

Bali

The trip – 3 hours wait in LAX, I spoke with a lady from Estonia...old part of Russia. After W.W. II she was in a camp – separated from family, with many other “lost” children. She was sent to Australia, adopted with many of her “friends.” From the war days they all keep contact, visiting each other wherever they may now be.

On the plane I sat next to an Indian who imports and exports...now lives in Hong Kong. Thought we’d have a great chat for thirteen-hour flight, but as soon as the plane lifted off, he took a sleeping pill and that was that. The stewardess on Korean Airlines, very sweet...food good enough...just cruising the aisles every hour or so...dozing off. Noticed my backpack was torn, just starting and that was exactly what I forgot to bring...sewing kit, but one stewardess had needle and thread, so in the dim light I sewed it up. Sierra Club backpack...kept tearing through the trip and me sewing it back up.

In Seoul had four hour wait for flight to Jakarta, and in the lunchroom for in-transit passengers was the Indian who was now quite alert. In our chat he revealed that he also had four children, and was proud that they were keeping to the traditions. He told me he was a Jain and was excited that I knew of his religion, which he then for the next two hours espoused the inner teaching as it was revealed to him. He was so into it he almost missed his connection, and when he realized his plane was about to leave without him, without saying goodbye he fled for the gate.

Speaking of gates my flight to Jakarta was scheduled to leave from the same gate as another flight to Jakarta was to leave from. My flight was scheduled to leave at the same time, and they called the flight number for the other flight. So when the other flight number was called I just sat waiting for my flight number to be called, which it wasn’t. I heard the final boarding call for the other flight and yet my flight number was still not called and all the people at the gate were now on the transit bus. Feeling something definitely wrong I finally mobilized myself to inquire only to find out that my flight number had been changed and the call for Jakarta was for me. What a way to make my way to Bali, calmly watching my flight taking off. The attendant called to delay the last bus to the plane and I was ushered onto it. Whew.

When I got on the plane there were two sections. My seat was in the last row of the first section and the seats were so closely crammed together I couldn’t even sit down. The whole front section was filled with Koreans, and being much smaller than me, I guess they managed. The back section of the lane was empty with much larger seats and space between isles. So I just decided that that’s where I was going to sit and the stewardess didn’t challenge me. It was a seven-hour flight from Seoul to Jakarta, thanks for the extra space.

I actually had not concept of distance. When I had planned my trip to Bali and looked at the map, well I thought that Korea being part of Asia wasn’t so far away from where I was going. I was shocked to find out that the flight was seven hours in length. Anyway I made it to Jakarta where I had to wait another four hours for the connecting flight to Bali. Upon arriving in Indonesia I had to go through customs and was given an entry pass, which I stuck into my passport pouch. I then had to get a boarding pass for the connecting flight and all the people from the flight were in a single line, about one hundred people. There were seven stations but only one of the seven attendants was at his station. It was my first real taste of another cultures concept of time. In reality even if the

line took three hours to get through, we would still have had another hour before the flight. Surprisingly after getting my boarding pass I found that there were no chairs and just two benches in the terminal. The only way to sit down was to go to one of the restaurants or cafes. I decided to change a Travelers Cheque for some Indonesian currency. The airport exchange was 800,000 rupiahs per \$100. The teller was a beautiful, dark beauty with a wonderful smile and sense of innocence...as she shortchanged me. I found out later that the going rate was actually 940,000 to \$100. Oh well, airport costs are always higher.

Flight to Denpasar, Bali was quick, and when I came off the plane my travel backpack came off the conveyer belt first. When planning for this trip when I made my reservations for the first night in Bali, I arranged for a driver to take me into the mountain town of Ubud. I was very grateful to see my name on a placard being held by my driver. Soon loaded into the van, it being night time and rainy, we set off for the hotel. As we started up I looked to hook up my seatbelt, but no...no seatbelts. Seatbelts, an American thing? Felt weird and a bit insecure. The driver entered the highway like a diver into a river. Looking out of the window of the van I never saw a sign, so who ever is driving really has to know the way. An incredible road packed with speeding trucks, cars and many more motorbikes...more like scooters. Narrow twisting roads, thought we were in at the least ten accidents with oncoming traffic, heart in mouth all the way through the glare of oncoming lights and the rain. Talk about having to have the faith...either we would make it or we wouldn't, flying off some cliff into the dark canyons that bordered the road.

Getting into Ubud I was a wreck, sweat soaked and very pale. I about fell out of the van and fortunately the driver carried my backpack. The Pertiwi Bungalows had my room ready...standard room is a bed, a bathroom, veranda with table and seats...what's with the lights, couldn't have been more than 25 watts. The bed was fine, fan overhead, hot, humid but not too bad. When I woke up I felt rested and walked outside to take a look around. When I arrived the night before everything was so dark and rainy I couldn't make out any details. In the morning light I was delighted to find that the room was in the middle of a tropical botanical garden. As I walked along the path past fountains with lotus flowers, bushes in full glorious bloom colored fuchsia, rose, pink, vermilion, and azure. The path meandered through the hotel grounds, crossing a bridge over a narrow deep canyon, the walls of the canyon covered with ferns, and came to a small artificial waterfall, pagoda structures and a pond, and then to a twenty-five yard swimming pool tiled in blue-black and serviced by a bar. At the back of the grounds was a road that separated the hotel from an endless view of rice paddies and irrigation ditches, bamboo forests and lush green colored mountains in the distance framed by low hanging clouds filtering the morning sun. The colors were so intense, I mean really intense.

I took a walk along the dirt access road bordered by irrigation ditch bringing water to the rice. Clouds moving slowly, the landscape highlighted by the streaking sunbeams, small shacks of bamboo on stilts in the rice paddies. Further on a number of homes with people just starting to stir. I get up at sunrise no matter where I am, so I am usually the first outside, and so too it was like that here. Meeting people coming along the road, amazing smiles, smiles from the heart...you smile they smile, everyone smiling...light filled. "Good morning. *Selama Pagi?* How are you" *Apa Kabar?*" Every home has a temple in the compound...fantastic figures adorning the gates...small

bamboo leaf baskets with rice offerings being placed by the women in the front door of their compounds. Later saw them being placed on main road intersections. The roads may have been paved over the holy place, but the holy place is just underneath the surface and the women know it's there and in the middle of the racing traffic they place their offerings.

Returned to the hotel and breakfast, *Makan Pangi* was being served. Buffet with eggs, toast, Indonesian Pancakes with bananas sliced into it, noodle dishes, various fruits, juices; all complementary with the room. After breakfast put on light linen pants I've been saving for this trip. Pants because the guidebook discouraged shorts due to the Hindu and Islamic customs. Time to venture out into Ubud. As soon as I went to the front of Pertiwi, a number of men approached calling out, "Transport? Program?" All smiling. "What is your name? Where are you from? Can I take you about? Tomorrow then?" "No," I reply, just walking today." I head up Wanara Wara road, which is called Monkey Forest Road in the guidebook, because at one end is a small forest with monkeys. Ubud is the cultural center of Bali, and that's my whole purpose of the trip. I wanted to immerse into a culture in which art is an inherent part of one's life. In all my studies of current world cultures Bali stood out as being that place, and as an artist, I needed to experience this feeling.

As soon as I walked up the street from Pertiwi, I was submerged in the density of Asian life. Every ten feet there is a small storefront packed full of arts and crafts. Paintings, *Lukisan*. Fabrics...brilliant sarongs, baskets, sculptures in wood of Rama and Sita. Each with a beautiful woman in front trying to draw me in...smiles, sweet eyes that mesmerize. "Just looking." "OK, come back, best prices, we'll discount." Sensory overload, still somewhat in shock from the nightmare ride from the airport. I haven't gone 100 yards, already an hour has past. Twenty shops explored...can't even begin to see what's in them because there is so much. Each store is small but like in a fantasy it just keeps opening up...how can there be so much in such a small space...so much warmth and humidity. Glad I was into using the Jacuzzi at my sports club for my body is totally wet...yet it feels soothing rather than enervating.

Guess there are no pollution laws for every car, truck, bus, van and motorcycle is spewing seeable fumes...black, gray, white...and with every breath, I feel asphyxiated. Yet the Balinese seem fine, so I guess I'll be fine also...what the hell... a little asphyxiation never hurt anyone. Stopped at a bookstore to get a map...thought I'd buy one of Bali for I intend to rent a car...but the map is 50,000 rupiahs, about \$5.00...so I settle for one of Ubud and local area...that's the one to start with anyway. Spent twenty minutes trying to locate Monkey Forest Road on it until I finally realize that's its name has been changed to Wanara Wara. I start to drink a lot of water, but never seem to have to piss. I kept getting disoriented, couldn't hold any landmarks in my mind...that's how intensely sensory Ubud is...I couldn't seem to differentiate stores or even streets. There are small green signs at the head of streets, but not at any intersection. Jalen road, OK, Jalen Raya...main road...Jalen Hanuman, Jalen Dewisita...basically a square, but where on the street am I, and what direction to walk to get back.

I have to walk until I come to somewhere, like the soccer field that is along Dewisita and Wanara Wara to figure out basically where I am... this disorientation due to sensory overload is the primal current I am experiencing. Not unpleasant though, just let's me know how complicated life can be and how little I have...to be aware of getting

through Costa Mesa, to the movies or to Golden Dragon, the best Chinese restaurant. What kind of minds these people have to put order to all that is happening. Nature is the same...abundance, where plants of all descriptions are growing...in, about, around, under, over, and through each other...where the ground itself is unseen except where people have put paths, roads, alleys...layers of growth, stands of bamboo, Papaya trees, gigantic reeds, towering over the middle level of trees...infinite depths; fields upon fields of perception and the breezes and winds moving every thing natural, undulating dance of life...a shooting light, a shockingly blue bird, red bill flashing through the branches, iridescent blue butterfly, a lightshow on wing...the air is alive...it's afternoon, I'm not even hungry and finally find myself standing in front of Pertiwi.

Pertiwi has a new section in the back of the property...magnificent swimming pool of deep blue tile, an attached restaurant with whicker chairs, a full staff and absolutely no guests. I dive in and my body torpedoes across the length of the pool, ahh, the cool water my sweat merged and washed off, and idly floating with the clouds let loose, and a fresh breeze cooling my chest...the sun moves slowly across the sky as my body merges and slow breathing a meditation, a floating meditation. Eventually I climb the stairs back into the liquid air, and the sun sets quickly from light to dark in about a couple of breaths. That's OK; I just wander back down the walkway to my bungalow.

Dinner is an adventure. There are no streetlights, but there is light coming from the storefronts. Low wattage and somewhat hypnotic. I stick to the frontage road, wandering up and down, checking out the menus, which read of *satay*, meat barbequed on stick, rice, *sayur*, veggies, and a place to get pizza and spaghetti, Indonesian style with a group of white people munching away. Finally I settle on Wynon's Café, a lush garden restaurant that is narrow but deep, out door areas covered with bamboo, the roof, open sides with Western and Japanese style sitting arrangement...ferns, flowers, trees around each section each served by a crew of servers...one pregnant, all young in sarongs and always the sweet smile.

