

THE COSMIC ELEMENTS IN RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, ART AND LITERATURE

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MAGIC AND THE ELEMENTS OF «PREDICTION»
IN THE CERVANTES' COMEDY
LA CASA DE LOS CELOS Y SELVAS DE ARDENIA

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We all agree on this basic point that human mind is very inquisitive in its nature and it always tries to know about the future, what will happen next? It has been a very important question, which all the civilizations have tried to predict. As their resources were limited, and the movement of sun and other heavenly bodies has always attracted the human mind, so in all the civilizations, human being tried to predict through the movement of planets, sun, stars and other cosmic elements. The astrologers or in some cultures, they were called as magicians, predicted certain things. Even now, in any newspaper, we see the daily, weekly, or even annual predictions, but it might be a matter of debate that how many of predictions are correct and how many are wrong.

From the other side, authors have used this theme according to their needs. For one moment, if we consider our religious texts as imaginary fictions, there are many examples of predictions. Just to give an example, I would like to present that ten avatars of Vishnu were predicted in the Hindu texts. Many times, these predictions are correct according to the literary texts but when we try to predict our future in the present age, questions arise. So prediction has been found excessively in the fiction. When the literary texts were translated or adapted in another language, these cultural beliefs were transmitted into the other culture. Here I would like to give two examples, an example, when the Buddhist religious texts were translated in Greek or Latin, the translators have adapted and introduced many Indian cultural elements into Western mythology.

As my paper deals with magic or the elements of prediction in a work of Cervantes, so in the beginning I would like to introduce the presence and importance of the Spanish Golden Age society. Like any other contemporary society, masses associated all the magic and superstitions with astrology. Thus it affected in the research of the astrology in the Golden Age period. Further, Inquisition was much severe with these elements, and one of the many norms of the Inquisition clearly prohibited any art or any science which dealt with this topic.

At this moment, it is important to talk about as to whom we can define as a magician. In the Western school of thinking, a magician is not only a person who has contact with demons or pagan gods; he has a deep knowledge of natural sciences which he uses for the benefit of his religion and through this knowledge he can attack or cause harm to Christians also. Through his power, he can create storms, earthquakes, or control the winds. As he has the support of demons, he promises to deal with the problems related with life, love, marriage and death. One of the many hobbies of this protagonist is to predict on the events, so he has a deep desire to know what will happen next, in other words, this science is astrology, and thus he dedicates much of his time in the studies of cosmic elements and to predict. María Jesús Zamora Calvo in her book, *Ensueños de razón. El cuento inserto en tratados de magia (Siglos XVI y XVII)* writes:

In brief words, in these traditional tales, the magician is presented as an illusionist. He is a creator of artificial actions, which carries to make strong the superstition of the common person. He is adocrined by the demon. He dominates the elements, transforms the human mind and without venom, he causes the death¹.

This profile of magician has a history, which comes from the past. In reality, during the Spanish baroque period, the magical world developed. It started from medieval literature, which was influenced from the figures of magicians or the person who cast their spell on another person. Many important books of the Spanish medieval pe-

¹ The original passage is «Resumiendo, el mago en estos relatos tradicionales, se nos presenta como un embaucador, creador de acciones ficticias que conducen a engrandecer la superstición de la gente. Continuamente, es adocrinado por el diablo. Domina los elementos, trastorna las mentes humanas y, sin veneno causa la muerte.» Please consult Zamora Calvo, 2005, p. 185.

riod as *Disciplina Clericalis*, *Calila e Dimna*, *Disciplina Clericalis*, *Calila e Dimna*, y *Sendebâr*, had the Oriental influence. Even in the famous book *Libro de Apolonio*, the author talks about magic, enchantment and spell. Even in the posterior books, which were very famous as, *El conde Lucanor* and in *El libro de buen amor* one can see the influence of all these elements. Nevertheless, *La Celestina* is the book which utilizes the magical beliefs of the contemporary era. Eva Lara Alberola in her work, *Hechiceras y brujas en la literatura española de los siglos de oro* describes:

When we talk on the genre based on *La Celestina* or the works which descend from *La Celestina*, we have to say that effectiveness varies from one book to another. In some books, the ambiguity of magical elements is maintained, particularly in the reference matter to the effectiveness and the role which it plays in the theme. Basically it happens in the tragicomedies, in which the interpretation with refernce to the magic and enchantment has been left for the reader and in his participation in the continuity of the events².

