SUBUD VOICE

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Conundrums

An interview with Ramon Kubicek from Canada

Ramon Kubicek.

I don't know anything about you really, except that you write poems, and you do paintings, and you live in British Columbia. So, could you just very quickly sketch in your background?

I'm the son of immigrants. My father was Slovak, my mother Czech. They immigrated to Canada and for the first year of my life I was on a farm in New Brunswick. And then they moved to Montreal, where I grew up and did my undergraduate work there at Concordia University. And then I just started to travel the world, as everyone did in those days. And I came across the ideas of Gurdjieff and I was absolutely enamoured with them.

When I eventually ended up in England, I found the Gurdjieff group. And then I came across John Bennett's book. And in John Bennett's book he mentioned Subud. I said, “Oh, well, this sounds interesting, but it must be deeply hidden.”

So, I forgot about that for me. Then just by coincidence, I happened to look in the newspaper and there was a jumble sale being advertised at Subud Hall, just around the corner from where I was. And so that was how I came into Subud.

When was that?

I was opened in 1972.

OK, what's your professional life been about? What sort of work have you done?

From the age of 14 onwards, all I really wanted to do was creative work. I figured it would it be film because everyone in Montreal was interested in film or writing or art. I studied those things at Concordia and then I went to England and studied more, but the practicalities of life took over.

I just took whatever work in England that I could get, which was everything from doing high rise construction,100 feet off the ground, or making chess pieces, or giving wine tastings and so on.

Then after almost six years I had to come back to Canada, and I went to Vancouver, and I ended up getting advanced degrees that enabled me to teach at a college.

Most of my professional life has been teaching in the college and university system because I couldn't make any money, or not enough money, doing art. And so, I taught at the art school here at Emily Carr and at Langara College.

Do you have a family, wife, children?

I have two daughters, one who's only 17 and lives with my ex here on the Sunshine Coast, about 20 minutes away from me. And I have another daughter who's lives in Montreal, and I have two grandkids.

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OK, so getting back to 1972, you joined Subud in England, tell me more about that.

Well, as I said, I went to the place for the jumble sale and there was a helper there who was selling odds and ends, and he invited me to come to an applicants' meeting. There was another fellow there, and this was his second round of applicants meetings. He said they had tested that it wasn't right for him at that time.

Then the helper said, "let's start with a quiet period." We closed our eyes and he promptly fell asleep. So, the other applicant started to tell me what Subud is all about. And the helper had a good long rest for about half an hour. And then he woke up and asked if we had any questions.

We did this, for a number of times. But each time he fell asleep. Eventually they tested, and I was able to be opened. But it was all quite bizarre to me. It was almost like it was designed to send me away. The helper who opened me quit Subud the day after because he had just gotten married, and his wife was in Bahai, and apparently you couldn't be in Subud if you were in Bahai. So, he dropped out of, but it didn't turn me off.

I stayed. And those were the days people were seeing giant angels everywhere and jinns but telling me that those were not important. And then they would turn to their friends and talk about the giant angels that they had seen.

I don't know. I never saw anything. So, I just had to take it on faith. But it was an extraordinary time for me. I remember walking home from the hall and just being enamoured with the sky full of stars, and that's all it was for me, the sky full of stars. There was no limit, just being connected to all of that, inwardly and outwardly.

What's been important about being in Subud? I mean, what are the experiences or the feelings that have kept you going? What does it mean to your life?

Yes, it's a question I ask myself every now and then. And it's hard to answer that because I realise that for my entire adult life, I've been involved with some spiritual work, before Subud it was Gurdjieff, since I was 18. So I don't know what it's like to not be connected to a spiritual orientation.

In the beginning, I felt like I was in a hurry of some kind. I don't know why, but I felt, oh my gosh, I've been in Subud three years, and I'm not enlightened yet. I wanted to say, Oh my God, what's wrong? What am I doing wrong?

Get a move on…

Yeah, that's right. And so, it took me a little bit of time to just settle down. To explore how you should sleep better or how to get along with your family, those sorts of things, but forget about questions of enlightenment.

So that's how I came into Subud. I was very keen and eager, but from the very beginning, it was always linked to my creative imagination. That was what was important. I was writing or I was working with art, or I was doing something of that sort. Or if I wasn't, then I was with students who were interested in that. That was my entire orientation. The question for me was, is what I am doing as an artist or writer supporting my spiritual practice, or is one getting in the way of the other? When I'm doing art, I don't think about spiritual preparation. I just do the art, that's it completely.

I don't believe in spiritual art, but is this good art or bad art, right? If you go back to the Renaissance, Giotto and all those, famous artists, they prayed, they went to church, they went to Holy Mass before they began their art. And the same with the great Muslim artists as well, or Buddhist artists.

One still does that, but it's a private thing. It shouldn't enter your work. When you enter your work, when you enter the studio, you go in with what I call an empty mind and that's it. You don't say how may I receive, or what should I receive today. You can pack up your brushes if you do that.

Are there any particular experiences in Subud that have been important to you? Moments of enlightenment when a shaft of light burst through the clouds.

Such moments are always attached to some ironic aftermath for me. When I was in England, and I was doing my first Ramadan, and we were living outside of Bristol, and in those days I was giving wine tastings. While I was fasting, I wasn't tasting the wine, and it was the only kind of work I could find.

I was driving into Bristol, and it was between Cheddar and Bristol, passing beautiful hills in the morning, and suddenly when I looked out, it's as if any separation between me and what was around me disappeared. The fields, everything. I felt oneness with all of it.

There were cows. I could feel the so-called inner of the cows and horses. I could feel all of this. It was all one thing, it was a truly ecstatic moment and, and I was terrified that it would end. I was almost holding my breath and of course, it did end. But I can still remember the feeling of it. So that really inspired me.

That is a wonderful experience.

And what was wonderful about it was that at the time, I felt guilty about having stopped doing the special meditation that I had received when I was in the Gurdjieff work. I'd stopped and I didn't want to talk to the group helpers about it because the feeling I had coming from them was that they were shut down completely.

Someone suggested I should write to Sudarto. So, I did write him. I told him about this experience, and I told him about my guilt about giving up this meditation. And he wrote this beautiful letter back to me as if he understood completely. He explained where the vibration of the meditation came from and the difference between that and the inner feeling. And when I finished reading the letter, any guilt or any desire to do the meditation just left. That was it. Boom. I wept with gratitude.

Sudarto was a very good helper…

The following year I was really keen on doing Ramadan. I could hardly wait for it to come, and the helpers had organised testing, and I didn't want to do it, but I hung around and then the helpers looked up and said, oh Ramon, why don't you test with us? So anyway, the short of it is that I ended up not doing Ramadan, to my great disappointment that year. Instead, my wife and I went on a holiday. It was the first holiday we'd taken for in a long time. We went to Cornwall and there was a kind of sweetness to it, but it was sadness as well mixed in together. And I didn't understand. But it was a first lesson in surrender, you know, and I have had many such lessons in surrender, because I wanted to do Ramadan, but it was my head that wanted to do it. It was because I had had that beautiful experience. It was just my greed wanting more experiences like that, right?

How does a spiritual or moral quality connect to art?

I remember talking critically about Jackson Pollock, not about his ability as an artist, but about how he treated women, how he treated other people, the fact that he was a drunk and this and that. Two years after that, I happened to be in New York and I stopped at the Museum of Modern Art and I walked in and there's a famous painting of his called *One*, which is about 20 feet long.

And I walked into that room, and I saw the painting and it's as if my heart stopped, all the breath was taken out of me. I was absolutely stunned by it. I sat down, stared at it for over half an hour.

'One' : Jackson Pollack, Museum of Modern Art New York.

Just couldn't move. And there was a voice that came in my mind and said you do not get to judge whom the gods will favour.

Let's talk about some of your own art. I want to ask you about this painting *Dream Voyage to the Mesopelagic Zone*. That seems to be a very mysterious painting. What's that all about?

"Dream Voyage to the Mesopelagic Zone." Acrylic, oil, oil stick, on canvas. 36" x 36".

Well, the mesopelagic zone is the zone of the ocean that begins at 500 metres of depth and goes down to about 1500 metres. So, it's really, as you know, incredibly deep and light there is minimal and sometimes the only light that you see is in the abdomens of little creatures that themselves get eaten by other creatures.

And so, these creatures that have fed on the small creatures, now suddenly their bodies are lit up and they provide light and that's the only light. Scientists are still fascinated with that. What is that all about, that zone? Who lives there? We have octopi, often giant squid, and really grotesque looking fish, stuff of nightmares. Occasionally sperm whales go down there. So, I find all that fascinating and at the same time it seems to me that it's a symbol for the collective unconscious. The sea is for everyone. No one can say, well, this is just our sea, It's for everyone. Although now there's a movement saying that certain people have the rights to certain seas. So, I've done a number of paintings that are both about the ocean and the collective unconscious.

You paint in quite a few different styles. Some are somewhat representational; some are very abstract. What about *Not Icarus*? Why does Icarus interest you?

"Not Icarus". Acrylic, oil, oil stick, on canvas. 36" x 24".

When I taught, I had a number of different subject areas so I could get a variety of work. One of them was classics, Latin and Greek art and literature. So that's always been something close to me. And you can see those stories everywhere. Just like with fairy tales. I can see fairy tales everywhere and I've often wanted to do a whole series of paintings just about Hansel and Gretel.

But Icarus, of course, is a painting about the beauty and terror of youth. In the story, Icarus has a father called Daedalus who makes him some wings attached to his body by wax, but Icarus flies too close to the sun and the wax melts and the wings fall off and Icarus falls to earth. Icarus doesn't listen to his father. Daedalus should have known that his son wouldn't listen to him.

Icarus gets completely captivated by the sun. And what's interesting about that story is that the sun is not the creator, but the destroyer of life. Now the sun is just the sun. It's not interested in destroying us, but

Icarus is a symbol of all our attempts to reach higher than ourselves. Our attempts to be heroic. And of course, most of those are largely doomed to failure.

Bees of the Invisible. I think that's an interesting painting to talk about because it has something to do with your idea of the role of the artist, doesn't it? Could you talk a little bit about that?

So, first of all, for me, an artist is not just an illustrator. Illustration is a wonderful skill, but it is not art. What do I mean by that? Art is about being able to transform. I'm going to have flour and water and yeast and so forth and salt and throw it in a bowl, is that bread? No, it's not. It has to be worked on in a certain way, and then it has to be baked in a certain way and has to go through this transformative process, and then it becomes bread. And that's kind of magical, the ability to do that.

"Bees of the Invisible". Acrylic, oil, oilstick, on canvas. 48" x 48".

And so, art is the ability to take the experience and present it in a way that transforms both the artist and the viewer. So it's not just, oh, an apple tree. Look how good this apple tree is. To be art, the apple tree has to be something else. It has to suggest other ideas. And then it doesn't tell us other ideas because then it would just be a poster. No, it suggests, and we play with it and, we develop a relationship with it.

Now, the “Bees of the invisible” is a line that's from the Austrian poet Rilke, from one of his letters where he talked about artists as being like the bees of the invisible.

They're constantly mining the visible and taking from it material that they afterwards convert to honey. And I thought, wow, what an extraordinary, beautiful phrasing of that process. Well, I don't know how it happens, but it does happen. And the bees are in service to that process. They don't question it.

