

# DEEP AND NARROW OR WIDE AND SHALLOW

## *SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF SUDARTO*

By Harris Smart

*Some memories of Sudarto based on visits to him, and an interview with him...*

In Christmas of 1974 I went to Cilandak for the first time. I did not know what to expect. The only person who had ever been able to give me any sort of a coherent account of Cilandak was a friend who had been there a few years before.

She told me that there was a great big duck pond in the middle of the compound and that her principal occupation the whole time she was there was to try and stop a crazy woman from flinging herself naked into the duck pond.

By the time I arrived the duck pond was no longer there, but in some other respects the experience was no less strange than what my friend has reported.

I was in a very bad way when I went to Cilandak. I was a wreck. My wife had left me in July of that year taking our baby daughter to another country. I was still madly in love with them both and yearned to be reunited with them.

Some time I must write a full account of my first visit to Cilandak. It was beautiful, spiritual, a profound and often disturbing confrontation with self. It was also joy, anguish, loneliness, excruciating boredom and the human comedy writ large. Yes, some time I must write it in full, but for the moment I will concentrate on my contact with Mas Sudarto Martohudojo, who was of course one of Bapak's most respected and best-loved helpers...



*Harris and his niece, Hope*

There were few guests staying in the compound at that time and, as I say, much of the time I was desperately lonely, friendless, at a loose end and bored.

The Indonesians seemed inaccessible. The expatriate permanent residents were sometimes kind and hospitable, but often remote. I can understand now why this should be so. They had their own lives to get on with and could not be blamed for putting some distance between themselves and the dreaded "guests" constantly arriving with new bouts of purification to be endured.

But at the time I felt very outcast and unworthy. I remember at one point cutting someone's grass with hedge clippers, and being grateful for the opportunity because it gave me something to do, made me feel useful.

At the same time I was raw and inwardly bleeding from the loss of wife and child.

I kept wanting to escape the unutterable boredom of the compound, to go to Bali, or explore Java, but I knew this would be the wrong thing to do. I knew I had to stay in Cilandak and live through whatever had to be lived through.

### **Visiting Sudarto**

About the only diversion in the compound was visiting Mas Sudarto. I learned that in the evening, if Sudarto's door was open, you could go and visit him. If his door was not open, you should not.

On the nights when he was receiving visitors, you went in and he would usually be sitting there watching TV. In those days the Jakarta TV was execrable, the treat of the night being some ancient black and white American detective series, Kojak perhaps would have been a highlight. Black and white Mickey Mouse cartoons were also a high point of the week.

Sudarto motioned you to a chair and you sat there watching the TV. Perhaps some other lost souls – it was almost always men who visited Sudarto – would enter and tentatively occupy other chairs. Sudarto was always most hospitable, offering cool drinks and kretek cigarettes which he himself also smoked.

At some point the TV would be turned off and we would sit quietly for a while and then a “session” might begin, perhaps with Sudarto leading off, perhaps with one of the visitors asking a question.

It was well-known of course that two of Sudarto's specialties were sex and telling you what animal you were, the latter topic in particular always being a source of great sport and amusement.

Sudarto's house provided entertainment and diversion, but also of course much more. There was spiritual insight, comfort and succor for the walking wounded. There was warmth, friendliness, tolerance, total acceptance and love.

### **The Roof Leaks**

Sudarto lived in a very old house. The roof was caving in. When it rained, water poured through the roof. Servants would come running with plastic buckets and receptacles of all colors and sizes and place them under the rushing water. Sudarto continued watching TV, or talking, or answering questions, or whatever, quite unperturbed.

(Later of course Sudarto got a new house, one of a three in a row with Bapak's other helpers, Prio and Brodjo.)

### **Sudarto's advice on marriage**

“You must understand the sacramental meaning of marriage which is not only here” – he points to his groin

– “but which is also here.”

An upraised forearm ending in a clenched fist.

“You must be strong. When you come, you are like an open door. If the man comes first, the woman enters into him, but if the woman comes first, the woman will enter him.”

(A woman I told this to asked, “But what if you both come together?”)

I Can't Go In

On one night, Sudarto's door is open, but I can't go in. I feel an invisible hand pushing me away.

Later on the verandah, I meet David and Hanafi. They have had precisely the same experience.

“You too?”

“You too?”

“You too?”

You had to ration your visits to Sudarto. No matter how much you might want to, you knew you could not go there every night.

