Chapter IV:
Mughal perception of Christianity

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Mughal Perception of Christianity

The Mughal elite perception of Christianity had several dimensions. The Mughal court created an atmosphere for a mutually enriching dialogue between Islam and Christianity over theological and metaphysical issues. However, the influence of Christianity over the Mughal society was not confined to the interaction between the intellectuals and theologians of the Islamic world and the Christian West. It went much wider and seems to have extended to the whole of the Mughal culture. There is even considerable evidence of Christian influence over Mughal art and architecture. This makes the whole question of the Mughal perception of Christianity quite significant indeed!

We find the first mention of contact of Mughals with Christianity when Jesuit Fathers from Goa and its neighbourhood came to meet Akbar after the siege of Surat. In 1576, Akbar invited Father Julian Periera, the Vicar-General of Bengal to Fatehpur Sikri. Monserrate gives 1578 March as the date of Julian Pereira’s arrival. Badauni, however, attests to the presence of Portuguese priests at the court during 1575-76 in these words: ‘There came experienced theologians from Europe (Afranja), whom they call 'Padre' (Padhari). Their absolute legislator (Mujtahid-i Kamil) who can alter all decrees in view of circumstances of the time, and

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1 Ebba Koch talks about a new architectural motif in the second half of seventeenth century, i.e. the Baluster column, which soon became a widely employed motif. Its earliest examples are found in Shahjahan’s contribution to three great fortress-palaces of the Mughal Emperors in Agra, Lahore and Delhi. See for details, Ebba Koch, ‘The Baluster Column-A European motif in Mughal Architecture and its meaning’ in Monica Juneja, Architecture in Medieval India, Delhi, 2001, p.328.
kings too cannot defy his authority, is called the 'Pope' (Papa). They brought the Bible (injil) and gave arguments in favour of the Trinity and proving the truth of Christianity (nasraniyat), began to spread the Christian faith (millat-i Isawi). His Majesty instructed Prince Murad to take some lessons from the Bible, and Shaikh Abul Fazl was appointed to translate it. In place of the invocation ‘Bismillah (In the name of God),’ he wrote (in the Gospel): 'Ai nami vey Gesu Christu’ (O whose name is Jesus Christ (Zhazhu Kristu))\(^5\) i.e. 'O whose name is Benevolent and Bountiful'. These accursed people brought in a description of Dajjal (Anti-Christ) and applied his attributes to our Prophet, peace be on him, the very opposite of all Dajjals.\(^6\) Apart from having a religious discussion with him, Akbar also wanted him ‘to dispute with the Mullahs, in the royal ante-chamber’ in his presence.\(^7\) The same year, another Jesuit father, Antoine Cabral was sent by the Viceroy of Portugal in India to the court of Akbar. Likewise, another Portuguese priest, Pietro Tavares also visited the court at Fatehpur Sikri in 1578,\(^8\) whom Akbar allowed to stay at his court for some years to have discussion on Christian religion.\(^9\) Hence even before the arrival of first Jesuit mission at Akbar’s court, some interest in Christianity was already evident. Nevertheless it was with the arrival of the first Jesuit mission in 1580 that there was a much livelier appreciation of Christianity. Akbar sent embassy to Goa with letters to Viceroy, Archbishop and Jesuit Fathers (as advised by Father Pereira who told him of Jesuit Mission in the College of St. Paul in Goa telling him that he would gain much more by hearing to them) to send ‘two learned priests.’ Accordingly, Father Rudolf Aquaviva, Antony Monserrate and Francis Henriquez set out on November 10, 1579 and

\(^5\) ibid.,p.267.
\(^6\) ibid., p. 260.
reached Fatehpur Sikri on 27 February, 1580. Unfortunately, Akbar's adviser and minister Abul Fazl, who met the mission, has not left his description of Christianity or even an account of his meeting with the Jesuits in his writings. He only writes about the Jesuit mission that 'at this time, the Christian scholars (filsufan-i Nisara) submitted strong arguments against the worldly learned of Muslim law at the imperial court; and learned controversy ensued.'

The religious discussions were held at Ibadat Khana in which ulema participated along with Portuguese Fathers, Armenians and other Christians of 'Eastern' origin. These munazara debates between the Christian scholars and the experts of Islamic law in the king's presence provided him a direct exposure to the areas of difference between the two religions and also gave him a more clear insight into the principles of Christianity which must have helped shape his perception of the Christian religion. Akbar occasionally intercepted to give his views, sometimes in favour of Jesuits, and sometimes in defense of the 'ulema.

In the first Jesuit Mission Fathers reported that they were able to engage him in 'frequent debates concerning an infinite variety of points—the trinity, God-the Son, His death, Muhammad, Alcoran, the day of judgement, death, resurrection and various philosophical and political subjects,' and every aspect of doctrine, ritual and customs dividing the

3. *Munazara* is an Urdu term, commonly used for a religious disputation or debate, derives from an Arabic root meaning 'to look at.' The accounts of some early Munazaras between Muslims and Christians, particularly during Abbasid era were held. Akbar assigned the Ibadat Khana in Fatehpur Sikri in 1579 to holding of religious munazara.
two religions was at least touched upon, ‘in both the Christian religion
and their own.’ Father Rudolf, who had studied Quran in translation,
contended that Gospel having been foretold in Old Testament must be
superior to the Quran which was not. He also argued that as Muhammad
had acknowledged the divine origin of the Gospel he was inconsistent in
refusing to acknowledge the divinity of Christ. His other arguments
dealt with the character of Muhammad’s heaven, the witnesses to Christ’s
divinity, the mystery of incarnation and the Two natures of Christ and the
inconsistency of Quran in its varying attitude towards the character of
Christ’s death. He once asked Father Monserrate why Christ did not
come down from the Cross, why did he allow St. Thomas to put fingers
into his wounds and what was meant by ‘sitting at the right hand of
God.’ He also discussed the celibacy of clergy, the Last Judgement, the
status of the Paraclete, and relation of Quran to the Gospel. He further
questioned him on contents of the sacred books, meaning of certain
sacred pictures, the significance of Noah’s Ark and tenets of Armenian
and Nestorian Christians.

Akbar, however, reportedly told Father Pereira, that he found the
doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation to be stumbling blocks and if he
could accept these, he would be ready to embrace Christianity.

He also held discussions with them in his private quarters, and they
also accompanied him on military and hunting expeditions. Abul Fazl
refers to the year 1579-80 as the one when much agitation was caused by

15 Aquaviva to Vicente, Fatehpur Sikri, 24 July 1582, in John Correia-
Afonso, Jesuit Letters and Indian History, Bombay, 1980, p.110.
17 ibid., p.30.
Maclagan, E. The Jesuits and the Great Mogul, p.35.
19 ibid., fol.71(b)-76(a).
20 ibid., fol.77(a)-78(b).
22 ibid., p.51.
the Jesuit mission. Unfortunately, our sources do not indicate any tangible consequences of this curiosity regarding Christianity during the time of Akbar and Jahangir. References to Christian practices or beliefs remain casual or incidental. In his book on ethics, Badauni mentions Christian books on ethics, but gives no title.

In any case, the first Jesuit mission ignited some interest at the court in the Bible. It was obvious that by now there were no Arabic or Persian versions of the Gospel available. Apart from having religious discussions with them, Akbar also tried to acquire the Christian religious texts. A copy of the letter which accompanied the proposed embassy to Phillip II, the King of Spain in April 1582 (still extant in the first ‘daftar’ of the Insha-i- Abu’l Fazl) reads thus: ‘our language being different from yours, we hope that you will rejoice us by sending to these parts a man able to represent to us these sublime objects of research in an intelligible manner. It has been brought to our notice that the revealed books, such as the Bible, the Gospels (injil) and the Psalms of David (zabur), Book of Moses(taurat) should these books which are profitable to all, whether translated into Arabic or Persian, as he had heard or not, be procurable in your country, send them.’