So, let's move on to poetry. I've only read one of your poems. It's the one called :”You Are Jerusalem”. That is a very powerful poem which binds together many different things. The idea of the city, the idea of the body. Tell me a little bit about your poetry. Is “Jerusalem” typical? Is that the kind of poetry you often write?

Often, yes, I wanted to have almost a tactile and rhythmic force in it. But it's always about ideas and about that moment when we realise what we thought was happening is not happening. But what can be happening now is a new relationship with the universe. And that's what the poem presents,. So, I've got a number of poems like that.

So, you said a new relationship. You mean that's something that's happening at the present time or something that can happen in life? What? What do you mean by that?

Something that can happen. I live in a small town, and I walk in a forest a lot. It's very close to where I live and everyone walks in forests. But I suddenly realised that more than once when I was walking in the forest, I was walking not just in a forest but had a sense of communal existence with the trees and the life force in the trees.

I was a guest in that forest. I could have come in and cut it up with a chainsaw, but that would only have only spoken to my ignorance. So, each time now that I walk in a forest, I can have that experience of new relationship with the trees and what they represent.

I'm going to probably write either a poem or a poetic essay about the rights of other living things. And it's a very problematic thing. It was provoked by a journalistic story I read about an oil spill on >

the West Coast of Vancouver Island where many, many, many shellfish died.

And there was much potential loss of income for the people who live there. And I understand that it must be terrible for the people, but I couldn't help thinking about the fact that the oysters surely have a right to life as well. Absolutely their life matters, right? There have been so many experiences in my life where it seemed as if animals were just there for our amusement. If we needed their flesh, we took their flesh. Otherwise, they're there for our amusement.

But I'm not trying to pretend to have a holier than thou attitude. I mean, I still sometimes eat meat. What is the right attitude? So, the poem is an exploration. It presents the conundrum of being confronted with that situation.

I also wonder what kind of Subud are we elders leaving to our younger members? And it's not about sermonising. I hate sermonising, but it's about being as engaged and as interesting as possible in order to attract younger people. Right now, I'm chair of SICA Canada and I'm doing a bunch of stuff for it, but what's the point of it? Is it attracting people?

Art shouldn't just be about something stunning to look at or to listen to. It should also be about people's feelings being touched. It's also a chance to question, why am I doing this? Am I boasting or am I trying to touch other people's feelings? Why am I wanting to touch other people's feelings?

This is certainly one of the conundrums. Where are the young people? Why aren't the young people joining? Well, it used to be that young people meant 20 years. Now it's anyone under 40.

There is the occasional encouraging sign. Recently I interviewed the Zone 3 representative who is 24. He's the youngest zone representative there's ever been. So, it'd be great if he was the first swallow of spring and lots and lots of young people not only joined Subud but took on these positions.

There are some young members. I ask them if they want to do something for SICA. Look, if you want to have a blog, for example, just write about what interests you. I'll support that. So far, nothing.

You seem very prolific. You turn out a lot of paintings. Is that true?

Once a week. Yeah, it's pretty prolific. A painting a week. I just have to close my eyes, and I see images all the time. Whether or not they're worthwhile doing, I don't know. But I like the work.

What I like about your work is that there is a lot of mystery. I really like that quality.

You Are Jerusalem

Ramon Kubicek

Cities and selves ever destroyed,
Built on top of each other.
These are your bones.

This city sacred to three religions—
When did you ever have another body
but the one that gets you out of bed each morning?

You awake praying
in the manner of your enemy.
Terrorists embrace their children
Lingering longer than you ever have.
Your hands contain more knowledge
than the venerable bookstore stuffed with volumes in 5 languages.
You have no garden
But the cracks in the pavements blooming already so your walks are blessed.
At night when you undress
The via dolorosa reveals itself in your markings from face to feet.
A twinge inside reminds you
your body has been the meeting ground
Of so many returns and so many awful memories
Yet it carries you from dusk till dawn

Knows still where the best coffees are to be tasted.
Somewhere in the streets young lovers turn to each other
With a radiance that hushes the breath of onlookers.
Voices on the rooftops seem to address you.
The voices are singing your songs.
The child you feared when you were six
Looks at you from an unknown face.
Tired crusaders in business suits emerge from taxis carrying sleek satchels.
You have never been to Jerusalem
But know too much about its boasts and its fears.
This you know,
No matter the day
You recognize your hands.
The history of what you have touched reveals itself to you.
And this you know
That you love your skin
Though the routes on your hands connect to the routes in the skin of strangers.
Your day, as fragmented as a shattered pane of glass still held in place
Quietly embraces you every night.
Even as you say I don't know, I don't know,
But this I do know
You are Jerusalem.

Trash and Treasure

Arifin Dwi Slamet, writes aboui a creative sustainability initiative in Subud Indonesia...

Complementing the "Who Am I?" program, on May 5, 2024, SICA Indonesia launched 14 communities intended as a place for Subud Indonesia members to explore their talents or find their true self, which in turn can support their entrepreneurship.

The communities offer various fields that members can follow according to their respective interests, and WhatsApp groups are created for each community where members can share knowledge or experiences in practicing their specialty fields with inner guidance. Each community also holds online or offline workshops to strengthen the capacity or competence of members in their chosen fields.

Educational flyer on waste sorting and an invitation to the public to donate waste to Berkah Sampah. The headline says "Waste is Not a Problem But is a Blessing". Designed by Arifin Dwi Slamet.

Another purpose of establishing these communities is to bridge Subud with the public at large, providing more significant benefits from Subud's presence. As Ibu Ismana Haryono said to me back in 2012, "Don't be a *jago kandang*! Go outside Subud, be active with people around you." "Jago kandang" is a figure of speech in Indonesian that refers to "someone who is only brave or great in their own environment".

Universal Earth

One of these communities is Semesta Bhumi Raya (literally "Universal Earth"), a community that >

In the selamatan of Berkah Sampah, Ibu Ismana Haryono hands over a piece of tumpeng to an SBR activist, witnessed by Sekar Mira (wearing a green shirt and brown hijab), SBR chair. (Photo by Sekar Mira)

brings together Subud Indonesia members who care about environmental conservation.

This community is led by a female member of the South Jakarta Subud group who is currently working on her doctoral dissertation in Environmental Studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands. Under the leadership of Sekar Mira, as she is called, the Semesta Bhumi Raya (SBR) community has held a number of innovative activities to educate the community, both within and outside Subud, in environmental management.

SBR's activities are in line with the current trend in Indonesia, namely the increasing concern for environmental sustainability involving young people. The Indonesian government itself has initiated the Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change movement for more than 15 years now.

Roderick (fourth from left) represented the Des Tombe family at the inauguration of Berkah Sampah, the SBR waste bank that stands on the land in Wisma Subud Cilandak owned by the family. (Photo by Sekar Mira)

The government hopes it can be implemented by all citizens with support from the private sector or non-governmental organizations. Its implementation takes various forms, including household waste management through waste banks.

The waste bank is Indonesia's solution for overcoming the waste problem while simultaneously implementing the concept of a circular economy (a model of resource production and consumption in any economy that involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible).

It is beneficial for community and nature sustainability. The waste bank is a concept of collecting and segregating solid waste that involves systems such as banking, but what is saved is not money but waste.

Savers who are also called customers get savings books/cards and can borrow money that will later be returned with solid waste worth the money borrowed. Waste deposited by a customer will be weighed and valued with a sum of money, and the waste will later be sold to factories or recycling agents or it can also be handed over to local upcycling agents for processing.

Some benefits of a waste bank worth considering include (1) efficient waste management; (2) additional income for the community; (3) reducing environmental pollution; (4) encouraging green practices in the community; (5) better public health; and (6) encouraging innovation and creation.

The waste bank initiated by SBR, one of the communities fostered by SICA Indonesia, was launched on April 27, 2025, which was marked by a ribbon cutting by Ibu Ismana Haryono and a selamatan by cutting a tumpeng (yellow cone-shaped rice).

Trash and Treasure

Bearing the name "Berkah Sampah" (Trash and Treasure), the SBR waste bank is currently still a semi-waste bank, namely only being an intermediary for distributing dry waste donated by residents of Wisma Subud Cilandak and the surrounding villages.

The Berkah Sampah secretariat tent and a table donated by Yayasan Subud. Located on vacant land within the Wisma Subud Cilandak complex. (Photo by Sekar Mira)

Ibu Ismana cuts a ribbon made of coconut leaves as an official sign of the operation of the SBR waste bank. (Photo by Sekar Mira)

SBR waste bank officers will sort the waste according to its nature, then take it to the nearest waste bank or recycling agent. The money obtained from the sale of waste will be used to support SBR activities, including to pay the wages of those running Berkah Sampah on a daily basis.

According to information I obtained from one of the sponsors of Berkah Sampah, the SBR waste bank will soon obtain a waste shredder, which can be used to make biomass.

Berkah Sampah's secretariat is still a tent set up on an empty lot inside the Wisma Subud Cilandak complex, which belongs to the Des Tombe family. Roderick des Tombe was also present at the inauguration of Berkah Sampah and brought with him a goodie bag filled with household waste in the form of plastic bottles.

The Yayasan Subud, which is in charge of Wisma Subud Cilandak, donated a table for the needs of the secretariat. To educate the SBR team in operating a waste bank, three members of Subud South Jakarta who are experienced in waste banks donated their time and energy.

In the future, it is hoped that Berkah Sampah can further optimize its performance in creating treasure from trash donated by the community, and its program replicated by other Subud groups throughout the country.

International Helpers Travels

Off to Sri Lanka ;The Area 1 IHs

The International Helpers from Area 1 made a last-minute trip to Sri Lanka in May. We had been planning to go later in the year, but the group was going to inaugurate their new Latihan space, so the time was right. Hamid and Isti da Silva had already been invited, so off we all went to Colombo.

The chairman of the Sri Lanka group, Malik Sideek, a lawyer and property developer, explained that Hamid was behind the plan. "Hamid and Isti visited us about two years ago, and he suggested turning a cramped guest house in the garden into a new Latihan space. So, we did," said Malik.

Malik and his wife, Ayesha, helped design and decorate the hall. It includes three glassed-in gar- >

den areas, one with a water feature, giving the hall a wide, spacious feeling.

We held a Kejiwaan day, which included the first Latihans in the new hall, testing, and a Bapak talk. The group provided lunch, which included delicious local curries.

Please read the full report with more pictures:
https://subudworldnews.com/userfiles/news/documents/2025/May/sri_lanka_2_SD_OV.pdf

Ciao Italy! The Area 2 IHs.

Five members of the International Helper Dewan, Lucia Bohm, Isti da Silva, Beata Alexander, Anwar Ziesel, and Michael van der Matten, attended the Italian Congress in late April, which was held at the Diocesana hotel close to the town of Lucca in beautiful Tuscany.

The Italian members – about 15 of them were present – are spread out over long distances, and it is only in Latina, about 100 km South of Rome, that .there are more than three members. So, it is not easy to develop a feeling of unity. However, with some support, Valentin and Margarita Pizzi are working hard to improve this. We encouraged them to organize a monthly face-to-face Latihan to bring the isolated members together. Efforts were also made to compose a national committee.