### **The Heirlooms**

One night at Sudarto's place after the TV, there is a lull in the conversation. Sudarto asks if we would like to see his family “heirlooms”.

He asks this as a polite and delicate inquiry, as if offering us a chance to refuse if we might wish to. As if he would not be at all offended if we replied, “No, not really, we have no interest in seeing your silly old heirlooms.”

Of course, we are spiritual and emotional paupers. We are the walking wounded. We are stripped and shriv- en. We are grateful even to be allowed into his door, much less to see his heirlooms. Still, he gives us the opportunity to refuse. He assumes nothing.

He shows us a beautifully carved keris and also a little glass jug, frosted and with gold decorations, which his grandfather would take, full of refreshment, when he went to visit the Sultan of Jogjakarta.

### **Deep and Narrow or Broad and Shallow**

A man named John arrived at the compound, a quiet, shy, sensitive fellow, obviously “going through some- thing”, another lost soul.

After a few days we get to know each other and he confides to me that he has come to Cilandak to change

his name. He swears me to secrecy. He is tremendously excited and expectant about the forthcoming change.

He writes a letter to Bapak.

A few days later, he gets a new name, "Herbert". Somehow the word gets around, and everyone comes up to congratulate him. But he sits on the verandah plunged in despair. He hates his new name. He loathes the name "Herbert" above all other names on earth.

I ask him, "Did you submit a list of names to Bapak?"

"Yes."

"Did you have Herbert on it?"

"Yes."

"Why did you put it on if you hate it so much?"

"I don't know, I don't know," he moans. "I thought I should."

"Was there a name you wanted?"

"Yes, I wanted Harvey. Harvey is such a strong, masculine name. It would've made me strong and masculine."

"Did you have it on your list?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. It was only when I got Herbert that I realised how much I wanted Harvey."

He manages to endure his new name for a day and then he goes to see Sudarto and says he is certain his new name is not right for him and he wants to ask Bapak for another name.

Sudarto ponders the matter and says: "What it comes down to is this. You can have a name which is deep and narrow or a name which is broad and shallow."

Neither of these options seems entirely satisfactory, and it is not clear which name corresponds to which category. Besides, Herbert would like to have a name which is both deep and broad. But finally he accepts Sudarto's advice that the important thing is the initial, and that if he likes the name Harvey he should just go ahead and call himself that, and it is not really necessary to bother Bapak about it.

Harvey sits on the verandah, exuding strength and masculinity, accepting our congratulations.

### **He Looks Different**

One night there is a selamatan, Sudarto looks different, handsome, distinguished. What is it? He wears a suit, his hair is brushed, yes, but something more. Ah, I know, he has his teeth in.

### **Interpreting a Dream**

One morning I had a powerful dream.

It came at dawn which is said to be the time that “true” dreams come.

In the first part of the dream I entered a basement under Bapak's house. I took off my watch, glasses and shoes as if preparing for latihan. I went inside the room and it filled up with water so I could not breathe. I was drowning.

In the second part of the dream I was flying above a road over a car which I knew contained my wife and child. I thought, I am going to join my wife and child in California.

I went to ask Sudarto to interpret the dream. I wanted to believe that it was a dream that augured well for reunion with my wife.

Sudarto explained various details in the dream to me. He explained, for example, that air represents the mind, whereas water is the feelings. So the dream shows my mind being overwhelmed by feeling.

I could tell that Sudarto did not think the dream necessarily meant I would be reunited with my wife and child, and while it is true that I later went to California to be with them, we were separated forever, not reconciled.

Sudarto, I think, was always very kind and generally preferred to give you the support of a good feeling rather than confront you with an unpleasant truth which might only serve to depress you with no positive outcome.

I remember reading later that Sudarto advised a helper that the most important thing about testing, is not necessarily to answer someone's question, which may be impossible or inappropriate anyway, but at least to send them away with a good feeling, at least send them away feeling better than when they came.

How many testing sessions have there been when the person was sent away feeling worse than when they had come?

### **That's a Pity**

The day I was leaving Cilandak, I went to see Sudarto in his office to say goodbye.

I said, “Well, Sudarto, I'm going tonight. I just came to say goodbye and to thank you for all the help you've given me while I was here.”

He looked at me and pursed his lips, “Ooh, that's a pity. That's a pity.”

