

YBANAG UNONI: REFLECTIVE OF VALUES AND VIRTUES

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Abstract— Ybanag Unoni is reflecting the values and virtues of the Ybanags. It is the intention of this study to bring out these values and virtues from the selected Unonis which are in consonance with the values education framework by the Department of Education. The selected pieces were analyzed using the said framework as the basis.

Keywords— *Ybanag Unoni, Ybanags, Values, Virtues, Traditional literature*

INTRODUCTION

Value systems and virtues of a culture are usually reflected in the traditional literature which was handed down to the people of the present generation through memory and practice rather through the printed page thus, oral in nature. It is not a secret that many Filipinos are unfamiliar with Philippine Literature especially those written long before the Spanish arrived in our country. This is due to the fact that the stories of ancient time were not written, but rather passed on from generation to generation through word of mouth. According to Estanislao Caldez, people maintain and preserve their culture by using their mother tongue, they maintain and preserve their culture as they pass this successfully to the next generation. It is to the credit of literary scholars and anthropologists that this oral literature has been gathered, collated and written thus becoming part of the precious literary heritage of the nation.

Traditional literature of the Filipinos has started with fables and legends made by the ancient Filipinos long before the arrival of the Spanish influence but this was not maintained because a new set of colonizers brought about new changes in their literature with literary modernism that highlighted the writer's individuality and cultivated consciousness of craft, sometimes at the expense of social consciousness.

Like all other cultural minority groups in the Philippines, the Ybanags have their own traditional literature which can provide insights on the values and unique traits of their culture. Ybanag traditional literature, like any other literature, is the expression of Cagayanos emotions and has spread to some parts of Northern Luzon. The type of traditional literature focused in this study is the Ybanag Unoni. It is a type of literature which is the counterpart of the Spanish coplas, a Spanish song which appeared during the Golden Age of literature. Roque Mabatan, the known Ybanag Verzista of Cagayan defined Unoni as the chanted sayings and proverbs which are preachy, pedagogic as well as theological. Hence,

this study envisions analyzing specific pieces of Ybanag Unoni in comparison to the framework of values provided by the Department of Education.

Research Questions

The study aimed to ascertain the values and virtues of the Ybanags as reflected in their collections of Unoni. Specifically, it sought to provide the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the specific examples of Unoni used by the Ybanags?
2. What are the pervading themes, values and virtues reflected in the Ybanag Unoni?
3. What is the contribution of the identified Ybanag Unoni to the attainment of DepEd's Values Education framework?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may be used as a legitimate basis for the inclusion of regional literature taught to elementary and high school students. Guided by this research, teachers may realize the importance of indigenous literature as a source of desirable values which can be shared with their students.

Literature Review

On Values and Literature

Literature is an indispensable component of our cultural heritage as persons. It reflects our way of life. Menez (1999) claims that literature reveals the intellectual, cultural and artistic development of human thought and expression.

Literature also helps us understand better our own self and other people. According to Villamarzo (1999) literature is not only a representation of life; it is also an excellent source of truths, values and insights which can help us become better person. Values are the factors that make a person dignified. They are the same factors that make him human. Values manifest man's existential phenomenon that he was created in the image and likeness of his creator. When positively and negatively exemplified, they enhance and diminish the dignity of a person (Esteban, 1990). Values refer to person's idea about worth and desirability and it makes up our judgment of moral and immoral, right and wrong and so forth.

The Filipinos have a set of cultural values, which have become the hallmarks of their cultural identity in the global community of nations. Some of these values have been affected tremendously by the diffusion of western culture into the Filipino way of life. However, some Filipino values have remained unadulterated and may be regarded still as traditional because the places of the Filipino group practicing them are seldom reached by social and technological changes.

There are Filipino cultural values, which are considered to be instrumental in attaining the desired vision of the Philippine society. These values are important for they relate to the process of social transformation and nation building. It is imperative to consider here, however that national development should not only conclude growth but also the establishment of national identity and the strengthening of indigenous values and institutions (Morales, 1991).

