

Sumiko

The word “unique” is often overused these days to mean something like “rather special”, or “rather unusual”. What it actually means of course is “one of its kind”, “completely unlike anything else”. I believe the word “unique” can be legitimately applied to this story. I do not believe you will have ever read another story exactly like it.

We have published this story in Subud Voice previously but because we will now have many new readers, both Subud and non-Subud, we have decided to republish this extraordinary episode from a spiritual life.

It comes from Rozak Tatebe’s book, *Subud – a Spiritual Journey*. Rozak joined Subud in his native Japan in 1954, making him one of the very first people outside Indonesia to experience the latihan. He was instrumental in the establishment of Subud in Japan...

A YEAR PASSED and by the following autumn, Subud was well established. It was then that I noticed there was something unusual about one of the women who worked at the patent firm. Her name was Sumiko, and while she was much younger than me, she was my senior and it was she who trained me.

The unusual thing I noticed about her was that whenever we sat side-by-side to work, I would start to feel unusually calm. But this was no ordinary calm – this was a certain kind of calmness that I had, until then, only experienced in my latihan.

I wondered if this young woman possessed some special quality. This happened another two or three times and one evening, after my wife and child had gone to bed, I started doing my latihan.

Suddenly, I was made aware that there was someone beside me. I looked round and saw the semi-transparent figure of a woman kneeling with her hands clasped in prayer. It was Sumiko. Of course, it was not her actual body, but rather her astral body that I saw.

How could Sumiko’s astral body enter the latihan space when she was not even opened? And how could she appear in a posture of prayer as though she were doing latihan beside me? After a few minutes, the figure started to fade and then disappeared altogether.

The following evening, an even more surprising event occurred. When my wife was asleep, I again started doing latihan. After a while, a small sphere of light appeared in front of me. I instinctively knew that it was my soul.

Then suddenly, another sphere appeared a little distance away. It was slightly smaller and it was Sumiko’s soul. The edges of both spheres touched and then, like molten metal fusing, they merged into each other to form a pear shape.

At that moment, my mouth moved involuntarily and I found myself declaring, ‘Sumiko has now become my wife.’ The idea was inconceivable, yet at the same time, expressions of gratitude to the Almighty for this feeling of joy and happiness kept welling up inside me. These were like hymns for a marriage.

That was how this experience started. The content of my latihan was utterly transformed. As soon as I was in latihan, all that came out of my mouth were songs of joy and celebration for my marriage to Sumiko.

There was nothing I could do about it. But my inner self was filled with a latihan of praise for the marriage; whenever I walked the streets and there was no one about, I would just open my mouth and sing.

Feeling her Emotions

In my outer life, a new situation arose with Sumiko that corresponded to the events that had occurred in the latihan. The first thing was that I started to feel her emotions. It was as if there was no longer a Me/Other factor.

And when I finally stopped doubting that a shared emotional bond had actually come into existence between her and me, the idea that humans led an essentially lonely existence and that the Other is always the Other whose mind can never truly be understood, was completely quashed.

It was only I who was aware of this shared emotional bond. Sumiko knew nothing about it but for me it was a startling discovery. For example, if it were love that Sumiko felt for me, when that emotion was reproduced inside me, I would feel it as my love towards her. Or indeed, if it were hatred that Sumiko felt for me, then I would experience it as hatred towards her. ▶

This process brought to mind sayings like, 'To be loved by others, you must love others,' or, 'Everything returns to its source.'

This shared emotional bond became deeper and deeper as time went on. Sumiko was unaware of what was happening to me. I did not mention Subud or the latihan to her. This was because it was unlikely that anyone could have accepted my experiences – even I myself could not understand them. However, as time passed, Sumiko began to be attracted to me and then came to love me.

She told me about unusual experiences that she had had as a child. What she spoke about seemed to have some connection with what was happening to me. However, I felt I could not speak frankly to her. All I could do was wait until the latihan gave me the next step.

In the meantime, Sumiko's love for me grew stronger, and I started to experience other strange things. Once, I had gone to the café to have a coffee. Even though the café was spacious, it was to my surprise filled with the scent of flowers.



It smelled like roses and had a heavenly sweetness. I realized that the fragrance was because of Sumiko; she had become convinced of my love for her and this was the manifestation of her happiness. I was filled with joy, but as soon as I left the café, the fragrance disappeared. In this way, I discovered that emotions also had odours. This was later confirmed by other experiences.

All my senses were heightened around that time, and in particular, my sense of smell. I also had experiences of a different nature, such as when I heard Sumiko's voice even though she was in another place. The voice was not coming from anywhere around me but was audible inside me.

Sumiko called me two or three times. I don't know whether she was actually calling me, or calling me in her mind, but I could hear her voice quite clearly. It is actually a very strange feeling to hear the voice of another person inside your own body.