I wondered why he said that. Perhaps Bapak was going to give a talk tonight, a special talk, in which the secret of the universe would be revealed for me alone. And because I was going, I would miss it.

“Why, Sudarto, what do you mean? Why is it a pity I am going tonight?”

“Just that it is a pity for anyone to be leaving Cilandak.”

### **The Queen of the South Sea**

Although I went back to Cilandak many times subsequently, I never spent so much time with Sudarto again. Partly this was because I never again had such a huge aching need, and partly because in later years Sudarto was not quite so accessible. It was said that he had been advised by Bapak to “cool it”. Perhaps there were people who became too dependent on his advice, or elevated him into a guru figure.

Still, he was always a presence in Cilandak and I remember one or two meetings with him. I remember how once he told the story of his meetings with that Javanese supernatural figure, the Queen of the South Seas.

She had first come to him when he had only been doing the latihan for a little while and her manner was very arrogant and overbearing. (He would demonstrate this, standing with his hands on his hips in a very fierce posture.) On successive visits her manner became less haughty until finally she made an obeisance to Sudarto. The point of the story was of course how his inner had grown over the years of doing the latihan so that he had risen from being below her, to being equal with her, to finally being above her.

Another time we were talking about enterprises and someone asked if it was good to pray for the success of an enterprise. Sudarto's reply was that if you prayed for the success of enterprises, you became good at praying, not necessarily good at enterprise.

One thing that Sudarto represented for me was the way the ancient traditions of Java were still there, easily touched beneath the modern skin of Jakarta. Sudarto was from Jogjakarta and imbued with the religious and cultural traditions of that city. He was one of the people who enabled me to see that just beneath the modern skin of Jakarta – the western clothes, the office blocks, the traffic fumes – was another world, a quite other spirituality.

Another image I have of Sudarto in these later years is of him going off to work outside the compound carrying his briefcase.

In 1984 I began to write a book about Subud based on interviews that I did with many people about their experiences. Towards the end of this period, Sudarto was kind enough to let me interview him, although he had been through a period of illness and was still not completely strong.

Although he spoke good English, with characteristic humility and modesty, he asked that Sofyan Brugger be present to help with the translation and perhaps to provide moral support. I was impressed by how care-

fully and seriously Sudarto answered my questions.

He was a wonderful man. To me a model of courtesy, kindness, affection and good humour. I felt he “did not have a mean bone in his body”. I felt he accepted everyone, was wise, and the exemplar of “lightness”.

### **The Interview**

*This is what he told me in the interview...*

I was born on January 29th, 1917. I am sixty-nine now and next year I'll be seventy. I was born in Jogja. Both my parents came from Jogja and my father was the regent (Bupati) of one of the districts there. I was educated at a Dutch school, and then a national school and then I worked as a teacher.

I was opened in August 1934, when I was sixteen, still a schoolboy. When Bapak received the golden umbrella, it was witnessed by five people and Bapak sent one of them to Jogja to spread Subud. The latihan place was near my house and I used to hear the noises of the latihan. A helper called me and said: “Don't be disturbed. If you like to join us, come tomorrow at four o' clock.”

After that I joined them for latihan twice a week. I began to have many experiences. For instance, I was sitting in my room and I saw creatures running from here to there. I asked the helpers about it, but they could never answer my questions. Only when I met Bapak were my questions answered. Bapak was kind enough to help me personally.

After I'd been in Subud for four years, I went to Semarang to see Bapak. By this time I was a teacher and I went in the school holidays. I was able to stay at my aunt's place and she was a very good friend of Bapak's.

People would gather three times a week at Bapak's house to do latihan. Sometimes I saw creatures, sometimes I saw light.

One night in Jogja, some years later, Bapak suggested we should do latihan at midnight, not in the room, but outside in the garden. I saw a big dog, as big as a cow, and when I told this to Bapak, he said: “Oh, you are very lucky because a dog means faithfulness and you have this quality. You will follow Subud faithfully.” It must be true because here I am still in Subud.

In the early days, the latihan was different from what it is now. At one time, when people did latihan their hearts stopped beating and their breathing stopped. Many people who saw this left Subud because they were afraid of dying. Bapak saw that that way was not the right way.

Later, as well as the latihan, Bapak added explanations. Later again, when Bapak moved to Jakarta which is a very intellectual town where everyone wants to know “why” all the time, he added testing. So now we had latihan, explanation and testing. Then people wanted to know what they should “do” and Bapak added enterprise. So now we have latihan, explanation, testing and enterprise.

