

Bahala Meditation

A Personal Renewal of Filipino Spiritual Practice

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Intro

This is a sharing of subjective experiences upon contemplation of Bahala. You may find relevance for your self in the sharing and decide to read on or you may not and move on along on your own journey never the less for stopping by.

A few years ago, I embarked on a journey of rediscovery and reconnection of my Filipino identity and along the way realized that it was also interwoven with my path as a Seeker, asking questions, seeking answers and somehow of making my Soul more whole and finding my deepest Inner Self(Loob).

Did I need to change my religion to deepen my understanding of my Self? I didn't. But I did shed the political prejudices and intellectual superiority complex of my religious upbringing. And I had to delve deeper into the Universal Truth and spirituality imparted to me within Christianity and Catholicism to find the Truth that exists in all of Creation. Where there is Truth there is interconnection and Universality. My prejudices told me otherwise and thus I had to shed them for the conflicts they create in my mind and separations with my fellow humans (mg Kapwa) in the world. Somehow my spirituality and my Filipino identity are connected and interwoven and my contemplations and meditations on *Bahala* are part of that journey.

There are three sets of subjective exercises here.

1. Finding renewed meaning in saying *Bahala Na*
2. Contemplation over the *baybayin* symbols that form the word *Bahala*.
3. Saying *Bahala* or *Bahala Na* as a prayer/meditation entry point or as a spiritual chant.

You can try these exercises to find out if they fit in with your personal search for finding faith in *Something Greater* and for deepening your spiritual journey.

6 Contemplations for Transcendent Meanings

Finding the new in the old.

The new millennium has dawned and new times call for new ideas. Einstein once said to the effect "we cannot solve problems with the same thinking that created them." For Filipinos to move forward, we must throw off the shackles of our minds. We must re-examine many of our limiting beliefs and release ourselves from them.

I believe that it is time for the manhid (hardened), cynical and unawakened Filipinos to go to the next level with the meanings that we attach when calling out the name of *Bathala* when we say "*Bahala na!*" or "*Siya ang Bathala!*" Ilonggos seem to invoke Bathala when they say "*hala*" or "*bala*". In ilonggo there is also the common phrase of "*Ang Dyos na lang ang kahibalo.*" (Only God knows). Such phrases are not a form of passivism, but rather of higher spiritual awareness of events unfolding in the Divine larger picture. The negative connotations of passivity can be transcended by raised consciousness and spiritual wisdom. I hope that these 6 contemplations can help that take place for those who seek something new, different and more uplifting that helps them evolve from within and move forward in life.

"Bahala Na" Renewed in Meaning

1. Contemplation on Presence

Bahala na at its simplest, basic meaning translates to "God now". This can be plainly translated into the practice of presence in the now...that God is in the here and now... It is the same meaning within the prayerful phrase of "Be still and know that I am."

Try it. Say now quietly, "*Bahala na.*" And feel the stillness within you. Connect that stillness with the stillness of the Universe and Creation.

2. Contemplation on Spiritual Surrender and Self-Actualization

Bahala na to spiritual Filipino folk is the equivalent to the traditional biblical Christian phrase of "Thy Will be Done, Lord." This meaning embodies the Feminine Principle of Submission to the Divine... At the same time, this phrase can also be renewed to be "May I do your will, Lord" and thus be a pro-active and dynamic act. This spiritual act thus embodies the Masculine Principle of Action. It is a way of facing Challenge/s. Invoke "*Bahala Na*" to find balance between your inner tranquility and outer self-actualization. Try it. Say now quietly, "*Bahala na.*"

Contemplation over the Baybayin of Bahala

Bahala or Bahala Na is a Filipino attitude towards life. My meditations on *Bahala* are part of a journey.

In my inquiries into other great religions of the world, indigenous spirituality of American Natives, and ancient ones of Europe and the Middle East, I have encountered Universal wisdom and truths and many names for the nameless, yet many-named Divine. One of the most resonant for me was *God/Goddess/All-That-Is* because it was a phrase that articulated an all-encompassing nature of a Divine Cosmic Force.

In the Jewish Tradition it is *Yahweh*. In English it is *God*. In Spanish it is *Dios*. In Islam it is *Allah*. In Christian tradition it is *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, the mystery of the *Holy Trinity*. In pagan traditions it is *Goddess* or *Great Mother*. For the American Natives it is wording that translates to *Great Spirit*. Left-brainer, atheists may not believe in any god but they may believe in a *Cosmic Intelligence* that underlies the laws of physics and atomic existence in space and time.

By coming to rediscover the use of Bahala, so many more Filipinos today, cut-off and unaware of their spiritual roots, can come to discover and know that ancient traditions of the Philippine Islands have always carried Universal Wisdom and consciousness of the awareness of the Nameless-Many-Named-I-Am, that is, The Divine, beyond human gender and material illusions.

A few years ago I was introduced to baybayin by Mary Ann Ubaldo of Urduja jewelry (see www.urduja.com). She shared with me not only the basic history of baybayin (or alibata) but also the works of Grace Odal and Bing Veloso. I received both historical knowledge of the baybayin, and also intuited knowledge of babayin symbols. What attracted me most among the symbols were those for *Bahala*. In this way, I came to know that *Bahala* is the most elegant way to express *God/Goddess/All-That-Is*---a non-gender all encompassing divine presence in the Universe. Please note, that this contemplation is on *Bahala* and not *Bathala*(which means God or Lord for ancient Pilipinos). The larger importance of *Bahala*, for me, is that it became a reconnection for me to our Philippine ancestors.