I order a chicken, *ayam*, dish with veggies and *nasi*, rice. A couple of rolls and bottled cold water. The Hindus are caste centered. The top of the hierarchy are the Brahmans, the priestly caste. Their names all start with *Ida Bagus*. The next caste is Kasatriyas, the warriors and government officials. Their names start with *Anuk Agung*. The *Wesia* are merchants and their names start with *I Gusti*. The lowest caste is *Sudra*. 90% of the people are in this caste, including artists. All their children are named in order of birth: *Wayan*, first born, *Made*, second born, *Ngoman*, third born, and *Ketut*, fourth born. Regardless of gender, that what they are called. My name would be Schiesel *Nyoman*, third born in my family. They get a kick out of it when I say that to their question, *Siapa Nama Kamur*, "What is your name?" Anyway, foods good, but too little quantity.

After dinner many people are out on the street selling tickets to cultural programs at the local temple or at the Ubud palace grounds. I'm not into it tonight...just head back to the room after watching the teams play soccer at the village field. Like kids world wide, but not rough. They play fast, but no tripping or body contact. They play like they are, nice people. Walking back to my room I walk carefully because the sidewalk is made of concrete slabs that cover the open sewer that run below, and all the concrete slabs are not whole. Many are broken or off center so they tilt, and if you aren't paying attention, you can kiss your ankle off. I don't understand what happened on the way back to

Pertiwi. How could I have passed it? Anyway I turned back, and I couldn't believe it I missed it again. What's going on? I must have walked back and forth three or four times before it suddenly was there. It has to be the sensory overload and the dim lighting. Nothing is distinct at night, its all shadows.

Sleep well after showering off...hand held shower. Lay down, no clothes, no sheets, fan on low. It's humid and hot. It's only 8:30 p.m., but I've had enough...like a little kid, runs till out of gas regardless of the time. Wake up around 2:00 a.m. and look out the window. Balinese rooms have large windows that don't open up, but above them there are grates of bamboo covered with screening and that's how the air moves. I notice the same arrangement in the bathroom, open, but no screens. I wait for the mosquito attack, but surprisingly, there are no mosquitoes...even when sitting on the veranda outside at dark, no mosquitoes...hmmm. Then, also I have seen only a few birds, and very few bugs. What's up? DDT? Did they spray the whole island? Hey, I'm taking toxic malaria pills and no mosquitos. Anyway, got up and standing naked in the dark room, looking out, in the subdued moon light with a faint covering of clouds I see a tree full of some kind of fruit like giant berries high up on the branches. Then I see something fly by like a giant moth, not a bird, no, wow, fruit bats...and then my eyes pick out more of them coming and going. I walk out of the room and sit on the porch, just checking them out as they swoop onto the fruit munching away. Yep, definitely not in California any more...must be the tropics. In the morning all the fruit has been stripped from the tree.

Have another wonderful breakfast. Day two and I feel like I've been here for a week. As soon as I walk out of Pertiwi I am approached by a young man who wants to be my guide. All day for only 75,000 rupiahs. About \$8.00. Take me around. I arrange for the following day...I want to go into a temple, but I need a sarong, so I start to look for one. Get some prices going up Monkey Forest Road to the Palace, take a left on *Jalen Raya*, anyway first I want to see the Nekka Museum which the guide book says is the place to start to get an overview of Balinese art. An elderly lady calls me into her shop and she sells me my first purchase...a batik sarong and waistband for 20,000 rupiahs. She is very gentle and she shows me how to wrap it. She starts speaking to her husband who brings forward a bag of fruit. She opens one, calling it *rambutan*; a red fruit with a skin of soft black spikes, and inside is a white pulp that she actually pops into my mouth before I can protest. To say no was not possible. I was like a child and she my grandmother, and in an instant I was chewing it and it tasted great...What of hygiene...disease warnings, never eat the fruit especially from the hands of a vendor...Oh well, out the window on the second day. Leaving grandma, walking down *Jalen Raya* wasn't I on my way to the Nekka...told it was only half a mile from the hotel...of course about ninety degrees and one click short of one hundred percent humidity. At the bottom of the first hill I am approached by another guide who tells me of an ongoing ceremony at a local temple. What the hell, got to get started for real somehow. Got into his Daihatsu van and off we go.

He tells me that his name is Rai Dharma, family of wood carvers, "*Ukiran Kayu*." On the way I explain that I am an artist and am here in Bali for three weeks to specifically make contact with artists. His English is OK and he seems to understand what I'm saying...the why of my trip to Bali. Art in America is influenced too strongly by commercial considerations...for me in the 60's and 70's when I first got into art I couldn't find meaning in it unless it had a socially consciousness raising theme. Art for

art wasn't for me. I wouldn't sell it either, so I gave it to friends. When I first got to Berkeley in 1964 I gave an art piece of mine to a friend. A few days later I saw that he no longer had it. He told me that he gave it to one of his friends. I couldn't believe he gave it away. He challenged me in that and said that once given away one no longer has an attachment with conditions. I was just starting to get high at the time, seeing psychedelic posters with negative space images that would suddenly flash up and he was saying that Art was in the giving, not the object with its meaning as a possession. Talk of mind expanding.

Later I saw a Mandala, a Tibetan sand painting constructed over a month by a team of monks. It symbolized life and in painting it the Mandala absorbed the ills of the community. After a ceremony, the monk leaned over this most beautiful art piece, with intricate and extensive detailing in the colors of heaven and leaning over swiped the sand, mixing the colors and erasing the form. It was the most glorious piece of work that I had yet witnessed and it wasn't preserved, an attempt at immortalization, but rather it remerged with the earth and in that, the spirit of the Mandala was reconnected to the greater energy. This art was an extension of spirit, brought forth for a "healing" and when it received the illness, remerged with the healing energy of life. Art then became to me a form of giving by Spirit for the rejuvenation and continuation of life. To celebrate states of birth, growth, and transition. In this way I was educated in a personal connection through art with the very source of life...art instructed me in its spiritual manifestation when I cared to live in this way, which I do.

Sharing this teaching, Art as healing, as a giving and a sharing, was not well received by my artist peers who all sought to make it financially by selling their work. Spiritualizing Art, a Shaman tradition was another aspect not well received, but me the newly awakened me... one who knew now the All of Life viewpoint was correct. Hmm. When I first saw Balinese art in a store in Palm Springs I was immediately deeply touched by its life force...objects true, and yet imbued with Spirit. Balinese Art is a living art, a living part of daily life, fully integrated and deeply meaningful. When I chose to go on this vacation I chose Bali in order to meet these types of artists who lived in this alive way. I chose to come to a culture, which is still building its temples, not just preserving the past and the work of long ago traditioned artists. Ahh, to have come to a culture in which its people appreciated and value the Art that resides in everyone. Everyone having a personal connection to Spirit, a living art.

Through our drive this day, in sharing this with Rai, his smile communicates an understanding where I seek relationships and not just the artist's objects. I feel very connected to Rai and he and I have been pulled together for this experience. There are many truths within Truth as time in Bali reveals. We drive the winding roads until we arrive at the Elephant Cave temple in Goa Gajah. I only know where it is because I looked it up in the guidebook. In fact, I've no actual clue to how I got here; the roads are poorly signed, if at all, and its crazy, but it must be the over stimulation of a billion details that I see here in the tropics. Rai remains with the van because as he explained that someone died in his village and at this time he is "unclean," until after the cremation ceremony, which is a week or so away. The Elephant Cave is a temple area so he can't enter this or any temple until after the ceremony. He sends me on my way with an encouraging smile, saying don't worry, "I'll be here when you come back."

I walk immediately into a craft area, many tiny shops where everything touristy can be had. The sales people aren't aggressive so I pass quickly through...walking down a long pathway after paying 3,000 rupiahs, which is like thirty cents. I put on the sarong, got to have respect...and immediately I am taken in by the way the path weaves its way down into a canyon, lush large leaved trees, just like in the photos. Green, iridescent green, neon green. I am knocked out by the temple grounds; its four very large bathing pools with elaborate Hindu sculptures. Getting to the bottom of the path a teenager walks up to me and just starts shooting the breeze in really good English. "What's my name? Where am I from? Am I married?" He uses my camera to take a picture of me down with the statues in the baths, telling me that the water coming from the statues' mouths are the "Waters of Youth." Hmmm.

The Elephant Cave has Ganesha carvings, the elephant boy Hindu God that sweeps away all obstacles. Elephant Cave...Ganesha...yeah, that fits. The cave opens to a hall cut out of the mountain and progresses to two small chapels. Very poor lighting. One chapel has a small shrine and the other has a number of lingam forms; the male sign of creativity resting on a flat stone, the *yoni*, the female principal of fertility. Women come here to become receptive/pregnant. My young friend then takes me up a trail to a meditation cave and starts to tell me how his brother was in an accident. The family is poor and can't afford medical treatment. He is leading me on in more ways than one. He then asks for a guide fee. I offer him 10,000 rupiahs, but get taken for another 10,000. It's a bad ending to the "tour." It's not the money, but the hustle. Back in the van, Rai tries to explain that setting the fee at the beginning is the best way. The guidebook said the same, but I just don't have the feel yet for how this is played out. "So Rai, how much do I owe you?" He replies, "Because you are an artist, and I want to be your friend, friendship before money, only 100,000 rupiahs, or about \$10.00 for everything...transportation and guide." More than fair and in perfect spirit with the whole Bali trip. Can't believe how nicely this is all working out.

Rai asks if I'd like to see some really fine art work, not to buy, just to see. "Sure." That's the only way I'm going to meet the artists. We head out and Rai begins to share with me about his life. His mother died when he was seven, father remarried and had three sons and a daughter. Rai's stepmother doesn't like Rai and father placates her. Everyone is an adult, but the youngest stepbrother is spoiled. Rai explains that he is a woodcarver and his stepbrother removes Rai's name from the bottom of his carvings and sells them as his own. His father knows, but won't do anything in order to keep peace with his wife. Instead of living at the family compound, Rai and his wife moved to a house in a small village from where the wife is from. Rai asks me not to say anything when we get to his father's place of business in the town of Mas, which is south of Ubud.

Rai Gallery is just off a main road, the only main road. We park along the side of a building and getting out there is a porch and on the porch about six men and a woman are seated carving away at sculptures at various stages of completion. They use chisels without wooden handles, hitting the chisels with a small wooden mallet. Each carver has innumerable chisels from large to exceptionally narrow, those for doing the finest detail work. I look at the work they are doing, sitting there with the wood between their legs, some very large and others less so in size. Each piece is exceptional to my eye. The men are dressed in loincloths only, just sitting there carving, nothing ostentatious and from

between their legs comes masterpieces. Kind of like just a bunch of laborers who just happen to be carving instead of digging or picking. Knocks me out.

