**Fourth Interview with Ibu Rahayu 1994: Going Deeper**

In November of 1994 I was desperate and a more than a little crazy when I arrived in Cilandak. It seems the push to go to visit Wisma Subud comes strongest when I need it most. After a series of devastating losses including the death of my daughter Mariama, the loss of a stillborn son Armand and the breakup of my marriage, I was hardly coherent. Something in me had compelled me to make this trip to Indonesia in hopes that my life, which was way off the rails, could be put back on track again.

When I first arrived, I called Ibu Rahayu and it seemed she was very busy and declined to set a time for us to meet. I was super disappointed. I found myself wide-eyed and unable to sleep that night and also besieged by a troop of relentless mosquitoes. I finally drifted off at 4AM so I was dead to the world the next morning when I received a note from Halimah Brugger at 8:35 AM that Ibu Rahayu had decided to meet with me at 9AM that very morning. Oh my God, I tore out of bed, jumped in the shower, washed my hair and managed to arrive for the interview at 9:05AM. Naturally when I arrived the maid told me that Ibu wasn't arriving until 10AM. In typical fashion, the maids got quite a laugh over my running around so frantically trying to get ready.

**The Interview:**

Since Ibu Rahayu now lived in Pamulang, we met in the rooms of a resident Subud sister. We had an hour's talk-not a word about the demise of my marriage. I had a series of questions that I thought might help get my life on back on track. The first thing I asked was should I change my name (reasoning that a new name like” Siti Rochanawati” might attract a better fate). Ibu got quiet and said well Halimah still suited me, but if wanted I could take the Christian version of Halimah, which was Helena, or Helen etc. Frankly, that option didn’t sit well with me. So, I remained Halimah. My next concern was whether or not to discontinue my work on my PH.D. which was suffering from a total loss of motivation and a myriad of personal difficulties. I had recently taken a leave of absence and was considering scuttling the entire enterprise. Here again, Ibu recommended that I continue my work on my PH.D. So Halimah was to remain a doctoral student.

 My third question was about where to live. I told her I wanted to move to Seattle where I had some good friends and connections. I was eager to leave San Diego where I was currently living. I now unsurprisingly associated San Diego with my own bad fortune. Also, I was eager to escape the painful experience of confronting my ex-husband and his new wife at every latihan. Again, Ibu was unenthusiastic; she didn’t think Seattle would be good for me. She suggested that I not be in a hurry to move to Seattle or anywhere, because good jobs are so hard to come by. When I remonstrated, “It’s been so hard on me there.” She replied mysteriously, “Maybe it will get better when you go home.” So alas I was to remain in San Diego.

Next up to change my life I also talked to her about my creative talents and my feeling that I. needed to develop them more and pursue them. She said yes but I could do that within my field of education-- that the field of education was wide enough to contain a place where these talents could be developed. So, I was to remain in education.

Every remedy I imagined would help me through my grief was shot down by one by one by Ibu. Feeling increasingly frustrated, desperate and even unloved. I just started to sob and sob and sob. It felt as if all the heartbreak of the last years was pouring out of me. In fact, I was literally flushed and feverish. The more impassioned, I felt, the quieter Ibu seemed as she sat there with me.

Then Ibu began to speak to me very directly...almost like an intervention. She reminded me that my life occurrences hadn’t been all bad and that yes, my problem was no children, but people with children had big problems of their own so it sort of evened out. She went on. It was my unquiet and frustrated heart that made me feel unloved and lonely, but in fact, my experiences have been very good and people loved me a great deal. I simply lacked confidence and certainty. *These feelings within me arose from the Nafsu*, she said*.*  In turn, these debilitating feelings came from something in my childhood --which may change. She suggested that I ask God to help me in this area. When I asked if therapy would be of benefit, Ibu Rahayu responded that it was not necessary, I should simply *surrender*. (Hmmm)

As we ended that interview, I asked “Don’t you feel feel sad sometimes?” Ibu just said that she just didn’t have time to feel sad or to think about herself much. She just went along with her life. Acceptance. Of course, this response to me at the time seemed very Indonesian, way beyond my understanding or experience. But, believe it or not I left that interview in a quieter state…totally exhausted drained --so much had been released.

**Going Deeper**

You can see how much ground we covered in this interview and how critical my questions were and how important this Ibu’s guidance proved to be. In hindsight, this meeting set the trajectory of my life post tragedies. In the immediate aftermath of the interview I was deeply disappointed. Ibu’s guidance seemed to block any possible move I could make in that situation. I didn’t have to follow it, of course, but by now I knew that I would be stupid not to. Now looking back at this time of my life all that Ibu suggested seems obvious. Conventional wisdom suggests that after a tragedy, best not to make any huge life-decisions. My name is still Halimah and it makes me very happy. Finishing my PH. D was critical to my work life as a single woman; it allowed me to support myself in a successful career as a college professor and as an educational consultant. Later on, I understood that moving to Seattle at that time would have been the death knell for my finishing finished my doctorate. Lastly, in my work as an educational consultant my focus became on research and development mainly for arts organizations. In retirement I have begun painting, singing in a choral group, taking up the ukulele, and attending many cultural performances.

But something far more profound happened for me in that interview with Ibu Rahayu. As we talked, I could feel it inwardly, coming perhaps from Ibu’s own quiet, the tiny beginning of a sense of detachment and surrender, that all these life events are not so important to the life of the soul. I guess this is why I was pushed so hard to make this trip to Indonesia at this time. You do gain an incredible distance from the immediacy of all the ups and downs of our lives. That it is important as much as possible to make the effort to feel happy and content and grateful in our lives so that that very lightness might serve as a sort of protective aura that envelopes us, allows the angels to help us and might in turn allow us to receive the guidance needed on a daily basis in a state of peace and contentment. I am and was very grateful for Ibu Rahayu’s advice and her inner push to help me go deeper into my soul.