

## ARIFIN KONRAD'S ASCENSION

From "Destiny" a book of Subud Life by Harris Smart

Arifin Konrad lives in Austria with his wife and children. He is school teacher.

In this interview he tells the story of a series of experiences he had in the 1990s in which he left this world and traveled through space to a place which he believed to be a realm infinitely higher than anything we know of here.

Many people will, of course, view this story as a figment of someone's imagination. On the other hand such experiences which were once the province of only the very highest teachers and prophets such as Jesus and Muhammad, now seem to be also experienced by much more ordinary people. And this appears to be happening not only in Subud but also in religions and other spiritual movements.

The first person to experience an "ascension" in Subud was Bapak Muhammad Subuh, the founder of the movement, one night in 1932 and he has left several vivid accounts of his journey.

Then, in 1971 (on the very same night that Bapak's second wife Ibu Siti Sumari died) Bapak's elder daughter, Ibu Siti Rahayu, experienced ascension similar to Bapak's.

Now, it seems that at least two other Subud members - maybe there are more - have had this experience. Arifin Konrad is one of them. This interview was conducted under the auspices of the "Jerry Chalem project" .. Jerry Chalem is a New York Subud member who arranged the gathering on video of a collection of invaluable interviews with Subud members. I am grateful to Jerry for his permission to publish an edited version of the interview here.

My name is Arifin Konrad. I was born in Austria in 1962.

*Do you have something you'd like to share with us about experiences with Bapak ?*

Well, it is a long story. I was opened in 1983. That is when I joined Subud. I only once had the opportunity of seeing Bapak in this world, physically. This was in 1986 at the International Subud Conference Centre at Anugraha, in England.

That was when I first started to realise who Bapak was. Before, I didn't understand at all. I thought maybe later I'd understand.

When people were talking about Bapak it was, okay, I could feel something but my brain and heart would refuse to admit that this was someone special.

In 1986 when I did latihan in front of Bapak in Anugraha, it was the last time Bapak was in Europe. I was really fortunate that I could go there because others who were opened at the time didn't go and didn't see Bapak again.

In this latihan I suddenly felt like I was alone with Bapak and I didn't really understand what was happening. But for a long time this was my measurement for myself as to whether this was the right way, or if my progress in Subud, so to say, was still on the right track.

The next thing began to happen in 1989. I was working as a teacher in Austria in a small place south of Vienna. One morning I drove to school. It was a morning like every other morning but suddenly I felt like I was having a heart attack, and it was really strong. It wasn't like imagination. It just hit me and I thought, I'm going to die.

I tried to avoid any accident. I stopped the car and it was like I couldn't see anything and I was just shivering and feeling this "boom" inside myself. It was like my heart was exploding.

And the next thing I remember I had arrived at the school. Somehow I managed to drive the car there. I was lucky because I was there early and there were still one or two hours before school

began.

I went to a quiet place and just lay down and I thought, Okay, that is it, I'm going to die. I couldn't stop this shivering. Somehow I survived and then I realised it was about time to go, so I felt, okay, maybe I can do it, and I picked up my books and things and went into the classroom, shut the door, and suddenly I was normal. I was still weak, but this shivering had stopped. Then I went through all the lessons and it was a very normal day.

*How old were you ?*

I was 27. When school had finished and I could go home I almost didn't remember what had happened. While I was driving and sitting in the car, suddenly I remembered, and again it started, but I managed to drive home.

The next day it continued. It would come and go, and then at the most unexpected moment I thought, I'm really, really, really ill. Maybe I should see a doctor. Then again I didn't want to.

*Over how long a period of time did this occur ?*

Well it was some weeks. If you put it all together it is much longer, but after some weeks I started to think, well, maybe there is also another explanation than just a physical one. Then I started to look around to see if there was somebody I could ask in our group whom I felt close to.

But especially after that happened, I didn't feel close to anyone.

However, there was a Subud family we felt close to, and there was a day I felt I could share this and ask, because they had been in Subud much longer.