Even though this is his family's place no one really greets him, but as he explained there is family tension. I can relate to that. He leads me away from the carvers into the first of three galleries. The first gallery is chock full of small to medium sized carving of busts, figures of varying themes, but most are of the Rama and his wife, Sita. Rai informs me that they are carved of various woods: ebony, mahogany, hibiscus and crocodile wood. Ebony is the hardest wood and most difficult to carve and crocodile is the softest kind of like balsa wood and easiest and quickest to carve. The pieces are priced accordingly. I can't believe the detail. It's exactly what I imagined.

Rai tells me that some of the pieces took three to four months to complete. I'm like a child in a candy store. I'm up and down the aisles...there's hundreds of carvings. It's incredible, incredible that as Rai leads me to the second gallery that I haven't even begun to see quality work. The sculptures in the second gallery are of larger pieces, where the figures are standing in a landscape of trees, flowers, rocks, streams, and the size allows for even finer detail. On one wall of the second gallery are the relief carvings, from one foot square to four feet by six feet...full landscapes with figures on chariots, village scenes with people at work, each tree is finely detailed and the scenes are multi-layered, each level overlapping the next. Amazing four levels of scenes. The skill in carving is equivalent to the finest European work of the Renaissance. I'm not saying better, but absolutely on an equal level. The fantastic thing is that these sculptures are contemporary; the carvers are still alive doing their work. This is not history, this is the current moment. Wow! The gallery is not a room in a museum...living art and the artists are people to get to know. I'm in heaven when Rai smiling at me says would I like to look at the third gallery. Third gallery, you got to be kidding.

In the Third Gallery are a number of life-sized carvings, similar religious theme, yet because of their size, beyond comprehension again to detail, dimension, and depth. One of the sculptures was the scene of a cremation ceremony in full relief, and as I walked around the sculpture my eyes were not capable of absorbing the depth of detail. I would have to come back a number of times to fully begin to perceptually comprehend this level of art. And I did return many times. Rai informed me that these works were accomplished by his father. Along one wall is a shelf with pieces in ebony, mahogany, and hibiscus that Rai tells me are his work...his work, I'm hanging out with one of the earth's greatest artists. He explains his father started him out when he was about twelve. He'd go to school in the morning - the students in Bali are on a split schedule because of insufficient classrooms and teachers - and carve with his father in the afternoon. He showed me some of his work when he was fourteen, reliefs, and they were better than anyone could do in the U.S.A., or so I believe. His modesty, he says they are not of the caliber of a Balinese master, but OK for being fourteen. We spent about an hour looking at different samples, and then he told me that he wanted to take me to another town that focused on, *Lukisan*, paintings. Each village in this area is really a community of a certain kind of artists. One village is wood sculptures, another village does paintings, and another village specializes on weavings.

I came to Bali because in the whole world this is where Art is alive and where Art is an integral to life. The way Balinese women move and act; it's a movement of dance. Well, in the gallery that Rai drove up to named, Petruk Art Gallery in the town of Botuan,

I was about to enter another dimension. Here also there is a progression of galleries. The first of the rooms is more of the touristy commercial kind...good work, but done fairly quickly. It was in the second room where traditional works were hung. High detail landscapes, village life before Western contact. The paintings were of religious ceremonies, temples, dances and scenes of various stories of the Balinese Hindu faith. They were very good, yet when I was guided into the third gallery, there leaning against an easel was the painting of my imagination. Also a landscape village scene around the theme of water as a stream cascades from the mountains, down into a village through a series of waterfalls. In the lower portion of the painting are stone carvers working on a masterpiece of *Wisnu*, mounted on the celestial bird *Garuda*. The colors are intense as if light is coming through the painting. The painting is of a village of people who live in intimacy with the aspect of the Supreme that brings the waters of life, around which all life depends and revolves. Right off, no needing to look for it, just like Rai coming into my life, here was the painting I came for.

It's very simple. One opens to spirit and spirit manifests. I asked if the artist was available. I needed to meet the artist. I needed to connect the work to the artist. Yes, he was available; in fact he was on the porch outside the third gallery working on a piece. A small young man, on a single crutch with a very much shortened and deformed leg, with bright eyes and the mesmerizing Balinese smile approached me. I smiled at the artist and saw his wonderfully light filled spirit. The painting is him. They were connected and one. I came to Bali to meet artists, to relate and to take home a symbol of that relationship to help me in my spiritual work in Orange County, California. I came to hook-up a direct line from Bali to me in California. I needed to know that these artists exist in the possibilities of our world. After a reasonable and mutually satisfying negotiation we exchanged our life's work, his painting and my money that I get from my work helping others and getting paid for this service. His art to help keep me centered in my effort to keep helping others in a culture that centers on commerce and profit. His service and my service connected and intertwined. The artists name is Imod Muliasta, and it is in our eyes that we soar soul to soul.

Back at Pertiwi for a swim, alone in the pool, flowering trees, fast moving clouds above as I float like a lotus pad, quietly. A waitress came over and asked if I would enjoy something to drink...orange juice. She brought out fresh squeezed, not really orange, but rather a strong green tint. It tasted like a cross of Orange and Kiwi – good. We began to talk after she asked me my name, “*Siampa nama kamur?*” She asked me my profession and I tried to explain about being the Volunteer Coordinator for Project Together, a mentoring program for emotionally involved children. She couldn't really grasp the concept of emotional problems. I tried the word “psychology,” but no luck. She understood English; just the concept of children with emotional problems was beyond her experience. I tried to explain like doctor for the mind, but no, that didn't work. Finally, I just came to say I was a teacher. No Balinese I spoke to grasped the concept of emotional problems. I knew that in Asia people don't go outside the family with problems, but this was a bit more. Back to the room, showered, and out I go for dinner.

After dinner I buy a ticket for 20,000 rupiah, about \$2.00 to see a *Barong* and *Legong*, a dance performance at the Palace grounds. Getting there early of course, I get a seat in the front row. It's dark so the area of the performance is lit up. At the far end is a stone arch, multi-tiered, with carvings of fierce faces, probably to chase away bad energy.

Soon all of the seats are taken, lots of Japanese, a smattering of Europeans, a couple of Americans, about 200 people. Basically the dances are ritualized with the idea of balancing the negative forces with the forces of good. The women dancers are in their late teens, the men seem to be in their 30's. Everyone is in full dress, scintillating, multi-colored sarongs, chest wrappings, headdresses of fantastic designs, full-face make-up. A compliment of musicians are lined up along the sides leading up to the "doorway" into another realm.

The musician group is a full *gamelan* orchestra. Their instruments are a kind of marimba but made of brass instead of wood, and each man, and there are about twenty in the orchestra, plays a different size *gamelan* so the tones of each *gamelan* varies. While initially to my ears the music is a cacophony of sound that gradually changes and with the visual accompaniment of the dancers the sound lifts me into a transcendental dimension of energy. In addition to the *gamelan* there are a complement of gongs, vibrating sounds from high to the deepest of low bass, with a never-ending vibration. Two drummers and two flute players, a single stringed or two stringed violin type instrument played with a bow and held upright, almost a voice and definitely paired with the flutes. The violin is called a *rebab* and the flutes *suling*. The sound of the orchestra is exotic, loud, a seeming jumble of sound, but perfectly synchronized with internal melodies and rhythms bending in around and through each other. It took me a few nights of attending the dances before the *gamelan* music began to take a form in which I could perceive the essential underlying order of rhythm and melody.

The women dancers are undulating in their slow controlled movement, strong leg postures with bodies bent at an angle, arms extended in stylized forms, moving in a number of directions, fingers vibrating like humming bird wings, eyes large, dark, lips smiling intensely and all perfectly harmonious with the music and the story line. The male dancers are total counterpoint...brisk, powerful, definite hard movements, full posturing, sometimes partly masked, or faces elaborately painted. Their costumes are even more outstanding in color and design than are the women's. Can't help taking flash photos along with everyone else. I came with the intention of respecting the performance by not taking the photos, just lost it in the excitement never wanting to lose the imagery. Year, sure. I just lost it this night and every night thereafter that I attended a dance. About a third of the pictures I took were of the evening dances, hope some of them come out.

An hour and a half later, or who knows about time, its over. Within seconds of the final applause and everyone was captured by the experience, all the performers are gone. When I walk back out on *Jalen Raya*, I see the musicians shooting by, in full dress on their scooters. All the performers are regular folk. Regular people by day, deities by night as they take on the various roles of their stories. Each block is like a tiny village within the town of Ubud, and each block has its temple and its nightly performances. The person serving food, or selling at their store are the performers that so enchant me each evening. This knocks me out. This really blows my mind. This performance group are people whose art is their life, not in just what they sell, but in the way they make it an integral part of their world life. Walking home, the streets are deserted, from hustling and bustling to no one on the streets. Contrast. There are no nightclubs in Ubud...no tourist hangouts with people drinking and getting crazy like down in the beach towns. This is their home, with tourists as guests.

Back at the room again, the end of day two and my mind is stretching. I lie there under the slowly turning fan, the heat still in the air, but not bad, and I'm tripping and hardly in my body. It's more than idyllic. I've arranged with Rai for another run about the next day. Trying to accept that I'm not ready to move on from Pertiwi. I have three nights paid for; tomorrow I'll extend for a few more days. It starts to rain; I can't resist, I throw the sarong on and go out and sit on the porch watching it come down through the lazy yellow glow coming from the ever so weak ground lights. Suddenly there's the crack and boom of lightening, and seconds later its like some one has turned on Niagara Falls. It's coming down, but not for long, probably an inch of rain in ten minutes. Then it stops, just like that, just like that in deed. I wonder if the bats will be back, but they didn't come...guess the fruit on the other trees aren't ripe yet.

Breakfast isn't the buffet, but a choice of Western or Indonesian. I choose Indonesian and get a noodle dish with a side of Jackfruit, papaya, and banana. Before breakfast I took a walk along the rice fields in back of Pertiwi. The dirt road leads between a few farm houses with chickens scratching, and ducks being led or rather encouraged on by a little elderly woman with her sarong pulled up into a short skirt, and old torn shirt and headband. She's holding onto a long piece of bamboo with a bright piece of red colored cloth at the top...the ducks are in a recently harvested rice paddy eating what's left. I turn back. Anyway I have already walked this way on my first morning. In walking back to Pertiwi I just keep on going and walk into the rice fields on the other side where the dirt road is overgrown with grass with puddles from the rain. Along the side of the road is an irrigation channel carrying water from where I don't know, to be dropped into flood the rice. Lots of plastic bottles caught in it along its way. What's with the plastic bottles? I see them everywhere during my stay, hundreds and hundreds of plastic bottles...I guess the irrigation ditches are the dumps for plastic. The tourists drink only bottled water. One morning I saw a male housekeeper carrying a trashcan full of bottles and watched him walk to the back of the property and just toss them into a canyon. The canyon was the dump for the plastic bottles except at the bottom of the canyon was a river that when flooded caught up the bottles and I supposed carried them down to the sea. Reminded me of when I visited a Hopi village and was surprised that they just threw their paper trash out their door where it would accumulate until the afternoon wind came roaring through and blew everything out and over the side of the Mesa. Hmmm.

