



MY PERSONAL INTRODUCTION TO A SPIRITUAL PATH – SUBUD by Sharif Horthy

In October 2000, Sharif Horthy, long time Subud member and translator of talks for Bapak (founder of Subud) gave a talk to the public in Los Angeles. This booklet is a slightly revised version of that talk. It is intended to be used for outreach.

The booklet was created by a small team of American Subud members, working with Sharif Horthy. Our intention is to make it as readily available as possible. National committees from all Subud countries are welcome to contact Subud USA regarding translating it and re-printing it themselves. Copies can be purchased from Subud USA as well. Quantity discount prices are available: talk to us! Profits if any will be used to translate the booklet into other languages.

"Every person will find for himself or herself the right way towards God, and what may be the right way for one may be completely wrong for another. Therefore, you must discover your own self, and develop your inner self, if you want to find the way to God. You must not follow or imitate anyone else."

- Bapak Mhs. S.
Sumohadiwidjojo,
Founder of Subud



A Brief Biography of the Author of This Talk, Sharif I. Horthy

Sharif I. Horthy was born in Budapest, Hungary in 1941. He studies physics at Oxford and civil engineering at Imperial College, London. In his mid-twenties he moved to Indonesia, where he worked as a consulting engineer and ran a construction company. In his spare time he was a personal assistant and interpreter to Bapak Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, the founder of Subud. After 22 years in Indonesia, he moved to the U.S.A. and then to England, where he manages the Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace. Sharif lives in Lewes, East Sussex with his Javanese second wife, Tuti, with whom he is gradually translating Bapak Subuh's works into English. The last time he checked he had five children and eleven grandchildren.

In October 2000, Sharif Horthy, long time Subud member and translator of talks for Bapak (founder of Subud) gave a talk to the public in Los Angeles. The following is a slightly revised version of that talk. Special thanks to Lorenzo Music for arranging the event.

[Mr. Horthy speaks:]

Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming. This is a very rare event. We were trying to figure out when the last time was, in the United States, that somebody talked about Subud to the public. And we figure it might be as long as 45 years ago. So, even if you end up not liking what I'm going to say, at least you will have the feeling that you have been at a very historic event.

What I want to do sounds very simple. I want to try and explain what

Subud is and what it has meant to me for the forty or so years I have been in it. I want to make it as understandable as possible. But we are talking about an experience that is kind of unique. It is one that those of you who have not joined Subud would not have had, as far as I know. So it is not that easy to talk about. Maybe one of the reasons we don't talk about it very much is that we have been told not to proselytize or try to pressure people into joining Subud. But another reason is that it is not that easy to talk about.

What I want to start with is to say that Subud is completely open. It is open to anybody. There are no secrets in it. So, if you are not getting what I am saying, it is because I am not good at explaining it. It's not because it is either complicated or secret. We are going to have questions and answers afterwards and I want you to be very, very relaxed about asking anything that is not clear. There are no "wrong" questions. In other words, it is supposed to be explainable and it is supposed to be clear, so please remember that if you are not getting it, it is probably my inability to convey it. And I'm also talking a different language of course, because I grew up in England, and there is that problem. What I am saying is, please be brave and just ask about anything that is not clear.

What I am going to do is, in just a few words, explain what Subud is and then I am going to tell you a bit about how I got involved in it. That will give you a sense of what it feels like to approach Subud and join it. And then I will give you a little bit of a rundown on how it started and the history of where it comes from, and, if there is time, I will talk a little bit about what Subud members do and what we believe and things like that. And then there will be a short test, which you can uh . . . No, just kidding, I think then we will just open it up for question and answers. I can see the audience is heavily laced with Subud members, so I'll probably ask some of them to come up and help, and join me in answering your questions. And maybe tell us about some of their experiences.

So, what is Subud? Subud is a direct, personal experience of a higher power in our lives, as an everyday reality. I know that this is kind of a difficult concept for some people, because for some people who are religious, a higher power is God and something you only talk about in church. And for others, it is something they do not really understand, and they may not believe in it.

