

VISIT TO UK SOUTH WEST REGION

From the International helpers
Lavasir Nordrum and Hamidah Jelman

7 to 14 May 2009



"Wisma Mulia" the Subud retirement home established in Gloucestershire, UK (not all the residents are in Subud). Lavasir is having coffee with some of the Subud residents after latihan and lunch.

Coming by train from London Paddington, we were welcomed at Bristol Parkway station and kindly offered supper before going to the Subud House.

The House was recently beautifully refurbished, for the comfort and satisfaction of the needs of the Subud group as well as for those of the non Subud groups which rent the premises helping to provide a satisfactory income. Many men were present; they tested about the importance of this house and it became very clear what direction to follow, so they felt happy in spite of the spectacular decrease of the members' attendance. There were only a few women, some coming from a different group. After general tests about the progression of our Latihan since we were opened, we did a few personal tests.

Our visit had been very carefully programmed by Richard and Sophia, national helpers for this region. Sophia offered us accommodation and because she also had to drive us for long distances we felt closely connected and able to share with her on a deeper level.

The next day we visited Wisma Mulia with her, in the morning. After the latihan which was particularly peaceful, Hamidah acknowledged the long commitment, in Subud, of our sisters and we spoke about how it was to live at Wisma Mulia, a good experience really. After testing “how our spiritual lives were at the different stages of our existence”? the women asked for specific tests: “What is our attitude towards death and how it should be following the will of God?” “What should be our attitude towards each other?” and “how we should be now?” We all shared lunch with them afterwards.

A few women were unable to attend because they were very sick. Virginia accepted to have a special visit from Hamidah. She was perfectly well in spirit and happily welcoming, speaking joyfully about her whole life and proud at having in her room the armchair that Bapak always used when he visited England. After looking at a few photos we had to go.

Three days after, we received a phone call telling us she had died in hospital. Again a day later we learnt that Valentine had also died in hospital, so we prayed for them, especially after doing a latihan with another group in North Devon, when we asked God to bless their souls and help with the inevitable grieving of our “older” dear brothers and sisters in Wisma Mulia.

In the afternoon, we went to Wales to visit the Brecon group. We were warmly welcomed there and we admired their beautiful latihan hall. It was another situation where the group experienced difficulties. One helper shared with us the loneliness he experienced in the past, when, for all sorts of reasons, fewer people were attending the latihan and he stayed to be the only one.

General tests were done with the women such as: “How were we before our opening”? “How was our latihan when we were just opened?”, “How was it 10 years ago? How is it now? What is the next step in our progress in latihan following the will of God. “How should I love myself? How should I receive the Love of God?”

There was only one woman active helper in this group, a hard job! Louisa was now ready to assume the role of helper and the test we did, with the group helper and Sophia, was positive. It seemed that this group is at the beginning of a more positive phase with a few men now joining the latihan

The next day Sophia drove us to South Devon, near Exeter for a party organised in the beautiful home of Pollard. There was no latihan that day but we enjoyed a wonderful joyful family atmosphere. We were able to talk openly with individual members during lunch and during a walk through the beautiful outstanding landscape. We were lucky the sun was shining from the day before to nearly the end of our trip,

There we realised how this region, since the very beginning of Subud in UK, has been a sort of nursery from where a lot of people took important responsibilities. It was a privilege for us to meet and share with our dear brothers Paul, Leonard, all ex -international helpers, and to be accompanied all the time by Richard, national helper, and his wife Ruth, as well as Idina and Elwyn, kejiwaan councillors, who took it in turn to look after us. Another evening we were received for supper by Alexandra, our national secretary, and her husband. We very much appreciated the deep links woven by the practice of the latihan.

