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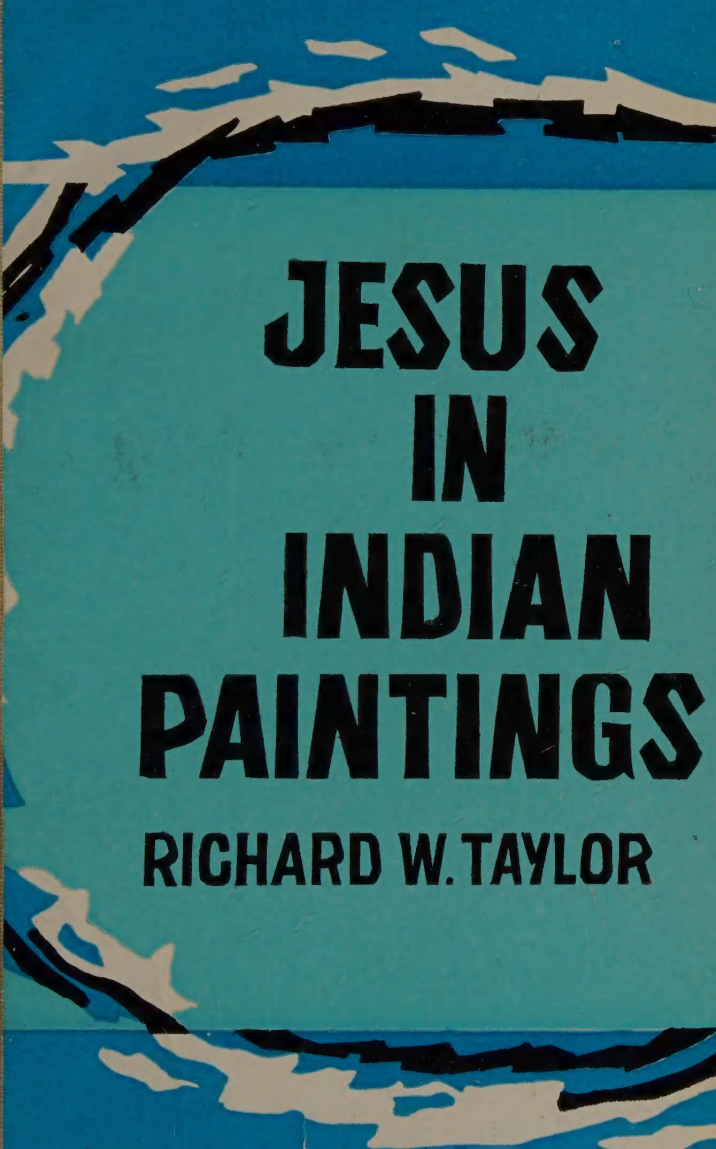


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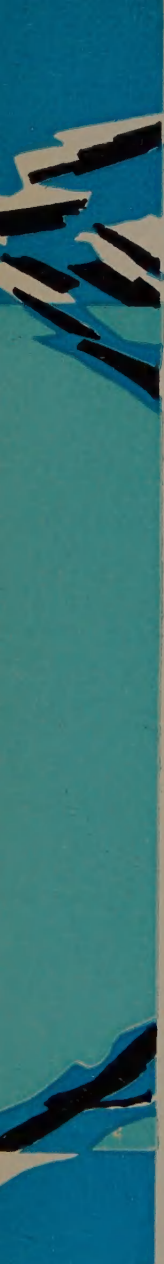
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CONFESSING THE FAITH IN INDIA::No. 11

A stylized globe is depicted in the background, rendered in shades of blue and white. The globe is centered behind the title text. The title is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with the words stacked vertically. The author's name is written in a smaller, bold, black, sans-serif font below the title. The overall design is minimalist and modern.

**JESUS  
IN  
INDIAN  
PAINTINGS**

**RICHARD W. TAYLOR**



**Rs. 12.50**

*This price applies to India only*

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Abraham Joseph*











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CONFESSING THE FAITH IN INDIA SERIES NO. 11

*JESUS IN INDIAN  
PAINTINGS*

RICHARD W. TAYLOR

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To  
MARY LYON



## PREFACE

In keeping with the basic rationale of the CISRS in its search for an Indian Christian Theology the *Confessing the Faith Series* has progressed through the publication of monographs on the theology of outstanding Indian Christians like Goreh, Chenchiah and Chakkarai and missionaries like Stanley Jones and C. F. Andrews.

*Jesus in Indian Paintings* by Richard W. Taylor has, in his own words, two basic concerns; one, for an essentially Indian understanding of Jesus Christ and two, for art as an important expression of understanding. In fact, artistic forms are more important than verbal forms for expressing the spiritual response of human persons to Jesus Christ.

Taylor's is a very original attempt to interpret the Indian understanding of Jesus which comes through a comprehension of the Jesus-image in Indian art-forms as a living theology. This sensitivity of the author comes through his long association with the Indian cultural scene and his keen and sympathetic understanding of it.

Bangalore,  
10th November, 1975

JEAN PARANJOTI-AUGUSTINE  
M. M. THOMAS  
General Editors



## FOREWORD

This is not an essay on Christian Painting in India—although one chapter is about such painting. Rather it is an introductory attempt to deal with some of the very wide variety of pictures of Jesus that have been painted in India since the closing decades of the sixteenth century and to get at the painters' (or their patrons') understanding of Jesus. On the whole, the Mogul paintings and the secular paintings since the rise of the Bengal School, and the ideas behind these paintings, excite me rather more than do the paintings by Christians.

I did not seek the task of writing this book. But when the outline for this series was first made I did insist that such a book be included—foolishly, I guess. A decade later I was instructed to undertake it.

My first venture into print on this subject was an article in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XVII, No. 3 (Sept., 1970).\* I have used most of that material here again. In that article and its notes I made sharp remarks against some historians and patrons of Indian Christian painting. If I have not repeated all of these remarks here it is by no means because I recant any of them.

I have published nothing that has not been substantially influenced by my gurus James Luther Adams and M. M. Thomas. This is pre-eminently so of this work. My belief that art is important for understanding at many levels was formed by Mr. Adams. My concern for Indian understandings of Jesus Christ was formed by M. M. Thomas.

\* Hereafter cited as Taylor (1970).

Much of the library research for this work and a considerable part of the drafting of it was done while I was a Fellow of the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research at Saint John's Abbey and University. I am most grateful for the help and support of the founding director, the librarians and the other Fellows there. I am also grateful for the extensive help of the librarians of the United Theological College, Bangalore.

One of the most humanly satisfying experiences of this project was the warmth with which I was welcomed by leading scholars of Mogul painting. Robert W. Skelton eagerly shared with me more important unpublished material than I ever expected from any stranger. Ashok Kumar Das was equally helpful. So was Emma Devapriam.

Specific acknowledgements are made in the text and the notes. I am exceedingly grateful to Josef James, Jaya Appasamy, and I. Job Thomas each of whom aided and guided me repeatedly and at many different points. The encouragement of Sylvia Smyth was once crucial.

*Christian Art in Asia* by Masao Takenaka promises excellent reproductions although the colours of those in the announcement of it are far too intense.

Loved ones and colleagues have supported me at every turn.

*Bangalore,*  
15th October, 1975

RICHARD W. TAYLOR



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Where the provenance is not noted it is the  
 collection of Mary Lyon and R. W. Taylor.

## I. INTRODUCTION

All of the volumes in this 'Confessing the Faith in India Series' have dealt to a large extent with Indian responses to Jesus. This one deals with painted responses. Most previous volumes have treated images of Christ that have been written or spoken about. Here I treat images that have been painted—probably painting is the ideal medium of images. It is finally becoming a theological commonplace that one's point-of-view, including one's cultural setting, importantly influences one's view of Jesus—one's image of Christ. I thank God for the richness of this pluralism and attempt to say more about it later in this introduction and again later in the book.

In each major period or sphere of the painting of Jesus in India I am inclined to see initially a response to images—painted and otherwise—received from abroad, usually from the West. I guess that this is true of most Indian theological responses. But I must confess that I am surprised that in earlier times the ancient churches of Kerala received little in the way of painting—and responded not at all—and that even in modern times little painting has come from those great churches as they lived through the times of such marvelous Keralite painters as Ravi Varma, who dealt with many Hindu themes, and K. C. S. Paniker, who has painted Christ with great sensitivity. I can only guess that they were so culturally secure, or perhaps so culturally static, that they were stimulated to no fresh images of Our Lord.

The Mogul courts of Akbar and Jahangir gave rise to one of the really great schools of painting in the history of the world. I feel that it was thoroughly Indian. Because of the interest of its chief patrons, the two emperors, who called for instruction in Christ's teaching and for more and more imported pictures of His life, this school produced hundreds of pictures

of Him. Many were copies of imports. Others were adaptations. Some were rather original, such as the holy family at a Saivite shrine. There is an extremely interesting series of Mogul paintings of the Life of Christ which I believe was painted from the story of a gospel written in Persian before any paintings of Him had been imported. Chapter II is on this school.

The Bengal renaissance involved a mighty ferment of ideas and no small part of these were ideas about Jesus. It also led to the Bengal School of painting which was quite interested in Jesus too and which was a chief root of modern Indian painting—which is the subject of Chapter III, in which no painters known to be Christians are treated. Because of the nature of the renaissance and its acknowledgement of Jesus and because of Gandhi, and perhaps because of an absence of acceptable or relevant indigenous motifs, for several decades Christ became an important motif for a good number of major modern painters in India. It is a great pity that these were not then taken very seriously by the churches; just as the churches had not taken with timely and open seriousness the remarkable ideas about Jesus put forward by some of the great renaissance intellectuals—being, I suppose, too bound by the chains of imported orthodoxy (chains mistakenly reinforced, I feel, by the missionaries and their helpers).