### **Subud Was More Spiritual Than It Is Now**

Formerly, Subud was more in the spiritual than it is now. This is because at the time I joined things were much more stable economically than they are now. Now the economic situation is so bad we have to think about enterprises as well.

When Bapak came to Jogja from Semarang, the war was going on between the Dutch and the Nationalists. It was dangerous and Bapak had to walk with his family through the woods because the roads were full of armies.

On the way, he had some adventures. For instance, he met a man in the forest who offered him hospitality. It turned out that this man was a robber chief. The police could never find his hide-out because you had to walk for a kilometer through the river to get to it. Perhaps if you'd had a helicopter, you could have seen it.

When I met Bapak, he hadn't yet married for the second time. He told me that he needed to marry again for the well-being of his children and he showed me a picture of his future wife. She was very beautiful and later they married.

### **Bapak's Approach to Business**

In Jogja, Bapak did various kinds of business, trading in things. Once it was some diamonds, once it was a horse. Whenever Bapak did business, everyone was happy. Bapak made a profit, but also the buyer felt very satisfied with the price. If a buyer was forced to sell because he needed money, Bapak would give him more than what he'd asked for. That is the Subud way of doing business.

Then Bapak worked as the treasurer for an Islamic political party. While he was treasurer, a lot of money came in and they were able to do many things. But then Bapak received that he should work full-time for God and he gave up his employment. Then people used to bring him whatever he needed, food and so on.

During the struggle for independence all the schools closed and I was no longer able to work as a teacher, so I moved to Jogja and worked first for the government of Jogja and then became deputy head of a big printing business. Bapak also suggested I should join the army and I worked in the press and publicity division. I was in Jogja when Subud was officially registered as an organization. I helped to draw up the principles for the constitution.

Later Bapak moved to Jakarta and he asked me to come there too. I worked as a small contractor and built thirty houses and some warehouses. I was very flexible with regard to work. If you have been trained as a teacher, you can do many things. You know how to organize and to get on with people.

In Jogja Bapak had often said that God would give us a piece of land. There would be a nice latihan hall and Bapak would say: "Yes, Darto, I have seen your house." When we moved to Jakarta, it all came true and we bought this land in Cilandak in 1957.

### **Impossible to hate**

I worked in the spiritual sekretariat, answering members' questions. I continued to have many experiences. I wrote some articles about them for the Subud publications, some thirty or thirty-five articles. But later

Bapak told me stop, as it might be dangerous for people not in Subud to read these things.

I'll give you an example of one of the things I wrote about. At one time it seemed that everyone hated me. Everywhere I went, everyone hated me. It seemed that even my own mother disliked me.

I asked Bapak why this was. He told me to check it for myself with testing. I found that impurities were leaving my heart. Formerly they were still at one with my heart, but now they were separating. It was only a process, but while it was happening people were aware of the impurities and disliked me. Since that time I've found it impossible to hate anyone.

### **You Will Die at 24**

Before I joined Subud, my mother had been told by a fortune-teller that I would die at the age of twenty-four. When I reached that age, my parents were very sad, expecting me to die. One night I did my latihan at home and dreamed that I was dead. The fortune-teller was right, but only in the dream.

Bapak said that if I hadn't joined Subud, maybe the fortune-teller would have been right, but because I had followed the latihan faithfully and sincerely in submitting to God, my being and fate had changed.

Bapak said once that it would be difficult for Subud until the year 2000. Now we are surrounded by the satanic, but after 2000, the atmosphere will change. He received in a vision that God will purify the world until that time. That is why we have so many earthquakes, storms and typhoons. But after 2000 it will be very good for Subud because the protection around Subud will open up. At the moment, Subud is enclosed within a protection. Now it is a very good time for us to worship God because there are so many temptations around us.

### **The Conditions of Marriage**

At the sekretariat I used to answer many letters from members about the relationships between husbands and wives. I wrote an article about the four states of marriage to keep people from writing so many questions. The first condition of marriage is from heart to heart. This is on the material level. In order for there to be harmony, the partners must help each other, advise each other and love each other.

Later the condition will become deeper, feeling to feeling. This is on the level of the plant. And what is the nature of the plant? The nature of the plant is egotistical. Because plants can't move, if there are two plants in the same place, they will compete for the food and light until one overcomes the other. If the nature of love is still at this level, you have to calculate not what you want, but what you both want, and if there is a child, what all three want. It must envelop all three.