But, as I said, Subud is an experience, so we do not go into all that stuff. We don't have to figure out what it is. It is very different from

the kind of spiritual movements, which start off with a teaching, and there are zillions, or at least many, many, of them. You first are taught what is a human being, and what is the soul, and what is God, and what are the *chakras*, and so on. Then you practice certain exercises you have learned, and you have a teacher, and then you are supposed to arrive at certain experiences.

Subud is absolutely not like that, because there is no intellectual effort up front. You don't learn anything. What happens is that a contact with an energy, or a power, is passed on from one person to another. So a person who has received this, and has practiced it, is somehow able to pass on this contact to someone near him or her. The only requirements for this seem to be, one: that they sincerely wish to receive it, and two: that they are next to somebody in whom this is already working.

So, it is a bit like - if I take an analogy from physics - you have a piece of iron and you have a magnet, and if you put them next to each other, the piece of iron becomes magnetized. Before that, if you hang the iron on a piece of string, it just goes round and round; but once it has been next to this magnet, it will align itself with the earth's magnetic field. So, something has happened to that iron, because it can now pick up a force field that was there all the time but before, couldn't be felt. So it is kind of like that, but as you know, analogies can be limiting, so you can just forget it.

But that is sort of how it works-it is something that is passed on. And this thing that is passed on is an experience that you have yourself. It is personal. Nobody tells you what to do or how to receive it. You just receive it. And most of us who have been in Subud a long time have already passed this on to many people. The process is very straightforward and I will describe it later, but none of us know precisely why it works. All we know is that when somebody is near us and we both surrender, meaning we just let go, they somehow get to receive this experience that we received before them. They get to feel the same thing. I am going to try and explain what that feels like, although it is different for everyone. But that is the reality of Subud.

It is very clear then, that Subud is not a cult, where you have a teacher . . . because there is no teacher. And it is not a religion because there is no creed, you are not told to believe anything. It is really an experience. But, although Subud is not a religion, it has a strong connection with religious experience. Actually I believe it is what is at the core of every religion. The reality is, if you dig into any

religion, whether it is Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism or others, you find that the people who started the religion had an experience of a direct action, of something that did not come from their own will. It is like a power was involved that seems to have an intelligence that is beyond the human. Some people have called that God, or Allah, or the Great Life Force, or whatever you like.

In Subud we don't say you have to believe in that. We say, "You can try it - if you want to experience that, we can connect you with that experience." And because there is not a teaching in Subud, it does not take you away from your religion. So if you are a Jew, or a Muslim or a Christian, you can go on practicing your religion. And, since you now have an inner experience that corresponds to what is taught in religion, it gives your religion a new dimension. It becomes more real, instead of just a lot of words.

That was my experience. People come into Subud who believe in God and have a religion; people come in who do not. People sometimes become religious when they are in Subud, some do not. Some people change religion when they are in Subud; that happened to me. And all this comes about through an inner development. The other dimension of Subud is that once you receive this experience, it triggers a whole process of inner growth. And, again, it is not something that comes from a teacher. You do have a teacher in Subud, but the teacher is inside you. You begin to recognize that there is a teacher inside you who can actually guide you in your life-which is different from everyone else's life. It guides you according to your own nature.

Subud is this individual experience. Subud is also the description of an organization that supports people who do this. It is a service organization. It is international and now spans about 80 countries. The purpose of the organization is to provide places where people can practice Subud and also to support members in bringing this experience into their life, whether through their enterprise or their work or through social work or cultural expression or any other means.

The organization itself is rather horizontal. To give you an example: although Lorenzo described me as the head of the international Subud organization - I do this for four years, and then somebody else does it - it is not a post that carries great power and influence in the world. I basically work with a council of people from all over the world representing the zones in countries which have Subud members. And I can never get them to do what I want and it is rather a hard job. So Subud is not one of those pyramid things where there is a big

organization and you have to do what you are told. It is very bottom up and quite democratic - more of an anarchist, minimalist organization. That is Subud in a nutshell.

Now I will tell you a little bit about how I got involved in it. In many ways I had a very ordinary childhood. I was an only child but I was lucky to grow up in a very loving family. We started out in Hungary, went through the war, and ended up in Germany, survived a Nazi prison, and then lived in Portugal and England and so forth. But, basically I had a normal, uninteresting childhood.