Among the baroque authors, Miguel de Cervantes and Lope de Vega are two most prolific authors. The fascination and the possibility to experiment different themes attract to these two great authors which has presented various protagonists who utilize the magic. At this moment, I would like to present, just two examples from Cervantes but from the *Novelas Ejemplares* by Cervantes. It is very difficult to forget the discussion between Cipión and Berganza and in this talk there are several allusions on magic. In the next example, which I would like to present, how Vidriera became a victim of enchantment and started thinking that his body is made up of glass. As Spanish is becoming more and more popular in Indian universities, so in other texts, like *La vida es sueño*, students are becoming more familiarized with the different concepts of Spanish Golden Age society.

² The original passage is «En cuanto al género celestinesco o a la descendencia celestinesca, hemos de decir que la efectividad varía de una obra a otra. En unas piezas se mantiene la ambigüedad del elemento mágico, sobre todo en lo referente a la eficacia y al papel que juega en la trama. Esto ocurre en las tragicomedias básicamente, en las que se deja a merced del lector la interpretación en referencia a la eficacia de la hechicería y su papel en el desenlace los acontecimientos.» Please consult Lara Alberola, 2010, p. 325.

Personally I think that within a short period of time, translation of many works of Cervantes would be available in Hindi and in other Indian languages. Under the financial assistance from GRISO, many research articles and books have been and are being translated into Hindi. Very soon, Hindi readers will be able to enjoy *Entremeses*, *Don Quijote* and even in these interludes, Cervantes has used elements of magic.

Magic is related with all the cosmic elements. Even to create magic or to influence someone under the spell of magic or to show the magic one has to take the help of cosmic elements, as to show the magic, any cosmic combinations can be used. The magician or in some cases the astrologers can create the deluge, fire or storm. All this may be real or illusion, but one needs all these astrological elements. Again it is a matter or question of debate, whether how many elements are used at a time, or which natural element has been used more in literature to create more literary effects.

Now returning on the theme, I would like to say that even the name of the comedy *La casa de los celos y selvas de Ardenia*, suggests that there would be elements associated with magic in the comedy. It is an allegorical play, but there are many elements associated with magic, spirits and occult sciences.

There are two important characters associated with magic in this play, one is Malgesí and another is Merlín. Merlín is a spirit and he assists the human magician Malgesí. Two knights Reinaldos and Roldán are in love with Angélica. Malgesí tries to cure them, but he remains unsuccessful, and thus he has a discussion with Merlín on this issue. The second appearance of the spirit of Merlín is to a Spanish legendary knight, Bernardo Del Carpio, who has come to the forests of Ardenia. In the enchanted forest lives Merlín and Bernardo wants to meet him, he clearly says, «que en la mitad o al fin / o al principio o no sé donde / entre unos bisques se esconde / el gran padrón de Merlín / aquel gran encantador / que fue su padre el demonio.» (I, 375–380)³. Thus he is clearly expressing the popular belief in Magic and in supernatural elements in the world. Interestingly, the spirit of Merlín is predicting certain events which will happen and in this way, he tries to control the national history. Later the spirit disguises himself as Castilla and he abducts Bernardo del Carpio

³ Miguel de Cervantes, *Obras Completas*, II, p. 462.

and puts him in Spain. Even in the beginning of the play, when Angélica arrives in the court of Charlemagne, the magician Malgesí starts reading a book and then appears a demon. The consultation of Malgesí is not considered out of the norms as in the medieval society, it was a method to gain knowledge⁴. No one objects as he is doing consultations from book or practices his science with the help of book or under the guidance from spirit. Thus Cervantes is continuing the tradition in which a magician was invoking the spirit to gain knowledge or to take help in the construction of the events. Later, when he does more consultations on the arrival of Angélica, he understands clearly the reason of her visit. She has arrived in the search of her husband, the one who can defeat her brother. The magician advises the emperor Charlemagne to arrest the princess, but as the authors of Golden Age have played with this theme, so in this case, here the Emperor refuses to arrest her.

