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Question: 1. What is the relevance of studying Jose Rizal in your Course ...

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Expert Answer



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1. What is the relevance of studying Jose Rizal in your Course or Career?

It is important to study the life of Jose Rizal because of his input towards the independence of Philippines. He chose to fight for his country through knowledge and the power of letters. He noticed the continued suffering of his countrymen at the hands of the Spaniards and sought to put an end to this situation.

The teachings of Jose Rizal has great relevance to the Filipino people especially the youth in order to rededicate their lives to the ideal of freedom and nationalism, for which our heroes lived and died. It is also important to pay tribute to him for devoting his life and works in shaping the Filipino character and to gain an inspiring source of patriotism through his writings.

Rizal's ideals and teaching can also be related to the current conditions and issues of our society and can develop an appreciation and deeper understanding of all that Rizal fought and died for. As young adults who have been given the responsibility of governing our country's future, we have the obligation to better ourselves and what better inspiration do we have than Rizal?

Most people wonder why it's important to study Rizal's life when all he did is write literature. It is through his writings that he revealed how cruel and abusive the Spaniards truly are in their treatment of the Filipino people. He also enlightened his fellow countrymen to take up arms and stand up for their right. It is because of this that he was imprisoned but that didn't falter him and inspired him to continue writing. It is Rizal who uplifted his generation and emphasized that the youth is the hope of our nation. We can take a lot from Rizal's life, like being aware of what goes on in our country and not just idly accept the injustice we receive in our country. To quote Rizal: "The Filipino are worth dying for."

Learning about the life of Jose Rizal is essential to anyone who has ever experienced colonialism and how the imperialist country that dominates the colony exerts rules and regulations that are not always fair. In Rizal's case, his country (the Philippines) was once a colony of Spain. As it often happens, Spain was making demands and setting rules that hurt the Pilipino community. Rizal was one of the first opponents of such regulations and he was both outspoken and actively participating in different manifestations to denounce the injustice.

As a typical martyr of a cause, Rizal stood out from other protesters in that he was poised, extremely well-educated (he was a medical doctor), intelligent, charismatic, and loved by the people. Those are the main characteristics of a true leader, and Rizal possessed them all. This means that he could also make a great study on leadership styles. He was a warrior without the need for war, and his fight against the injustices committed against his country were both truthful and worthy.

Another factor on martyrdom is sacrifice. Rizal ultimately paid with his own life the unfair tactics of factions who accused him falsely of belonging to sectarian movements.

Another awesome study in leadership, Rizal represents every man and woman who has ever lost their own lives to the consequences of the very cause that they tried to go against. Ultimately, it took a long time to get to where the Philippines finally got their independence from Spain. Therefore, Rizal's influence over the independence movement was both symbolic and necessary for this significant and historic change to happen.

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2. What is the purpose of studying the Life and Works of Jose Rizal?

1. First and foremost, because it is mandated by law. 2. Secondly, because of the lessons contained within the course itself. Let us discuss those reasons one by one: WHY STUDY RIZAL: BECAUSE IT IS MANDATED BY LAW. The teaching of Jose Rizal's life, works, and writings is mandated by Republic Act 1425, otherwise known as the Rizal Law. Senator Jose P. Laurel, the person who sponsored the said law, said that since Rizal was the founder of Philippine nationalism and has contributed much to the current standing of this nation, it is only right that the youth as well as all the people in the country know about and learn to imbibe the great ideals for which he died. The Rizal Law, enacted in 1956, seeks to accomplish the following goals: 1. To rededicate the lives of youth to the ideals of freedom and nationalism, for which our heroes lived and died. 2. To pay tribute to our national hero for devoting his life and works in shaping the Filipino character. 3. To gain an inspiring source of patriotism through the study of Rizal's life, works, and writings.

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3. What are the societal problems experienced by Jose Rizal in his time?

Rizal should not be viewed merely as the sole authorial figure in the novels that sparked revolutionary ideas, but as an unwavering organizer of people. Illustration by JL JAVIER

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Manila (CNN Philippines Life) — José Rizal's "Noli me Tangere" and "El Filibusterismo" depicted the most important social ills that gripped Philippine society under Spanish colonial rule. These novels were scathing critiques of friar domination and corrupt governance. At the same time, Rizal showed in these works how some Filipinos were complicit in the colonial enterprise: from middle-class professionals who remained silent in the face of wrongdoings to ostensibly religious churchgoers who perpetuated repressive social structures.

The "Noli" and "Fili" were not eye-openers in the sense that Filipinos during Rizal's time did not have to read about colonial abuses in a novel that was barely in circulation (colonial authorities banned the book, and only a small number were smuggled into the country) and written in a language that limited its accessibility to the educated elite — such abuses were everywhere.

