

THE MIRACLES OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER IN
SAN FRANCISCO JAVIER, EL SOL EN ORIENTE, A JESUIT
COMEDY

Sabyasachi Mishra
GRISO-Universidad de Navarra

Saints across the world are revered by the people for their selfless service towards humanity. In the Catholic tradition of sainthood, the name of St. Francis Xavier is taken with great respect. In many parts of the world, he is not only revered by the Christians, but people from the other faith also give him love and much respect.

At a time, when travelling to another countries was considered as a difficult task, St. Francis Xavier travelled and preached Christianity in the lesser known parts of the world. Born on 7 April 1506 in a noble family of Navarra, he saw the loss of the independence of the contemporary Navarre state. When he was nineteen years old, he was sent to Paris for higher studies in Colegio de Santa Barbara and there he come in contact with St. Ignatius de Loyola. Later on, they became good friends and in a discussion when Father Ignatius told him that what is the use of wining the whole world if someone lose his soul? These words made him think much and he left showing his opulence. Later on, the blessed saint dedicated much of his time in studies and in 1534 he confessed and received communion with some of his friends. Initially he had plans to go to Jerusalem, but due to the ongoing war between Venetians and Turks, they had no option rather to end this plan. After meeting with father Ignatius, he decided to stay in Italy and to spread the message of Christianity with zeal in universities. After some time, Father Ignatius thought that it

In/En: *St Francis Xavier and the Jesuit Missionary Enterprise. Assimilations between Cultures / San Francisco Javier y la empresa misionera jesuita. Asimilaciones entre culturas*, ed. Ignacio Arellano y Carlos Mata Induráin, Pamplona, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, 2012 (BIADIG, Biblioteca Áurea Digital-Publicaciones digitales del GRISO), pp. 145-153. ISBN: 978-84-8081-338-9.

was necessary for them to part and go to preach Christianity. In 1540, Father Ignatius ordained the Jesuit Society and then the society got approval from Pope. Due to illness of their colleague, Father Francis Xavier had to embark for the India trip and finally he embarked for India on April 7th 1541. He suffered many hardships during the travel and finally arrived India on 6th May 1542. Without going into more details on his biography, I would like to say that after coming here, he chose this land and remained here for always.

He was and remains one of the most popular saints in the Catholic traditions of Christianity and thus many poems and religious comedies were written on his life. The dramatic life history of Saint Francis Xavier has made him a popular protagonist in the Jesuit and other religious comedies. Arellano writes,

El conjunto de textos dramáticos javerianos que han llegado a nosotros puede observarse en dos secciones:

1. Por un lado las piezas menores (diálogos la mayoría) y representaciones insertas en espectáculos festivos y religiosos, a modo de las loas panegíricas y encomios, piezas generalmente más cerca de la lírica y en las que lo dramático no alcanza grandes desarrollos.
2. Cuatro piezas largas: *La gran zarzuela San Javier grande en el Hito*; *San Francisco Javier, el Sol en Oriente*; *Las glorias del mejor siglo* y *La conquista espiritual del Japón*¹.

Many of the important works on the life of Saint Francis Xavier was written in the seventeenth century and even a large number of the religious plays on the life of the saint were written in three important dates, on the day of his beatification, canonization, and centenary of the Jesuit Society. Carlos Mata Induráin writes in his article, «San Francisco Javier en el teatro español del siglo XX»:

Buena parte de esa producción dramática sobre San Francisco Javier corresponde al siglo xvii: se trata de obras compuestas según los patrones del teatro jesuítico y concentradas en el torno a tres fechas claves: 1619, beatificación, 1622, canonización, y 1640, primer Centenario de la Compañía de Jesús. Después de la época barroca, la presencia del tema javerano en el teatro es más escasa, pero reaparece con cierta intensidad en el siglo xx. Tenemos, por un la-

¹ Arellano, 2006b, pp. 19-20.

do, obras en las que el santo es el protagonista o tiene un papel muy destacado².