The road meanders between the paddies, elderly men are out in them, bent over, replanting the rice. Further, coconut palms edge the paddies along with giant bamboo, and a drop off into another narrow but steep canyon chocked with grass, and in a small opening a beautiful, delicately formed richly tanned cow with huge black eyes, like a deer's tethered next to a small thatched open sided shed. The cow is gorgeous...how can a cow be gorgeous? It can. Large white birds with light yellowish long beaks, like large egrets, but not, are spotted through the iridescent green of the rice paddies. They are the only birds I see.

My eyes are dancing in my head; at last my eyes are seeing the colors they were designed for...Seeing! The difference from seeing in California and seeing in Bali is akin to the increased ability of computers today from those of the 1980's. From 250K to 80 gigabytes. My eyes can't get enough, my brain is powering up...the amount of light filled energy components scream into my head through my visual ports...at last energy to more

fully power my brain...Light is the source of energy and here in Bali it's wide open in the best of ways...green, Green Power absorbers. I don't even know this is happening on a conscious level, but subconsciously my brain cells are waking up to do what they were made for.

After getting back, breakfasting, showering I meet up with Rai in the lobby. Today he told me he is going to take me to *Tampaksiring* where the *Gunung Kawi* is located in a valley...a series of royal tombs along the sacred *Pakrisan River*. The tombs are from the 11th century. They are carved right out of the rock, with facades carved in relief to resemble the fronts of temples. The tombs are down a 300 step stairway, but to get to the stairs, as is common, one has to walk through a gauntlet of merchants quite aggressive, in this location, in their effort to get me, the tourist to stop and shop. Old women approach me and actually grab my arm with surprisingly strong grips, which I actually have to break loose from, pleading, "On my way back," because of course there is no other way back. I pay the entrance fee, put on the required sarong and sash and begin the descent. It's a deep valley, always the abundance of green...fern, coconut palm trees, rice paddies, each moment more intense than the last. It is hot, humid and I'm soaked and soon I'm sucking water out of my bottle. At the bottom of the stairs...another world, huge structures just like the guidebook described where the kings and wives were entombed.

First, a small wooden temple with wooden statues carved into the temple with faces that would definitely chase away unwanted spirits. The intricate designs...the key word is intricate...everything I've seen is intricate...detailed finely like the magic of turning the life force into a frozen form. I sit in the shade of the temple, not much available shade as the sun is nearly overhead. As I look up into the temple I see that the posts and beams are painted in colors of red, green and blue. There is something about this combination that emanates spirit. There is a breeze and I can hear it, yes Hear it moving softly, gently about. After a while I head to the small bridge that crosses the narrow river. I'm coming down a few stairs when both feet slip and I slide briefly out of control, but fortunately my body is moving in concert and after I slip a few feet I regain my balance. Yep, still upright. Whew, that could have been bad. There is a small hut just up from the bridge, with yes, another elderly lady, but thankfully she doesn't pursue me. Across the bridge, still with my arms attached to my body, although the fingerprints are just fading, I wander to another section of carved walls then back up along the cliffs to the main section where the king and his favorite wives were entombed.

This section is really ancient feeling. There is a stairway leading up into an overhang, but I don't feel it's right to go into it...so, why? Don't know. Don't feel invited. Not the right moment. I see a few other small temples further on and I go over to them. Again the intricately designed woodcarvings, some painted. I'm alone...it's quiet. I am in a sacred place, alone with the endless timelessness and it feels like a deep, very deep but gentle massage. After some passage of the sun overhead I come back into awareness and a few yards away, on a dais, a risen platform with a thatched bamboo roof is an old man. Where did he come from? He stands up and comes over to me and with a big smile tells me to come on, saying, "I'll show you what you want to see." All right, and right behind him I follow to those stairs that rise up into the king's area. The walls open up into an alleyway where one can hear ancient echoes. He leads me into a cave. I'm following his voice because I can't see anything...the contrast between light and the

sudden dark blinding me. “Step over here.” I do, to the side of the entrance and I can then see in the faint light. My guide tells me this where the king meditated. The cave is carved out with a depressed walkway around a rectangular protrusion of stone. At the back is an area where one could sit and meditate. After a while I’m taken to more caves where the king’s wives were laid to rest. It’s so old, the feeling, and then somehow we’re back to the dais where we started. Is the elderly man real? Is he speaking fluent English? He looks into the distance, he disconnects...his body sits cross-legged, but he’s no longer there or rather here. Strange, so anyway I get up and just wander off.

I start the walk back cross the bridge and up to the left where the elderly lady was sitting in front of her shop and now there is an elderly man, small and of course, smiling at me, and waving me over. I’m hot and I get a Coke and sit on the steps next to the man who is carving a coconut. He’s doing a relief carving on the surface of the coconut of Sita and Rama in a forest...really a combination of relief and filigree, naturally in the finest most intricate detail. There are Balinese carvers for every possible material. On the way past the shops at the top of the stairs I briefly saw carvings in bone and deer antler that were as complete as the ivory carvings of balls inside balls done by the Chinese carvers that I always come across in Chinatown. The coconut carver looked about my age, fifty-five and he tells me of an Ashram for the study of yoga that is close by and how his carvings are world famous, and people who come from all over the world to study there line up to buy his work. “Only \$150 American.” The work is great, he’s right it’s fabulous, but \$150. “OK, you pay what you want. How much do you want to pay? You can have one of my carving for the price you set.” I’m just in awe of the skill and design and buying it isn’t what I’m into...I can’t spend even a minute with an art work before I’m pushed into negotiations for it. I’m irritated and I definitely don’t want to experience irritation. It was actually exhausting me to fend off the sales people at the hundred shops I had to pass as I made my way into the valley. I shuddered at the thought of having to go back through the line of shops on the way out. I don’t like the pressure and I don’t like my attitude about it. So I change my attitude and as I walk back up the three hundred steps, the pop out of the air, the old man who toured me through the tombs. He takes each step as a totality...his rhythms, no rush, each step moving below his feet; everyday he says he makes the walk. Halfway up there’s a view of the valley and it’s power moves my attention from the steps, my breath, the heat and humidity and when I resume the climb, the man isn’t anywhere in sight...just not there.

Rai is sitting in his van reading a newspaper. The van is in the sun, its got to be cooking in the van; he isn’t bothered, not perspiring...just reading the paper. He smiles at me, apologizes again for not being able to go into the temples with me. As we drive he tells me more about his conflict with his youngest stepbrother who is selling his work after shaving Rai’s name off his work. I share a bit about Karma and how this life is a cleansing of past relationships and the opportunity to expand one’s ability to be unconditionally loving. Karma, his stepbrother doesn’t even know why he is behaving the way he is, nor does anyone else; Karma is deeply subconscious. His face lights up in recognition of the basic teaching of Hindu spirituality. It’s in how we deal with the situation that we become empowered. Balancing the energies by choice.

I share a bit about my relationship with my brother, how we’ve been in conflict our whole lives, not knowing the source of the tension; caught up in it. Many attempts to bring it to awareness only to have it fade within days; clouds of Karma casting shadows

onto our lives. As it happens in such a discussion, where I'm sharing, intuition emerges. Rai was sharing about forgiveness, and then I experienced a moment of clarity and expressed that I needed to forgive myself for my past life transgressions. I felt that unless I could forgive myself, after so many years of dedicated effort to develop into a nice, caring and safe person that the conflict couldn't release until forgiveness of myself could be accomplished. I asked Rai if there was a Hindu ceremony for the forgiveness of self for past life transgressions. He said that actually there was such a ceremony. It just kind of hung there, didn't develop further except for the memory, of the intuition, which isn't just hanging there.

Rai starts to say that because of my interest in carving that he could take me to get a set of carving tools. That's exciting, for when I saw the carvers their tools were so differently designed than those in the West. A while later we are driving up a narrow country road. Coming down the other way is a group of Japanese eco-bike riders. I admire their courage for being on bikes given the insanity of the driving patterns. Any way a short time later Rai parks on the side of the road. There is a short, steep path up to this small group of buildings. In the front is a small iron forge, and there is a man squatting in front of a small anvil, beating out the shape of a knife as his young assistant works a hand held bellows. Rai greets him and speaks for a moment while I stand to the side. The man looks at me, smiles, a few teeth missing and gestures me to sit. Sitting is squatting and this is so for real, stepping back into time, yet in this time too. What was, still is, if one can only see, and to be led to where all time exists simultaneously...then what is time?

Rai let me know that I can get a set of thirty chisels for \$35.00, and that's a fair price. Rai checks out each chisel, rejects some and they are replaced. Soon I have a complete set wrapped in paper. I ask if I can take a photo...no problem. It's moving being here, moving me beyond and behind the façade of life. As I shake the smith's hand I notice all the burn scars on his extended hand and arm. Hands that make! Real hands used for real creations of his culture; the tools for carving the wonderful pieces of art and heart

Back at the room about 3:00 p.m., walking Ubud I began looking for another place to stay. The travel book spoke about home stay, where people have rooms to rent in bungalows built behind the main house. Usually in a garden setting, breakfast included. I told the Pertiwi manager of my intent. He immediately smiled and informed me he had such a room at his home. "Let's go." A short way outside of Ubud, up a main road he pulled into a driveway. On one corner of what looked like a small shopping center was a walkway. Around the building it opened up into a small courtyard. Sitting along a wall was a young woman with a baby on her lap leaning back into her chest. She was feeding him in this posture with a spoon...kind of back handing food into his opened mouth. The room was OK, overlooked a wall that opened up on a rice paddy, but it wasn't just right...too close to the main road and felt squeezed in.

After being dropped off at Pertiwi I started wandering the streets. Along Hanuman Rd., I saw a dirt road coming off it with a number of signs and one read Sulendra's home stay. I turned up the road, past some chickens scratching around, past a tiny store that looked a bit like a cave, past another intersection with a road being regraded; the road was breaking down with broken asphalt, holes in the road, and as I passed a small laundry a man approached and asked if I was looking for a place to stay.

He led me past the sign for Sulendra's, just around the corner to the Hautama's home stay. I liked it immediately, well kept courtyard, family temple, and on the second floor was a group of very large rooms with a double and single bed, large bathroom with Western style toilet, a porch with two chairs and wicker table...all for 45,000 rupiahs a day, or about \$5.00 with breakfast. I left a \$2 deposit with the understanding that I would move my stuff over in a couple of days as I had already paid for the next day at Pertiwi.

The following day I just kicked back, wandering through Ubud, just checking it out at the next level. It passed uneventfully and toward the end of the afternoon I began to pack my stuff...so much and I thought I had brought so little. The next morning I called Mardi, the man at Hautama, who had said he'd come for me. Well he did, but on a motorcycle and I had the backpack and another bag also. "No problem." He took my large backpack, put it in front of him and rode off with it. First trip to Hautama. One half hour later he was back, with me on the back, bag over my shoulder, holding on for dear life as he roared through the nightmare of traffic, and the beginning of rain. Still, we made it safely, unpacked, and around noon Rai turned up telling me that he wanted to show me some more art, close by. He had been told by the people at Pertiwi where I had moved to.

