuh. He soon recovered his strength, and continued in reasonably good health for most of the rest of his life.

There are many stories surrounding his birth and childhood. His mother, for instance, liked undertaking ascetic practices, and as a young girl used to sleep, from time to time, in a cemetery by the grave of an ancestor. Here she had some remarkable experiences which prepared her for the coming of this child. She had other experiences when pregnant with him which gave her to understand that the baby she was carrying was someone exceptional.

As a child, Pak Subuh used to be taken to weddings by his grandmother with whom he stayed. Unfortunately, like children everywhere, he commented loudly on what he saw, and his remarks were along the lines of: "Why are they marrying? It is not going to last." All too often what he said actually occurred, so one day his grandmother found herself receiving an invitation on which it was written: "But please do not bring that grandson of yours, his remarks tend to upset people."

As a young schoolboy he, himself, began to notice he was different, in some ways, from other children. He found he could not utter the sort of obscenities and bad language of which most young boys are only too fond! He tried, but all that happened was that he choked. He then discovered that he could not read aloud, and could not write down, facts which were completely untrue. At first this "problem" got him into trouble, but when the teacher began to notice what was going on, the boy became a source of great interest to his teacher.

There are many other stories, too, about him meeting people, talking with them, and who, a little later, completely vanished. He came to accept this kind of thing, but when he was old enough he tried to find some spiritual teacher who could help him to understand all this. To his consternation

most of these people treated him with honour and would not accept him as a pupil. Eventually one of the Sufis did allow him to be present with his pupils, but said to him, "One day I will be coming to you, not you to me." This remark made the pupils interested in him, and he began to get a following, although he did not know what he had to give to them.

The worldly side of his life was hard work, but with good results. He had wanted to become a doctor, but the family fortunes were not strong enough to support this idea, and after leaving school he felt indeed fortunate to be given quite a good job on the railways.

After a while he wanted more than this, and having studied book-keeping in his spare time, he started to work for the municipal authorities in the city of Semarang. This was a good job, and by studying in the evenings he was able to improve his position, and also take on private clients. He bought his own house and, as his father had died young, he helped to support his family. His mother and younger brother lived with him.

It was at this time, when he was concerned with his work and the ordinary life of a young man of twenty-four, that he first received the Subud latihan. It was totally unexpected.

Pak Subuh's house was quite near to a big main road, but in those days, in Java, roads were not well lit, and in the middle of the night they were very dark and very quiet. After finishing his studies around midnight, Pak Subuh used to take a stroll to clear his head before going to bed. He sometimes went along the main road, and sometimes took another little side road which led up a little hill.

On this particular evening he was walking along the main road at around midnight, and it was, as usual, very dark. Picture his astonishment, therefore, when the whole sky became as bright as day, and he saw what seemed to be the sun falling out of the sky, coming nearer and nearer, until it fell on his head and entered him. Immediately his chest was

filled with a very strong vibration. “Oh dear!” he thought. “This must be the onset of a heart attack.”

He turned and went home as quickly as he could, and his mother, who met him at the door, wondered if he was feeling unwell because he was looking so pale. He needed to get away, to be on his own, so he hastily reassured her, and retired to his room. He lay down – and prepared for death.

He did not die, but suddenly his body became filled with light, like electric wires all through him. Not only this, but he found his head was also filled with light, and he wondered how on earth he could see into his own head! It did not last for long, but when it finished, something not his own will, made him sit up, get up, and walk to the room in which he usually said his prayers. He stood there and made the movements of what in Islam is called two *raka'at*. He was then walked back to his bed.

He felt wonderful – but very surprised. He had not had a mediumistic experience. Whatever had moved him had not supplanted his own nature, but had filled it with a sort of vibration, and it left him with no feeling of fear.

After this experience, for a period which he always referred to as “a thousand nights”, something happened to him **every** night, and he never slept – yet he was not tired in the daytime, and went on with his work in the normal way. He even got married to a very young bride, and started a family.

The vibration was with him all the time. Sometimes he experimented to see whether he could get rid of it, by going to the cinema for instance. No use. It stayed right with him throughout the most exciting films. But he was certainly able to enjoy himself during this period. One of his pastimes was to play in a gamelan orchestra with friends from his office.

The next major events in the coming of Subud took place in 1933. At this time Pak Subuh was thirty-two years old. He had a wife and three children, a good job and private clients, and among his friends were those who knew he had something, and wanted to receive it too. Yet in a way he seems to have been still waiting for something – and when it came it must have been the most glorious experience of his life.

Apparently he had no advance warning that something was about to happen. One evening he just went to bed, and then it started.

First he had the sensation of being pulled and pulled until his head seemed to be at the North Pole and his feet at the South. They even felt cold. Then he felt his chest being opened up and widened out round about himself to a round shape. After this he felt movements and a moment later he felt freed from the earth which he left behind. And then he felt himself going through the sky at an unimaginable speed. He had a complete and clear awareness and also an alive inner feeling throughout, and he constantly uttered "*Allah Hu-Akbar, Allah Hu-Akbar*", which means "God is most Great, God is most Great". He felt the air rushing past and penetrating him. During this journey he was made to know and to see things beyond human understanding. He passed through the sun, and he visited the heavens. And when he returned, he saw the earth – and it looked very small.

As he descended further he saw the lights of the city of Semarang from the air. He continued on his journey and slowly came down until he was above his own house. Now he wondered how to get in because it was all locked up for the night. While he was wondering about this, he suddenly entered quite easily and stood on the floor of the room in which he usually did the latihan. He looked at the clock on the wall which showed 4.25 in the morning.

From there he went to his bed where he saw his own body as if it were sleeping. He was amazed that in the middle of his forehead he saw a radiant light shining, bright as the morning star. He then opened the mosquito net and kissed his body lying on the bed. After this his eyes opened, and soon his normal consciousness returned.

Bapak wanted to get up right away, but could not do so because his body still felt very cold. After one or two minutes however, Bapak was able to get up and go to the clock which he had looked at before. At that time the wall clock showed exactly 4.30 and, strangely, the room had a fragrant smell. Then he performed the dawn prayers.

After her own prayers, his mother came to him. She whispered, “May I tell you about an experience I had last night? At midnight I was awakened from sleep. I sat up and searched with my feet for my sandals, because my eyes were still closed. But for a long time my feet could not find the sandals, so that I had to open my eyes. I was very frightened when I saw the room almost entirely filled with light from electric light bulbs. But when I looked properly, the light did not, in fact, come from electric lights. The lights were all stars shining in the sky. Then I looked down, and below me there was open air, so at that moment I felt I was in the sky, and my body felt cold and I was frightened. I gave up my intention to find my sandals, quickly lay down on the mattress and went to sleep again. I have just got up and, after finishing my ablutions and prayers, I felt brave enough to come to you because I saw that you are here and the condition of your room is no longer as I saw it last night.”

Perhaps this experience was given to his mother so that she might understand something of the reality of her son’s experiences; so that, a little later, when he received to give up his good job, and his private clients, she would know that he was not completely mad.

1933 was an astonishing year. Bapak prayed that he might be able to share what he was receiving with those of his friends who wanted to receive it. From the latihan he received that if he surrendered in the presence of others who were sincere in their wish to surrender to Almighty God, that they would also receive the latihan. At first it was his wife who received with him, and then one or two of his men friends. Soon, however, women were being received into Subud by his wife, and more men received the latihan from Bapak.

While this was happening, Bapak was himself receiving about the future – a future which involved a second world war, a man coming from the West who would take Subud beyond the seas, and Bapak himself travelling around the world for Subud. It all seemed impossible to the young man of 32, particularly as he had just now resigned from his job, and given up all his private clients, because he had received in the latihan that this was what he had to do. He had

received that now he must give all his time to the needs of Subud and those who had received the latihan.

The next few years were very hard ones. He and his family never actually starved, but from having enough to include small luxuries, they now did not always know where the next meal was coming from. Then they lost a baby son, and his wife, very depressed over the loss of the baby, went to live with her parents. She became ill, and Bapak went to stay with her because he loved her very much indeed. In this way he was with her when she, too, died, leaving him with four young children, two boys and two girls. The youngest remained with her maternal grandparents, and Bapak's mother helped him care for the three older children in Semarang.

Before the war came, Bapak married for the second time. His second wife was already a widow, and brought two children of her own to the marriage, who were about the same age as Bapak's older children. His second wife accompanied him during the dynamic spread of Subud in the late 1950s and 1960s, and became known to thousands of members as "Ibu". In Indonesia this is the equivalent for women to the word "Bapak" for the men. After "Ibu" passed away in 1971, Bapak married for the third time, and his third wife accompanied him during the last period of his life, and survived him as his widow.

After the first few people were opened in Semarang in 1933, the latihan began to spread by itself. There were many mystical teachers in Java at that time, and hundreds of groups following psychic or magical methods. Under these circumstances it is quite astonishing that Subud should have spread beyond the small group of people close to Pak Subuh. But it did spread, and in 1934 Bapak was asked to start a Subud group in the city of Yogyakarta.

When some 40 candidates were waiting in Yogyakarta Bapak sent one of those with whom he had been doing the latihan in Semarang, and in this way a men's group was started in Yogyakarta.

To receive the latihan for the first time was called by the Indonesians "to be opened", and this expression is still used in Subud today. In those early days in Yogyakarta, the

men's latihan tended to be a very rough experience in which physical violence was common and so was verbal abuse. Even so, the group grew bigger.

According to the memories of the members of those days, there were two outstanding characteristics developed in this men's group. First, was their ability to heal the sick by doing the latihan in their presence, and the second was a sort of Zen-like ability to excel at the Indonesian martial art of Pencak Silat.

Groups practicing Javanese martial arts were suspected by the government of being training grounds for political subversion. Those receiving the latihan in Yogyakarta soon found themselves having to prove to the authorities that their activities were not aimed in this direction. They therefore invited the government representatives and police to what might be now called some kind of Subud presentation. However presentations in 1935 or 1936 were very different to what might happen today.

