



ULLIPAN AND HER SALIDUMMAY

by: JINKY V. MANGAD

In a small village nestled in the majestic mountains of Kalinga, there lived a woman named Ullipan. The Ykalinga people, known for their vibrant cultural heritage, thrived in these lush landscapes, carrying forward traditions that were as old as the mountains themselves. Ullipan, a proud bearer of her people's customs, had dedicated her life to preserving the ancient dances and songs, especially the "salidummay"—a traditional song that resonated with the deep history and spirit of the Kalinga people.

The Kalinga culture was rich and diverse, with each aspect of their life intertwined with tradition. The people were renowned for their intricate tattoos, known as "batok," which served not only as body art but also as markers of identity, bravery, and status. These tattoos told stories of the warrior's bravery in battle, the farmer's bounty, and the wisdom of the elder. The Kalinga textiles, woven by skilled artisans, were a riot of colors and patterns, each design carrying symbolic meanings and reflecting the weaver's life experiences.

Music and dance were at the heart of Kalinga traditions. The "salidummay" was more than just a song; it was a lyrical expression of the people's connection to the land, their history, and their values. The Kalinga dances, often performed during important communal events, depicted various aspects of daily life, from planting rice to celebrating victories in battle. These dances were accompanied by indigenous instruments like the "gangsa" (a type of gong), which resonated with a rhythmic harmony that echoed through the mountains.

Ullipan, with her deep love for these traditions, became a custodian of Kalinga culture. She knew the significance of the "bodong" (peace pact), a unique Kalinga practice that helped resolve conflicts and maintain harmony among different tribes. She was well-versed in the "ullalim" (epic chant), a form of oral literature that narrated the heroics and adventures of

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legendary Kalinga warriors. These elements of Kalinga culture were not just rituals; they were living embodiments of the community's values, resilience, and identity.

Despite the richness of this cultural heritage, the younger generation of the village was drifting away from these traditions, enticed by modernity and the allure of new lifestyles. Ullipan's efforts to teach the dances and songs to the youth were often met with laughter and dismissal. They saw her as an old-fashioned relic, clinging to ways that had no place in the modern world. "Why bother with these old songs?" they would say. "The world is moving on, and so should we."

Yet, Ullipan remained undeterred. She believed sincerely in the importance of preserving the cultural heritage of the Kalinga people. She would gather the children and young adults, sharing with them the stories embedded in the dances and songs, hoping to spark a flicker of interest. Despite the challenges, she continued her efforts, driven by a love for her culture that was unwavering.

One evening, during a village festival, Ullipan performed the "salidummay" alone in the square, her voice carrying the melodies that spoke of the mountains, the rivers, and the ancestors who had once walked the same paths. As she sang, the older villagers listened with tears in their eyes, remembering the days when the village would come alive with these songs. The younger ones, though still dismissive, felt a strange pull in their hearts—a connection to something greater, something ancient and profound.

The next morning, Ullipan was found in the village square, lying peacefully with her eyes closed. She had passed away in her sleep, her lips slightly parted as if singing one last note of "salidummay." The villagers mourned her loss, realizing too late the treasure they had in Ullipan. Her death was a solemn reminder of the fragility of their cultural heritage.

As they gathered to pay their respects, they heard a faint melody carried by the wind—Ullipan's voice, singing the timeless songs she had cherished. It was as if the land itself was

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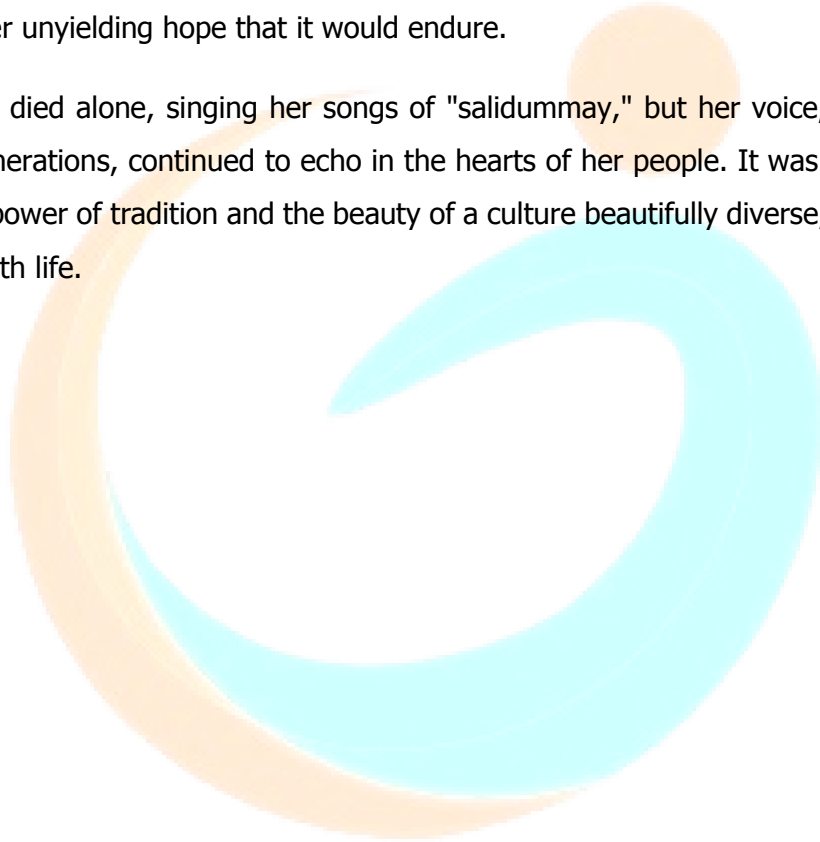
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mourning the loss of its faithful guardian. The younger generation, moved by the poignant beauty of the moment, began to see the value in the traditions Ullipan had tried to preserve.

In the days that followed, the villagers started to revive the old songs and dances, teaching them to the young and performing them with renewed fervor. Ullipan's legacy lived on, not through grand celebrations or monuments but in the quiet persistence of her spirit. Her story became a legend among the Kalinga people, a tale of one woman's love for her culture and her unyielding hope that it would endure.

Ullipan died alone, singing her songs of "salidummay," but her voice, filled with the wisdom of generations, continued to echo in the hearts of her people. It was a testament to the enduring power of tradition and the beauty of a culture beautifully diverse, rich in history, and vibrant with life.



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