

Traditions and beliefs

[Life](#), [Love](#)



A tradition is a practice, custom, or story that is memorized and passed down from generation to generation, originally without the need for a writing system. Traditions are often presumed to be ancient, unalterable, and deeply important, though they may sometimes be much less "natural" than is presumed. Some traditions were deliberately invented for one reason or another, often to highlight or enhance the importance of a certain institution. Traditions may also be changed to suit the needs of the day, and the changes can become accepted as a part of the ancient tradition.

Folk Beliefs, otherwise known as "Superstitious Beliefs", forms part of a people's value systems and culture. They basically reflect the customs, traditions, and mores of a group, which has been based on religious beliefs, opinions, or popular old practices. Also they tell of how a people view the unknown and the Means to appease the gods that control the future.

Filipinos still adhere to numerous widely-held folk beliefs that have no scientific or logical basis but maybe backed-up by some past experiences (yet can be dismissed as mere coincidence).

Some are still practiced to this day primarily because of 'there's nothing to lose if we comply' attitude while the others are totally ignored for it seemed downright ridiculous. A number of Filipinos have Folk Beliefs about life, family, luck, wealth, etc. Some of which were presented by the four groups last Monday, April 26, 2010. I have noticed that almost all groups presented folk beliefs about courtship and marriage. Courtship is one that is still being practiced among the strictest of the Filipino families.

This is performed by the male (who is the suitor since it is wrong to do it the opposite way) visiting the home of the female. In the olden days, courtship doesn't start until the male suitor had obtained permission from the parents. This was done with the male suitor being accompanied by another respectable elder and approaching either the father or the mother of the female and obtaining permissions days in advanced to visit at a particular day and time. Nowadays this form of getting the parent's permission is still being practiced in the provinces, however, due to western influences, there are some variations more adaptable to the modern times. One alternative is to make a phone call, asking for the parents' or guardian's permission through an elder to schedule a visit. Another way is for the suitor to approach the parents in a public place, and informally asking for permission to visit. Either way, it is to show proper respect to ask for permission prior to the formal visit. Properly greeting the parents by placing the back of the right hand of the parents to the suitor's forehead is practiced to show respect. This is called pagmamano in Tagalog.

When the permission has been granted, the suitor whether accompanied by a friend or an elder will visit the girl's home and offers gifts. Gift bags or boxes of goodies or Filipino snacks purchased from a local store and flowers are generally given. The snacks or other goods are offered to the family of the girl then the flowers and special sweets (like chocolate or candies) are given to the girl. In a strict Filipino home, during courtship, the parents are present during the first visit. This is the opportunity to get to know each other.

This is sometimes called courting the parents first and winning their hearts and approval then letting the boy or suitor court the girl. Subsequent visits are then scheduled if all went well during the first visit and, depending on how long the courtship will last; the answer is given by the girl with the parents' knowledge as well. After the courtship stage and the girl decides that she also would like to take the suitor's offer of love and commitment, then the girl will give the favorable answer to the suitor. At times it takes months before the answer is given.

In the olden days, strict parents would sometimes give a series of tests, having the suitor do some chores like fetching some water from the well, cutting firewood to be used for cooking dinner, helping the father of the girl do some yard or farm work. Nowadays, a more modern approach is being performed by the suitor whereby he offers gentlemanly help to the parents, sometimes carrying groceries as he sees them walking down the streets, offering them a ride if he happens to be driving their way, doing other favors that can help win their favor and better his chances of getting the girl's love as well.

After the girl announces to the parents that she is ready to be engaged the parents would be around to congratulate the suitor. From then on, the suitor is treated like a member of the family. Sometimes, even before marriage, the suitor is introduced to the friends and relatives of the girl's immediate family as future part of the family or future son-in-law. Engagements may take longer than a year, and then the date shall be set for marriage. During the waiting period they are free to go on dates, at times with a chaperone.

Nowadays, after the first few chaperoned dates they can date on their own, especially those who live in the cities where it is not as strict as in the rural areas of the country. When the two decides that they are ready to get married, then the pamamanhikan (official request of the male and his parents or guardians for the girl's hand in marriage) begins. This is usually done in the evening after dinner. Then, if the parents of the girl agree, they will give them their blessings and set the date of the wedding. The engagement sometimes last from several months to a couple of years due to extensive preparations.

The majority of Filipino weddings are now Catholic weddings, but some native traditions remain. Most have special " sponsors" who act as witnesses to the marriage. The principal sponsors could be godparents, counselors, a favorite uncle and aunt, even a parent. Secondary sponsors handle special parts of the ceremony, such as the candle, cord and veil ceremonies. Candle sponsors light two candles, which the bride and groom use to light a single candle to symbolize the joining of the two families and to invoke the light of Christ in their married life.