Well, it felt normal. But the thing that perhaps was not normal was that, at the age of eight, I had an unusual experience. I was walking home from school one day through this beautiful park in Portugal near where we lived, walking through lots of flowers and so on. At a certain moment I 'came to' - it was like a kind of awakening. In that instant I realized a whole lot of things. I realized first of all that I had been asleep, or rather - since I was a child who liked going to the movies, the way I conceived the experience was - I had been in a black and white world. I had been living and walking around in a black and white world and now suddenly I had woken up and the world was Technicolor.

And then I realized not only had I come to, but I'd had this Technicolor experience before, that this was how I lived when I was much younger. I had memories going back to the age of two or three when we were still in Hungary and I was aware that when I was at that age, my whole life was Technicolor. That is, my life was very real, and I was right there living it. Somehow this had evaporated and my life was not real anymore, as though there was now some kind of cotton wool [thread] separating me from the reality of the world around me. This realization was accompanied by a great feeling of loss and sadness, as though I had lost something very precious.

In that instant I became a seeker, though of course at the age of eight I didn't express it to myself in those words. I knew I was looking for something - I was trying to find out how to hang on to that experience. A few years later, when I was still reading comics about Bugs Bunny and Donald Duck and so on, I also started reading other things. Being an only child I read a lot. I started ordering books on science and philosophy through the mail, not really finding anything that grabbed me. Finally I came across a book by a follower of the Russian-Greek teacher Gurdjieff. He was from the Caucasus and his philosophy was, I think, based on teachings he got from a Sufi school

way out in the East somewhere.

Gurdjieff explained human life in terms of human consciousness. He suggested that human beings are really asleep; that we essentially spend our lives imagining that we are awake, making decisions and running our life, but actually we are just behaving mechanically, in a state of semi-sleep. We have the illusion of being free will but actually we are being moved around by forces we are unaware of. The key to becoming human was waking up. In other words, human consciousness could be developed. And this really grabbed me because it seemed to explain the experience I'd had. I got genuinely interested in this man's teaching. I read book after book, because he seemed to give clues about how to do this.

At twelve, I was sent to a boarding school in the north of Scotland, and I took advantage of life at school to do these funny exercises, like fasting and not sleeping, trying to do things consciously, counting backwards while going to sleep ... I mean lots of different things. I think I was very lucky because I was at an open, permissive kind of school where weirdos were tolerated, so I got away with it. But what I concluded was that none of this seemed to work. I still believed the diagnosis, but the cure wasn't working.

It was only when I was about sixteen that I discovered there were still groups following Gurdjieff's teaching, although he himself had died. I decided to go and find one of these groups. And I did. It happened to be the one where the founder of Subud had just been invited. He was invited by one of the leading people in the Gurdjieff work who had found that, without Gurdjieff there "to urge them on," the group was making only limited progress. They were basically giving up. According to what this particular leader told us, when Gurdjieff lay dying a few years earlier, he had warned him that this would happen. Gurdjieff had told him to "look for someone who is preparing himself in the Dutch East Indies who will take you to a higher level." So, with his "antenna" out looking for something new, he heard about this man who was the founder of Subud and invited him over to England.

He had just been and gone when I got to Coombe Springs, the headquarters of this group. Within a few months of him being there, a big crowd of these Gurdjieff types had gone through this Subud experience. Overnight many of them abandoned the Gurdjieff work - not the philosophy, but the techniques - and they were practicing Subud.

Gurdjieff was a kind of straight, up-and-down-the-line kind of guy, one that European intellectuals could relate to, but I wasn't sure about Eastern gurus, so I had misgivings at first. This sounded a little weird. But what they told me piqued my interest, because they said that, in Subud, you simply surrender and receive a contact with a life force that fills the whole universe, including human beings, and that this life force is actually the power of God. It is not just a force; it is an intelligent power that can guide you to your own individual truth. They said that this process will go on inside of you, and that all you have to do is just ask to receive this, and it can be passed on to you. And then what you do is you practice it. You do it twice a week for half an hour and that gives enough time for it to work inside you. Little by little it will become part of your life. So I said, "Okay, I would like to receive this," and I was told to wait a week or two to sort of acclimate myself.