Chapter IV treats painting by Christians. Much of this is instrumental—it is designed to be evangelistic or instructional or both. Most of that which is thus instrumental is under the patronage of missionaries or missionary organizations. These patrons delight in calling it Indian Christian Art. Some of us counter by asserting that it is neither Indian nor Christian nor Art. Probably the truth is somewhere between these extremes. I deeply regret that there is so little contact between Christian painting and the main-streams of Mogul and modern painting.

Some Christian painters have recently tried to appropriate various Hindu symbols and motifs in their paintings of Jesus. I call this sanskritization. It is very interesting and I find it most creative and exciting. It has led to considerable theological debate—much of it a reprise of earlier controversies on adaptationism. In the mainstream of modern painting, painters of Jesus have not gone in for this kind of sanskritization. I speculate that this may be because they are quite sure of their Indian roots while Christian painters may be less sure of theirs.

The National Christian Council of India began to encourage Christian painting in the 1930's and started annual competitions as a way of doing this.<sup>1</sup> Alfred D. Thomas the first leading Protestant painter was recognized, but criticised, by the National Christian Council for his early painting, 'Christ of the Indian Road'<sup>2</sup> which had clearly been strongly influenced by the description in the book of the same name by E. Stanley Jones.<sup>3</sup> On the Catholic side at about the same time Angelo da Fonseca started a most productive lifetime of Christian painting with the encouragement of P. H. Heras, s.j., who became the guru of so many who took indianizing the church seriously.

Catholics were greatly supported in their interest in Indian Christian painting by Celso Costantini the founder of the journal *Arte cristiana* who became the first apostolic delegate to China in 1922 whence, after about a decade, he joined the Roman Curia and lent his increasingly great prestige to the cause of indigenous art for religious use in mission countries. In 1940 he published a book on the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Guardian*, 30 Sept. 1937, p. 619 ; 15th April, 1937, p.237.

<sup>2</sup> *The National Christian Council Review*, Vol. LI, No. 3 (March, 1931), pp. 115 f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Richard W. Taylor, *The Contribution of E. Stanley Jones*, Madras : CLS for CISRS, 1973, pp. 8 f.

art of what were later to be called the younger churches, which included reproductions of paintings by Angelo da Fonseca and A. D. Thomas.<sup>4</sup> He followed this with a magisterial theological treatment of art.<sup>5</sup> Finally, Cardinal Costantini's was the moving spirit of the Vatican exhibition of third-world Christian art in 1950. A somewhat similar figure on the Protestant side was Daniel J. Fleming who spoke with the prestige of the Professor of Missions of the renowned Union Theological Seminary in New York City, having earlier been a Presbyterian missionary at Forman Christian College in Lahore. Two of his three or more books on world Christian art include Indian paintings by Thomas and others.<sup>6</sup>

Other scholars of world Christian painting who treat India include Prof. Arno Lehmann, a former Leipzig missionary in South India, whose two volumes<sup>7</sup> include many reproductions, some of which are misleading,<sup>8</sup> and John F. Butler, formerly with the Methodist Missionary Society in South India.<sup>9</sup> Presently the primary promotor and publisher of Indian Christian painting is M. R. Lederle, s.j.<sup>10</sup> Fr. Lederle's taste is wide and right. His reproductions are excellent. The encouragement he offers is great and crucial. I think that he knows more than anyone else about Indian

<sup>4</sup> Celso Costantini, *L'Arte cristiana nelle Missioni*, Vatican: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1940. There is a French translation.

<sup>5</sup> Celso and Giovanni Costantini, *Fede ed Arte* (3 vols.) Rome: Tumminelli, 1945.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Johnson Fleming, *Each With His Own Brush*, New York: Friendship Press, 1938; and *Christian Symbols in a World Community*, New York: Friendship Press, 1940.

<sup>7</sup> Arno Lehmann, *Die Kunst der Jungen Kirchen*, Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1955; and *Christian Art in Africa and Asia*, Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969, translated from a German edition.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Taylor (1970), footnotes 66, 76, 79, pp. 92-94.

<sup>9</sup> John F. Butler, 'The Nature, Influence and Use of Christian Art in India' in *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. VIII, No.1 (June, 1974). Most of Butler's earlier work is identified in this article.

<sup>10</sup> M. R. Lederle, s.j., *Art India*, De Nobili College, Pune 14.



Christian painting. Fr. Lederle is the more remarkable when seen against the background of other missionaries who have really intended to encourage Indian Christian painting but who have actually stunted it because of a lack of catholicity in taste and theology—and entrapment in their own missionary power.

The most common Christian pictures in India are those found in almost every bazaar picture-stall along with pictures of Hindu gods, movie stars and political leaders and rather like these in style. They are gaudy—but not unpleasant. Indeed they have a certain charm. I consider them in Chapter V. Christ and his sacred heart seems most popular. Christ bleeding from the cross is very common. I know of one that includes Christ, Buddha and Gandhi.<sup>11</sup> Such paintings are found as objects of devotion in most Christian homes in India and in many non-Christian homes. They reach almost infinitely more people in India than does any other Christ-themed art. And I am inclined to guess that they are used for devotional purposes by many many more people in India than is any other Christian art. So they must be taken seriously even when the Babe is a blue-eyed blonde, as He often is, and even when they are treated as almost magical—as they very often are.

#### CULTURE AND CHRIST'S IMAGE

It might be argued that Jesus was so common of face that Judas had to kiss Him in order to identify Him and so common that He was not recognized on the road to Emmaus. Be that as it may, it does seem clear that the figure of Christ has adapted itself to all ages, to all cultures.<sup>12</sup> Even all of the

<sup>11</sup> A trio that K. C. S. Paniker (see below—Chapter III) used in a very different way in a fresco in Raj Bhavan, Madras.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Beauty* (tr. David E. Green), New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963, p. 167.

major periods of merely western European history have had their own style of Christian art and painting and the image of Jesus varies vastly between them—due in considerable part to how they understood Him. Recently, in Rome, conservative Roman Catholics have been outraged by a new magazine called *Jesus*, published by a major unofficial Catholic press, because instead of being draped with the traditional seamless robe Jesus was portrayed wearing contemporary and fashionable jacket, shirt and necktie. The publisher said, ‘We wanted to give Christ a current image. . . . to bring Christ to as many homes as possible.’<sup>13</sup>

Such a portrait will seem excessive to many. But I would agree that ‘Certainly it must be admitted that conscientious Christians have somewhat different configurations of the meaning of Christ, are attracted by different “portraits” of Christ. Part of the life of the church is the formation of such a portrait, the judgement of excessively inadequate ones, the enrichment of those that suffer a poverty of appreciation. This task of the church and of the Christian is not without some objectivity, however, since it is done in recognition of the place of Scripture as the document that provides the charter for faith and life.’<sup>14</sup> But with the proviso that the serious portraits of Christ painted (or otherwise proposed) from outside the church must be taken equally seriously by the church. Indeed when I think of how often and how arrogantly very sensitive suggestions from outside have not been taken seriously by the church I wonder if I should not advocate taking outside portraits *more* seriously than those proposed from inside the church.

In paintings of Christ, Indian ‘Christians in the East. . .

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<sup>13</sup> *National Christian Council Review*, Vol. XCIV, No. 12 (December, 1974), pp. 622 f.

<sup>14</sup> James M. Gustafson, *Christ and the Moral Life*, New York : Harper & Row, 1968, p. 269.

are concerned not only with the Western Christ but with one who is distinguished from Western faith in him and who is relevant to life in other cultures<sup>15</sup>—precisely in contemporary Indian culture. This may be true even of *various* Indian cultures—both regional and those which are related to caste and class. This is also being clearly seen by the new Black theologians. One of them recently lectured in Bangalore and spoke of the blackness of Christ and of how,

‘ In the history of Western painting the depiction of Christ evidences his progressive whitenization or bleaching with the object of changing him from a Semitic to an Aryan person. What must have been his dark hair was rendered as light-coloured, his dark eyes as blue. It became a matter of importance that the incarnation of God be as far removed as possible from anything that would suggest darkness or blackness. “ His hair and his beard were given the color of sunshine, the brightness of the light above, while his eyes retained the color of the sky from which he descended and to which he returned ”. The Aryanization of Christ according to color symbolism commenced when white Europeans began to come into close contact with other races. ’<sup>16</sup>

This gives us more reason than ever to seek Indian portraits of Christ. We should also be cautioned that this possibility,

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<sup>15</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, London : Faber and Faber Limited, 1952, p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> Gayraud S. Wilmore, ‘ Black Theology—Its Significance for the Christian Mission Today ’ in *Bangalore Theological Forum*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (1974-1), pp. 41 f. where the internal quotation is cited as Roger Bastide (*sic*) ‘ Color, Racism and Christianity ’ in J.H. Franklin (ed.), *Color and Race*, Boston : Beacon Press 1969, p. 36. Wilmore published an almost identical article in *International Review of Mission*. Vol. LXIII, No 250 (Apr., 1974) in which some of the material above is attributed to Bastide but none of this set apart by quotation marks.

As this book goes to the press I have found the Bastide article and find most of this quotation on pp. 315f.

Wilmore uses ‘ Aryan ’ in a Western sense rather than in an Indian sense.

this necessity, of seeking culturally relative portraits of Christ can be misused—as on some levels it was misused in the West.

### THE PAINTERS

It is only in modern times that the painters of Christ interest me (their patrons were more interesting before that). And bazaar art is largely anonymous. So painters appear mostly in Chapters III and IV. Among these painters there are :

A. Some who paint Christ for evangelical purposes—who have themselves found something very important in Him and His good news and who seek to share it through their painting.

B. Some who paint Christ because of their fascination with some particular Christ-theme or themes—such as those who see His crucifixion as the ultimate in sacrificial service to humanity.

C. Some who paint Christ in order to express some powerful insight of their own into reality—who appropriate Christ to bear their own weighty truth.

D. And some who paint Christ because they have discovered a market where pictures of Him bring reward.

I would not want it thought that any particular painter must fit into only one of these categories. Many would not.

