Many years ago, a Subud member pointed out to me that the word religion comes from the Latin ‘religare’, meaning to re-connect. Assuming that is accurate, the word religion actually means re-connection, and we could hardly dispute that this is at the heart of Subud. This is not, however, a plea to call Subud a religion; far from it, that would only lead to confusion. Unfortunately, the understanding today is that religion is an organised group of people with a specific dogma based on something received by a prophet or the founder a long time ago. Granted, many religions, and I'll take Christianity as an example, did have a mystical experience that could be received by its followers – in this case, the receiving of the Holy Ghost, by which early Christians spoke in tongues, healed and so on – yet that experience seems to have become rarer over the centuries. Today it might seem impossible for us to conceive of Subud 'losing' the latihan, or that it could become diluted; yet, though we have received this most incredible of gifts, we still have it 'hidden under a bushel'. To quote an out-going chairman of Subud USA: "we treat Subud as if it were a small flame that we are gathered around to protect, instead of the force that it is, which creates and moves the stars, the universe and all that is in it." When will we feel ready to hold the light up high?

The religious people brought together at the World Conference of Religions for Peace are mostly full of goodwill and sincere intention, working on inter-religious dialogue from the grass root level all the way up to the corridors of power (among those key-note speakers present: HRH Prince El-Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, HE Mohammad Khatani, former President of Iran, Archbishop John Baptist Odama of Uganda, HE Mustafa Ceric, Reis-ul-ulema of Bosnia Herzegovina, Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, Katherine Marshall, Councillor to the President of the World Bank, Chief Rabbi David Rosen, HE Kjell Magne Bondevik, former Primer Minister of Norway, to name just a few).

As an association, I have to acknowledge that the WSA does not have very much to show in the way of larger joint efforts. As individuals, many Subud members express evidence of the fruits of the latihan in their life and in their work, yet how openly they speak about the connection is another matter. Joint endeavours seem to include, on the whole, two or three members working together; the number of projects involving a few more can probably be counted on one hand.

Organisations like the WCRP deserve our respect. They are trying to bring harmony and peaceful coexistence into the sphere of the many religions in the world – something which is extremely hard to achieve when considering the strong egos, self-interests and emotions involved – yet the effort is being made. Within Subud, in spite of this incredible gift we have received and share, we often have difficulty finding real harmony among ourselves. Either we sweep issues under the carpet or we have painful disputes, frequently over matters that are so insignificant when we look at the big picture, that we should really be stunned at our own behaviour. We are also, as a whole, not overly tolerant towards other spiritual movements - as though by speaking with them we could already be in danger of mixing -, and are often very dismissive of organised religion. One even hears
quite frequently that new members do not always feel fully welcome – especially if their life-style is a bit out of the norm. I feel it is time that each one of us takes a serious look at our behaviour and attitudes, especially if we would like Subud (I'm talking here of the association, not the latihan) to survive beyond the first generations.

Attending a conference like this one in Kyoto really brought home the scope of some of the major issues confronting humanity, and makes me wonder what the WSA's role or involvement might be. I have a sense that more and more Subud members do want to become involved, while acting from their inner guidance, rather than just the heart and mind. On the last day I managed to speak to one of the WCRP people directly involved in inviting us to participate. He told me that he thought it was important to involve 'spiritual' organisations that can bring another dimension to the sphere of organised religion. That is good to know. On the other hand, there was no opportunity within the very tight schedule to give any kind of in depth explanation about Subud, so our role, for the moment, remains passive. Of course, I mean passive on the outer. On the inner it is difficult to say. For example, by chance, all those Subud members still present on the last day (myself, Simon, Sharif and Tuti, Alexandra, and Patrice) found ourselves sitting together in the second row for the last plenary. This was the only time we actually all came together for any length of time. Then, unexpectedly, a major tension arose like nothing that had happened up till that moment. Without going into detail, I will say that it was one of those situations where, as a Subud member, one automatically tunes into the broader inner space, feels the movement of the latihan and prays that emotions might simmer down. Was it just coincidence that we were all sitting together when it happened? Who knows. However, when I think about the testing I did before going (very much the spiritual connection and little 'activity'), I have to conclude that our presence at these kind of events has, at this time at least, to do mainly with the inner, spiritual support.

Actually, I could probably write a few pages more on my various impressions and how they led to my examining the position of the WSA and how we interact with the world. I can't help but feel that we (and here I'm talking about the whole rather than individuals) are far from truly acknowledging and appreciating the gift of the latihan we have been given, and what incredible things could happen if we work jointly with a common intention and goal, in accordance with guidance received all together. We have become fearful of undertaking joint projects on a larger scale because we are afraid of what we think we might lose. I'm more concerned about what we might lose if we don't create situations to work together in the world. When we gather for meetings or other events, we quickly become aware of the amazing power that arises when we give it space and put aside our own individual agendas and self-interest; yet we don't carry it beyond into a real project. I can't help but believe that this was one of the main purposes behind Bapak's idea of enterprise. That they should become vessels for the power of God to act in the world.

Lots of love,
Osanna