So I asked, "If you experience something that is physically really hurtful, could it be connected with the kejiwaan ? "

They said, "“Yes.”"

So I told a little of what I was experiencing and they said, "Yes, it could be connected with the kejiwaan, but maybe you should just let it go. Maybe you just want to prevent something from happening."

Because I still felt like I was dying, it sounded like someone telling you, "Okay, you feel like dying, go ahead and die." It didn't really work for me right away.

*Were these shakings always the same or did they change in nature ?*

Well, it was changing. I didn't realise at that time, but when I look back, it was like the **physical side of it was not** so strong any more. But it still was something really frightening. It became like something calling me.

*Then what happened ?*

I have to explain that by this time my wife and I had decided to sleep in separate bedrooms because it was really disturbing for her with every night me jumping out of bed and walking around and around. So I started to sleep in my study. And then one night I just felt so exhausted with all of this, I thought, if I die, I die. So what is the big deal anymore ? And then suddenly I became very peaceful and there was a point I was asked " Do you want it ?"

*You were asked "Do you want it ?"*

I said, "Yes I want it."

Then I just experienced that it happened. It was very real. I started to separate from my body and I was suddenly outside my body. Then I could see my physical body and it was me.

Then I met someone, well, I think it was one of my ancestors.

It was a woman, very old and very young at the same time. She was complaining because it took such a long time for me.

She said, "What were you doing all this time ? I've been waiting for you."

She went on talking like this and after a while I thought to myself, "that can't be the reason why I'm here".

I said, "I'm sorry, I have to go on. I was called."

As soon as I said that she bowed down and disappeared, and then I was back in my body again.

This was like the start, and the next night it was far easier for me to let go, because the morning after the first experience, I awoke and everything was normal. I wasn't crazy. My mind still worked, my heart still worked. I could do my job, I could care for my family. Though at the same time I was thinking, well, that is really scary, maybe I'll end up in a hospital where all the mad people go.

*So then what happened ?*

The next night again I separated from my body and this time there was no one to meet me. I turned around and looked at my body carefully and it was really interesting. I then became bored and sat on my bed and thought, so what ? What is this for? Then I thought, okay, I'll walk around a bit, look at my children.

After a few days it became obvious to my wife that something unusual was happening because at night I would fall asleep, and then suddenly again it would go "boom", and I sat up and walked around and around until it finished and I could go back to sleep.

So my wife asked me what was happening and I told her and we were concerned about it, but she wasn't really deeply worried.

This was the strange thing. She didn't take it like me. For me it was physical, whereas for her it was something spiritual going on.

(She told me later that even before it all started she had an experience that had prepared her for the possibility that something special would happen to her husband and so she was waiting to see if her receiving would turn out to be true).

I just didn't think it could be anything spiritual because it was so physical.

However, when I stayed up at night and walked around, I could feel the latihan and this is what really helped me to survive and not go mad. It was also interesting that the experience started to move to times when there was nothing going on.

That night I went to the door and wanted to open it, and suddenly my hand went right through the door. I thought, Oh wow, what is this? Maybe I could walk through the walls. So I did. It worked. I went through the house and looked at everybody sleeping and everything was peaceful.

So then I went back and still nothing was happening. Then I wondered if maybe I could also go through the ceiling. When I thought this, I immediately went through the ceiling.

Then I sat on the roof. It was a really quiet and peaceful night and I was sitting there and I looked around and saw the moon and thought, wow, because it was a full moon. Then I saw that it was getting bigger, and suddenly I saw that I was moving and that the house was far below.

Then it all went too quickly to really think about it, and I saw that the earth was further away. I could see it from above. It was really big and dark. I thought, oh, that is what it looks like.

Then I saw that I was getting closer and closer to the moon. It got bigger and bigger and then I

arrived there. I was standing on the moon and there were rocks around and sand. Then I thought, if I'm here, I want to see the place where mankind made its first step on the moon. And I was taken there. I could see it. I saw all the rubbish they left and there was still some strange mirror and there were still the footsteps.