A different set of categories is that of Man and Motif. Some painters are concerned with the whole Man—Jesus Christ—His life, His teaching and usually, but not always, His being Lord and Son of the Father. Other painters dwell mostly on a Jesus Motif, or on several. Common Motifs are suffering service and self-sacrifice. Many painters live and work somewhere between these polar extremes. Man and Motif are closely related to the categories Person and Principle used

by E. Stanley Jones<sup>17</sup> and expanded and enriched by M. M. Thomas<sup>18</sup> to discuss and evaluate Indian ideas about Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup>

### THEIR PAINTINGS

Many of those in India who paint Jesus make some deliberate effort to make their painting of Him 'Indian' in one or more of the following ways :

A. Contextually : By pictorially showing His features, His dress or His surroundings—or all of these—as clearly Indian.<sup>20</sup>

B. Stylistically : By painting in some traditional Indian art style such as miniature, cave (Ajanta and Bagh), temple sculpture-like, or folk ; or by painting in some oriental style as the Bengal School and others did when seeking non-European roots for themselves as Indian painters.

C. Canonically : By conforming to traditional, and often very complex, rules or conventions of layout, relationship and the symbolic meaning of gestures, colours and things.

D. Mythically : By adopting Him into some aspect of an Indian religious or folk tale or understanding, or by adapting some event of His ministry into a more Indian setting.

<sup>17</sup> In E. Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi : an Interpretation*, Lucknow : Lucknow Publishing House, (1948) 1963, pp. 75 f., 99 f.

<sup>18</sup> In M.M. Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization*, Bangalore : CISRS, 1971, pp. 31 ff. Cf. also 'Baptism, The Church, and *Koinonia*' in *Religion and Society*, Vol.XIX, No. 1 (March, 1972), pp. 69. ff.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Taylor, *The Contribution of E. Stanley Jones*, *op. cit.*, pp. 30 ff.

<sup>20</sup> Frank Wesley so well mastered this kind of 'Indian Christian Art', which he now views as an inappropriate mixture and calls 'soup and curry', that he was able to produce a major work of 'Sarawak Christian Art' while never having been nearer to Sarawak than a missionary's slide projector. Cover illustration by Frank Wesley, *The Methodist Woman*, March 1963, and the article about it on page 4 (284); also used as cover illustration of *World Christian Education*, Vol. XVIII, No.2 (Second Quarter, 1963).

There are an increasing number of modern artists who do not seem to make this special effort to paint 'Indian'. But painting is a 'cut-flower' art in India. There is no substantial continuous tradition of painting. So, almost all painters from the turn of this century until recently have sought 'Indian' roots by copying earlier Indian styles or by looking to the Orient rather than to the west for bases for development. And this fits in with the present widespread concern among intellectuals for developing Indian 'models' for thought, discussion and analysis in many different fields.

New Testament scholars speak of 'controlling images' of Jesus in the New Testament. Some controlling images, not all wholly biblical, that are found in, or behind, some Indian paintings of Jesus are these :

A. Christ as Ideal Man : Sometimes this seems related to a neo-Hindu understanding of Christ as Lord or as Avatar or as Bhagawan.<sup>21</sup> Mathew P. John has suggested to me that there may be a category of 'Ideal Man' in the *Bhagavad Gita* ; if there is it may reinforce this image. Some modern Malayalam secular writers write of Christ as the ideal human incarnation.<sup>22</sup> So do some other modern writers. This controlling image is also sometimes related to the theological seeing of Christ as the New Man.<sup>23</sup>

B. Christ who suffers : Many stress suffering service. Sometimes this is related to vicarious suffering. Gandhiji's suffering is sometimes included in this type. Often the cross is also stressed.

C. Christ as Good Shepherd : This is a Christian motif which is sometimes also used to show Buddha as a shepherd.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Richard W. Taylor, 'On Acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus Christ Without Shifting Tents' in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (March 1972), esp. pp. 61 ff.

<sup>22</sup> I am grateful to M.M.Thomas for this information.

<sup>23</sup> A term first found in Ignatius, I am told by D. Ritschl.

At St. Mark's Cathedral, Bangalore, on the second Sunday after Easter, when the Church of South India theme is 'The Good Shepherd,' the Rt. Revd. Ernest John once suggested that every (Christian) home should contain a picture of Jesus the beautiful Good Shepherd carrying the poor lamb—to remind us of who and what Christ is. The bishop suggested that this would be better than other pictures of Christ we have.

D. Christ as religious teacher : This includes both His role as a teacher and His style as a religious. Some include here His role as the founder of a major religion.

There are many other scenes and events from His conception, birth, life and resurrection that are repeatedly painted.

## II. THE MOGUL INTEREST IN JESUS

The name of Jesus appears prominently on two of the most important buildings of Akbar's city of Fatehpur Sikri. They would not have been put there without his approval. I am inclined to think they would have been chosen by him. They certainly show the seriousness with which Akbar took Jesus. One of these inscriptions is in the central bay of the Jami Masjid. It reads, in part,

‘ Said Jesus Christ, Blessings upon him, the world is a lofty mansion, so take warning and do not build on it. It is stated in history that he who is inclined to be pleased to-morrow, enjoys happiness eternally. It is also said that the world is but for a moment, so spend it in worship, the remainder of life is worthless. He who performs *niamz* but not with heart does not gain any advantage therefrom, besides being kept far from God. The best property is that which is spent in the way of God. To part with the world in lieu of the future existence is profitable. A life of poverty with resignation and content is like a country for which there is no responsibility.’<sup>1</sup>

I do not have the original of this inscription but if it really reads Jesus Christ rather than Lord Jesus this would be further testimony to the high place Akbar gave Jesus. It is recorded that Akbar did use ‘ Christ ’ in places like the phrase ‘ Oh Thou whose names are Jesus and Christ ’ (*ai nam i tu Jesus o Kiristo*).<sup>2</sup> Akbar's son, Jahangir, once rebuked a

<sup>1</sup> Edmund W. Smith, *The Moghul Architecture at Fatehpur Sikri* (4 Vols.), Allahabad : Government Press (Archaeological Survey of India), 1894-98, Vol. 4, p.15.

<sup>2</sup> R. Krishnamurty, *Akbar, The Religious Aspect*, Baroda : University of Baroda Press, 1961, p.48, citing Badaoni (Lowe), p. 314, which is Abd al-Qadir Badaoni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* (trs. Ranking, Lowe and Haig) (3 vols.), Calcutta : 1844-1925, Vol. II, p. 314.



noble for referring to Christ as *Isa* (Jesus) rather than as *Hazrat Isa* (the Lord Jesus).<sup>3</sup>

The other inscription is boldly placed on the great gateway of victory, the *Buland Darwaza*, the grandest gateway in all India and one of the biggest in the world. It reads, again in part :

‘ So, said Jesus, on whom be peace ! the world is a bridge ; pass over it, but build no house on it. He who reflected on the distresses of the Day of Judgement gained pleasure ever-lasting.

‘ Worldly pleasures are but momentary ; spend then thy life in devotion and remember that what remains of it is valueless.’<sup>4</sup>

It is thought by a leading art historian to express ‘ this royal builder’s ultimate belief.’<sup>5</sup> This saying has early Muslim sources—called *agrapha*—going back at least to the seventh century.<sup>6</sup> This same *agraphon* occurs on a royal tomb at Burhanpur in Khandesh but without the usual attribution to Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Akbar

Akbar reigned from 1556 until his death in 1605. In those fifty years he fostered a new, synthetic civilization.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*, London : Burns, Oates and Washborne, 1932, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> S.K. Banerji, ‘ Buland Darwaza of Fatehpur Sikri’ In *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XIII, pp. 706 f.

<sup>5</sup> Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (The Islamic Period)*, Bombay : Taraporevala’s, (1942) n.d., p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> Joachin Jeremias, ‘ The Saying of Jesus About the Bridge’ in *The Expository Times*, Vol. LXIX, No.1 (October 1957), pp. 7 ff. Cf. E.J. Jenkison, ‘ Jesus in Moslem Tradition’ in *The Moslem World*, Vol. XVIII (1928), pp. 263ff. Cf. also James Robson, *Christian Islam*, London: John Murray, 1929, pp. 68, 71. I am grateful to David T. Lindell for guiding me to these materials.

<sup>7</sup> H.G. Rawlinson, *India, A short Cultural History*, London : The Cresset Press (1937) 1954, p. 305.

He was illiterate but possessed a very keen mind which sought new information and ideas. He seems to have been religious by nature. He had had some kind of a very moving mystical experience as a boy of fourteen in the Punjab.<sup>8</sup> He had another while hunting in May 1578 which his official biographer describes in glowing terms: 'As attainment follows upon search, the lamp of vision became brilliant. A sublime joy took possession of his bodily frame. The attraction (*jazaba*) of cognition of God cast its ray'.<sup>9</sup> Upon this sudden change Akbar ordered every bird and beast, many thousands of which had been gathered from miles around, to be released and the hunt to be abandoned in thanksgiving for this great boon of having gained his desire in the spiritual kingdom. The description of Akbar's state continues, 'As his pure heart is free of sensual pleasures, and he ever desires asceticism, the thought of this boiled over in his soul and the desire for oneness prevailed.'<sup>10</sup> This reminds the translator of the biography of the foundational mystical experience of St. Augustine—who was about the same age as Akbar at the time of these experiences.<sup>11</sup>

As a young ruler Akbar had been a very observant Muslim—and he may well have thought of himself as such until his death.<sup>12</sup> But as time passed he certainly understood what this might mean quite differently. He had made annual pilgrimages to Ajmer. But eventually he sent his son Daniel, explaining that there are two kinds of religious worship,

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>9</sup> H. Beveridge (tr.), *The Akbar Nama of Abu-l-Fazl* (3 vols.), Delhi: Rare Books, 1973, Vol. III, p. 346. Cf. also the Introduction, *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. xvii.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xvii f.