While waiting, I had an interesting experience. I was living in Coombe Springs and I heard what we call the practice of the Subud "latihan". Latihan is an Indonesian word meaning training - that's all it means. But in England, calling it "training" could be confusing because that evokes the idea of a teacher and a set of exercises, etc., so we just call it "the latihan". The first time I heard the latihan, it was like the sound of lots and lots of people singing and shouting and making a good deal of noise. You might have thought that this would be off-putting or that I might think, "What is going on here?" but I had a strange inner feeling at that moment. It was almost like a voice in my head. The words were just suddenly there: "The thing you are looking for has to be like this. It can't be something polite, with people explaining things to you in an intellectual way."

So, I thought, okay, I'll have a go at this. This is the way I received it: one day I was asked to come in the evening. When I arrived - there were two or three other people who were also waiting to receive this contact - all we were told was take off anything that would stop us from moving freely. For example, if you have coins in your pocket, take them out, take your watch off, take your shoes off, and take your glasses off - so that you feel really free. The place where we did this was just a large open space with carpets, nothing else. Having done that, having prepared myself in that way, I (along with the others) was asked to stand up, close my eyes, and surrender - to follow whatever happened, not to try to do anything, but to just let go.

This was very difficult for me because I was rather an intellectual person and, when you tell a very intellectual person to stop thinking or to let go, they think even harder. They think, "How do I let go? How

do I stop thinking?" I got more and more frustrated, standing there with my eyes closed and lots of people around me singing and making noises and running around, and I thought, "I'm not going to get this, this isn't going to work. I'm just not able to let go." As I was going through this inner agonizing, I suddenly noticed that my hands had started floating up, like this, (demonstrates) towards the ceiling. And I thought, "What is this?" As soon as I thought "What is this?" they flopped down again. But the moment I just did nothing, they started moving up again of their own accord, as if somebody had picked them up and was moving them for me. Now this was really strange. Every time I stopped worrying about it, it would happen. So, the first latihan I did was spent with my eyes closed and my hands going up and then flopping down and going up and flopping down. I knew something was happening but, for the life of me, I didn't know what.

I was rather skeptical as a young man - probably rather unbearable - and I thought, well, this could be hypnotism, it could be people around me influencing me, it could be anything. But it was certainly something I had never experienced before. Then, in my second latihan, I had the experience that, for me, absolutely clinched what Subud was. I need to tell you this, not because you will also have that experience, but because then you will understand why I am still in Subud after 42 years.

What happened in my second latihan was that I immediately started moving, it wasn't anything to do with hands, or worrying about letting go, or that sort of thing. The moment I started I was spinning around like a top. I moved really quite violently and the movement was totally involuntary. I was also completely conscious - I wasn't in a trance or anything like that. I could observe it, and I could have stopped it if I wanted to. After about ten, fifteen minutes the spinning stopped and I was made to kneel on the floor. As I knelt, I suddenly became aware that I was back in my childhood, at an age of two or three, and I was in the place where we lived in Hungary. I was actually there, in our apartment. My mother was there; my governess was there. I noticed that I was in that state of vivid consciousness, exactly as when I was two. And as I realized this, again there was the voice that wasn't a voice, as if the words appeared in my brain. It said, "Is this what you wanted?"

For me this was extraordinary! First of all I myself had forgotten the experience I'd had at the age of eight, and secondly, I had never spoken about it to anyone else. So from these simple five words, I knew that the power behind Subud was an intelligence that knew me

much better than I knew myself, that it had been with me from the time I was born to the present, and that I just had not been aware of it.

I didn't need any more proof, but if I had needed it, it came a few weeks later. I of course had to go back to school - as I said, I was at this boarding school in the north of Scotland, a few hundred miles from the nearest Subud member. Before I left Coombe I had talked to the helpers - that is what we call the people who pass on this contact - and I asked them, "What should I do when I go back to school? Should I practice this the way you do here, half an hour, twice a week?" They said, "No it's better not to because you haven't been doing it very long and you might not be able to stop it. You might get scared, or people might see you and think you're crazy and then you could get worried. So it would be better not to do latihan at school. Come back and continue with it on your summer holidays."