If you want to learn more about baybayin, than these meditations will not suffice and you will have to do further research online and via published books you can find in the Philippines such as *Saysayin ng Babayin* by Bing Veloso.

Baybayin can be powerful because it can get you in touch with not only your ancestors' historical roots, but possibly also their emotional and spiritual roots. And for some, it might be a tool in bringing about a wholistic Filipino identity in these times. This experience will vary from person to person---from the nothing consequential whatsoever or to the deeply moving.

Today, I believe that through the process of learning more about the baybayin some Filipinos can uncover some beautiful pieces of wisdom that our pre-colonial ancestors inherently had. For me, it began with the baybayin symbols for *Bathala* and *Bahala*.

Figure 1



Figure 2



BATHALA

The symbols that spell *Bathala* would look like Figure 1 of the baybayin symbol sequence. There are Filipino scholars who have studied baybayin and believe that the symbol of TA is a likeness of lightning and that in the name of Bathala "ta" is the indicator for great strength and power. In these Filipino meanings, I find parallels with the symbology of lightning and powerful father godheads from around the world such as the Greek *Zeus*, the Roman *Jupiter*, the Norse *Thor* and the Vedic *Indra*.

BAHALA

In everyday life Filipinos might say the colloquial phrase of *Bahala Na* many times and so the word of *Bahala* is possibly invoked more than *Bathala* might be.

There are baybayin scholars who believe that the baybayin sequence of BAHALA, Figure 2, is readable to both *Bahala* and *Bathala*, because it is to be intuitively discerned as to when which word is most applicable for saying and for invocation.

For my part, I resonate with the symbols of *Bahala*. I find profound meaning in the symbols of *Bahala* along with the discovery that the ancient native writing system of baybayin is not like Western-style, straightforward symbology that represents exact sounds. Baybayin writing system IS different because it calls for a measure of intuitiveness and inner knowledge in order to read and write it.

Can we Filipinos today train ourselves to rely not only on our intelligence but also on our inner knowing like our pre-colonial ancestors in the Philippine islands?

Bing Veloso has explored the inner knowings of Baybayin and I have enjoyed contemplating upon them. My favorites are the ones for Bahala. And I share those with you here.

Meanings and Diwa (Idea or Spirit) within the Symbols

***Bahala* usage in prayer, chants and meditation**

As mentioned in the *baybayin* explanations above, the meditative practices of many religions, practice conscious breathing because breath (*hangin*) is believed to be the connection of our physical bodies to Spirit. Meditation practices incorporate breathing in certain rhythms and ways.

With regards to sound, Hindus and Buddhists chant and meditate on the sound of "om". They believe that this sound vibrates with the Creator, the Source of all Life... "Shanti, Shanti, Om" and "Om Mani Padme Hum" are other Buddhist phrases for chants and sacred song.

"Amen" is also a sound that may have its roots from "Om"...if you listen to the songful Judaic, Latin and Gregorian chanting style of saying "Amen" at the end of a prayer it sounds similar to Buddhist practice of chanting "Om".

All sacred music and chanting, no matter the religion and context of human experience, are a way of using sound to connect us with spirit.

So now people may want to explore the sacred word for God in Filipino as a chant or meditative sound...

To begin...

Try whispering "*Bahala Na*" to yourself... you will find that you must use your breath to make the sounds of buh-huh-luh-nuh. As the sound is released from your throat, become aware of the whispers of your breath that flow out from your lungs.

Make an Intention

Close your eyes. Make an intention that you want to become closer to God/Goddess/AllThatIs in this exercise. Breathe in and as you breath out try saying it softly.

Now try again. Close your eyes and feel the breath come from your mouth. Pay heed to your physical breath and the thoughts and feelings that come over you while you say "*Bahala*" or "*Bahala Na*." What feelings and thoughts come to you after you say it? If they are new, explore them. Do not bury them back into your subconscious. They are probably about issues that you need to address in yourself to bring yourself to wholeness and healing.

On another try, use the sounds to help empty out thoughts and feelings from you. Use it as exercise to be present in the now. Sit in meditative silence.

Also try different ways of saying "*Bahala*" or "*Bahala na*" by chanting the phrase. Here are some ways:

Discovering Ancient Wisdom in our Heritage

The *baybayin* should not just be perceived as an ancient indigenous writing system... there is also spiritual relevance in many of the formations... *Bahala* in *baybayin* beautifully gives evidence to the Universal Wisdom of the ancient indigenous spirituality of Filipinos.

I am eager to search further within Filipino mythology and traditions for the gems of Universal Wisdom that have always been there. Another example of such deep wisdom is the legend of Malakas at Maganda which has allegorical references to the Feminine and Masculine Principles of Creation. The opening of the bamboo stalk and the entrance of man and woman into the world is more than just a story about the creation of man and woman. This is creation mythology about the Masculine and Feminine Principles of existence.

In our myths and traditions, there is more Universal Wisdom and spiritual meaning than Western institutions and tradition may have given our heritage credit for. But, today, we can rediscover the wisdom of our people in our myths and traditions. We only have to go beyond initial appearances where our colonized perceptions are limited---we must see with open heart and mind.

It is up to us Filipinos to find the wisdom of our traditions and mythology and to then share and uphold it with our people and with the world.

May you receive this in openness and your life be enriched by it.

Halin sa tagipusuan
Ever out of Love.