We went to a textile shop. Outside of the shop were groups of ladies creating Batik and Ikat, woven textiles. The Batik ladies sit on a mat, four around an iron pot on a low flame with wax melting, and small crafted tin scoopers that have a tube spout and they can control the flow of wax to make the patterns. The Ikat textiles are woven, geometric designs and other patterns. Rai is hanging out with other guides so after a watching the women for a while, I go inside. A sales person is besides me as I enter the shop. Textiles on the walls, piled, hanging, shapes, designs endless. I am looking for hand woven. I'm told that everything is hand woven. Incredible designs and sizes from single, double, queen and King size like covers for a bed. Finally I see a pattern that I really like not for myself, but for Kim, my girlfriend. They want \$50.00 American, I start bargaining, no \$20.00 more like it. Rai told me to always start at half and fair would be like 25% less than the asking price. Finally, after walking away a few times, settle on \$35.00. A lot in Bali, but it's got to take a great deal of time to make this piece of fabric. Pay for it and I feel great that I'm learning the cultural skill of bargaining. I promised Kim to get a number of textile pieces and now I have one.

I meet Rai outside and we head off to Batuan village where there is a ceremony going on. Rai parks across the street and I cross, tying on my sarong. Give donation. Following me are women with offerings in baskets balanced on their heads. Each basket is layered with food, flowers and other decorations...like small pagodas. The arrangements are exquisite, each an art piece, precise designs in the placement of the food for color and shape. Of course the flowers are brilliant yellows, whites, and shades of pink. The women's costumes are no less; flowing multilayered and illuminated movement for the women walk in rhythm with the breeze. They carry themselves with an aura of angels into the central temple grounds where tourists like me aren't allowed, but they can be seen over a low wall. There are about a hundred women sitting or kneeling before a dais where the Brahmin priest is bestowing blessings on their food. Outside are the men, sitting under a thatched roof and when I drift over a number of them engage me in a friendly conversation. Hindu life is very active and integral to how one lives one's life. It's interesting how much attention is given to the temples. The statues are dressed

up in yellow sashes, or black and white plaid sarongs, draped around the waists of the figures. The doors to the temples are painted in what looks like gold paint with vermilion contrast, and this is applied to the rich carvings that cover the doors. I head back out of the temple, women are leaving with their offerings, after being blessed they return to their homes and that's what the family eats. The offerings aren't offerings, but their daily meal that they take to the temple to be blessed...and the layout of the food on the bamboo trays that they carry to the temple is their lunch. Incredible. As I leave more women from the village are still making their way into the temple to have their food blessed.

Rai waits for me patiently. He can hangout, no problem. He asks me if I am serious about meeting a carver and getting into carving. I had told him that not only did I want to meet the artists I hoped that I would be able to study carving with one of them. Balinese style of carving. Absolutely! We head for Mas, a town near Ubud, which is known for its woodcarvers. That's where Rai's family shop is. We pull into a driveway next to the village soccer field and that is where I meet the famous mask carver Ida Bagus Anon. Ida Bagus is the designation for the Brahman caste. Rai speaks with Anon for a while and I head into his gallery of masks that is up a short staircase behind his carving area. The masks are exhibited from hooks on the walls. On one wall are carvings of deities, mostly female; Mona Lisa smiles, the lines flowing, the details in the expression of the eyes and lips...the wood is contrasting lightwood with dark swirls running through. On the back wall the masks are the sort used in the religious dances; masks of demons with twisted tusks, bushy eyebrows and the third wall is covered with masks that have been painted with endless coats of paint, smooth white, red lips, almost like Geisha faces without the hair. Anon's mask carving is that of a master. When I come back into the studio Anon is back to carving and Rai tells me that I can start the next day...30,000 rupiahs per day. Anon looks up and smiles and says 9:00 a.m. probably for one half a day. The charge is nominal. I'm very thankful for this exceptional opportunity.

The room at Hautama home stay is comfortable except for the roaches. I tell the manager, Mardi, who is actually the owner's son and they spray the room and dying roaches are here and there when I return from Anon's. I clean them out, wash off, get some dinner and head back to the room. Play some flute then sack out. In the morning, or should I say around 4:00 a.m. I am shocked out of sleep by the frantic crowing of roosters that seem to be in my room. Can't believe the volume of the roosters...every rooster in Ubud must be going off and now I know that there must be a hell of a lot of roosters in Bali. I wonder if the whole island is going off. It's weird, at Pertiwi I never heard a single cock crow, but then I guess that I was in the commercial area, and the home stay is in the residential area. I just had no idea how important cocks are to the Balinese men. I would find out.

I planned to take the *bemos*, the local bus, which is really a van down to Anon's in Mas. Takes about fifteen minutes, but breakfast is late and Mardi offers to take me on his motorbike. It's a short yet exciting ride, over broken roads, dashing through the diesel clouds from trucks that fill the road, around dumped dirt that blocks one of the lanes. At Anon's miraculously intact, in fact Balinese are protected somehow...they don't get into accidents. I'd see a whole family on a motorbike: father, behind mother, behind brother and sister holding on and balanced on the handle bars a baby. The first views of the world for Balinese children is from the handlebars, so a motorbike is a natural extension of their first perceptual processing. By the time they are old enough to ride the motorbike

independently they are totally at one with the machine and the flow of traffic must have its own rhythm that they can discern like a bird riding the airwaves. As I get off the back of the motorbike I feel an intense pain and my right ankle just got branded on the exhaust pipe. Burned it good; a three-inch circle of skin burned...can't believe it. Before I left for Bali I was deeply concerned about getting any kind of cut...fearful of infection in the tropics. It blew my mind...a burn. As I walk into Anon's I show him the burn that is already starting to blister, and he says something to his apprentice who goes into the courtyard and returns with a piece of aloe. He squeezes the aloe and rubs the sap on the burn. I know aloe is good for burns. Anon tells me to get an antibiotic burn cream called Bioplacenton from the *apotek*, the local pharmacy when I get back to Ubud. I'm burned. So what. Ever onward ever forward.

Anon's apprentice has a piece of log quartered. His name is Ketut, that's the name for the fourth child when one is born into the Hindu Sudra Caste. As it turns out Anon will have nothing to do with my mask carving. Ketut motions me to sit on the floor. He places a flat slab of wood between my legs, gives me the piece of log; the wood is from the *Pule* tree, a wood that is softer than pine and harder than balsa. Then Ketut hands me an adz, kind of a hatchet/ machete. Ketut motions me to start cutting off the bark. I'm sitting on my butt with an adz and a chunk of *Pule* wood, but how am I supposed to do this cutting when normally I would be standing with the wood on a worktable? The whole posture thing is totally off. And the adz, with one side flat, the other side curved and the blade side razor sharp. I mean razor sharp. It scares me. I'm not that coordinated and I like to use somewhat dull tools so I don't slice a part of me off. I start...giving the wood a few tentative whacks, primarily trying not so much as to cut the bark, but to not cut off my hand, or slice into my thigh. Ketut watches me with a grin on his face, but the eyes are kind. He takes the adz and shows me how to use it, and then give it back to me. I kind of get it, but when Ketut swings the adz, whole sheets of bark come off. When I do it small chips break loose. I know that I'm not using it well, but the use of the adz is new and intimidating. Still after a while, I kind of get the hang of it and the bark comes off. I show it to Ketut who broadens his ever present smile, takes a pencil and draws a series of lines that show where the next group of cuts must be made to begin to give the rough shape of the mask.

Besides me Ketut is actively carving his own mask. Across the room Anon is carving a large mask that looks like a monster eating a woman. Anon isn't sitting on the floor, rather he sits on a very low seat made of slats of wood and he listens to music of the dances that I have been seeing at night at the temples. The mask he is working on will be worn by the male dancers if he captures the spirit of his work just right. Ketut's movement is sure and precise. His use of the adz, chisels and knives are amazing and more amazing is that he holds the mask he is working on with his feet, flipping the piece of wood to the exact angle he needs to use his tools well. He uses his toes, the arch, and the heel like hands. The cutting edges are inches from his feet, but no problem. I'm blown away; me sitting, bent over just trying to do the cutting in this style is stretching my mind as well as my body. I like this. I like it a lot. Now Anon is playing a tape, sounds like the dialogue of one of the dances. He surrounds himself and his work with spirit. We all work through the morning except for a stop for tea that a lady brings us. I get up every once in a while to unbend my body and to allow my mind to relax so that I

can keep a sharp eye on the sharp blades that I am using. Eventually, enough for today, and I take the *bemos* back to Ubud and walk back to my room for a nap.

After dinner I had bought a ticket to a *Barong*, a religious dance at a local temple. Through out the dance a narrator in, I guess *Sanskrit*, the Hindu religious language, like Latin is to Catholicism, kept up a running dialogue...deep voice, rhythm and pace in tempo with the dancing and the music...it carried one on its patterns of speech to another plane. The temple was off the road, down a path...the stage area was new and smelled of freshly cured concrete. In fact I was early and in the area in front of the stage, where seats would be placed for the audience, a group of elderly Balinese women were having an aerobic class, which in the incongruity of the setting surprised the hell out of me. They were having fun, energetically engaged. Anyway, the tape that Anon was playing while he worked sounded like the *Barong* dialogue. I guess this is a side thought.

Back to splitting from Anon's studio. After a few hours I can sit no longer, my hands are also cramping and so I take my leave. I caught the *bemos* back to Ubud and ask directions to an *apotek*, the local pharmacy where I intend to buy the Bioplacenton burn cream. I am directed to an *apotek* but they don't sell it and am given directions to a larger *apotek* up on Jayan Raya Rd. Twenty minutes later I have the cream. I ask the pharmacist where I can buy a plastic stool. I need to sit when I shower so that I can keep my leg out of the water in order to prevent infection...I definitely don't want to get any water on the burn. He doesn't know, but a customer says he'll take me to a store. He has a motorbike parked outside. Oh no...a motorbike. After getting the ride on his motorbike, I am more than careful of the exhaust pipe. We are parked at a general store, just like the ones back home...a regular non-tourist store...so this is where the locals shop. At the back of the store are plastic goods and I find two step stools, small and short, but they'll have to do. The man who gave me the ride gives me a ride back to my home stay. On the way he tells me that he is from Java, the next island in the Indonesian chain of islands, and that he is trying to open a business with a Balinese partner. People are amazingly nice and helpful and he accepts no pay for his help.

OK, now to shower. The shower is suspended from a hose attached to the wall, but it crimps when I'm seated on the stool and the water can't run. So regardless of my plan to sit, I have to stand, but for some reason I stand on the wrong foot and the water runs right onto the burn, exactly what I didn't want. It blows my mind. Oh well, I finish showering, dry off, and apply the burn medicine with its antibiotic that I hope will kill off the bacteria from the shower water. For the next week I'm very careful keeping the burn dry and I apply the medicine numerous times each day until a healthy scab forms. Thank you Lord.