That he had a keen desire to have a direct access to the ‘revealed books’ is also testified by the fact that every embassy sent to Goa carried a royal letter with a request to send the abovementioned books along with a translator. Although in 1580, Fathers presented him all volumes of Royal Bible in four languages, he insisted on getting a translation in Arabic or Persian, (None of his scholars could read any of the four languages-Hebrew,
Chaldean, Greek, and Latin, in which it was written and therefore constantly requested Fathers to provide him with translations in Persian of the Christian *Injil* (gospel)\textsuperscript{28} the reason he charged Abu’l Fazl with translating the gospel into Persian.\textsuperscript{29} During Second Jesuit mission, which arrived in April 1590 under Padre Firmilium (Leo Grimon?) from Goa. Akbar put some people to be instructed by him in order that the translation of the Greek books might be carried out.\textsuperscript{30} The second Mission, however, ended abruptly. In 1595 Father Jerome Xavier, who came with the Third Jesuit mission (along with Father Emmanuel Pinheiro and Brother Benedict De Goes in 1594,\textsuperscript{31} was commissioned by Akbar to translate the life of Christ based on the gospel, into Persian from a work in Portuguese, in collaboration with Maulana Abd-us-Sattar bin Qasim Lahori. This work was titled ‘*Dastan-i-Masih*’ or ‘*Mirat-ul-Quds.*’ It was prepared in 1602.\textsuperscript{32} It has four parts (*Babs*)-1) Nativity and the Infancy of Christ, 2) His Miracles and Teaching, 3) His Death and Suffering, 4) His Resurrection and Ascension.\textsuperscript{33} The complete Persian manuscript of the four gospels which was finally ready for presentation to Emperor Jahangir in 1609 is not extant, and the Royal Polyglot Bible was

\begin{footnotes}
\item[28] Aquaviva to Vicente, Fatehpur Sikri, 24 July 1582, in Correia-Afonso, Letters, p.68.
\item[31] *ibid.*, p.50.
\item[33] Maclagan, E. *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*, p.204.
\end{footnotes}
later returned into Catholic hands. Akbar also asked Father Jerome Xavier to write on the life of twelve apostles in Persian. (This work however, could not be completed during Akbar’s period and was presented in its final form to Jahangir in 1607, by the Fathers at Lahore and is said to have been appreciated by him).\(^{34}\) Abd al Sattar also wrote a work called *Ain-i Haqq numa*. This treatise was in the form of a dialogue between a padre and a philosopher who he purports to have met at court, while a *mulla* intervenes. This was in five parts-1) Necessity for a Divine law, 2) What Christ teaches regarding God and proofs of it being confirmable to wisdom, 3) Divinity of Jesus Christ, our Lord, 4) Commandments of the Gospel and their contrast with those of the Muhammad, and, 5) the strength imparted by the Christian faith and its superiority to other religions. He later wrote an abridgement titled *Muntakhab-i-Ain-i Haqq numa*.\(^{35}\) Akbar also asked Father Xavier to write on the lives of Apostles. Xavier accordingly wrote *Dastan-i-Ahwal-i-Hawariya* (lit. lives of the Apostles). The Apostles whose lives were covered were Ss. Thomas, James the Less, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simond, Jude and Matthias. In 1604, a Florentine traveler, Gambetta Vachiete, also presented a Persian translation of the Psalms to Akbar.\(^{36}\)

However, Akbar’s enthusiasm for Persian translations of the Christian texts had no influence on the Mughal ruling elite, whose ideas and perception of Christianity hardly changed. The arguments in the Jesuit fathers discussions with the *ulema* were based on scriptures, and even when the *ulema* were presented with portion of the Gospels translated into Persian, they questioned their scriptures, which ‘the Koran

\(^{34}\) *ibid.*, pp.209-11.
\(^{35}\) *ibid.*, p.208.
\(^{36}\) *ibid.*, pp.211-12.
says are spurious. And it is logical to conclude that the ruling elite held more or less the same view as that of ulama. Besides, Akbar’s zeal for translations was certainly not carried further with the same vigour even by his successors.

The Fathers at Lahore presented to Jahangir a book on the life of twelve apostles in 1607 and in 1610. Father Jerome Xavier also wrote *Ain-i-Haqqnuma* for Jahangir. (It was written in Portuguese with the title *Fuente de Vida*, after which various translations and abridgements were made in Persian, the most significant being the *A'ina-i-haqqnuma* (the truth reflecting mirror). This imaginary discourse set at the Mughal court was constructed by Jerome Xavier on the basis of several years’ residence in the Mughal Court in order to show in systematic fashion, what he saw as the ‘truth of Christianity and the falsehood of Islam’. The outcome of the role-play of the three disputants, a ‘Father,’ a ‘philosopher’ and a ‘mullah’ is of course, contrived in favour of Christianity. Xavier himself speaks through the mouth of the Father and the ‘mullah’ perhaps represents the Muslim leaders with whom Xavier held frequent intercourse.

In his reign, another work on Christianity named *Subh-i-Sadiq*, was written by Sadiq Isfahani, which was a biography of Jesus Christ, completed in 1609 at his court. It described the life of Mary, the birth and life of Christ, his miracles, ascension to heaven as well as the lives of the Apostles and their attempts to spread the faith in different parts of the world. An account of the life of Jesus Christ was also written during

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38 For an abridgement in English of Xavier’s *A'ina-i-haqqnuma*, see Samuel Lee, *Controversial Tracts on Christianity and Mohammadanism* by the B.D. Henry Martyn, (Cambridge, 1824).
Aurangzeb’s reign by Shaikh Muhammad Baqa. One of his brothers, Dara Shikoh, also maintained some relations with Christians at a personal level and while he held religious discussions with Hindus, Jesuit priests, mullahs etc., he took delight in ‘talking to the Jesuits and making them dispute with Muslim priests.’

Akbar’s attitude towards the Christian Fathers was quite respectful and was in keeping with his policy of “absolute peace” or sult-i-kul. Father Monserrate noted that Akbar gave them entrance even to the inner courtyard of the palace, where only the most distinguished nobles had the right to entrance; he sent them food from his own table—a mark of distinction which he is said never to have conferred upon anyone before, he visited one of the Fathers when he was ill, and greeted him in Portuguese as a sign of respect. He is even said to have been considerably influenced by the Christian philosophers at that time and it may be due to this influence that he allowed certain Christian rituals to be publicly practiced. Badauni lamented that heresy became common as ‘beating the gong after the manner of Christians and exhibition of the form of one person of the trinity, and of cunabula, which is the way of keeping festival and other such childish games became of daily occurrence.’

Observation, or hearsay, about modes of religious worship, symbols and taboos also influenced the pattern of questioning on both sides. In India the long residence of the Jesuit missionaries within the palace enclosure, when non-Christians were permitted by Akbar to

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42 Monserrate, Fr. A. Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar, p.64.
43 Abu’l Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, Bib.Ind., vol.iii, p.398.
attend Church services and even to observe the sacraments, meant that the liturgical forms of worship, and especially the various festivals of the Christian calendar were open to Christian observation. Akbar showed great interest in Christian festivals, visited the Jesuit chapel on special occasions such as a marriage ceremony, and at Christmas to see the crib. Akbar had even celebrated the day of Assumption of the Virgin in 1590, 'by bringing out and paying respect to his picture of Our Lady.'

It was through the Jesuit priests that Akbar came to know about Pope as being the representative of all Christians. Badauni also mentions that the monks from Europe were called Padris, with an infallible head called Pope. It is infact alleged that when Akbar got the mahzar issued by the Ulama, he was not oblivious of the position of Pope. Badauni wrote: 'there came experienced theologians from Europe (Afranja), whom they call 'Padre.' Their absolute legislator (mujtahid-i-kamil), who can alter all decrees in view of circumstances of the time, and kings too cannot defy his authority, is called the Pope. The shast resembled the crucifix.

As a friendly gesture towards the Fathers, he is said to have expressed his wish to them that Christians should live and preach freely in his Empire. He even permitted his two nephews to embrace Christianity under their supervision and put Prince Murad under Father Monserrate to learn Portuguese from them.

At the same time he let them construct Churches in his Empire e.g. at Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore- the reason why the Christian

45 Monserrate, Fr. A. Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar. p.59.
47 Monserrate, Fr. A. Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar. p.172.
49 ibid., p.260.
50 Fr. A. Monserrate, Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar. p.47.
community grew in Agra and Lahore, although he never issued a general order to that intent. He is reported to have issued a farman permitting the construction of churches in Cambay. Infact, when the Agra church, whose construction was permitted to Jesuits, was completed, Akbar himself participated in its inauguration and performed service according to the Christian practice. He also granted annual maintenance allowance to it. This allowance was continued by Jahangir. He is also said to have provided funds to the Church at Lahore, for its upkeep and expressed his wish to the Fathers to see it. The Jesuit Fathers were given considerable importance during Jahangir’s reign also. He gave them a house and a church at Lahore and also extended payment of pension to Fathers at Lahore. On another occasion, he ordered a monthly allowance of 30 rupees to the Church. He is called by Joseph Salbank, in a letter to East India Company, as the one who, ‘doth much honour the memory of our blessed Lord, whom he calleth Hazerat Esa, therefore the Christains live with more liberty and security in the country than they do (in any?) Mahometan King’s dominions.” Empress Nur Jahan is also reported to have visited a church at Lahore. As a gesture of

