Chapter IV
RENAISSANCE ART AT THE IMPERIAL ATELIER

Renaissance is the revival of arts and letters and a transition from the Middle ages to the modern world. The history of art is as ancient as the history of mankind and civilization and is often interlinked with the rise and fall of the dynasties. The renaissance movement in London began with the publication of English masterpieces awakening in the minds of the people a sense of their national life. It in place of being scholar's art and artist to monopoly was rendered a far reaching popular movement. There was a phenomenon of general unrest against the old order and let to the movement of missionaries comprising artists and priests etc. 'In 1595 a Portuguese artist along with three Jesuit missionaries visited the city of Lahore where they were cordially received and honoured.' The artist was taken into imperial service and he produced 'many small oil paintings of christ and Madowa. He also went through the imperial collection of European Renaissance, religious pictures
and prints'.\textsuperscript{2} The artist remained busy with his art and oil paintings and his companions utilized most of their time in preaching and expounding christian tenets. The emperor also allowed them to hold religious debates and discourses. An imperial hall was exclusively reserved for the purpose, where the priests and Mullahs engaged themselves in religious debates. Although the main object of the missionaries was to preach their religion, they also visited the Imperial palaces and tombs of the Mughal emperors during 1580-1630. In the tombs and palaces, 'the walls covered with Italian renaissance style and mural depiction of christ impressed them very much'.\textsuperscript{3} 'Madona and Christian saints were also represented on the walls see (Fig. 1 & 2). They also saw Mughal artists working on miniature paintings, fine jewellery and sculpture featuring the same subjects. They also included devotional images'.\textsuperscript{4} The Jesuits introduced the 'Mughal court to a wide spectrum of Renaissance art and culture at their missions in Fatehpur Sikri,
Agra and Lahore. They not only tried to push up their mission but also began to encounter the Mughal's own renaissance in which there was 'a climate of creativity, experimentation and tolerance, that made Mughal culture one of the most refined on earth'.

Both the host and the reverend guests remained adamant on their missions and the Jesuit campaign was fervently led by Jerome Xavier (1549-1617). The christian members of the mission were directed to learn Persian and go through Indo-Islamic culture on the other hand charmed by the perspective and modelling of the European prints and paintings brought in by the missionaries, Akbars artists prompt by adopted the Renaissance style and used western convention to strengthen Mughal painting with their sincere efforts the painters under Jahangir were able to give highly refined naturalism and zeal for psychological portraiture. 'Both Akbar and Jahangir actively encouraged Artists Kesu less (active circa 1570-1590) and Manohar (active 1582-1620) to create images of
Jesus and christian saints and attached much importance to the devotional value and identity of the subject. The notable development was the royal inclination towards christianity and interfaith debates held at the royal palaces and illustrated in contemporary miniature paintings. The debates further motivated Akbar to summon religions authorities from Iraq, Kharasan and Transoxania and India and thereby inspired him to allow Jesuits presence in his court.

The Portuguese when settled in Goa made Goa their administrative and economic capital and they considered Asia as a staging ground for religious and cultural activities. 'In 1542 Fransis Xavier arrived in Goa.' The Portuguese build, splendid churches colleges and residences throughout the colony and decorated them with paintings and statutes and artefacts. They employed Indian artists & painters. Goa became a thriving centre for the arts and ateliers of astonishing productivity and ivory and wooden statutes and furnishing in a subtly hybrid style and merging the late
Renaissance Style in it and also elements of local Hindu temple art. Standing christ child in rock is the most valuable relic of this period. With its fascinating beauty it reminds 'Hindu and Buddhist deities in its frontality, symmetry and block-like composition'. During this period European artists worked in Goa. Portuguese Jesuit painter Maweil Godin to reproduced fine images of Virgin Mary attributed to St. Luke.

The third Jesuit mission is a landmark in the missionary's efforts to advance the religious work done by the previous missions. It came to India in 1595 and worked till 1773. It comprised of finest preachers and scholars, who were very much 'influenced by Valignano's reforms. Father Jerome Xavier and Manoel Pinhiero and Brother Bento played an important role in preaching'. They had with them Portuguese painter to meet the iconographic needs of the Mughal court. The enthusiastic members of the mission actively displayed their interest in rich costumes, curtains, candles, flowers, singing organic
music, theatre, bell ringing and exhibition of pictures and thus highlighted the object of the mission.

A Portuguese painter, whose name is not on record was employed by Jahangir to paint only 'his father's collections and other christian images. The busy artist spared sometime to paint "Madona and child with Angels and Suzanna and the Elders (1552-1624)'. His painting in oil on paper with much thicker brush was an improvement over the Mughal artists. At that time copying of engravings was a standard practice in Portugal. Sixteenth century artists as Gasper Dias, Fransisco Venegas and Diogo Teixeira followed the basic compositions of the original prints, but adhered to their own style. The work of the artist not being helpful for conversion he was recalled from the Mughal court and asked him to serve in Japan. 'The artist left the Mughal mission in 1595 joined Niccolo's Academy in Japan. A painting on coper of the "Repentant Magdoline in Osaka may well be his work. Here the treatment of the face and hands,
slanted halo and background remind his two works from the Mughal Mission'.