<sup>12</sup> Cf., Sri Ram Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, (1940) 1962, pp.39 ff. Cf., also Krishna-murti, *op. cit.*, pp. 57 ff. for a summary of the belief that Akbar did *not* die a Muslim.

ceremonial and spiritual, and that henceforth he would follow the latter more.<sup>13</sup> Religious toleration had become a crucial cornerstone of Akbar's empire. Many of his nobles were Hindu, and they were permitted to continue in their Hinduism—as were his Hindu wife and his sons' Hindu wives. So his grandson the emperor Shah Jahan had a Hindu mother and two Hindu grandmothers—something unheard of in a Muslim ruling family. As Akbar journeyed through his country on the business of empire he stopped off to visit holy teachers at Hindu holy places.<sup>14</sup> On one such visit to the Hindu holy place of Nagarkot, to his delight the local Hindu goddess appeared to him in a vision while he slept.<sup>15</sup> He also abstained from eating meat on Fridays<sup>16</sup> and suggested an elaborate scheme for other spiritual practices.<sup>17</sup>

In 1575 Akbar inaugurated weekly religious discussions on Thursday nights (after eve-of-Friday services in the mosque) at Fatehpur Sikri and constructed a special building, the Ibadat-Khana or chamber of worship, in which to hold them. Here Akbar and some of his nobles would occupy one side, ascetic holy men (usually Sufis) another side, eminent descendants of the Prophet a third side, and doctors learned in the law the fourth.<sup>18</sup> The object was that 'all orders and sects of mankind—those who searched after spiritual and physical truth, and those of the common public who sought for an awakening, and the inquirers of every sect—should assemble in the precincts of the holy edifice, and bring forward their spiritual experiences, and their degrees of knowl-

<sup>13</sup> Beveridge (tr.) *Akbar Nama*, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 462 ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 513 ff.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 510 f. Or perhaps it was the goddess at Desuha (Dasuya) which he visited after Nagarkot.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 488 ff.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158 ff. *Cf.* also Badaoni (Lowe), *op. cit.*, II, pp. 203 ff.

edge of the truth in various and contradictory forms.’<sup>19</sup> ‘There was a feast of theology and worship.’<sup>20</sup> Akbar, becoming increasingly rationalistic in his approach to religion, was to pursue this dialogic method, which he devised, for many years and in different settings. At first only Muslims, of various sects, were engaged. Later, by 1578, there were Hindus, Parsis, Christian, Jains and others.<sup>21</sup>

In these religious dialogues Akbar found that the leaders of the various Muslim sects could not agree with each other on many questions of what was true and lawful. Frequently they resorted to name calling against each other. Probably in response to this Akbar started to take a much bigger role in strictly religious affairs. He preached some short sermons with authority. In the autumn of 1579 he caused the so-called Infallibility Decree to be signed and promulgated. This decree was signed by the leading religious authorities of the realm—some of whom seem to have signed under duress. This decree called Akbar the Sultan of Islam and the Refuge of mankind, etc., and recognized him as the final authority in matters of faith and law when there was disagreement among the existing religious leaders; it also recognized his authority to issue new orders provided they were not contrary to the Koran and were for the good of the people. So, in general, he was, in his wisdom, to select between conflicting views, but he was permitted to put forward new views within clear but flexible guidelines—guidelines which gave a loop-hole for the opposition.<sup>22</sup>

Some years later, the dates are in dispute, Akbar may have tried to outline a Divine Faith (*Din-i-Illahi*) or Divine Monotheism (*Tauhid-i-Illahi*). Probably this was an ongoing effort

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<sup>19</sup> Beveridge (tr.), *Akbar Nama*, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 158.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 393 ff. Cf. also Badaoni (Lowe), *op. cit.*, II, pp. 270 ff.

at clarification. Certainly those orthodox who opposed him were made uncomfortable by what was going on.<sup>23</sup> But the whole matter seems to have been blown up out of proportion by some historians.<sup>24</sup> He did find a kind of order among his most loyal followers who got some kind of token and his picture upon initiation. The follower was also advised that :

‘ He must not confuse or darken his years with sectarian quarrels, but must follow the rule of universal peace with regard to religions ; he must not kill any living creature with his own hand, and must not flay anything. The only exceptions are in battle and the chase.

“ Be not the practiser of making lifeless any living thing. Save in the battlefield or in the time of hunting.”

‘ Honour the luminaries (the Sun, Moon, etc.), which are manifesters of God’s light, according to the degree of each, and recognize the power and existence of Almighty God at all times and seasons. Be careful indeed that whether in private or in public you never for a moment forget Him.

“Lame or low or crooked or unrefined,  
Be amorous of Him and seek after Him ”.<sup>25</sup>

Akbar would have known of Jesus from the Koran and from the many sayings attributed to Jesus in Islamic tradition. But he had met no European Christians until 1572. After that he seems to have questioned all of the Christians he met about Christianity.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Badaoni (Lowe), *ibid.*, II, pp. 287, 313.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 42.; and Krishnamurti, *op. cit.*, pp. 101, 146 f.

<sup>25</sup> *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir* (2 vols.) (tr. Alexander Rogers, ed. H. Beveridge), London : Royal Asiatic Society, 1909-1914, Vol. I, pp. 60f.

<sup>26</sup> A. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 136 f.

In 1576 Akbar heard about two missionary priests in Bengal who had refused absolution to the converts for committing several kinds of fraud on the government revenue collection. This position of the priests improved the government revenue collection. This incident persuaded Akbar that Christian principles, which condemned even dishonesty practiced against an alien government, must possess exceptional value and influence over the hearts of men.<sup>27</sup> Learning that Father Julian Pereira was Vicar-General in Bengal, stationed at Satgaon, Akbar sent for him. Akbar received him with great kindness and carefully questioned him about the law and beliefs of the Christians. Akbar shared some of his interest in Christianity in debates or dialogues with his chief religious leaders and invited Fr. Pereira to some of the discussions. He asked Fr. Pereira to teach him some Portuguese so that he might better understand Christian doctrine. 'The first word that he taught the King was the sweet name of Jesus. The King found such pleasure in this holy word that he repeated it at each step as he walked up and down in his house.'<sup>28</sup> Akbar's mystical experience during a big hunt, mentioned above, and this interest in the name of Jesus took place at times not far removed from each other. Fr. Pereira seems to have arrived in 1578.<sup>29</sup> The mystical experience also took place in that year. Fr. Pereira was not able to satisfactorily answer all of Akbar's many pressing questions—but he did mention the Jesuit missionaries in the College of St. Paul at Goa as more learned than himself.

Akbar wrote to Goa requesting that some holy and learned Fathers be sent to his court. Three Jesuits arrived in Fatehpur Sikri in 1580. Akbar undoubtedly wanted to learn more

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Pierre du Jarric, s.j., *Akbar and the Jesuits* (tr. C.H. Payne), London: George Routledge & Sons, 1926, pp. 15 ff.

<sup>29</sup> Krishnamurti, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

about Christianity. He also undoubtedly wanted to know more of the wider world and have wider contact with it.<sup>30</sup> Probably he also sought clergy to minister to the growing number of European artisans and technicians in his employ.<sup>31</sup> For their part the Fathers certainly hoped to make a convert of Akbar, and of others. At the court the Fathers were sometimes referred to as 'Nazarene sages.'<sup>32</sup> Akbar sent his second son, Murad, to be tutored by the Fathers. The Fathers report that once when Akbar came to see what his son was learning he asked him to read aloud the lesson he had been given to write. Murad began "In the name of God", on hearing which his Majesty at once told him to add the words "and of Jesus Christ the true prophet and son of God," and this was done then and there.<sup>33</sup> Then Akbar entered the oratory of the Fathers, removed his turban, and knelt and prayed. 'After that, he seated himself on a cushion on the floor; and when the Fathers had also seated themselves, he told them that he did not doubt that our (Christian) law was the best of all, and that he beheld something more than human in the life and miracles of Jesus-Christ; but that it was beyond his comprehension how God could have a son.'<sup>34</sup> Another time he came to the oratory with his three sons and some of his chief nobles. He then caused the party to remove their shoes. He showed great reverence for pictures of Jesus which the Fathers had brought. 'Before leaving, he told the Fathers that their law appealed to him very strongly; but that there were two points in it which he could not comprehend, namely, the Trinity and the Incarnation. If they could explain these two things to his

<sup>30</sup> Beveridge (tr.), *Akbar Nama, op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 37 f.

<sup>31</sup> H. Hosten, 'European Art at the Moghul Court' in *Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society*, Vol. III, Part I (Calcutta 1922), p. 142.

<sup>32</sup> Beveridge (tr.), *Akbar Nama, op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 368.

<sup>33</sup> Du Jarric, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25 f.

satisfaction, he would, he said, declare himself a Christian, even though it cost him his kingdom.<sup>35</sup>

Shortly after they had arrived the Fathers of this first mission had presented to Akbar a very beautiful set of volumes of the Bible. 'The King received these holy books with great reverence, taking each into his hand one after the other and kissing it, after which he placed it on his head, which, amongst these people, signifies honour and respect.'<sup>36</sup> This was in the presence of his court. Then, 'he inquired which of these books contained the Gospels; and when it was pointed out to him, he looked at it very intently, kissed it a second time, and placed it as before on his head.'<sup>37</sup> The Fathers also presented Akbar with pictures of Jesus and Mary and the 'King took the portrait of our Saviour in his hands with great reverence, and before putting it down kissed it, and made his children, and several of his courtiers who were present, do the same.'<sup>38</sup> By 1583 the Fathers decided that Akbar was not about to become a convert so they left Akbar's court.<sup>39</sup> But shortly before they left Abu-l-Fazl, who was once charged by Akbar with the translation of the Gospel,<sup>40</sup> said that just the day before Akbar 'had taken the Holy Bible which they had given to him, and with great reverence had placed it on his head, adding that he had not done the same with the book of Mahomet, which had been presented to him on the same day, and which was far more richly bound.'<sup>41</sup>

In 1590 Akbar, who had not wanted the Fathers of the

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26. f. It is at about this time that Badaoni (Lowe), *op. cit.*, II, p. 257 writes, 'His Majesty firmly believed in the truth of the Christian religion.'

