

Life and Works of Rizal

Chapter 1:

The Rizal Law (RA 1425) – mandatory study of the life, works, and writings of Dr. Jose P. Rizal. It requires educational bodies to include the life and writings of Rizal in their curriculum to teach them about the concept of nationalism. It was approved on June 12, 1956.

Summary:

Historical Background and Context: RA 1425 was passed in response to global and local tensions, including issues of communism and the need for nationalism in the Philippines during the 1950s.

Opposing Opinions: Senator Claro M. Recto supported RA 1425, emphasizing its role in educating Filipinos about their history, flaws, and values. The Catholic Bishops of the Philippines opposed it, citing concerns over the separation of church and state and potential attacks on Catholic dogma.

Compromised Version: Senator Jose P. Laurel's version of the bill helped settle disputes between different proposed versions, leading to its eventual passage.

Importance of Studying Rizal: Studying the Rizal subject is mandated by law and offers valuable lessons for nation-building and personal development.

Purpose of the Rizal Subject:

The Rizal subject is included in various higher education programs because it is mandated by Republic Act 1425 (RA 1425), passed in 1956.

The law ensures that students study Jose Rizal's works to keep his contributions to the nation alive in the minds of the youth.

Historical Context:

The 1950s were marked by global and regional political unrest, including the rise of communism and the Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In East Asia, countries experienced prolonged political uncertainty and internal unrest due to the rivalry between Soviet and US influence.

Purpose and Background

- **Promotion of Nationalism:** RA 1425 aims to promote the ideals of freedom and nationalism by mandating the study of Jose Rizal's life, works, and writings, particularly his novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*.
- **Role of Education:** The law emphasizes the importance of education in developing moral character, personal discipline, civic conscience, and the duties of citizenship among students. It acknowledges the inspiring role that Rizal's works play in shaping these values, especially during students' formative years.

Key Provisions

1. **Inclusion in Curricula:**
 - All public and private schools, colleges, and universities are required to include courses on the life, works, and writings of Jose Rizal in their curricula.
 - For collegiate courses, the original or unexpurgated editions of *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* or their English translations must be used as basic texts.
2. **Implementation:**
 - The Board of National Education is responsible for implementing the law, which includes preparing primers, readers, and textbooks related to Rizal's works.
 - The Board must establish rules and regulations to enforce the provisions of the Act within 60 days of its effectivity.
 - Exemptions from using the unexpurgated texts are allowed for students who have religious objections, provided they submit a sworn written statement. However, these students are still required to take the course.
3. **Library Requirements:**
 - Schools, colleges, and universities must maintain an adequate number of copies of the original and unexpurgated editions of *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, along with Rizal's other works and biographies, in their libraries.
 - These works must be included in the list of required readings.
4. **Translation and Distribution:**
 - The Board of National Education is tasked with translating *Noli Me Tangere*, *El Filibusterismo*, and other writings of Rizal into English, Tagalog, and other major Philippine dialects.
 - These translated works should be printed in affordable editions and distributed for free to interested readers through local organizations and councils.
5. **Religious Sensitivities:**
 - The Act does not amend or repeal existing laws prohibiting the discussion of religious doctrines by public school teachers. This provision ensures that the Rizal Law respects religious beliefs while promoting nationalistic education.

Summary Explanation

RA 1425, also known as the Rizal Law, mandates the inclusion of courses on Jose Rizal's life, works, and writings in the curricula of all educational institutions in the Philippines. The law specifically requires the use of his novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* as essential texts in higher education. The purpose of the law is to foster a sense of nationalism and patriotism among Filipino students by exposing them to Rizal's contributions to Philippine history.

The law also requires schools to keep copies of Rizal's works in their libraries and to make these texts accessible to students. It provides for the translation and distribution of Rizal's works in various Philippine languages to ensure widespread access. While the law promotes the study of Rizal's works, it also respects religious sensitivities, allowing exemptions for students with religious objections.

Overall, RA 1425 aims to instill in the youth the values of nationalism and patriotism through a deep understanding of Jose Rizal's contributions to the Philippines' struggle for independence.

Situation in the Philippines:

President Ramon Magsaysay, during his term as Defense Secretary and later as President, faced the communist-led Huk Rebellion in Central Luzon.

To counter the growing communist influence, Magsaysay supported a wide-scale propaganda program aimed at educating the youth about the dangers of communism.

Passage of RA 1425:

In response to these challenges, Senator Claro M. Recto authored Senate Bill 438, known as the Rizal Bill.

The Rizal Bill aimed to craft a nationalistic policy that would rekindle nationalism and patriotism among Filipinos.