This particular presentation was opened by each Subud member stepping up on the stage, and issuing a challenge to anyone in the audience to contend with him at Pencak Silat. The audience was wise enough to decline regretfully these challenges. And it seems that it was only after this that the Chairman gave a speech in which he explained that the **only** aim and purpose of Subud was to surrender completely to the Power of God. His powers of oratory must have also been inspired, because the authorities were somehow convinced that this group was not training for political or subversive activities.

Other Subud groups also started at around this time in Java, but in the troubled times ahead not all of them survived.

The Second World War brought great hardship to Indonesia, but in one way or another many of the little Subud groups did manage to continue to meet for latihan, sometimes beating a curfew by spending all night at the place of latihan, which, of course, was usually in someone's house.

Furthermore, the War was not without danger for Bapak. Ibu's son was a member of the youth movement fighting the occupation, and at one time Bapak's older daughter hid his gun, wrapped in a quilt, under his bed, just before the house was searched for arms. It was not found. If it had been, the men in the house, including Bapak, would have been shot. It

was too dangerous for the boy, still only about fifteen years old, to stay in Semarang, so he left home to join the other young people hiding out in the forests. Bapak's family did not see him again for several years.

Even after the Second World War had officially ended, the fighting continued in Indonesia. This was the war of independence, and it had several stages. In October 1945 the Indonesian youth movement was fighting the Japanese in

the streets of Semarang. At this time some 500 Japanese and 2000 Indonesians lost their lives.

During that terrible October, Pak Subuh received in the latihan that he should take his wife and the remaining four children to the village where her mother lived. This was near Yogyakarta. Even to cross the main road outside their house was dangerous in Semarang, so they had to travel by country paths and seek shelter wherever they could. They had many adventures. On one occasion they found shelter with a bandit chief who had found himself preparing his house as if he was expecting visitors. He was truly astonished to find himself acting as their host, but he liked Pak Subuh so much that he wanted them to stay on with him. Pak Subuh, however, had received to continue on his way.

That journey across Java took some two weeks, after which the family rested in the house of Ibu's mother. A few weeks later, again following Bapak's receiving, they moved on to Yogyakarta, where they arrived with no money, and no house to go to. The overwhelming kindness of one of the Subud families at that time caused Ibu to call them her own family, and this close relationship between the two families has continued ever since.

Bapak was now, once more, able to undertake normal work, and he worked for the government as chief of the financial section of the Army Medical Corps. Every Thursday and Saturday, in the evening, he opened the men who wished to follow the latihan. But at the beginning of 1948 Bapak resigned from the army because he felt that working as a soldier was not in accordance with his own inner nature.

He did not stop work. He now established his own small Subud enterprise. He became a building contractor assisted by other Subud members who were more expert

in this field, and who were also following the latihan. In later years he would chuckle and say how pleased he had been because they had owned a horse and cart.

Bapak remained in Yogyakarta for about ten years. At first, during this period, Indonesia was struggling for independence, and almost all the men young enough to fight became involved in this struggle. Many of the Subud members had remarkable experiences as they faced very dangerous conditions. Many found themselves taking involuntary action at a crucial moment, which saved their lives.

The group grew and strengthened and in 1947 it was registered with the government of Indonesia, as an organization with the name Soeboed. When Indonesia altered the spelling of its language some years later, the name was written as it is today, Subud. Before 1947, the groups were not called Subud, but had other names usually indicating some kind of training for physical development.

In 1949 the Dutch government ceded sovereignty of Indonesia to the Indonesian people. There were still many hardships, however, and the life of those around Bapak was often a fight against poverty. To own a bicycle was still something of a luxury, and most people walked to and from the latihan, sometimes Pak Subuh spoke about a very different future, a future when Subud would have spread beyond the seas. It all seemed very unreal to the Indonesian members. Not only were foreigners usually considered to be uninterested in deeper spiritual matters, but furthermore there were no foreigners around. In Yogyakarta there was only one person who was not Indonesian. This was a Dutch priest who had stayed on after independence.

The story of the spread of Subud to all mankind now begins to move very much faster. Whereas in the years between 1925 and 1952 it had spread throughout Java, by 1958 it had spread throughout the world.

This sudden spread had nothing to do with some man-made plan, but it all seemed to happen in an orderly way, and sometimes to the considerable surprise of those involved.

The man who now moves “centre stage” was born and educated in England; although neither of his parents had any English blood in their veins. His father was Jewish, and his mother was Catholic, while he, himself, had embraced Islam. He was an expert linguist, and earned his living by teaching languages and by writing for periodicals and the press. His name was Husein Rofé.

Rofé came to Indonesia from North Africa, partly for what he described as “superficial reasons”, and partly to seek a Master of Oriental Wisdom who would help him towards self-realisation. In due course he came to Yogyakarta. He set about his search for his spiritual teacher and, through one of his pupils, met Pak Subuh. Bapak was not at all what he had expected. He looked ordinary, smiled and joked a lot, and behaved quite normally. However, when Rofé received the latihan he knew that this was what he had been searching for.

He had strong latihan experiences from the time he was opened, and he received, almost before he had had time to know what receiving could be, that he had a mission to take Subud to the West. He told Pak Subuh, but it was only later that he discovered that Pak Subuh had, in fact, been awaiting his arrival since the early 1930s.

As soon as he had sufficient experience in the latihan for Bapak to allow him to open others, he set off for Jakarta, and there tried to interest the foreign community in Subud. He also discovered that he could heal people who were ill by doing the latihan in their presence. But Jakarta did not seem the right place for him, and he later went on to Palembang in Sumatra. Here once more he healed the sick, while remembering Bapak’s guidance that this should only be done if medical science had not been able to help the patient, or if no medical help was available. He found healing people drained his inner energy, and also that this healing tended to give others the idea that Subud was only some kind of faith healing, while of course in fact it was so much more.

Eventually, as a result of writing for the press abroad, he was invited to go to Japan to attend a religious congress, and he gave up an excellent job in Sumatra to take up this challenge to spread Subud overseas.

His visit to Japan was successful in spreading Subud, but almost everything that happened there worked out in an unexpected way. He did not even really expect the small Subud group which formed around him, to last, but it did, and some of those early members are still very active in Subud in Japan over 30 years later.

After six months Rofé moved on, this time to Hong Kong. He had no intention of going to Hong Kong, having set off for Indonesia once more – however his visa for Indonesia was cancelled while he was on his way, and the ship's captain had to land him at the only other port of call on the ship's itinerary. The humour in this situation was quite apparent to him – he had received that he had a mission to spread Subud to the West, so why did he think he could go back to Indonesia?

His next move was to the island of Cyprus, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. This may well have been about the last place he would have expected his mission to take him to, but in fact this was a very important move. His stay in Hong Kong had been reasonably comfortable, and a Subud group had formed around him, but he had been very concerned at the lack of opportunity to move on to the West. He had, however, written about Subud in various magazines, and one of these had found its way into the hands of an Englishman who worked as a naturopath in Cyprus.

Roland Starr had already followed two or three spiritual disciplines, and was very sensitive. On reading Rofé's article he felt immediately that Subud was for him. He wrote to Bapak and invited him to Cyprus. Bapak's spiritual receiving indicated that it was not yet the right moment for him to go to the West, and he asked Rofé to go in his place. A ticket was sent to Rofé, and he left Hong Kong for Cyprus in August 1955.

The group opened in Cyprus included the naturopath and his wife, a bank inspector for one of Britain's largest banks, and his wife, as well as a High Court judge. The naturopath and his wife later prepared the way for Bapak in South America and started a group in Cuba. The wife of the bank inspector, after she became a widow, moved to the international Subud centre in Indonesia where she had an important role to play

for more than 20 years. The High Court judge introduced Rofé to the first of the small group in England who would, a few months later bring Bapak to the West.

Rofé was introduced to Ronimund von Bissing just before he left Cyprus for England. Von Bissing contacted him again in London and, after giving the matter considerable thought, he was opened. He had been an exponent of the Gurdjieff System. This System required its followers to be very sincere, very persistent, and also intelligent. By working on oneself to break down habitual action, and reaction, it sought to bring one into contact with one's own inner nature, or essence.

It was not difficult for many of those following that System to see the implications of what was claimed for Subud, but what they found astonishing was the facility with which one reached a state of inner awareness without having to do anything other than completely surrender. In fact, they even found this rather hard to accept.

Three or four of von Bissing's Gurdjieff friends were also opened, and among them were leaders of Gurdjieff groups in or near London. Five of these men, after experimenting with the latihan for some months, accepted Rofé's suggestion that they should invite Bapak to England.

Bapak accepted this invitation. After Rofé had left Indonesia, the intensity of Bapak's mission had begun to increase. He moved to Jakarta from Yogyakarta in 1955 and on his second visit to the northern city of Medan in Sumatra, which happened in February 1956, he did what he was to do later in the West – he held latihan almost every day, and gave talks every night. The membership of Medan increased rapidly as a result of this.

He and his wife and two assistants arrived in England in May 1957. For a few days they stayed in Rofé's house, but it was really too small for his purpose. It was then that one of the five men who had invited Bapak to England offered him accommodation at his institute, which was situated just south of London, and Bapak and his party moved there in early June. This place was known as Coombe Springs.

Coombe Springs was the name of a mansion which belonged to the Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences, and John Bennett, who was its founder and director, had been practicing the latihan for about seven months. This fact was known to very few of his followers. His idea, as with the other Gurdjieff leaders, had been to try out the latihan before offering it to those who were, in effect, his pupils.

Now was the time, he thought, to offer Subud to those of his followers who seemed most suitable for this “new work”, and he asked Pak Subuh’s permission to do so. Pak Subuh’s reply was a real surprise. Bapak said quite simply that **anyone** who wanted the latihan could be opened.