<sup>36</sup> Du Jarric, *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>40</sup> Badaoni (Lowe), *op. cit.*, II, p. 256.

<sup>41</sup> Du Jarric, *op. cit.*, p. 36.



first mission to leave, again wrote to Goa seeking Fathers for his court for further instruction in Christianity. This request was sent with the Greek subdeacon, Leo Grimon, who had recently come to his court. The subdeacon gave a picture of the situation at the court that seemed very favourable to Christianity. He asserted that Akbar was 'most anxious to establish the fundamental truths of Christianity, and has induced the Prince his son, and his chief general to hold the same views.'<sup>42</sup> It was also reported that in 1590, upon learning that the Christians were celebrating the feast of the Assumption, Akbar decided that he too would celebrate it. So, 'he caused a high throne to be erected, upon which he placed the picture of the blessed Virgin which (the first mission) had given to him, commanding all his princes, captains, and courtiers to do it reverence, and to kiss it. The chief lords of the court demanded that the eldest son of the King should first set them the example, and this he at once and very willingly did. The most distinguished of the officers showed themselves the readiest to honour the Virgin.'<sup>43</sup>

So a second mission of two Fathers was sent off. They arrived at Akbar's court, then in Lahore, in 1591. They were received with kindness and great favour and were given princes for students but they soon saw that 'the Emperor had not decided, as they expected, to embrace the Christian Faith'<sup>44</sup> and they proposed to return to Goa but were bidden by the Provincial not to do so. Nevertheless they did not stay long. I think that it was these Fathers of the second mission who reported that 'the night following their arrival, his Majesty sent for them, and showed them the pictures of

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<sup>42</sup> Provincial's report of Nov., 1590, quoted by V. A. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

<sup>43</sup> Du Jarric, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>44</sup> Provincial's report of Nov., 1591, quoted by V. A. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

our Saviour and our Lady, which (the first mission) had given him, holding them in his arms as reverently as though he had been a Christian. As soon as the Fathers saw the pictures, they fell upon their knees to do them reverence, as was fitting; seeing which the little grandson of the King also knelt down, and clasped his hands together. This greatly pleased the King, who turned with a smile to his son the Prince, and father of the child, and said, "Look at your son".<sup>45</sup> At this time he also showed them the Royal Bible and the books of theology that he had been given by the first mission.

Again in 1594 Akbar asked for Jesuit Fathers from Goa to be sent to his capital. The Viceroy realised that Akbar's conversion was unlikely but he saw, perhaps for the first time, the possible political advantages of having his Jesuits at the Mogul court.<sup>46</sup> Three Fathers were dispatched on this third mission. They reached the court in Lahore in 1595. Jesuits continued at the court thereafter. This mission was led by Jerome Xavier who eventually was extremely productive of apologetic and evangelistic literature—some of it versions of various parts of the Bible, some of it interpretative, and some of it highly disputational.<sup>47</sup> These Fathers reported Akbar's reverent regard for objects relating to the Christian faith which gave them great hopes of his conversion.<sup>48</sup> 'The pictures he possessed of our Saviour and our Lady were some of the best that had been sent from Europe. These he held in high veneration, taking great pleasure in showing them to his friends, often holding them in his arms

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<sup>45</sup> Du Jarric, *op. cit.*, pp. 62 f.

<sup>46</sup> Krishnamurty, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Arnulf Camps, *Jerome Xavier S.J. and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*, Schoneck-Beckenried: Nouvelle Review de Science Missionnaire, 1957.

<sup>48</sup> Du Jarric, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

till he was weary, for they were large and heavy.<sup>49</sup> One day Akbar came to a feast which the Fathers were celebrating and remained on his knees with his hands clasped throughout the litany. Then 'He looked long and attentively at the pictures in the Chapel, and enquired about the mysteries which they represented. He also lent the Fathers.....his own beautiful pictures for the feast of the Assumption.'<sup>50</sup> The Fathers also reported that they often saw Akbar 'doing reverence to the pictures of our Saviour and our Lady, and even wearing suspended from his neck by a gold chain, a reliquary, which had on one side of it an Agnus Dei, and on the other an image of our Lady.'<sup>51</sup> The fathers had a picture of our Lady copied from that in Rome called *di Populo* and sent to them from abroad. For two years 'they had not dared to exhibit (it), for fear that the King might ask them for it.'<sup>52</sup> But they did exhibit it at Christmas 1601 in Agra and several times thereafter. It drew crowds of people including nobles who honoured it.<sup>53</sup> Akbar sent for the picture, made a deep reverence to it, kept it overnight to show to his ladies, and may have had it copied.<sup>54</sup> During these times that the painting was being admired the Fathers talked and preached about it.

Akbar, the Fathers felt, entertained a high opinion of the Christian religion. Yet they found no way of getting him to what they felt was the whole law of Christ.<sup>55</sup> Akbar even gave them written permission to make Christian converts.<sup>56</sup> In his eulogy in memory of Akbar, Fr. Xavier wrote 'Although he was very well instructed in the doctrines of the

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160 ff.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166 ff.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. A.V. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 290. Cf. also Camps, *op. cit.*, pp. 200 ff.

Christians and had a great veneration for Jesus—he never embraced the Christian Faith, as he could not believe in Christ’s miracles and divinity.’<sup>57</sup> It has wisely been suggested that Akbar acquired from the Fathers for his own purposes the truths of Christianity.<sup>58</sup> The missionaries wanted more—as have missionaries in different parts of India, at different times. But that Akbar did in some real sense consider Jesus as Lord I have little doubt.

### Jahangir

Prince Salim, who was Akbar’s eldest son, took the name Jahangir upon succeeding his father as emperor. As Prince ‘he had been looked upon almost as a Christian, and had been openly spoken of as such by his adherents.’<sup>59</sup> When the third Jesuit mission brought along a Portuguese painter Salim ordered him to ‘make a copy of the picture of our Lady which they had brought from Goa.’<sup>60</sup> One day when he came to their chapel with his father, Salim admired an embossed image of the little infant Jesus and also a crucifix that he saw there and he ordered similar ones to be made for himself by his own craftsmen. The Fathers said of Salim that he was ‘very favourably disposed towards the Christian faith, and lost no opportunity of defending it. He publicly expressed his devotion to our Lord and our Lady, and placed their pictures, on which he delighted to gaze, in his own chamber. Whenever the Portuguese, or other Christians at the court, obtained good copies of such pictures from India or Portugal,

<sup>57</sup> Letter of September 25, 1606, Br. Mus. Add. MSS 9854, fols. 39-40 quoted by Camps, *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>58</sup> Frederick Augustus, *The Emperor Akbar* (tr. Annette S. Beveridge (2 vols.), Patna : Academica Asiatica, (1890) 1973, Vol. I, p. 332.

<sup>59</sup> Fernao Guerreiro, s.J., *Jahangir and the Jesuits* (tr. C. H. Payne), London : George Routledge & Sons, 1930, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Du Jarric, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

they used to present them to the Prince, knowing that this would greatly please him.<sup>62</sup> The Fathers also said that Salim 'had already secretly opened his heart to Father Xauier (Xavier), and had given such proofs of his devotion to our Saviour and His thrice-holy Mother, as to justify the hope that God would one day work in him a great miracle'<sup>63</sup>—meaning that he would one day formally convert, which was the Fathers' constant aim. While Salim was in revolt against his own father he sent a message to the Fathers reiterating 'that he had a great love for Jesus-Christ.'<sup>64</sup> They report that he said to an Italian, 'these words : " I have a very great affection for the Lord Jesus " ; and to show that these words were not mere words, but that he spoke from his heart, he drew aside his robe, and showed him a cross of gold, which it was his habit to wear suspended from his neck. ' <sup>65</sup> They also report that once when Salim was with his captains, ' he asked them on whom they would call for aid if they found themselves in great danger. Some answered in one way, and some in another. " As for myself ", the Prince said, " I should call on none other but the Lord Jesus ; for it is He alone who can succour us in all our perils and adversities " .'<sup>66</sup> About this time he sent to Father Xavier ' a small ornament made in the form of a reliquary attached to a golden chain, and having on one side of it the image of our Saviour in enamel, and on the other side that of our Lady ; this, he wrote, he had worn on his breast, or rather on his heart.'<sup>67</sup>

Following his reconciliation with Akbar the Fathers write that he showed ' Many proofs of his devotion to our Saviour

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81 f.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186 f.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187. Cf. Guerreiro, *op. cit.*, p. 106, n.3.

<sup>67</sup> Du Jarric, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

and His holy Mother, whose images he held in the highest veneration. Indeed the Fathers could make him no more acceptable present than a well-executed representation of either ; though he employed the most skilled painters and craftsmen in his father's kingdom in making him the like. He also had engraved on an emerald, the size of a man's thumb, the image of our Saviour crucified, and this he was in the habit of carrying about with him, attached to a gold chain.

' One day, Father Xavier presented him with a book containing the life of our Saviour Jesus-Christ, which he had composed himself, and translated into the Persian tongue, and to which the King had given the title, *The Mirror of Purity*. The Prince read it from beginning to end, whereby his love for our Saviour was greatly increased. He also had painted in a book pictures illustrating the mysteries of His life, death and passion ; and because at the beginning of the book there was a cross illuminated in gold with the superscription, *Sicut exaltauit Moyses serpentum in deserta* &c., he ordered the artist to paint thereon the figure of Jesus-Christ crucified ; and on another page on which was the name Jesus, encircled with rays, he had painted in the midst a picture of our Lady and her infant Son with His arms about her neck.'<sup>68</sup> I find it impossible to read these reports, even allowing for excessive optimism on the part of the Fathers, without feeling that Salim took Jesus very seriously in many ways.