And now, from inner feeling to inner feeling. This has to do with the animal level. The characteristic of the animal level is having a purpose or goal. For instance, God has blessed the deer with little feet so that it can run quickly away from tigers. When you reach this level, you must work together on a common ideal until your egotism goes away.

If later you reach the level of soul to soul – the human level – your idea will be her idea, and her will will be your will.

### **Too Small to Do It**

Once Bapak went away and he ordered me to answer all the letters. I was surprised that I could answer many letters quickly and directly. What needed to be said came straight into my mind. I knew that this ability was not mine. I thought it must be Bapak in me. When he came back, I was pleased to give this task back to him. I knew that I was too small to do it. I was sick for three weeks afterwards, completely exhausted.

One time when we were still in Jogja, Bapak was kind enough to call Ratu Kidul, the Queen of the South Sea. Bapak asked how was her attitude towards me. She stood with her arms folded very fierce and arrogant. Bapak said: "Careful, Mas Darto, she is very powerful." Two or three years later, he called her again, and she went down on her knee to me, showing respect. The third time she sat down, and the fourth time, she kissed my feet. Bapak said: "Now you can go to Jakarta. You are strong enough."

### **Spiritual Experiences**

In Jakarta there were many temptations, but I was above them. In those days I saw many things. Once during the night, I saw four coffins passing by in the air. The next day I learned that four people had died in a neighbouring kampong.

The day before yesterday a Subud member came to me crying because his father who is from Solo was sick. He asked me to help him. When I quietened myself, I saw pictures of the father surrounded by creatures. This fulfilled what Bapak has said that, if you want to assist a sick person, you have to wait until you can clearly see the creatures who bring the illness. If you can see them clearly, the creatures will leave.

Before I was married, I had many experiences. After my marriage, it was as if my spiritual life disappeared. I asked Bapak why this was so. Bapak said: "Formerly, you could do many things, but you were still alone. After marriage there is a place in your heart for the inner self of your wife. You are not just a man and a woman, you become one. While you are by yourself, you cannot really say you are spiritual."

### **My Son Has a Higher Nature than Me**

God blessed me with a son who has a higher inner nature than my own. When I was in union with my wife, I felt myself lifted up beyond my own nature. Then I was returned to my own self. And so it was with my second child, third child and so on. My children will be like a ladder for me to climb higher.

Two or three times women Subud members have told me they dreamed of having intercourse with me. Bapak told me: "This happened because she was active in Subud, but her husband was not yet active. You were used by God. Later the husband will also be lifted." Of course, this only happened in a dream, not in reality.

A few years ago Bapak called me to his office and said: "You have served Bapak for eight years in Jogja and twenty-seven years in Jakarta, a total of thirty-five years, and Bapak feels it is enough and now Bapak will give you a pension."

But now I find I must go out to work again. I got sick when I stopped working because my mind which was formerly active had nothing to do. So now I go out to work to keep my mind active.

## **The Meaning of Your Name**

What is your name? Harris? This name belongs to a man who likes to stand on his own two feet. You are not easily influenced by your family and friends. You don't like to take orders, unless you can see they are logical and right and then you will take them. This is a characteristic of all the names beginning with "H".

## **Sudarto's Writings**

Although Sudarto is no longer with us, we still have our memories of him and we also have the series of articles he wrote about his experiences in early editions of *Pewarta*..

I think these articles were controversial at the time, with some people feeling they should not be published because they smacked of "magic". If I remember correctly, John Bennett, or some figure in authority, had to publish a letter (quoting Bapak) justifying Sudarto's writings.

It is true, of course, that you could take Sudarto's writings the wrong way, become intoxicated by the marvelous spiritual experiences he tells, or begin to long for similar experiences too much.

But for me these writings have always inspiring. I find it good to read of others' special experiences. It amplifies my understanding of the latihan and of what happens to other people. Surely the experiences and insights that Sudarto describes are signs of one kind of development along the spiritual path? Certainly we should not yearn too much for the same experiences. Our way may be quite different, but hearing of these experiences can also be inspiring and encouraging. They can also be a clue as to where we should look in our own lives for our own "proofs of the latihan".

There are of course marvelous experiences such as his description of sex with his wife: "All about us, everywhere we looked, we saw various kinds of flowers which gave a very fragrant smell, and the stars seemed to be very close to us."