There are several versions of what happened next, but it seems that a list appeared and was circulated which was headed, “ANYONE WANTING TO JOIN THE NEW WORK, SIGN BELOW”. Everyone who could find the list signed up.

Explanations were minimal – indeed there was very little to say. In groups of 15 at a time, the men entered the largest room at Coombe Springs which happened to be the dining room. All furniture had been removed, and the curtains were drawn. There were usually two Indonesians and Rofé standing chatting in the middle of the room. When the 15 had assembled they were arranged in a rough circle around those in the middle, and were told to stand with their eyes shut and surrender completely to Almighty God. The Indonesian in the middle, who they later discovered was Bapak, said two or three words which were translated, “There is no God but God”. And then while some just stood with nothing apparently happening to them, others moved, fell to the ground, shouted and sang. After about 30 minutes someone said “Finish”, and they all very quietly left the room. And the next 15, who had heard strange noises from outside, entered – somewhat nervously.

One evening would be a men’s night, and another would be women’s night. There were two nights for men, and two nights for women each week. The strange thing was that even those to whom nothing seemed to have happened in the latihan, wanted to come back. It was often difficult. Long

journeys were involved, and when they finally arrived at Coombe Springs, they had to wait their turn as the room was only big enough to take fifteen at a time. Often this meant a wait of some hours, and then returning home in the early hours of the morning. And yet they did it, twice a week, month after month.

In the first two months after Bapak arrived at Coombe Springs, some 400 people were opened. By the end of the year that number had doubled.

During that summer, a Gurdjieff Seminar had been arranged at Coombe Springs, and people arrived from Europe and North and South America, as well as other parts of the world. They too all joined the “new work”. When they left, news of Subud went with them to their own groups back home. Soon the invitations to Bapak to go to other countries were coming in.

In this way Bapak visited the Netherlands and started a visit to Germany in 1957, and in 1958 he also visited Switzerland, the United States and Australia, before returning to Indonesia; and after staying in Indonesia for about four months, he visited Sri Lanka and Singapore.

After they were really able to feel the latihan, people were permitted to establish centers nearer to where they lived, and this cut down the amount of travelling done on a twice-a-week basis. When some of these members were permitted to open others, this made it far easier for new people to come into Subud because Subud centers now existed in more places.

In November 1957, the press was full of stories about the film star Eva Bartok who, after doing the latihan, was able to give birth to her baby which the medical profession had feared would result in her death. This unexpected publicity informed a much wider public about Subud, and by the end of the year those asking for the latihan were by no means only the followers of the Gurdjieff System.

Most of these early groups survived remarkably well, which is perhaps surprising when one realise that no one in them had more than a few months’ experience of Subud. Certainly Bapak and Ibu visited them, and perhaps Bennett as well, but these visits were not all that frequent because both Bapak and Bennett were serving the whole world.

The new members were excited by what was happening to them. Most of them began to feel in subtle ways “different” very soon after they were opened, and the need to experiment with what they had received soon began to bear fruit.

Within a few months of Bapak’s arrival in England, a group of Subud members had managed to buy a beautiful big house in a rural area of England, and furnish it as a Subud nursing home. In this home the staff not only cared for the sick in a normal way, but they also did latihan with them.

There were many remarkable results which affected not only the patients themselves, but also the staff. The business side of this operation was, however, more philanthropic than practical, and after two-and-a-half years this first social project had to close down because it was quite simply losing too much money.

Almost immediately after the nursing home had closed, a home and school for maladjusted teenage boys was opened in the South of England. Most of these adolescents had been through the Courts, and the idea was to allow them to relax and develop their own talents in an atmosphere of calm and peace arising out of the latihan carried out by the staff and visiting Subud members.

This experiment continued until a change in government policy towards the rehabilitation of this kind of young person made the smaller residential homes, such as this one, more or less redundant.

Since those days Subud members have established many social projects all over the world, and have also participated in projects which are not wholly operated by Subud. Some of these projects are big, while others have been established and run by just one or two people. Many are for children or young people, on the other hand some provide for the aged, or even a whole community of severely underprivileged people. Whether they provide education, social, or medical help, they have all been established with the same aim – to provide a quality of care that can adjust to the needs of all human beings.

There are a number of these projects that have attracted the attention of Governments, and some have been adopted by major international institutions. The primary reasons for this are, perhaps, that these projects are innovative in one way or another, introducing new ways to meet the needs of today.

One of the first of these innovative projects was the American Overseas Medical Aid Association. It started when a Subud member who was a research assistant in medical physics, was one day helping a secretary “clean out” a number of medical journals because of lack of space. The secretary, whose husband and son were both physicians, remarked, “It is a crying shame that we have to toss these out. I bet there are lots of physicians all over the world who would be delighted to have them.” This remark was the inspiration for this project.

The American Overseas Medical Aid Association – AOMAA – collects surplus medical literature, medical educational material, surgical and other medical equipment, and even medications that are not out of date, and then dispatches this material to countries where there are severe shortages. So equipment and medical literature from, for instance, the surgery of a deceased doctor in the United States, is sent as a gift for a medical school, or perhaps a hospital in a country in the developing world where such things may be unaffordable luxuries.

The Subud member who started this project and incorporated it as a not for profit corporation, has managed it almost single handed for many years. He has funded much of its operation out of his own pocket. He has been a nominee for the prestigious President’s Volunteer Action Award, and received a special commendation from President Ronald Regan. He has also been commended by Resolution of the State of Illinois, and by a Resolution of the Chicago City Council.

Another not for profit organization that has received Government recognition, this time in Ecuador, is Asociacion Vivir. It was created by a Subud member who is a physician. In her small clinic she began to see how the women she was treating needed to learn how to care for themselves, and how to look after the health of their children. What they needed was basic knowledge about health, and about alternative home therapies as well as nutritional recommendations for simple diseases. She then started very simply to try to meet these needs, and over a period of about sixteen years she established Asociacion Vivir, and several other projects related to it. She says that she uses the inner guidance of the latihan for her work and also the tools of society to achieve her goals.

When giving a talk about her work, she describes what she is doing like this:

“We are building the foundations for a broader approach to healthcare that challenges the common belief that health is only about taking medicine and receiving treatment in medical centres.

“Wholesome living habits help to improve and maintain health within the family. Empowering the mother to become the primary health care provider is our goal, and through her, we try to touch the other members of the family.

“Our mission has taken us to more than four hundred rural and urban communities around Ecuador, and impact studies have shown that we have reached, directly and indirectly, about eighty thousand people. Instead of imposing our views, we encourage the communities to take pride in their own culture and to bring back the methods of natural healing that they have been using for centuries.

“We train people to take a leadership role in their communities and to work as a team sharing what they have learned. We complement western medicine by systematically researching Andean healing traditions and incorporating this knowledge into daily life. Through our classes, workshops and publications we encourage human growth, self-esteem, self-knowledge, improved gender relations and personal responsibility as the basic elements to improve the quality of life.”

In June 2000, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) selected Asociacion Vivir from recommendations from 150 countries, as one of the top fifteen Health Promotion projects to serve as a *world model*.

Asociacion Vivir has received important financial support from the European Union, UNICEF and other international NGO's, including Susila Dharma Germany and Esquel in Ecuador. The doctor who achieved all this has been invited by the Ministry of Health of Ecuador to participate in healthcare reform for that country, and in 2001 she was offered the post of Minister.

This project, used as a model, may bring about far reaching changes to the way health care is taught in countries everywhere. Like this, there is also another social project

using modern knowledge with local culture, which started like Asociacion Vivir with one Subud members responding to a need.

A Norwegian Subud member, who was a child psychologist, was visiting an orphanage in a third world country, when he noticed that the children were emotionally distressed even though they were being properly fed and the institution itself was clean. He felt that what these children were lacking was the kind of human contact that helps children to develop normally. Out of this experience, came the International Child Development Programme – ICDP.

It started in 1980, and in 1992 ICDP was registered in Oslo, Norway, as a ‘private charity intended to work for the healthy development of children and youth world wide, that can participate in social activities run by other humanitarian organizations and is non political and non denominational.’

The original team consisted of three Subud members, and a professor from Bar Ilan University in Israel. The Norwegian child psychologist, who later became a professor at Bergen University in Norway, was joined by a Norwegian colleague who was also a child psychologist as well as a specialist in mental and physical handicap. The third man was a Dutchman who was, at that time, the Chairman of the international welfare arm of Subud, who for many years had undertaken extensive and varied social work in Indonesia.

ICDP aims to promote long-term help for children, through sensitizing caregivers to their children’s needs. This is done by a program of exercises and activities aimed at bringing out the supportive and positive caring skills the caregivers already have but have suppressed. In this way a change in their caring practice is achieved through a process of raising their awareness, and because this process is happening within the caregivers themselves and is not a system imposed from outside, these changes are in line with the culture of the caregivers.

The work of ICDP is community based, and is applicable across cultural barriers. It is also equally valid whether the caregiver is well-educated or semi-literate. It focuses on competence building in the field of psycho-social care, and it raises local awareness of the needs, the standards and the rights of disadvantaged children. It is usually implemented through local paramedical aides, but it can also be integrated into primary health care and used for up-grading the quality

of care in institutions, pre-schools and crèches. In this way ICDP can reach a great many children because it can upgrade existing projects and networks of care.

ICDP has run training projects in many countries and is the most far reaching of all the social or welfare projects started by Subud members. ICDP projects are sponsored by a number of international or national institutions, among whom are UNICEF, WHO, NORAD, and the Catholic Church, as well as the State Ministries in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Some of the projects have direct sponsorship by Subud, through the Susila Dharma International Association.

The Susila Dharma International Association (SDIA) is an association of organizations and individuals from twenty-seven or more countries. It fosters global co-operation through long term partnerships, education and the provision of support services to its members who assist or participate in social development. SDIA and its members are affiliated with the World Subud Association, and constitute the social or welfare arm of Subud. It supports and co-ordinates Subud social projects undertaken by individual members and by groups, and facilitates the application of charitable donations raised by Subud world wide.