When he became emperor, Jahangir continued the religious discussions that his father had so favoured. Indeed the first official British ambassador to his court, Sir Thomas Roe, records that every night for a whole year Jahangir spent two hours in religious discourse, throwing out hints of his conversion to Christianity. These hints, according to Roe who tended to distrust Jahangir, may have been intended to mis-

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190 f.

lead the Fathers.<sup>69</sup> Jahangir was extremely tolerant. Roe says, 'He is content with all religions.'<sup>70</sup> He celebrated many Hindu religious festivals.<sup>71</sup> And he visited many Hindu temples and places of religious pilgrimage.<sup>72</sup> It was also his wont to visit learned Hindu holy men.<sup>73</sup> One of these, Jadrup, Jahangir visited several times and says that from him 'I heard many sublime words of religious duties and knowledge of divine things. Without immoderate praises, he sets forth clearly the doctrines of wholesome Sufism, and one can find delight in his society.'<sup>74</sup> He says further of Jadrup 'he had thoroughly mastered the science of the Vedanta, which is the science of Sufism . . . my revered father . . . saw him in the very same place, and always remembered him well.'<sup>75</sup>

Jahangir's interest in Christ continued unabated. He was interested in a version of the Gospels in Arabic<sup>76</sup> but even more pleased with the copy of the Gospels in Persian which the Fathers later gave him, 'which he accepted very graciously. He would allow no one to hold it for him, but kept it in his hand until he withdrew.'<sup>77</sup> At Christmas in Lahore the Fathers had a small manger on their altar and the King 'sent some choice candles of white wax to be burnt before it, and some of his own beautiful pictures to add to its adornment.'<sup>78</sup> Of an evening the King would look through a portfolio of

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<sup>69</sup> Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619*, (ed. William Foster) (2 vols.) London: Hakluyt Society, 1899, Vol. II, p. 314; cf. p. 382.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Tuzuk*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 158, 246 f., 252, 268, 361, 396; Vol. II, pp. 381, 74, 100, 176, 212.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 254; Vol. II, pp. 103 f., 218, 224 f.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 355 ff., 359; Vol. II, pp. 49, 52 f., 104 ff.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 52.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 356 f.

<sup>76</sup> Guerreiro, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

pictures of Christ and ask the fathers to explain their meaning<sup>79</sup>. And the Fathers reported :

‘ Throughout the discussions . . . the King always showed his deep regard for Christ our Lord. He also spoke very strongly in favour of the use of pictures, which amongst the Moors, are regarded with abhorrence ; . . . at Agra . . . in a balcony where he sits daily to be seen by the people . . . in the middle of the ceiling there was a painting of Christ our Lord . . . On the outside of the wall, where is the window at which the King sits when he shows himself to the people . . . there were . . . above . . . on the right (a) representation of Christ our Lord with the globe of the world in His hand, and on the left of our Lady the Virgin . . . In the interior of the palace the walls and the ceilings of the various halls are adorned with pictures illustrating the life of Christ . . . All this the King did of his own accord, without a suggestion from anyone.’<sup>80</sup>

Once Jahangir received a picture of the Adoration of the Magi which had been sent by the Jesuit Assistant in Rome directly to him. ‘ He sent for (the fathers) as soon as he received it, and having shown it to them in the presence of his courtiers, asked them to explain its meaning. When they had done so, he repeated what they had said to those present, telling the story of the birth of our Lord and the Adoration of the Magi just as though he were a preacher in a pulpit, holding the picture the while that all might see it.’<sup>81</sup>

The fathers report, that ‘ by means of these pictures, and what the Fathers have told him about them, the King is well versed in most of the mysteries of Christ our Lord and our Lady the Virgin, and openly prides himself on his knowledge.’<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63 ff.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65 f.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.



They further report that ‘so high is his esteem for Christ and our Lady, that all the orders and letters which he sends . . . are sealed on the outside with their effigies. . . the figures of our Lord and the Virgin . . . are impressed on the wax with which the letters are fastened.’<sup>83</sup> And they say that ‘by these and other signs one cannot but recognise the sincere devotion of this King to Christ and our Lady, for whom he himself confesses his great love.’<sup>84</sup> But they confess that ‘While he has so high a regard for Christ and the holy Virgin, and for all that appertains to the Christian faith, he is held back by the severe discipline which our law imposes.’<sup>85</sup> The Father’s hope for Jahangir’s conversion seems to have had some basis in reality. Even Roe reports that ‘The King undertook the Argument, and defended our Saviour to be a Prophet.’<sup>86</sup> And the English Captain William Hawkins who could converse with Jahangir without an interpreter reports that in Agra the king said his morning prayers with his beads while sitting on a jet stone on the upper end of which ‘the pictures of Our Lady and Christ are placed.’<sup>87</sup> And William Finch describes the King in his chair of state, ‘On the right hand of the King, on the wall behind him, is the picture of our Saviour; and on the left, of the Virgin.’<sup>88</sup> Two<sup>89</sup> or three<sup>90</sup> of Jahangir’s nephews, who had been taught by the fathers along with some other boys, were ordered by the King to be baptised and this was done with great pomp—the boys being dressed in Portuguese costume and being given the ‘Christian’ names of

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66 f.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Roe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 317.

<sup>87</sup> W. Foster, *Early Travels in India*, Oxford : 1921, p. 114.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>89</sup> Roe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 315.

<sup>90</sup> Hosten, *op. cit.* pp. 144 f. citing *Ragvagli d’alcune Missioni fatte delli Padri della Compagnia de Giesy*. . . . . Roma, Zanetti, 1615, pp. 32-33.

Don Filippe, Don Carlos and Don Henrico.’<sup>91</sup> This seems to have been done in good faith although Roe did hear rumours that it might have been done to keep the boys from becoming any threat to the throne.<sup>92</sup> I must confess that I should have thought that this denationalizing upon baptism might have put many off. Be that as it may, during an illness toward the end of his life Jahangir asked Father de Castro to commend him to Christ, assuring him that he would become a Christian in case he should recover.<sup>93</sup> But he did not fulfil this promise—so far as is known. Although after his death some Jesuit circles were describing him as ‘more attached to Christ than to Muhammad’<sup>94</sup> and some as having been secretly baptised.<sup>95</sup> Having also heard of the rumours of secret baptisms of Gandhi and Nehru I am inclined to think that this idea of Jahangir’s secret baptism is missionary wishful thinking. But that he was much attached to Christ and to the Virgin Mary I cannot doubt.

### The Painters

Surprise at the encouragement of figure painting, let alone the painting of Jesus, in the Islamic cultural context of the Mogul court is sometimes expressed. Of course I have already suggested that the court in the times of Akbar and Jahangir was not all that orthodox. There is not, as has sometimes been supposed, any mention of pictures in the Koran—although statues are to be avoided as idolatry.<sup>96</sup> But the Traditions of the Prophet, which are as binding on the faith-

<sup>91</sup> Hosten, *ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Roe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 189; Vol. II, p. 315.

<sup>93</sup> Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, Oxford : At the Clarendon Press, 1928, pp. 4 f.

ful as the Koran is, do clearly condemn painting. The Traditions take the following line,

‘ The Prophet is reported to have said that those who will be most severely punished by God on the Day of Judgment will be the painters. On the Day of Judgement the punishment of hell will be meted out to the painter, and he will be called upon to breathe life into the forms that he has fashioned ; but he cannot breathe life into anything. The reason for his damnation is this : in fashioning the form of a being that has life, the painter is usurping the creative function of the Creator and thus is attempting to assimilate himself to God. . . ’<sup>97</sup>

This eventually came to be quite fanatically held throughout Islam and painting condemned.<sup>98</sup> Yet it seems unlikely that Muhammad could have been so utterly negative toward painting as his followers became because he permitted his wives, sitting around his deathbed, to discuss, among themselves and with him, the beauty of the pictures two of them had seen in a church in Abyssinia ; and because,

‘ After his triumphal entry into Mecca, Muhammad went inside the Ka’bah, he ordered the pictures in it to be obliterated, but put his hand over a picture of Mary, with Jesus seated on her lap, that was painted on a pillar, and said, “ Rub out all the pictures except these under my hands. ” ’<sup>99</sup> Akbar faced and opposed the traditional negative judgement on painters squarely and theologically when he said, ‘ There are many that hate painting, but such men I dislike. It appears to me as if a painter had quite peculiar means of recognising God ; for a painter, in sketching anything that

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5 citing Bukhari (ed. Juynboll), Vol. IV, pp. 104, 106.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9 ff.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6 f.

has life, and in devising its limbs one after the other, must come to feel that he cannot bestow individuality upon his work, and is thus forced to think of God, the Giver of Life, and will thus increase in knowledge.<sup>100</sup> So, far from being presumptuous and blasphemous, painting may be seen as advancing pious humility and divine knowledge. Thus Akbar positively undergirds painting theologically.

In fact, Muslim paintings of Jesus, outside India, are not rare. After all in the series of the inspired prophets of God, Islam assigns to Jesus the highest place after Muhammad. So, where religious art became possible pictures of Jesus frequently occur. Some of these follow Islamic versions of the life of Jesus. One represents the agraphon of Jesus and the dead dog—here Jesus is a gowned, turbaned, bearded oriental with a staff and red-gold flame halo. He looks much the same in a painting of Him conversing with the devotee and the reprobate. There is a nativity which follows the Islamic birth stories and has Mary, as an Arab, holding on to a palm tree in the wilderness. The Babe is on the ground, again with the flame-like halo.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, in a standard work on Islamic illustrated manuscripts I find pictures of Jesus in the ' Turkish ' and ' Persian ' sections but not in the ' Indian ' section.<sup>102</sup>

Akbar showed a special liking for painting from his earliest days. Humayun, his father, encouraged this and both Humayun and Akbar took lessons in drawing from the Persian painter Khwajah Abdus Samad.<sup>103</sup> Probably Humayun

<sup>100</sup> Abu-l-Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari* (tr. H. Blochmann and H.S. Jarrett) (3 vols), Calcutta : Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873-1894, Vol. I, pp. 107 f.