The bill was passed into law as RA 1425, also known as the Rizal Law, in 1956.

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Historical Context and Intentions of RA 1425:

- In the 1950s, the government faced challenges such as the widespread recruitment of youth into leftist movements. To counter this, the government aimed to revive the ideals of nationalism and patriotism to strengthen democracy.
- The passage of RA 1425 was timely and relevant, aiming to:
 1. Re-dedicate the ideals of freedom and nationalism for which Filipino heroes lived and died.
 2. Honor Jose Rizal, who shaped the national character through his life and works.
 3. Inspire patriotism in the youth, particularly during their formative years.

Specific Mandates of the Law:

- **Curriculum Inclusion:** All schools, colleges, and universities must include courses on Jose Rizal's life, works, and writings, particularly *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*.

- **Library Requirements:** Educational institutions must maintain copies of the unexpurgated editions of these novels, along with Rizal's other works and biographies.
- **Translation and Distribution:** The Board of National Education is tasked with translating and distributing these works in various Philippine languages, making them accessible to all.

Overall Objective:

- The government intends for Rizal's life and works to serve as a guide in combating the effects of communism and ensuring that the youth remember the ideals of democracy and independence. The course on Rizal is a constant reminder of the blessings of freedom and the role of the youth in nation-building, inspired by Rizal's legacy.

Part 2: The Issues and Debates of RA 1425 in the Context of the 1950s

? Controversy and Debate:

- The passage of the Rizal Law (RA 1425) in the 1950s sparked significant controversy, similar to modern debates like the Anti-Terror Act of 2020.
- The bill faced strong opposition and support, leading to intense debates in Congress, particularly during its second reading.

? Key Figures and Contentions:

- The bill was authored by Senator Claro M. Recto and sponsored by Senator Jose P. Laurel, Sr.
- A major point of contention was Section 2 of the law, which required students to read the unexpurgated (unedited and uncensored) versions of Rizal's novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*.
- The Catholic Church, particularly through the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), strongly opposed this provision, arguing that the novels violated the separation of church and state and could harm the Catholic faith.

? CBCP's Position:

- The CBCP acknowledged Rizal's contributions and patriotism but expressed concern that his novels criticized both colonial rule and the vices and defects of the Filipino people.
- The Church feared that mandatory reading of these novels in their unexpurgated form would injure the faith of Catholic students.

? Outcome:

- Despite these debates, the Rizal Law was ultimately passed, becoming one of the most controversial and historically significant pieces of legislation in the Philippines.

Rizal's Critique of Society and the Church:

Rizal's novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, are recognized for their fearless critique of both the colonial government and Filipino society. He criticized not just the abuses of colonial authorities but also the passivity and vices of his fellow Filipinos.

The novels particularly targeted the religious practices of the time, which Rizal believed were tainted by superstition and abuses within the Church. He acknowledged attacking not just the superstitions but also the rituals of the Church, which are sacred in Catholic worship.

Balanced Perspective on Rizal:

Rizal is honored as a national hero, but it is also acknowledged that he had his faults. Some passages in his works may be objectionable or mistaken, but this does not diminish his overall contributions.

Rizal's retraction before his death, where he expressed regret for any statements against the Church, reflects his complex relationship with his faith.

Rizal's Religious Controversies:

In his novels, Rizal did not limit his critique to individual clerics; he also questioned Catholic dogmas and practices. This included challenging beliefs in miracles, the doctrine of Purgatory, sacraments like Baptism and Confession, and rituals like the Mass and veneration of saints.

These critiques were seen as attacks on the Catholic religion itself, leading to concerns that the novels could undermine the faith of believers.

Church's Stance on Rizal's Works:

The Catholic Church recognized Rizal's patriotism but was concerned about the potential negative impact of his works on the faith of the Filipino people.

The Church cited Canon Law 1399, which forbids books that attack or ridicule Catholic dogmas, undermine religious foundations, or disparage divine worship. Due to these concerns, the Church suggested that Rizal's works should be read by Catholics only with proper guidance and permission from ecclesiastical authorities.

Historical and Cultural Impact:

Despite the controversies, Rizal's works are still valued for their profound insights into the nation's social and political issues. The Church acknowledged that, aside from the religious critiques, Rizal's writings could foster a constructive nationalism and civic virtue if read with the right understanding.

The ongoing debates around Rizal's novels highlight the complex interplay between faith, patriotism, and historical memory in the Philippines.

1. Rizal's Fearless Critique:

- Rizal was bold in critiquing both the colonial administration and the flaws within his own country. He acknowledged his own shortcomings and the mistakes of his fellow countrymen.

