

“To The Filipino Youth”

Unfold, oh timid flower!

*Lift up your radiant brow,
This day, Youth of my native strand!
Your abounding talents show
Resplendently and grand,
Fair hope of my Motherland!*

*Soar high, oh genius great,
And with noble thoughts fill their mind;
The honor's glorious seat,
May their virgin mind fly and find
More rapidly than the wind.*

*Descend with the pleasing light
Of the arts and sciences to the plain,
Oh Youth, and break forthright
The links of the heavy chain
That your poetic genius enchain.*

*See that in the ardent zone,
The Spaniard, where shadows stand,
Doth offer a shining crown,
With wise and merciful hand
To the son of this Indian land.*

*You, who heavenward rise
On wings of your rich fantasy,
Seek in the Olympian skies
The tenderest poesy,
More sweet than divine honey;*

*You of heavenly harmony,
On a calm unperturbed night,
Philomel's match in melody,
That in varied symphony
Dissipate man's sorrow's blight;*

*You at th' impulse of your mind
The hard rock animate
And your mind with great pow'r consigned
Transformed into immortal state
The pure mem'ry of genius great;*

*And you, who with magic brush
On canvas plain capture
The varied charm of Phoebus,
Loved by the divine Apelles,
And the mantle of Nature;*

*Run ! For genius' sacred flame
Awaits the artist's crowning
Spreading far and wide the fame
Throughout the sphere proclaiming
With trumpet the mortal's name
Oh, joyful, joyful day,
The Almighty blessed be
Who, with loving eagerness
Sends you luck and happiness.*

Interpretation:

The poem is a message primarily to tell the importance of one's love and appreciation to his dialect or language, for it is the bridge and intermediary connecting people's country to each other. Rizal praised the rising generation. This poem can be considered as Rizal's first testimony and presentation of his nationalism. In this literary piece, he clearly referred to the Philippines as his home/motherland, he thought in the poem relates to the role of the youth with the nation building. He composed the poem to dedicate to the youth of the Philippines. He wanted the Filipino youth to use their capabilities, talents and skills to stand out not only for their own praise and success but also for the praise and success of their own motherland, the Philippines. Dr. Jose Rizal wanted the Filipino youth to build up their abilities and use them to help those who are in need. Also, he challenged the youth through this poem to refine and nurture their talents in the arts, to invigorate and reinforce their knowledge of the sciences, and to look forward and comminute their chain of servitude.

On the other hand, the message this poem tries to convey is holding a very strong one; strong enough to persuade/induce those who are to be persuaded/induced.

As one of those individuals, I could really feel the nationalistic courage within me glow brighter the moment I finished reading the poem. It was like telling me that I am one of the existing hopes of our country and that through my skills, abilities, expertise and knowledge of things, I am capable of protecting its freedom against oppressive forces that may come through.

Moreover, it was like telling me that together with my co-youth, I am responsible for preserving the Philippines as a nation for me and the rest of the Filipinos and not for the foreigners.

The Philippines a Century Hence

"The Philippines a Century Hence" is an essay written by Philippine national hero Jose Rizal to forecast the future of the country within a hundred years. Rizal felt that it was time to remind Spain that the circumstances that ushered in the French Revolution could have a telling effect for her in the Philippines.

This essay, published in *La Solidaridad* starts by analyzing the various causes of the miseries suffered by the Filipino people:

- Spain's implementation of her military policies – because of such laws, the Philippine population decreased dramatically. Poverty became more rampant than ever, and farmlands were left to wither. The family as a unit of society was neglected, and overall, every aspect of the life of the Filipino was retarded.
- Deterioration and disappearance of Filipino indigenous culture – when Spain came with the sword and the cross, it began the gradual destruction of the native Philippine culture. Because of this, the Filipinos started losing confidence in their past and their heritage, became doubtful of their present lifestyle, and eventually lost hope in the future and the preservation of their race.
- Passivity and submissiveness to the Spanish colonizers – one of the most powerful forces that influenced a culture of silence among the natives were the Spanish friars. Because of the use of force, the Filipinos learned to submit themselves to the will of the foreigners.

The question then arises as to what had awakened the hearts and opened the minds of the Filipino people with regards to their plight. Eventually, the natives realized that such oppression in their society by foreign colonizers must no longer be tolerated.

One question Rizal raises in this essay is whether or not Spain can indeed prevent the progress of the Philippines:

- Keeping the people uneducated and ignorant had failed. National consciousness had still awakened, and great Filipino minds still emerged from the rubble.
- Keeping the people impoverished also came to no avail. On the contrary, living a life of eternal destitution had allowed the Filipinos to act on the desire for a change in their way of life. They began to explore other horizons through which they could move towards progress.
- Exterminating the people as an alternative to hindering progress did not work either. The Filipino race was able to survive amidst wars and famine, and became even more numerous after such catastrophes. To wipe out the nation altogether would require the sacrifice of thousands of Spanish soldiers, and this is something Spain would not allow.

Spain, therefore, had no means to stop the progress of the country. What she needs to do is to change her colonial policies so that they are in keeping with the needs of the Philippine society and to the rising nationalism of the people.

What Rizal had envisioned in his essay came true. In 1898, the Americans wrestled with Spain to win the Philippines, and eventually took over the country. There was a reign of democracy and liberty. Five decades after Rizal's death, the Philippines gained her long-awaited independence. This was in fulfillment of what he had written in his essay: "History does not record in its annals any lasting domination by one people over another, of different races, of diverse usages and customs, of opposite and divergent ideas. One of the two had to yield and succumb."