Normally in the comedies where the astrologers or predictors have an important role, they are shown as powerful protagonists. Here in this comedy, the human magician Malgesí has been shown as weak protagonist. Here at this moment I would like to provide some of the weakness of the human magician. The magician or astrologer evokes the spirit not by the memory but by the help of the book. Even the emperor refuses to give him an audience completely; he is unable to persuade the knights that they should leave the pursuit of Angélica. On several occasions he had tried to persuade the knights, but he remains unsuccessful. Merlín is a supernatural power and thus he tells clearly to Malgesí that his knowledge is limited. On the other hand, this weakness in Malgesí has been shown several times. In the *Jornada Segunda*, when there is an altercation between the two magicians, Malgesí and Merlín, it is Merlín who dominates the scene and he has to take help of the Greek gods and then arrive all the mythological figures of the Greek tradition. All the Greek Gods are trying to help Merlín. The Greek God Love sends Reinaldos to fetch «magical» water from hot fountain, which will help him to forget his love. In the process, comes many allegorical protagonists in the play and they meet with the different protagonists,

⁴ For detailed analysis of Magic in the Renaissance period, please consult the article of Meixell, 2004, pp. 93-118.

some with pastoral protagonists, some with Reinaldos and some Roldán.

Here I would like to say that in the baroque period, one could study the movements of planets and sun, but to predict was completely prohibited, or to make any observation about future was not allowed at all. On this aspect writes Antonio Hurtado Torres in his book *La astrología en la literatura del Siglo de Oro*:

We are convinced that it was like this, as the observation of the presence of astrology in the literature of the above said period evokes more interest than the theoretical work, the erudite or the bookish sources to which the renaissance or baroque author came closer, and from other part it was logical that the Inquisition would pursue more the «practical» astrologer who was practicing a remunerated work and thus he dedicate to start interrogations; the least persecuted were the theoretical astrologers who published «movements of moon» or «discourse on comets» which were permitted⁵.

So following the norms of the Spanish contemporary society, Cervantes has situated the play in the distant time period and in his work, even the protagonists, who are related with magic and astrology, are not forecasting anything. The magician tries to seek help from the Greek gods.

Thus we can presume that in the contemporary society, it was difficult to give an opinion on the work or the child, which was born in the specific time period or started at the specific time frame of the day, month and year. Pedro Ciruelo, in the second half of the sixteen century, publishes an important book, *Reprobación de las supersticiones* which deals with an important aspect of astrology. In this book the author categorizes the true and false astrology. According to the author of this book, the true astrology talks about the things which originates by the virtue of the heaven and thus excercises the divine influence in our works, passions and illness. In the same man-

⁵ The original passage is «Estamos convencidos de que así fue, por una parte para nuestro cometido último, observar la presencia de la astrología en la literatura de dicha época interesa más la obra teórica, la fuente libresca o erudita a la que el escritor renacentista o barroco se acercaba; y por otra parte, es lógico que la Inquisición persiguiera más al astrólogo “práctico” que ejercía una labor remunerada y que se dedicaría a levantar “genituras” e “interrogaciones”, estas últimas perseguidas que al astrólogo teórico que publicaba «lunarios» o “discurso de cometas” que estaban permitidos.». Please consult Hurtado Torres, 1984, p. 16.

ner, the true «philosopher» can give his opinion on the day, on the month or on the season, even on the nature of any person, but it should be always for the betterment of that person. The second category, which is of false nature, which tries to determine the fortune or his wish, is diabolical.

In the same time period, Pope Sixto V published a Bull, in which astrology, magic, enchantment, to possess and to read all these types of books were completely prohibited. In the Bull, clear instructions were given to the inquisitors to punish the disobedient persons. Some books were published, but they talked clearly against any superstition. Without going more into details on astrology, I would like to say that two categories of astrology existed in the Spanish Golden Age, one the true astrology in which divine element in astrology was emphasized, and the other which talked about the predictions or the superstitious elements, was completely rejected by the Church⁶.

In the Tercera Jornada of the comedy, Reinaldos is a witness of tragical death of Angélica, but he is unable to do anything to save her life. He is witnessing everything due to magic of Malgesí. It is something like a dream which is happening in front of his eyes. Malgesí dominates upon the scene completely, and just at the moment, when Reinaldos is committing suicide, Malgesí arrives and informs to Reinaldos that what he witnessed was a shadow of Angélica, and he accepts that he had created an illusion so that he can return to himself. It is not only that Reinaldos has seen illusion because as there are many protagonists, and many of them see illusions from time to time, which are important works of Malgesí. In the end, Angélica rejects the proposals of Reinaldos and Roldán. The Emperor Charlemagne gives them the tasks of finishing the moors from Libia and Andalucía and thus in this way this comedy comes to an end.