The religious element, which is an essential element in all the religious comedies, is shown by the life of the saint in a play, and even when they portray the life of a saint, they present only those elements, in which a saint has obtained his sainthood. The dramatic element of the play depends upon many things, for example, his virtues, or the process of his conversion, or his supernatural powers, or in the martyrdom of the saint. The life of the Saint Francis Xavier was full of the virtues, and supernatural powers. He always received the help of God and thus he was able to perform miracles.

Thus we can say that, from its beginning, the religious comedies in general and Jesuit comedies in particular, have two important roles, to entertain and to teach the life of the saints or to teach the fundamentals of the religion to the common people. Thus we can say that themes of these plays were essentially religious in nature. In many comedies, they also preach the greatness of saints, particularly St. Francis Xavier and St. Ignatius de Loyola. According to the norms of the Jesuit Society, it was considered as an important pedagogical tool. In some theatrical presentations, they even talked about the great and important works done by Jesuit Company.

San Francisco Javier, el Sol en Oriente is a comedy which covers many aspects of the daily life of some people who are in higher status of Japanese society. The events described in the comedy, takes place in Japan and is a complex comedy because it touches political, religious and love affairs of the Japanese society.

As I have said earlier, the play is divided in three acts, and the first act begins with the news of arrival of a foreigner saint to Jaridono. The saint is a foreigner and he will impose new rules and traditions in Japan. The king is going to the temple of God Amida, about his oracle. In His oracle, the pagan God has predicted about the arrival of the saint approximately one thousand years ago. On the way towards the temple, he has plans to meet with Coralia, who is the de-throned queen of Yamaguchi. She wants to take the help of the King, Around Coralia the love theme has been based as the Prince Maluco and the general Ferivo are in love with her. All themes of the play are interrelated as later his aspirations grow up. He wants to

² Mata Induráin, 2007, pp. 133-134.

be important and thus he conspires with Fucardono, an important priest of the society and thus a war begins. In this war, Saint Francis Xavier has to intervene. Maluco, who is the price of the kingdom, tells us about the life of the Saint Francis Xavier. Continuing the thread of the comedy, I would like to add that in the first act of the comedy, many of the miracles of the San Francis Xavier has been described, and the writer has started to make the base for the other miracles which will complete in the later stages of the comedy.

The second act of the comedy is more religious in nature. The events in the play happen after one month of the arrival of San Francis Xavier. The King decides to be Christian, but he cannot do so due to affairs of the state. Maluco talks with the Saint, and the author using the contemporary narrative style of the religious comedies in which a religious figure ends the doubt of a person who wants to know more on the religious dogmas. After a long conversation with the Saint Francis Xavier, in which SFJ ends the various doubts of Maluco on the Christian faith. Convinced, he decides to accept the Christianity. Fucardono and Ferivo make their concrete plans against the king. As the saint is helping the king, the enemies of the king want to assassinate the saint also. But the God has other plans for the saint. To prevent his assassination in the night, the angels prolong the day by bolding the movement of the sun. There are some other miracles of the Saint Francis Xavier.

The Third act begins with the introduction of the comic characters in the play who informs us what is going in the play. The King has become Christian and he is living far from the mundane world. The price Maluco is in fight with Ferivo, and has married with Coralia. An important female character of the play, Amira has died due to jealous as she loved Maluco. Father Francis Xavier is planning to go from this Japanese province Bungo. Meanwhile, in the fight, Maluco and the princess Coralia are lost in the storm. Again the king has not any other option rather to take the help of Saint Francis Xavier. Again, Saint Xavier helps to the king and saves the lives of the lost people. A series of miracles takes place in the play. Ferivo starts talking about the truth and basic fundamentals of the Christian thoughts. Saint Francis Xavier also bring back to life to Amira and thus after taking the new life, she describes her travel to places where a dead person goes and thanks Saint Xavier from saving her life from the terrible experiences which she would have received. In the end

of this religious play, an important protagonist talks about the more miracles of the Saint Xavier, which could be incorporated in the second part of the play, but the second part of comedy was never written.