However, what made the novels powerful was the very act of writing; Rizal displayed courage by publicizing his criticisms of colonialism at a time of intense repression against dissent. He used his real name in his novels' bylines and was not afraid to return to the country to act on his political beliefs despite the certainty of reprisals from state and church reactionaries. When he could have just stayed in Europe to further his medical career or in Hong Kong to be with his family who was forced into exile, he chose to practice what he preached. As he mentioned in one of his private correspondences, the medicine must be brought to the sick man.

Contrary to popular misconception, for him, the arena of struggle was in organizing Filipinos in the Philippines and not asking for piecemeal reforms from Spaniards in Spain. It is not an exaggeration to say that his ideas fueled the revolution that gave us independence from Spain less than two years after his execution.

How are Rizal's works still relevant today

Rizal therefore remains relevant to 21st century Filipinos. Unfortunately, this also means that many of the social ills he fought against continue to afflict Philippine society, more than a century after his martyrdom. The unequal treatment of colonized nations is still the predominant feature of neocolonialism, which is nothing but a rearrangement of old colonial ties. Foreign powers, like the U.S., treat our archipelago as though it is its own backyard that needs to be fortified from enemies, which explains the presence of American troops through the Visiting Forces Agreement, Balikatan Exercises, and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

At the same time, imperialist aggression by upstart colonizers like China has also compromised the integrity of our national sovereignty, as it gobbles up islands and atolls in the West Philippine Sea. Uncannily, Rizal's warnings about dealing with established and new colonial powers in his essay "The Philippines a Century Hence" are applicable to this very day.

Meanwhile, the state attacks against dissent and democratic rights that Rizal saw in his lifetime as he dealt with censorship, the guardia civil, and a sham justice system, seem to have been replicated in the current Duterte administration: the judiciary's independence now in question due to the former CJ Maria Lourdes Sereno's ousting through quo warranto, the forces of our Philippine National Police roam the streets as modern-day guardia civil that prey on the helpless in the guise of maintain peace and order, and Spanish-era censorship has morphed into the disinformation of fake news and attacks on press freedom.

Nonetheless, Rizal's heroism is a testament that tyranny can never fully suppress legitimate democratic aspirations. Although many remember Rizal for emphasizing the importance of education and the intellectual growth of a society, what is often left unmentioned is how he viewed knowledge not in terms of an individualistic pursuit of greatness, enlightenment, or socioeconomic mobility, but in terms of its value to a collective.

Rizal, an organizer of people

Rizal should not be viewed merely as the sole authorial figure in the novels that sparked revolutionary ideas, but as an unwavering organizer of people. This side of Rizal is most apparent in how he worked with fellow ilustrados in Europe to further the Propaganda movement and Philippine scholarship, how he founded La Liga Filipina, an organization that included the likes of Andres Bonifacio and Apolinario Mabini, in a short span of time, and how he helped the residents of Dapitan improve basic services in their far-flung community without the help of the colonial state.

He gave his most lavish praises to the young women of Malolos who decided that they would take the initiative in establishing a night school for themselves so they could learn the Spanish language despite stiff friar opposition. He even rallied the people in his hometown in Calamba against the Dominicans' abuse of their position as hacienda owners.

At a time when expressions of democratic aspirations, especially among the middle class, are more or less confined to social media posts and individual acts, Rizal's life should remind today's Filipinos that actual organizing efforts, especially at the grassroots level, are needed to achieve the changes we want to see in the country. Rizal was aware that a single person cannot by himself carry the heavy load of improving a society beset by corrupt social structures; he had to work with the likes of Marcelo del Pilar, Graciano Lopez Jaena, Antonio Luna, and Ferdinand Blumentritt. More important, he made it a point to collaborate with ordinary folk, the townspeople of Calamba and Dapitan for example, because he recognized that overturning such corrupt social structures would not happen at the level of those occupying the topmost social strata but from the people themselves desiring these changes.

Viewing Rizal as a model for a more progressive Philippines

Thus, the challenge for today's educated Filipino middle class who regard Rizal as a model is to shun this growing tendency to view the masses as lazy freeloaders but as partners in forming a progressive Philippines.

As the economic squeeze created by policies of the present and past administrations tightens, those of us who are most economically vulnerable will all the more resort to radical measures: louder and bigger rallies against 'endo' and the TRAIN law, further labor strikes and disputes such as in NutriAsia, more incidents of vacant and dilapidated NHA housing being occupied by Kadamay members, Lumad fleeing ancestral lands to escape militarization, and peasants joining the New People's Army in the face of the state's hollow agrarian reform program.

What the haves view as parasitical, unethical, and unfair are desperate measures for the have nots. As Rizal himself acknowledged in his classic essay "On the Indolence of the Filipinos," the Filipinos' laziness is but a byproduct of the repressive social structures that deny them the fruits of their labor.