I went back to school. One day, only two or three days after getting back to school, I was reading a book and suddenly I could feel this inner movement. I thought, "Now what? Do I follow this or not?" Luckily, as a prefect I had my own room, and I decided, "Okay I'll just do it." I locked my door and I followed the latihan. It stopped after about forty minutes and it was gone. Then I knew for sure that it was inside me and not an influence from someone else. I was not getting it because I was with other people. It was like a switch had been turned on. Something inside me had made me able to have access to this force, power, whatever it was. So I went on doing the latihan, and I went back to Coombe Springs, and the rest is basically that I never, never stopped doing the latihan. I do it whenever I have the opportunity, usually twice a week, maybe three times a week, sometimes every day.

Why I do that is ... it is not a practice like being a member of a religion where you go to church and you think, okay, I'll give it an hour because it is my job as a Christian to go to church. I do it because for me the latihan is a time when I am in touch with my real self. I believe now, from my experience in Subud, that there is such a thing as a human soul. And I believe that each of us has a human soul. But for many of us it is completely dormant because there are other souls as well - I will talk about that in a minute. What I think happens in the latihan is that the half hour of being in the room, either alone or with other people, of closing your eyes and completely letting go and letting this power work in us, is analogous to letting your soul breathe. It is giving time for your own real self to come out of the dark room that

you have kept it in and actually be in contact with your body, with this world, with your everyday experience.

The thing that I was told in the beginning, at my introduction to it, really did happen for me. Little by little this power or this feeling of the latihan, where you are moved by something that is you and yet it is not you - it is a deeper you - this became an experience that started to pervade my life. In other words, it was not only in those half hour sessions that I would feel the inner movement. It would come at any time: when I was working, when I was thinking, when I was writing, when I was eating, when I was making love, whenever. You don't know why it begins. It just does. It is always from beyond your own will; it is not something you can force. But you can also bring it on yourself by being quiet ... you let yourself get quiet and then it comes.

That has been my experience. And more and more as I go on I have realized that inside me there are two people. There is the old me, this person who was born a long time ago, grew up, developed a personality with good and bad habits, and an ego that wants this and wants that. And then there is another "I" that is really from another world and doesn't care unduly about any of this stuff here. It seems mostly to be looking after me, making sure I don't do anything stupid that would damage my possibility for surviving this world and going on into the next one.

It is very important to emphasize that I am convinced that this experience, which I call the experience of the latihan, is something that is not bound to this world. When I die, I will be just as alive as I am right here and now, through the vehicle of the latihan. In some way, the latihan experience is really separate from this world. I know this is probably a little difficult to believe - the great thing about Subud is you don't have to believe any of this stuff. I am just telling you how it seems to me. If you decide to try it, you will experience it in a completely different way from me - it will then be your own truth, not mine.

What I want to do now is to very briefly explain how Subud started. Earlier I mentioned the founder of Subud, Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwijoyo, who was born in 1901 in the city of Semarang in Java. We call him Bapak, which just means father, but in Indonesia it also has a meaning similar to Mister, Everybody is called Bapak, so this is not intended as a sign of undue reverence, as if he is our guru or something. It is just a respectful name, and it is easier to pronounce than the other one.

He received this gift when he was 24, at a time when he was not looking for a spiritual path. He had had some rather unusual inner experiences before that age, which you can read in his autobiography. As a result of these experiences, for a rime he looked for a spiritual teacher who could explain to him about the meaning of life. But he had given up on all that. He had decided he wasn't going to get anything from the many mystical teachers who could be found in Central Java in those days. He decided to become an accountant. He was working by day as a bookkeeper, and studying at night. He wasn't married yet and was living with his mother.