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53 In 1602, when the Fathers at Lahore under Father Francis Corsi requested Akbar to grant them ‘letters-patent’ in the form of an edict, signed by himself, proclaiming his goodwill towards Church and Christians and let his subjects free to convert to Christianity without any hindrance, he only gave his verbal assurance and did not sign any such edict, (C.H.Payne, *Akbar and the Jesuits*, p.154-56).
55 F.Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire, 1656-68*.
57 Monserrate, Fr. A. *Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar*, p.69.
59 *Letters Received*, vol.vi,pp.183,188.
friendliness Jahangir handed over many youths to Father Francisco Corsi for education as also his deceased brother's sons-Tahmiras, Baysinghar and Hoshang (son of Daniyal) for education in Christianity. All of them were baptized at Agra. These princes however, renounced their new religion later on. In the maintenance of relations with the Portuguese one of his nobles, Muqarrab Khan, a mansabdar of high rank during Jahangir's reign, played an important role. In 1607, he was sent as an ambassador to the Viceroy of Goa where he displayed considerable appreciation for Christianity. He tried to win over the Jesuits by expressing his love for their faith—he is alleged to have shown reverence to a painting of Jesus and Mary at Surat 'and so deeply was he impressed, that he said that it would be better not to have lived at all than to have lived without seeing so marvellous a work.' At Patna Muqarrab Khan is reported to have helped construct some Jesuit churches and to have kept a priest, maintaining his links with the Portuguese and so enriching himself. However, Maclagan quotes Father Simon Figueredo's letter of 20 December 1620, where the Father says that Muqarrab Khan kept a priest 'with no other object than that of attracting Portuguese trade, from which he could enrich himself.' He also allowed the Jesuit Fathers, Pinheiro, to treat his adopted son-later known as Masih-i-Kairanwi- with Christian relics, and even

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62 Roe held that these three Mughal princes had been baptized seemingly for diplomatic reasons. William Foster (ed.), *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, 1615-19*, p.376.
65 *ibid.*, p. 79.
67 *ibid.*, p.78.
helped construct some churches there.\textsuperscript{68} In 1612, he was again sent as an ambassador to the Viceroy of Goa, where he allegedly embraced Catholicism and received the name ‘John.’\textsuperscript{69} Maclagan corroborates this conversion and refers to a letter written by Muqarrab Khan on 3\textsuperscript{rd} April 1615 wherein the name ‘Jesu’ was superscribed.\textsuperscript{70} Nicholas Withington, in one of his despatches of 17 November 1613, says that:

After this Mocrobacann proceeded on his journey for Goa, where (as the Portingals say and swear) he according to his desire was christened, saying he felt his conscience very light and jocund after his baptism.\textsuperscript{71} He was, however probably an imperfect Christian and therefore, treated with some circumspection by the authorities at Goa.\textsuperscript{72}

After the death of Father Jerome Xavier in June, 1617, however, Jesuits were not provided patronage on grand scale, but were still favoured.\textsuperscript{73}

Christianity, as preached by the Jesuit fathers from Portugal, managed to sustain interest of the Mughal court and nobility till around 1630, after which it started to wane, the reasons being the end of Portuguese domination of the high seas due to which not only their economic motives but also their religious mission hitherto carried forth by the Jesuit fathers with much vigour and passion, received a serious setback from which it never recovered. The Jesuit fathers had helped the Mughal court in maintaining cordial relations with the Portuguese. They often accompanied embassies sent to and from Goa and often helped the Mughal Kings in acquiring Christian texts and paintings. Once the Portuguese power started declining, their role as cultural ambassadors slowly diminished and the patronage which had been extended to them

\textsuperscript{68} ibid., p.78-79.
\textsuperscript{69} Letter Received, vol.iii, p.298n.
\textsuperscript{70} E. Maclagan, \textit{The Jesuits and the Grand Mogul}, p.78
\textsuperscript{71} Purchas His Pilgrims, vol.iii, pp. 184-5, also pp. 265-6.
\textsuperscript{72} ibid., p .78.
\textsuperscript{73} Maclagan, E. \textit{The Jesuits and the Great Mogul}, p.90.
earlier was rolled back by the Mughal emperors. Besides, neither Akbar, nor Jahangir fulfilled the Jesuit hope of their conversion which, they hoped, would lead to mass conversions of his subjects!

The Jesuit churches at Agra which had been built with Akbar’s permission and had received grants from both Akbar and Jahangir were refused any further renewal of financial assistance by Shahjahan. In 1635, he also destroyed their churches at Agra and Lahore. Infact, he ordered the Agra church to be burnt. The Portuguese established at Hughli under the auspices of Jahangir, later Shahjahan was offended by the protection they were giving to the depredators of Aracan and attacked them. It was to punish them that he ordered the large and handsome church at Agra, together with one at Lahore, which had been erected during the time Jahangir, to be demolished. He also prohibited them from proselytizing among Muslims. Another Jesuit Mission arrived at Shahjahan’s Court under Father Antonio Ceschi, Father Antonio Botelho, and Father Henry Roth. However, Shahjahan had no personal contact with them. There was some thawing of relations in the reign of Aurangzeb. His brother Dara displayed some interest in Catholic Christianity. Even the grants of property made to Jesuits by Jahangir were duly confirmed. No interference was done in their mode of worship by Aurangzeb. This display of friendliness did not last long and even when he sent for a Persian translation of the Gospels, he was deterred by advisors that the book had been tampered by Farangi Padres, and therefore he did not read it. Remarks against the Prophet Muhammad were not tolerated. Even

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75 Bernier, *Travels in Mughal Empire*, p.176.
77 *ibid.*, p.107.
78 *ibid.*, p.116.
79 *ibid.*, p.121.
80 *ibid.*, p.121.
celebration of Mass became difficult. Allowances to the non-muslims were stopped and Jazia was reimposed by him in 1679 at the rate of 3½ rs. Per head p.a. At the plea of Fathers against this tax, only the Christians of Agra were exempted from it.

The writings of contemporary thinkers provide a useful insight on the nature and extent of the interactions between the Muslims and the Christians in the period. One such writer is Shah Waliullah who critically analyzed the beliefs of Christianity. To start with, he disputed the New Testament and interpreted it in a Quranic way. While the New Testament considered Jesus Christ as a part, an ‘incarnation’ of God, he disputed the fact that Jesus was the ‘son’ of God saying that in the ancient Semetic languages, the word ‘son’ was interchangeable with ‘beloved’ or ‘favourite’ of God, which was in fact the true meaning of the word. Earlier, similar remarks were made by Alberuni who said that 'By the son [of God] they (the Christians) understand most especially Jesus, but apply it also to others besides him,' thereby implicitly disregarding Jesus’ status as an ‘incarnation’ of God and reaffirming the Quranic view that he was only the ‘messenger’ of God. Even in the Ibadat Khana debates, Muslim disputants drew information about Christianity from Quran, which was relied on as the authorities source on Christianity even when the Bible was accessible. One of the Fathers reported crudely, but pointedly, ‘because they do not have the Bible nor can read it.' The Jesuits expounded on the ‘second Person’ as the ‘word’, their reasoning exemplified in Father Aquaviva’s claim to Akbar that, in calling Christ

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81 ibid., p.122.
82 ibid., p.123.
'Calametollah’, Alcoranus so far agrees with the first words of the Gospel, ‘In the beginning was the word.’

At a very early stage in the historical encounter Christian apologists seemed to accommodate to what they saw as Muslim misunderstanding of the physical sonship of Christ by exposition of the second person of the trinity in ‘word of God’ rather than ‘son of God’ terminology, thus placing the ‘word’ (logos) of the first chapter of John’s Gospel in the context of the Quranic Kalimat (word).

Emperor Jahangir may have broken the pattern briefly in the early seventeenth century, by seeming to come to the Jesuits’ rescue in positing to his ‘ulema metaphorical acceptance of Christ's divinity and sonship, but the Emperor’s motive for this probably merely reflected his malicious pleasure in seeing his own ‘ulema discomfited by his apparent acceptance of the Christian heresy.

Trinity refers to the three different ways in which God works—an idea which clashes with the strict monotheism of Islam, and therefore unacceptable. Another fundamental concept of Christianity which he disputed was crucifixion, which is in fact a basic tenet on which many other beliefs are based e.g. the original sin, the consequent sinful nature of mankind which needs repentance, and forgiveness of sins which would lead to reconciliation of man with God. It is believed that Jesus forgave every sinner on his own and declared that he was dying for the forgiveness of ‘their’ sins; and lastly resurrection on the third day of his death. The Quran was also the starting point for discussion of the nature

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86 Monserrate, Fr. A. *Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar*, p.180.
and significance of Christ's death. Shah Waliullah reiterated the Quranic view that being a messiah, Jesus could not have suffered death and that he had ascended to the heaven alive before crucifixion. Therefore, he denounced crucifixion also.  

The irreconcilable clash between Islamic notions of *tauhid* (divine unity) and Christian understandings both of *taslis* (trinity) and of the Incarnation and divinity of Christ initially determined the focus of debates between the ulema and the Christian missionaries. Shah Waliullah also firmly denounced the concept of 'trinity.'

Christians on the other hand, had always regarded Muhammad as a 'false prophet' and the preacher of a 'heresy,' attacked both his status and his character. As Badauni commented, 'these accursed people brought in a description of *Dajjal* (Anti-Christ) and applied his attributes to our Prophet, peace be on him, the very opposite of all *Dajjals*.

Aquaviva, who was the first to make the accusation, reported his Superior-General that 'we, in the presence of the king and all his people have said that Muhammad was anti-Christ,' Since these details come to us almost from the Jesuit accounts, one cannot rule out an element of

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89 *ibid.*; Alberuni considered Trinity to be not inconsistent with monotheism, for he says that the Christians 'distinguish' between the Three Persons (the Trinity) and give them separate names, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, but unite them into one substance, *Alberuni's India*, tr. E.C. Sachau, London, 1910, i, p.94.