## **An Expert on Sex**

Sudarto was regarded as an "expert on sex" and many people consulted him about it. There are many references to sex in his writing. He provided a good example of the spiritual awareness of the sacred nature of sex, while being able to talk about it in a perfectly frank, uncomplicated and good-humored way.

What impresses me about Sudarto is the way he unites the spiritual and the practical. People often think of the spiritual as being airy-fairy and remote from the practicalities of everyday life. Sudarto shows there is no separation. His story about the man who came to him for advice because he could not satisfy his wife is practical on the most basic level. Surely what Sudarto discovered through his testing is the same as what modern physicians call the "G-spot". (The term "G-Spot" was coined in 1981, based on the work of the German gynecologist Ernst Gräfenberg.)

## **The Secrets of Sex**

Somewhere in one of his talks Bapak says the purpose of Subud is to unite heaven and hell.

I guess that is another way of saying the purpose is to unite the spiritual and the material.

I guess that is another way of saying that, on the one hand, Subud takes us into the loftiest spiritual realms, and at the same time it is concerned with the most practical minutiae of how we live our lives right now in this material realm: including those areas of life sometimes considered taboo, private or secret.

As is well-known, Bapak had several helpers who particularly assisted him with his work in Cilandak. There were three in particular whom many consulted when they went to Cilandak: Prio, Brodjo and Sudarto.

Each had his own particular area of expertise. It is well known that one of Sudarto's areas of expertise was sex and many people went to talk to him about sex.

In the 1960s, Sudarto wrote down several of his experiences in the *Pewarta* and these were subsequently collected and published in a most valuable little book by Solihin Garrard in 1997. (Bapak asked Sudarto to record the experiences for the benefit of Subud members.)

There are many extraordinary, wonderful and instructive experiences in this book, notable particularly for the way they span the most subtle spiritual dimensions to the earthbound practical minutiae. It is perhaps this embrace of the “sublime to the ridiculous” which more than any other characteristic defines the particular nature of Subud spiritual experience.

(I am reminded in this context of an experience Bapak records amongst the many sublime wonders of his “thousand nights”. He recalls how he was confronted by a vast ocean which he then swallowed. He belched and the “belch smelled of sea water”. It is that funny little detail which confirms the authenticity of the experience to me.)

### **The G-spot Experience**

It is perhaps worthwhile to quote in full Sudarto's experience printed in (*Pewarta*, Vol. 3 5-6, July 1963.)

I was sitting by myself in our little garden, enjoying the rather cool late afternoon. It was pleasant and quiet. Suddenly I felt as if I was being tickled from inside. As usual, whenever something like this happens, I went into my room to allow and follow whatever was happening inside. Once I was in the room, the tickling became more intense and I could not prevent myself laughing and giggling. Hearing this, my wife entered the room and, apparently affected by the funny atmosphere, asked laughingly, "What's the matter, dear? Laughing all by yourself?" Still giggling I tried to explain to her that I was being tickled from inside. She reminded me of Bapak's advice that when something was happening to your inner feelings, you should follow it so that in the end its meaning would be indicated to you.

This funny feeling was still with me when I heard some people approach the house on bicycles. I left the room to meet them. They were two Subud members one of whom was only recently opened. I asked them to sit down. Strangely enough as soon as I sat with them, the tickling immediately disappeared and instead, then arose a feeling of sexual satisfaction. I had no idea what it meant, nor did I try to understand. I just entertained the visitors normally.

The member who had been in Subud for some time explained what they had come for. His friend, the

younger member, wanted some advice. After this introduction, he asked his friend to speak for himself. This friend gave some account of his relationship with his wife and finally said: "Actually, brother, being a man, I am very ashamed of myself, because my wife said that Sate Blora tasted better than to sleep with me." (Sate Blora is well-known in Djakarta. It is roasted meat on skewers sold on the side of the road in the open. It is delicious and connoisseurs take great delight in eating it). He paused for a while and then continued. "I would like some advice about the best course to follow so that I can save my manhood."

Based on my own experiences I advised him first to follow the latihan kejiwaan of Subud sincerely and patiently as the best. In the meanwhile I did some testing. I felt and saw in the test as if I was at the entrance of a cave, holding a stick. A little way inside the cave, right on top, I saw a waterfall. I tried to penetrate with my stick into all parts of the walls inside the cave but there was no flow of water as I felt I expected. Finally the waterfall itself became the target of my stick and with it there was a strong flow of water accompanied by a feeling as if sexually satisfied.