In 1989 SDIA became one of the few hundred non-governmental organizations affiliated to the United Nations' social arm, ECOSOC, under what is known as Category II. This is for organizations that are internationally known for specific competence in some areas of the Council's activities and can submit written statements and be granted hearings. The U.N. welcomes and needs this kind of co-operation.

It is, perhaps, significant that the first book published by UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO in which the Susila Dharma International Association participated, should start with a statement by Pak Subuh:

"We give charity to all men, without distinction as to nation, social level or situation. We do not need a return or reward of any kind from those whom we help."

**Dharma – surrender, trust
And sincerity
Towards Almighty God.**

In 1960 Subud was spreading quickly in Indonesia as well as in other parts of the world. Bapak was now living in an area of Jakarta where embassy residences had been built in colonial times. It was an elegant suburb with tropical trees - including a huge flame tree which grew in his front garden. The tempo of life was that of bicycle rickshaws, and food-traders carrying their wares on their shoulder poles, but his house was a hive of activity with many visitors inquiring about Subud, including some foreigners from the embassies.

The house had an open-ended garage which served as the office for both Bapak and the small grouping of experienced Subud members who became known as his “International Secretariat”. As with everything else in Subud, there was no plan for an office in advance of its need, and at first it was not even possible for Bapak to answer all the letters which came to him from overseas because no one was available to translate these letters into Indonesian. The letters which arrived in Jakarta were collected and sent to Coombe Springs, where they were answered by Bennett or his staff. At Coombe Springs, of course, no one had been in Subud very long, but neither had the letter writers.

In 1960 Bapak felt that the time had come to search for land on which a complex of Subud buildings could be created. By this time Subud members from overseas were coming to Jakarta to visit Bapak, and they were all accommodated in the houses of Bapak’s family or other Subud members. The hospitality and care given by the Indonesians to their guests became legendary; nevertheless there were limits to the numbers of visitors who could be looked after in this way. Bapak felt that one of the most pressing needs was for a guest house to accommodate these overseas guests, and he wanted

it to be near his own house so that they would not have to travel across the city to see him. Lastly, but actually first in importance, he wanted Subud to own its own latihan hall, which had to be big enough for both the local group of members and the overseas visitors. The difficulty involved in creating a complex of buildings at that time in Jakarta, when almost all building materials were in very short supply, might have daunted a weaker man, but Bapak had received that this was the time to move forward, and he led the way.

Bapak bought land on the outskirts of Jakarta in an area of small farms and paddy fields, near the market of Pasar Mede. This area was reached by a one-way, partly sealed road leading to the new hospital, Rumah Sakit Fatmawati.

At first this became a picnic place where Bapak and his family, accompanied by Subud members from Indonesia and overseas, would go for a pleasant day among the fruit trees for which the area was famous.

This land became, in time, Wisma Subud, the first international centre for Subud. The whole project was launched largely out of the proceeds of the sale of Bapak's gold watch, and Ibu's jewellery and other personal possessions.

The first latihan hall – at that time it seemed enormous – was a dismantled building removed from a building site in Jakarta. When rebuilt at Wisma Subud, this building also provided two offices for the International Secretariat, as well as two or three bedrooms – with roofs which were not exactly rain proof.

The guest house was built as and when money was available for the next lot of bricks. At first the guest house had only two floors, and when it was finished, Bapak and his family moved into the upper floor which became their temporary home until their own house was finished.

Because of the political situation, getting the necessary steel for building to Indonesia at that time, and even getting money into that country so that local building materials could be purchased, was a very complicated business. Steel was sent from Japan, and most money passed through a member who was an accountant in Singapore. He was in touch with one of

the members of the Secretariat.

Raising the money, overseas, for the building of Wisma Subud, was an enormous undertaking for the relatively new Subud groups, and it was one of the very first international financial commitments accepted by a World Subud Congress. For what seemed many years in the 1960s, Subud groups everywhere were giving concerts, holding jumble sales, and committing part of their local centre budget to this building programme in Jakarta.

The Subud world supported the project to such an extent that by 1971 more land had been bought, a large house for Pak Subuh and his family had been completed, together with an 18-room guest house, guest cottages, some private homes and a new latihan hall capable of seating over 2000 people.

The latihan hall was opened by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, President Suharto, at the start of the Fourth Subud World Congress in August 1971.

Wisma Subud provided the opportunity for Subud members from anywhere in the world to visit Bapak – but when the original land was purchased and the first buildings were being built, most Western Subud members never anticipated actually going there. It was a very long way from North America, or from Europe, and the political situation often seemed unfriendly.

Not only this, but the very nature of Subud itself – a receiving arising out of our own individual surrender to Almighty God – does not require reliance on anyone else. There is no teaching in Subud, so, it was argued, why would anyone want to go half way around the world to sit at the feet of Pak Subuh?

There are many things in Subud which are difficult to understand until one is in Subud and experiencing it. and when you, yourself, are a Subud member, there is still much which you only discover from personal experience. Those who visited Wisma Subud discovered its value – sometimes to their own surprise.

Around Bapak there was a sort of inner atmosphere, and where he lived for most of the time, it was very strong indeed. Not only this, but at Wisma Subud were members

with far longer experience of the latihan than anyone else in the West had had at that time. Questions about personal experience of Subud could be answered both inwardly in the latihan, and outwardly by asking questions.

In the 1960's the International Secretariat expanded to include four non-Indonesian Subud members who helped with translations. The Secretariat itself had expanded to cope with far greater volume of letters, and the transcriptions and translations of the many talks given by Bapak.

Not everything had gone smoothly at Wisma Subud during the 1960's. there were horrendous political upheavals in the country. The foreign Subud members had all had to leave, and for several months the men at Wisma Subud, including Bapak himself, kept all night vigil, every night. The latihan was continuous – as two left the hall, two more entered – and two by two the remaining men would patrol the grounds, carrying side arms. At one time even Bapak was armed.

In the daytime, troops kept guard. It is said that Radio Beijing had broadcast to the communists in Indonesia that Subud was a major enemy of a communist state. Whether or not this was true, certainly the situation was very dangerous.

After the danger passed, the foreigners returned, and the first of the international enterprises was started. Two more pieces of land were purchased adjoining the original complex, and buildings continued to rise on what had been paddy fields and orchards. By this time 126 adults and over 60 children lived at Wisma Subud. They were of many nationalities and usually were equally fluent in Indonesian and English.

Even with all the new building, not nearly enough rooms were available to house the 2000 guests expected for the 1971 Subud World Congress. Fortunately, one of the advantages which Wisma Subud had enjoyed since its earliest days, was the presence of architects and engineers who were Subud members. One of these brothers now designed long dormitory buildings built of woven matting. There was an upper and lower floor, and sleeping cubicles each sufficient for three people lying on mattresses on raised platforms. The buildings for married couples provided

one-and-a-half sleeping spaces for two people because, as Bapak pointed out, when you are married you become one.

Every night of that congress there were concerts or some other cultural entertainment put on by one or more countries. The quality of these performances was mixed, but many were by professional performers who happened to be in Subud. In addition, there were displays of Indonesian dancing and a performance of the famous Indonesian wayang, or puppet shadow theatre.

The world congresses are a feature of Subud life, and they are almost always very happy events. They are also very important, because it is at the congresses that major decisions about the conduct of Subud affairs are taken by representatives of each country's national committee, together with helper delegates.

The first world congress took place at Coombe Springs in 1959. The organization of Subud as we know it today, developed slowly, and usually out of the needs expressed at the world congresses. In general terms, the spiritual needs of the members are looked after by the helpers, while the organizational needs are handled by committees.

Subud centers, therefore, have a committee which is responsible for providing and maintaining latihan premises, and managing the money. The centers also have a helpers' group which sees that latihans are available at times when the members can attend, who carry out interviews and openings, who do the latihan with those who cannot attend the general latihans because of sickness or some other disability, and who receive with members who are trying to clarify something specific in their lives about which they are not yet able to receive for themselves in their normal latihans. Helpers are usually members with longer experience of the latihan. They may come from any background, and they help on a voluntary basis.

No one pays for the latihan because this comes from God, and therefore is not ours to buy or sell. But it is necessary to have premises in which to hold the latihan, and all members help, to whatever the degree of their capacity, to cover these costs. Of course, there are always some people whose financial state precludes any sort of financial contribution,

and that is never made a barrier to full participation in the latihan.

In addition to paying for the latihan premises, members usually want to support the Subud social projects, and some are able to work together to form Subud commercial enterprises. In their own personal lives many Subud members take part in social projects run by religious groups, or others run by the State. There is now a growing awareness among members regarding the environment, and therefore some members take an active part in environmental groups.

At the First Subud World Congress in 1959 some of the basic principles of Subud organization were already laid down. Administration, for instance, must always be seen as a service rather than to organize just for the sake of organization.

Another of the basic principles also formulated at that time was that Subud has a rotating international administration. To quote from the documents in 1959:

“There is no Subud headquarters and therefore there is no permanent place for any international services. It is therefore recommended that such services as are more conveniently performed on an international basis should be undertaken by a country that feels itself strong enough to do so. Such services should go by rotation from one country to another for such periods as may prove both convenient and desirable.” At the Second World Congress in 1963, Pak Subuh summed up the need for international organization this way,

“As you know, the Subud brotherhood has an organizational side, which is responsible for the conduct of worldly and administrative affairs, but the affairs of the organizational side ought not to play the dominating role in our brotherhood. Our brotherhood is a spiritual brotherhood, and it is the latihan, the spiritual part, which is the most important thing, while the organization is only a kind of secretariat, meant to administer the practical affairs of the spiritual brotherhood. It is the latihan that is the truly important part, and this must always be remembered in the discussions which will be held at this congress.” (63BCL1)

It was at this congress that the first international committee was created to handle the affairs of the “brotherhood” as the association was then called. This committee was called “Subud International Services”, and it was located in New York. Thereafter new international committees formed at every world congress, each time a different country being chosen to serve Subud in this way. World congresses are always held at four to five year intervals. In this way no one country dominates the international administration of Subud affairs.