Each afternoon, after carving with Ketut, Rai takes me to a different temple and for rides into the countryside to satisfy my curiosity. I'm still absolutely confused as to the geography as the roads constantly fuse into one another. One afternoon we drive through a town, up a side road until it comes to the end. Rice paddies stretch off to the right...to the left a valley and in between is a dirt trail. I had been telling Rai that I wanted to walk in nature. Here I am. Rai leads up the trail, which borders an irrigation channel. We walk around the first bend and in the channel is a naked man bathing, with his young daughter scrubbing his back. My goodness, the water doesn't look that clean. The trail is muddy from the daily rains and I have to concentrate on not slipping. I am wearing my tennis shoes, but the footing is treacherous. Rai is wearing flips and is having

no trouble at all. I wonder how he can even keep them on his feet. We start to ascend a hill and the valley stretches down and away, green palms, tall trees, names I wouldn't know and there perched on the edge of a cliff is a small barn with a cow inside. The cow is like the one I saw behind Pertiwi, a knock out, beautiful large deer like eyes, creamy brown hide...its beautiful like in a sensual way...I just want to reach out and touch it. Even the cows are exotic in Bali. The trail is just too muddy for me, so we turn back and when we come to the man bathing, his wife and son have joined him and they are bathing...parents and children all naked. I just advert my eyes...I had read in the tourist book that I would see scenes like this and that nudity was not unusual in the backcountry, as this is how the farm people lived. OK, its so. I want to be cool, give them their space, don't gawk at the naked bodies, take no photos, except in my mind. Pictures I can't take seems that I never forget them.

Another night at Hautama. Downstairs I hear laughing, sounds like a group of young men. I wander down and the youthful manager notices me and smiles. He is sitting in front of a small room with three friends. He invites me to sit down, so I do. He asks me about my day and I share a bit. One of his friends sits next to me and asks my name, where I'm from and if I need a guide. His English is very good. He is different than other Balinese men. He is rugged, built very strong in his upper body, strong is the word and extremely handsome. His clothing is different also. He wears a black leather jacket even in the heat and humidity of the evening. His eyes sparkle and his smile is dazzling. He knows himself and his power. He is forward with his energy, while the other Balinese men hold their strength within. His name is Ketut, also fourth child.

I explain to Ketut that I already have a guide, yet he tries further, explaining that he is a wonderful guide and can take me to many wonderful places. He says he can also bring me anything I want, even a girl. His eye contact is intense, yet warm and overall he's very likeable. I thank him for his offer. I explain that I'm in Bali to get to know people, to meet and share, but I'm not here for sex or other pleasures. Ketut is somewhat surprised and accepts what I say with a serious nod of his head. Mardi, the manager gets up and enters the room, which turns out to be a bedroom with a bathroom behind it. Rap music is being played on a CD player and as he goes into the room he invites me in also. OK, yet because the room is so small the only place to sit is on the bed. There are two other young men in the room already. One is sitting on the floor, so Mardi, Ketut, this other guy and myself are all on the bed. The guy sitting on the floor is eating and on the wall behind him are pin-ups of naked Asian girls, mostly pale skinned Japanese. This totally surprises me.

On the bureau are a number of bottles of alcohol. Ketut sits next to me on the edge of the bed, right next to me so that our legs are touching. The other guys make themselves comfortable by lying head to foot, their legs draped over each other. I feel awkward being so close like this. Definitely, in each other's space at least by Western standards, but hey, this isn't the West, so what, shouldn't personal space also be different here in Bali?

We start talking about the music playing on the CD player and Mardi and Ketut share that they listen mostly to R &B, Hip Hop and Rap...all of which is available on the island; probably pirated from Hong Kong. Yo, Soul Music is worldwide. The guys are very forward with their conversation, which revolves around girls, jobs, places to stay and being on their own. I guess that it's the same with young men everywhere; at least

certain circumstances are universal. I hear from them that when they turn seventeen that they are expected to be on their own, but this isn't really true for Mardi who runs Hautama for his family. It's clear that like everywhere there are those who have and those who don't.

Mardi's family owns property sufficiently large and well placed like here in Ubud where there is a strong economic base of tourism, thus the homestay, Hautama. Without the tourists, no home stay business, which at \$5.00 per day is incredibly affordable for me. In Bali \$5.00 is a large amount of money equivalent to a weeks pay, or even two weeks pay. Having property in a rural town doesn't allow such earnings, which is then limited to farming...growing rice. So Ketut and the other guys come from such families, so they leave their rural home and come to the tourist centers to try to make a living. Ketut does so by being a guide.

Ketut's English being the best acts as an interpreter for some of the other guys. We talk of politics. It's interesting to me. Ketut shares their frustration with the Central Government in Jakarta, which is Muslim. The government of course taxes the Balinese people and businesses, yet returns to Bali, which is Hindu, only a small percentage of the take, leaving Bali with few resources for road repair, schools, etc. School isn't free. Children only go to school if their family can afford the fee. Ketut tells me that there aren't enough schools and teachers because the Central Government doesn't provide the funds, so children go to half-day sessions, some in the morning, others in the afternoon. Without tourism, the economy of the island would collapse. He shares that there really is democracy within Bali, with town meetings where the assembled work out the way things are to be. The temples act as community centers and are an inherent part of Balinese culture and daily life.

The other guys listen to Ketut. The conversation drifts back to girls and sex. Ketut is very popular with the girls, yet he shares that the girl he now loves has doubts about him and he as a result is depressed that she won't give up her current boyfriend for him. I wonder how much ego Ketut has to think this way. I share that since he really is a playboy that she senses that she would be just one more conquest in a series of conquests and that she may have more respect for herself than to allow herself to fall into that kind of relationship. Ketut is sincere and actually seems to question himself. I share that a history of commitment in him is lacking and certain women can sense that. Further, to be in love requires commitment and perhaps should he want a truly loving relationship he would need to develop the ability to be committed and loyal. My suggestion leads to him thinking about changing his overall attitude toward women and making the changes in order for this to happen. He states that he is ready to change. I brought up the image of Rama and Sita, the ideal in relationships and suggested that should he take all his primal energies and mold himself into Rama, then his Sita would come to him. I shared that one doesn't find one's soul mate, that just the opposite, when one lives honestly with integrity this act of life draws the souls together. Here I am in Bali talking this way, integrating the Hindu imagery into my rap...what's happening?

I stayed a while longer then thanked them for their hospitality and went back up to my room. I took out my flute and played for a while and it felt good and the air was open to the sounds and it filled me with Bali and a sense of peace overcame me. Playing the flute on Bali, me a California Krisihna. Man, am I home at last, where my music is at one with the life that one lives? Falling asleep is easy, it's the 4:00 a.m. waking by the

shrill crowing of the cocks that's tough. Some cock contest on who can doodle the loudest probably to establish who is the King of the Roost. I guess I'd have to be a cock to appreciate this. A few hours later I'm on the *bemos* to Anon's to continue the mask carving. The shaping continues with Anon listening to chanting, me following Ketut's guidance. Ketut's method of teaching is perfect. He has started to make a series of cuts on the left side of the mask and then I make an effort to copy his work on the right side. The general shape is coming into being, me seated on the floor, struggling with the posture, bent forward, holding the piece in place with my feet, my hip joints opening up to accommodate the need. Now I'm using chisels, pieces of metal with no wooden handles as there would be with Western tools. It's strange, but I can sense a greater sensitivity and control holding the bare metal handle instead of holding onto a wooden handle.

When I complete copying Ketut's effort, he makes a further series of cuts. He is amazing in all ways. First his feet are like hands, he moves and controls the piece with dexterity. His use of the chisels is masterly. He works the chisel from 360 degrees, from all angles, deftly, precise, and with no hesitation. The blade is less than an inch from his foot as he strikes the mallet, no slipping, no mistakes. I'm into the carving, sitting with two master carvers, how fortunate. Anon continues with his complex and highly detailed carving, Ketut is making his own mask. Each of us concentrating, focused, yet sharing through the work. The atmosphere is unique for me; working while the radio seems to be singing rather than playing the mantras that it is tuned to. Soon enough it's noon and I've had enough for today...back, legs, feet and toes, arms, shoulders, neck and hands...yes, we've all had enough. I get up, pick up my backpack and wave goodbye. Anon nods and says quietly, "See you tomorrow." These are the first words he has spoken to me since I started the carving. I can't help but to wonder why.

Today I don't want to take the *bemos* back to Ubud. I want to walk through the villages that surround Ubud. Mas is the woodcarving center and along its one street are galleries of carvings and I'm looking forward to checking them out. It's midday and the sun has broken out of the clouds, which stand in large masses off in the distance. It's going to rain but not till later. Now the sun is out and it's really hot and humid, but my body doesn't seem to mind. I walk up the road. Of course the sidewalk is totally broken up, so I'm walking mostly on the edge of the road, jumping out of the way of the incessant traffic crowded on the too narrow lanes. I haven't walked two hundred yards when to my surprise, Rai pulls up beside me in his Daihatsu van, a smile on his face, telling me he had come for me at Anon's, but I had just left. OK, so I got in and we head up the road. I really wanted to go the galleries, but I was actually thinking that I would end up at his father's gallery to look at the master pieces there. I didn't want to just look, but more so to absorb. Rai was happy to take me there. I would walk Mas another day; after all I still had two weeks more in Bali.

Walking into Rai Gallery is such an otherworldly experience. The carvers sit in the covered porch, each with their piece, chisels working carefully, artfully, guided by the vision each holds within...deep concentration, meditative, each moment extended. Each carver artist, nothing special in the way they look, yet oh so special in what comes into our lives from their dedication. Am I one of them? I am, yet in another way. I did my first sculpture when I was four. In kindergarten, in Mrs. Kasten's class, I made an elephant out of clay, fired gray, well proportioned, definitely precocious. Years passed until my twenty's when I began carving in wood, stone and sculpting in clay. For those few years I

allowed myself the freedom. Then it felt perfect, until I asked myself what is the social value of carving as I don't connect art with capitalism...and selling Art to the rich so they could control and benefit personally, or as an elite caste, by the power of life that Art presents. I gave all my work to friends, kept none of the pieces, and took my talent, the talent of Art to help others in direct social work.

At Rai Gallery, in Bali, none of this mattered. Here was Art that enhanced people's spiritual experience. Surprising, none were of Krishna, who was such a major focus of meditation in my own experience with Hinduism through my years of Yoga as presented by the Masters from India who came to the United States in the 60's and 70's. Because I play the flute, I of course identified with Krishna and because I am an American male, I identified with his conjugal relationship with women who were all his Gopi's; his female disciples who worshipped him. Yet, through it all, I could never accept his advise to Arjuna and his intervention on Arjuna's side for the justification for war. Here in Bali, the focus was on Rama and Sita, with their perfect dedication to each other; a much better focus than Krishna if one sought a spiritual relationship within marriage and family. Hmm, seems that Balinese Hinduism is a bit different than Hinduism from the motherland of India. Funny, it never occurred to me before, but now it did. I knew from the beginning that I would purchase one of the carvings in the Gallery, and my meeting Rai Dharma was meant to be in the spirit of the trip to Bali.