Before concentrating into the central theme of my paper, I would like to describe the miracles. Cardinal Saraiva Martins describe miracles as «A marvelous act, done by God, in which; He has put his mark»³. Father Francisco García has defined miracle as,

Cuando las palabras del santo no tenían fuerza, empezó Dios a predicar con Milagros, que son la lengua del cielo, y a confirmar la doctrina de su apóstol con señales de que después hay tanta copia que nos han de hacer parar muchas veces en el curso de su predicación⁴.

[When the words of Saint do not have any force, then God started to preach with miracles, which in reality is a divine language. It confirms the doctrine of its apostle with signs of abundance that makes us to stop them in the course of its predication.]

Concentrating on the miracles of the saints, I would like to add that in the religious play, the narration of the miracles is very important and it is always incorporated in two manners: miracles, performed by the saint when he is alive and miracles performed by the saint when he is dead. The models for showing the miracles may be of different categories, for example, with the physical presence of the saint or after his death when he appears and help people or his relics help people to continue on the path of Christianity.

Saint Francis Xavier performs many miracles in this play. Many of his miracles are given a place in the book. I would like to talk about some of the important miracles.

a) The miracle of crab: It is a real incident. M. G. Torres describes that when Saint Francis Xavier was navigating through the Amboino Islands, then all of a sudden a big storm had come. The sailors of the ship had lost the control of the ship. Then the saint prayed to God and in this process, a big wave has come and took his

³ Torres Olleta, 2005, p. 13.

⁴ In Torres Olleta, 2005, p. 14.

cross with him. After his prayers, the storm became quiet. Everyone on the ship was happy except the saint as he was sad on the loss of his cross. The next day, when they arrived on the land, Saint Francis was taking walk on the seaside and there was a miracle of the God, as a crab was coming with the same cross. The creature returned the cross to the saint and again went back in the water (p. 43). The miracle has been described in the play also as an important reference. Coralia, one of the principal protagonists of the plays describes:

CORALIA Ved un pez
 que en encrespados vaivenes
 proejando hacia la orilla
 romper con el margen quiere.
 [...]
 Un crucifijo en la boca
 trae, y al santo se le ofrece.
 (Calleja, *San Francisco Javier...*, vv. 1068b-1075)

b) The episode of corrupt Portuguese Diego Suárez: This is a very humorous and at the same time one of the most comic episode of the plays. One of the most common vices of the contemporary Portuguese was playing cards. In the beginning of the play, Diego is in Japan, and he is very angry with the saint as he thinks that the Saint is always pursuing him. He says that the saint is always behind him. To escape from the saint, he went to Goa from Portugal, the saint arrived there. He went to Malacca, the saint reached there. Then he went to Japan, the saint arrived in Japan. Even in Japan, he went to Bungo province to escape from the saint, but it is the saint who is not leaving him.

DIEGO ¿A dónde las ansias mías
 huir podrán, u de qué modo
 me llegará yo a esconder,
 para que el padre Javier
 no me eche acíbar en todo?
 A predicarme en Lisboa
 empezó, y cuando salí
 de Portugal y a Goa fui,
 me vino siguiendo a Goa.
 A Malaca me ausenté,

no tanto a emplear mi hacienda
 cuando a excusar su contienda,
 y a Malaca tras mí fue.
 Vine a Japón, y en Fuqueo,
 donde avecindado estoy,
 mi trato asenté, y cuando hoy,
 sin él pensaba estar, veo
 que me sigue aunque me aleje,
 y que no basta, se ve,
 irme a Bungo para que
 el padre Javier me deje,
 con este martirio eterno
 de que confiese.

(Calleja, *San Francisco Javier...*, vv. 729-751a)

As the saint wants to reforms him, so the saint invites him to play the cards. He is a very good player of the cards and normally wins. So he is happy, but with the help of God, there is a miracle, and the holy saint wins the match. As I have said earlier, in the religious comedies, the author always tries to show the miracles. Many miracles are associated with the life of the saint. It is one of them.

c) The divine help in many languages: In the play, a rare miracle has been also associated with the saint. When the holy saint is in the Japanese palace, he is unhappy that he can only predicate in Spanish. Then he asks for the divine help and God sends him four persons, who can translate the message of the saint in four languages, i.e. indio (Hindi), Japanese, Portuguese and in the Chinese language. From four clouds, came different interpreters.