91 *ibid.*


exaggeration and hyperbole. Even so, they do give us some idea of the
tolerance with which Jesuit beliefs were received at Akbar’s court.94

Although Akbar accepted with much delight a book of Father
Xavier’s composition describing the life, miracles, and doctrine of Christ
but he refused to acknowledge the divinity of Christ and ascribed his
miracles to his skill as a physician.95 While believing that the Christian
beliefs were misinterpretations of the ‘actual’ texts or events, Shah
Waliullah believed that the Christians mistook the allegorical references
to Christ as being his ‘miracles.’ He held that Bible was an ‘unauthentic’
text full of interpolations and misinterpretations.96 (The Gospel texts, the
Quran itself had claimed, had suffered from unauthorized deletions and
insertions; and this claim, of course, created a fundamental point of
disagreement between the Muslims, on the one hand, and the Jews and
Christians on the other).

Regarding the birth of Jesus however, he believed that Jesus was
indeed the son of Virgin Mary, conceived of the faithful spirit Gabriel at a
divine command.97

Two interrelated aspects of the Incarnation which always gave rise
to perplexed questions from Muslims, were the relation of Mary to the
Godhead, and the circumstances of Christ’s physical birth. At a very early
stage the notion that Mary was one of the three persons of the trinity had
been incorporated into the Muslim image of Christianity to the
apologists, the Jesuits among them, always denied that Mary was

94 Akbar is even reported to have asked them ‘to expound the truth to me,
and not be afraid of exposing the crimes of Muhammad.’ Monserrate, Fr.
A. Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar, p.134.
96 Shah Waliullah, Al Fawz al-Kabir fi usul-i tafsir, Karachi, 1383/1963-
64, pp.23-32. cf. S.A.A. Rizvi, Religious and intellectual History of the
Muslims in Akbar’s Reign, p.238-40.
97 ibid.
‘worshipped’, but her visual representation in many of the ‘Virgin and Child’ paintings displayed at the Mughal Court probably only reinforced the Mughal assumption (On one occasion in 1582 Monserrate recounted with approbation a report ‘amongst the Mussalmans that king had become a worshipper of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God,’ a tendency encouraged by the placing of a beautiful picture of the Virgin on his balcony.  Among the more learned Muslims the role of Mary in the incarnation process remained a focus of debate, for although the Quran might seem to support the Christian teaching on the ‘virgin birth’, scholarly exegesis differed on whether Christ, if conceived miraculously, had nevertheless been born in the usual human manner.

Another work belonging to the mid seventeenth century is *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* by Mulla Mubad Shah, a Zoroastrian, who served the information about Roman Catholicism from a French priest (or Padre Francis, a Portuguese priest) whom he met at Surat, without a critical analysis. This account is divided into three sections-(i) birth of Jesus Christ, (ii) beliefs of Christians, and, (iii) practices of Christians. In the first section he dates the birth of Christ as three thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine years since the beginning of creation. His virgin birth had been predicted by Isaih, the prophet (Father of David). Jesus also announced that he was the son of God who sits at the right hand side of God (i.e. part of trinity). Jesus was considered blasphemous and underwent suffering and crucifixion, to atone for the sins of mankind, as was predicted by Isiah. The second chapter (*nazar*) contains articles of

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98 Monserrate, Fr. A. *Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar*, p.176.
faith on the divine attributes of God as well as the human nature of Jesus. It outlines belief in the virgin birth of Christ, his crucifixion, incarnation, resurrection, ascension to heaven and his anticipated arrival on the judgement day as well as belief in trinity. The third chapter deals with the rituals and practices of Christian community as Sunday sermons, confession, rituals of marriage etc. The author further wrote that the successor to Lord Christ was called ‘Pope’ and also that the New Testament of Bible is regarded as the word of God.

What is noticeable here is that although a vague notion of the differences that had divided the Christians world was known to the scholars in Mughal India, the details of the schism in the Papal world were not known. Like most other works in Mughal India, the Dabistan treats the Christians as a homogenous community of believers. Alberuni also had access to the text of the Old Testament, for he refers to both the Jewish and Christ' Testaments being in Hebrew and Syriac. Similarly, he cites 'the Second Book of Kings', about the loss of David's son borne by Uriah's wife and God's promise of another son to him whom he would 'adopt as his own son'. Of the Christian gospel, Alberuni shows equal if not greater grasp. Elsewhere he shows familiarity with the ranks of the Church, speaking of the bishops, metropolitans, catholici and patriarchs, and of the lower clergy, namely the presbyter and deacon. Presumably, he knew more of the Eastern than of the Roman Church, for he never mentions the Pope. Unfortunately, our sources do not indicate any tangible consequences of this curiosity regarding Christianity during the time of Akbar and Jahangir. References to Christian practices or beliefs remain casual or incidental. In his book on ethics, Badauni mentions

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101 ibid., pp.252-53.
102 ibid., pp.254-56.
104 ibid., p.15.
Christian books on ethics, but gives no title; elsewhere, he recalls from his personal knowledge that Christians and Jews like the Hindus, not only regard music as permissible, but consider it a part of worship, is a little more specific evidence of actual observation of Christian (and Jewish?) practices, but it hardly denotes penetration. Jahangir seems to have an idea of their different modes of worship when (while praising Akbar’s religious policy) he said, ‘Sunnis and Shias met in one mosque and franks and Jews in one church, and observed their own forms of worship.

Ferishta, writing in the first decade of the seventeenth century, wrote that the English are different from Portuguese as they consider Jesus Christ to be a servant or envoy of God, and that God is one, without a wife or a son.

Since the Mughals first came into contact with Portuguese, it was their version of Christianity which they first encountered. In the latter half of the century, Khafi Khan, writing in the mid-eighteenth century, wrote that, ‘unlike a Hindu temple, their (Portuguese’) place of worship was very conspicuous, for tapers of camphor were kept burning there in the daytime. They had set up figures of the Lord Jesus and Mary and other figures in wood, paint and wax, with great gaudiness, but in the churches of English who were also Christians, there are no figures set up as idols.

Khafi Khan also mentioned that in their commercial settlement at Hughli in Bengal, they (Portuguese) also built a place of worship called church (kalisa).
The treatment of Christianity in Mughal paintings contributes to a better understanding of how kings and nobility perceived Christianity. The source of Mughal art’s introduction with Christianity primarily were the European prints and paintings with which the Mughal artists were familiar even before Akbar had any formal encounter with the Portuguese. (When Father Monserrate arrived from Goa with the first Jesuit mission, he noticed that the European pictures of Christ and Mary were already there).\textsuperscript{111} Akbar’s innovative aesthetic sense led him to experiment with Christian religious themes, based on the gifts made to him by the Jesuits. In 1580, the first Jesuit missionaries presented him an eight volume Polyglot Bible with several pictures. In 1580, Akbar was presented portraits of ‘Saviour of the World’ by the Father and in 1598, Father Xavier presented pictures of Christ and Ignatius Loyola to Akbar.\textsuperscript{112} Again in 1601, Father Xavier and Pinheiro presented to Akbar picture of Virgin drawn in ink.\textsuperscript{113} A large number of small engravings and illustrated frontispieces were also introduced from Europe during the late sixteenth century and the beginning of seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{114} Besides these books, prints and engravings, silken and woolen tapestries worked with stones from the Old Testament were also brought here,\textsuperscript{115} and therefore themes and stories of Christian mythology and parables were

\textsuperscript{111}Monserrate, Fr. A. \textit{Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar}, p.29.
\textsuperscript{112}Maclagan, E. \textit{The Jesuits and the Great Mogul}, p.226.
\textsuperscript{113}ibid.
\textsuperscript{115}Francisco Palseart, ‘\textit{Remonstrantie}’, c.1626, tr. Moreland and Geyl, ‘Jahangir’s India, Cambridge, 1925, p.25.
profusely worked upon such as that of Adam, Noah, Moses, Sarah (wife of Abraham), Daniel in the Lion’s Den, The Angel of Tobias, Expulsion from Paradise, Holy Family, Annunciation. Angels appearing to the Shepherds, Cleaning of the Temple of Bethlehem, Nativity of Christ, Adoration, Presentation to the Temple, The good Shepherd etc. Themes from the life of Christ were painted with equal vigour, for example, ‘The Entry into Jerusalem’ (which is probably one of the ‘Dastan-i-Masih’ manuscript, Mughal ca 1605, BM, 7-2405), Christ in the Wilderness, The Last Supper, Crucifixion, Lamentation, The Last Judgement, Resurrection etc. The subject of crucifixion is not seen favourably by the Muslims, yet the topic was not altogether discarded by the Mughal painters and we do get some examples of it like Crucifixion, Descent from the Cross, Deposition of Cross, (which Akbar specially got made by a Portuguese artist)