2. Affectionate Realism:

- Just as Rizal was realistic about his country, we should approach him with a balanced view. While honoring him as a national hero, we should recognize his mistakes and not idealize him as faultless.

3. Human Fallibility:

- Rizal had human flaws and made errors in judgment. His eventual retraction of certain views before his death shows he did not fully endorse all his earlier statements.

4. Evaluation of Rizal's Works:

- Rizal's novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, aimed to expose societal issues, including some criticisms of the Catholic Church. These criticisms are sometimes seen as attacking core Catholic doctrines and practices.

5. Church's Position:

- The Catholic Church finds that parts of these novels are contrary to Catholic teachings and thus fall under Canon Law 1399, which condemns works attacking Church doctrines. These works should only be read with ecclesiastical permission.

6. Educational Concerns:

- Introducing these novels as compulsory reading in schools could unfairly expose students to anti-Catholic views without a counterbalance. The principle of "separation of Church and State" is cited to argue against making such reading mandatory without equal representation of Catholic perspectives.

7. Patriotism vs. Faith:

- There is a risk of conflating patriotism with anti-Catholic sentiment in Rizal's novels. The Church emphasizes that while Rizal's patriotic intentions are clear, his works contain elements that are objectionable from a Catholic perspective.

8. Catholic Hierarchy's Stance:

- The Catholic Church affirms loyalty to the nation and respects Rizal's patriotism but underscores that he should be honored for his contributions to the country rather than for aspects of his writings that criticize the Catholic faith.

9. Conclusion:

- The Church supports the teaching of Rizal's patriotic ideals but cautions against compulsory reading of texts that might conflict with Catholic doctrines without providing a balanced view.

? Rizal's Approach to Criticism:

- Rizal's intention in his novels was to target the corrupt practices and superstitions of the religious order rather than the core doctrines of the Church. He aimed to highlight the "social cancer" affecting Philippine society.

? Misinterpretation of Criticism:

- While Rizal did criticize certain religious practices and figures, he did not intend to attack the Catholic faith as a whole. However, some passages in his novels are seen as disparaging Catholic beliefs and practices.

? Retraction and Acknowledgment:

- Rizal's retraction of some of his views before his death reflects his recognition of the tension between his criticisms and his Catholic faith. He retracted statements contrary to his Catholic status, acknowledging his errors.

? Impact on Catholic Doctrine:

- The novels contain critiques of Catholic doctrines and practices, such as miracles, the Sacraments, and Church rituals. These criticisms have led to concerns about the novels' alignment with Canon Law and their suitability as compulsory reading for students.

? Educational Fairness:

- Forcing students to read these novels without providing an equally strong counter-narrative on Catholic teachings may be seen as unfair. It risks indoctrinating students with anti-Catholic sentiments under the guise of patriotism.

? Balancing Perspectives:

- The Church advocates for a balanced approach where students are exposed to both Rizal's patriotic ideals and the Catholic perspective. This balance is crucial to avoid biased interpretations of Rizal's work and its impact on students' religious beliefs.

📌 **Freedom of Conscience:**

- There is an emphasis on respecting the freedom of conscience of Catholic students. The Church argues that educational policies should not impose readings that contradict the beliefs of a significant portion of the population without providing a fair representation of their faith.

📌 **Call for Legislative Consideration:**

- The Church urges lawmakers to consider these concerns and ensure that educational content respects the religious conscience of all students, balancing patriotism with respect for Catholic teachings.

Part 3: Why Study the Rizal Subject?

The study of the Rizal subject, mandated by RA 1425, remains essential for contemporary students for several reasons:

1. Historical Context and Legal Mandate:

- RA 1425, or the Rizal Law, was enacted to ensure that students study the life, works, and writings of Jose Rizal.
- The law's primary aim is to instill a sense of nationalism and patriotism by exploring Rizal's contributions and sacrifices for Filipino independence.

2. Educational Objectives:

- **Understand Rizal's Impact:** Recognize the significance of Rizal's life and works in today's society.
- **Apply Rizal's Ideals:** Use Rizal's principles to address contemporary social and personal issues.
- **Appreciate Rizal's Contributions:** Gain a deeper understanding of what Rizal fought for and his vision for the nation.
- **Promote Citizenship:** Encourage active participation in governance and civic duties, reflecting Rizal's commitment to nation-building.

Studying Rizal's life and ideas helps students connect historical lessons to current social, political, and economic issues, ensuring they contribute positively to the nation. As Rizal famously said, "The youth is the hope of the fatherland," underscoring the importance of applying these lessons in contemporary contexts to build a better future.