Licuanan (1988) pointed out the following values as the main strengths of the Filipino character or the positive behavioral traits of the Filipino; family orientation, joy and humor, flexibility, adaptability and creativity, hard work and industry, faith and religiosity and ability to survive.

Similarly, Gordon (1995) also identified the fundamental Filipino values which he further claimed as the six pillars of the Filipino values. They are the following: love and respect for God, love and respect for nature, love and respect for country, love and respect for fellowmen, love and respect for family and love and respect for self. Moreover, Romero (1995) conducted a study on the commonalities of eight – linguistic groups in terms of cultural values: family orientation and solidarity, strong interpersonal relationship, strong conjugal relationship, regard for women, children, parents and dead ancestors, deep sense of spirituality and religiosity, harmony with people and with nature, industry and work orientation, discipline as a social concern, social awareness and consciousness and social responsibility.

These values, therefore, contribute much to the recognition of the Filipino identity and if fully harnessed and positively practiced they will certainly affect a progressive future for the Philippine society. As Guerrero (1999) clearly put it, “being a Filipino means relying on our capability as people and feeling secure in all the cultural values and practices of our nation, while cognizant of our nation’s place in the community of nation.”

In the same perspective, Quisumbing (1996) aptly put this way: “The transformation of the nation is achieved through the recapturing of some of its cherished values as a nation and imbibing new attitudes and behaviors needed to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.” Similarly, Rocas (1996) also claimed that our future depends not only on the values that we have but how we make use of these values. He further claims that for the effective teaching of these values, we have to come up with values education materials rich in Philippine history and culture.

On Culture and Ingenious Literature

Culture is not only art and music, as some may believe, but also consists of the values and rules we live by. Similarly, Kottak (1991) claims that “culture” encompasses rule-governed, shared, symbols based on learned behavior and beliefs transmitted across the generations. He goes further by defining “national culture” as one that refers to the experiences, learned behavior and values shared by the same citizens of the same nation.

Cultural development should also be given priority in the educational system. The school system is a powerful institution in preserving, promoting and evolving a national culture; values and beliefs can be more effectively preserved and promoted through the school curriculum (Romero, 1995).

Gatan (1981) likewise claimed that education could be more effectively achieved if it is presented in its natural context and indigenous symbols are used. Education and its vehicle, the curriculum should be developed and formulated within a given culture, taking into serious consideration the values of the people it seeks to serve.

Shimuzu (1989) in his study of the Pinatubo Aetas concluded that the process of selected assimilation contributed to the stability and continuity of the Aetas’ culture. Their antagonistic feelings toward the lowlanders made the Aetas preserve their own cultural heritage. In the same context of culture, Dumia (1986) in his book about the Igorot culture claimed that the misconception and oftentimes, discrimination to the detriment of ethno linguistic group is caused by the lack of knowledge and information about the culture of that ethnic group.

Our country experienced, and at present, still faces the same situation regarding indigenous people and cultures. As viewed from the succession of governments, all the way from the Spanish regime to the present, the indigenous groups are the least westernized (Oyawon, 1990).

To fully understand the ethnic groups and to avoid all negative connotations about them, there is need to know and understand their values, which are mostly reflected in their folk literature.

Alviar (1997) in his study of the portrait of the Cordillera as drawn from their traditional literature pictured the Cordilleran as a man whose life is permeated by his religion. Every stage of his existence is marked by ritual performances, designed to remember, honor, thank and propitiate his various deities. He values industry, bravery, and prowess in hunting. He is kind, hospitable and generous.

Similarly, Pamittan (1983), in her study of the Itawes way of life as reflected in their literature, concluded that the Itawes are God-fearing, family-oriented and superstitious. They are simple and humble people. They are patient, persevering, peaceful, hardworking and industrious.

Alingod (1985) also conducted a study on the way of life of the Igorots in Rizal, Kalinga-Apayao as reflected in their songs, dances and practices and she found the following social

values of the Igorots, to wit: equality, respect for human dignity, family solidarity, value for marriage, moral responsibility, emotional closeness, and respect for authority, courtesy and politeness.