118 *The Voyage of Nicholas Downton to the East Indies, 1614-15*, p.8.
123 ‘Nativity of Christ,’ Thomas Arnold, *Indian Miniatures, The Library of A. Chester Beatty*, ed. J.V.S Wilkinson, P.82, see fig.iv, p.138; Also ‘Nativity of Christ’ *Mughal and Deccani Paintings, From the Collection of the National Museum*, Dr. Daljeet, Delhi, 1999, see fig.v, p.139.
125 ibid.
126 ibid.
127 ibid.
Christ holding a Cross (BL.A(A), No.12) We find another painting on crucifixion during Jahangir’s reign. Some other pictures of Christ related to his miracles e.g. Christ stilling the Storm, Widow’s dead son regaining life, the Revival of the Daughter of Darius. The portraits of Virgin Mary seem to have been very popular in the Mughal court. Akbar is said to have received a beautiful picture of the Virgin presented to him by Fathers with greatest delight which had been brought from Rome. In 1580, the Fathers gifted him another picture of holy virgin. Father Xavier in a letter to the General of the Society asked for a large picture of the Holy Virgin or of the Nativity to be sent for Akbar and Prince Salim. Akbar got made a painting of ‘Madonna and the Child with Angels’ (by a Portuguese painter), Madonna (by Balchand), Madonna and Child, The Virgin, Child and the Angel, Virgin and Child (by Manohar), The Virgin, Child and the Angel, by Mahabat (a painter of Jahangir). Other paintings were Madonna by the Tree, Madonna on the Bed, Madonna with a Rose, Madonna on a Snake, Madonna on the Crescent, Madonna on the Rock, Madonna and Child, (one by Basawan and Other by Jamal Mohammad), Virgin and Child (Kesav), Madonna Feeding Infant Jesus. Paintings of Christian saints were also done to a

128 S.P. Verma, Humanism in the Mughal Painting, p.214.
130 ibid.
132 ibid.
133 Monserrate, Fr. A. Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar, pp.48-9, 58-9.
136 S.P. Verma, Mughal Painters and Their Work, pp.74, 93,195,213,241.
138 S.P. Verma, Mughal Painters and Their Work, pp.74,195,205,212-13,256.
great extent, Kesavdas, a painter of Akbar's court, created some of the best works e.g. 'St. Mattews and the Angel (1587-88), based on an engraving by Philip Galle), St. Jerome (by Nadira Banu), St. John, George, Martyrdom of St. Cecilia (a painting by Nini in Jahangir's period, Victoria and Albert Museum, London; also in Indian Museum, Calcutta, no.139-1921), Magdalen, Margaret and Catherine, Tobias and the Angel, (signed on the mount by Husain, Musee Guimet, Paris.) Virgin and Angel (c. 1605-08 A.D., no. 3619 H.A., unsigned, Central Museum Lahore), there is another picture where a saint is shown reading a book and the cave where Christ was born is shown in the background.

Jahangir, even as a prince, was particularly fond of collecting Christian pictures. In 1608, Father Xavier noticed his collection having the pictures of Sardanapalus, the Circumcision, God the Father, Crucifixion, David kneeling before Nathan. There is also a miniature by Abul Hasan, a painter of Jahangir, titled 'Jahangir holding the Picture of Madonna,' c. A.D. 1620. William Finch noticed pictures of Christ and the Virgin Mary on the walls of the retiring room in the Fort of Lahore. Thevenot in his account, based on hearsay, also noted that while on one of the gates was the painting of crucifixion and on the other gate was the picture of the Virgin. Jahangir's palaces at Agra carry many pictures of Christ, Mary and various saints and have been described

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139 ibid., p.309. Gulshan (A), Gulistan Library, Tehran.
140 A.K. Das, Mughal Painting During Jahangir's Time, p.68, see fig.vii, p.141.
141 ibid., p.76. See fig.viii, p.142.
142 ibid., p.75. See fig.ix, p.142.
144 S. P. Verma, Humanism in the Mughal Painting, p.217.
146 Mughal and Deccani Paintings, From the Collection of the National Museum, Dr. Daljeet, Delhi, 1999, opp. p.50. See fig.x, p.144.
147 W. Foster, Early Travels in India, p.162-3.
148 Jean de Thevenot, The Indian Travels of Thevenot and Corcos, p. 85.
thus: "in the middle of the ceiling there was a painting of Christ our lord surrounded by angels; and on the walls were some small pictures of the saints including John the Baptist, St. Anthony, St. Bernadine of Sena, and some female saints." There were figures on each side of the window. Above those on the right was a representation of Christ our lord with a globe of the world in His hand, and on the left was a picture of our Lady the Virgin, copied from a painting by St. Luke, and to the right and left of these were various saints in a posture of prayer. The window where the King sits, he had got painted on the flanks of the same wall life-size portraits of his two sons, above one of them is a representation on a smaller scale, of our Lord and a father of the company with a book in his hand and above the other, of our Lady the Virgin. On the vault of the charola (oriel) are pictures of St. Paul, St. Gregory and St. Ambrose. In the interior of the palace the walls and the ceilings of the various halls are adorned with pictures illustrating the life of Christ, scenes from the Acts of Apostles copied from the Lives of Apostles which the Fathers had given him, and the stories of the Sisters Ana and Susana and many other saints. As a prince and in the early years of his reign, Shahjahan did evince some interest in the European pictures, but later on we hardly notice depiction of Christian themes to any considerable extent. However, one of his sons-Dara Shikoh, collected some engravings representing Virgin and Child during the flight to Egypt; ‘St Catherine of Seina’ dated 1685, and ‘St. Margaret’ in his album.

Not only the kings, but some nobles also, particularly of Jahangir’s period, showed considerable interest in European pictures based on

150 *ibid.*, p.64.
151 *ibid.*, p.64-65.
Christian themes. It seems that they showed special inclination towards portraits based on Christ’s life and Virgin Mary. In 1616, Roe presented Muqarrab Khan thirteen pictures of Christ and a set of twelve Apostles.\(^{154}\) The same year, he presented Jamaluddin Hasan Inju a book containing forty-eight sheets of pictures illustrating the whole life of Christ.\(^{155}\) Aziz Koka, a foster-brother of Akbar, also showed interest in Christian pictures and tried to acquire the picture of Madonna Del Pepolo from the Jesuits.\(^{156}\) Mirza Beg, Asaf Khan, Mahabat Khan and Zulfiqar Khan also possessed some Christian pictures.\(^{157}\)

To conclude, given the conducive atmosphere for inter-religious dialogue at Akbar’s court, there was a marked interest in, and receptivity of Christian faith and beliefs. This interest declined in the subsequent period, but as the case of Muqarrab Khan shows, never quite died down, and was retained by sections of the Mughal nobility. Islam-Christian dialogue and debates continued in the eighteenth century, and scholars like Mulla Mubad and Shah Waliullah compared the two faiths, in a framework informed by comparative religion. The influence of Christianity disseminated the Mughal court culture, and left its indelible mark on Mughal art and architecture.

\(^{155}\) *ibid.*, p.64.
\(^{157}\) *Letters Received*, vol.iii, pp.64, 82.
Fig. i. Rudolfo Acqaviva and another Jesuit debating with Muslim Divines before Akbar
Fig. ii. Copy of European Engravings; one signed by Nadira Banu c.1600-1604 A.D.
Fig. iii. Folio From the Gulshan Album showing European object
SEPARATE MINIATURES OF THE MUGHAL SCHOOL

XIII. THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST
Fig. v. The Nativity of Christ
Fig. iv. 1. SEPARATE MINIATURES OF THE MUGHAL SCHOOL

MIX. THE VIRGIN AND CHILD BY KEST
Fig. vii. The Martyrdom of St. Cecilia
Fig. x. Jahangir Holding the Picture of Madonna
CHAPTER V:
The European merchant as the ‘other’ of Indian merchant
The European Merchant as ‘the other’ of the ‘Indian’ Merchant

One of the factors that shaped the Mughal policy responses towards the European merchants was a sense of separation between the European and the indigenous merchants. Scholars have not paid adequate attention to the sense of ‘difference’ that informed Mughal policies towards the European merchants.

By the time the Mughals established their rule, the Portuguese had already established a monopoly on the inter-Asian trade. The main method of enforcement of this so-called monopoly was first, by issuing cartaz (or passes), by which they imposed restrictions on the personnel and armaments allowed on the ship, and, second, through piracy. The control of Portuguese of the Red Sea trade was particularly irksome to both Ottomans and Mughals since the Portuguese posed a potential danger to not only the native traders, but also to the hajj pilgrims. Akbar, in a letter in 1586 to Abdullah Khan Uzbeg, expressed displeasure regarding the unrest that the Portuguese created by harassing traders and pilgrims to holy places. Badauni also testifies to the fact that Akbar detested their control of the High Seas.