At about midnight he would usually stop studying and go for a walk before turning in. On this particular night he went for a walk. It was pitch dark, but as he was walking along not far from his home, everything around him turned suddenly light. He looked up and saw what he thought was the sun in the sky above him. As he looked, he realized that it was a ball of fire and it was falling to earth, towards where he was standing. It fell on top of him, and he experienced it entering into his body through his head. His whole body began to shake and he thought he was going to die. He thought he was having a heart attack. He stumbled home. His mother opened the door, and said, "You look rather pale, are you all right?" He could only say, "Yes, I am okay." He went to his room, lay down on his bed and prepared to die.

But he did not die. I will try to describe what happened, the way he described it to us. For a few seconds, he had the strange experience of seeing inside his whole body, which was full of light. Then that went away and, as he was lying down, his body started to move by itself, as if somebody were lifting him up into a sitting position. He sat up on his bed and was made to walk like a puppet to his study, where he had been working earlier. It was as if he was being moved by another person while he just observed. When he got to his study, his body performed the movements of the Muslim prayer. The familiar pattern, you go down like this, then you go down on your knees and come up again and so on. He did this without any words, entirely moved by an invisible force. Finally he was taken back to his bed and he went to sleep.

The next night it happened again. And then it happened every night. This was really the first experience of the latihan, as we know it. According to Bapak's story it worked in him every night for a thousand nights. He practically didn't sleep for a thousand nights. The

experience got deeper and deeper and it changed from the movements of prayer to dancing, followed by a series of inner experiences, where he felt how it was to be a material thing, he experienced what it feels like to be a plant, what it feels like to be an animal, what it feels like to be a human being. And then, he was shown things about the universe. It was as if he was given a spiritual guided tour of life in the universe.

Certainly, all this totally changed him. After those thousand days, he was a completely different person from what he was before. But he wasn't very happy. He never wanted to be different from other people, so I think at one point he prayed to God, saying, "Look, God, if this is just for me, I really don't want it. I just want to be a normal person."

A few years later, about eight or nine years after the latihan began, he had an experience where he received a better understanding of his mission. He was taken out of this world and was told, "Yes, this thing, this contact you received, is not just for you. You can pass it on to other people. And not only that, they can pass it on to other people, like a chain reaction." That was the beginning of the spread of the latihan.

He was also told he should not look for followers, but just pass it on to anyone who asked him. And so he did that. At first it was just his close friends who had noticed that he was different. They said, "What's up with you?" He said, "Well there is this thing I do, you see, and if you want it, you can have it." Little by little it grew, so that by the end of the World War II there were a few hundred people practicing this. One day they all met and said, "Look, we ought to call ourselves something." They all sat around to determine what to call it. In fact they were able to choose the name using the latihan. They tried to receive, through the latihan, what the name should be. They got the name Subud. That is how Subud began.

And then in the early fifties, when Indonesia had just become free, a young Muslim of Syrian descent who spoke many languages came to Indonesia. He was called Husein Rofé. Because he had an interest in mystical movements, one of his language students introduced him to Bapak. He received the latihan and quite quickly realised that it was something new and unique. He had become acquainted with lots of mystical teachings and different kinds of Sufism and so on, but he had never encountered anything that was so real. He started writing articles about it. The Gurdjieff people in Europe picked it up and invited first him, and then Bapak, to England. That is how it started outside Indonesia. So now you have the whole story.

There is one more thing I would like to talk about, and that is what else Bapak brought us. He spent the rest of his life, not so much passing on the latihan - we all did that, as I said, whoever got the latihan and practiced it was eventually able to pass it on - but what Bapak went on doing, was to go around the world explaining what the latihan was. And, in a way, to me his explanations seem as important as the experience itself. That is why I want to spend just five minutes on that.

Actually I am a little nervous doing this, because the truth is, he never spoke about these things to anyone who hadn't first received the experience. There was even a sort of dictum that he coined when he came to the West, "Experience first, explanations afterwards." I only recently came to understand that if he had talked about these things to people who had not done the latihan, it would be as if he were teaching. It would be Bapak telling everybody, "This is how the world is," and immediately Subud would become a reaching, not an individual and personal experience.

