Conclusion

My time in Java was short and full of challenges. I was constantly aware that I was seeing everything through western eyes, and that Indonesian society is extremely complex. I knew I was not seen as a farmer, but as a westerner, someone with money who could afford to travel. I wanted to sit down with the women in their houses, talk about goats and crops and gardens, but the barriers of language and culture prevented me.

Industrialization and environmental destruction will continue in countries like Java for quite some time, as governments race to catch up to what they see as western standards of living and western ideals. Women like Chandra Kirana are caught in the middle, struggling to care for their families, make a living, keep their political lives intact, and maintain their culture.

As a farmer, I struggle constantly with lack of money. My rural community slowly fragments as subdivisions appear. My family and I eat well, but increased taxation combined with rising land prices makes the future of our farm obscure. I know that small farms and rural culture are endangered all over North America. My sense of isolation from other writers and the endless work load are difficult. A lifestyle like ours is increasingly rare, for many reasons.

How I wish I could have shared with the Javanese women our sense of connection to where we live, our worries for the future. Although our lives may look different, I am sure that many of our concerns, our losses, our basic affinities with land are much the same.

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References


If, after hearing the stories told about her the rice goddess returned as a green spider or, at least, someone came by as a spider, miniature, round iridescent, astonishingly emerald and jumped up on my pants and leapt and jumped on a hot afternoon in a village whose name means Flower of the Forest and no one said anything or noticed that the goddess was leaping like an emerald out of the garden and spinning a web from my green cotton Canadian pants to the ancient wall while I also spun and spun and the garden grew in dizzy circles and I thought I might fall over all these new edges as the goddess spun me dizzy and choking and the green spider was greener than any emerald leaping and dancing while I sat very still and sweated, trying to breathe in the garden in the white brilliance of another late hot afternoon.

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