Please read the full report
https://subudworldnews.com/userfiles/news/documents/2025/May/Area_2_IH_Update.edited.pdf

These articles first appeared in www.subudworld.com

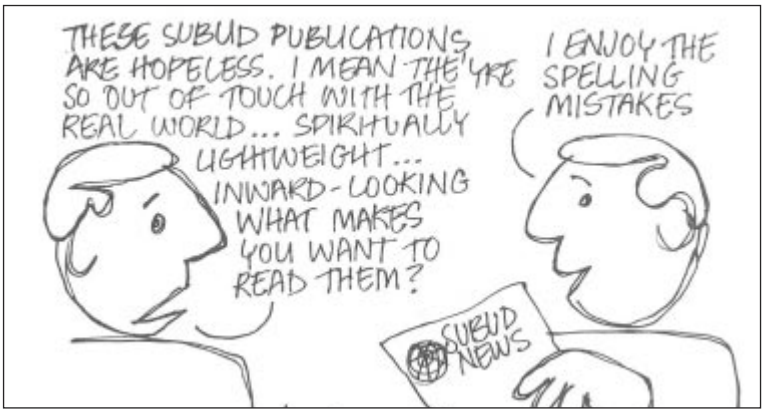
Letters to the Editor

The New Pope: Iljas Baker writes...

Hi Harris,

Looking at things superficially, before reading with more attention I noticed a few errors/typos – not that significant, except for on page 19: "Beneficial Ways for Practising the Latin: Part 1".

I know a new pope has just been elected, but...



From 'The Complete Recorded Jokes' Campbell and Bolt.

Surrender: Mardijah Simpson writes…

(Our June issue featured several articles about surrender…)

HI Harris: probably thinking too much about the power of language and words, I realised for me the word 'surrender' is chained to experiences and thoughts of war and aggression -– no doubt due to learning about life as a child in WW2.

More recently the international news has reported on attempts at a "cease fire" – again a violent image of fighting fires.

I realised that the way my brain (and heart?) work is to automatically find a visual image (metaphor) for a word I am exploring.

So, then I wondered if the actual word 'surrender'' is a narrow English expression whereas Bapak and doubtless Zen masters and hermits – speaking and thinking in Javanese /Indonesian / Hebrew / Arabic and so on – have a wider vocabulary to use and express what they are explaining.

So, trying to be practical – how would I explain the experience mentioned?

Again, an image – learning to swim – stop panicking or assuming the worst, trust and allow the water to support you.

'Letting go' - well that takes me to 'Opening' – the gate, the heart, the mind…

Marcus Bolt writes...

Hi Harris. Really enjoyed reading the articles on Surrender in June's Journal. They immediately reminded me of the old story of the Zen master who one day asked his students, "How do you get the swan out of the bottle?"

The students thought about this for many years, desperate for understanding. Finally, they came to the Master and, begging him for enlightenment,pleaded, "Master, *how* do you get the swan out of the bottle?"

"There it goes.." the Master replied.

That story in turn reminded me of one of the slogans employed by Alcoholics Anonymous: 'Let go and let God' – that same wisdom implying let it go, surrender...

There's also a story told by Varindra Vittachi in his book *Reporter in Subud*. He writes that one day Bapak told him that, "Varindra, you keep running; you run and run every day with all these wild animals, lions and tigers chasing you. Then you come to an abyss, only ten feet across... on the other side there is a wonderful, green, safe place... but you cannot surrender your fear and jump across... but God is merciful and drops a rope, six inches above your reach... all you have to do is jump up and grasp it and swing across, but you dare not jump that six inches... so you keep running parallel to the abyss with the animals still chasing you..."

Then he asked Varindra, "What do you surrender, Varindra? Have you big estates, lots of money? Lots of power? Lots of sins? Are you capable of big sins? Have you waged war or murdered anyone? No, you are incapable of that. So, what should you surrender? Those things inside yourself you despise in others, envy, jealousy, distrust, habitual irritability, impatience and so on, plus all your meaningless fears. Will my child return safely from school today? What will I do if I lose my job? The kind of rubbish that goes on in our heads all the time... That is what we have to surrender..."

And, in Halimah Polk's article on Surrender, she writes: "A friend went to Ibu Rahayu during a very difficult time in her life and recalls Ibu saying to her, 'Oh, you just have to surrender.' When my friend looked uncomfortably confused, Ibu kindly said: 'By surrender, I mean just don't think about it'. It was so simple. Just don't think about it." Then, Roland Evan's article starts with a Bapak quote: "In short, to surrender means to empty oneself of all else." (83 HAM 2)

Both articles continue in a similar vein to the Varindra story, but more expansively talking of the childhood traumas that we carry into adulthood, about betrayal by partners (both relationship and business) and so on.

Halimah also writes of being aware of the common sense 'be positive, not negative', but is still unable to shake off past wounds as they become a 'habit of mind', but can now, through her latihan, almost 'not think about it'. Roland writes that occasionally he finds surrender by 'relinquishing ego control' through being aware and attentive during latihan, quoting Ibu Rahayu: '…*mawas diri*, meaning self-awareness or attentiveness...' (16 CDK 1)

So, there you have it. Let the swan out of the bottle, let go and let God, empty oneself of all else, don't think about it and be aware and attentive. Simples!

But I ask myself, after 57 years of latihan, do I really know how to surrender? And it occurs to me that the only way to really know how to do it is to...er... surrender.

Pilgrimage Part 1:

Travel notes from an inner journey by Mashud Darlington...

"He who finds himself loses his misery." Matthew Arnold.

I was born on the 14th of April, 1944, in Pendelbury, a North Manchester suburb pockmarked with craters from the aerial bombardment that had recently raged overhead.

I was the younger of two brothers in a family that had, generations earlier according to family tradition, had Quaker forebears. However, no one in the present generation showed any signs of *himma*, that spiritual yearning that has characterised my own life.

Confirmation of this ancestry came later, in my early twenties when my future wife came to stay >

with my parents in the house, they had by then moved into in Irlam, North Manchester. During the night, she was awakened to find that at the foot of the bed a group of people wearing old fashioned clothes were trying to attract her attention.

One of these, a man, tried to convey a message to her, but a woman standing next to him became impatient, and tried to force him to get his message across quickly. Rohana was so startled by this she switched on the bedside light and they disappeared.

Later, disappointed that she had not been able to discover what this message was, she wrote to Sudarto Martohudojo, an experienced helper living in Indonesia at the time, where he worked for Bapak answering members' letters.

Sudarto replied that the experience was genuine and that these people were my ancestors who had come to welcome Rohana into the family and to warn me never to leave Subud or neglect my latihan. Later, my brother who did leave Subud, gave up the latihan and degenerated spiritually, behaving in ways that distressed these ancestors.

Mashud Darlington.

> *"My own inner journey began on my 18th Birthday..."*

As the latihan came to influence my thinking, I began to understand something I had read decades earlier in a newspaper. An actress, in an interview said, "If you have children, you will recognise aspects of yourself in their character, but they will have other characteristics you do not recognise and may not like." These impulses that arise from different forebears in the previous three of four generations are very difficult to separate from the impulses of our authentic self; and if we are careless may cause us to lose our way in life.

First contact…

My first contact with the Subud latihan came in 1961 when my brother returned from a graduate recruitment trip to the Unesco building in the Place de Fontenoy in Paris with a contact with a fellow student who was already a Subud member and I became strongly attracted to this spiritual process called the latihan.

In fact, the city of Paris has been the backdrop to many important early events in my inner life. It was there that I attended my first talk by Bapak Muhammad Subuh, the founder of the Subud spiritual movement, and had my first direct contact with him at the Centre Protestant, in the Cité Universitaire area of the 14th Arrondissment. It was there also during Bapak's visit in 1964 that I first met my future wife and companion on the Subud spiritual path, Rohana.

From 1963 to 1966 an armed conflict had arisen between the UK and states supporting the creation of Malaysia, and the Indonesian government. This undeclared war (termed by the Indonesian government) the Indonesian-Malaysian confrontation was at times so severe that Bapak as an Indonesian national was unable to travel to the UK.

The British Subud members then travelled to Europe to attend Bapak's World Tour events. The latihan spiritual training and the talks given by Bapak were attended by smaller numbers than was the case later.

In one latihan attended by about 40 people in the Centre Protestant in Paris I was continuing with my latihan in the normal way when I felt a shock in my inner being. My eyes sprung open to see Bapak standing directly in front of me, although sideways on with his left shoulder towards me. >

My eyes were level with the black hat, the 'petji' that Bapak normally wore. I quickly closed my eyes again and continued with my latihan without further shocks.

The beginning…

My own inner journey had begun on my 18th birthday, Saturday 14 April 1962, when I first received the contact with the vibration of life energy known as the Subud latihan kedjiwaan at my 'opening' at the Manchester Subud Group. I felt my life would change, but at that time just experienced a vibrating force that lifted my arms into the shape of a cross.

> *I felt a shaking within myself as though my soul shook with fear...*

I had of course no understanding then that I was beginning a journey towards clarity of mind, peace of heart, and an inner state forming a channel for a deeper and wider life energy. "Happy are the poor in spirit, theirs' is the Kingdom of Heaven." Matthew 5:3

It was only later when I 'saw' the force of the latihan that I began to sense the quality of this

"Fragment of the bolt of light
That shattered the primeval night."

I was at that time fasting and attending the group latihan in Manchester. I surrendered myself to Almighty God and prepared to receive the latihan, but nothing happened. No vibration arose in my body and my inner state did not change to the state of inner quiet and detachment I normally experienced. This situation continued for the whole half-hour of latihan. I felt that the latihan had left me and began to pray the Muslim prayer Al Fatihah.

When I reached the part of the prayer that says 'To You alone do we surrender and to You alone do we turn for help,' I felt a shaking within myself as though my soul shook with fear. I continued with the prayer 'Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom You have favoured'.

I then saw above my head an opening, and behind the opening an intense light like the light of an electric arc welder. This light would certainly have destroyed my eyesight if I had viewed it with my physical eyes.

A fragment of this light then broke away and fell, curving down, hitting me on the head and burning its way through my body. It was the same as my normal latihan, but many times more intense. Fortunately, at this moment the helper said 'Finish' as the experience was too strong for me to continue with it for more than a few seconds.

A River Running Fast

Sara Straub writes about loving oneself…

Recently early in the morning, the question arose within me. How do I love myself? It wasn't the first time I had asked this question, but this time the understanding was very different. It was so simple. My arm shot up in the air and I was surrendering to God. I know that sounds almost too simple, but somehow it is the result in part of 25 years of illness, also known as purification in Subud.

The illness that I have experienced has isolated me, prevented me from joining groups, making me face my own dilemmas with only blind trust as a guide, and on the whole, doing it alone. The Latihan was always very much present and contrary to what people might think is right or prescribed, when I did try to attend a group somewhere, I was always stopped in the most surprising ways.

The questions which I have tested are ones which have come from within myself, no preamble, no warning, they just were there and the answers whilst I didn't always understand then definitely made sense later.

Eventually I am understanding something of what it was that has driven me forward all these years. I have always been like a caged animal needing to move on. Get rid of possessions, be free. I've never given any thought to how I might achieve the perceived goal except to follow the impulse.

A couple of weeks ago as I stood in front of the window in hospital, yet again, very early in the morning, overlooking a magnificent view of mountains and hills here in Switzerland, an extremely beautiful part of the world, I realised anew that I felt caged. However, this time there was no escape. >

Illness has prevented me, both my own and that of my husband, from wandering very far, apart from the occasional walk in the adjacent hills or into the medieval town in which we live.

