

disease to the surface, then surely the latihan would cure it.

And so I actually became more assiduous in practicing my latihan. I still laboured under the illusion that this was what would cure my disease. I wanted to show Dr. Taniguchi that he was mistaken when he said that my disease was a result of doing the latihan.

At least if I were miraculously cured that in itself would serve to dispel any doubts. Otherwise Subud would have lost and Dr. Taniguchi would have won. That was my reasoning. Looking back on it now, I can see how very foolish this reasoning was, but at the time, I was oblivious that this was my own self-will and in fact the complete opposite of surrendering to the Almighty.

I refused hospitalisation because I wanted to practice the latihan freely. Instead of sticking to the principle of doing latihan twice or three times a week, I would practice daily, and sometimes even twice a day so that my disease could be cured even sooner.

To begin with, I applied myself by doing the latihan at home and using the rest of my time to rest and read the Old Testament, the Koran, and other Buddhist texts I had not had the chance to read before. During that period, I had an unexpected experience.

It was around lunchtime and there was not a soul about. Just as I was slowly making my way down a gentle slope, I was suddenly overcome for no obvious reason, with a feeling of repentance towards God. It was clear that this was something that had welled up from the depths of my being. At the same time, I wept. I understood then that this was a sincere repentance expressed by my soul.

However, although I had experiences like these, it was clear that my health was not improving after three, four, and even six months had passed. My confusion grew and I began to lose patience. Then, after nine months of daily, intense mental struggle, I finally gave up.

#### **In Hospital**

It was then that I agreed to enter hospital. With my resources completely depleted and in a state of total exhaustion, I let go of my desire to prove that the allegations of Dr. Taniguchi were wrong.

Once I had given up everything and entered the hospital, I relaxed, and as my treatment progressed, I gradually showed signs of improvement.

I spent much of my time reading books that Michael had lent me. These were about theosophy, or by authors who had not yet been introduced to Japan, such as Krishnamurti, Gurdjieff, Ouspensky and so on. I was able to read these books in English because I had so much time on my hands.

I also continued doing latihan at the hospital by choosing places that were not frequented at certain times. I intended to continue doing the latihan quietly by myself for ten years until I had gained enough experience. I had learned the hard way how difficult it was to try and get others to recognise the value of the latihan.

In fact, I was not discharged for another seven months. When the time finally arrived and I came home, I thought I had learned patience and was sure that I would be able to handle anything that cropped up in the future. However, little did I know what lay ahead.

*Rozak's story will be continued in future issues. Publication details of the book itself will be given as soon as known*

## *For Those Wishing to Fast in Ramadan*

### **When is Ramadan in 2008?**

Ramadan in 2008 will start on Monday, the 1st of September and will continue for 30 days until Tuesday, the 30th of September.

Based on sightability in North America, in 2008 Ramadan will start in North America a day later – on Tuesday, the 2nd of September. People in other parts of the world should also consult with their local Islamic authorities about the dates for Ramadan.

Note that in the Muslim calendar, a holiday begins on the sunset of the previous day, so observing Muslims will celebrate Ramadan on the sunset of Sunday, the 31st of August. Although Ramadan is always on the same day of the Islamic calendar, the date on the Gregorian calendar varies from year to year, since the Gregorian calendar is a solar calendar and the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar. This difference means Ramadan moves in the Gregorian calendar approximately 11 days every year. The date of Ramadan may also vary from country to country depending on whether the moon has been sighted or not.

The dates provided here are based on the dates adopted by the Fiqh Council of North America for the celebration of Ramadan. Note that these dates are based on astronomical calculations to affirm each date, and not on the actual sighting of the moon with the naked eyes. This approach is accepted by many, but is still being hotly debated.

### **RAMADAN AND LENT**

*From **Pewarta Kejiwaan Subud Vol. VI, No. 2, page 9** – **Announcement from Bapak, 1968...***

#### **Lent and Ramadhan**

In reality, Lent and Ramadhan have equal value. Christians feel that fasting in Lent is very important for them because it is derived and adapted from what was done and experienced by Jesus Christ.