A similar study was conducted by Lora (1980) and she found out that the Gaddangs have a rich collection of literary types that reflects their values, beliefs and practices as a people. Lora concluded that the Gaddang in spite of his belonging to an ethnic minority group is still Filipino in his total way of life.

In a similar context, Tovera (1983) made an analysis of the Kalinga folklore. In her study, she found out that the literary works depict the Kalinga's way of life, his customs and traditions, his dreams and aspirations as well as his frustration.

Sola's (1985) study of the superstitious beliefs of the Ibanags in some selected towns of Isabela disclosed that the subject of her study cling to age-old practices, which in a way affected every dimensions of their life; social, economic, scientific, and educational.

Josue (1993) also conducted a similar study of the Ibanag in Reina Mercedes, Isabela and she found out that the subject she studied is religious. This is manifested not only through their attendance in mass but also praying the novenas. She also observed humility, self-control and sense of gratitude among Ibanags.

Bosing (1998) also conducted a similar investigation but this time on the Isnags. She concluded that the cultural beliefs and practices of the Isnags play major influences in their social life. She also concluded that the present-day Isnags are still strongly attached to their cultural beliefs and practices; however, the educated Isnag begins to influence his community to adjust to modern living.

METHODS

Research Design

As regards to its design, the study made use of the thematic analysis. This method of literary analysis was employed to draw and ascertain the values of the ethno-linguistic group under study. The Ybanag Unoni is analyzed to draw the theme or main idea that it reflects. The central idea is focused on the values and virtues that each Ybanag Unoni reflects.

Key Sources of Data

The Ybanag Unoni analyzed in this study and the in-depth discussion about the culture, arts, values and virtues of the Ybanags was taken from the following key informants:

1. Rocque Mabatan, the known Ybanag Verzista of Cagayan.
2. Blessilda Diwa, the Regional Director of the Department of Tourism Region-2 for an in-depth discussion about the culture and traditions of the Ybanags.

3. Hortencia Calvan, the Division Chief of the Department of Education Region 2, for the comprehensive analysis of the Values Education Framework and an extensive discussion about the perceived benefits of the Ybanag Unoni.

To validate the perception and analyses of the values and virtues of the Ybanag as reflected in their Unoni, documentary data were also taken from the following sources:

1. Most of the Ybanag Unoni used were taken from Rocque Mabatan's collections of Ybanag Unoni.
2. Some of the Unoni and verses were drawn from Humberto Bauza's "Readings on Ybanag Culture."
3. Some of the Unoni and verses were also taken from Estanislao Caldez's work "Ybanag Folk Literature: Reconciling and Uniting Tone" an essay contained in the Cagayan Quadracentennial Souvenir Program, 1986.
4. The historical data and other Ybanag values about the people of Cagayan and Tuguegarao City were taken from the work of the late Msgr. Domingo Mallo entitled "Vignettes about Cagayan and the Cagayanos."

Data Analysis and Procedure

The thematic approach used in analyzing literary work was used in this study. This approach of literary analysis was adopted to ascertain the values of the Ybanags as reflected in their Unoni.

In determining the values and virtues of the Ybanags, the Values Education Program, Framework of the Department of Education (DepEd) was used as framework or basis for the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the Ybanags, health is of paramount importance. They value it more than anything else, more than their material possessions. This attitude toward health can be seen in their Unoni.

"Maski awattu cucuam, nu mapia laman y gawagawayan, maski mazziya, basta napya."

[Even if you have no material possessions, as long as you have good health, even if you're poor, as long as you're healthy.]

The said Unoni is teaching the Ybanags to guard their health as it would be their ultimate wealth. Practically, if a family member gets sick, much time to enjoy life is taken away, more money is forcefully spent, and the worst would be the stress that it would cause. There is no greater wealth than, than to stay healthy.