> *"Time for loving myself has arrived and it's so very, very easy..."*

Gradual acceptance that my soul means business. Saying "Your will be done" in the latihan is quite serious and that's exactly what will be done whether I like it or not. And when I ask to be more surrendered, I'll be tested to the enth degree. Whatever comes towards me at this time I had better embrace. This is not a game of naughts and crosses.

Switzerland is a very tough teacher. It has taught me to let go of money worries and be aware that all is well. Proof of this comes all the time. I always find the things that I need are reduced by 50%. That's almost like finding a good parking spot, and we all know about that.

The trauma of sexual abuse…

In the past couple of days, I've been reading some books narrated by another Subud member. She puts such content into her narration, and I become so involved in listening that I can be taken to places I actually need to visit.

My own mother was sexually abused. I received it once and asked her about it. She threatened to kill me if I told anyone, so traumatised was she. However, her sexual attitudes have always been reflected in my own and having listened to a book now about abuse of all sorts within a family I was finally able to really understand a lot about myself.

I wasn't abused but the shadow of it followed me. The warped view of sexuality inherited etc and that feeling of being caged; past lives popping into my head now and again; probably most of us at some stage have an inkling of where we've been, what we've done and a few of them loom large, the ones where I've been imprisoned as a nun or as a prisoner, burnt alive etc.

My poor ancestors they must be very grateful to be freed from this terrible trauma, but to be honest it's very hard work and becomes harder from what I can gather. Meanwhile the latihan keeps ploughing through those ancestral layers becoming ever deeper. There's always a compensation.

The power of the nose…

I read a little talk the other day where Bapak said we must face God with the nose. The power of God is in the nose or some such thing and once again the question came about how I receive in my nose and my nose was very obliging and it did exactly what it was supposed to do, much to my surprise! This will make it much easier when I'm really unsure about things in the future.

My mother's always had this thing about her nose . She hated her nose but it was probably her nose that got her through the worst of things and the words Nosy Parker, of which I was often accused of being, were actually quite a compliment in light of this new understanding.

My nose had been working nicely. I just didn't realise. I was interested in other people, a kind of love and caring which I expressed not towards myself but towards others.

Loving oneself…

Now the time for loving myself has arrived and it's so very, very easy. Because my lungs are in a bad way I've always been horribly allergic to smoke. Here in Switzerland almost everybody smokes or vapes. I was traumatised as I became so much worse when I came here breathing in that constant smoke suddenly suffocating. Now I don't care. I'll take precautions, but I'm no longer so angry.

This has been my most spectacular lesson.It's so much easier not to be critical or judgemental but just to love others and know that their journey is absolutely right no matter how horrible it may appear. And I have witnessed evidence of this now in a conversation I just had with my mother. She's finally taking care of her own needs.

So, after well over 40 years of latihan, God's grace is finally penetrating some of the layers and the reality of the worship we have been given is starting to ring true.

Thank you Almighty God.

Beneficial Ways for Doing Latihan

By Suryadi Mai

Part 2 Preparing for Latihan

The Latihan can only be received well when the influence of the Nafsu from the lower forces is reduced or weakened. Therefore, it is very important to prepare oneself or prepare oneself internally before practicing the Latihan. Because this preparation, if done properly, will create the right and favorable conditions for receiving.

Here is an excerpt of Ibu's explanation:

"This comes from experience, brothers and sisters. I did not study how to do this, no. It comes from experiences I have had doing latihan. So, before doing latihan, we need to be in a fresh, clean state. Do not do latihan because you are sad, or unhappy. Make yourself feel better and become quiet first, only then do latihan. Then your latihan will be alive. A latihan that is alive means that you can really feel that you are being guided in your latihan, you can feel it. Well, I am sure you have experienced that. But sometimes when you do latihan, you do not feel good, so you only do it for a short time. Many people do that. It does not mean it is God's fault because God is avoiding you, not at all. You are the one who is avoiding God".10 JOG 2

Suryadi Mai.

The time of Tranquility is therefore an important and the time when we feel the signal of readiness coming from within.

In an article by the helper Halimah Polk (USA) in Subud Voice (November 2021), she recounted hearing from an Indonesian assistant the advice of Ibu Hardiyati (Daughter of Bapak and sister of Ibu Rahayu) as follows, that Ibu compared preparing for the Latihan practice to carefully preparing one's house to receive special guests, and gave the following advice:

"During the time of Tranquility, you should prepare respect for your honored guest, and then during the quiet time, clean your inner house as much as possible, by gradually letting go of all the remnants of daily life, such as thoughts and worries, all problems, all concerns about success or failure, or worries about family relationships, etc. All these things must be let go of or put aside during the time of Tranquility."

Bapak also spoke about the preparations for practicing Latihan, letting go as follows:

"During the period of time of Tranquility, you must relax or unwind your body, mind and spirit from all desires for worldly things, from all desires for a good Latihan, from all desires for happiness, and even from the desire to be close to God, until this state of relaxation becomes a complete void, ready to be filled."

The above advice shows that our inner self is simply like the vibrations of Nafsu through the mind and heart. Now we must know how to keep ourselves in a state of surrender so that we can completely relax and let those vibrations subside, creating the space for receptivity.

And the most important thing is that the above mentioned things must be done in a state of complete surrender with a sincere heart of patience, acceptance and letting go. Ibu also advises that we can also turn to Almighty God and pray for help to be in a state of surrender.

> *A state of complete surrender with a sincere heart of patience, acceptance and letting go...*

Start the Latihan

During time of Tranquility, when the mind and heart have truly calmed down, our inner feelings will become quiet, almost empty, and this is the signal for readiness to receive the Latihan.

In the book *Bapak Answers to Members' Questions*, Latihan section, Bapak said that when we practice Latihan together with other members, or practice in a group, we should start Latihan at the same time. If there is a helper in charge, we should wait until the helper says "Begin Latihan" before everyone starts. Starting Latihan at the same time will help the group practice Latihan in harmony and stability.

When we begin the Latihan, we should stand up in a relaxed position, rather than sitting or lying down, because the standing position allows the whole body to relax and move easily. And in this relaxed position, we should begin by forming in our mind a wish with the intention of surrendering >

to God Almighty, and then consciously maintain the state of connection with the power of God, while waiting for the Latihan to begin. Making a wish with the intention of surrendering to God Almighty is very important, because our inner state is still very immature, and is always susceptible to the influence and domination of the Nafsu, which are always lurking in our mind, and the moment we neglect to maintain the state of connection with the power of God, we will immediately

In Bapak's talk. code 71 TJD 15, Bapak explained the need to begin the Latihan with an intention as follows:

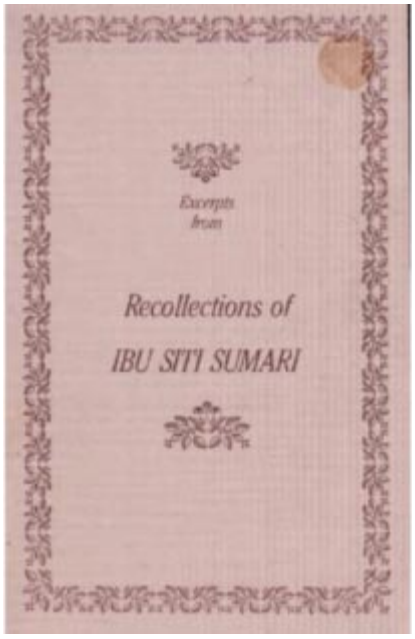
"And now that grace has come, it has descended on all of you. Consequently, it is so easy that, as soon as you stand up, 'ngeeeeeee … [Bapak makes the sound members make in latihan.] As soon as you stand up, 'click', it comes spontaneously. Even before Bapak says relax, you start going 'nggeeeeng' [Bapak makes the sound of somebody in latihan]. I tell you, 'Don't start moving yet. I haven't said begin, why are you starting to walk?' So, move when you are required to move. Because, in everything you do, you first need to make an intention.

"Well, it is important to be able to cry spontaneously. But cry only if you need to. If you cry when there is no need or talk to yourself when it is not required, if you go to Pasar Baru, you will start laughing for no reason, 'hahahaha'. [Bapak makes the sound of someone laughing inanely.] What then? People will laugh at you.

"Therefore, you need to understand the importance of making an intention. For instance, when people pray in Islam, first they make an intention: 'I hereby perform my prayer …' Oops I made a mistake, I did not say which prayer. 'I hereby perform my midday prayer in four cycles for the sake of Allah.' Only then do you start the prayer by saying Allahu Akbar or God is Great. That is an intention".

The purpose of making a wish is to help us determine for ourselves the direction and purpose of our surrender, which is only directed towards the Almighty God (that is, towards the life that is within our inner self), so that we can be conscious and maintain this state throughout the time of receiving. Otherwise, we will easily be swept away into the vortex of Nafsu.

A Book About Ibu Siti Sumari



Daniela Moneta. Archivist writes…

We are re-publishing the little pink covered book published in 1989 about Bapak's second wife, Ibu Siti Sumari. Ibu traveled with Bapak through the years in Indonesia when Subud was developing. She then traveled with Bapak on his first trip outside Indonesia to Coombe Springs in 1957 and up until her last trip with him in 1970.

The original book about Ibu is titled *Excerpts from Recollections of Ibu Siti Sumari* and is 59 pages. Since then, more stories about Ibu have emerged and have been shared. We hope to collect them all and add them to the new edition. It will be in English and also in Spanish for our many members in Mexico, Central and South America, Spain, and other places around the world. Of course, it could be translated into other languages.

We are contacting you because you were opened in 1970 or before and perhaps you met Ibu on Bapak's visits around the world, at Congresses, or on visits to Wisma Subud. If you were not yet opened, perhaps your parents related stories you could share.

Many new stories have emerged through the years and, of course, we would like to have as many as possible for the new edition.

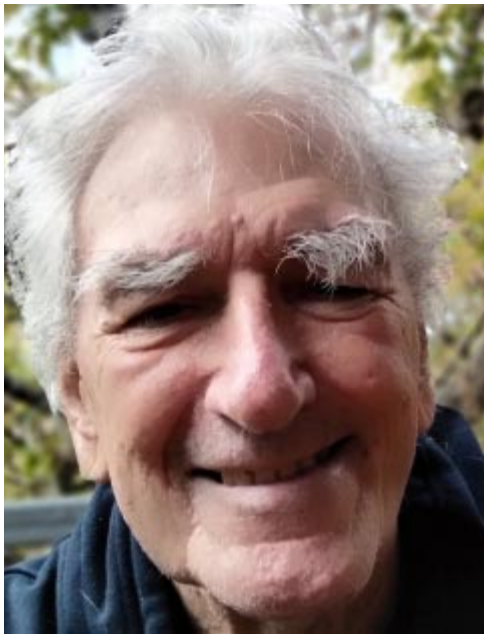
Please consider taking some time to send us your story about Ibu Siti Sumari. Send them to the Subud Archives at: admin@wsaarchives.org

Please give us your name, where you were opened, and any other information you might like to add. Send your stories as soon as possible so we can get the new publication out quickly.

Sincerely, Halimah Polk, halimahpo@gmail.com

Daniela Moneta, daniela_wsaarchives@subud.org

Life Is Unpredictable



Harris Smart writes about how unexpected things happen for good or ill…

Sometimes life can suddenly change in an instant. You go to a party, and you meet the love of your life, and your life is completely transformed. Or you get up in the morning with a plan for how you're going to spend your day and instead you get knocked down by a car. Every day people set out in the morning with their plans and some unexpected thing happens to knock them awry.