During Bapak’s lifetime, he would sometimes give advice between world congresses to deal with some international need. About the year 1970 the work of the helpers was divided up into different-sized geographical areas of activity. Some helpers were to hold responsibility for the well-being of the members in their own centers, while others would be responsible for watching over regional matters, others would take on national matters, and some would work in international groups covering international matters. The international groups, for instance, would be responsible for helping the members in countries where Subud was very new. There is no spiritual hierarchy among these different areas of responsibility, but usually national or international helpers have already had experience in their own centers, or in regional activities. Indeed to prevent any suggestion of a hierarchy, the national and international helpers have a limited term of office, after which others must replace them. They then return to helping in their own centers.

In Subud there is no priesthood, meaning there is no one to intercede between a member and God. Each person receives for himself or herself. The helpers do not have any more of a “direct line to heaven” than anyone else, but they are usually people who have been in Subud for more than seven years – enough time in which to have learned when members need support, and how that support can be given.

The work of helpers is based on surrender, trust and sincerity towards Almighty God. They come from all walks of life, all religions, and all races. They do not claim infallibility.

The term “helper” was originally used by Bapak for all those who helped him look after the spiritual needs of the members. Bapak defined his own role as being like the school janitor who prepares the classes for the pupils. Their actual teacher is Almighty God. One can carry this analogy further and say that if the classroom has in it a number of pupils who are, in themselves, quiet and attentive, the rest of the class will find it easier to study. This is more or less the role of the helpers.

Bapak sometimes gave some general explanations about why we are the way we are. They go something like this.

When a baby is conceived there is a focus through which another human being can come into the world. The focus is dependent on two people, the father and the mother. Both are equal in their responsibility because neither can make a baby without the other.

The baby comes into the world through that focus and it partakes of it, because something in its own nature is similar to the opportunity being offered. It then grows in the mother’s womb, still linked very closely with both her nature and the nature of the father through whom it has come into this world.

Who can say whether the child is aware of these influences, or whether perhaps its state of bliss in the womb is impinged upon by actions or condition of the parents. However it is quite clear that before it is born it does react to stimuli of a material kind from outside the mother – for instance, it will jump when it hears a sudden noise.

After it is born, the baby responds to feelings and moods which arise from within itself. Expressions pass across its face when it is not looking at anything in particular corresponding to any other physical stimulation.

As it grows bigger, able to see more clearly and little by little to respond more and more to the world around it, the child loses its connection to its own inner nature and becomes molded by the interaction between itself and its whole environment. By the time the child has grown up into an adult, it has developed a character and a way of life which may or may not be in harmony with its own inner.

In the latihan the way is opened for a man or a woman

to discover again his or her own inner nature. To get to that point, however, the Power of God seems to work through all that is irrelevant or wrong. Just as in our ordinary life our physical illnesses can be cured in many ways – medication, operations, physiotherapy, and so on – so the latihan puts right what is wrong in many different kinds of experience, each of which accords with the individual himself. This process is called “purification”.

This process happens by itself without any outside help, but we ourselves have to surrender to Almighty God with patience, trust and sincerity.

Out of our experience our understanding changes, and out of the changes which happen within us ourselves, our own attitude to others changes too, so that in time Subud members find themselves **less easily angered, made jealous, or impatient of the failings in** others. Indeed, gradually an awareness of why others behave as they do, and a growing sense of very real compassion for their weaknesses, often results out of following the latihan.

It is a fact that some Subud members, having seen this process at work in themselves, often want to help children to remain close to their own natures as they grow up, and this feeling gives rise to social and educational projects for children and young people.

In Ecuador there is an educational project which demonstrates this process very well. It was started by Mauricio and Rebeca Wild. Rebeca has expressed the principles involved like this:

“Looking round the world today, we see how social and personal problems are mounting up everywhere. Many young people are so much caught up in them that there seems no way out. What is the problem, since we as parents do our best? Why is it that young people still feel something went wrong?”

“Recent studies provide us with clues.... They agree more and more that human growth is planned and guided by our inner systems of development which cannot be manipulated from outside without causing trouble. They are already present in the smallest baby and follow their own laws and timetables.

“This should make us wary of interfering....since **unjustified**

needs turn into tensions on many levels, resulting in inner pain, a growing sense of personal insecurity, loss and dissatisfaction.”

In 1977 Mauricio, who was a clergyman, and Rebeca, who was trained as a Montessori teacher, established a kindergarten at Tumbaco. They named it the Pestalozzi Kindergarten as a tribute to the Swiss educational reformist who founded the Pestalozzi Children’s Villages. Soon the kindergarten grew to 30, and then the parents asked them to set up a primary school as well.

They established a school for the fee-paying children called Pestalozzi I, and then they started a special project, Pestalozzi II, for Amerindian and mixed race children from the poorest families, where materials and teaching are free. These schools were given official Government recognition in 1982.

Pestalozzi education covers a wide field and incorporates methods put forward by Montessori, Freinet, Makarenko in the USSR, and the Open Schools in the United States, as well as S.A. Neill’s Summer Hill in the UK, the “Ecole Moderne” in France, and the findings of the child psychologist Piaget. The aim of the Wilds was to recognise and develop the child’s own nature, his natural curiosity for instance, and parents noticed how helpful their children became, and how happy and self-assured they were.

The immediate academic results of this system are summed up by a headmaster of a school in Quito who had become curious about Pestalozzi because all **his** children who had come from there had responded poorly to memorised knowledge but were invariably among the best pupils after one or two months. He wanted to know why. He then offered to give preference of admission to Pestalozzi children.

The Pestalozzi schools were declared model preschools for the whole country by the Ministry of Education. There are now seminars on this system for students, and courses open to the public.

The involvement of the Wilds with Indians of Ecuador is a moving story. It started with the Amerindians who are largely a self-sufficient peasantry identified with their traditional way of life. The content of state education was

incomprehensible to them since it had no relevance to their own needs. The challenge was therefore not only to adjust education to the needs of the individual child, but to adjust education to the needs of a particular community against the background of the world we live in. the Pestalozzi system was later adopted by a very large French charity for a project in Quito, and is being applied to all their other social projects of this kind throughout the country. Other members of Subud have also used it in conjunction with the needs of local educational projects in deprived areas.

The need for this kind of secondary education also exists, and will probably come when funding and staff are available.

Children, in their own home, learn from the example of their parents, but children, especially as they grow older, spend much of their time out of the home. Peer pressure is very strong, and the young can be manipulated because they are often not sufficiently confident to resist. Subud has held many camps for children and young people, and these give an opportunity, in a different and sympathetic environment, for values to be talked about between the young people themselves, including those who are already doing the latihan.

People may enter Subud at the age of 17, but they must have permission from their parents. There is never any force placed upon a young person to come into Subud, and unless their parents are already Subud members, they must wait for three months after applying to join, before they are opened, in the same way as any other applicant must wait. This gives them the chance to decide whether they really do want to commit themselves to attending group latihan twice a week on a regular basis; in other words it gives time in which to assess the level of their own sincerity.

Pak Subuh often suggested that young people about to embark on university courses should wait until they were through their studies before starting the latihan. He laid much emphasis on being prepared properly for work in the world, if possible in accordance with one's own particular talent. If young people became too involved in spiritual matters at a time when they should be studying, this might

interfere with their concentration on their studies and lead to **less good results** at graduation.

When talking about younger children and Subud, Bapak used to say it was better for them not to think about this kind of thing while they were still at a stage in life at which all that the adults were talking about was still only theory. They would receive the benefits of the latihan through their parents.

Once someone has been opened in Subud the latihan is always with them right through to old age and the end of life. In England there is a home for senior citizens, many of whom are members of Subud. They have their own bed-sitting room, small kitchen, and bathroom, but the midday meal is always taken together in the central dining room. The public rooms include a latihan hall.

This is a place where people do not seem old because they are so alive. And yet, of course, many pass on from here to the next life, and it is a subject about which there is no mystery in this community. The residents talk about death easily, and tell you about some of the really wonderful occasions of passing away which have happened here. There is no feeling of some dreaded parting, of disappearing into some terrible abyss, but on the contrary there is a feeling of passing from life to life, of walking from this room to the next – with the added advantage of leaving behind the inadequacies of an ageing physical body.

Pak Subuh, himself, never saw surrender to God as something passive, but more like the surrender of a tool to its maker. He advocated working until this was physically quite impossible due to the frailties of old age, and he himself was certainly an example of working hard until only a few days before he passed away.

Surrender to Almighty God with patience, trust and sincerity results in an awareness of inner guidance and a sense of compassion for others. How we express this depends upon us, ourselves.

Who? Me?

Many Subud members wonder why it is that they, themselves, have been able to receive the gift of the latihan, whereas others, apparently far more worthy, never hear about Subud. Pak Subuh used to say that sometimes it is our ancestors who have earned the right to receive the Grace of God, but that during their lifetime they had no opportunity to do so. Now they receive its benefit through us, their descendants.

The cross-section of humanity which comes into Subud is very broad. There are the highly educated, and those who have never been to school. There have been government ministers, even a prime minister, and people of all levels in the armed services and the police. (On at least one occasion both the governor of a prison and one or more of the prisoners were all in Subud!) there are school teachers and professors, and school drop-outs; musicians, artists sculptors, and photographers, and stars from the stage and screen. There are doctors, nurses, health fanatics and those with incurable illness. There are housewives, people in business and students. Some are old, some are young, and most are somewhere in between.