I would like to say that in this comedy Cervantes has taken a liberty in using the terms related with astrology like «stars, heaven, planets». I would like to give some examples from the texts in which one can see how in spite of the prohibition from the Church, in the popular culture, the people used to have a strong a belief in the

⁶ For more details on the topic, please consult, Hurtado Torres, 1984. The book presents a lengthy discussion on the sign, symbols, meanings and detailed bibliography on the development of the theme.

planets and in the supernatural elements. In the Primera Jornada, when Bernardo and Reinaldos meet, Reinaldos talks about his difficult situation and says: «Vete, porque solo el sol /ha de ver nuestra desdicha; / que no queremos testigos / más que el sol en la lid nuestra.» (I, 757- 760). Further, Reinaldos says: «¡Por cierto, a gentiles manos / te ha traído tu fortuna!» In the Segunda Jornada, when Reinaldos is seeing the allegorical protagonists, at the arrival of Celos, Malgesí says: «Mas, veslos, salen: advierte / que cuanto con ellos miras / amenazan triste suerte / Ciertos y luengos pesares / y, al fin, desdichada muerte.»(II, 1323-1327). Even in the end, Malgesí says to Roldán: «No te alargues, arrogante/que Dios dispone otra cosa / como en efecto verás.» (III, 2748-2750) I have just presented some examples from the comedy in which Cervantes talks about the destiny, fortune or will of God.

I would like to say that that the baroque comedies in which the magician was an important protagonist, he used to do pact with the demon to get some benefits. This pact used to provide him knowledge of prediction, control of souls, to prevent the spread of Christianity in any specified region or for getting other benefits like to get the beloved ones. I would like to quote once again María Jesús Zamora Calvo:

The pact with demon arises from the anxieties of the human to cross his limitations, to achieve his wishes, and definitely, to achieve a power equal to God. During the Golden Age, it was considered that there was a fine curtain between the natural and supernatural order. Only God and the Demon can cross this fine curtain. When it seems that God does not hear the petitions of any human being, the human reaches to Demon. [...] His power, however limited, is so enormous that on the earth there is no similar power like his, he can enter into the thoughts, incline the wish, fascinate the imagination, etc. With him, the supernatural order is within the reach of human being, for this, it is sufficient that human being should enter in contact with the demon, establishing a pact, in which generally he has to sell his soul⁷.

⁷ The original passage is «El pacto con el diablo surge de las ansias del hombre por superar sus propias limitaciones, por llegar a la consecución de sus deseos y, en definitiva por alcanzar un poder semejante al divino. Durante los Siglos de Oro se considera que el orden natural y el orden maravilloso están separados por una leve cortina, que tan solo Dios y Satanás pueden atravesar. Cuando las imploraciones a Dios, parecen ser desoídas, el hombre acude al diablo. [...]. Su poder, aunque limitado, es

Malgesí is in the contact with the spirit of Merlín, but nowhere in the comedy it has been mentioned how he has done this. Many questions have remained unanswered when we speak of this question, but as Cervantes is always innovative in his themes and ideas, so we see that human magician Malgesí is not so powerful when we compare him with spirit. Astrology is comprised of many elements related with cosmographical elements, but there are always limitations, in which Cervantes has talked about in *El coloquio de los perros*. The witch clearly says that whatever happens is due to the wishes of God. If God does not allow, demon is even incapable of thinking.

To summarize, I would like to say that the Cervantes has presented magic and used the elements of the prediction in his comedy *La casa de los celos y selvas de Ardenia*. There are magicians, they can create illusions, and the spirit of Merlín is present to control the desires of Malgesí. Personally, I think that the authors of Golden Age have appropriately used the astrological elements in the comedy to give more theatrical elements in the comedy. They don't give any judgement on the theme, however in each comedy, the use of astrology is different. Normally, it has been related with magic and demons which I have shown in my paper. As *La casa de los celos y selvas de Ardenia* has several themes, but one of the major themes which are presented in a very interesting manner is the theme of magic.

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tan grande que no hay en la tierra ninguna fuerza semejante: puede penetrar en el pensamiento, inclinar la voluntad, fascinar la imaginación, etc. Con él, el orden sobrenatural está al alcance del hombre; para ello es suficiente con que este entre en contacto con el demonio, estableciendo un pacto que generalmente conlleva la venta del alma.» Please consult Zamora Calvo, 2005 p. 173.

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