You say that Jesus Christ carried out the religious observance of fasting in the wilderness for forty days at the time of Lent. This may be taken to mean that Jesus Christ fasted during this time so that the inner feeling might be swept clean of the influence of the nafs causing darkness (wilderness) within.

For Muslims, the religious observance of fasting in the month of Ramadhan is the same. This, too, is derived and adapted from what was done and experienced by the Prophet Muhammad.

It is told that the Prophet Muhammad fasted in a cave at that time (this, too, means 'in darkness'). He carried out the religious observance of fasting in the cave so that the inner feeling could be swept clean of the influence of nafs causing darkness. It is therefore said that the revelations that he was to be the Messenger of God came to him in the cave. In other words, it was then that he received the first command of the One God.

This is Bapak's explanation concerning these two religious observances of fasting, as seen from the spiritual point of view. So Bapak feels that Lent and Ramadhan are of equally great and high value.

Furthermore, any individual Christians, or Christians in general, may follow the religious observances of

*cont on p 11 >*

fasting during Ramadhan if they wish to do so, because, although this is not usually customary for Christians, if the fast is observed it is also a method whereby the influence of the nafsu, which always constitute a temptation and hindrance to the quiet of the inner-feeling, can be separated and swept away from the inner-feeling.

Conversely, it is the same for Muslims who wish to carry out the religious observance of fasting during Lent.

Now of course you ask: how is it for us or for Subud members? Bapak would like you to know that because our Brotherhood of Susila Budhi Dharma consists of members of various nationalities and religions it is best for each member to observe the fast of his own religion unless he wishes to observe another as well.

### Observing the Fast of Ramadan

Compiled from explanations given by Bapak, by Mas Sudarto and by Mas Prio

**Eve of Ramadan:** The way to observe Ramadan is to take a full bath, including hair washing, and also cutting the hair and the nails, the evening before the fast. Then, after you are clean, to state your wish to observe Ramadan as a sincere expression of your worship of Almighty God. Then stay up at night, preferably spending the night together with other Subud brothers and sisters, in the home of a member who is also observing Ramadan.

Around three o'clock in the morning, you should take breakfast and you should brush your teeth no later than 4:30 in the morning, and after this, no more smoking, not even gargling till 6:30 PM or 7:00 PM – around about sunset. (The local mosque can clarify as to the hour for breaking the fast.)

To break the fast, start slowly by drinking warm tea and a light snack; you can eat your dinner about half an hour or an hour later. Bapak also recommends no sexual union during the whole month of Ramadan. It is also beneficial to sleep as little as possible during Ramadan, not only on Nights of Power.

During the month of Ramadan: it is not permitted to have sexual intercourse, and our fasting must also include abstention from the following:

- a) We must not use our ears to listen to gossip, quarrels or bad words.
- b) We must not use our mouth to say anything wrong or unkind.
- c) We must not use the emotions to reach the emotions or passions of others.
- d) We must not use our eyes in a way that is not good or nice.
- e) We must not use the heart and mind to imagine or think about unhappy things, fantasies or unrealities.
- f) We must not eat or drink or smoke anything between dawn and sunset each day.

During the month of Ramadan, we have to fast thirty days, and during the thirty days of fasting we go through three important periods:

**The first ten days (ending evening of 9th day Ramadan):** This is a period of putting the passion in an inactive state. During this period we are made aware that our passions become weaker and weaker day by day, and on the 9th day of fasting, it is felt that our passion is completely inactive.

**The second ten days (ending evening of 19th day Ramadan):** This is a period of becoming aware that in general our attitude and actions are guided by our inner-self and the guid-

## *In reality, Lent and Ramadhan have equal value*

ance day by day becomes stronger and stronger and on the 19th day of fasting our actions are as if in a complete latihan state, but in harmony with our daily activities.

The last ten days (ending evening of 30th Ramadan. This is a period of receiving the lailatu 'lkadar (the Nights of Power), and this is sent by God on the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th and 29th days of fasting. This lailatu 'lkadar is not something that falls from above, but it forms a certain power which can change our state.