Subud is not a religion, and has no teaching. In Subud one only surrenders to God, and that is why religion is no barrier to joining Subud. There are devout Jews, Christians and Muslims, as well as Hindus and Buddhists in Subud. There are ministers of religion, and from time to time even some monks and nuns. There are also people who practice no religion, and those who came into Subud with the sincere desire to find out whether or not God even exists.

With such an enormous variety of people, what they do in the name of Subud varies according to their own capacity and ability. That most are really sincere is true, but that does not mean that they will attain instant success when they do try to work together, or that previous bad habits all disappear at the

moment of opening! But remarkable changes do happen, sometimes quickly, and sometimes gradually, depending on our own inner strength, and the nature of the problem itself.

Many of us are idealistic, and inevitably some people who come into Subud do not find whatever it was they were seeking. People leave. Apart from contacting them to discover if they are ill, or if there is some misunderstanding which can be put right, the Subud Association does not pursue them. Ultimately “being in Subud” or “not being in Subud” is a matter to be worked out between the individual and Almighty God.

This situation is, of course, different to what happens when a member wishes to introduce some other method to the Subud latihan. In such cases, this member will be asked to desist, and if they are not willing to do so, they will no longer be permitted to call themselves Subud members, and the Subud Association will no longer take any responsibility for what they do. This is something which happens very rarely, but occasionally such action becomes necessary in order to preserve the essential purity and simplicity of the spiritual latihan of Subud.

When we are given the opportunity to come into Subud, this chance happening is usually very appropriate to our own nature and situation. Remember that there is no advertising, and no outside pressures to join Subud, so people are able to respond, very naturally, when the opportunity presents itself. The stories of how people came into Subud are often very funny, and the contrast between the nature of one person, and their opportunity, and the nature of another, and the opportunity they are given, is sometimes very illuminating, as the following exchange between two members in Auckland, New Zealand brings out very clearly.

One evening, after latihan, the members were drinking tea together in the kitchen of the Subud house in Auckland, when someone asked one of the women what brought her into Subud. Her story went something like this.

She and her husband had been trying to establish a spiritual centre on a four acre island in the Caribbean. These people had always thought that to belong to any particular sect or “ism” was too constricting, and even, perhaps, rather childish! Of course they had heard about Subud – they were the sort of people who had heard about just about everything.

One afternoon she sat in the open air, surrounded by uninhabited islands and open sea. She closed her eyes and went into a deep meditation. She quite suddenly received that she had to leave this beautiful place and go to the United Kingdom where she must join some organization or group. What this organization was called was not revealed.

She uttered a prayer along these lines, “Dear God. If you really want me to do this, you will have to provide me with a ticket, because at this moment, as you know, I have no money.”

The following morning a fishing-boat brought her a telegram from her mother. “Darling daughter! Do forgive me but your island sounds thoroughly uncomfortable. Would much prefer you visit me than I visit you! Am therefore sending ticket immediately.”

The journey was not straightforward. The ticket was finally located on one of the islands a long way to the South, some days after her plane had left for England. The airline was most apologetic and put her on another plane which took her even further south, to Barbados. It was there, in a hotel – courtesy the airline – she met a priest. As she was not at all sure what the Almighty had in mind, she told him about her search, and he gave her a telephone number to try when she got to London.

Some days later she actually did reach London – via New York. She telephoned as suggested, and found herself talking to a very famous Anglican priest who was known for his understanding of mysticism. “How did you find me?” he asked. “This is my first visit to London in three years, and I am only here for six hours.”

She was sent by this priest, to an Anglican centre for spiritual healing, to see whether this kind of work might be her vocation. This centre had several healers, but the most famous was a woman who had herself been healed by a miracle. There was an interview with this famous healer. The spiritual force was so strong during this interview that it was almost visible, but when it came to verbal communication there was a gap between the two women which was so large, that they could not really meet.

So her search continued, but with a difference. On the train journey back to London, there was something inside her which said, "Now you must start to surrender your thinking to Almighty God."

The priest had suggested that she should study the Christian mystics St. John of the Cross and St. Theresa of Avila. At her mother's home she spent much time reading the works of these saints, and surrendering to God through meditation, and in particular she tried to surrender her thinking. This gave rise to spontaneous movement.

One morning, during a meditation, and having surrendered her thinking, she suddenly saw a huge symbol of life which came down and into her head. Within her something said, "Today you will find what it is you have to join."

Afternoon tea was a feature of life with her mother, and this particular day they were joined by her mother's sister-in-law who brought along a friend. The friend turned out to be an amateur astrologer. He pronounced over the tea-cups, that he believed she was about to join something, and that he felt this might be Subud. He was quite interested in Subud himself, being a follower of the Gurdjieff System. After tea was over, the aunt and her friend left, and her mother turned to her and said, "I wonder what brought them over 80 miles just to have afternoon tea."

During the evening her husband telephoned from London. He had gone to visit an old friend of his that day, only to find him about to take off for a place called Coombe Springs. "Hop in the car, old boy. They have a Subud congress going on down there. Just up your street." After a day at the First Subud World Congress, her husband had applied to be opened.

She did not have to wait three months to be opened because she was due to leave the country within only a few weeks. It was, however, rather strange that the day she entered Subud happened to be exactly three months after that afternoon in the train when she received that she must now surrender her thinking.

After she had finished her story, there was silence for a few minutes. Then one of the men looked up and said rather wistfully, "I didn't have anything like that. When someone told me about Subud, I just felt a need – so I joined!"

Those of us who need visions, have visions, and those of us who can, quite simply, "just respond to a need" have Subud put in front of us. But, sometimes when Subud is in front of us, we do not even see it because we are not yet ready.

There was a young teacher who was rebelling against life, and trying to find the meaning of everything. She got herself to Montreal, and found herself working in a very rough school, in a tough district. She looked for somewhere to live and found a house down a back street, with one room to let. She liked it, and liked the people there, and coming home to that place each evening was the high point of her day. Then one day the house burned down.

She moved on, spent two years in Canada, and then took several jobs in the United States. She met Russian orthodox priests, and she worked for an orthodox Jewish rabbi's family. She camped out in the National Parks of New Mexico and Arizona and felt the presence of the great Indian culture. An awareness of searching grew in her – "there must be some *underlying truth* that links all religions".

Eventually she returned to England, rather despondently because she had found no answer to her questions, no fulfillment from her search. A school in a country town seemed a most unlikely place in which to continue searching.

But it was, in fact, here that she was put in touch with Subud, and Subud was what she had been searching for.

Three years after joining Subud she was attending latihan at one of the centers in London when, to her surprise, she saw a girl from the house in Montreal – the girl who had opened the door to her so many years before. It was only then that she discovered that she had been staying in a house used regularly for latihan, and that the latihan had been going on in the room right above her own.

Of course, from time to time people find Subud without being aware that they need anything at all. Take, for instance, the communist whose way of life included the idea that to own a book was capitalist in the extreme.

One day, while waiting for a friend, our communist was attracted to the window of the local mystic book shop. That was strange enough, but what was even worse was that one of the books looked so interesting that this man sneaked into the bookshop to take a closer look. No harm in “just looking”. But somehow the whole situation got completely out of hand, and our communist left the shop plus book, properly paid for too.

With terrible feelings of guilt the book was read – from cover to cover. Well, the book had been read – but how did one know if it was *true*?

Even though much trouble was taken to hide that book from other family members, the end of the story was three up to Subud and three down to the Party.

And then there are those who know that they are seeking, and thought they knew precisely where they would find it.

Some young Iranian students were living in Los Angeles about the year 1978. Certainly one of them had overworked at his studies, and had to rest for a while, and he was bored with everything. There were others, too,

possibly equally bored, so they started to search for an inner way, an inner meaning to life.

They went to the film *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, which they enjoyed very much, and one of them remembers a line from the film which stuck in his mind at the time. It was something like, “If it is the right time you will get help”. That, at least, was a comforting thought, because he really did want help.

Three of these students lived together, and one of them was working as a taxi driver. He was a great reader, and had not only studied the Persian mystics, but had also read Buddhist books, and books on Zen. He read in his cab when he had no passenger.

One day, about a week after the film, the cab driver was about to cross an intersection when the light changed. Instead of accelerating, his foot came down hard on the brake. With a squeal of tyres, and all the traffic backing up behind him, he came to a halt. He could not think why he had put his foot on the brake.

Immediately he stopped, a passenger climbed in. he had recently arrived from out of town, had boarded a bus for Santa Monica, only to find there was no seat. He had left the bus without realising that all public transport in that area was full at that time of day. And then this taxi stopped right in front of him.

He noticed the books in the car and before long the two men were talking about Persian poets, so the cab driver asked him if, perhaps, he was a Sufi. He replied that he was a member of something even better. He was a member of Subud. When the cab driver heard that word, he felt calm, cool and very happy.

When he got home he rushed into the house shouting, “I’ve found it! I’ve found it!” and so it was arranged that the Iranians would meet the Subud man in a coffee bar in two days time, to hear more about Subud.

But one of the students did not want to go. “No.” he said. “I am going to become a sufi in the desert.”

All was ready – they were about to leave the house. “No.” he said, “I will go to a movie.” “Oh, come on,” they said, “there is nothing on at the movies, and besides there is

nothing in the refrigerator. You'd better come to the coffee bar.”

When they met with the Subud people, two of the students had little need to ask questions, but one, of course, asked questions for a solid three hours. Having got all the answers he said once more, “No. I am going to the desert to find a Sufi master.”

In the course of a conversation with someone else, the Subud member suddenly turned round and said to him, “Why must you go to dig holes in the desert to search for water, when a river is in front of your feet?” at that moment he finally knew he wanted Subud.

The opportunities to come into Subud are so varied and so individual that it is hardly surprising to find that the Subud members themselves are widely scattered. It is easy to suppose that when Subud started in a country, all the members were in one place, but in actual fact this was not usually the case. Subud centers were often far apart, and the groups were usually very small.