<sup>101</sup> Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 99 ff. and plates XXVIII, XXVI, XXV. The Nativity with the Palm tree is in Fleming, *Each with His . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>102</sup> Ivan Stchoukine, Barbara Flemming, Paul Luft and Hanna Schreide *Illuminerte Islamische Handschriften*, Wiesbaden : Franz Steiner Verlag, 1971, Nos. 391, 2883, 2893.

<sup>103</sup> Percy Brown, *Indian Painting under the Mughals*, Oxford : at the Clarendon Press, 1924, p. 62.

had been exposed to Persian painting during the year he spent in exile in Persia.<sup>104</sup> It has been written by the early leading legitimator of Indian art that 'Akbar was something more than a connoisseur. He approached art in a religious spirit and with a profound view of statesmanship, regarding it as a spiritual force which makes for peace, reconciliation, and enlightenment.'<sup>105</sup> Be that as it may, it is clear that Akbar encouraged, gathered, trained and directed a great many painters of skill and talent. We are told on authority that :

'The names of nearly one hundred and fifty of Akbar's court painters are known by their signature or from inscriptions, and it is interesting to observe that most of the names are those of Hindus, to whose skill indeed Akbar's chronicler Abu-l-Fazl accords special praise. None of these were apparently of high caste. Many came from Western India, but it would seem that the Emperor enlisted the talent of half the sub-continent.'<sup>106</sup>

Abu-l-Fazl lists seventeen famous painters of Akbar's court. Well over half of these are clearly Hindus, as I judge their names. From these four are singled out for fuller mention—two from Persia and two Hindus. Daswanth, one of these, is described as the son of a palkeebearer whose talent was discovered by Akbar who handed him over to Kwajah Abdul Samad for instruction and of whom it is said, 'In a short time he surpassed all painters and became the first master of the age.' The other was Basawan of whom it is said, 'In

<sup>104</sup> T.W. Arnold, 'Historical Introduction' in Laurence Binyon, *The Court Painters of the Grand Moguls*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921, pp. 15 f.

<sup>105</sup> E.B. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (1928) reprinted in *The Art Heritage of India* (ed. Pramod Chandra). Bombay: Taraporewalla, 1964, p. 82.

<sup>106</sup> J.V.S. Wilkinson, *Mughal Painting*, London: Faber and Faber, 1948, p. 4.

backgrounding, drawing of features, distribution of colours, portrait-painting and several other branches, he is most excellent. So much so that many critics prefer him to Daswanth.<sup>107</sup>

In this way the Persian painting of the court of Humayun was transformed into the Indo-Persian art of the Mogul school.<sup>108</sup> This must have been based, at least in part, on a living Hindu tradition of painting about which we know very little.<sup>109</sup> Akbar's patronage was liberal—both in pay and in honour, including titles.<sup>110</sup>

When Europeans came to his court Akbar sought pictures from them and many of these were religious pictures, most of which were provided by the Jesuits I suppose. 'Shortly after the Jesuit priests had introduced the Mughals to their collections of religious art and examples of illustrated books, one of Akbar's Kahar artists, Kasavadasa, or Kesu the elder, began the preparation of a series of miniatures among which were included copies and imitations of Christian pictures. The whole, when finished, he had bound up in a *muraqqa* (album), which he presented with a dedication to the emperor in 1588.'<sup>111</sup> When Akbar visited the father's chapel he ordered his painter to make copies of the pictures he found there.<sup>112</sup> When dealing with Christian and other European imports the Mogul painters did one of the following three things :

'Occasionally, Mughals painted line-for-line copies from European pictures; more frequently they "quoted" bits and pieces from them and incorporated a Christian saint

<sup>107</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari*, *op. cit.*, pp. 107 ff. Cf. Beveridge (tr.), *Akbar Nama*, Vol. III, p. 651.

<sup>108</sup> K. Bharatha Iyer, *Indian Art*, Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 1958, p. 75.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Vincent A. Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, Oxford : at the Clarendon Press, 1911, pp. 455 f.

<sup>110</sup> V.A. Smith, *ibid.*, p. 456.

<sup>111</sup> Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 167 f. Cf. V.A. Smith, *ibid.*, p. 472.

<sup>112</sup> Du Jarric, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

or European town into otherwise Mughal compositions. Sometimes, exotic religious subjects, such as *Christ with the Virgin Mary and St. Anne*, were translated into essentially Mughal terms. The hot, glowing colours, Indianised costumes, and gestures are here far removed from the engraving or painting that suggested them.<sup>113</sup>

But they just may have painted some pictures of Jesus entirely from their own imagination too. In Persia from the sixteenth century there were also occasional examples of pictures with Christian themes.<sup>114</sup>

Jahangir was also a great connoisseur and patron of painting. Even as a prince he had his own atelier. He was proud of his ability to recognize the work of different painters and claims :

‘ As regards myself, my liking for painting and my practice in judging it have arrived at such a point that when any work is brought before me, either of deceased artists or of those of the present day, without the names being told me, I say on the spur of the moment that it is the work of such and such a man. And if there be a picture containing many portraits and each face be the work of a different master, I can discover which face is the work of each of them. If any other person has put in the eye and eyebrow of a face, I can perceive whose work the original face is, and who has painted the eye and eyebrows.’<sup>115</sup>

He especially mentions Abu’-l-hasan and Mansur as two of his favorite painters.<sup>116</sup> Jahangir was even more generous of money and honour with his painters than Akbar had been.

<sup>113</sup> Stuart Cary Welch, *The Art of Mughal India*, New York : Asia Society, 1963 pp. 29 f.

<sup>114</sup> Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, *op. cit.*, pp. 115 f.

<sup>115</sup> *Tuzuk*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 20 f.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

Once he gave 2,000 rupees to the excellent painter Farrukh Beg the Kalmak.<sup>117</sup> He gave titles to several, at least. Many feel that 'it was in Jahangir's reign that Mughal painting reached its greatest height of accomplishment.'<sup>118</sup> The Jesuits continued to give the king many copies of Christian pictures—as an evangelistic teaching device.<sup>119</sup> The English and the Dutch also gave him Christian pictures, at his request.<sup>120</sup> Roe found them most acceptable gifts to give to the nobles as well.<sup>121</sup> Often these pictures were engravings from European paintings and Jahangir instructed his painters to consult the Fathers as to the colours to be used in the costumes.<sup>122</sup>

Shah Jahan was Jahangir's son and successor. His mother and three of his grandparents were Hindu—which may show in another way, just how thoroughly Indian the court had become. The paintings of his reign maintained, on the whole, the standards reached under his father. And by this time painting had started to spread to princely and provincial courts too. When Aurangzeb became emperor painting was doomed by his puritanism but remained in some of the provincial courts.

Finally, I should record that European painters found inspiration and pictorial material by copying Mogul paintings. The most famous and best documented case of this is Rembrandt van Rijn.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Smith, *History of Fine Art, op. cit.*, p. 470.

<sup>118</sup> Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>119</sup> Maclagan, *op. cit.*, pp. 225 ff. where many of the gift pictures are listed.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 224 f.

<sup>121</sup> Roe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 245.

<sup>122</sup> Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

<sup>123</sup> The best treatment I know of this in English, and it is illustrated, is Emma Devapriam, *The Influence of Western Art on Mughal Painting*, Case Western Reserve University: Ph.D. typescript, 1972, Appendix I, pp. 170 ff. Cf. the two articles by F. Sarre in *Jahrbuch der königlich-preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, Vol. XXV (1904), pp. 143 ff.; Vol. XXX (1909), pp. 283 ff.



## THE PAINTINGS

Mogul paintings of Jesus were done in four different formats. These are : (1) Wall paintings ; (2) Illustrations for books ; (3) Picture albums ; and (4) Independent easel paintings with frames.<sup>124</sup> Of these I am primarily concerned with extant miniatures of the last three of these formats.

Some of the wall paintings of Jesus have been mentioned above as I tried to show the interest and devotion of Akbar and Jahangir. When the Jesuits first arrived at Akbar's court in Fatehpur Sikri they were told that Akbar had pictures of Jesus, Mary, Moses and Muhammad in his dining-room.<sup>125</sup> It has been suggested that the fresco in the palace called the house of Miriam in Fatehpur Sikri dated from about 1570 and was a representation of the Annunciation.<sup>126</sup> Maclagan has a fairly detailed listing of reports of various Christian wall paintings at Fatehpur Sikri, Sikandra, Agra and Lahore—none of which remain.<sup>127</sup> What we do have are miniatures in which some of these wall paintings are shown in the background. One of these is a 'Palace Scene with Emperor Jahangir' which shows a number of frescoes on a wall in the background which include Christ apparently giving a blessing and, separately, Mary in a gesture of intercession.<sup>128</sup> Another shows a woman

<sup>124</sup> I follow Devapriam, *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>125</sup> Thomas W. Arnold, *The Library of A. Chester Beatty, A Catalogue of the Indian Miniatures* (ed. J.V.S. Wilkinson) (3 vols.), London : Emery Walker, 1936, Vol. I, p. xxviii, citing Anthony Monserrate, s.j., *Commentary . . .* (tr. J. S. Hoyland) Oxford : 1922, p. 560. But Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 237, reads Monserrate as meaning these were hung on the wall.

<sup>126</sup> Arnold, *ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Maclagan *op. cit.*, pp. 237 ff.

<sup>128</sup> Freer Gallery of Art, No.07.258 described by Richard Ettinghausen, 'New Pictorial Evidence of Catholic Missionary Activity in Mughal India (Early XVIIth Century)' in Hugo Rahner and Emmanuel von Serverus eds., *Perennitas*, Munster : Verlag Aschendorff, 1963, p. 391 and illustrated in figs. 1 and 2. A very similar picture, I.M. 115-1921, was noted by Maclagan, *op. cit.*, pp. 421 f. and is listed in Robert W. Skelton's card file as being reproduced as lecture slide R 15. Mr. Skelton's illustrated

bathing in a harem building with what seems to be a figure of Christ forming part of the architectural decoration.<sup>129</sup> There is a miniature in Boston of Jahangir in his court which shows a small painting of Mary at the top of a pillar.<sup>130</sup> A picture of Shah Jahan's court shows in the background parts of two painted panels which, I agree with Maclagan, are sufficient to enable identification as Jesus and Mary.<sup>131</sup>

Parts of three large wall paintings have recently been discovered in a gate (dated about 1630) to a Mogul market located between the tombs of Humayun and Nizam-ud-din in what is now the southern part of New Delhi. The wall painting in the best condition seems to be a madonna seated and holding a babe with a standing haloed male (perhaps with a beard), the next best wall painting may contain a haloed figure. I am unable to clearly identify anything of significance in the bit remaining of the third picture. (I am most grateful to Fr. Hambye who took me to this gate while this manuscript was in the press).