What he was in fact giving people who had received the latihan was a kind of road map. He was saying, "This is what the latihan is about and this is the meaning of the experiences you are having, so you may better understand what is happening and where you are heading." And I can tell you, such understanding can be very useful. As you have probably gathered by now, this experience does not come from your own will, rather, it happens to you. You are being cleaned out and changed inside. That can be wonderful and it can also be scary and unsettling, so understanding what is going on can make all the difference.

Basically what he said was that, while we live in this material world, we see material things-tables, chairs, electrical conduit boxes, etc., everything that is material. These material things are actually alive; there is a movement or vibration in them that is alive. If they were not alive, they wouldn't exist. So, Bapak had a sort of quantum-mechanical view of the material world.

Then he said there is a higher world, the vegetable world. He said that is not the material world, but a world inhabited by vegetable essences. In the vegetable world these essences appear as plants, but we also have them inside of us. When we eat a potato, the potato essence in us and the potato essence in the potato meet at that moment, resulting in the delight we feel when we eat. It is the nice feeling when you eat something that tastes good. And he said that meeting is very

important because, it is at that moment, we are enabling these vegetable essences to meet their destiny. The same with the animals. Eating a plant or an animal should be an act of worship or a sacrament, not just an act of consumption.

And then there is the human world where we basically interact through sex. And there are worlds that are higher still, worlds which are independent of this world. Bapak explained that the latihan came from a universal power created by God to enable essences at each level to connect with and ascend to higher worlds. So for us, the latihan is our link with where we originally came from, and takes us back to God.

I found these explanations very interesting. I was born in Hungary in the middle of the Second World War. Although I was small during the war, I still remember that time, that atmosphere. As we know, it was a time where apparently highly civilized people were performing acts of barbarity that we still have not come to terms with. As a young man, I realized that, from time to time, cultured and educated human beings can behave in ways that are barbaric and evil but I could not understand why. With Bapak's explanations I began to understand that there is no such thing as evil. What there is, is things out of place. You can have a material, vegetable or animal soul in charge within people whose human soul is dormant or unconscious. What motivates the actions of such people are these inferior selves.

The soul is what is powering you, what is alive in you. But it may not be human - it could be material, it could be vegetable, it could be animal. If, for example, a person is capable of exterminating other people because he believes that will somehow make the world a neater place, it means that the soul in him or her is a material one, because a material thing feels nothing. A material thing is totally without feeling or morality, or even any awareness that there are other living things. Therefore, it is clear that a person like that-it is not that they are "evil"-is just doing what their true nature, the thing that motivates them, wants to do. And what is wrong is that that thing, that motivating force, is out of place. A material soul has taken possession of a human body.

Because in our culture we have learned only to look at what we see with our eyes, we do not see that. We only see the results in the way the world is. The same is true of the vegetable forces. They have certain characteristics, as have the animal forces, and so forth. What the process of the latihan does is to awaken the human soul and gradually introduce it to all these other things inside us, so that it can

eventually take charge. It is like the householder who has been locked in the cellar while the cats and the dogs have been running the house. One day the door is opened and the householder emerges from the cellar and, of course, at first, feels really strange. But little by little he takes charge of all the things in the house, and eventually tidies up the house, puts the dog in the dog house where it is useful for scaring off intruders, and puts the cat in charge of catching mice and so on.

So, that is a part of the big picture that Bapak gave us. As I said, it is not a teaching, it is an explanation or a roadmap for what we experience in the latihan.

I think I have covered everything that can be said about Subud that could make sense to anyone who has not done it.

Transcription from recorded L.A., California talk in October of 2000, courtesy of Rosana Schutte and Sierra Goodale.

SUBUD is an international association of men and women who experience being in touch with one's true self and real humanness through deep worship of God. The name, SUBLJD, is derived from three Sanskrit words which together mean a willingness to put into daily practice that which is received from God.

SUBUD embraces all religions, all races, and all cultures. Although it is based on a spiritual experience, it is not a religion or religious sect. SUBUD has no specific teaching, dogma or creed. Members belong to all religions and spiritual paths and many find their beliefs strengthened by the SUBUD experience.

SUBUD groups are in eighty countries, with over 10,000 members worldwide. As an outer expression of the aims of SUBUD, members participate in humanitarian and cultural projects, and activities for youth and families.

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