Here are two experiences both of which happened on a Good Friday...

On the Good Friday just past I went into a nearby country town to buy a pizza. What could be more harmless than that?

While my pizza was being made I sat on a chair drinking a soft drink and looking vaguely into space. A man, a woman and two small children entered the pizza shop. The woman was covered in tattoos, not nice ones, but ugly prison ones.

The two children were a boy and a girl aged I five or six. At one point the little girl pushed past me to get to the soft drink machine. I suppose I have a habit of looking idly at people and wondering about their lives. Who are they? What sort of life have they had,? What can you deduce about them from their manner and appearance?

So, I was doing something like that and the man walked across and stood in front of me. He was very tall and gaunt. Maybe in his 50s. He too was covered in prison tatts and his appearance was mutilated; he only had half an ear. He looked really dangerous. He said something aggressively to me, but I didn't hear it, being hard of hearing. And then he in moved even closer to me and said, did you hear what I said?

I said, no I'm hard of hearing.

He said, I saw you are looking at my daughter. He was really aggressive. There was a to repeat feeling of violence and malevolence. I felt like I was in a really dangerous situation. That my jaw might be broken or that I might even be killed. My heart was pounding enormously.

There have been other occasions in my life when I've been attacked. Once at night I was walking through a park in Melbourne with another friend and a woman when suddenly we were attacked by a gang. We ran for our lives, and we got away. On another occasion, a gang attacked me and there was a brief fight, and I was knocked down, but they left it at that.

But this felt much more dangerous, really dangerous. I just said mildly, I wasn't looking at anything, and he backed off.

Even after they had left the shop, and I had my pizza, I still felt frightened. I stood at the door and looked up and down the street to make sure that he wasn't there waiting to accost me. And when I saw it was all clear I hastened to my car and drove away.

But when I got home, I found that in my panic I had turned the pizza box upside down and all the topping had fallen off and just lay there like a congealed mass in the bottom of the box, while the pizza base was void of adornment.

Another kind of unexpected…

My other Good Friday experience was about 10 years ago when I was living in Melbourne. I went into the city. Nothing was open. Everything closed, all the shops and everything. Then I found a cinema open. I watched the film *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* which is about a group of middle-aged English people who go to stay in a hotel in India. The English people are all these famous English actors like Judy Dench and Bill Nighy etc.

> *"Sometimes life can change in an instant...."*

After I had seen the movie, I was walking out through the foyer, and I saw a man with his back to me looking up at the coming attractions. I thought to myself, when that man turns round I will see it is Bill Nighy, and when he turned around it was Bill Nighy.

I went up to him and we had a conversation. After we had introduced ourselves I asked what movie he was going to go and see. He said, he wasn't sure. I said, you should go and see the Marigold hotel movie, that's very good, I just saw it ha ha ha.

He laughed politely. We then had a pleasant conversation I asked him why he was in Melbourne. He said he was here to make a movie. He was very agreeable; he looked like any other well-dressed middle-aged gent out to see a movie by himself. As is so often the case, he looked shorter in real life that he does in the movies.

I was going to join some friends to see a performance of Mozart's Requiem in a church. I thought, probably it's the kind of thing that Bill Nighy likes to do, go to a church like St Martins in the Field in London, and I thought of inviting him to come with me but then felt shy about it. We wound up the conversation, I did not want to hang around like an adoring fan, and I walked away down the street but then I thought, yes, I should invite him to the Requiem, but when I went back he had gone already. It shows you should do things the instant you think of them.

Suppose, for instance, you go to it party and there is someone very attractive there and you would like to speak to them. In my experience unless you act instantly on the impulse, you will never act on it. You will just become be enmeshed in useless wishing and regretting. Timing is all. Spontaneity is all. The latihan encourages us to be spontaneous but still we often fail because of our temerity and conditioning.

This theme reminds me of an experience recorded by Emanuel Elliott which emphasises the value of acting spontaneously. *See the next article…*

The Punch

This story appears in a Emanuel Elliott's book The Dawning...

"May this 'I' die, and may another live in me greater than I and better for me than I."
St. Teresa of Avila

...It was at this point in the regeneration process that I received that I had experienced the end of a life and death cycle. It was certainly true that I had gone through a death or separation in relation to my former self and ways of being, evidenced by character changes that one of my business partners was later to describe as 'huge'.

In addition to the transformation of my attitude towards work, for example, I could no longer swear, touch alcohol, tell or listen to tasteless jokes, or look at women in an inappropriate way, all of which had in varying degrees hitherto been habitual to me.

Then, I had a dream that seemed at first entirely without reality, little more than a source of amusement. Eventually, however, I came to recognise the far-reaching significance of its inner meaning. I came to see that it was laying down the ground rules that would govern every second of my existence for the rest of my life.

It was a pivotal experience, one that could easily provide the theme for an entire book, a book without an ending since it goes to the very heart of staying close to the spiritual life while still in this world, this homeland of the lower forces.

In the dream, I had just finished cleaning out an enormous cowshed, and it looked spotless. My boss came to inspect my work. "So you're satisfied with this, are you?" he asked me.

I looked around again but could see nothing to complain about, unless you counted a single tiny >

piece of straw lying at my feet. But even that was perfectly clean and shiny. It looked exactly like a small golden capital letter I.

"Come and have a cup of tea," said my boss, in a very friendly manner.

Over tea, he said, "From now on, whenever it is appropriate for you to say either 'please' or 'thank you' to me, you must say it immediately."

Sounds easy enough, I thought to myself.

A few minutes later such an occasion arose, and I was in the process of formulating the best way to say 'thank you' when, without warning, my boss drew back his fist and punchd me in the jaw without warning, knocking me over backward.

"I said immediately," he reminded me.

Before long, the crucial message represented by this dream began to get through to me: that it was vital to stay very close to the fountainhead of a new spiritual identity; that through awareness I must allow this higher level to govern every act and movement, every thought and intention, and every usage of the senses.

I began to experience that only through constant attention from moment to moment would this inner contact and balance be maintained. If my awareness slipped, even for an instant, I would pay a heavy inner price, aptly symbolized by the punch in the dream.

The slightest inattention in any part of my being – even, for example, a tiny careless movement of a little finger – would be enough to trigger one of these 'awareness slips,' as I came to call them.

I suffered enormously during this period, which lasted for some years. It was like walking a tightrope or skating on very thin ice during every waking hour. Constant inner attention was called for, a faculty which seems normal now. As Bapak wrote in Susila Budhi Dharma… so if a man is inattentive, even for just a moment, then he will instantly become unable to tell one from another of the forces that impose on his inner feeling at such a time.

The process intensified as the demands of this inner awareness extended to my freedom to use the first-person pronoun, which was gradually withdrawn from me altogether. Strange and hard though this seemed, I simply had no choice but to accept and follow what was now clearly more than ever a continually unfolding process.

Bizarrely, during the first phase of this new trial, I found that if I said the word I (or any other personal pronoun) before 8.45 a.m. or after 5.45 p.m. (i.e., outside normal business hours) I would at once become heavily oppressed by negative lower forces. Such an utterance, in other words, constituted an "awareness slip" and brought with it a highly unpleasant condition that could last for several hours and sometimes for a whole day.

After being allowed a few weeks to get used to this, the restriction was extended to include weekends. Once I had adjusted to that, it was further extended so that I was bound to this extraordinary discipline around the clock, seven days a week.

Except when it arose of itself in latihan, I was unable to use any personal pronoun whatsoever – I, me, my or mine – for more than a year, a requirement that called for an extreme degree of self-awareness. I became adept at conducting conversations without using personal pronouns, speaking of myself either in the third person or in the first person plural when absolutely necessary.

During this time I was somewhat comforted to come across the following remark made by Bapak in Jakarta in August 1973: Bapak hopes that you will truly surrender to God Almighty and give up your I, so that your I can be stripped bare and you can receive what is actually there in your inner self.(73 CDK 2)

And by another he made in Vancouver in July 1981: The word I is a very important thing to have and use. But if you misunderstand it or misuse it, or if you are not clear about it, then it can also be very dangerous, because we say all the time, "I do this" or "I do that" or "I am able to know this, and say that, and do that."

But who is 'I'?

When we say I, it is not at all easy; it is very difficult to be clear who is I and who is influencing I at that moment.

He went on to explain that the purpose of the latihan is to teach us to experience the separation of our real I from all the subordinate forces that vie for ascendancy within us

Emanuel later added...

Reviewing this account some 18 years after it was written, it feels appropriate to couple it with a brief reference to subsequent developments in relation to the meaning and significance of the 'I.'

Beginning around the year 2000, the word 'I' would often arise of itself within the inner being, but possessed of a purity and newness quite unlike one's everyday usage of the personal pronoun. As time passed, this simple expression evolved into 'I am,' into 'I am God' and into 'I am the one who is coming,' etc.

All such variations emanate from the same clear source, a place that is increasingly accessible in any moment of quietness and surrender.

It would be easy for the thinking mind to be alarmed or confused at such inner pronouncements, to imagine perhaps that one is going crazy. It would even be possible for the ego to take it personally and begin to build up a fantasy world for itself.

I know that I am not alone in experiences of this kind, and perhaps others will find it helpful and reassuring, therefore, as I did, to read the following extract from Bapak, taken from a talk given as far back as 1957: "...Those who know the real 'I' means the same as 'I know God.'

"Such a saying, however, is very difficult to analyse. It is very hard to comprehend it without misunderstanding, because it is not yet known, it has not been experienced yet, what the condition within the human spirit is, so that it may be believed and concluded to mean, 'To know me is to know God. It could even give the idea that God may be just like me, or that God may be just like Pak Subuh, for instance.

"What is really meant is nothing of the sort, but rather, Whoever knows 'I,' or when I know 'I,' it means the same as 'I know God." (57 HAG 7)

In Kalimantan...

This is a section from Ramzi Addison's book The Boy from Brixton. *Ramzi describes a visit to Kalimantan. It is interesting to compare his comments on the jinn with those of Darius McStay in the article following...*

I was sent by my university to carry out some research on the Subud gold mine in Kalimantan. What interested us was the unique arrangement that the gold company had with the local Dayaks who lived in the areas round where exploration was going on.

The company set up a Trust, YTS, Yayasan Tambuhak Sinta – Mooring post of our love – in a Dayak dialect. Mooring posts are particularly meaningful to a community that relies on the river so much.

This Trust worked with the Dayak communities to introduce more effective farming techniques, while working with the villagers' indigenous knowledge. Rather than simply trying to impose Western solutions, YTS staff, many of whom were Dayaks, worked with the villagers to prepare plans for the future.

This is in contrast to most extractive industries whose only concern is to get in, suck out as much profit as possible, then move on, leaving the shattered communities to cope with the impacts on their culture and economies.

The primary means of transport in Kalimantan is via the big rivers that reach from the sea far up into the mountains. Before setting off up the river Kayahan with my Dayak guide and translator, I was feeling distinctly uneasy about the trip.

Now the jinn in these parts seem particularly powerful. I had heard stories about people getting offside with the jinn and things not going well up the river. I was getting the jitters about the trip but one of the women who lived in Rungan Sari told me how to address the issue.

