A Story about Concerns for Nature

as told by
Ayah Karmain

Well, now I will speak in Sundanese. I will tell about my concerns about nature. Being different from the general population, I have a greater responsibility for the natural environment and traditional customs. Because the elders were entrusted with this task by our ancestors, we must ‘take care of the queen (leaders) and nobles (princes) and follow the mandate to maintain our heritage’. As time has gone by, the tools of technology have become increasingly sophisticated and more advanced. Outsiders (those outside the Baduy community) refer to these advances as globalization. I don’t really agree with this globalization because I am more focused on our customs and concern for nature, both of which I have been entrusted with.

Therefore, I think about nature: mountains have been leveled, valleys destroyed, and the order of things changed all over. These places have been exploited; the resources have been dug up. Because the real riches, that is our natural environment. Really the natural resources should be enough for all mankind, but they must be managed according to rules regarding what can and cannot be exploited. What can be used should be managed carefully, but what cannot be managed should not be used because I feel pity. Human beings despite their considerable number have received bounty (from the God) both physical and spiritual. But humans should not but gluttonous or greedy because the natural environment of the Earth must be balanced, preserved. Mankind and the natural environment must be balanced because if there is too much ‘progress’, too much exploitation of nature, mountains will be flattened and valleys destroyed, and this will lead to disaster.

Now everywhere there are coal mines, gold mines, silver mines, bronze mines—everywhere that mountains and valleys are not being protected and taken care of. Areas all over are being destroyed. I worry. According to the history of our origin, there is no difference in nature and the human form. It is said that historically the natural environment of Java stretches from the head Ujung Kulon to Balanggun. In the West there is Sanghiang Sirah, the head, and in the East Sanghiang Dampal, the foot. From Sanghiang Sirah to Sanghiang Dampal stretches the backbone: the Kendeng Mountains. Within the backbone of the Kendeng Mountains lie all of the natural riches, because according to the history of Java it like the human form.

Well, now I am worried and because of that I tell about “Concerns about nature”, because greedy, lustful humans have dug out the mountains. And we are just waiting for the destruction of nature. If the mountains continue to be excavated, they will collapse, and then what will be the future of mankind? Well, I worry. Because if we indulge in the pursuit of pleasure and riches indiscriminately without seeking a balance, what kind of future will our children and grandchildren have? So I tell the “Story about concerns for nature”.

Don’t be surprised now for it is not only man who coughs. Now mountains everywhere are coughing too. Like Mount Sinabung erupted; this is a sign. Mount Kelud also is a sign that we are unable to preserve nature and our environment. Because of this, the elders here are worried. So I tell you “A Story about Concerns for Nature”.

The government must determine areas that companies can use for exploration and those they cannot. It should not just be allowed everywhere. Our indigenous areas, especially, I will try very hard to defend. So, I ask for the prayers and support of all nations and all religions. I do not want it to change. I want it strengthen and resolved and to be reassured that man, nature & the environment will be harmonious and in balance.

I tell you now about my concerns about nature like this. Perhaps people can be educated and better understand. Yes, our brothers must learn about the wild, about nature. Those who are not Baduy need
to understand the wilderness, the politics of nature. Perhaps they will better understand. I have not been to school; I am a common man. But I have these thoughts, concerns about nature because I have been entrusted with it and I worry a disaster will occur if we don’t remain vigilant.

Well, I will say just this much. Maybe the story could be shorter and maybe longer. But perhaps I will stop here. I’m speaking in Sundanese. That’s all, brother.