5. Why do we need another Jose Rizal today?

The way José Rizal is celebrated in the Philippines as a national hero finds no match in the world. Shrines and monuments dedicated to his figure are abundant throughout the archipelago, and his name indicates often the most prominent street or plaza in town. Rizal is a subject in the university as it has become a symbol of Philippine patriotism. Some historians have gained fame and money becoming eminent "Rizalistas," and I was not surprised at all when I got to know that there is even a small group of religious believers in Mount Banahaw called Rizalistas, who claim Rizal is the real messiah. Rizal is the favorite among the national heroes, and the best word I find to call the relation between Filipinos and Rizal is devotion.

Although Rizal was already esteemed as a top intellectual and writer both in the Philippines and Spain, the making of Rizal as a national hero was a legitimate and well-intentioned operation carried out a few decades after his cruel execution during the American period. And the problem with having him converted into a national hero is that it has resulted in some unexpected consequences: an exaggerated focus in his life: what I have called "chismography" about Rizal, the oblivion of other world-class Filipino intellectuals – Sanciaingo, De Los Reyes, Kalaw – and a neglect of what it should be most valued: his writings

I remember a day in class when I asked my students what they could say about Rizal, and I was told he was a babaero (womanizer) and had many many girlfriends. "That's why he is our role model!" one said cheerfully. I remember a student telling me she failed in class because she forgot the color of the shirt Rizal was wearing when he was shot. I can recall the faces of disappointment every time I bring my foreign friends to Rizal's shrine, a reliquary-like place where you can find a long list of the professions Rizal supposedly practiced and the list of the 14 languages he was supposed to master, but nothing that could help to understand him.

The state of semi-divinity achieved by his figure carries other problems: "I will not achieve what he did in 35 years. He is a genius and he liked to work hard. I admire him, but I prefer a simple life," another student told me. Rizal has been placed on such a high level that some young Filipinos do not think of him anymore as a human person whose achievements could inspire.

The lack of understanding of Rizal comes, in my modest opinion, because Rizal was a writer and suffers the irony of being a national hero in a country where most people do not like to read. Sadly, the proliferation of monuments, shrines, and homages have not been accompanied by a close scrutiny of his writings, which are most often read in a very shallow and purely nationalistic way. Apart from Noli and Fili, the rest of his abundant and rich written production is almost impossible to find in bookstores, and if not for the outstanding efforts of another patriot – Teodoro M. Kalaw – in collecting and editing most of his precious letters, those would not be easily available today.

The centennial of his birth moved the government in 1961 to publish most of his works in several volumes. However, the editorial criteria was far from the rigor demanded today in reliable editions and, most importantly, with the exception of Noli and Fili, and some other English translations, most of the works of Rizal are still only available in a language most Filipinos do not speak: Spanish. Even for his masterpiece, the only critically annotated bilingual edition was published by Vibal Foundation in 2011.

I perfectly understand that renaming a square or placing a statue in a square is way easier than publishing critical editions, but I truly believe, given the current circumstances, that the works of José Rizal truly deserve it. Establishing carefully the texts, annotating it in order to make more accessible to all kind of readers, and providing translations to the most important Filipino languages would be an undeniable exercise of patriotism that should not be longer delayed. No one can blame Filipinos for not reading Rizal when, in the first place, most of his works are not easily available.

It can happen that a Filipino reader does not have the patience to read his novels, but it could well happen that this same reader might enjoy reading his private letters or short articles. Although Filipinos cannot access the stylish beauty of his Spanish, they could get engaged with his rich arguments, with superb critical thinking skills, his uncommon intellectual brightness. Admiring Rizal without understanding him is a kind of empty nationalism and blind devotion.

6. What does it take to be another Jose Rizal?

José Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines, wrote many political pieces which expressed the feelings of many about the Spanish colonization and the potential for a democracy. The following timeline follows Rizal's biography throughout his life.

7. Will you be the another Jose Rizal?

No, i am not the another jose rizal

8. If you are Jose Rizal, what will you do to solve our current societal problem?

THE PHILIPPINES' national hero, the writer José Rizal, was the first intellectual in Southeast Asia to think systematically about social and political issues. In fact, it could be said that Rizal's thoughts about the nature of Filipino colonial society laid the foundations for an original Southeast Asian sociology of colonial society.

Rizal, who was of mixed Chinese descent, was from a prosperous family and able to enroll in the top schools in Manila. His father successfully managed a sugar plantation on a parcel of land leased from the Dominican Order. He attended the Ateneo de Manila University, then studied medicine at the University of Santo Thomas. In 1882, he left for Spain to continue his study of medicine and the humanities at the Universidad Central de Madrid.

