CHAPTER VI

THE FINAL PHASE: THE 60'S

A. Further Developments in Style

A quick glance at the works of the sixties reveals that they come from a master who is sure of himself and his aim. The characteristic linear quality of his style is not only maintained but becomes more pronounced since the lines become stronger, fewer and more expressive compared with the fine, delicate ones of the earlier period.

The figures acquire greater simplicity and solidity of form. There are fewer of them in the compositions - one or two suffice to tell a story or convey a message. Little interest is taken in rendering the details of drapery and ornaments. The background disappears completely in most of the paintings of this period, with the figures filling up the picture area. All attention and importance is given to the figure. An interesting feature noticeable in some of the figures of this phase of Fonseca's art is the elongated face and neck, even distorted at times. This made its first appearance in a painting of the Head,- 1947. In a few rare instances it re-appeared in the late fifties. The colours, alongside with his general sober hues, gain

1. In the home of Ivy Fonseca, Pune, Fig.152.
a few thin flowing lines in white bring into relief the features, expressive of the wisdom and strength of Jesus who asked His disciples to follow Him since He is the way, the Truth and the Life. Fonseca might have had in mind that in following this changeless, faithful and most trustworthy friend, Jesus, one would find true peace and happiness in God who is the source of all peace and the fountain of joy.

A look of tenderness and compassion shines through the divine face of Christ in the painting entitled Jesus - 1961 (Fig.103). The highlight on the tip of the nose and the left side adds to the touch of gentleness and gives a certain liveliness to the facial expression. The background is dotted with symbols - the fish and the monogram both of which stand for Christ. The textured garment provides a pleasant contrast to the soft lines of the hair and the plain mass of the beard. The kind, benevolent expression of Jesus is an invitation to place one's trust and hope in His steadfast love.

Set against a deep purple background and red halo is The Master - 1967 (Fig.104), placed off centre and

5. In the collection of Ivy Fonseca, Pune.
6. The Greek word for fish IXTUS is an acrostic formed from the titles of Christ - Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. The monogram is made by the first two letters of the name Christ in Greek - Χ (chi) and Π (rho) - ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ.
7. This painting is in the Institute for the Study of Religion, Pune.
clad in a simple yellow kurta. The majestic, noble bearing of Christ, bordering on the mystic realm, is most appropriate to the title - The Master, the Lord and King of all creation. Though a bit too stern, the manly figure is depicted with power and authority calling to mind the words of Jesus, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."³

This is one of his last paintings, a masterpiece of his final phase. He used deep colours for this painting, a rarity with Fonseca.

An interesting detail observed in these pictures of Christ as well as in other figures, is the diversity of the shapes and treatment of the beards. They are shown long and pointed, or in a plain round or squarish mass, unruly and curly, or trimmed and straight, falling in strands or in locks, and ending in a half ellipse, or conical shape or parted like flag ends. The hair too is treated in locks or in a mass. The variety in the hair styles of the ladies forms a study in itself.

In all these paintings, the figure of Christ is manly, upright and forceful, drawn with the bold, vigorous lines characteristic of the last phase of Fonseca's development. A sense of power and authority, mingled with peace.

and tranquility, radiates from these faces of Jesus, since the artist was more concerned with the expression of deeper realities and emotions than with mere external appearance. His rich imagination and glowing religious fervour were a help in realizing his mission. These noble figures display a certain static quality, intended to evoke the transcendent nature of the paintings and to create a reflective mood in the spectator.

Another quality present in these faces of Christ is a certain seriousness, a serene gravity, a trait of Fonseca's art in general and to some extent, a feature of Indian art. In this way, too, he made his figures Indian, vibrant with his own profound interior life. These works reflect his honesty and sincerity of purpose, in which he is comparable to Fra Angelico.

There is something inexpressibly transcendent, as if touched by God in the painting of St.Anne - 1961 (Fig.105). The tenderness and compassionate love with which the mother embraces her daughter, the trust and confidence with which the daughter throws herself into the arms of her mother, the strength, comfort and reassurance she finds in the maternal love are indescribable, but brought out graphically through the gestures and expressions of the two figures. The expressive lines reveal the intensity

9. Printed into small holy pictures by Art India, Punc.
of their mutual love.

Solidity and simplicity of form and composition, a marked feature of Fonseca's art, are well brought out in the painting Ishvarava Namah (Praise to you, the Lord) - 1962 (Fig. 106)10. The sharp precise lines impart a feeling of hardness to the picture. The checked pattern of the Madonna's blouse and the treatment of the hair are the only relieving elements in the otherwise plain flat application of the drab colour. The same type of treatment and colours are seen again in He was full of Wisdom - 196211.

