

WHAT IS SUBUD

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The word 'SUBUD' is an acronym for the Sanskrit words 'Susila', 'Budhi' and 'Dharma'. The three words together may be translated to mean 'right living following the inner self of man'. Subud is not a new religion. It is a spiritual movement started in Indonesia in the 1930s by a Javanese Muslim Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjono (1901 - 1987). The followers of Subud address the founder as 'Bapak', an Indonesian word that translates literally as 'father' but is used as a manner of address to any elderly male. The basis of Subud is the practice of the 'latihan kedjiwaan' or spiritual exercise of Subud. Hussein Rofe, an English Jewish Muslim convert, arrived in Indonesia in 1950 in his search for a spiritual master. He came to hear about Subud and eventually became the first Westerner to be opened in Subud. In 1954 he visited Hong Kong and Japan. He started the first Subud group in Japan, the first outside of Indonesia. He then started a group in Hong Kong, then Cyprus. It is to the credit of Hussein Rofe that Subud was introduced to the West. At present, there are international Subud centers in most countries in the world, the notable exceptions being China, Taiwan and South Korea.

Bapak described how he came to receive the latihan kedjiwaan of Subud. In 1925 - as a young man of 24 - he was having a late night walk about the neighborhood near a construction site. Suddenly, a very bright ball of fire appeared above him in the sky and it descended and enveloped him. Very quickly, he headed home and laid down in his bed, probably expecting to die; he did not die. Instead he was made to rise and go to his study room, did the Muslim prayer ritual and then was made to return to bed. He was surprised at what happened as it happened without his intention; there was an inner force which led him do what he did. Bapak described how for the next thousand nights, such involuntary exercises would come to him. They may come as physical movements, dances, speaking in different tongues or singing in hymns and others.

Bapak later received that what he received is to be made available to anyone who ask to receive it. Bapak explained that the Subud exercise is firstly a spiritual purification, but a process that comes directly from the power of God free of the will or intent of man. In Subud, the direction or path of purification may not be easily understood by the person undergoing the process. Traditionally in the past, the method

of man towards spiritual progress is through an effort of the will, usually accompanied by some forms of ascetic practices; the practitioner too usually has an aim that he works towards. In the case of the Subud latihan, a person has no particular spiritual result towards which he aims for - except 'right living' in accord with the true self of man. Bapak explained that man in general cannot aim to purify his inner-self through his own will power; the will of man comes from the lower forces of life and man will not be able to achieve such spiritual progress through will power. Only the power of God may purify the inner-self of man in order that he could finally live rightly in accord to his true self.

Purification is a necessary step towards the advancement of the inner-self of man, towards the soul following its true destiny according to the Will of God. Spiritual purification generally brings about marked changes in a person, especially in his habits and physical health. In the course of spiritual purification, the person may sometimes receive 'spiritual' experiences. There was even a story of how one person - for a period of time - began to understand the speech of fowls. So he bought some chickens and have them running about his place. To while away time, he would just sit around and listen in to the fowl talks. A friend of his found out and asked: "What do the chickens usually talk about?". He answered: "It is food and sex and sex and food".

Bapak explained that the latihan kedjiwaan is an exercise that comes as a result of a person's willing to surrender to God - surrendering his heart and mind. In a state of surrender, the person would receive a vibration of the power of God within his being; it is this direct contact with the power of God that cause the inner movement giving rise to the outer observable manifestation of the latihan kedjiwaan. Bapak at times did compare Subud to the receiving of the Holy Spirit as with the early Christians. Bapak said the coming of Subud fits the present time as man cannot nowadays believe in God. Man's mind has become very strong and it is usually a very strong mind that cuts off a man's willingness to surrender to God. Bapak said that mankind today may only be brought back to God only through evidence - words alone would be of little help. The Subud latihan is the evidence that God has given to mankind that He exists. In the present age - especially in our internet age - there is never any lacking of talks and teachings. You could easily find people all over the world giving talks about how God exists and why man should believe, etc. But because of the very strong mind of man, explanations through words alone seems insufficient to convince the more cerebral among men about the existence of God. If a man is willing, he could receive and experience the working of the power of God within his being - the very evidence that the power of God exists.

After Bapak received his thousand nights of training, he was able to pass the exercise to others who are willing to receive it. The only precondition is that a person is willing to surrender to God. There is something called the 'opening' in Subud; it is the initiation of a person into Subud. After the opening, a member would join the group latihan which consists of a half-hourly session, twice a week done in an empty room. Men and women exercise separately. After a person has been opened in Subud, a person too may be able to pass on the Subud contact to others - that is, to initiate others into the Subud latihan. Though any Subud member may open others, it is not done this way. In the early days, Bapak would appoint some members as helpers and the opening would be initiated through these helpers. Nowadays - as Bapak has left the world - helpers are appointed in some manner by the international Subud organization.

Although Subud has spread to most countries of the world, it is still a relatively small and unknown movement. Bapak did not allow proselytizing. We could only talk about Subud to people who are willing to listen or when people themselves come to ask for explanations about Subud. Hopefully, if more people in the world practice the Subud latihan, it may bring down the heat within men which is the real cause of the very many problems currently facing mankind.

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