Most of the Subud members who fasted felt, after completing the fasting, that there were changes to their inner. Mostly, their spirit to worship became stronger and stronger and also the intention of doing 'prihatin' became stronger and stronger.

**LAILATUL-QADR:** (The evening preceding 27th day Ramadan): Although it is generally accepted in the Moslem community that the last ten days of Ramadan are days of receiving, this particular evening is celebrated with special prayer, in the Moslem community, because it is thought that this is the day upon which the Messenger Muhammad received the verses of the Qu'ran.

**TAK-BARAN:** (30th day Ramadan): The last day of fasting. Sundown marks the end of the month.

**IDUL-FITRI:** The Night of Forgiveness. At the end of Ramadan, we again take a full bath and put on new clothes, and then we should go to our family and our friends and ask forgiveness for whatever sin we have done. This is a time of special celebration and thanks to Almighty God.

1. To print out Bapak talks, or listen to talks, go to [www.subudlibrary.net](http://www.subudlibrary.net). You can do a search, using key words, so you can ask for Ramadan Talks.

## *The Experience of Fasting*

*Maurice Baker writes...*

Although not a Muslim I believe we have a unique opportunity, a great gift no less, in being introduced through Subud to the fast.

It continues for me to be an amazing way to experience the same reality people all over the world also experience, going back hundreds of years.

Whether or not we in Subud experience this differently or not I'd be wary to say – perhaps only in the sense that we experience the latihan differently. But it all depends on the individual and, of course, God's grace. So who can say?

I do, however, believe Subud members are mistaken if they believe that having the latihan makes doing Ramadan redundant. For me it's akin to attending latihan regularly, doing enterprises, supporting social welfare projects, etc, etc. In other words, it's as important as following all Bapak's other advice.

At the end of the day fasting is about putting oneself on the line. Learning by doing. Submission by deed rather than by word.

### Entering a Differing World

I have fasted during Ramadan every year, bar one (more on this later), since joining Subud in 1968. For me the Fast, like Subud, is a great gift from God; an opportunity to learn and experience something beyond the ordinary. [cont on p12>](#)

yet within the ordinariness of a fairly unremarkable life.

I never, for example, tell work colleagues what I'm doing (nor do they ever guess) as for me it's about a lot more than abstinence and to explain or justify it to others who are neither Subud members nor participating would be virtually impossible.

It's as if one enters a different world during Ramadan; a time of altered perception, of challenged understanding and new horizons. Faith and closeness to God can be deepened during Ramadan. A sense of peace and gratitude, combined with that from the latihan, can grow like at no other time – especially in the evenings towards the end of the month.

There are many rewards but, like the latihan, they don't come easy. You have to persevere because you will fail often. Your eyes will stray, your tongue will lash out, and your heart will long for more than cookies. Worst of all your brain will convincingly argue against the whole silly charade on a regular basis.

But small miracles will occur (it's a mistake, I've found, to expect earth-shattering spiritual experiences). As an example, last year I woke up at some unearthly hour every morning without the use of an alarm clock – don't ask me how.

Another example, I used to get headaches from fasting but no longer do – my theory is that I'm not fighting it so much these days. One also wastes less time during the day and gets more work done during Ramadan. Surprisingly, after the first few days, energy levels often rise throughout the month.

### **My Heart Dreads Ramadan**

But don't get the wrong idea. My heart always dreads Ramadan. It can be very lonely when, like me, there are no other Subud members around to commiserate with.

The nafsu energy you take for granted is suddenly whipped away and, at least for a while, you're left floundering in a sea of self-pity and confusion. 'It's not meant to be easy,' you tell yourself, but no words make any difference.

Some afternoons drag on for an eternity with, seemingly, all manner of trials and temptations to entangle you. In these circumstances one begins to realise the meaning of faith (or is it stubborn stupidity?).