Painted in 1967 on hardboard with opaque water-colour, but totally different from the other paintings of the period is the Beginning and the End (Fig. 107)12. He visualises the vision of Christ which St. John had on the island of Patmos where he was exiled for proclaiming God's word. It is almost a literal rendering of the vision as described in the Apocalypse.13

The tall figure of Christ stands in a rigid frontal

10. Printed into greeting cards by Art India, Pune.
11. Printed into small holy pictures by Art India, Pune.
12. In the collection of Ivy Fonseca, Pune.
13. Apocalypse or the Book of Revelation, 1/12-17.
of her sari. The colours, too, are rich and complimentary - the red sari enhances the pleasant green background against which she is placed.

Two other paintings, belonging to the last year of his life, are remarkable for their powerful characterization. These represent St. John the Evangelist - 1967 (Fig.110) and St. John the Baptist - 1967. Both express, in different ways, their steely determination to pursue the path they have chosen. The figures are characterized by vigour, great inner strength and power that urges them on to action. This is more forcefully expressed in John the Evangelist. Fonseca does not adhere strictly to one particular style of painting at a given period, as is evident in the last phase of his art. He changes the mode according to the theme and the meaning he wants to convey and selects what suits best.

C. The Theme of Prayer

Different aspects of prayer - offering oneself, worship, paying homage, surrendering oneself, meditation and contemplation - form the content of a number of paintings by Angelo da Fonseca, though the spirit of prayer is the

17. Ibid.
18. Fonseca's collection, Pune.
quintessence of many of his figures. It finds expression in diverse ways throughout his artistic career.

The earliest painting dealing with this subject is Meditation - 1934\(^1\). In an atmosphere of silence and solitude, the soul of man longs for union with God. The figure looks as though he is trying to empty himself of vain thoughts and desires in order to orient himself towards God. In the Evening prayer of 1935\(^2\), the soul's searching and longing for a touch of God is depicted by a few expressive lines.

The words of Rabindranath Tagore, "Thy infinite gifts come to me only in these very small hands of mine, Ages pass; still thou pourest and still there is room to fill", provided the subject matter for a picture painted in 1944 (Fig.111)\(^3\). The mystery of prayer is symbolised by the seated figure with upraised hands in the attitude of a humble recipient of God's gifts and with glowing eyes gazing into the heavens. There is nothing to distract his attention nor drag his spirit from the contemplation of God. The intensity of his yearning for that unique experience is

19. Artist's Album, no.155.
21. Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali, I,4. The original was painted on the wall of the artist's room in his home in Goa. He repeated it in a watercolour which is in the Institute for the Study of Religion, Pune.
reflected in his radiant face.

The painting is done on a piece of hardboard with the varying values of Indian red demarcating the sky, hills and figure. The hills are indicated by mere outlines. The lines from Tagore are written at the bottom left, while from the corresponding right corner, there arises a small plant with a few flowers, signifying the soul that opens itself to God and His action and the resulting blossoming of oneself in the warmth of God's love.

The same sentiments are carried into the picture called Contemplation - 1957 (Fig.112)\(^22\). The solid immobility of the figure seated erect is expressive of the depth of the meeting with the spirit of God. So totally absorbed is she in the Lord that she is oblivious of the surroundings - the trees, plants and stones and even her own self. Nothing disturbs the peace and joy she experiences in the Divine Presence. From the halo around one may conclude that the figure represents Mary in communion with God.

Other paintings inspired by the theme of prayer are Evening Sacrifice,\(^23\) Bhakti - 1956 (Fig.113)\(^24\) - another instance of complete absorption in God. Reflection or

\(^{22, 23}\) In the collection of P.J. Ubelmesser, S.J.,\n\(^{24}\) Nuremberg.
Meditation? - 1957, 25 Prayer - 1960 (Fig.114) 26 where the aspect of offering and surrendering oneself to God is brought out, Mary at Prayer, Aarati, Evening Prayer, Roadside Worship - 1967, 27 and an Unfinished Painting - one of his last pictures.