His first novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, literally *Touch Me Not*, from the Latin version of the words spoken (according to John 20:17) by Jesus to Mary Magdalene when she recognizes him after his resurrection, was published in 1887, the year Rizal returned to the Philippines. The *Noli*, as it is affectionately known among Filipinos, portrayed the oppressive conditions of Spanish colonial rule and can be read to this day as an analysis of the problems of Filipino society.

Rizal's second novel, *El Filibusterismo* (*The Revolution*), was published in 1891. The *Fili* speculates on the likelihood and outcome of a revolution against the Spaniards. Rizal's views enraged the Spanish friars and colonial authorities. His parents' property was confiscated and male members of the family were deported to the island of Mindoro, and Rizal himself was exiled to Dapitan, Mindanao, from 1892 to 1896. Accused of inciting Filipinos to revolt in 1896, Rizal was found guilty of sedition and executed by firing squad on December 30, 1896. He was just 35.

Although he lived a tragically short life, he was an original thinker and prolific writer unrivalled by anyone of his generation in the region. Among his works are several poems and essays, three novels, studies on Philippine history, and a Tagalog grammar. His impact extended far beyond the Philippines, where he remains a potent figure to this day, influencing intellectuals throughout Southeast Asia.

VIEWS ON COLONIAL SOCIETY

There are three broad dimensions of Rizal's writings on the Philippines. First, there is the critique of the colonizers' knowledge of the Philippines. Second, there are his ideas on the nature and conditions of colonial society. Finally, there are Rizal's discussions on the meaning of and requirements for emancipation.

According to Rizal's logic, the corrupt Spanish colonial bureaucracy relentlessly exploited the Filipinos, but blamed the underdevelopment of the people on their presumed indolence. Rizal's aim was to show that this view was erroneous through recourse to both logic and historical fact. Rizal went into pre-colonial history to address the colonialist view of Filipino indolence. The facts proved that pre-colonial Filipino society was relatively advanced, suggesting that the presumed backwardness was due to colonialism. And, of course, despite the claims of the heavy-handed colonial government and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, colonial policy was oppressive. Rizal referred to the "boasted ministers of God [the friars] and propagators of light(!) [who] have not sowed nor do they sow Christian moral, they have not taught religion, but rituals and superstitions." (Rizal, 1963b: 38) The sentiment is not without merit even today.

THE CRITIQUE OF COLONIAL HISTORY

Rizal had definite views about the problems of what we would call today "Orientalist" images of Filipino society held by colonial-era scholars. This comes across very clearly in his annotation and republication of Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (Historical Events of the Philippine Islands), a work that first appeared in 1609. De Morga, a Spaniard, served eight years in the Philippines as Lieutenant Governor General and Captain General and was also a justice of the Supreme Court of Manila (de Morga, 1890/1962: xxx).

Rizal's objective in annotating and republishing this work was to correct what he understood to be erroneous reports and slanderous statements that could be found in most Spanish works on the Philippines. He also wanted to recover the pre-colonial past that was erased from the memory of Filipinos by colonization (Rizal, 1890/1962: vii). This includes the destruction of pre-Spanish records and artifacts that could have thrown light on the nature of pre-colonial society (Zaide, 1993: 5). De Morga's work differed from others as it was the only civil, as opposed to ecclesiastical, history of the Philippines written during the early Spanish colonial period (Ocampo, 1998: 192). Ecclesiastical histories were problematic not only because they tended to be biased, but also because they "abound in stories of devils, miracles, apparitions, etc., these forming the bulk of the voluminous histories of the Philippines" (de Morga, 1890/1962: 291 n. 4). Rizal's annotations stressed the following: Filipino advances in agriculture and industry in pre-colonial times; the point of view of the colonized on various issues; cruelties perpetrated by the colonizers' the hypocrisy of the colonizers, particularly the Catholic Church; the irrationality of the Church's discourse on colonial topics.

Let us consider an example of the point of view of the colonized. In a section where de Morga discusses Moro (Muslim) piracy, Rizal notes that: "This was the first piracy of the inhabitants of the South recorded in the history of the Philippines. We say "'inhabitants of the South' for before them there had been others, the first ones being those committed by the Magellan expedition, capturing vessels of friendly islands and even of unknown ones, demanding from them large ransoms.

"If we are to consider that these piracies lasted more than 250 years during which the unconquerable people of the South captured prisoners, assassinated, and set fire on not only the adjacent islands but also going so far as Manila Bay, Malate, the gates of the city, and not only once a year but repeatedly, five or six times, with the government unable to suppress them and to defend the inhabitants that it disarmed and left unprotected; supposing that they only cost the islands 800 victims every year, the number of persons sold and assassinated will reach 200,000, all sacrificed jointly with very many others to the prestige of Spanish Rule." (de Morga, 1890/1962: 134 n.1)

Rizal also notes that the destruction of Filipino industry, the depopulation of the islands, Spanish plundering of gold and the enslavement of people were never seen as wrong acts among the Spaniards (de Morga, 1890/1962: 134 n.1).