To start with it was personal correspondence which kept everyone in touch with everyone else, and the journeys which Bapak made in response to the members' invitations.

The guidance and advice from Bapak was invaluable, particularly when it was given in person so that individual questions could be answered before confusion had time to become well established. It is probably only a result of his constant travelling that peculiar practices have never become part of Subud, though from time to time there were some minor misunderstandings, usually due to weak translation of his advice.

Pak Subuh's first journey was to England in 1957. There were two young assistants with him and his wife. It was an astonishing experience for them even to leave Indonesia, something which Bapak had received would happen, but which was an almost unbelievable happening to everyone else.

There followed the opening of hundreds and hundreds of people, and an intensity of spiritual experience which is hard to imagine. Within a few months they were on the move

once more, and wherever they had been invited, there people waited to receive the latihan. Before reaching home again, they had traveled around the world.

In 1959 and 1960, not only did the original groups want advice, but more people were waiting to come into Subud in other countries.

In February of 1959 Bapak visited Singapore, Hong Kong and Tokyo. Then, after ten days in Jakarta, he set off for Sydney, Australia; followed by Auckland, New Zealand. Then Los Angeles, Mexico; Caracas, Venezuela; Lima, Peru; Santiago, Chile; and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Back to North America – New York, Montreal, Toronto, Washington, St Petersburg, Florida; Stamford, Chicago, Denver, Tucson, San Francisco, and Vancouver.

He flew to Europe – Amsterdam, Holland; then Oslo in Norway.

From there he went to the United Kingdom starting with Coombe Springs, two groups in London, and then St. Albans. He then traveled to the groups around Britain, starting with the home for maladjusted adolescent boys at Blandford. Bristol followed, and then the Subud nursing home near London. From here he went north to Garstang, Liverpool and Manchester. Then to Ireland, Navan near Dublin, and Ballyards, south-west of Belfast. From Belfast he flew to Edinburgh and from Edinburgh he went to Glasgow and finally to Newcastle, before once more going to Europe, this time to Brussels and Paris, followed by the German centers in Wolfsburg, Planegg near Munich, and Munich itself.

There were invitations to Vienna, and to Geneva, and then after that Bapak returned to France, to Nice, St Paul de Vence, and Marseilles before his final visit in Europe to those waiting in Athens.

On the way home there were still more people to see in Asia. He went to Karachi in Pakistan, to India where he visited members in Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta. Then at last it was Singapore, and finally on June 1st, 1960, he arrived back in Jakarta.

In August he toured Java, and again the following year. In 1963 he undertook an enormous journey, and in 1964 he

went again to Europe and India. In 1967 he went round the world again and, on this journey, included South Africa for the first time.

Even after a heart attack in 1979, Bapak traveled to London and then on to Toronto to attend the 1979 World Congress. In 1981 it was Europe and America, and in 1982, although again his health was giving cause for considerable alarm, he went to Australia, New Zealand and Japan, and returned to Indonesia in considerably better health than when he set out. In 1983 he was in England for the 1983 Congress, and for surgery to remove a cataract. His last journey abroad was in 1985 when he was again in England primarily for medical reasons.

Apart from all of this, of course, there were also the other journeys around Indonesia.

During these visits what did he do? Of course there were talks and he often explained that he received these in a state of latihan, as he gave them. He could not say in advance what they would be about, and he sometimes commented that he was interested in what he had just said, as his audience. Bapak would talk in Indonesian, sometimes for as long as half an hour or more, and then an interpretation into English would follow and, if necessary, from the English into another language. Although Bapak did know some English, he only used one or two words in his talks.

Some of these talks were very long, lasting several hours, and people would fall asleep. But Bapak often commented that sometimes this was the best way for them really to comprehend what he was saying, because then what they needed would be received by their own inner nature without the interference of the thinking.

As well as the talks there were the latihan and what is called, in Subud, "testing". In testing, Bapak would help the members to test their own progress, or their own ability to receive in the latihan. It might be something quite simple, such as the difference between walking from one's own will, and walking when surrendered to the Power of God. It might be something about the kind of work most suited to one's own nature. Or it might be something to show how an expanded understanding arises by itself out of following the

latihan. In testing, an answer to a question is received and usually demonstrated by movements, through complete surrender to the Power of God.

As time went on the capacity to test grew wider and deeper, and the questions more serious. It is by testing, often accompanied by the helpers, that Subud members have always found the guidance for their lives, if this is not already apparent to them in their own general latihan.

The latihan, talks and testing were the serious side of a visit from Bapak, but by being near Bapak and his party, the members learned about all kinds of other things concerning the way to live in harmony with one's own inner self.

Take, for instance, cooking or housework. If this is done in a calm and relaxed way, then those eating the food usually feel relaxed too, and that makes the food taste good. Furthermore, a calm house is a pleasant environment, but a house full of quarrels and disagreement is full of tension.

Lastly, there was the unique feeling of being close to Bapak. To some it was a feeling of calm, joyful serenity, while others felt an intense sense of worship, not to Bapak, but to Almighty God. And there were also those who had the most uncomfortable experience of seeing all their own faults. But while those around him were having these feelings or experiences, Bapak was doing ordinary things, like going shopping, or sight-seeing, or just relaxing wherever he happened to be.

Of course, Bapak was not alone on these journeys. He was accompanied by his wife and one or two other family members, and by his interpreter. While many of the women were enjoying the presence of the ladies of his party, his interpreter often needed help with the correspondence which followed Bapak around the world in what seemed like ever increasing quantities.

These journeys were, unfortunately, a severe physical burden to Bapak as he grew older. The long flights, the different beds, different foodstuffs, and all those needing his attention, made him very tired. His party included members of his family who would cook for him, and this cut out some of the discomfort, but, even so, his schedule was very demanding.

He undertook this travelling only when he received to do so, but when he received to travel, fears for his own physical health never held him back.

Bapak was 80 years old in 1981, and his years were really beginning to show. But he still gave talks, and still he continued to answer huge piles of letters. His physical health was often not very good, and he and his family started to think of moving out of Jakarta, away from the once country road which was now a busy highway running past the entrance to Wisma Subud.

In 1986 a new house for Bapak and his family, a little outside Jakarta in a place called Pamulang, was finally ready. It had been built by Bapak with considerable help from several members, mostly Indonesian. This was their act of appreciation towards the man who had done so much for all Subud members, both in his own country and throughout the world.

This house was designed to incorporate a traditional Javanese open-sided hall before the front door, which made it look very big. On the upper floor was a private apartment for Bapak and his wife, and on the ground floor were public reception rooms and family bedrooms. The whole house was most tastefully decorated in soft and pleasing colours.

In February 1987 Bapak moved house to Pamulang, and there was a big party, or *selamatan*, to welcome the move. But Bapak's life was already drawing to a close.

On his birthday, June 22nd, there was the customary party. The open-sided hall was full of people, many from overseas. Everyone understood that Bapak was not very well, and would probably not be strong enough to join the guests, so they were delighted when he did come out of his bedroom to stand at the top of the main staircase in his house to complete the Javanese ceremony of cutting the summit off his mountain.

The guests surged into the hall below singing "Happy birthday to you." and the Indonesian birthday song, "Panjang umurnya." They sang both songs over and over again. There was something very special in the air, and the area around Bapak seemed full of light.

Having cut the rice mountain, he acknowledged their greetings, and waved as he returned slowly to his room. Many then found themselves weeping, for some reason they did not want to define.

Wisma Subud was very quiet that night. And then, around dawn, they came – they came running, “Wake up! Wake up! Our Father, our father Yang Mulia Bapak has passed away! Our father! Our father has passed away!”

Food – both inner and outer

In the years 1952-53, Pak Subuh wrote a book which is called *Susila Budhi Dharma*. This book was not written exclusively for Subud members, but on the other hand it is advice, received in the latihan, for those who are already in Subud.

The book was received in the Javanese language, first in prose and then, a little later, in verse. The Javanese is translated into Indonesian, and the Indonesian into English. The English has now been translated into several other languages and this book has been read all over the world.

When one starts it, this book seems to be only about what one eats, and the influence that different kinds of plants and animals have on us if we eat them. It means, however, more than this, because it is all about the nature of man himself, and what happens to him if he partakes of this or that kind of experience.

Life is made up of many different kinds of experience, and all influence us to some extent. Some of this influence is obvious to us, but some is more subtle such as those matters explained by psychologists. Experience in the latihan indicates that many of these sources of influence remain to be discovered by science, and the most important for these is the deeper effect on us of sexual intercourse.

The natural purpose of the sexual act is procreation. Using our intelligence we can prevent procreation without denying ourselves sexual union. However what we are doing is only preventing the chemical process which would otherwise give rise to the physical body of a child.

A child is not just a physical body, and the ability to procreate is also not solely physical. Every time we have sex we unite physically, but it seems that we also unite in a different part of our nature, and it is that non-physical unity which is not washed away with soap and water.

The residue of casual encounters seems not only to cloud our

ability to know ourselves and be true to our own needs, but also enters our children who came into this world through an act of procreation in which we, ourselves have taken part.

The confusion in so many young people is only too obvious these days, but it is also true to say that there are thousands who are genuinely struggling to overcome it. Subud accepts anyone who genuinely wants to change, but the evidence of the sincerity of this wish sometimes has to be demonstrated before being opened; for instance sincerely trying to stop drug addiction because this is something which causes such confusion in a person that it is often hard for them to be able to know the latihan.

Each one of us is our own master, and we can choose how we live our own lives. Ordinary eating does play a big part in helping us to achieve whatever it is we want to do. An athlete has a certain diet which might not be so appropriate to a housewife, and so on. If we fast we soon learn how food affects our character. Those with certain kinds of allergy will have learned this lesson without even fasting.

Science is gradually learning more and more about the food we eat, so perhaps one day it will be discovered that what Pak Subuh has said in his book – which is that the nature of the plants and animals we eat does affect our behaviour – will be found to be scientifically correct.