After a time I thought if I can go to the moon maybe I can go to Mars. I said, "I would like to see Mars", so again I was taken there. It didn't take long but there was a distance in between.

Then I was there on Mars. It satisfied my curiosity, but wasn't so interesting. Then I thought, so what about Jupiter? And it was quite a long journey to Jupiter. Then I was there. I met somebody there.

*Who ?*

I don't want to talk about it. I can't remember their name but the being was quite tall, big, not very physical, but that is not the thing I want to talk about.

Then I decided that being there was too far away. I got a bit homesick and said, "I'd like to see Venus."

I also went on to see Mercury and on the way there, suddenly my journey stopped, and I was suspended in space. I realised that the movement had stopped. I thought, okay, I'd like to go home.

But nothing happened so I tried all kinds of things to get moving again.

I asked, begged and cried and I was really desperate and suddenly I realized that I had thought it was me who could travel but now I understood that it was just something given, something borrowed, and I had a big feeling of regret.

I began to cry and asked for forgiveness and I realized that this is something that is not mine and I completely surrendered to the power of Almighty God. I promised not to move again by my own will and then suddenly movement began again. I was praying all the time.

*Just worshipping God ?*

Praying, worshipping God and praying. I thought the journey would end then, but it wasn't like that. I was taken closer and closer to the sun and it was very frightening for me. Well, here the sun is nice, but out there it is really big and scary. It is so big, you come close, and you think you're close but that is not close. If you come closer, it feels like it fills the whole universe.

You're in the middle of it, and it is a universe. And then I was taken back after seeing that.

*All this time you had no sensation of temperature, of hot, cold,*

Oh, yes, of course, I did. I could feel, I definitely had senses, but I don't know if it was more feeling or more physical, it is hard to compare.

*You could feel, you could hear. What did you Hear ?*

If there was wind I could hear wind and I could feel wind. I could touch wind. If there was heat, I could feel heat.

*So then you came back ?*

So then I came back to normal and didn't have a clue what it all was about. I didn't know any of the Subud stories, Subud experiences. I didn't know what Bapak had experienced. I didn't know any of this so I was really left without a clue as to what it was all about.

The following weeks I had experiences similar to this - being taken somewhere in space or taken somewhere on Earth and also I would go to bed, close my eyes and I would be seeing landscapes, places.

It went on like this for some weeks. I was also taken to other galaxies, seeing beings other than human beings, but it was more like watching, witnessing. Then, after maybe three months, it stopped, and I came back to normal.

I thought, okay, that is gone now. I was quite happy about it because it was very embarrassing.

But later, while I was decorating the Christmas tree, suddenly I felt like I felt before, with the feeling in my heart, and I knew I had to give way to something so I said to my wife, "I'll be right back. I will just take a short nap."

And I went into my room, lay down on my bed and tried to surrender.

Then I was told...

*You mean you heard a voice ?*

Yes. I heard a voice that said, "An angel is travelling to my servant."

I'm just repeating exactly what was said to me.

*Did you recognise the voice ?*

Of course I felt something but I don't want to describe it in detail.

So here was this message and I didn't feel prepared for it. How do you behave in front of an angel? Then I was told to close my eyes and I felt a presence and I was asked, "Arifin, you are supposed to go to God."

I would say it was the angel's voice and then it said, "Do you want to, are you ready?" And I, to my own surprise, said, "Yes."

I mean there is not much choice. It felt like it was the law of Almighty God, "Yes" or "No". So it was, "Yes".

And then, of course, my human nature came back and I said, "But why, why me I'm the worst".

There I was complaining, and the answer came, "You are ready, that is enough."

But it was Christmas and I just wanted to spend Christmas with my family in peace and happiness, and I asked to be allowed to do that, and it seemed to be okay. So after that, I got up and everything was fine and we really had a nice Christmas together.

But then I really started worrying about it because then I thought, well, going to God, what does it mean? It means you die.

So I was really frightened and I tried to keep myself busy and then in the night nothing happened.

So next day I thought, well, that is it, you missed your chance.