THE MEANING OF INDOLENCE

Rizal was very aware that in Spanish colonial discourse, the backwardness of the Filipinos was blamed on their indolence. In the view of the Spaniards, Filipinos had little love for work. But, as the late Malaysian academic and politician Syed Hussein Alatas (who was also my father) has noted, the unwillingness of Filipinos to cultivate land under the feudal *encomenderos* (overseers) was interpreted out of context and understood to be the result of laziness, which was in turn attributed to their nature (Alatas, S.H. 1977: 125).

Rizal made some very interesting observations that Alatas considered to be the first sociological treatment of the theme (Alatas, S.H., 1977: 98). Firstly, Rizal observed that the "miseries of a people without freedom should not be imputed to the people but to their rulers" (Rizal, 1963b: 31). His many writings furnish us with instances of oppression and exploitation such as the confiscations of lands, appropriation of labor, high taxes and forced labor without payment, that go far in explaining the reluctance of the Filipinos to work (Rizal, 1963a).

Secondly, Rizal insisted that the Filipinos were not inherently indolent. Furthermore, to the extent that there was indolence, this was not to be seen as a cause of backwardness. Rather it was the exploitative conditions of colonial society that resulted in indolence. In pre-colonial times, the Filipinos were hardworking and diligent, controlling trade routes, tilling the land, mining ore and manufacturing. Their indolence developed when their destiny was taken away from them. Things were different in the pre-colonial period: "[The Filipinos] worked more and they had more industries when there were no *encomenderos*, that is, when they were heathens, as de Morga himself asserts"; the *Indios*, seeing that they were vexed and exploited by their *encomenderos* on account of the products of their industry, and not considering themselves beasts of burden or the like, began to break their looms, abandon the mines, the fields, etc., believing that their rulers would leave them alone on seeing them poor, wretched and unexploitable. Thus they degenerated and the industries and agriculture so flourishing before the coming of the Spaniards were lost." (de Morga, 1890/1962: 317 n.2).

What is important to note here is Rizal's approach to the problem. He made a distinction between being "indolent" as a reaction to climate, for example, and indolence in terms of the absence of love for work or the avoidance of work (Rizal, 1963c: 111). In the tropics, the pace of life was slower for reasons of climate, and even the Europeans had to slow down. The physiological reaction to the heat is not consistent with Rizal's other definition of indolence as "little love for work." The adjustment of working habits to the tropical climate should not be understood as a result of laziness or little love for work (Alatas, S.H. 1977: 100).

The second kind of indolence Rizal noted was a consequence of the experience of the Filipinos under Spanish rule. The fact that Filipinos were industrious in the past meant indolence must have social causes that could be found in colonial rule (Rizal, 1963c). To be sure, there are weaknesses in Rizal's treatment of the problem. Alatas states that it is not reasonable to call the absence of the will to work conditioned by the exploitative conditions of colonial rule indolence (Alatas, S.H. 1977: 106). Indeed, there is a need to revise Rizal's definition of indolence as little love for work. Alatas noted, however, that Rizal's recourse to historical and sociological factors to explain the lack of motivation to work among colonial Filipinos is on the whole sound (Alatas, S.H. 1977: 105-106).

The theme of indolence, or the lazy native, in colonial scholarship formed a vital component of the ideology of colonial capitalism. Rizal was probably the first to deal with it systematically and sociologically. The exposé of the myth was taken up in greater depth by Alatas in his famous *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (1977), which contains a chapter entitled "The Indolence of the Filipinos," in honor of Rizal's work on the same topic, "The Indolence of the Filipino",

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND EMANCIPATION

While studying in Spain at the Universidad Central de Madrid, Rizal was exposed to current controversies between liberals and conservative Catholics (Bonoan, 1994: 13). This undoubtedly led to his developing a great commitment to the idea of the freedom of thought and inquiry (Bonoan, 1994: 17). In 1885, he states in a letter to his mother: "As to what you say concerning my duties as a Christian, I have the pleasure of telling you that I have not ceased believing for a single moment in any of the fundamental beliefs of our religion. The beliefs of my childhood have given way to the convictions of youth, which I hope in time will take root in me. Any essential belief that does not stand review and the test of time must pass on to the realm of memory and leave the heart. I ought not to live on illusions and falsehoods. What I believe now, I believe through reason because my conscience can admit only that which is compatible with the principles of thought"; I believe that God would not punish me if in approaching him I were to use his most precious gift of reason and intelligence." (Rizal, 1959: 224, cited in Bonoan, 1994: 19).