An Experience to Top All Others

And then, finally, I had an experience that was to top all the others so far. That day, I had used the director's chauffeur-driven car to go to a foreign embassy to have some papers approved. On my way back, I was sitting in the rear seat relaxing, when suddenly my body felt heavy and I was over-

come with exhaustion. My body was drained of all its strength so that I could not even lift a finger.

Then, my chest started to become bright as though lit up and Sumiko was inside. The feeling I had then was indescribable. It brought with it a sense of reality that was 10 or even 100 times more intense than the reality one feels towards the things of this world – an utterly heightened sense of existence.

Bapak characterizes a true spiritual experience as one where the sense of reality is 100 times stronger than normal. Once one experiences this overwhelming sense of reality, I do not believe there is anyone who would doubt the truth of that experience.

While the exhaustion had to some extent dissipated, the feeling of Sumiko's presence inside me continued until the car I was in reached the firm. I realised she would still be at the office. I was curious as to the difference between the Sumiko inside me and the Sumiko at the office. Which one was the real Sumiko?

When I arrived, she was talking to someone else but we exchanged a few simple words. This was actually very strange. The Sumiko inside me felt so real, it positively sparkled while the real Sumiko who was standing in front of me had a much fainter, shadowy presence. And she was clearly unaware that her real entity had detached itself and was actually inside me.

The Fateful Love

Sumiko knew nothing of the events I have described earlier, but it is not impossible that they did have an effect on her. The love she had for me became much more intense.

From a social point of view, her love was unforgivable. ▶ I had a wife and a child, and Sumiko had sensed from the very start that I had no intention to divorce. Despite this, she had decided she would give herself to me and she casually hinted at this.

At that time, we were talking together in a café. Without warning, I was suddenly filled with a burning love for her, and an unexpected thought welled up from my heart; I wouldn't care if I went to Hell as long as I could marry her. I was horror-stricken.

Until then, that thought had not crossed my mind. I had always thought that the whole purpose of human life was to remain focused on God and on Heaven, and to never desist from this no matter what happened. Nevertheless, I had had this thought in the core of my body.

Because of our shared emotional bond, I knew the source of my emotion came from Sumiko. But as soon as I felt it, I knew it was also my emotion and as such, was shocked at the intensity of it. The words, 'fateful love,' came to me.

A Fate that Transcended Will

Certainly, the love between Sumiko and me had been born when our souls were linked through a fate that transcended will. I realized that the kind of fateful love I thought existed only in novels – that feels beyond your power to stop even though you know it leads to your own destruction - truly could exist.

Despite this, I did not make any moves toward Sumiko. To be honest, this was not because I didn't want to marry her. Since our spiritual marriage had occurred, the idea of a marriage in this world was of course, a very attractive one.

But in order do that, I would have to either divorce my wife, or elope with Sumiko, or conduct an immoral affair in secret, none of which I was capable of doing.

My wife and I had fallen in love at work. We had gotten married around the time that I discovered the existence of Subud. Dr. Taniguchi had told me to stop Subud as it was dangerous, but I had continued to do the latihan.

I finally decided to marry my wife when I thought that even if I took the Subud path against Dr. Taniguchi's wishes, this young woman would still follow me.

And indeed, just before we got married, she did start doing the latihan and had continued to stay by my side without complaint, even after I had collapsed with TB, even after I refused to go back to my job at Kyobunsha because I wanted to re-establish the group, and even though we had no idea of how we were going to get by.

Like any ordinary couple we had our differences and our quarrels, and sometimes I felt awkwardness between us; but none of these had escalated into a major issue and my wife still trusted me. So I could not betray her, or divorce her.

And when I considered the effect such an action would have on the newly established Subud group and my responsibility towards its members, I could not behave in such a way that would draw social censure, no matter what the reason.

Hoping for Guidance

I was hoping for guidance from God. As I mentioned before, since I myself did not understand what was going on, I could not give any explanations to Sumiko, and so I took no action.

I hoped that the latihan would show me the next stage, and what I should do. Since it was through the latihan that this situation had arisen, I presumed that the latihan would also give me instructions. I waited and waited but my wish was not fulfilled.

I tested. I calmed my mind and asked sincerely. “Why has this happened? How should Sumiko and I be from now on? What is it that I am supposed to do?”

Instantly, the answer came tumbling out of my mouth. That was how I received answers at that time.

“The matter of Sumiko is in God’s hands. You cannot know yet what God’s will is for you.”

This answer was unexpected. While it was somewhat comforting to confirm that God’s will was involved, it was basically a denial of the question. Unlike tests I had done until then, I found myself back where I started and in a state of suspense.

The story of Sumiko will be concluded in the next issue. Rozak's excellent book, [Subud – A Spiritual Journey](#), is available from [Amazon.com](#) at US\$14.