A splendid creation, a masterpiece of linear expression, a moment of divine experience rendered permanent, sum up the Evening Prayer - 1961 (Fig.115) 28. A few sweeping lines done with consummate skill define the fragile seated figure with bowed head. The depth of the artist's form language reveals itself in a unique manner in this representation of prayer. There are no distracting elements in the picture, on the contrary, everything contributes to the intimate relationship between the soul and God. Even the colouring evokes a sense of the mysterious and supernatural. The figure is set against a bluish-grey back-ground, herself clad in a tint of the same hue.

An atmosphere of profound silence reigns over the picture, and in this congenial soil for contemplation, her whole being is bathed with the presence of God and radiates peace, freshness and serenity. The figure itself as well as the gently curved line of the wisp of

25: Ibid.

the collection of Ivy Fonseca, Pune.
incense smoke symbolise the prayer that wells up from the heart of man to his God.

The full import of the theme of prayer, the soul-stirring experience of man in his contact with God, is conveyed in Mary in Contemplation - 1960 (Fig.116)²⁹.

It is the very embodiment of the tranquility and serenity that a soul enjoys from total surrender of oneself to God and communion with Him. The mere presence of the picture helps one to turn one's thoughts from mundane concerns to the eternal realities of the world beyond.

Here is the expression of a soul caught up in God and delighting in His presence. Her countenance is aglow with heavenly peace.

Painted in the evening of his life is the Unfinished picture (Fig.117),³⁰ depicting an elegant lady holding up a burning lamp in her hands. It is a very significant and symbolic gesture of the offering of his entire life and work to the service and glory of God.

These paintings based on the various aspects of prayer testify to Fonseca's deep life of prayer, and the importance he attached to prayer, without which life would be empty and meaningless. These pictures convey

²⁹. In the possession of P.J. Ubelmesser, S.J., Nuremberg.
³⁰. In the collection of Ivy Fonseca, Pune.
the tremendous impact of his quest after things spiritual and of eternal value. They are the outpourings of men's longing for a touch of the Divine, and possibly, too, his attempts at translating his own experience through line and colour.

D. Explorations and Experiments in other Materials and Techniques

Though the greater part of Fonseca's artistic activity was centred round painting in different techniques, he experimented with other materials as well. In his search for new ways and means of giving shape to his creative energy, he was ever alert and ready to explore possibilities in new materials. Some of the materials and techniques he experimented with are carvings on wood, tile, slate, soft stone, painting on cloth, designs for stained glass, wrought iron, statues and sacred vessels for liturgical use like chalices, ciboria and monstrances. These ventures demonstrate his enterprising, energetic and ingenious mind and his facility in handling various media.

There are a few superb examples of carvings on wood in the possession of Ivy Fonseca. Though he did not devote much time to it the extant examples exhibit a masterly touch in their execution.
A work done as early as 1933 is almost like a coloured line drawing on wood. It shows an Indian religious. In the fifties and sixties he made a few more attempts in this field. The Pieta of 1957 (Fig. 118) is a good, finished product. The outlines of the figures and their features are indicated by thin, sharp lines. The textures compensate for this hardness of line. Thick and thin, broad and narrow marks seemingly left by the tools create a pleasant variety of textures in the background, the faces of Christ and Mary, and their garments. Though worked out in a different material, the expression of sorrow and resignation are well brought out as in his paintings of the Pieta.

A tondo (round) representing the Madonna (25cm in diameter) is another fine example of wood carving. One of his last works of 1967 in wood is the unfinished Holy Family (Fig. 119). The composition is formed by a closely knit group of the Mother carrying the Infant in her arms, with St. Joseph standing behind

31. In the collection of Ivy Fonseca, Pune.
32, 33 & 34. Ibid.
her holding a staff signifying protection and security. Only the background is partially worked out in detail while the rest of the picture is formed by the incised lines. The star stands out against the closely dotted textured background at the right. The unworked details are more expressive than the finished details of the earlier Pieta.