Arguing that the underdevelopment of Filipino society was not due to any inherent shortcomings of the natives but rather to the distortions of colonial rule, Rizal asserted that emancipation would come about from enlightenment. Colonial rule was oppressive because of the backwardness of the Church. The Church was against enlightenment, the supremacy of reason. The European Enlightenment was good for Filipinos, while the Church was against it because it established reason as authority, and not God or the Church. While thinkers such as Marx, Weber and Durkheim all argued that reason had become unreasonable in the sense that modernity was alienating, anomic and ultimately irrational, Rizal had a different attitude toward the Enlightenment and reason (Bonoan, 1994). His writings do not show the same kind of disillusionment or ambivalence with reason that we find in much Western thought of the same period. This is likely because, for Rizal, the Philippines was not sufficiently modern, being held back by an anti-rational Church.

The consequence of this, as Rizal foretells in *El Filibusterismo*, is the emergence of the *filibustero*, the "dangerous patriot who will soon be hanged," in other words, the revolutionary (Rizal, 1992: 69). The revolution against Spanish rule and the Church seems inevitable and the only means of achieving freedom. *El Filibusterismo* is a prescription for revolution. The *Noli* of 1887 does not go so far as the *Fili*. It only suggests the need to displace the civil power of the villainous Franciscan friars. In the *Noli*, the civil and military power exercised by the Spanish Captain General, a colonial officer, is perceived as rational and progressive. Elias, a noble, patriotic and selfless Filipino dies in the novel, while the egoist Ibarra, a confused romantic in love with the iconic symbol of Filipino womanhood, Maria Clara, survives.

In the *Fili*, there appears a shift in Rizal's thinking. The villains now include both the clergy, this time the Dominican priests, as well as the mercenary Captain General. The revolution does not succeed, which was a reflection of Rizal's assessment of the lack of preparedness of the Filipinos for revolution. He feared that those who would spearhead a revolution would be motivated by little more than self-interest rather than social commitment (Majul, 2001: 68). Rizal himself was reluctant to join the revolution because he did not advocate a revolution that was bound to fail. Rizal, however, was revolutionary in his actions and writings. He paid the ultimate price for this when he was executed for treason against Spain.

The idea behind promoting scholars like José Rizal and other Asian thinkers of varying degrees of renown, is to contribute to the universalization of the social sciences and humanities. These disciplines may be global, but they are not universal so long as the multiple voices that have something to say about society are not rendered audible.

9. Is criticizing the government important for Jose Rizal?

Civil servants play a very important role in public administration as the partners of the government in bringing its affairs to the people, such as delivery of basic services and carrying out its day-to-day-functions. Often, civil servants or the bureaucrats are criticized for being unresponsive to the public needs. Corruption remains a malady in the bureaucracy up to now. There is very little respect for the people in the government. We cannot blame the people for the common perception that corruption is endemic in the government, considering that the Philippines has consistently been on the list of the most corrupt countries in Asia, according to surveys.

Corruption in the government had its origins during the time of the ancient Filipinos. These were exacerbated by the abuses of the Spanish friars and officials with the onset of the colonial rule. Jose Rizal, our foremost hero, vehemently condemned and exposed these abuses and cruelties in his two novels the *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*.

One cause of corruption in the bureaucracy is the lack of adherence to the principle of merit and fitness in the selection process. To curb abuses in the government, Rizal asked that Filipinos enjoy equal rights similar to those of the Spaniards by giving them the same opportunity to work in the government. Rizal believed that the adoption of a competitive government examination will ensure that only qualified individuals regardless of race could serve in the government.

Today, political intervention and nepotism in the government are very rampant. Many incompetent officials land a career in government service- turning the bureaucracy into an inefficient organization prone to corruption and manipulation of politicians.

Realizing the negative effect of corruption in the country, progressive legislators have exerted efforts to reduce, if not eliminate once and for all, the occurrence of graft and corruption in the bureaucracy by passing several laws. But these laws have seemingly remained powerless against the persistence of corrupt practices in the government as shown by the public's acceptance of corruption as part of everyday life. Filipinos have taken notice of the catchphrase good governance through good leadership as a possible solution in solving the problems of the bureaucracy. For good governance to be achieved, however,

bureaucrats should not only possess competence, education and skills, but also exhibit a great commitment and integrity to serve the public. While the public has seen its fair share of efforts at reforming the bureaucracy, its continued support remains essential to the success of the government's program of promoting efficiency in the government service.

Jose Rizal had known this, and for him, the people are duty-bound to be involved in the task of good government. In one of his writings, he said: "Peoples and government are correlated and complementary, an aimless government would be an anomaly among a righteous people, just as corrupt people cannot exist under just rulers and wise laws. Whatever social and political environments we are in are products of men's deliberate choice." As Rizal emphasized: "There are no tyrants where there are no slaves."