Also, miraculously, an inner guidance may override common sense solutions. And oh, the sense of relief and sheer gratitude, not to mention that first wonderful cup of tea, when reaching the day's end!

### **The Guardian Angel**

Lastly, let me leave you with my beginning. The first time I did Ramadan was a disaster. It was 1969 and I knew nothing about fasting, Islam, Subud, or any spiritual matters at all. I only did the fast on a whim and had no idea what the procedure was.

At the time I was working in a warehouse and my allotted task was pricing packs of ladies undergarments, all of which had graphic photos of voluptuous females on them. How could I keep my mind off sex staring at this lot all day? The staff canteen was another mine of temptation – a feast of cheap cakes, cookies and other treats – which was the sole place of refuge from our mind-numbing jobs (there was nowhere else to go unless you wanted to wander the endless corridors).

There were many other difficulties for me then (including

*It's tough in a disbelieving, materialistic, world to put your faith in receiving, but that's all you can do in the end*

being made homeless) but suffice to say that the fast was just about the last straw. Then I got flu. Forced to sleep on a friend's sofa I was woken one night by a giant warrior carrying a great spear and intent on piercing my chest.

I screamed out in terror and tried to fight him off. Eventually the apparition departed and I ran shouting into my friend's room, terrifying his poor wife who must have thought they were harbouring a madman.

As years have gone by I've realised that this was my guardian angel and he was only trying to get me to submit to God's will. I failed miserably – would I fail again today?

This experience was the most dramatic I've had, and perhaps I needed something rather drastic then to wrench me out of previous complacency.

### **Faith**

Other experiences, thankfully, have mostly been quieter, more subtle, but equally important to me. Perhaps the prevailing lesson I've learned is the importance of faith. As Bapak describes it faith is not blind or wilful but comes from within.

This is what grows and develops during Ramadan. When you embark on the Ramadan journey, especially when not a practising Muslim carried along by culture, friends and family, etc., then increasingly you must turn humbly and honestly to God.

It's tough in a disbelieving, materialistic, world to put your faith in receiving, but that's all you can do in the end. Miraculously, this inner faith becomes a guide, a beacon, a path laid out for you as you proceed, as in the latihan.

Oh, and the one year I flunked out. I was preparing for exams and let my brain rule. This was a one-off opportunity I couldn't afford to miss, so I didn't fast. As it happened, however, the workload was far less than expected and, I realised later, could easily have been managed. I never chickened out again however many reasons there seemed to justify it. ●

## *What is my Attitude to Fasting?*

**Samuel Lesley writes...**

My first attempts at fasting were a disaster. I got no benefit and was so fatigued that I just felt depressed. So I gave up. Instead, I tried to fast inwardly while eating normally. That too was a disaster, because the absence of hunger made me forget that I was fasting!

A few years later when telling a brother of my experiences, he suggested that we do some testing about it. To the question 'What is my attitude to fasting?' I got the answer that I was metaphorically holding my breath from dawn to sunset, waiting for it to be over.

In effect I was shutting down all systems during the day and resuming normal behaviour after sunset! To the question 'What should be my attitude?' I got the feeling that I should accept the discomforts, not fight them.

This reminded me of early experiences in the latihan, when I knelt with my forehead on the ground, and then drew my head towards me and rotated it so that the back of the head was on the floor and my ears were between my knees. This was painful and I could barely breathe.

*cont on p13>*

Initially I panicked, but later I learned that if I accepted the pain and remained calm, then I could cope. The result was a lessening of a long-term back problem.

So when I resumed fasting I accepted the discomfort, and tried to work normally. The result was amazing: after a fortnight the discomfort disappeared and fasting became a calm and peaceful experience.

## correction

**Rukmawati Branting who is now living at Wisma Mulia. U.K writes...**

There a mistake in Subud Voice June 2008. at Page 5 'The Start of Subud in Australia'. 3rd line : please eliminate 'who later became Rukmawati Branting.' ! Silvia was Lawrence Branting's 1st wife. She died in Sydney in early 1958 while Lawrence was still living at Coombe Springs. I became Lawrence's second wife in May 1963.

