

## Being Human: Exploring the Forces that Shape Us and Awaken an Inner Life

**Alicia Thom**

**Solihin Thom**

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"I am ready to fight the jihad within," writes one of the authors, "to overcome the petty thief within me that usurps my self and allows ego, will, and emotions to wreak havoc with my life. Like Ala'din, I must learn to polish my vessel and understand the unseen forces that both help and thwart me." Through personal reflection, Solihin Thom motivates the reader to fight the inner battle for the health of the spirit within.

Rich in metaphor, this book examines the unseen forces that shape the content of one's "self." Leading the reader rung by rung up the hierarchical ladder, the authors explore each of the life forces from the material self (our genetic blueprint) to the noble self, which seeks alignment with the Divine (the primary life force) and the essential qualities connecting them. For example, the animal self (third in the hierarchy) "is the force that motivates us to rise to the challenge." If the animal self "becomes dominant we will assume an identity that is based on power, attraction, reaction, habit, sexuality, and ambition. We may be easily sidetracked, tempted to stray and drawn to greener pastures." Through reflectiveness in our inner life, we can rise above the instinctive animal self to the human self, which allows us to "see things from a different perspective."

The book concludes with a hands-on exercise, in which, by using instincts and intuition, one arranges the accompanying cards, each representing a life force or essential quality, and thus gains an awareness of how the forces and elements may be unbalanced in one's life.

The authors were introduced to the life forces (drawn from Muslim teachings) by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, founder of Subud, "a worldwide spiritual community of people who believe in the possibility of being in touch with one's true self and one's humanity through surrender to God." Several years after being introduced to Subud in 1973, Solihin Thom became a Muslim. Alicia Thom, a Master NLP practitioner, joined Subud at seventeen. The Thoms have conducted personal development workshops together since 1990. Alexandra ter Horst, who holds a degree in psychology from the University of Virginia, joined the Thoms' organization in 1995 after attending one of their Life Forces workshops, and joined Subud in 1996.

Being Human goes a step beyond today's popular teachings to explore the ancient philosophy centered on the life forces. Although initially distracting, the authors' individual reflections, injected as separate essays, add a distinctly personal tone, enabling the reader to relate more directly to the material. Enlightening for those seeking a greater awareness of the forces that shape and influence the content of one's "self," this book is an insightful tool for re-establishing order and balance in life.

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