

LESSON 11

Mga Talang Pangkultura

Pagdamay Expressing Sympathy and Compassion

If you are a heritage learner, have you ever wondered why your parents always send money to the Philippines—perhaps to help out siblings or cousins, pay for medical expenses or send a relative to college, or be very much concerned when there are reports of typhoons or flooding in the Philippines?

If you are a second-language learner, have you ever wondered why there are so many Filipino groups based in countries all around the world that seek to help their fellow Filipinos in the homeland or be part of the movement for justice and equality in the Philippines?

Here are a few lines from the **pasyon**, as quoted in Reynaldo Ileto’s book, *Pasyon and Revolution*:

**Isilid sa inyong puso’t alaala
Na kaya narito’y hindi sa ligaya
Kun di sa pagdamay kay Hesus na ama
Pagsakop nito sa sanglibutang sala.**

*Implant in your hearts and memories
That we are not here for happiness
But in **damay**/sympathizing with Jesus the Father
In his redemption of sinful mankind.*

Ileto argues that it was **damay** or “compassion” for the **Inang Bayan** or Mother Country that was asked of Filipino revolutionaries organized through the Katipunan. He explained that during initiation rites, the revolutionaries would be so moved to tears not only by the leader’s speech or sermon but also by the complete experience—of being asked to have a “complete change of **loob**.” This according to Ileto, in the **pasyon** context, means: “...a decision to avoid wrongdoing, to follow instead Christ’s example.” In the Katipunan, having **damay** implies a commitment to struggle for **kalayaan**.

It is this same concept, of **pagdamay**, I believe, that leads present-day activists to join the national democratic movement in the Philippines and even Filipinos based in the diaspora and sympathetic allies of various ethnicities to be involved in organizations that promote the welfare and rights of peasants, workers, the urban poor and other marginalized sectors in Philippine society.

As students of Tagalog/Filipino, you may want to go beyond studying the usual phrase **Nakikiramay ako**, which, as you have been taught, is the appropriate thing to say when you offer condolences to a bereaved friend or family. Try to understand the meaning of the following words: **pagdamay**, **dumamay**, **nakiramay**, **damayan**. Think of this as the opposite of **walang pakialam**, which needs two words to express the feeling of indifference or apathy.