I told the friend quite plainly what I had received in the testing. I was rather surprised to see that he obviously seemed to understand the meaning of what I had received. In his feelings he was himself witness to the testing. He said that the cave stood for the female sex organ, and the waterfall that was situated precisely on top of the inside of the cave symbolized the sensitive part of the organ. His interpretation was in accordance with my receiving and again I stressed to him such a condition could only be experienced when he was in a state of worshipping God, as in the latihan. The visitors left. I was alone. My thoughts tried to analyze what I had just received, and caused me to ask myself whether it was really correct. But as soon as I asked this, I felt myself overcome by the latihan which caused my thoughts to stop. In my heart I could only thank God for the indications that He had given me.

A few days later the young man came again. He looked very happy. "Your theory is correct, brother," he said. "This is the proof." He raised his left arm to show it to me. "It was bitten by my wife," he explained. Hearing this, my wife, who happened to be there with me, invited him to sit down, and then she left.

He continued, "Since that night, brother, the atmosphere in the house has become quiet and harmonious. Whereas before, I seemed to be uncared for, and there was always tension in the house, now I have a delicious breakfast before leaving for the office."

We both became silent. The result of the testing made us more sincere in our worship of God, and when the visitor had left, I again felt within, gratitude to Him, as due to His guidance, a family had become harmonious and united.

### **Ahead of His Time**

Of course, what Sudarto had discovered spontaneously through his receiving in the latihan is what is these days known as the G-spot, that particularly sensitive point in the female anatomy the location of which is precisely indicated in Sudarto's symbol – "the cave stood for the female sex organ, and the waterfall that was situated precisely on top of the inside of the cave symbolized the sensitive part of the organ" – and which if correctly stimulated produces the most satisfying results for all concerned.

Now perhaps the G-spot may have been known about before, and named in scientific circles, but to the

best of my recollection it was not until the 1970s that it became generally known and talked about.

Through his receiving, Sudarto was ahead of his time, defining something useful to mankind (possibly even more useful to womankind). Because in all literature, even in erotic texts and sex manuals like the Kama Sutra, is there any other reference of this phenomenon until magazines like Cosmopolitan etc. got hold of it in the 1970s?

All this, I think, an excellent example of the sublimity, practicality and efficacy of the latihan. Just as Bapak said – useful things will be found through the latihan.

### **In My Own Life**

That most touching of Sudarto's stories, the one I always remember, is how for a whole year everyone hated him, even his wife, even his own mother.

In difficult times in my own life when I have felt unloved, outcast or hardly done by, it has been a great comfort for me to remember this story of Sudarto's. If this man who was the soul of gentleness, kindness and humility had to go through such an experience, then surely I can go on, bearing whatever small cross it is that I have to carry.

Mas Sudarto died in 1993.



# MAS SUDARTO ANSWERS SOME BIG QUESTIONS

## *AN INTERVIEW WITH MAS SUDARTO*

By Ilaina Lennard

Whilst I was in Cilandak some time ago I visited Mas Sudarto Martohudojo, who for many years worked in the Secretariat, answering hundreds of questions from Subud members all over the world.

Mas Darto is now dead. When I visited him he was already old and frail. Nevertheless his door was always open, which at Cilandak indicates that the owner of the house is 'at home' to visitors. You could see from the lush little garden that Mas Darto and his wife loved plants; and birds chattered away from perches near the door. You entered, and there he was on the sofa. I felt my face melt into the widest of smiles. Very soon a cup of fragrant jasmine tea appeared for me and my translator, which was Rachman Mitchell and later Halim Wheelton.

My mind was full of 'western' questions, though it seemed almost rude to trouble an old man with my curiosity, and I didn't always get a straight answer.

I told him that in England, many people thought that the celebrating of the Thousand Days after Bapak's death held great significance. Did Mas Darto think so?