Ostensibly however, Akbar maintained cordial relations with the Portuguese by accepting to take cartaz from them to send off his pilgrim ships, a practice which continued under Jahangir. Akbar signed a farman on 18 March 1573, perhaps at Broach, instructing the Captains, Governors, administrators and other officials working especially in Surat, Broach, Naussari, and

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1 Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, vol.iii, p.275; see also Maktubat-i-Allami (Inshe’i-Abul Fazl) DAFTAR I, tr. Mansura Haider, Delhi, 1998, p.44.
4 ibid., p.81.
Velodra (Vadodra) in the province of Gujarat not to disturb the Portuguese in their possession like Diu. It further enjoined to them not to favour Malabar pirates but extend help to Portuguese. As for the general Portuguese merchants, like all other traders, they had to pay custom-duties and the final decisions regarding the fiscal administration rested with the Mughal Emperor. As Akbar went on occupying the port cities of Surat, Broach and Cambay, some Portuguese merchants at Cambay sought from him the special favour of exempting them from the obligation of paying custom-duties for the commodities imported into Cambay by them. Akbar granted the request and reportedly agreed to take the lumpsum payment of 300,000 cruzados every year instead as duties to the captain of Cambay.

As their trade contracted towards the mid-sixteenth century, they began to rely more and more on the profits from directing and taxing Asian trade. They now allowed and even fostered Asian trade, even to Red Sea, for thus their custom-duties increased. Their presence was to some extent a decisive factor as far as the routes and commodity composition of the overseas trade is concerned. While in the sixteenth century the South East Asian trade declined largely because of Portuguese interference, the increasing dominance of Gujarati merchants in Red Sea trade was also evident, which remained significant in the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century. Due to the Dutch, English and the French participation, India’s foreign trade, specially the Red

5 ibid.
8 ibid., p.85.
Sea trade, both in terms of volume and value, witnessed a tremendous growth in the seventeenth century and first half of the eighteenth century, and indeed a major role was played by the Indian maritime merchants also. Still, it cannot be denied that the most important change during the eighteenth century was the growing importance of the European factor in the Indian Ocean. This ascendancy of European factor in Indian Ocean was certainly not a sudden process. It was preceded by two centuries of dependence.

The overwhelming and intimidating presence of the Portuguese and their dominance of the maritime trade was one of the factors that shaped the Mughal perception and policies towards the English. The presence of the Portuguese also prevented the Mughal officials from developing better trade relations with the English. In 1618, Sir Thomas Roe wrote to the Company, ‘the Portugall houlds all the coast to slaverie, and there is no way to remedie it, unless either the Kyng would build or give us a port or hyre our shipping; but he will not bee drawn to alter his conditions, because hee is not sencible of the dishonour, giving reason he conquered Guzuratt and keepes it in the same condition he found it and upon the same articles and contracts made by Bahud(ur Shah), King of Guzuratt, who made them with the Portingalls before this monarchy was united.’

Some time before the foundation of the English East India Company in 1600 A.D., a number of English travelers like Thomas Stephens, Ralph Fitch, Newberry and Leeds visited Mughal India. Then in 1599, John Mildenhall came during the reign of Akbar, who tried to negotiate with the Emperor ‘some kind of commercial

\[\text{ibid., p.39.}\]
\[\text{EFI, 1618-21, pp. 12-13.}\]
treaty or understanding which should be a basis for the English trade in India. He failed to secure any treaty with the King and returned unsuccessful. Probably, the experience of Mughal ruling elite of the European merchants with the Portuguese, who had introduced an element of ‘force’ in the maritime commerce of the high seas, was responsible for their wary attitude towards the English merchants. And this fear was not unfounded. They English also resorted to piratical activities against the Mughal shipping on the Western coast. They began to issue passes to unprotected Indian vessels as early as 1613. As a consequence, Muqarrab Khan, the Governor of Surat, did not allow the English to establish Factory at Surat, and also rebuked them for the robbing of ships coming from Red Sea by one of their factors, Henry Middleton. However, further attempts to open up trade with India were made during the time of Jahangir, when Hawkins, the self-styled ‘envoy of the King of England’ visited Jahangir’s court in 1609. Hawkins met the Emperor at Agra and was given every assurance regarding trade facilities to the English but nothing substantial could be achieved which they believed was due to the intervention of Portuguese. For the same reason, in 1608, when William Hawkins arrived at Surat, Muqarrab Khan (who was the mutasaddi of both Surat and Cambay) allowed them to unload their cargo but the local Mughal officials did not permit them to engage in any commercial transaction in Surat. He did not let them establish a

\[\text{12 Letter Received, vol.i, p.307.}\]
\[\text{13 Letter Received, vol.i, p.279.}\]
\[\text{14 Foster, W. (ed.) Early Travels in India 1583-1619, p.66.}\]
\[\text{15 Orme, Robert Historical Fragments of Mughal Empire 1659-1689, p.323-4.}\]
factory at Surat,\textsuperscript{16} on pretext of which Middleton used force to exchange goods of Indian vessels in Red Sea, specially that of the Gujarati fleets.\textsuperscript{17}

Till the time the Portuguese retained their previous position in the perception of the Mughal elite as a formidable sea-power, the English merchants were not much encouraged. But this was not the sole factor. The indigenous merchants were unequivocally against the admission of another European company in the trade of Indian Ocean. In 1612, Middleton was also refused trade at Dabul (Dabhol)\textsuperscript{18} not because of Portuguese instigation but ostensibly because as Hawkins himself states that Surat merchants had made declaration at the court that the encouragement to English would mean ruin of trade of Gujarat.\textsuperscript{19} Having had the experience of Portuguese piratical activities, the Surat merchants were wary of letting any other European trading Company into maritime trade of the high seas. And in the initial phase, the English traders tried to make an impression upon the Gujarati merchants that they were powerful enough to succeed against the Portuguese.\textsuperscript{20} In 1612, Capt. Best and in 1614, Nicholas Downton even inflicted crushing defeat on the Portuguese, but it only served to make the ruling elite more watchful of their activities.\textsuperscript{21} The king allowed the English to trade in Mughal dominions, but he also took care to not let them settle and build a factory or even buy a house.\textsuperscript{22} Though the

\textsuperscript{16} Letter Received, vol.i pp.175-76.
\textsuperscript{17} ibid., p.279.
\textsuperscript{18} ibid., p.258.
\textsuperscript{19} Foster, W. (ed.) Early Travels in India 1583-1619, p.66.
\textsuperscript{20} Letters Received, vol. ii, p.186.
\textsuperscript{21} Tuzuk, p.274-5,1614, 9\textsuperscript{th} R.Y.
\textsuperscript{22} The permission to settle at Surat (i.e. having a factory was not yet given (for details see EFI, 1624-29,P.20-21,310).
Province Governors broadly acted as agents of the central administration, they also acted according to their discretion.

One example is of Muqarrab Khan, the Governor of Surat (the prime hinterland of the western coast). He tried to take advantage of friction between the two companies hoping perhaps that their conflict could only be in the interest of the Empire.23 In 1611, he visited Middleton and in return for some concessions (which were not given eventually), and permission for the setting up of a factory,24 he asked for a treaty and assurance of English aid in any fighting with the Portuguese.25 On 27 January 1612 he reiterated his offer to help the English to establish a factory, but within two or three days he asked them to leave the port as the Portuguese, not surprisingly, resented these negotiations and warned Muqarrab Khan to desist, at which he rapidly changed his mind. Again, it was only after a war had ensued between the Portuguese and the English that Muqarrab Khan began to seek the friendship of the English. He was pleased to hear that the English had sunk a Portuguese ship and damaged another.26 When he heard of the growing hostility between the English and the Portuguese (in 1614-15), he seems to have become friendlier towards the English.27 In any case, he prudently supported the English because

25 Purchas His Pilgrims, vol. iv, p. 219: 'that if I [Nicholas Downton] would assist them [the Mughals] against the Portugals, the Nabob would do us all the favour that in his power lyeth.' See also Purchas His Pilgrims, vol. iv, pp. 220, 222 and 258.
26 Letters Received, vol.i, p. 138; vol.iii, p. 64.
27 Purchas His Pilgrims, vol. iv, pp. 224-5.
of the fear of Portuguese naval raids. But again, a peace treaty was signed by Muqarrab Khan and the Portuguese Gocalo Pinto da Fonseca on 7 June 1615, which declared that the Mughals and the Portuguese 'will not engage in any trade' with English and Dutch merchants, nor would they be sheltered in ports, or supplied with provisions.

The Mughal perception and policies towards the English in the seventeenth century were not uniform and can be demarcated in two distinct phases. In the first phase, that lasted till about 1630s, roughly speaking, the Mughal administration perceived the English as petty merchants, foreign and inferior.

During this phase, the Mughals outright rejected the English claim to a superior status based on their political connections with the ruler of England. Hawkins’ ‘embassy’ and later Edward’s ‘embassy’ (who having supposedly brought a letter from King James expected a ‘better treatment’) had failed miserably in getting privileges for English merchants at Surat. Jahangir was fully aware that Surat had become a place of contention between the English and the Portuguese merchants and the English claim that Portuguese attacks on Mughal ships had led Muqarrab Khan to let the English fortify at Surat was totally unfounded. It is clear from a letter written in Dec.1615 by William Edwards to the East India

\[\text{28 Downton wrote that 'the cause of their request [to the English to stay on at Surat], was their feare lest the Viceroy [of the Portuguese] after my departure should come against Surat with all his forces.' Thomas Elkington also writes of Muqarrab Khan's anxiety to befriend the English. Purchas His Pilgrims, vol. iv, p. 243.}\]

\[\text{29 S. A. I. Tirmizi, Mughal Documents (1526-1627), New Delhi, 1989, pp. 97-8.}\]

\[\text{30 Letter Received, vol.i, p.26.}\]

\[\text{31 Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, p.274-5.}\]

\[\text{32 Letter Received, vol.ii, p.186.}\]
Company in 1615, that Muqarrab Khan allowed them only ‘trade’ at Surat. They received a *farman* written to Governor of Surat and Cambay permitting them ‘trade and acceptance’ in the country.