I was to announce to the jinn who I was: "I am Ramzi, and I worship the One Almighty God >

through the latihan kejiwaan brought to us by Pak Muhammad Subuh and I ask for your help and protection to progress up the river."

In addition to worrying about the jinn I was also anxious about getting stomach ailments to which I am very susceptible. I only have to hear the word 'Indonesia' and I have to rush to the toilet. And mosquitos and the giant insects that live up there. And snakes.

> *I was impressed by the Dyaks. They were very straightforward and direct…*

The first day...

The first day on the river was on a public boat with about forty passengers. I was placed in the seat of honour, next to the driver, as I was the only white man there. We spent the night in a little town, then off for two more days journey in small boats owned by YTS.

All the way up I ran through my mantra of announcing to the jinn who I was (not aloud of course). I could feel that I was passing through different jinn kingdoms as we moved up.

For two nights we slept in villages on the bare floor and ate food that I had no way of identifying.

Things that were just a normal, part of everyday life for the Dayaks, I found very difficult. Like walking up narrow, slippery ironwood planks from the floating dock to the riverbank wearing my slip-on sandals.

I had taken tramping boots to go walking in the jungle, but in the event, I suddenly found myself being whisked off on a half hour hike through streams, across more narrow ironwood planks spanning big water holes full of black water and spiky bamboo shafts, wearing only my little sandals.

Impressed by the Dayaks...

I was impressed by the Dayaks. They were very straightforward and direct. The only time I saw Dayak cultural objects was in Europeans' houses in Rungan Sari. In the villages the only ornaments were guns hanging on the wall. In fact there was almost no furniture at all and meals were eaten from a mat on the floor.

You would not want to get on the wrong side of these people! I felt like a little white snowflake among these tough people, but I found there was one thing they seemed to be scared of that I wasn't.

One day, I was standing on a narrow verandah smoking. The rain was pouring down and running off the roof inches from my face. The houses are raised off the ground on stilts because of the periodic flooding and I saw a young woman struggling up the ladder to the verandah carrying two big pails of water from the river.

She'd had to go down to the river then come back across the plank then up the ladder to ground level, then up another ladder to the house. I could see stands of large bamboo plants close by. Of course, I thought, white man's technology. Split the bamboo lengthwise to make gutters. Suspend them under the edge of the roof and catch the rain coming down from the roof in a container on the verandah.

I suggested this to the headman, but he was very definitely against the idea. I asked Mayang, my guide, why this was, but she would only say that the Dayaks don't like rain. And I saw this later going up the river in a small, motorised canoe.

It started to rain and immediately the driver steered the boat to the side, under thick overhanging trees. I asked several people about this but I still have no clear idea why this fear exists.

Protection...

When we returned, I realised that I had been very protected on my little adventure. I was not bitten once by mosquitoes and only saw one insect the whole time, a large hornet that cruised by without stopping to say hello. I saw no snakes or other biting things; I did not get the runs and was generally very healthy.

I was also much more confident negotiating the various ways of getting across water in the world of the Dayaks. Thank you, Jinn! Mayang was impressed at how much more competent this quivering little white man was after a few days living up the river.

Many Subud people have much more dramatic stories of encounters with jinn and I hope they tell some of these stories some day. BUT – beware – I was shown very clearly DON'T MESS WITH THE JINN!

There are other unseen entities that share this planet and other realms with us – devils and angels and ghosts. I know a bit about ghosts from my encounters but almost nothing about devils or angels. I have learnt not to try to find out about these things. If I am given some insight then I am grateful, but I know so little about it all that I stay right away.

The Great Jinn of the Mountain: *Part Conclusion*.

. A jinn. Google image. Darius says it depicts the anger and war he found himself fighting against.

By Darius McStay

Editor's note: I have followed with great interest Darius's lively account of his expedition to meet a jinn. I expect that other readers will also have been expecting this encounter to happen in the jungles of Kalimantan, but instead in this final episode, we find it happens in Java during the Indonesian National Congress and Bapak Centenary. It raised the question in my mind, was this encounter with an external entity or with forces inside Darius himself? I asked Darius about this and he replied by saying, "My hunch is both, from a past life attachment perhaps." He also quoted Joseph Campbell, 'All the gods, all the heavens, all the hells are within you'…

"Hi Darius. I've talked to Josh and he said yes, you were a Shaman before. You were a shaman in England," reported Lesy to me over voice message.

I'd just met Lesy to discuss a business opportunity in Palangkaraya only to find myself blurting out my experience with the jinn. I had no intention of sharing over a business meeting of course, it was just how the conversation went.

Call me a dum dum, however, going with the flow had lead her to revealing her son was able to "see" spirit beings and could receive some guidance for me. I had accepted her offer of course. I was already half way down the rabbit hole, might as well get to the tea party.

"The Shaman are connected – in spirit of course – with the Dyak Shaman here in Palangkaraya," her voice message continued. "So that's why the Jinn wants to meet you." It had never occurred to to me the Jinn might have Shamans too. "I asked Josh if you would be okay and he said, "Yes, mummy, the Shaman just wants to meet Darius, but he will be okay. You are from ancient times!" She signed off, laughing emoji.

I should reveal a little more about the Shaman life I've relived through my latihan. It's hardly been a laughing matter.

After meeting him in my opening it wasn't long before he was roused (or rather forcibly wrenched) awake. "Leave me alone," he would growl in latihan with a menace like Darth Vaders', scaring the bejeebies out of me. One evening in latihan I felt an angelic presence above me ask "Are you willing to go through this?"

"Yes?" I replied. Immediately I was thrown out of my body and Mr Shaman snapped into it. Along with his wrath. He proceeded to smash up the latihan room. It was all I could do to contain the violence. Amazingly the other men carried on regardless. By the end of it darkness possessed me.

"We've received you're not safe to go home," said one of the helpers afterwards. "We're going to do a special latihan with you". Without going into it, what happened next was a full exorcism. Once done I felt broken, but Darth was defeated. Yoda would be proud.

Over the ensuing years I have received complete recall of this past life. In a nutshell I was cap- >

tured by the Spanish Inquisition, tortured until I relinquished my heathen faith in the Goddess, forced to bow down to a new Man-God called Christ and finally burned alive on a cross anyway. I've even met the woman who rang the bell that lit the fire this lifetime.

Sitting on the Subud bus driving up the mountain en route to Bapak's grave, I contemplated all of this. I was on the "Subud Centenary Tour," with a bunch of other zealots, struggling to admit to myself I had definitely drunk the Kool-aid.* Actually the zealots were alright. It was the tour I felt uncomfortable with. I'd booked it because it was tied into the price of the Congress. The itinerary was to visit all the sights of Bapak's life story, where he was born, where he grew up, and of course his grave. Every time we jumped off the bus an Indonesian member would insist we lined up for a photograph.

As I stared out of the window, marvelling at the Jakarta landscape below, I remembered that when I received to come to the Kalimantan World Congress I had already decided I was done with Subud (again!). So you might imagine my quandary when Bapak pops into my latihan to give me my marching orders. To justify the calling I decided I'd go as a kind of pilgrimage to restate my commitment to God. You know, like Muslims go to Mecca. Maybe I'd get a religious experience. Now, as the religi-bus drove up the mountain towards Bapak's grave I felt an inner tug. This was my pilgrimage it dawned on me. Would this also be where I'd meet the Jinn?

"Is there a Jinn on this mountain?" I asked our tour guide .

"No, I don't think so," Luluk replied. Luluk is an ex TV presenter and hosted both the Centenary tour and Indonesian Congress. "Although there are guardian spirits. Some report that the Nafsu can't get past the entrance to Bapak's grave. There is a deep peace there."

"Wrong Mountain," I mumbled under my breath.

"Pardon?"

"Nothing".

Bapak's grave at Suka Mulia.

At Bapak's grave

By now I'd had rather enough of all this spooky stuff. Couldn't I receive a normal latihan just walking round in circles like everybody else? At the grave the tour group sat and closed their eyes, waiting for something. I walked around and read the nameplates on the graves. The ages of the Bapak's family struck me. Most had died young. Certainly they had all suffered difficult lives. Out of curiosity I decided to see if I could feel the anit-nafsu barrier at the entrance. It was an odd sensation, but palpable. Then I walked off ahead of the others, determined not to be impressed.

We did latihan later at the nearby hall. I sincerely prayed for a normal, builders tea latihan and got one. Mostly. It was, I admitted reluctantly, very deep and very peaceful.

At Bapak's house

Next on the Tour 's itinerary was the house Bapak grew up in. Despite myself I was beginning to enjoy being part of a group from such varied parts of the world, with such different and interesting experiences in latihan. I suppose growing closer on a shared experience was inevitable. We'd even started our own WhatsApp group.

At Bapak's birthplace in Kedung Jati.

Arriving at Bapak's house late evening I discovered there was a group that practiced latihan there. Discovering half of the Indonesian Congress had turned up for it threw me, though. The place was packed, with maybe 80-100 Subud members milling around, all chatting away and smoking the obligatory Kretek.

Now I really balked. To my way of thinking, the latihan is attached to no place and no time yet here I was being told in no uncertain terms by the head of Subud Indonesia that the latihans here >

were super special. I finally snapped. I decided I would display my revulsion by completely ignoring everyone, polite conversation aside. And I definitely wouldn't do latihan.

"Men's latihan in five!" came the call. We all streamed into the two tiny rooms Bapak had grown out of years ago. Don't judge me, I'm English. It's hard not to join a queue.

Resigned, I simply asked to receive whatever God would have me receive.

Immediately I was struck by a huge beam of light blasting down from the heavens. My body stretched into Leonardo da Vinci's Vetruvian Man and terabytes of spiritual electricity surged through my every atom. Then, with equal force the earth opened up below me and a host of demons and darkness rushed into my soul. I started to howl. Images flashed through psyche.

I'm Iblis, I'm the Jinn, I'm a watcher from Eons ago. Their memories and force raged at the light. I sensed Bapak, but he seemed busy, then Christ too. All within, without, shaking it about. Shaking me to my limits. Hang on, where had the walls and roof gone? I beheld a great battlefield. Fire and Brimstone had scorched the earth and Mount Megiddo (Har-Magedon) burned.

"This one is strong!" The demons, the Jinn, the Watcher in me screamed. "We can't beat him"! Light ripped my Jiwa, darkness boiled my blood. My mind struggled to accept as I battled to submit. Was this a some crazy re-membering or was I just witness to this terrible war between heaven and hell?

"Finish!" someone shouted over the din in the room. I collapsed.

I slept well that night.

During Bapak's Centenary. At his house in Semarang. Darius is in the very back row in the centre.

At the Congress

Next morning Congress began in earnest. Whilst eating breakfast I noticed I felt different. Full somehow. Bigger perhaps. Stronger?

The Indonesian Congress was busy and the number attending impressive, but alas, I saw almost none of it. I managed the opening ceremony with its fantastic display of traditional and modern dance and colourful ritual, Luluk and her cohost seamlessly tying it together.

I was impressed that the government minister for culture showed up. He praised Subud for it's contribution to the spiritual dynamism Indonesia strives for. Later he asked me why Subud doesn't advertise itself when the young so desperately need spiritual guidance? Jokingly, I told him I was working on it.

That night I sat round a table with Ivan and Dom from the tour and an Indonesian woman called Asril. She mentioned she liked my blue eyes and that there was something about me. I'm an actor. Flattery will get you everywhere so I found myself gobbing off about the Great Jinn of the Mountain. Immediately I felt my energy drain and something enter in.