He said smilingly that it just made him feel "more sure" in his worship of God. And he explained a little more about what the Javanese believe happens to a person's soul, after he dies:

For the first three days the soul hovers between the grave and its old home. Between the third and seventh day it wanders a little further to include family and neighbours, and on the seventh day for the first time, the person becomes aware that he has died. On the fortieth day the awareness of its new form of existence becomes wider, and at this time the family prays that the soul find its right way in the hereafter. At the end of one year they pray for the soul to go on, away from its earthly existence. And by the Thousandth Day, if the soul is truly alive, as with someone who has received the latihan, it can see people both here and in the after-life. In Java selamatan are held on all the important days, and are also held for ancestors, as a prayer for their souls. Sudarto felt that gradually his latihan had widened to include his ancestors, so that through it he could help them to become free. "It's as if I can now touch them," he said. And added that maybe Bapak is now helping all of us with his latihan.

Could Bapak still reach us, even if we are only at the material level? Sudarto talked instead about how he understood Bapak to be, if seen from the level of the inner reality. Once in testing he had seen a very bright light and been told, "You have to go through this light." Seven times he had to pass through realms of ever greater light, till at the end he found himself asking "Oh God, where is the truth?" then he had seen Bapak

and been aware that Bapak is one with the Power of God. That was in 1971. Then Bapak told him not to test things like that!

Had Mas Darto 'seen' Bapak since he died?

Yes, he had tested whether it was permitted for him to see Bapak, and Bapak had appeared, and tapped him on the shoulder.

He remembered Bapak saying that when he died Subud would continue for 500 years until a time when mankind will be given a receiving that is even more simple.

I next asked Mas Darto a question that had long puzzled me: why had Bapak talked so little about environmental problems?

Mas Darto said that Bapak had warned that after he died there would be many natural disasters, volcanoes erupting, floods, storms and that he remembered Bapak saying that the soil itself would protest, would cry out, if people were not in harmony with it. The soil, explained Mas Darto, also worships God in its own way. But the vibrations of human beings are stronger than the vibrations of the molecules of matter, so they can affect matter in a beneficial way through the latihan. So the earth will respond if we have the right feeling towards it.

I said, "Extraordinary things have happened in the world since Bapak died – does Mas Darto feel there is any connection?"

"Yes, there is indeed a connection, if you have an awareness and understanding of the spiritual world. But there are answers for the heart and mind, and answers which can only be understood by the inner self."

Next I asked Mas Darto about his own life. This proved not so easy. He's very self-effacing, and seems more at home answering questions about spiritual matters. However, I did glean the following:

He had first heard about Bapak from those who in 1932 had witnessed the Golden Umbrella of light that appeared over Bapak's house. (Such people saw this golden light as a revelation from God descending on Bapak). From these witnesses Bapak chose his first helpers, and one living near Sudarto told him about the Golden Umbrella. Sudarto's uncle had followed the same guru as Bapak before he received the latihan. Then in 1934 Sudarto met Bapak, and although he was only sixteen, Bapak asked if he would like to be opened. But he didn't attend any Subud meetings till he was twenty.

Once, when he had been invited to stay at Bapak's house, Bapak told him that if he had any spiritual experiences, he was not to ask the local helpers in Jogja, but take them to Bapak himself. When he was about twenty-five Bapak tested whether the being who in Javanese tradition is called Queen of the South Seas was on a higher level than Sudarto? According to Bapak's receiving Sudarto was lower than she was, but after more years of latihan this changed, and she paid respect to him.

It was then that Bapak began to pass on some of people's questions for Sudarto to answer. Bapak also gave

him more time than others. He still worked for the government from 7.30 a.m. but afterwards he and Bapak would have lunch together. In 1955 Bapak asked him to leave his job and move to Jakarta. That was just before Subud spread to the West. Later, when Cilandak was built, Mas Darto moved into the house where he has lived ever since.

Then Sudarto fell silent, as if he had little more he wished to say about himself. Usually he said, people asked questions – such as “Where is the source of Subud?” or “What is the meaning of my name, what are my strengths and weaknesses?”

Others came to Sudarto saying, “Sudarto, I’m moving in the latihan, but I don’t feel anything.”

“That is because your feeling is not yet alive.”

Or they say, “In the latihan I feel things, but I don’t understand my feelings.”

“That is because your inner feeling is not yet alive”.

We cannot receive the latihan with our understanding until our understanding is itself alive, he said.

I only had one question left: the meaning of my name. Sudarto’s answer gave me an insight I shall always treasure. And I thought of the countless times people had sat in Sudarto’s little house and hungrily asked him their Big Question. And how gently and patiently he always tried to help them, if he could. Thank you, dear elder brother, for giving your life to us for so many years. I hope we never took you too much for granted.



*Mas Sudarto*

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