## letter to the editor

### FROM A WOOLLY LIBERAL

**Sebastiana Pienaar writes from Perth, Australia...**

Marcus Bolt's article (*Who Hi-jacked Subud?* June 08) was interesting.

I am a 'woolly liberal' of the Anglican Church of Australia. Funnily enough, its a term oft applied to middle of the road English Anglicans.

I think it is human nature to institutionalize. As a theological student, I recently did some work on the function of ritual.

Ritual creates order and meaning and sometimes (if you're lucky), transformation.

Those wagging fingers in the UK might be trying to create a religion out of Subud?

I feel for Marcus. I can't say I have been subject to such finger wagging extremes here in Australia. On the other hand, being a second generation Subudian I have probably just laughed at those that have tried to tell me what to do and what to believe so I haven't noticed them.

On the third hand, Marcus says he currently does latihan in a group where there is no finger wagging, helpers etc. My only hesitation in that would be helpers serve a function. A function to (attempt to) pull people back together again if they fall apart (worst case, that's their job). So the 'rules' or perhaps 'structure' does serve a function; to Help.

Perhaps the English finger wagging constituents should walk down the road to a Church, Synagogue, Mosque, Temple to satisfy their natural human nature that requires ritual, form, structure? Works for me.

Yours in companionable stirring,

**To which Marcus replied...**

Thank you for your warm response, Sebastiana. I understand what you're saying, and Bapak did, of course, advise us to go back to our religions, especially after the latihan had broadened our understanding. Regarding helpers, it has to be pointed out that for every helper who has 'helped pull people back together' there has been one who contributed to the falling apart in the first place.

## Latihan for All Humanity

**Léonard Lassalle writes from Beaumont du Ventoux, France...**

For quite some time now, I have been wanting to share with Subud the radical change in my way, as a Subud helper, of helping people access the latihan and easing the spread of the latihan in my own neighbourhood and region.

So many of us, the older generation, are slowly returning our bodies back to the earth. This is a good thing, as we are leaving more space for the younger generation to take over.

I hope that they will not follow our footsteps but be more inventive, discover their own ways to spread the latihan. It seems to me that we have not been such brilliant examples of doing this in our local communities.

My reason for sharing my experience is to encourage the younger generations to be freer, to follow more their receiving and not to be so bound by the many regulations that we have tied ourselves to, regarding the approach to newcomers.

We call them applicants or probationers; is it really necessary to label them as such?

Would it not be better to keep the words that crystallise a situation out of our vocabulary, so as not to label anyone? Could we not invite the newly interested friends into our homes for tea or even a meal, allowing ourselves to listen to what they have to tell us, thus start to be attentive to their terms and expressions, and then use their language when we talk to them about the effect of the latihan in our lives?

To me the priority is not to spread Subud, but to make the latihan accessible to as many people as possible. We have too often 'sold' Subud, instead of simply being an example through our loving behaviour. People come to the latihan not by what we say, but by how we are. They respond to our care and love; it touches them and opens their feelings.

Is it really so important for people to become members of our Subud organisation right at the time when they start latihan – by making them fill in forms – and even in some countries produce a photograph?

Let the friends who have just started, first really feel the latihan deeply, experience its benefits for themselves, in their time, not in ours, in their space, at their speed. Then, if the practice of the latihan satisfies them, they will naturally become curious and want to know more about the Subud organisation.

#### The Newborn

During the past ten years or so, I have not been following what the great majority of Subud helpers consider to be the norm. Most of the people who have received the contact in our local community have received and practiced the latihan, and like ourselves, are still benefiting greatly by it.

Some of them have felt the need to join the organisation officially, others have not, for reasons that fit their situation. Is not the latihan for the world at large?

If the Subud organisation wanted to keep the latihan just for Subud 'members', then that would be a sad thing and would then bring me to wonder whether I would really want to belong to this organisation.

*To encourage the younger generations to be freer, to follow more their receiving and not to be so bound by regulations*

*cont on p14>*