Rizal was admired for being a good leader. He gained the respect of his colleagues in the Propaganda Movement like Marcelo H. del Pilar who was once his tough rival for the leadership of the organization. As a leader, Rizal was transformational, charismatic, visionary, and most importantly, incorruptible. He displayed a kind of leadership that was not motivated by personal interest but the willingness to sacrifice oneself for the good of the majority which he described in his novels as the national sentiment.

A close study of Rizal's novels reveals how he stressed the importance of national sentiment as essential in guarding society against all kinds of injustices, and bringing about social change. A character in the novel *El Filibusterismo*, who lacked national sentiment, was Señor Pasta, a wealthy lawyer. In a scene in the novel where Isagani expressed his desire to help the students establish an institute for the instruction of Spanish, Pasta expressed his surprise as Isagani had already mastered the language. When Pasta made it clear to Isagani that he was unwilling to help his noble cause for education and even dissuaded him from pushing through with his plans, Isagani remarked: "When I have gray hairs like those, sir, and turn my gaze back over my past and see that I have worked only for myself, without having done for the country that has given me everything, for the citizens who have helped me live – then, sir, every gray hair will be a thorn, and instead of rejoicing, they will shame me!"

Rizal clearly realized the idea of national sentiment and its value that when developed and imbibed by the people, might bring about common good. The essence of national sentiment is the subordination of personal interests and comfort to the social good.

Basilio, also a character in the *El Fili*, demonstrated the lack of national sentiment because he opposed the idea that justice be served to his family. He feared that all his dreams would be shattered if he would brought the matter to the government officials. Had he had been brave enough to face social alienation, Basilio could have helped prevent the acts of injustice that transpired later in the novel.

To his fellow propagandists, Rizal advised not to derive personal benefit from their service to the country. In his letter of gratitude to the members of the *La Solidaridad* for appointing him Honorary President of the association, he wrote: "No member should expect rewards or honors for what he does. He who does his duty in the expectation of reward is usually disappointed, because almost no one believes himself sufficiently rewarded. And so that there may not be discontented or ill-rewarded members, it is advisable for each one to do his duty just for its own sake and at best expect to be later treated unjustly because in anomalous countries, injustice is the prize for those who fulfill their duties. [London, 28 January]."

People who seek fortune should not find employment in the government because the biggest reward from government service is the attainment of the common good served with one's good will, integrity and a clear conscience. Public servants who accept bribe compromise their integrity. Once, Rizal was offered P100, 000, a huge amount that time, apart from a professorial chair at a university and an estate of his own if only he would renounce his two novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. Rizal showed he was made of strong moral fibre for he was not tempted by these bribes, giving up his personal happiness for the welfare of his countrymen.

With the idea of good leadership that Rizal has bequeathed to us, we can change the negative image of the bureaucracy, transforming it into a more efficient instrument in bringing about social, economic and political reforms in the country, a paragon of administration as well as an agent for social change.

10. If you find problems in the government, being the hope of Jose Rizal, will you be silent or be vocal about it?

Rizal's letter to the women of Malolos emphasized reason and supported the education of women so that they may be enlightened: religiousness required reason; without reason there was only religiosity. Rizal's letter argued that women's value was contingent on their contribution to the Filipino identity, stressing how the character of motherhood reflected the character of motherland. Sen and Nussbaum's capabilities approach is a broad framework within the liberal tradition followed by Rizal that allows for a better appreciation of Rizal's messages in the context of modern-day understandings of development. In particular, reason and affiliation are central to the capabilities approach, which regards women (and men) as bearers of intrinsic value, helping identify not only the potential but also the limits of Rizal's arguments. Current debates pertaining to individual rights and choice, including those on reproductive rights, provide a platform on which the relevance of Rizal's messages may be tested. It is shown that the capabilities approach enhances Rizal's messages for human development.

When Jose Rizal lauded the success of the letter of appeal for educational opportunities sent by the young women of Malolos to the Spanish governor-general Valeriano Weyler in 1888, he was celebrating the Maloleñas' agency and their process of empowerment. In his letter "Sa mga kababayang dalaga sa Malolos" ("To my country women, the young women of Malolos")² written in 1889, Rizal began by saying that he had not conceived of bravery as a characteristic possessed by women of the Philippines until he heard of this news. Rizal saw these women as *katulong* [allies] in the demand for the betterment of the Filipino nation, thus inspiring hope and fostering confidence in victory over suffering. Immediately notable in Rizal's letter is its connection with a political project—namely, a deliverance from suffering (originally, *mahango sa pagkalugami*),³ especially for women, and the betterment of the people (originally, *ikagagaling ng bayan*). A second point to be noted is Rizal's argument that deliverance requires reflection and reasoning, which he asks of his readers in the preambular paragraph to his final words in the letter. On these two counts, this paper argues that the human development and capabilities approach developed by

Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum is a useful framework both in understanding Rizal's message to his women contemporaries, as well as in deriving messages relevant to Filipino women confronting 21st-century issues. Like Rizal's message to the Malolos women, the capabilities approach is also a political project. As put forward especially by Nussbaum, it is a "foundation for basic political principles that should underwrite constitutional guarantees" [2000:70], particularly with the insistence that "capability, and not functioning, is the appropriate political goal" [Nussbaum 2000:87] (original italics). Amartya Sen [1999:4] has also offered the capabilities approach as an evaluative tool,⁴ arguing that the "assessment of progress has to be done primarily in terms of whether the freedoms that

people have are enhanced." As a framework for assessment, the capabilities approach has the advantage of confronting the various concepts behind welfare, progress, and development with an alternative that "is respectful of each person's struggle for flourishing, that treats each person as an end and as a source of agency and worth in her own right" [Nussbaum 2000:69]. This allows for a more complete accounting of women's roles and status in society. I undertake to read Rizal's letter in two parts following the argument of Nussbaum [2000:82] that practical reason and affiliation are capabilities that "both organize and suffuse all others, making their pursuit truly human." The first part covers those sections of Rizal's letter that argue for the use of reason and the need for education. This refers particularly to reflections on the role of friars and the practice of religion in the lives of women. The second part covers sections of Rizal's letter that argue for a sense of duty and responsibility, which are functions related to the capability for affiliation. This would have particular reference to the role of women in other people's lives as well as her duty to her nation. There is a world of difference between the Filipinas of the 19th century and the Filipinas of the 21st century. The most striking contrast is that they now have access to education and that more women are highly educated. A major change on this aspect was already reflected during the American colonial period, which, in turn, was translated into greater political participation [Roces 2002]. There remain gaps despite this progress, however, and a fresh reading of Rizal's letter reminds us that many issues involving women's freedom persist. Current public debates involving the Catholic Church as a political force affecting women's lives (particularly the dispute over a proposed legislation on reproductive health known popularly as the "RH Bill") are useful tests of the extent to which Rizal's arguments for the use of reason still resonate as a guide to women as they relate to modern-day church authorities. 2. The capabilities approach and its political value Rizal's letter had political value. At the time Rizal wrote the letter he was already a recognized figure of the Propaganda Movement. His *Noli me tangere* was already widely read and he was in the middle of writing *El filibusterismo* when Rizal sent the letter off to Malolos. It was Marcelo H. del Pilar, editor of *La Solidaridad* to which Rizal contributed regularly, who requested Rizal to write the letter. Tiongson [2004] tells of how the letter's recipients were

eventually able to read and discuss his handwritten letter and moreover reproduce it for others to read in the school for which the women had petitioned. Rizal's letter arrived about a month after the women's appeal to open a school was granted, subject to several conditions⁵ and only after much lobbying involving travel between Malolos and Manila. Tiongson [2004:175] writes that all the ladies must have been assiduous students, especially since the discussions in class were not limited to academic subjects but included political issues of the day. It was in this school that the women read the first issue of *La Solidaridad* (February 15, 1889), where Lopez Jaena wrote a long article about their school, reproducing their letter and eight of the signatures, and praising their courage and determination; and a subsequent issue (March 15, 1889) of the same paper, where Fernando Canon published a sonnet dedicated to them. Most of all, it was in the school where the women read and discussed Jose Rizal's handwritten letter to them that arrived sometime in March 1889, and made copies of it for themselves and for dissemination. I contend that this explicit recognition of the letter's political value is not only historically appropriate, it also needs to be amplified using a capabilities approach if Rizal's ideas are to remain relevant in addressing similar issues debated in the Philippines of the present. For Nussbaum [2000:83], the starting point of the capabilities approach is "a freestanding moral idea"⁶ that there is a set of human abilities—those that have been assessed as valuable from an ethical standpoint—that exert a moral claim to be developed. As Rizal implied, therefore, there is a prior political task of choosing, as a nation, those actions that contribute to the development of these human abilities that the collective values, knowing that the chosen actions have effects that redound to the individuals comprising the collective.

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What are the impressions of Rizal in his first foot in the Spanish soil? Describe your thoughts about his experiences. (Answer in 2-3 paragraphs)

[See answer](#)

Andres Bonifacio, through Dr. Pio Valenzuela, sought Rizal's opinion and approval in launching an armed rebellion against the Spanish administration. Rizal staunchly opposed the rebellion saying that

[See answer](#)

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