In 1615, Sir Thomas Roe, the ambassador of King James I came to the court of Jahangir and made a deliberate effort to present himself at the Court as an ambassador of the English monarch, besides working upon getting trading privileges. For the Mughals, on the other hand, he was a representative of the English merchant body, and they were foreign merchants not to be placed on parity with Indian merchants. Obviously, this embassy was also unsuccessful. Nevertheless, Roe devised the plan of escorting Mughal vessels to Red Sea in order to gain acceptance in the Indian trade alongside the Portuguese, even if by force the mercantilist consideration behind which was to stop the bullion inflow into India from Europe and finance Indian trade from the Red Sea trade profits. Earlier an unsuccessful attempt had been made by Henry Middleton through force to gain participation in Red Sea trade. Linked with their desire to gain acceptance in the Red Sea trade was the desire to get permission for settlement in Surat which was a principal port on western coast, from where the Red Sea and Persian Gulf trade was carried on.

One of the major components of Mughal response towards the English and other European merchants was the safeguard of the trading interests of the Indian merchants.

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33 ibid., vol.ii,p.149.
34 ibid.,vol.iii,p.65.
36 EFI, vol.i, p.22.
38 Letter Received ,vol.i, p.155-61.
In 1618, Roe drafted proposals for a *nishan* which was submitted to prince Khurram. It included a demand to allow him to land with ‘arms’ to defend against Portuguese, which was rejected by him.\(^3^9\) Further, his demand for complete freedom of trade throughout the Empire was completely ignored by Khurram. These proposals submitted by Roe on 15\(^{th}\) August, 1618 for a *nishan*, and reformed by Khurram were not accepted by Roe and with the mediation and assistance of Afzal Khan (Asaf Khan?), Khurram’s secretary, a revised *nishan* was issued.\(^4^0\) In the revised *nishan*, Roe had to agree not to build any house in or about Surat without obtaining permission from Jahangir. They could only rent a house for merchants’ residence and storing merchandise. (In fact, in 1617 when the news regarding a ship reportedly containing building material (reportedly for a Factory at Swally reached the Prince Khurram, an embargo was placed on their trade and they were not allowed to unload that ship).\(^4^1\) Also, their goods were not to be passed unchecked.\(^4^2\) Roe took an undertaking that the English were to live at Surat according to laws and regulations of the Empire.\(^4^3\) The English claimed that by 1613, they had the permission (by a *farman* supposedly given to Thomas Best) to trade with Surat\(^4^4\) but this *farman* had little value.\(^4^5\) The permission to settle at Surat (i.e. building a ‘factory’) was not yet given\(^4^6\) and the idea of making a fortress at the coast of Gujarat had been outright rejected by Prince

\(^4^0\) *ibid.*, p.485.
\(^4^1\) *ibid.*, p.415.
\(^4^2\) *ibid.*, p.481n.
\(^4^3\) *ibid*.
\(^4^4\) Letters Received, vol.i, p.280.
\(^4^6\) *EFI*, 1624-29, p.20-21,310.
Khurram (no contemporary copy of this nishan is extant. At the India Office, there is a transcript of it is made in 1789, endorsed by Khurram and signed by Roe). 47

The English could not get the Mughal Emperor sign the treaty or having an exclusive alliance with them against either Portuguese or the Dutch, because he considered it below his dignity to sign a treaty with the representatives of a foreign merchant body. Roe’s proposal to Prince Khurram to let them ‘settle’ (at Surat) against which they would assume the responsibility of naval defense of Surat against the Portuguese was scornfully rejected by Khurram. 48 Apparently any such ‘help’ which would put the Emperor under obligation of a foreign trading Company was unacceptable to him. In 1616, Roe tried to convince Jahangir that the Dutch in South and East were building forts as in case of Masulipatam, and would become masters of the port, could only ‘somewhat trouble’ Jahangir. 49 The repeated English assumptions that the Mughal Emperor shirked making alliances with them or letting them settle and give them concessions because they were apprehensive of Portuguese reactions is not true. 50 However, by the end of the first phase, the Portuguese were gradually virtually wiped out by the English and they had established complete supremacy in the high seas. The English were able to impose successive defeats on the Portuguese, one after the other. In 1622, they captured Ormuz in the Persian Gulf from the Portuguese. In 1633 they defeated the Portuguese at the port of Hugli, thoroughly routing them, their successive victories enabled

47 EFI, 1622-3, p.321.
49 ibid., p.303.
50 Letters Received, vol.iv, p.314.
them to establish a maritime supremacy in the Indian Ocean, which, with the Portuguese no longer in contention, came to be gradually recognized by the Mughals.

An important instance of Mughal perception of the English merchants comes from the Red Sea trade dispute in which Thomas Roe played an important role. In 1618, the English East India Company, under the initiative of Roe decided to participate in the trade to Red Sea, in order to enhance its profits from the Indian Ocean. In 1618, the English dispatched Anne to Mocha. Encouraged by the profits, in 1619, another ship Lion was dispatched to the Red Sea. (This trade ‘the ambassador (Roe) told the Company, in reaching home, ‘in tyme may be enlarged by the English, and will be the life of Surat and Persia trade.’ The English decision to participate in the Red Sea trade created quite an uproar among the Surat merchants, who in alliance the local authorities, seized the English factories and prevented them from buying merchandise from the merchants of Gujarat. When the Factors started their investments for the fleet expected in the autumn, a general boycott was organized, and they were plainly told that unless they would undertake to abandon the Red Sea traffic, they ‘should not buy a yard of calico for that purpose.’ When the English took the matter to Ishaq Beg, Governor of Surat, he flatly refused to help them. They were specially prevented from buying linen or making big investments in buying for the lading of Lion, and when they suspected that they were buying

52 EFI, p.xiv.
54 ibid.
55 ibid.
linen from several adjacent places, they called a meeting of all brokers in Surat and surrounding places and decided not to ‘buy and sell’ any commodity to English.\textsuperscript{56} Not only Surat and Nausari, but the Governors of Broach and Baroda were also informed that the English were to be boycotted as per the orders of the Prince finally prohibiting their linen investments in Ahmedabad and confined them to Broach only. The English had to agree to not making any investments in the Red Sea until further orders came from the Prince.\textsuperscript{57} The Surat merchants, in fact in alliance with the local authorities, seized the English Factories and prevented them from buying merchandise from the merchants of Gujarat. Consequently, Thomas Roe was forced to take the matter to the Mughal court. In response to his petition concerning the blockade of the Red Sea, Prince Khurram issued a \textit{nishan}, which forbade them from trading between Gujarat and the Red Sea on the ground that their participation in the Red Sea trade was ruining the Gujarat merchants. The \textit{nishan} prohibited the English from trading between Gujarat and the Red Sea since this was the only avenue of overseas trade left to the Indian merchants in the wake of the advent of European Companies.\textsuperscript{58} Another issue of controversy was the coral trade. It was a major item of import from the Red Sea\textsuperscript{59} (although most part of coral that they sold at Surat was brought by land to Bijapur).\textsuperscript{60} The merchants of Surat did not want the English merchants to bring in large quantities of coral in Surat.\textsuperscript{61}

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{EFI}, vol. i, p. 134-35.
\item \textit{ibid.}
\item \textit{ibid.}
\item \textit{EFI}, 1624-29, p. 258.
\item \textit{EFI}, vol. i, p. 54.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotes}
Khurram's \textit{nishan} also forbade the English from importing coral, again on same ground.\textsuperscript{62} When the Governor and merchants of Surat wrote a joint petition to the Prince for a \textit{nishan} to forbid sale of coral to the English merchants and their further trade in that commodity on the pretext that it was against their interests,\textsuperscript{63} it was accepted. The \textit{nishan} is significant in highlighting the Mughal perception of the English. It would seem from the \textit{nishan} that the Mughal court did make a distinction between the India and the foreign merchants and believed that the Indian merchants, being their subjects, deserved a more favourable treatment than the foreign English merchants.\textsuperscript{64} A sense of identification with the Indian merchants, reinforced by a sense of difference with the English is clearly suggested from the \textit{nishan} of Prince Khurram.