"You see that?" Asril stared deeply into my gorgeous blue eyes, but spoke to Ivan and Dom. "His face has changed. The isn't Darius." To me she challenged "Who are you?"

I felt small and stupid. Nonsense tumbled out of my mouth.

"Hold my hand and call your name," she quipped. Such a flirt. "Do your latihan." Oh.

"You must meet my family," Asril stated flatly afterwards. "My uncles and cousins. We call ourselves the Ghostbusters," she chuckled. I thought. Here we go again.

Darius with Richard and Dom during the Indonesian National Congress during the Centenary.

The next evening four Indonesians, myself

and Dom and Ivan met in a small hotel room. They'd wanted to help. I suspected they were also curious. Asril was sat quietly in the corridor, energetically supporting us as the Ghostbusters arranged their Proton packs.

"Let's do latihan," smirked Indonesian Bill Murray wryly. I braced myself.

Immediately the latihan started I felt a surge of power enter me and again I sensed a wrathful personality. But this was not the Shaman. This was the Great Jinn and he was not happy. I felt guilty. I'd come in peace. This was betrayal. I sensed that's exactly how the Jinn felt now as he roared in resistance.

At the railway station where Bapak worked.

I fell to my knees as one of the ghostbusters ripped his hands down my spine, gurgling and growling dementedly. The beast fought back with all it's might as his attachment to me was violently shredded from my core. We'd gone loud, but we didn't stop.

The latihan went on and on, draining me both of capacity and will. I felt it was killing me. I can't do this anymore. Then my heart broke and a thousand years of grief and remorse poured out.

Finally it ended. I was weeping, begging God's forgiveness for my sins, promising to serve only Him from now on. It was over. Once again I collapsed.

"That felt like King Kong," one of the younger Ghostbusters reported afterwards, a wink in his eye. "We've not fought anything that strong before."

I spent the rest of the Congress agonisingly ill in bed.

Sie Gohong villages put on a traditional Dyak welcome for Bapak's Centenary.

Purpose done

Soon after I felt my purpose for being in Kalimantan was done. Driving on my moped to Rungan Sari I suddenly felt a huge weight lift from me. It was as if I suddenly woke up from a 30 year dream. In a flash I was 19 again, completely present and wondering what the hell was I doing in a jungle? The next day my Dad begged me to return home.

"I need your strength," he pleaded.

My latihan is cleaner now, deeper and stronger. I'm glad. In my supporting latihans for Dad, I'm clearing his path to travel safely through to the other side. Sometimes it feels like I'm holding all the world's Nafsu at bay, that would otherwise drag him down, not up, on his passing. Scott has assured me that not only have I been purified of the Jinn but have also helped a huge number of ancestors out of their misery, clearing my own path forward.

Day by day, week by week I'm processing my time in Kalimantan. I still don't know why Bapak gave me Iblis (on loan). However I do feel I've overcome the Satanic world. I feel the truth that God has truly saved my soul and am comfortable with my soul's re-membering. In Kalimantan I received the words "Esa Manna Tuah". In Indonesian Esa is a poetic word meaning 'One," often used in divine context. In high Javanese these words could be translated as unity with and the emergence of Grace.

My mother likes to remind me I was born on Palm Sunday and Sunday's child is full of Grace. I can't speak to that. However after 32 years of purification through the latihan I can say this:

There but for the Grace of God go I…

**"Drink the Kool-Aid" is an idiom that means to blindly accept or follow a belief, ideology, or system—especially one that is extreme or potentially dangerous—without questioning it. It often carries a negative or cautionary tone, implying uncritical obedience or submission.*

The phrase references the Jonestown Massacre in 1978, a tragic event involving the Peoples Temple, a cult led by Jim Jones. Over 900 members of the cult died in a mass murder-suicide in Jonestown, Guyana, after being coerced or forced to drink a flavored beverage laced with cyanide.

The Virgin Mary in Islam

By Iljas Baker...

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The announcement that the next Subud World Congress will be held in Fatima, the place where Mary (Maryam in Islam) the mother of Jesus is reputed to have appeared six times to three children in 1917, seemed to give the Congress a special significance and I imagine as we get closer to the event we will probably see an increased interest in the Virgin Mary among Subud members.

No doubt by the time the Congress comes round Congress attendees will be familiar with the "dance of the sun" which took place at the sixth apparition and was said to have caused healings among the 70,000 spectators who were there. They will be familiar too with the various messages, some known, some still unknown, that the Virgin Mary is reputed to have imparted to the children.

This then might be a good time to share the Virgin Mary narrative in the Qur'an, and in the Islamic tradition more generally, as it is not well-known among non-Muslims. The high esteem that the Virgin Mary has in Islam as recorded in the Qur'an is undeniable and surprises many Christians. Perhaps this knowledge in itself could help to soften Christian hearts towards Islam and encourage further exploration and understanding of the religion among Subud members in general.

Mary is the only woman named in the Qur'an. She is mentioned seventy times in a total of seven chapters or surahs. Chapters 3 and 19 contain substantial narratives about the conception and birth of Jesus whereas the other chapters focus on making clear that Mary gave birth to a prophet and not the son of God. Surah Al-Imran (3: 37-48) tells us that Mary was brought up under the care of Zachariah, her father's cousin, and when he visited her in her "sanctuary", presumably to take provisions to her, she was already fully supplied. When asked where they came from, Mary replied, "They are from God: God provides limitlessly for who He will." On another occasion the angels told Mary: *"Mary, God has chosen you and made you pure. He has truly chosen you above all women … Mary, God gives you news of a Word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, who will be held in honour in this world and the next. He will be one of those brought near to God. He will speak to people in his infancy and in his adulthood."*

When Mary questions how she can give birth when she is still a virgin, the angel responds, "This is how God creates what he will: When He has ordained something, He only says 'Be' and it is."

A very similar narrative is given in Surah Maryam, the nineteenth surah, with additional information. According to this chapter (19:16-22), the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she would give birth to "a pure son". When she questions how this can be possible inasmuch as she is a virgin, Gabriel replies that such a thing is easy if God ordains it.

She is to produce a son who will be "a sign for all people" and a blessing from God. In this narrative, Mary isolates herself, probably in the desert, to give birth. She feels birth pains while passing a palm tree and miraculously a stream appears beneath it providing her with water and the tree provides her with dates. According to the Qur'an, it is in this setting that Jesus was born. There is no mention of Joseph.

Clearly there are similarities with the Christian narrative and also sharp differences and any interfaith dialogue worth its salt has to acknowledge both without making a judgment about the superiority of either narrative. Historically, the Qur'anic narrative of Mary and Jesus has helped to promote good relations between the two faiths and nowhere is this clearer than on the occasion when some of the early Muslims fled Mecca for protection to Abyssinia.

Before the Muslim community had become strong enough to resist the often violent persecution >

by the ruling Quraysh tribe who rejected Muhammad and his monotheistic religion, it was decided that some of the more vulnerable members of the community should seek refuge in Abyssinia where the king or Negus was known to be sincere in his practice of his religion (Christianity), fair in his dealings with others and tolerant of differences.

After their arrival in Abyssinia and after hearing about the reason for their emigration, the Negus asked the Muslims about their scripture. In response, one of the emigrants, Ja`far ibn Abi Talib, beautifully recited in Arabic verses 16 to 22 of Surah Maryam:

She withdrew from her family to a place in the east and secluded herself away; We [Allah] sent Our Spirit to appear before her in the form of a perfected man. She said, 'I seek the Lord of Mercy's protection against you: if you have any fear of Him do not approach!' but he said, 'I am but a Messenger from your Lord come to announce to you the gift of a pure son.' She said, 'How can I have a son when no man has touched me? I have not been unchaste,' and he said, 'This is what your Lord said: 'It is easy for Me - We shall make him a sign to all people, a blessing from Us.' And so it was ordained: she conceived him.

The English translation doesn't even hint at how beautiful the Arabic sounds, but according to Martin Lings in his highly respected biography *Muhammad: his life based on the earliest sources* (p.83), the Negus and his bishops wept when they heard the recital and wept again on hearing its translation. The Negus told the Muslims that the scripture came from the same source as that which Jesus brought and conveyed his welcome and offered his protection to the emigrants.

This story seems to me to offer more hope for bringing Muslims and Christians closer together than any expected Marian intervention (a not uncommon idea in Subud circles, and one that might gain more attention the closer we come to the Congress). The Abyssinian story essentially points to the benefits of being spiritually sensitive and recognizing inwardly that both the religions come from God. These are surely gifts of the latihan kejiwaan that we can put into practice in our own lives and thus take responsibility for making a difference.

Mary conceived not just a pure son, but a prophet and his prophetic character is neatly encapsulated in Qur'an 19: 30-33 where the infant Jesus to the amazement of all says:

I am a servant of God. He has granted me the Scripture, made me a prophet; made me blessed wherever I may be. He commanded me to pray, to give alms as long as I live, to cherish my mother. He did not make me domineering or graceless. Peace was on me the day I was born, and will be on me the day I die and the day I am raised to life again.[1]

This is precisely why large numbers of sincere Muslims continue to honour Jesus and take him as a spiritual exemplar along with Abraham, Moses and Muhammad.

There is little mention of Mary's subsequent life in the Qur'an or in Islamic literature more generally. Certainly, there is no mention of her assumption (*mir'aj*) which is Roman Catholic dogma. Although, interestingly, Martin Lings claims that like Muhammad after her, she "was taken up out of this life to Heaven."

In the Sufi tradition as in orthodox Islam, Mary is seen as worthy of great respect. But in the Sufi tradition her significance is symbolic. In his book of discourses, *Signs of the Unseen*, Rumi compares the body of the spiritual seeker to Mary and our true self to Jesus:

Our body is like Mary, and each of us bears a Jesus. If we experience birth pains, our Jesus will be born, but if there is no pain, our Jesus will return to his origin by that hidden road whence he came, and we will remain deprived. (page 23, translated by W.M. Thackston Jr.)

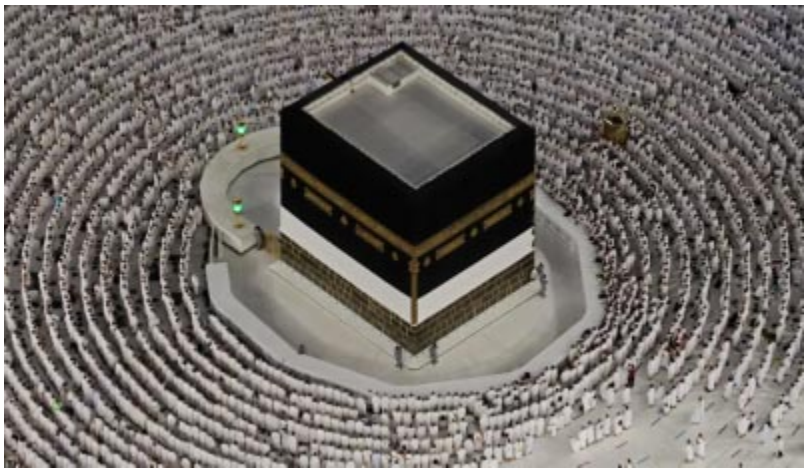
In the Qur'an and in the Islamic tradition more generally, Mary has a unique and profound status, "chosen above all women", decreed by God to be the mother of Jesus, the Messiah, based on her purity and on devotion to her Creator. This is the culmination of her story in the Islamic tradition. That same tradition is silent on whether Mary has a role to play in an individual's devotions or personal spiritual development although its frequent reiteration of "no one is worthy of worship except God" and "no one intercedes with God without His permission" offers a kind of framework.