SAN JAVIER ¡Oh, Señor, quién al oído
 vario de tan varias gentes,
 indios, chinas, lusitanos,
 y japones, que me atienden,
 como en trajes y costumbres
 en lenguajes diferentes
 pudiese dar de tu fe
 noticias! ¡Oh, quién pudiese
 hablando en mi español solo
 enseñarlos!
 [...]

LOS 4	Obedientes los Genios de los idiomas, Francisco, a tu ruego tienes.
G. INDIO	Habla.
G. CHINA	Exhorta.
G. JAPÓN	Di.
G. PORTUGUÉS	Predica.
LOS 4	Verás, que un tiempo te entienden hablando en solo tu idioma... (Calleja, <i>San Francisco Javier...</i> , vv. 1084-1098)

The saint predicates and each character understands and then translates in the local language. Everyone is surprised by this miracle. There are written evidence that when the saint predicated in Travancore, he used to predicate in the language which he never learnt or knew. His eloquence in the Indian languages was perfect. Here, the author has used similar theme.

d) Appearance of St. Ignatius and supernatural elements: From the very beginning it is clear that *El Sol en Oriente* is a religious comedy. In the religious plays, the author generally presents miracles approved by the church and some supernatural elements. When the life of Saint Francis Xavier is in danger, Saint St. Ignatius comes and saves the life of Saint Xavier. On another occasion, when the Ferivo wants to kill the saint in the darkness, two angels came in the scene and they prolong the day. Due to continue daylight, even the bad characters of the play are surprised and they are accepting the supremacy of the saint. Due to divine help, they save the life of the saint. Amira, who is in love with the price Maluco, is unable to see his marriage and she commits suicide. In the war against the rebels, at one moment the ship of Maluco is lost in the sea-storm. The king takes the help of the saint and thus the life of Maluco and the princess Coralia is being saved. These are some of the supernatural elements in the play which fulfill the didactic elements. In the baroque period, one of the major roles of the plays was to teach the fundamentals of the Christianity.

We should remember that miracles were incorporated in the hagiographic comedies, which were written for a Christian spectator, who used to believe in the miracles and in supernatural elements. They used to firm his belief in the Christian concepts. *El Sol en Ori-*

ente fulfills almost all of its major functions when we talk about the concept of miracles in the play.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arellano, I. (ed.), *Life and adventures of St. Francis Xavier. Free adaptation of Teixeira, Valignano and others*, tr. A. Chattopadhyay, New Delhi, C B Processor & Publishers, 2006a.
- Introducción a *San Francisco Javier, el Sol en Oriente (comedia jesuítica del P. Diego Calleja)*, Madrid / Frankfurt, Iberoamericana / Vervuert, 2006b.
- Arellano, I., González Acosta, A., and Herrera, A. (ed.), *San Francisco Javier entre dos continentes*, Madrid / Frankfurt, Iberoamericana / Vervuert, 2007.
- Calleja, D., *San Francisco Javier, el Sol en Oriente*, ed. I. Arellano, Madrid / Frankfurt, Iberoamericana / Vervuert, 2006.
- Mata Induráin, C., «San Francisco Javier en el teatro español del siglo XX: *Volcán de amor* (1922) de Vallejos y *El divino impaciente* (1933) de Pemán», en *San Francisco Javier entre dos continentes*, ed. I. Arellano, A. González Acosta and A. Herrera, Madrid / Frankfurt, Iberoamericana / Vervuert, 2007, pp. 133-150.
- Dassbach, E., *La comedia hagiográfica del Siglo de Oro español*, New York, Peter Lang, 1997.
- Torres Olleta, M.^a G., *Milagros y prodigios de San Francisco Javier*, Pamplona, Fundación *Diario de Navarra*, 2005.