*You were two frightened so nothing happened.*

I didn't feel really well that day. Next night my worries became even stronger because I thought about nothing else.

I was worrying and thinking about it. I became really frightened and then I went through a state of terrible crisis and suddenly I had a very powerful latihan.

After that I felt quiet and I went to bed and didn't worry about anything. At the end of the latihan I again separated from my body and was taken outside into space and suddenly all my fears came to one point and I thought, what if all this doesn't come from Almighty God?

Then there was an explosion inside myself and after that there was complete quietness. Then I heard a voice that said, "Arifin, what would you be if I would not be?" Then I saw all my life

and all the many, many points in my life when I had been rescued and saved, and then I knew. I knew I wouldn't be, if Almighty God would not be. And because Almighty God wants me to be, what do I have to worry about? Then I came back and I slept well that night. And the next day it was gone. I didn't worry about it anymore. If anything wants to happen it will, if not, it is okay. So in the middle of the next day, I felt tired and thought I'd have a nap. I went into my room and lay down and I didn't expect anything.

So I lay there and suddenly I turned around and then I realised - okay again I'm outside of my body. I was half-tumed, I was half inside and half outside, and I stood and looked at my body.

Then I turned back and there on the chair in my room I saw Bapak. He smiled at me. I am unable to express what I felt. It is like you grew up, and you grew up without a father, but you know he is somewhere, and then suddenly you meet him and you know he really is, there is no doubt about it.

*How did you feel ? Did you feel acceptance ?*

Yes. I felt his love, his acceptance, his authority, everything you expect a father to be. And there is no doubt you are his child. And you don't want it to be anything else.

*And did he say something then ?*

Not at the start. He sat there as real as anything could be. It wasn't a shadow or something. It was really Bapak who was my father. And I felt complete, really complete, there was nothing missing. But my brain or heart wanted to know whatever it wanted to know, and because I just couldn't understand why this was happening, after a while I asked, "Why did you come here ? Why me ?"

*You asked this ?*

Yes I did. In the moment the question came to me, I spoke it. "Bapak why are you here?" Bapak was sitting and smiling and then he said, "You cannot go alone. That is why I'm here."

Then before I could even think about what it meant to go, Bapak stood up and said, "Lets go," and off we went.

Then we left the world and were going through space and it was wonderful because I was feeling like a lost child who was being taken care of. It was so good.

While in this world, I saw Bapak as he usually appeared to us, but after leaving the world, Bapak changed shape and I didn't mind, because it was still the same. But Bapak grew bigger and bigger and bigger and he was made of light.

*He was still in his body, but just larger ?*

No. I didn't see his physical body any more.

*So it was a feeling of Bapak ?*

No. There was also something I could see.

*What did he look like ?*

It was hard to look at because it was light. Pure light. So I could hardly look at him. He was much bigger.

*This was Bapak, no question ?*

No question. Because it just felt the same as before, I was his child. So if that continues there is no doubt.

Then Bapak brought me to the sun and then he said, "Did you take the world with you ?" And I said "No." and then he said, "Let's go back".. We went back. Bapak would show me the world.

It was like a kind of testing. He would put me somewhere and say, "What does it feel like."

I said, "It feels like an empty space as if in the desert or something."

And then Bapak would explain something about it. After that I was growing taller and taller and taller and it was as if I were growing around the world, and suddenly I felt the world inside me. It must be how a pregnant woman feels. I felt it was too heavy for me.

*You felt like the world was inside your stomach ?*

Yes. It felt like that. So I said, "Bapak I can't move." And I really felt like that.

Bapak said, "Nothing is impossible for Almighty God".

Then I felt light again. Then he took me back to the sun and we went right through the sun. Then suddenly we were in an empty space and I didn't see Bapak anymore. I felt left alone, not really, but I didn't see him anymore.

*You felt alone ?*

I felt like a child who gets lost in a crowd. Still walking beside his parents, but he can't see them, and he asks, "Where are my parents?" I asked, "Bapak where are you?" And suddenly I felt he was all around. I was taken further and then there were two beings. I felt they were angels, and they were asking "Who is it? ".