My apologies if anything I have written here offends anyone.

[1] The Qur'an rejects that Jesus was the son of God. Furthermore, according to the Qur'anic narrative Jesus was not crucified, it only appeared so (see Qur'an 4:157).

Bus to Mecca

June this year has been the month in which Muslims make the pilgrimage to Mecca. Dachlan Cartwright recalls making the Haj in 1980...



One million Muslams follow the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca.

Alhamdulillah, I performed the Haj in 1980, when I was working at King Khalid Military City (KKMC) in the remote desert of northeast Saudi Arabia. Four buses came down from Turkey to pick up the workers who were making the pilgrimage, comprising 60 Turks, 60 Bangladeshis, ten Thais, and myself.

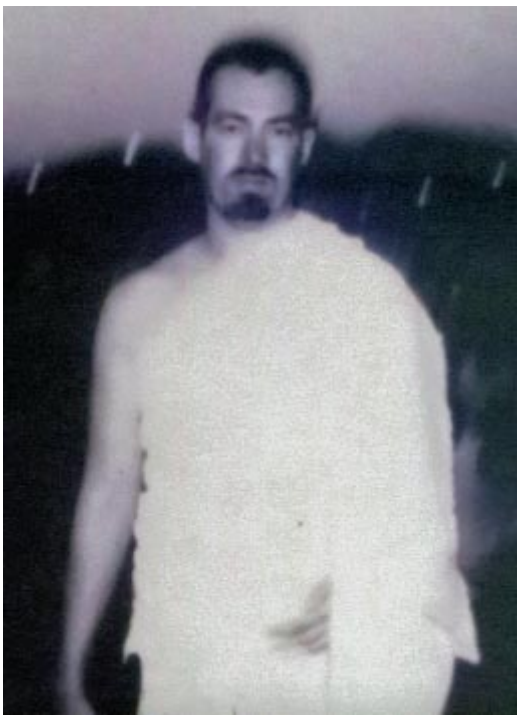
We set out in the evening, and just before dawn were stopped and searched for arms. (We were coming from the general direction of Iran, and this was the year after some disturbances at Mecca.) At dawn we arrived at the town of Buraidah, and 100 hajis descended on a small mosque for the dawn prayer.

All morning we drove westwards, the desert tableland of Nejd gradually giving way to the innumerable sawtooth hills of Hejaz, part of the mountainous belt that extends from Yemen to Syria and contains the holy lands of three religions. Winding down to Medina, which, although dominated by mountains to the west, lies on a level site, we left the buses in the bus park, and caught local minibuses to the Prophet's Mosque.

The Mosque in Medina, enclosing the Prophet's Tomb, is a noble, serene structure dating from the Turkish occupation where, after praying, we rested and drank water sold by Arab boys, who carry the water in huge jugs strapped to their bags, and serve it by dipping their shoulders forward.

But it was here that I first encountered the physical violence of the Haj. The Saudi belong to the puritan Wahabi sect, and frown on such practices as kissing the Prophet's Tomb. Fierce old Bedouin of the Saudi! religious Police guarded the tomb, whipping off kissing pilgrims, while yelling "Haram! Haram!" (in this sense "forbidden, proscribed"). Something else amazed me.

Next to the Prophet's Tomb is an empty space, which awaits, I was told, Jesus after his second mission. (Muslims, like Christians, believe Jesus will come again.)



Dahlan Cartwright in pilgrim garb..

After visiting the graves of the Prophet's companions, we returned to the bus park and set off that night for Mecca.

At Mecca

Mecca, unlike Medina, is built on hills and valleys, and in this sense reminded me of a Welsh mining town. All roads lead to the "Haram" (here meaning "Sanctuary"). We parked the bus in the Turkish bus park and set out for the Haram on foot.

The Haram consists of a vast mosque, in the centre of which is an open space surrounding the Kaaba. When I first saw the Kaaba and the pilgrims circling it, I thought, if any place was the centre of the world, this must be it. Muslim tradition holds that there are seven Meccas, one above the other.

If you imagine a record player, with the central spindle linking all seven Meccas, this is one way of picturing it. Perhaps it needs a physicist to conceive of the pivotal force of a place receiving so much continuous wave energy from people bowing in prayer from all over the world, plus the con- >

tinual circling, which only stops five times a day for prayer in Mecca itself.

This prayer time in Mecca during the Haj forms a remarkable visual pattern, best seen in aerial photos, as the whole city prays, radiating out from the Haram into the alleys and valleys in a kind of spidery Catherine wheel.

But what struck me as we plunged into the throng to begin the prescribed seven times circling, were more mundane sensations, like all those discarded toothpicks under my bare feet. Around the Kaaba itself, the Saudi guards, as in Medina, were attempting to whip off those pilgrims who were kissing the Kaaba itself (except for the Black Stone, which is permissible and desirable to kiss, but not obligatory).

Pilgrims usually perform the Haj in groups under a leader, who leads the recitation of the special prayers required at different stages of the Haj. Because of the congestion and risk of separation, these groups often link up like a conga or locomotion dance.

As you circle the Kaaba in an anticlockwise direction, you are being buffeted from the right from these groups, trying to reach a more inner lane, or making a run for the Black Stone. One of these lanes in reserved for disabled pilgrims, who are carried at shoulder height on wooden litters, and these you have to watch out for.

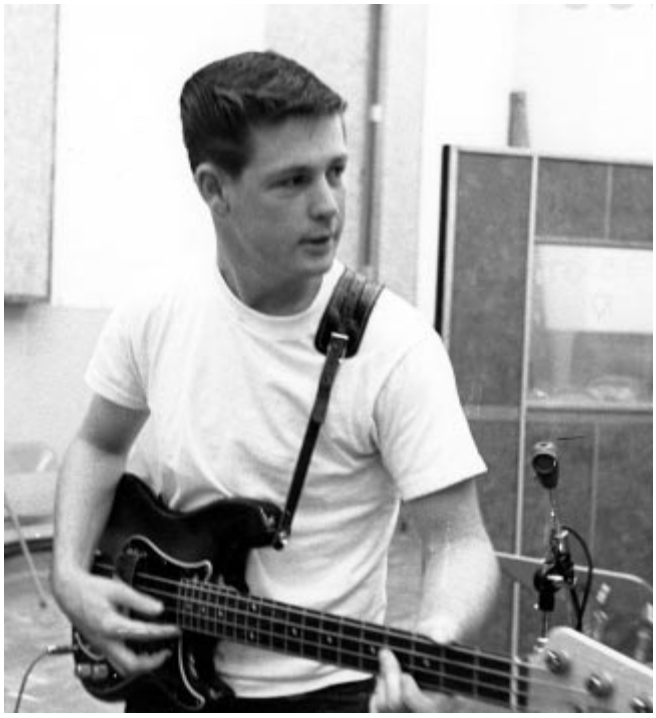
On the whole, some of the big African pilgrims seem to enjoy the pushing and shoving, and apparently the local Mecca tearaways see it as an annual sport. On the other hand, the smaller, politer Malays and Indonesians are at a disadvantage.

Click here to read the full article: https://subudvoice.net/wp-content/uploads/HAJ.pdf

Brian Wilson and Subud

Memories of the Co-Founder and Leader of the Beach Boys

By Matthew M. Clark, a Subud member...



Brian Wilson's Legacy

Brian Douglas Wilson (June 20, 1942 – June 11, 2025), recently passed away. He was an American musician, songwriter, singer, and record producer who co-founded the Beach Boys.

Often called a genius for his novel approaches to pop composition and mastery of recording techniques, he is widely acknowledged as one of the most innovative and significant songwriters of the 20th century.

His best-known work is distinguished for its high production values, complex harmonies and orchestrations, vocal layering and introspective or ingenious themes.

He was also known for his versatile head voice and falsetto, which diminished after the 1970s.

Brian Wilson's direct involvement Subud was fleeting, but there can be no doubt that his music was, in many ways, deeply spiritual, if not divinely inspired.

Whether or not his experience with the Latihan of Subud contributed to his artistic direction is known only to the One Almighty, but of this there should be no doubt: Wilson's spiritual quest took him down a rare path and helped him create some of the most beautiful and touching music of a generation.

God bless you Brian. Thank you for your songs in the soundtrack of our lives. May you now sing with the Angels.

To read Matthew Clarke's complete monograph on Brian Wilson, click here
https://subudvoice.net/wp-content/uploads/wilson.pdf

Remembering Bapak

Along with many other groups and gatherings around the world we celebrated Bapak's birthday on June 22 in the North Coast Subud group in Australia. We gathered at the house of Mursalin and Mariani New which had been decorated in Indonesian style with Indonesian music playing. There was a wonderful lunch of Indonesian style food including chicken satay.

There was a wonderful happy feeling amongst us all. Mariani is our chairperson and she read a statement by Ibu Rahayu about how we should remember Bapak on his birthday along with all the other Subud members who have passed on to the hereafter.

In Australia it was the winter solstice and we gathered around the fire.

When I came home, there was a photograph of Bapak in my emails, sent by Sahlan Simon Cherpitel, that well-known photographer of Bapak.

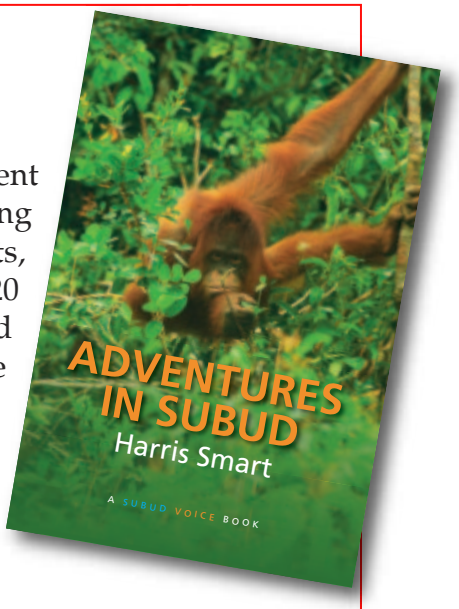
Bapak in Vancouver 1981, by Sahlan Simon Cherpitel.

Winter solstice fire.

Will the Circle be unbroken....

Harry Armytage on satay duty.

Adventures in Subud



A book by Harris Smart presenting an overview of the development of Subud covering practically every aspect of Subud life including spiritual experiences, enterprises, welfare projects, cultural projects, health and healing and youth. The book is 360 pages long with 120 illustrations including photographs and cartoons. It shows Subud as a dynamic movement combining spirituality and action in the world.

"A feast of a book... a masterful and at times heart-wrenching record of our Subud experience... replete with hope and disappointment, revelation and joy."
...Dr Livingston Armytage

"A book that will open doors to enquirers about Subud and is a major contribution to our knowledge about Subud and its positive impact on the world."*...Valentine Navey*

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Articles should be written in such a way that they are intelligible and interesting to both Subud members and the general public. Sometimes this means providing an explanatory introduction or notes for the non-Subud reader. There is no payment for submissions. Correspondence about articles will generally not be entered into.

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