Veil sponsors place a white veil over the bride's head and the groom's shoulders, a symbol of two people clothed as one. Cord sponsors drape the yugal (a decorative silk cord) in a figure-eight shape--to symbolize everlasting fidelity--over the shoulders of the bride and groom. The groom gives the bride 13 coins, or arrhae, blessed by the priest, as a sign of his dedication to his wife's well-being and the welfare of their future children.

The four groups, as far as I can remember, presented more beliefs and traditions about death, marriage, life and luck.

These were:

- The table should not be cleared while an unmarried woman is still eating because she might end up an old maid.
- Do not sweep your floor at night or else you are sweeping your luck out of the house.
- If one cuts his fingernails at night, a member of the family will die.
- One must not organize teams of 3 or 13, otherwise one member will die.
- Eating Pancit on their birthday will enable them to live longer.
- The use of the word " Po" or " Opo" means " Yes" in a very polite manner. It is usually said by a young person to an elder.

Holding a family reunion to celebrate a birthday in the family, fiestas, for Christmas or New Year's Celebration.

- One must be able to have “ handa” during feast days.

The first belief tells me that when you clear the table while an unmarried woman is still eating, that woman will stay single all her life. I still don't believe in such belief because I have met and seen single women getting married even if this clearing of tables while they ate happened to them. This is also my very first time to hear such belief. The second belief is one I heard when I was still very young.

I was at my grandfather's house at Negros Oriental one summer. One night, there housemaid swept the floor and was scolded by my grandfather's sister for doing such act. I wondered why and so I asked my parents about it. They, too, didn't know why sweeping floors during night was not allowed. Now, I know why. I still don't believe in such belief although luck in that house has gone in and out. I believe it's just coincidental when someone sweeps during the night and then you become very unlucky in the future. The third belief is

somehow coincidental for me when you cut your fingernails and someone in your family dies.

I have also tried a lot of times already cutting my nails at night and I have also tried losing a member of my family already but I don't think it was because of what I did. I don't see any connection between cutting fingernails during the night and death. With the fourth belief, I have heard this since I was in my grade school years. I still hear such until now. I usually go around with two of my very close friends. We always take pictures of ourselves yet not one of us has died, fortunately. I was told that whoever is in the middle will die first.

It sounds pretty scary at first especially when I was still very young and innocent. However, as I grew up and hear such, it becomes lame to me and somehow funny because I have had lots of experience already with having two friends with me. The group presented this by three people who was about to take a picture of themselves and then their friend told them they shouldn't be three otherwise the one in the middle will die. And so they invited more people to join them so they wouldn't be three. The fifth belief tells me that eating Pancit will make your life longer.

I always hear such especially during festivities and celebrations. On birthday celebrations, there is always pancit on the table because it is said that this will make you live longer on earth. They always say “pansit, pampahaba ng buhay”. I'm pretty sure it is such because pancit is long. We don't usually practice such tradition in our family. The sixth belief shows respect to the older people when you say Opo or Po. It is our tradition to say such. We also

“mano” or kiss the right hand of an older person when we greet them.

Actually, you don't really kiss that hand.

You just bow a bit, and gently take the older person's right hand with your right hand, and move it towards your own forehead. Sometimes, it's the back of their hand that touches your forehead. In our family, we practice such tradition as a sign of respect. When we got to our province in Negros and get to meet with the very many relatives of ours, we “mano” every older relative. Other relatives of ours especially my aunts and uncles who are in their late 20's and early 30's wont let us “mano” them because they don't want to be “old”. The seventh and eight traditions have been practiced for years by almost all Filipinos.

These happenings bring family members together especially those who are living away or are working in different places and rarely have the chance or time to come home. The presence of family visitors and reuniting members delight the other members of the family, aside from stories and gossips to tell. And, if a visitor is a foreigner or a relative who comes from abroad, the family is very proud especially when the neighbors are around, and offers everything just to please the visitor. Once the visitor is gone, the family will either praise or mock the visitor. It's mostly not the presence but the presents.

We always celebrate feast days by having handa and inviting people to eat inside the house. In our family, we do the same during our village's fiesta. We invite friends, relatives and neighbors to dine and celebrate with us. Such tradition brings families and friends closer and patches up the times you

missed together. With the very many traditions and beliefs of the Filipinos, I can say we only practice a few. Our family is not the type who believes in such beliefs. We only practice those traditions that are very common like celebrating festivities and occasions and giving of gifts during special days.

I don't believe in these beliefs because they sound ridiculous for me but I respect them and the people who believe in them. We were not raised believing in folk beliefs because they are mere stories and doesn't have any connection with the real world. Sometimes, I wonder why people have made so many beliefs. Is it their way of scaring people especially beliefs about death and misfortune? I believe it is only you who can bring luck to yourself and it is not harmful to believe and practice such beliefs and traditions. I just learned that folk beliefs are not real and not practical and one's life must not always work around with beliefs.