Devon seems like a vast beacon where everybody is independent, but where members are really well connected with each others. A lot of them are successful artists. We were happy to look at their work and listen to their experiences especially Lavasir, the artist in our IH team. In fact it is very moving to discover how these old Subud members are also perfectly well connected with the rest of the Subud world, as well as faithfully doing their own latihan, regularly. So we soon had a sense of really belonging and were in real harmony, all the day

long. We felt the same in Idina and Elwyn's home where Hamidah helped Idina prepare the meal as Lavasir visited the interesting house that Paul had built and where he lives with his large family. We were 8 to share a very good dinner.

Outside the home of April, in a small village of North Devon UK: from the right you can see Hamidah, Elwyn, April our hostess; Alexandra, National Secretary, Idina, and one of the members of the group. Here we had latihans, testing and lunch.



The next two days were very busy. In fact we were driven up and down the little roads amazed by the tender beauty of nature in May, the best season for trees and flowers, where the sea surprisingly appears to remind us from its presence, never far away.

After a couple of hours we arrived at Ringwood (the Wessex group). Some members experienced difficulties, it was a place to express different views and emotions and try to clarify the situations.. It will continue the day after in Exeter.

The latihan and the tests were particularly strong and well received. We added to the previous tests: "What is the influence of my latihan on my day to day life/on my family and on the whole world?" The members felt really happy to be able to share their receiving.

Another drive and we arrived in the evening in Exeter, in the Quakers' meeting place, the oldest Subud place in UK where the latihan has been practiced without interruption for 50 years!

As there were some isolated members or members coming from a long distance, we tested also "How was our latihan when it is done at home/in group/one and twice a week?" Even "How it is when, having been opened, somebody is not doing latihan?" "What support to give

to each others?” “How is my latihan when I ask forgiveness and how it is when I worship God?”

Coming back home to Leonard and Davina’s place, South of Exeter, we were very tired but ready the next morning for another busy day. Direction North Devon, to have a lunch shared with everybody before the latihan in the beautiful home of April. Again we all shared and tested. Some tests were done by the men on the significance of being together as Subud members; the importance of being an example and of following Bapak’s advice.

In the evening we returned to Exeter for a latihan and testing sessions for helpers. It was well attended and we had a very interesting time with the women helpers. Hamidah began to ask what they find difficult and what they find easy in their role as helpers. They spoke mostly about the way to give explanations to candidates; how to be sure that the new members don’t feel isolated from the helpers group, etc. What could they do to help improve the members/candidate’s relationship with the helpers.

Interesting tests were done after that: “What are the needs of the members of this group”? “How can the dewan of helpers respond to these needs”? “How, individually, can each helper respond to them? “How would the group be if helpers could work well together”? Everybody left with a very good feeling.

The day after was a little more relaxing for us, staying and talking with Leonard and Davina, visiting their father, the famous painter Harold Hitchcock in his studio, admiring his paintings in the house and exploring the garden. I was amazed by the number and variety of beautiful gardens that we have seen during this trip! Going to visit Myriam near the sea in front of the famous Burgh Island was a real treat, a real experience of the sea.

In the evening there was latihan, tests and tea with the South Brent group for women only. The same tests very welcomed.

The last day we had to drive again for a couple of hours to Cornwall the furthest place of our trip. More men attended. They obviously enjoyed the meeting and the lunch carefully prepared by the only woman present, from this group. She had been 50 years doing latihan and being a helper so she only wanted to test what was now her responsibility. Obviously she needed to be only an honorary helper.

The men tested “What is the validity and convenience in Subud now, of the convention, which means for example: sitting quietly to prepare for the latihan; doing prihatin; fasting during Ramadan or lent, reading Bapak’s talks”? “How we affect each others as Subud members”? “What is the significance of receiving advice from each other”? “What is our capacity and our willingness to receive the latihan”?

The next morning we came back to London.

We would like to thank everyone from the bottom of our heart, and especially the helpers who were so kind and cared for of us so well, helping and sharing in everything we did. We feel very privileged to have been so close to them.

All our love goes to them and to all those we have met. Their presence helped make this wonderful trip.

Lavasir and Hamidah