After following the latihan for some time, many people begin to be aware of the unity of all life, and this gives rise to a feeling of respect for nature. When we begin to be aware that animals are in their own way, and plants in theirs, both surrender to and worship God, then it makes us sometimes a little less casual in our attitude to eating them.

There are no dietary rules in Subud. The vast majority of Subud members eat meat, but of course there are also vegetarian Subud members. There are also those who follow the dietary rules laid down by their religions.

It is very common to find Subud members sitting quietly before a meal. Their aim is to prepare the way for both the food they will eat and they themselves to unite in their worship and surrender. In this way the plant or the animal, or even the salt and the minerals, are not just seen in their

material form, but as living essences which, together with human beings, form one interacting creation.

The experience of the latihan breaks down the feeling that there is some vast distance between this world and the next. It also overcomes the idea that there are purely spiritual activities, and purely material activities. After a while in Subud most members become aware that they are enveloped by the Power of God at all times in everything that they do, and the evidence for this is that the awareness of the presence of the latihan is with them in the midst of even the most traumatic worldly experience.

Sometimes this awareness gives rise to a feeling of what is true and what is false; or it reveals the result of an action at the moment when that action is conceived; at other times it is subjective and one's foot may be slammed on the brake seconds before the child runs in front of the car.

Gradually the reliance on this awareness increases, and at the same time comes a feeling of thankfulness to the Power of God. What is happening is that slowly we become people who bear witness to the Power of God through what we do – how we live our lives. The more this happens, the more we receive, which is why Subud people sometimes describe their life in Subud as being from the spiritual to the material, and from the material to the spiritual – and so back again to the material.

That kind of experience cannot be given to us by someone else. Each person receives for themselves, in a way and at a speed which is appropriate to their own nature and the condition of their lives.

This is why, in Subud, there is no “leader”, no one who can say, “Do as I say and you will get this result”. We can support each other, stand beside each other, and encourage each other. For instance, we can say, “I have also had an experience like that, and so has So-and-so. It is not imagination – it is really like that.”

We can also say, “Let's test whether your experience is real or whether it comes from your imagination or desires.”

We can even say, “Look. I did what you are intending to do, and I had a really bad experience.” But human nature being what it is, that usually does not prevent someone having to go through the same experience for themselves. If, however, an experience is your own, then it belongs to you, it is real and can be exceedingly precious.

That is what Subud is all about – real experience – your own experience – which is why you have to experience the latihan before you can understand it.

The appropriate road

In a general talk to people wanting to come into Subud, Bapak made the following remark: “Every person will find for himself the right way towards God, and what may be the right way for one may be completely wrong to 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. Usually if there is a teacher he teaches his followers to do exactly the same as he does in order to reach what he has reached. But this is really wrong, because not only between a teacher and his followers but even between two brothers of the same parents there is already a big difference, not only in outward appearances but also in their character and in their whole being. So surely you can understand now that what is the right way for a certain teacher to find God is not necessarily the right way for his pupils.

“Therefore, Bapak says, 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. You must not be afraid and you must not be worried, for whatever comes to you in your latihan is only what is in you and comes from your inner self. It is the real you that arises in the latihan, so you do not have to be worried or afraid.” (From *For Applicants to the Subud Brotherhood*. 1968. Based on notes taken at a talk by Bapak to applicants, Singapore 1960).

In the latihan we make movements and sounds. We find ourselves learning to walk so that we can tell the difference between walking because we **want** to walk, and walking from the inner. We learn to feel and be aware of the latihan in our different organs, and we gradually come to understand the meaning of what we do in the latihan, so that the guidance

we are receiving can be actively followed in our ordinary lives.

Changes occur in the way we do things, for instance, in the way we relate to others, and in our attitude towards our work. The feeling is something like waking up from a deep sleep and suddenly seeing why we are doing what we do. Gradually we come to understand who we are, and how we are influenced both from the outside and by our own passions.

All this may bring about changes in our lives. Some of these changes are made by us – for instance, we may decide to change the policy of our company, or we may change from accounting to marketing, or from being a bus driver to being a cook. The housewife who produced the family meals from habit may become interested in food, in recipes and diets.

There are other changes which are totally involuntary; for instance, we become bored by some activity which we used to do, which was clearly bad for our health. We find ourselves seeing the character of others more clearly, but also becoming more charitable in our attitudes. We become angry less frequently, or feelings of jealousy may quietly disappear. Suddenly we realise they are just not there any more.

As our inner awareness deepens, our understanding of our religion increases; it has been said that the great religions are ways to God and Subud is a light for those who travel them.

All this sounds very easy, and indeed in some ways it really is easy. However, what is demanded of us is patience, trust and sincerity in our surrender to Almighty God. This is not so easy.

The extraordinary thing about Pak Subuh was that he was able to make this kind of surrender even in the early days when there were only very few people who had experienced the latihan, and when his receiving about the future must have seemed to many to be nothing more than imagination. Throughout his life his surrender was not something rigid which set him apart from other people, but instead it was so alive that it encompassed the other people. Perhaps this was the reason that when he was in Indonesia he usually looked

like an Indonesian, but when he was in Germany, he looked somehow German, and in America, American, and even in Japan, he looked Japanese. People loved him, quite spontaneously, and some wept, quite involuntarily, whenever they came near to him.

People asked for Pak Subuh's advice on almost every conceivable subject, because his inner wisdom was so deep, and his compassion towards his fellow human beings so wide. He quite frequently reminded people that he was not a fortune-teller and that all he could do was give them advice and guidance which could help them surrender themselves more fully to the Power of God. God, and not Pak Subuh, was their teacher.

Under Pak Subuh's guidance an international structure for Subud was formulated, and after his death it was formalised at the World Congress of 1989. In the structure of the World Subud Association the care of the members is left in the hands of the helpers on the spiritual side, and the representatives of zonal groups of national committees on the organizational side. These two parts of the Subud Association are responsible for the care of Subud throughout the world. No one person replaces Bapak.



Budhi – the force that resides within man himself

In each of us there is a force that is of God but in us individually. It pervades our soul or inner nature, our thinking and our bodies. If we truly surrender to the Power of God, and if God wills, it can be permeated by the Holy Ghost or *roh ilofi*. And it is the *roh ilofi* which acts as the “messenger” between God and man. Pak Subuh referred to this inner force in man as the “*budhi*”.

This word, when used in casual conversation in Indonesia, means someone’s behaviour, or character, and if a person is truly filled by the Power of God, this will be seen in his behaviour or character. Usually, however, our behaviour is dominated by our passions.

The symbol which you see at the top of this page is composed of seven circles and seven radial lines. The nearer the outside, the wider they get.

The innermost circle represents the material world, the second circle is the vegetable, and the third is the animal. The fourth is the human; after that is the fifth, the perfect human, followed by the sixth which is the angelic (*roh rachmani*) and the seventh which represents the arch-angelic (*roh rabbani*). There are more levels beyond this, but they are so totally beyond our comprehension that no effort is made to represent them.

The circles are wider as you move outwards to represent the fact that these levels get bigger and more powerful the higher you go. The seventh circle, the arch-angelic or *roh rabbani*, is the largest and most powerful life force there is.

The radial lines are all the same, and represent the holy spirit (*roh ilofi*), and the space between the circles is the force of the angels (*roh el kudus*), which is inside and yet outside everything.

When Pak Subuh first received this symbol he received it in light, which is represented by the colour gold; and he saw it

Against a midnight blue sky.

There are seven levels within each of the levels represented in this symbol, and, in the latihan we gradually begin to distinguish for ourselves what these are, and how they affect us. To our eyes it often seems a slow process, but actually it is amazingly quick.

There are always some people who, for a while, consider themselves to be of a very high nature. However in all things concerning Subud, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating”. If someone is truly able to surrender and is graced by the Power of God to receive even at the lowest levels, it will show in his behaviour, and maybe even in his appearance. It is an old saying that goodness shines out of the eyes of those who serve God, or that a person who surrenders to God is like a house from which the light shines out on a dark night.

Small children and animals respond quite naturally to goodness even in perfect strangers. There are hundreds of stories about children who ran to Bapak and, in one or two instances, of children who, too young to talk, persisted in trying to give him presents. There are likewise many stories of animals trying to get into the latihan, or even joining in, in their own way, outside the latihan room.

From time to time Bapak was asked to define God, or at least to define the source of the Subud latihan. He used to reply that man could only define something that was within his human understanding, so to define God was to limit God to what man could understand. As man was a creation of God, this was rather like asking a table to define its maker.

So if we have to define the source of the latihan, then all we can say is that it comes from beyond our mind, and we can receive it when our own hearts and minds and passions are stilled. We surrender only to God, not to man, or to spirits, or to forces, or according to this way or that way defined by teachings. Therefore we should have no fear, for God is all Glorious, All knowing, and All Powerful.

In Subud, at the end of something, it is customary for us to ask for forgiveness because the feeling arises within us of our

own inadequacy when we try to “get it right”. I ask you, the reader, therefore, to forgive anything which I have written which you feel to be offensive or incorrect, and I pray that, regardless of my imperfections, you yourself will be able to perceive the content of this book. Amen.

Epilogue

Subud is an association based on Susila Budhi Dharma. It is based on the principles of true human behaviour, remembering that God is Almighty and that there is in ourselves, residing within our being, something that we can neither know or see; that is, the *budhi*. *Dharma* signifies that we should submit ourselves completely to God, for we believe in Him and it is to Him alone that we surrender our body and soul. Thus Subud is a brotherhood of men, based on the principles of true human qualities, remembering the greatness of God that is manifested within our being through our complete submission; God exists, we truly believe in Him and he is truly Almighty.

(Extract from a talk given by Bapak at Coombe Springs, England in 1959. Reference 59CSPS.)

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EPILOGUE

Talk by Bapak (59CSP5)