Monopoly system was an important part of the imperial economic policies which directly affected the European merchants and their trade. Monopolies in certain articles were imposed for various reasons, such as according to the military exigencies of state as in the case of saltpeter (in 1636), or for revving up revenue for the state, as in the case of indigo (which was monopolized in 1633), gold and silver monopolies. And mostly, these temporary monopolies had to be terminated before their stipulated time, one of these reasons of which was the opposition put up against them, as in the case of indigo where Anglo-Dutch combined opposition made the monopoly difficult to sustain by boycotting its purchase. The Governor of Surat, apprehensive of the falling revenues of his

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{The English Factories in India}, ed. W. Foster, 1618-21, p.131
\textsuperscript{64} William Biddulph, one of the factors of the English Company at the Mughal court found ‘the prince and all generallye tenderinge their own peoples goods and complaints before our shutes and benefitts.’ \textit{The English Factories in India, 1618-21}, ed. W. Foster, vol. i, p.174.
port, petitioned to the Emperor to restore the freedom of trade in indigo. Through his mediation some relaxation was given to both English and Dutch through three farmans—one to the Governor of Surat, one to English and one to Dutch, to make arrangements to buy indigo at Agra—the proposal was rejected by both English and Dutch. This shows that a foreign merchant body could expect a revision of the Emperor’s firman, if its interests were adversely affected. It also reflects the collusion between the Mughal officials and the European merchants, who through the mediation of important nobles at the imperial court, could get the imperial orders revised. These nobles, either for financial reasons (e.g. Muz-ul-Mulk, Governor of Surat,) or for political reasons (e.g. Asaf Khan, the vakil and Afzal Khan, the Diwan-i-kul) supported them. President Methwold and others in Swally Road (Dec.29) wrote to the Company that although Manohar Das, a bania, was the prime monopolist, yet Mir Jumla, High Steward of the King, was principally engaged in the project (1634, O.C.1543 A) and they decided to take advantage of the enmity between Mir Jumla and Asaf Khan who belonged to the different factions at the court, and hooked on Asaf Khan’s help. Consequently, on 14th April,1635, the English received the imperial farman, dissolving the indigo monopoly and its sale once again became open to all.

In 1636 when the Emperor received complaints from Dutch about attempts of Saif Khan, to monopolize the stock of indigo in his district, a farman was issued by the Emperor on Feb.22,1636, reiterating that indigo monopoly had been taken off and that no

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65 EFI,1634-36, pp.70-71.
66 ibid., p.72-73; 1634-36, p.11.
67 EFI,1634-36,157n.
one could monopolize indigo in unauthorized manner. Thus while making it clear that the European merchants, like all other merchants of his domain, were protected from any arbitrary act of Mughal officials, another farman, which was simultaneously issued, shows that he would neither let the foreign merchants disrupt the trade of Surat, or let the Mughal ports be harmed by them. He wanted the heads (principals) of both English and Dutch factories to be accountable for the activities of their merchants. The farman said that the Dutch and English must always keep a deposit of Rs. 12 lakhs at Surat and that the Principals of both nations must always remain in Surat and must not go aboard their ships at any time. The farman further sought to regulate their movement and activities by ordering that the ‘English & Dutch must not resort to any other ports in the Mughal Empire. They were also not allowed to bring ships to any other place except Swally Hole (Swally Marine), where it ‘shall not be lawful for them to build any frigates.’ Likewise, in a document dated 10 September 1645, a hasb ul hukum issued by Saadullah Khan that the English were not expected to a) fortify their factories, b) employ armed guards in their factories, c) refuse to pay regular taxes, and d) construct a fortress for their residence.

Here we again notice the collusion of local Mughal officials with the European merchants, as seeing the opposition that it invited, the Governor did not implement the farman to its full

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68 President Methwold’s Diary, Jan. 22-Apr. 6, 1636, (Surat Factory Records, IOR, London, vol.i, p.491; EFI,1634-36, p.157). I am grateful to Dr. Farthat Hasan for this reference.
69 EFI,1634-36, pp.157, xvi.
70 ibid.
71 Bibliotheque Nationale, Suppl. Pers. 482, ff.133(b)-134(a). I am grateful to Dr. Farthat Hasan for this reference also. Also see, Tavernier, Jean Baptiste Travels in India, 1640-67, vol.i, pp.6-7.
effect. A similar example can be taken in case of saltpetre monopoly when the cooperation of a Governor helped in making monopoly ineffective. George Tash took assistance of Governor Mir Musa (through gifts) and succeeded in clearing all obstructions to saltpetre business, which was very important for them as in Bengal, they had less trade except in saltpetre. They had large Factories in Patna, kasimbazar and Hughli. When President Methwold said that the English would not submit to conditions of such ‘slavery’, the Governor pretended that the farman was merely a ‘formality’ and when Dutch also complained through the Shahbandar, Mirza Mahmud and the King’s commissary they got the reply that ‘it was not meant for them, but to restrain the English, who had taken to frequenting the Portuguese settlements with their small vessels and were planning to use them in fetching goods by water from Broach and Cambay, which would injure the customs-revenue of Surat.

After 1630s, however, a new phase in Mughal perception and policies towards the English began to take shape. By this time, the Portuguese had been virtually wiped out by the English and the English maritime supremacy in the Indian Ocean came to be gradually recognized by the Mughals. During this phase, two developments seem to have shaped the Mughal policy towards the English. The first was the English maritime supremacy which allowed the English to engage with the Mughals in the politics of a

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72 George Tash, Hugh Fenn and Anthony Smith at Ahmedabad in a letter on Feb.28,1647 to Surat, President and Council, EFI, 1646-50, p.108.
73 EFI,1661-64, p.69.
74 EFI, 1634-36, p.57n.
balance of terror. Mughal aggressions in the land were responded by the English in equal measure on the high seas. Thus, there existed between the English and the Mughals a reciprocal 'balance of terror.'\textsuperscript{75} The second important development was the growth in overseas trade by the Mughal officials. Mughal ruling elite had been carrying on trade since the beginning. Muqarrab Khan, a noble of Jahangir carried on private trade. His commercial links with both Portuguese and English merchants are time and again alluded to in the Factory Records. Middleton also tells us of the commercial transactions which he conducted along with Muqarrab Khan and Khwaja Nizam. This Khwaja Nizam who appears to have been a business partner of Muqarrab Khan was reportedly such an influential merchant that no other merchant dared to trade with the English 'without his prevention and leave'; and he was thus able to dictate terms to the English merchants.\textsuperscript{76} Further, it appears that he owned some ships and carried on private trade.\textsuperscript{77} We are told that among his contemporaries, Muqarrab Khan 'hath more adventures at sea than any of this country.'\textsuperscript{78} And in his commercial transactions, Muqarrab Khan made full use of his

\textsuperscript{75} EFI, 1618-21, pp.138, 237. Also see The Diaries of Streygham Master, 1675-80, ed. R.C.Temple, London, 1911, vol.ii, p.35.\textsuperscript{76} Purchas His Pilgrims vol.iii, pp. 180-1; vol.iv, pp. 219-20.\textsuperscript{77} Purchas His Pilgrims vol.iii, p. 176; vol.iv, pp. 224-5; EFI, 1618-21, p. 19.\textsuperscript{78} Letters Received, vol.i, p. 307; Purchas His Pilgrims III, p. 2.)
position; we find him forcing the English to sell their goods at lower prices.\(^{79}\) Nurjahan and her brother Asaf Khan in particular, depended on Roe. She, in turn, became Roe’s solicitor and Asaf Khan his ‘broker.’\(^{80}\)

During the second half of the seventeenth century, a large number of Mughal officials were participating in overseas trade. Mughal officials such as Shaista Khan and Mir Jumla had important trading interests in West Asia and South-East Asia. Referring to Mir Jumla, Walter Littleton and Venkata Brahman reported to the Company in 1651 that 'Concerning forran negotiation, hee [Mir Jumla] hath trade to Pegue, Tennassaree, Acheen, Rackan (Arakan, Persia, Bengalla, Moka, Peruck, Maldeevaes and Macassar. Hee hath ten vessels of his owne, and intends to augment them, makeing much preparatyon for building of more.'\(^{81}\) Imperial ships were regularly dispatched to the ports of Aden and Mokha by members of the imperial court. Nur Jahan, Jahan Ara and other imperial princesses had ships of their own to participate in overseas trade.\(^{82}\) The result of this was that the interest of the Mughal officials came to be tied up with the interests of the Company. This led to a nebulous and undefined alliance between the two. Though conflicts between the Mughals and English officials were common and frequent, these conflicts did not undermine the larger cooperation among them. This increase in the

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\(^{79}\) See, for example, *Purchas His Pilgrims*, vol.iv , pp. 21, 23, 24; *Letters Received*, vol.ii, p. 138.

\(^{80}\) *Letters Received*, vol.i, p.150.


\(^{82}\) Shireen Moosvi, *Mughal shipping at Surat in the first half of Seventeenth Century*, p.312, Indian History Congress, Calcutta Session, 1990.
participation in overseas trade by the Mughal officials, and the absolute maritime supremacy enjoyed by the English in relation to the Mughals, led to the development of greater cooperation between the English and Mughal officials. This cooperation ultimately led to the development of an alliance between them based on a framework of mutually accepted code of conduct and practices. It was this alliance that considerably facilitated the trading activities of the English in India and contributed in a large measure to their ultimate success and gradual undermining of the interests of the Indian merchants.