Prince Salim who was a zealous patron of art preferred European style paintings at court and due to his obsession of his identities with Jesus and Christian saints, he demonstrated a passion for exact direct copies of the engravings and also strictly pressed that the works must have devotional meaning and stylistic integrity and it confirmed that he was very much concerned for iconic and talismanic for the power of image as an embodiment of divine. He was not interested in the narrative aspect of the works.

'The artists under Salim were required to be exacting and consistent. Abul Hasan (1584 circa 1628) a senior painter was so much close to Jahangir, that he was bestowed the title of Nadir-uz Zaman (wonder of the age)'. There were also women painters during Salim's heyday. Nuri Nadira Bano and Raqia Bano (1599-1605), were also painters in the Mughal atelier and art instructions were also there in
harem. All the paintings of the time are mainly of
christian subjects. Manohar, another painter also tried
hand on christian themes and followed the style of
Salim's Academy, in which "Christ as Savior of the
world" remained the only subject of the academy.
Prince Salim was also vigorously interested in Printing
process and he liked himself to have been engraved on
the copper plates. The practice of making pastiches
found its complete expression in the margins of
Salim's Albums. In two phases cira 1598-1604 and cira
1608-9 the artists of the Prince painted figural border
to adorn poetic texts where the inscription are mostly
by Mir Ali, the safavid calligrapher who died in 1556.
"Other painters as Aqa Reza, along with Baswan
combined christian and other European images with
Islamic and Hindu figures with a view to represent
world religions". The crucification scene was very
popular with the mughal painters of this period. The
painters who were members of the missions were
required to present the whole christian religion through
the medium of painting and with their wisdom and
support of the local painters they could make the object of the missions a complete success.

Both Deccani and Mughal artists tried then hands on European prints e.g. *Madonna and Child* Plate No. 35 and *Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* Plate No. 21.

**Madonna and Child**

"Both Deccani and Mughal artists copied European prints, but their interests were distinct, and the contrast allows us to differentiate these two contemporary Islamic traditions working within India. If we compare this work with the European copies found in the margins of Jahangir's albums (e.g., cat no. 16c), for example, we see that the Mughal work typically uses cloth to enhance the weight and mass of the bodies. By highlights and shading, it makes the forms exist in space, and this would be close to the intention of the European source (which is unidentified). The Deccani artist, however, makes a rich pattern of the folds of the drapery, and shading is used not to increase our sense of the physical
existence of the Madonna but to intensify the
definition of lines in the flat pattern.

A fully painted version (Fig. 44) of the Freer
drawing is in the National Museum of India, New
Delhi.15

**The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia**

'Saint Cecilia, the patroness of music, was a
Roman lady who suffered martyrdom in the region of
Alexander Severus, about A.D. 230.

NINI, a Court Artist of the reign of Jahangir
(1605-27), evidently copied this work from an Italian
painting then in one or other of the Jesuit churches
at Agra or Lahore. The original painting was
probably destroyed when the two churches, established
by Portuguese missionaries in Akbar's reign (soon
after 1556), were demolished by order of Shah
Jahan, between 1632 and 1635 - a period of severe
anti-Christian propaganda in India.
Jahangir (1605-27) both respected and honoured the Jesuits; his religious controversies, both with Father Joseph D'Acosta, Superior of the Mission College at Agra, and with a fearless Florentine priest, whom he nick-named 'Atash' (Fiery One), are recorded in his Memoirs (Tazuk-i-Jahangiri).

Religious subjects, copied and adapted from European paintings and prints, were, to some extent, popular in India between the years 1560 and 1627, and were used as mural decoration in the Imperial palaces at Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore. Two interesting sixteenth-century wood-engravings, one of Saint Caterina de Siena (dated 1585) and the other of Sant Margarita, can be seen at the India Office Library in a much treasured album of Indian paintings containing the inscription: 'Presented to his nearest and dearest friend, the lady Nadirah Begam, by Prince Muhammad Dara Shikoh, son of the Emperor Shah Jahan, in the year 1501 (A.D. 1641).
The deep outer border of the buff-coloured mount is decorated in colours and gold with Mughal seventeenth-century flowering-plant motives, resembling those used both in the carved and inlaid (pietra dura) ornamentation of the Taj Mahal at Agra (1632-54), and of Shah Jahan's Palace at Delhi (1638-48). From the point of view of similarity, these naturalistic plant-forms are possibly even more closely allied to those which appear in the designs of the famous woollen - pile carpets made in the Imperial Factory at Lahore, about 1630, for the old Palace at Amber, the ancient capital of Jaipur, Rajputana: the residue of this consignment of Mughal carpets is still preserved in the Maharaja's Palace at Jaipur. On the reverse, contained within a similarly decorated border, is an illuminated panel of calligraphy written in the Nastaliq character by Mulla Mir Ali of Herat (d. 1518). 16

REFERENCES:

1. M.S. Ackler Gallery, "The Jessuits and the grand Mughal: Renaissance Art at the Imperial Court of


5. Ibid, p. 11.

6. Ibid, p. 11.


8. Ibid, p. 15.


10. Ibid, p. 27.

11. Ibid, p. 27.

12. Ibid, p. 27.