No need to put it off, so as we drifted through the Gallery I was in that mind set and when I came, was called in front of an ebony carving of Rama and Sita, I bonded and made the purchase. Rai's negotiation was guided by Dharma, for the price had to reflect what was fair for the artist, and being Dharma, this was one of Rai's carvings. When he was happy with his own negotiation with himself as the artist and the seller, I was pleased as the one purchasing it, now to be the piece's caretaker, Rama and Sita and their coming into my relationship with Kim, my soul mate.

I have been investigating how one sends artwork home and I had stopped in at a number of shipping businesses that handle this. On Monkey Forest Road there were a number of such places and within a few hours I learned what the basic charges were. It was best to send the work by seairmail, by ship, because airmail was too expensive. I didn't want to keep the sculpture with me, and so Rai suggested that mailing it could be done through the government post office. It was a bit more costly, but perhaps more trustworthy. This is what I did and actually watched the postal clerk prepare the shipment, which like everything else in Bali was fascinating. The clerk first inspected the artwork to be sure that there was no damage. Next he wrapped the sculpture in insulation made of shredded packing paper filling all the crevices of the sculpture and covering all the projections. Wrapping the sculpture then in shipping paper, he fashioned a cardboard box and made it like a cocoon to tightly secure the sculpture, and taped it closed. Once completed the clerk fashioned a waterproof covering from plastic interwoven with reinforcing strips, which were somehow sewn into place. Next he used a large packing needle and expertly sewed the cover and then had me write my address. It cost about \$60.00 American to mail it, and that's a great deal of money in Bali, yet that's what it cost for the shipment. Guaranteed. I felt good that it was done and I was free to move on without the worry of having the piece with me, a weight of concern against theft that would have been a burden to my freedom to explore.

The next few days I rose from bed, showered, still keeping the burn on my leg out of the water. Mardi brought tea at around at around 7:15 a.m. and left it on the porch table. It was wonderful, stepping out of the room, the small pond under the stairway, the clouds overhead, sometimes raining, sometimes sunny. The garden catching the early light, the trees and bamboo a curtain and the air warm and clean, and butterflies starting their dance. Breakfast was simple; Jackfruit, bananas, and toasted bread with a fried egg sandwich. To catch the *bemos*, I first walked up the dirt road that led to Jayan Raya. The people just getting going, people sweeping, women putting out offerings, dogs wandering, sniffing and doing other dog things. Each morning was perfect and just right in its own way.

Being on the *bemos* on the way to Anon's was always a great way to be in touch with the local people who had no means to own a car or even a scooter. Women returning from market putting their baskets on top of the *bemos*, or if small enough, on their laps. Children on their way to school. Laborers with a leather bag of tools. Many elderly men and women in traditional dress, all polite on the crowded seats, all within themselves in a good way.

The mask carving was progressing with the facial features emerging. The tools for carving were smaller now to work the finer details. Small chisels and curved knives specially designed for working the concave, undulating surfaces. Ketut, always attentive, smiling, encouraging. Anon always removed, focused and uncommunicative...working on his mask, occasionally sending Ketut on an errand. My motivation was very high, but not really fulfilled and though I was physically engaged, yet not allowed into the essence of the meaning due to Anon's distancing. My fantasy remained just that, the desire to explore and to share was not available except as an observer and tourist carver. Anon never opened up or made himself emotionally available, although he was polite and of course allowed me to work with Ketut. For this I was grateful and it partially eased my disappointment. What did I really expect? To be taken into his confidence, to be invited to stay within his family compound? To be taken in and to be treated to home life? To be shown the inner meaning of Hindu life as he lived it with his family? To be respected as an artist, musician, asked to share my abilities to play the flute, to connect to the core, the essence, the struggle of consciousness, the compassion of social involvement, the brotherhood of spirit? Well, yes! That's exactly what I hoped for. The same with Rai Dharma and with Rai he was open and honest; but still not connecting to the heart of art. I know it was something in me that kept the door closed, not closed in me, rather in the artists. Great artwork in no way necessarily engenders great awareness or spiritual consciousness. The gift of manifesting masterful work was balanced by blindness to its real power by the artist. The artist is just a person, no different in needs, emotions, confusion...still I fantasized, hoping, seeking, waiting to meet another person with the commitment of awakened social connection, and here in Bali, with such prolific master works...were the artists no more aware of their inner nature than anyone else. I was obviously disappointed, even bitter and very likely deluded to the Truth due to my own deep-seated unbalanced nature. Who was I for them to open up to...but a tourist who was in Bali only long enough to taste the fragrance of the blossom, and not there to turn the soil, to nurture and protect the growth of the plant, just wanting to eat of its fruit. Not entirely true, but maybe true enough.

One afternoon after returning from Anon's Rai informed me that his village was having the Cremation Ceremony, and this ceremony would end his mourning period, and then he would be cleansed and able to go into temples. He asked me if I would like to come with him to the ceremony. Yes I would. We drove through the countryside going onto smaller roads that curved their way through a number of villages. In one of the villages the farmers had spread their rice crop out on the road to dry in the hot sun. We just drove over the rice. Rai parked on the outskirts of his town, and we walked into the center, really a junction of two roads.

Across from where we stood was a temple and a bamboo structure like a bridge had been built from the opening in the temple to a mobile pagoda that would house the body; the pagoda was to be carried by the men of the village. The pagoda was fantastically decorated with a dragon and a highly decorated black wooden casket with an animal head, in which the body was to be placed. After a half hour or so a group of musicians assembled and began to play and the body was now being carried from the temple and a number of men climbed with it onto the pagoda and placed the body into the casket. With a loud cheer and chanting the men dressed in loincloths and decorated headbands lifted the pagoda and with the band playing at top volume the village people surrounded the pagoda as it was carried down rather erratically down the street to the cremation site. All the villagers were clothed in formal dress and there was a great deal of bustling as people darted in front and around the pagoda, excited but aware enough not to get trampled by the men who were straining to carry the pagoda and the body.

At the cremation site three priests conducted the ceremony, with the family walking up to the priests and blessings were made. The ceremony was a pageant, a celebration of the ascendance of the soul. It was a community event as everyone in the village attended. The man had been dead for some time, but the astrologers had consulted and it was more than a month before the cremation could take place. As the man was wealthy the ceremony was well attended and presented in full regalia. The actual cremation took place and as the flames consumed the pagoda and the smoke billowed high, the people began to return to their village and to disperse. The ceremony was complete when the flames were started, only the caretakers stayed for the hours that it would take to reduce the body to ash. The ceremony was so complete and I felt touched that I was able to participate, and that Rai felt good about me to choose to include me.

One morning at Anon's we had a visit. Anon explained to a group of young children who were brought by a private school of Australian ex-patriots, that the masks he created imbued the spirit for the sacred dances; that the dancers, once donning the mask became imbued with the celestial deities essence if the mask was made with the artist maintaining the correct attitude while carving. Anon shared that the dancers sometimes returned his mask as having failed to connect in this way. Special ceremonies were conducted by the priests to further imbue the masks, but not always successfully. Anon told the children that he was conscious of this and dedicated himself to the effort, yet he was simultaneously removed or detached, and he didn't see himself as the anyone special, just a human form, just the maker of masks. He related that the power of the connection surrounded him, yet did not reside in him. Further he said that he resisted that possibility, and perhaps its responsibility. Great and small, all caught up in the human condition...and of course, I also. I learned all I came to know about Anon and his work that morning. I was hurt that he could tell the children yet wouldn't speak to me directly.

I moved from Hautama, had enough of the crowing of the cocks. I moved my stuff to a neighboring home stay where I rented a room with my own porch, over looking a small pond and the jungle. The place is called Sulendra's Home Stay, the one I originally was looking for when I was diverted to Hautama. I thought I'd walk into the jungle, to explore, but when I took a step into it, into the lush vegetation, hidden within it leafy cover, the land dropped abruptly off into a hidden steep canyon; the second step would have had me plummeting down...quickly removed my foot from the jungle...more to this than I am ready for. Sitting on the porch on one afternoon, playing my flute, watching the wind move the trees in their dance, playing the flute the notes coming slower, watching a butterfly flit across the view, as the notes come out ever slower, extended and within the notes the inner vibrations become visible, like the waves of light in a mirage, and the butterfly is flying on the vibrations of the breeze and the breath I blow into the note, and the note is extended and as it extends, time is slowed down, so that so much is happening within each moment, so much more is happening within each moment...the butterfly is still flying through this very moment and flies not away but completely within this moment as the limbs of the trees wave their leaves not to the breeze but to the motion of this very moment...not like slow motion, but movement that extends and extends, and then finally with another breath, another moment, and another world emerges within, with nothing more than the coming into the frame and the movement within the frame, but does not exit from the frame until again the next breath. Bali where time slows and extends and so much more is present. I am waking into the inner sense of time, where time is timeless and coming from, or going there is no longer visible for here and now remains suspended. Wow!!! My whole day in California would fit into a moment in Bali. I guess that's why I can do my whole day by late morning and still have the rest of the day to experience...maybe that's how the artists can place all that infinite detail into their work...time is suspended and what is, finally has a chance to be...the slower one goes the more one sees.

I began to draw with the colored pencils that I had carried in my backpack. I'm in Bali. Drawn by the spirit of the land's artwork. I would do an art piece. I chose the view from the porch in front of my room. The view at my feet...the view of the seated artist: the tiled floor of the porch, plants bordering the pond and the stone stairway that was really formed concrete and the moss growing on the stairway, the result of the brief daily rains.

Drawing what one actually sees, not from imagination, forms a connection with what is outside of me; my focus intensifies the inter-relationship, heightens the connection, brings me into awareness of the connection. Seeing the subject for extended time allows me to see the subtle changes as they take place, the light especially. Light is why we have sight. No light, no sight. Sight in itself is a wonder...how I see is an incredible aspect of life and to be sensitive to its living influences is one of life's greatest enhancements. Just to spend days drawing a plant as the sunlight changes, and to see those changes, sometimes abruptly as the cloud covers the sun and the light dims and the colors dim also, or as the sun emerges from behind the cloud and the light explodes from the leaves. Capturing that experience as an artist is really to be here as it happens and to be its witness. I'm the connection.