In 1957 Fonseca tried another hard and brittle medium, tile. The head of Christ entitled Christus - 1957 (Fig:120) is a refined work. The head of Christ wearing the crown of thorns stands out in relief against a textured background. The features and details are smoothly worked out. This, again, is a tondo.

From broken pieces of slate, Fonseca produced works of art like the Mother and Child - 1951 and the Head of Christ. The group of the mother and child in the former stands out in silhouette against a lightly chiselled off background. A Bas-relief in Soft Stone is an attempt with a still harder material. In fact, any material close at hand seemed good enough for his artistic expression.

35 & 36. Ibid.
37. In the possession of Pierre Jacob, S.J., Calcutta.
38. Artist's Album , no. 121.
In his younger days Fonseca wanted to go to Italy to study and perfect his techniques in oil painting and making stained-glass. This he realized in 1948 during his tour of Europe with his exhibition. At an exhibition of Fonseca's paintings in Glasgow, Douglas Hamilton, a Scottish artist in stained-glass, suggested that many of his pictures could be adapted to the stained-glass medium. Consequently he went to his studio and learnt the process and executed two small specimens — Our Lady of Light and the Annunciation - 1948 (Fig.121). Thereafter he made designs for the same, as for instance At the Foot of the Cross (Fig.122), Magdalen, and the designs for the stained-glass windows of the Seminary chapel at Pilar, Goa.

On the back wall of the chapel behind the altar are three stained-glass windows, two of which were designed by Angelo da Fonseca and made by ENTW.U.Ausfuhrung, P. Winnen, Cologne, Germany. He designed the two side windows, leaving the middle one to be made in the European style to signify that Goa is a blending of the East and the West. But in the finished work, the central window looks more or less similar to the side ones. The drawings were supplied by Fonseca in 1954-55 and the work was completed.

39. Evening Mail, Dublin, Friday July 9, 1948. These are in the possession of Ivy Fonseca, Pune.
40, & 41. In the collection of Ivy Fonseca, Pune.
in 1960, and finally mounted and set up in 1962. The middle window has for its theme, Our Lady of Pillar holding the Christ Child and standing on a pillar with angels having Indian features and costumes, kneeling at the foot of the pillar. The side windows represent St. Thomas and St. Francis Xavier at the left and right respectively. These compositions on the whole are more harmonious than the earlier attempts.

Besides stained-glass, Fonseca also composed designs for wrought-iron work and statues. St. Joseph the Worker was made for St. Joseph's Technical Institute, Pune. He designed the altar railings in the novitiate chapel of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, Pune (Fig. 123), and those in the church of St. Theresa, Harigaon, Ahmednagar district.

On the side altar, in the church of Christ the King, Ghodegaon, Ahmednagar district, stands a small wooden statue of Our Lady (about 82.5 cm high) designed by Fonseca. She stands on a Lotus pedestal holding out Christ Jesus, as if presenting Him to the world. A small halo is placed around the head of each, with a large one behind the statue, with the symbol of the Holy Spirit carved at the crest. He also made sketches for a

42. Now they are removed from the chapel, but a part of it is used for a small movable altar.
few statues for Fr. Herns which were cast in copper under
his direction. One of these is the fine statue of Our Lady
of the Holy Rosary. The ivory triptych representing
Mary as Queen of India flanked by St. Thomas and St. Francis
Xavier was made after his design too. These were made
for the Holy Year Exhibition held in Rome in 1950. 43 Many
more compositions for statues and wrought-iron may have
originated from his competent hands but remain undiscovered.

The many-sided interests of Fonseca enabled him to
render his service to anyone who consulted his opinion with
regard to the planning and erection of an altar and a
tabernacle, or to fashioning church vessels and vestments.
In this connection he designed a few patterns for chalices,
ciboria, monstrances and tabernacles. The pastel sketches
for a ciborium and a chalice (Figs. 124 and 125) 44 are
quite original in shape, and of elegant and harmonious
proportions.

No matter what medium or technique he employed, what-
ever came out of his creative mind and adroit hands, is
imbued with his own spirit of faith. His creations are,
in the words of Sepp Schuller, Conservator of the
Missionary Museum, Aachen, "the direct stream of genuine
inspiration which draws its strength from the profound

44. In the collection of Ivy Fonseca, Pune.
religious contact, free and ever fresh, with the best scenes of Indian life in our own days."\(^{45}\)

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