I didn't know. I was separated from everything that wants to invent something or imagine something. So I was lost and then Bapak said, "This is one of my children." So I was allowed to continue.

*It was like you were at a point and they said, "Who's there ?" Like knocking at a door. And Bapak said, "This is one of my children." So they opened the door for you ?*

Yes. Right. If you think about it in terms of this world, it would be like that. It was like a gate. It felt like it.

The experience continued and then I saw something which is really hard to describe. Because if you put in words you can so easily turn it in a different direction.

I was shown different things and the beings that were there, and I was taken up and at a certain point I wanted to remain there.

*Why ?*

I didn't want to go any further. I didn't want to go back. I felt at home.

*But you decided to come back ?*

No. I didn't decide. I was called. It was Bapak who called me. He said, "Arifin, my child, not yet. That is not why you're here."

So I had to go further and this was really hard, really hard. It was like only complete surrender and prayer would bring me anywhere. Then I came into a realm where I felt the presence of people, beings. I was being introduced to them and I realised that these were the prophets. There were quite a number whom I didn't know and some I did know. Some I did know but I didn't know that they were prophets. Then eventually I was introduced to Bapak and it was like he showed me that the other ones were inside of him, the other prophets. All I could do was bow down.

*What did that mean when Bapak showed you that ?*

That Bapak was encompassing all the prophets. I don't know if it has any further meaning.

*Did Bapak say anything ?*

No. He was nodding. It was like he was saying “You see.””

I fell down and all I could do was kiss his feet. Then Bapak showed me a space that was completely empty or completely full at the same time. I felt I wasn't existent anymore. It was like I dissolved and there was only one consciousness, like no consciousness of myself left. This was the point when everything else disappeared.

Then I was shown something. It was this world. I looked at it and it was pitch-black, dark. Then when I looked at it again, I suddenly saw a small light, and then another and another, and there were lights appearing all over the planet. Then there were threads of light going from one to another and it became a net and when the net was finished it was like the world was suddenly glowing from inside. Then it was gone.

*Do you know what that meant ? Did Bapak explain to you what that meant ?*

No. But it was not like something you are shown in a dream.

*You just had the experience ?*

It was there. It didn't need any explanation. And then I was taken back.

That is it. I had a hard time after that. Really. Ibu Rahayu saved my life. She really did.

*You mean literally or just supporting you ?*

I desperately wanted to go back. I had no proof of what I'd experienced other than my own. It is hard to live with it. I was really grateful when Ibu Rahayu visited Austria. Osanna Waclik, to whom I had told a big part of the story, went to Ibu Rahayu when she was in Austria. I didn't dare to. And she asked Ibu Rahayu if this was a real experience and Ibu Rahayu said, “Yes, it was.”

Then she wanted to see me. And she said, “You want to go back ?” I said, “Yes.”

She said, “Not yet. Don't go back.”

Then she told me that she had had a similar experience. She said it is always different but there is a similar content. And that Bapak was always praying that there would be witnesses for what he had experienced. That I had been a witness and that now I had to go on with my life and do whatever is in front of me as best as I can. So I try to. And I still do. That is it.

Having an experience like that does not grant you holiness.

Heart and mind are not changed much. They have been through something but there is so much more. Your feeling has changed and all your life forces have to catch up while you sometimes also feel far away from other human beings.

Thanks to Almighty God one is not left without help. In my case there was Ibu Rahayu, my beloved wife, Kamilia, and friends that consciously or unconsciously helped me on my way back to a life that could contain “normality” as well as the continuation of the inner life.

My life has altered in many ways since. I changed my job half a year later and went into computers. A few years after that I converted to Islam after being circumcised a year before without knowing where this would take me.

We have five kids between 5 and 19, and my family is very important to me. It is my haven where I can recover from stressful times. We own a small house and almost always have someone living with us.

I do not know where life will take us, but with the latihan it is definitely worth living.