The mask is almost completed. I haven't sliced off my fingers or punctured my thigh, or dinged my feet. Ketut is a wonder and yet we can't speak to each other for we

have no interpreter, nor really are words necessary...the carving speaks for both of us. I finally get to walk back to Ubud through the surrounding villages. It's hot and I'm wet but I don't mind...its like being in the womb. The trees overhanging the smaller roads give filtered shade and the rice paddies cool me down just by walking by them. The colors of the tropic are so much more intense than in California, being so near the equator, vibrant and the colors somehow quicken my blood. I walk through the towns, walking into and through various galleries of wood and stone sculptures, and then into a painting gallery that is more like a museum of classical Balinese art with paintings of all sizes and subject, some as long as fifteen feet with scene after scene painted through its length in the finest of detail. In the courtyard is an old man, wearing thick glasses, is pot bellied, dressed in only a loincloth, and is bent over a drawing that he is doing in pen and ink. I look over his shoulder and with his eyes only a few inches from the drawing he is placing the finest of lines, drawing each hair on a monkey, the other monkeys in the drawing are already completed...I am touched by the depth of concentration and skill. Walking through the gallery I see two paintings of the most delicate and gorgeous colors, infinite detail of two deities surrounded by plants and animals...the paintings vibrate and sing to me and I think of my two daughters Hannah Brahmani and Naomi Saraswati, and know that the paintings are singing to me to bring the deities to them. And I do.

The next day I take a walk through Ubud and I am looking for paths that lead out of town up into the surrounding hills. By the bridge that crosses the river that runs through Ubud I see a path and I follow it up past an ancient temple and it winds along the river then ascends up into the hills. The path follows a ridge between two valleys. On the right, down in the valley are rice paddies and in the valley on the left is the river. Around a bend coming down the path are three very old ladies, very old, using walking sticks and carrying baskets on their backs. I step out of their way as they pass. Looking over their shoulders across the valley to the left, coming down a path from the village on the hill are more old ladies and they seem to be carrying large clay pots. I sit under a tree and watch their descent through numerous switchbacks; their path leads down to the river. Amazingly, I watch them fill these large pots with water and incredibly they put them on their heads and walk back up this very long path to their village on the hilltop. I can't believe it. How can these tiny ladies be so strong, not just to be able to walk up and down these steep paths but to carry jugs of water back to the top? I am having trouble just making it up the path carrying my water bottle. Bali is a trip.

Eventually I get up and continue my walk and I come to the top of the ridge, which opens out into a flat area, of course full of rice paddies. In one rice paddy an elderly man is walking behind two cows that are pulling a plow through the muddy water. More to watch, and I see him going up and down and after a while I can make out sounds that he makes that get the cows to move forward or to the right or to the left. He is wearing a loincloth and a straw hat, his skin brown and his face is lined with age and experience. The scene is so idyllic. Visually it is right out of the paintings that I have been seeing...it's all still going on...not visible to most tourists, but there when one walks into the countryside. Walks slowly into the countryside. I spent the rest of the afternoon wandering around, walking along the rice paddies following the paths between them further and further back into the valley. At one point I laid down and took a short nap under a palm tree and when I woke I didn't need to be anywhere else nor did I even

need to be there...I didn't feel the need for the need that drives one into the next moment. I was within time, not being moved by time.

Through the next days I began to make some purchases of hand woven cloth. A shop keeper informed me that the "hand woven" piece that I had purchased at the place that Rai took me to was actually machine woven, and the work that the ladies were doing in the front of the store was not the pieces that were sold inside...just an illusion that tourists responded to. This shop keeper spent time educating me as to the different weaving techniques, then showed me an exquisitely hand woven textile from one of the neighboring islands, the work done by a local woman, the weaving which was definitely hand woven again in the finest of details and patterns. Through the afternoon she educated me and picked out various sizes and styles that were representative of the art and I purchased them without making the effort to bargain, for our relationship was such that the price she set was the correct price for the pieces. After leaving her shop I returned a few times to express my appreciation and to let her know how much I valued her integrity and concern for me.

One morning I went to the market just as the sun was rising. The market in Ubud is where all the local farmers bring their produce. In this case the market was spread out in front and within a large three story complex. There was every kind of vegetable and fruit, nuts and beans, baby pigs, chickens and duck in wicker baskets, fish, pig heads, chicken feet, and melons with women in traditional dress sitting by their goods weighing, bargaining, and wrapping up the sale. The colors of the produce and the traditional dress of the women was completely tropical. The produce flowed from the stalls along the street into the hallways with the ladies sitting by their baskets of food for sale even up the stairs leading up to the second floor, through the second floor, up the third set of stairs to the top floor, a flow of colors and smells blending into a tapestry. Looking down into the interior courtyard from the third floor with each lower tier the people diminished in size until down below the colorful dress of the people blended into a Balinese bouquet of flowers for that was truly what the people were, flowers of rich beauty in human form.

I had finally given up on trying to keep my day backpack together. I had sewn the tears that kept ripping on every outing whether I was on the *bemos*, walking through the villages, up the mountain paths, shopping for this or that...enough. I walked through the market stalls looking for backpacks, but surprisingly with everything else for sale, no backpacks. Finally I settled on two cloth zippered bags with straps for carrying the bags over my shoulder. I quickly found three other stores selling the same bags and once I priced them I negotiated them down by 75%. I was very proud of myself for having mastered the art of bargaining. Yes proud of getting the price down to what the locals would pay. I was figuring it all out.

I had finished the mask, well Ketut finished the mask. I did my half, but at each point, Ketut took his tools and added the fine touch that brought it into balance with his half of the mask. I was very pleased with the final product and deeply thankful to Ketut for guiding me at each step. Frankly, by this time I felt nothing for Anon who continued to ignore me except to accept the payment at the end of each session. I was pretty disenchanted and hurt. Actually I felt that I had not been just rejected, but I had somehow failed some kind of test. Otherwise I thought that Anon would have befriended me and been willing to spend time with me. I felt bad. I wanted in and had come to Bali to get in...

What did I seek in my trip? What did I seek to connect to and to return with to the USA? I am from another world, one that has imposed itself on the world, and these people are in part trapped in it mentally and physically, yet they are free of it spiritually through their art. In their art they can live in their way of days before the West's invasion. Was I no different...my superimposition of my need, to veil it in supportive words, rationalized as a "connection," was it no more than another Western with Western values here to gain the riches of this land, and in that, to take? I needed the "connection" and I came to discover it, to find it, to cut it from the land and to take it away from its homeland, a slave to my need. What do I offer in exchange? Excess money that I had laying around. My idealism, hiding an investment, a great deal, a fair price, or the bargained price, the price of my proof that I had learned the way of the land.

Yes, I came with an open heart, a friendly intention, a beautiful music to share, and it was not wanted, not cared for...noticed yes, complimented yes, yet not more, not an opening of the door to that which the Balinese hold sacred...their personal lives. Is that what I came to share, to fortify myself with, to sustain my work in California...to "connect?" Anon was completely connected, his life, his family, his work...all completely integrated through his art...what could I add to that, what did he need that my essence could offer? Nothing. He didn't want to hear "my" flute...it isn't Balinese...though it could have opened up other doors, other worlds, he already had enough of other cultures and their impositions...the doors I could open would only divert his focus on the essence of his meaningful life...he didn't need what I offered and he definitely hadn't sought me out. I wanted him to recognize me; it was my imposition that put him off...my hidden need, rather than a true appreciation of the power of his life. I wanted; no different in truth than an invader not after the physical treasure, rather after his spiritual treasure. Actually he hadn't rejected me; it was I who rejected him and his right to privacy to live in a way that was available before I, and all like me had come to Bali's shores. He embodied that essence and sought to preserve and to maintain it within the way he chose to live.

I don't have that core in the USA. I reject our capitalistic cultural greed, our arrogance, but yet haven't recognized its deep and subtle grip on me, as am I not still one of America's children, raised to consume others as food and sources of gratification. I came to Bali, I stayed, I tasted, I consumed, and I left...just like all the others, but the other's who came for the surfing, to layout on the beaches, to buy art were more honest. They didn't shroud their intentions in spiritual grandiosity...to find a "connection," to touch the essence, to "force" my world view through "my" music, which wasn't asked for, but each night, standing there, I played melodies from another land, a foreign land, a music that I laid out without any real concern for how the music interfered with the music of this land.

Sure I had a moment of awareness, a feeling of my music's imposition, but hadn't I carried my flute with me, to play in a Hindu setting, to be a Krishna...to have the people hear the flute and come to me as a manifestation of Krishna, to listen and to adore me? The music I played was definitely the most complete I have ever played, Bali extended, amplified and focused the sound...it became timeless, each note complete in itself, each a universe of tones, halfway between and half again, diminishing as an inhalation an extension...as an exhalation, spiraling, then becoming a sphere within which reality lived, a reality and an universe of its own. I became mesmerized, I am the sound, the

sound am I, and this gift of Bali I am still; no adoration, no recognition, just a total integration within the land and its being. It reveals my truths; it encourages my honesty. I correct my viewpoint without prejudice of my people's unwanted uninvited impositions. The Balinese smile is the essence of the love within the land...it is enough and I am blessed to live with its revelation as I am. I grow in perspective; I am laid bare by Bali's touch. I am revealed and I am educated to my subconscious influences.

The rest of my time in Bali was an effort to just be...no longer seeking to connect; I had connected and it had bared my soul. I was in a kind of shock, in my own way, and I couldn't resolve all the issues of my feeling disconnected and constantly seeking that feeling of belonging, of being appreciated, and wanted. As I walked the streets of Ubud I was kind of tired, no longer excited, but not disinterested. I had been disappointed that I wasn't recognized by whom? By Anon? But what an experience with Ketut and Rai. Why the focusing on what I felt that I missed out on and failing to appreciate the incredible gifts that I had been bestowed with. I wonder how the life force of Bali felt about my greed. Both Rai and Ketut had opened their hearts and responded completely as was possible and they had taken me into the mysteries of Balinese Art and the people who live and respond to their Spiritual harmony with its influence on who they are, and its reflection in their art. I was brought to my knees on a certain level, and raised up on another. I am not really proud of the way I was able to bargain down the price of those bags...actually I was a bit ashamed of myself for being so severe. Yes I learned how to do it to the last cent, but did I need to? I guess I did at that moment, but afterwards when I bargained I let up sooner than I could and paid more. I didn't need to be so brutal. I didn't actually want to be like that.

I may be a bit harsh on myself, and maybe my perspective isn't completely correct, yet I am an artist and the closer I can be to an honest perception of myself and the environment within which I live and travel, the clearer I believe is my art. I can't just appreciate art for art's sake, I always feel it's correct to place the art within the social context, and am I not my own art project, constantly shaping and refining its message.

My last day on Bali I took the bus to the airport, and as the bus descended from the mountain plain on which Ubud was built the land began to change and finally when we came down into the flats the countryside became densely populated, the buildings were modern, the streets broad and well paved, passing many hotels and the magic of Ubud was somehow diminished. I felt a feeling of despair. I had seen none of this upon landing in Bali in the middle of the night. This transition was too abrupt. Yet, as I flew out from Bali's and as the plane ascended through the broken clouds and the ocean began to define Bali's shoreline, from this height I again could see the emerald green of the mountain jungles of the high lands and thankfully I felt that I could again feel a thread of light connecting Ubud and its people to my heart.