The Ybanags are lovers of truth. They believe that the foundation of their healthy and harmonious relationship with their fellowmen lies on their being trustworthy.

**“Passil, siri, anna tazzi
Ay bakka na kararua,
Aya, kurug, anna allo dalana na
Y mapolu kannaddaka
Y maporian mamatabba.”**

[Envy, falsehood and cruelty
Are high tides of the soul,
Love, truth and kindness
Are its low tides.
The former drowns the latter saves.]

The Ybanags are conscious that love, truth and kindness are building blocks of relationships. When relationships are broken by envy, falsehood and cruelty, its love, truth, and kindness that restores, rebuilds, and saves. The theological virtue of love, which can be defined simply as desiring the good of the other, could actually be named as truth and kindness. Just as God’s love for humanity, takes the name of sacrifice.

There are two virtues that the Ybanags are much known for. These are their high sense of religiosity and deep spirituality.

**“Ariammu tagatutan y
Grasya nicao nga duttal,
Innaggam mu mabunnay
Y allo na Dios ta tolay.”**

[Do not be impatient for blessing to come to you,
Just keep on waiting on for God’s mercy.]

The Unoni is exhorting the Ybanags towards the virtue of faith. The virtue of totally surrendering to God. Standing on the ground that God is a merciful God and He hears and understands the miseries of His people, He would grant His blessings to help man and woman be lifted out from the miserable situation, as He brought out the Jews from Egyptian slavery. Thus, the Ybanags have the reason to patiently wait for the blessings of God.

Their faith in God which has reached great depth since the inception of Catholicism in the country is a virtual manifestation of their total dependence and reliance on the Creator.

The Ybanags do have concern for others. They seek to promote the common good and general welfare of the society by promoting freedom and respect.

**“Mas mapia y mangiyawa
Anne ta mangalawa
Maski gurameme y balem
Nu alawa y futum nga
Mangalawa ta ikattolem.”**

[It’s better to give than to receive.
Even if your house is rundown
As long as your heart is big enough
For your fellowmen.]

The Ybanag Unoni is giving importance to relationships, how one relates well with the other. During celebrations, welcoming the visitors wholeheartedly is more important than preparing the best place for them to stay. The very beautiful place may become useless if the treatment that visitors receive in the place is not humane. Good relationships are not built on material possessions. As the biblical teaching says, no one is so rich who could not receive anything and no one is so poor who could not give anything.

Ybanags are not superior in term of economic status. However, they are not also at the bottom. Their economic well-being is probably attributed to their work values.

**“Y malappo egga laman y canan na,
Y talakak, makkappak;
Y malappo, massappo.”**

[The industrious
Will always have something to eat,
He who is lazy fasts,
He who is active feasts.]

One can notice that an ant never sleeps. It keeps on going on in search for food to be stored and be eaten. Whatever happens, they will have something to eat. The Ybanags are taught to do the same – to be industrious to have something to eat at whatever circumstance. It is teaching them not to work only for today but also for the future.

As compared to the Department of Education’s Values Education framework, the Ybanag Unoni are teaching the values on health, truth, love, economic efficiency, social responsibility, and spirituality. Thus, the identified pieces of Ybanag Unoni can be used in the elementary and high school level.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The Ybanag Unoni is reflective of the values and virtues of the Ybanags.
2. The Ybanag Unoni is in consonance with the values education framework for the basic education.

With the findings and conclusions, the following are hereby recommended:

1. Ybanag Unoni should be included as one of the mainstream topics in Regional Literature.
2. The Department of Education (DepEd)-Region II and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)-Region II should task the different schools, colleges

and universities in their region to include the Ybanag Unoni as one of the subject matters in Literature, Social Studies and Music.

3. More studies on Ybanag Culture and Arts should be conducted that should focus on the Ybanag's indigenous literature.
4. The Ybanags of this generation should be persuaded to learn the Ybanag Unoni. They should take advantage while there are still Ybanag folks who can teach them to produce this certain type of literature.

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