



Philippines Legends and Myths

Do spirits and divinities live in the remote hills? Do fairies bless and fulfill innocent wishes? Are these myths and legends entwined with Philippines? Which of these stories are inseparably related with Philippines and believed from generations to generations? To know, read on...

The **Philippines** is a country in Southeast Asia comprising of 7,107 islands in the western Pacific Ocean. As it has many islands and is inhabited by different ethnic groups, Philippines legends and myths are very diverse. Its mythology includes a collection of tales and superstitions about **mythical creatures** and entities, which are still believed by many Filipinos.

Philippines Mythology

Filipinos believe in many mythological creatures, one of them is the *Aswang*, a ghoul or vampire, an eater of the dead and a werewolf. They also believe in the *Dila* (the tongue), a spirit that passes through the bamboo flooring of provincial houses and licks certain humans to death. Filipinos also have some other mythological entities like *Diwata* and *Engkanto* (fairies), *Kapre* (a tree-residing giant), *Sirena* (mermaids), *Tikbalang* (demon-horses), *Siyokoy* (mermen), *Mambabarang* (spirit-summoners), *Tiyanak* (demon-infants) and *Duwende* (dwarfs). The prevalence of beliefs in these entities are more strong in the provinces. Some of the common myths are:

- According to Philippine myths, ancient people believed in one supreme **God**, who is the creator of the world. But contradictory to this, there was another myth that said the creation of the world was not the work of a supreme being but rather the outcome of a struggle between hostile forces.
- According to the different regional groups, once upon a time the sky was low and the universe was made up of many layers, with each layer inhabited by different kinds of beings.
- Another myth was that floods take place as a punishment for the people's failure to fulfill their sacrificial responsibilities to the Gods or to observe God's laws.
- According to the Nabaloi version, floods occur due to the negligence of the woman guarding the river, as she fell asleep and the wood and the thrash clogged the river, causing it to swell and overflow.
- Many natural phenomena like rain, **rainbow**, lightning, thunder, eclipse, etc., were also explained by these myths. According to them, the rains are believed to be the tears shed by a man longing for his vanished wife, a *Diwata* (fairy) throwing out water in the sky.
- The rainbow is considered to be the flower-loving daughter of Bathala, who was cursed to stay on **Earth** by Bathala. Others believed that the rainbow is a road from the sky to Earth that a man built to meet his star wife and child.
- Similarly, the lightning and **thunder** occur due to the marriage of a God and a mortal wife, and the **eclipse** occurs when the moon is swallowed by a monster like a huge snake, gigantic tarantula or a lion.

Philippines Legends

Here are some of the famous Philippines legends:

The Makahiya

Once there lived a rich couple, Mang Dondong and Aling Iska who had a twelve-year-old daughter named Maria. Being dutiful, obedient and kind, Maria was loved by everyone. But shyness was one of her distinct features, due to which she avoided interacting with people and used to lock herself in her room. Maria had a beautiful **flower garden**, which was well known all over the town. She took care of her plants tenderly and patiently, as the plants were her source of happiness and enjoyment.

One day a group of bandits raided the village and killed every man they found for money. When Mang Dondong noticed the arrival of the bandits, fearing his daughter's safety, he decided to hide Maria in the garden. Aling hid herself in the house. She trembled with fear and prayed " Oh my God! Save my daughter ". Then suddenly the door opened and the bandits entered the house. They hit Mang Dondong on the head, due to which he lost consciousness and fell on the ground. Aling tried to escape but was also hit by them on the head. The bandits pillaged the house and took away the money and jewelry. The bandits left the house to plunder some other village.

When Mang and Aling regained consciousness they ran to the garden to look for Maria but she was not there. They searched again and again but Maria could not be found. Then suddenly something picked Mang's feet and he saw a tiny plant closing its leaves. Both Mang and Aling knelt at their knees and took a closer look at the plant. After looking at the plant for a long time, they came to know that the plant was their daughter Maria. Indeed, to save her from the bandits, God transformed her into a plant. Aling wept uncontrollably, and to their surprise, every tear got transformed into a small and rosy flower of the new plant that they found in the garden.

After that, Mang and Aling tended the plant with immense care, as they knew that in reality the plant was their child Maria. The plant was as shy as Maria, so they named it 'Makahiya', which in Tagalog means shyness.

Legend of the Dama de Noche

Many years ago, there was a rich maharlika or nobleman, who spent his early bachelor days wining and dining in the company of nobility. He drank the finest wines, ate the most delicious food and enjoyed the company of the beautiful and bejeweled women of the noble class. After spending this kind of life for many years, he decided to settle down and get married to a woman of his choice. "But whom to marry?" he asked himself, "All the women I know are gorgeous and charming, but I am tired of the glitter of their jewels and the mellowness of their clothes!". Finally, he found himself a simple charming girl whose name was Dama.

They got married and lived happily. She loved and pampered him with the most delectable dishes and kept his home and clothes in order. But soon he got bored and began to long for his friend's company. He looked at his wife and thought, she is not beautiful, doesn't have the air of nobility and wisdom in her. And so, he returned to his world of glitter and pleasure. He started to spend his evenings sitting around with his friends, drinking and talking till the next morning.

Seeing this, Dama felt that she was losing her husband. She wept and prayed, "Oh God! Help me. Give me a [magic](#) charm that would make my husband come home again and would never leave my side, forever!". At midnight he came home, opened the door of their bedroom and called for Dama to tell her to prepare his nightclothes. He shouted all around the bedroom and searched the whole house. But could not find his wife. Finally he returned to their bedroom, and when he opened the door, he stopped. A sweet and fragrant scent that he had never smelled before drifted to him. He went straight to the window from where it seemed to be coming. He was amazed to see a strange bush growing outside his window. The bush had thousands of tiny star-like white flowers, from which the heavenly and enchanting scent was coming.

He stood there, completely enthralled by the glorious smell. "Dama..." he whispered softly, wondering, could this be Dama? The noble man sat by the window and waited for his loving simple wife to return. But she did not come back, only the fragrance of the [flowers](#) stayed with him, casting a spell over his entire life.

In the moonlight, Dama of the night, or Dama de Noche would be in full bloom, capturing the rich maharlika and making him never want to leave her side, forever.

These legends and myths were just few out of many. The Philippines has a rich collection of legends and myths from the mysterious distant past, which have fruitful lessons to teach and learn.

By [Kanika Khara](#)

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