### Madonnas

A substantial majority of the miniatures of Christ show him as a Babe with His Mother—or sometimes with His Family.

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card file at the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, is a most marvellous instrument for the study of Mogul miniatures which Mr. Skelton graciously shared with me.

<sup>129</sup> British Museum, 1920-9-17-036. Noted by Skelton as lecture slide L 41.

<sup>130</sup> This is reproduced in Milo Cleveland Beach, 'The Gulshan Album and Its European Sources' in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts *Bulletin*. Vol. LXIII (1965), no. 332, p. 62. I suppose that this is the same picture of which Maclagan, *op.cit.*, p. 242, speculates that there may be a matching painting of Jesus just outside the field of the miniature; Arnold, *Chester Beatty Catalogue*, *op. cit.*, p. XXXV, has a similar speculation.

<sup>131</sup> Maclagan, *ibid.* This is in the Bodleian Library, Ouseley, Addl. 173-13 and is reproduced in Binyon, *Court Painters*, *op. cit.*, pl. XXXVI and also in Brown, *Painting under the Mughals*, *op. cit.*, pl. XXIV.

Sometimes the Virgin Mary does appear alone without her Son.<sup>132</sup> This preponderance of madonnas is fundamentally due to the theological bias of the Jesuits. Their theology and piety placed great stress on Mary—as European catholicism did at that time. Indeed the English protestant traveller says that the beggars in India would beg from a Christian in the name of Lady Mary rather than in the name of Lord Jesus and presents this as proof that the Jesuits preached ‘Mary more than Jesus.’<sup>133</sup> When Maclagan, working from Jesuit sources largely, lists the pictures that the missionaries are known to have presented to the emperors I calculate that thirteen were of madonnas and that seven were other pictures of Jesus.<sup>134</sup> Probably the engravings that they dispensed in much greater numbers would have followed something like the same proportion.

Madonna miniatures range from simple copies, often with colour added where the engraved original had none, to some quite creative ventures.<sup>135</sup> The Indian Museum, Calcutta, has a pretty small oval miniature of ‘Our Lady giving suck to her child’ which seems pure Flemish right down to the fruit on the table.<sup>136</sup> Maclagan feels that Our Lady’s ‘costume is

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<sup>132</sup> There is a superb Virgin Mary without Jesus in which she is rather Italianate but set in a scene that is quite Indian both in the treatment of the background and in mood. Bharat Kala Bhavan Acc. No. 9068/15. Colour reproduction in Chandramani Singh, ‘European Themes in Early Mughal Miniatures’ in *Chhavi*: Golden Jubilee Volume, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares: B.H.V., 1971, p. 407, Pl. 36 and also on Vakils card 74-1187.

<sup>133</sup> Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226 ff.

<sup>135</sup> Maclagan lists many madonnas he has seen, *Ibid.*, pp. 250 ff. and notes; and Felix zu Lowenstein, *Christliche Bilder in Altindischer Malerei*, Munster Westf.; Aschendorffsche Verlagsbunchnhandlung, 1958, reproduces twenty-four madonna miniatures.

<sup>136</sup> Reproduced in Percy Brown, *Indian Painting*, New Delhi: YMCA Publishing House, (1917) 1965, Pl. 14, p. 91; and also in J. Jennes, ‘De Uitstraling van de Vlaamse Prentkunst in Indie, China en Japan Tijdens de XVIe en XVIIe Eeuw, Enkele Nieuwe Gegevens’ in *Miscellanea Jozef Duverger*, Gent: 1968, p. 479.

Oriental <sup>137</sup> but it does not appear so to me, although it may be made of Indian stuff.

There are two marvellous Mogulish madonnas in Hyderabad. One of these,<sup>138</sup> shows Mother and Child in the interior of what seems to be a Mogul palace. This Madonna is a robed and sparingly jewelled, barefoot noblewoman or princess, with a spare double line halo, in an elaborately draped, structured and inlaid room with various expensive-looking items about including books and vessels. Painted in many shades of brick-red and white, it is a *tour de force*. She sits on elaborate rugs or inlay, perhaps on a platform, and against an ample bolster. The Babe clad only in a shirt, (how very Indian !) plays, standing in Her lap. This is one of the most satisfactorily Mogulised reclining and/or enthroned madonnas I know. There are many who recline in a Mogulish atmosphere. One in Poona has a hookah in the foreground.<sup>139</sup> One or two in Teheran recline with a suckling child on a bed with Mogulish decoration and with a hookah, a book, and a cat.<sup>140</sup> A similar one with a similar Mogulish bed going in the reversed direction and with vessels in the foreground but painted outdoors under a tree and in the Bijapur style is found in Boston.<sup>141</sup> In the Salar Jung Museum, also in the Bijapur style, the Madonna is still under a tree but the child no longer sucks and she sits on a richly inlaid platform ; with them are two female attendants, one of whom is somewhat Europeanish, some vessels, a book and a very aristocratic-looking small white

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<sup>137</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>138</sup> Löwenstein, *op. cit.*, Pl. 31.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 7.

<sup>140</sup> Ettinghausen, *op. cit.*, Fig. 6 ; and Lubor Hajek, *Indian Miniatures of the Moghul School*, London : Spring Books, 1960, Pl. 32. I think these are the same but the attributions are different.

<sup>141</sup> Hermann Goetz, *Geschichte der Indischen Miniaturmalerei*, Berlin : Walter de Gruyter, 1934, Pl. 7.

dog.<sup>142</sup> There are a number of madonnas in existence, painted on Mogulish rugs and/or bolsters, which seem more European.<sup>143</sup> Others are on European thrones but in somewhat Mogulised settings.<sup>144</sup> And, of course, there is hardly any end of copied European madonnas seated beside trees.<sup>145</sup>

The other Mogulish madonna from Hyderabad<sup>146</sup> shows a rather conventional bolster-seated, haloed, barefoot Mother seated on a marble-paved and fenced area in a Mogul garden with a border of flowers growing on each of the two pictured sides and with a background of grass and flowers, a body of water, and more grass and flowers—purely lovely. The nude, haloed Babe rests playfully in her lap. Two winged angels are pouring blessing (perhaps rose petals) on them from the sky and there is one angel with Mogulish cloths and wings in adoration with folded hands before (beside in Mogul miniature perspective) them. Angels with the Holy Pair are not uncommon. One miniature of the Virgin adoring the Child is fairly Europeanish with the Virgin kneeling with folded hands to the gesturing child on a cot on the floor and a spotted cat nearby but with a Mogulish vessel and an open book with an Arabic hemstitch of Hafiz; much of the interior decor is very Mogulish. A bald male angel presents a book, has a fine pair of wings and may be dressed like a European soldier—which

<sup>142</sup> The museum's coloured reproduction of this is reversed left to right, just as a fair number of Mogul copies reverse European originals.

<sup>143</sup> Skelton records one illustrated in the Sotheby Catalogue for 1 Feb. 69, Lot 121, p. 59. IOL J. 14-4 fits here fairly well.

<sup>144</sup> Arnold, *Chester Beatty Catalogue*, *op. cit.*, XIX and Pl. 83, 'The Virgin and Child by Kesu' is one such—with some Mogulish vessels and a striped cat, surrounded by quite a crowd. Skelton records another illustrated in the Sotheby Catalogue for 6 Dec. 67, Lot 116.

<sup>145</sup> Cf., for instance, Emmy Wellesz, *Akbar's Religious Thought Reflected in Mogul Paintings*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952, Pl. 36—a copy from Durer's engraving of 1513. Basil Gray, 'Painting' in *The Art of India and Pakistan* (ed. Leigh Ashton), p. 149, No. 666, notes this and other copies of Durer and corrects Maclagan's understanding of one.

<sup>146</sup> Löwenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

seems unusual in *any* setting, European or Mogul—but he certainly is not a European-style *angel*.<sup>147</sup> Nativities with animals, an adoring Mother and adoring angels are pretty common and not very Mogulish.<sup>148</sup> But one of these in the Chester Beatty Collection adds two standing Muhammadan-type angels with feathers on their arms and chests.<sup>149</sup> Occasionally the Virgin is omitted.<sup>150</sup>

Or Joseph may be included.<sup>151</sup> This brings us to miniatures of the Holy Family of which my favourite is in Jaipur (Plate I) where the nativity is shown with Joseph and a crowned Virgin with the Infant and two angels, sitting on what I see as a Kashmiri carpet; the Virgin has a coloured spot (*bindu*, *tikka*) on her forehead and is dressed in robes of Indian material; there are Indian flowers in the foreground.<sup>152</sup> There is a 'Holy Family with the Three Kings' in Poona with a haloed Mary in Indian dress and forehead 'tikka' but with Joseph and the Babe unhaloed; two of the kings could have been taken from the bare-topped, crowned, bejeweled, longish-haired sculptured kings of almost any Hindu temple—and resemble them in gesture too; but the third king is a real outlander with clearly Portuguese hat, ruff, hair, sword and gesture—we will see him again in 'The Inn at Bethlehem'.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>147</sup> Wellesz, *op. cit.*, Pl. 37 of Douce Or., a. I. of the Bodleian Library.

<sup>148</sup> Two in the India Office Library are J. 6-1 and J. 6-2. One, from the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta, is in Löwenstein, *op. cit.*, Pl. 2, and is remarkable for having two winged angels dressed totally in the style of Mogul or Rajput maids. Cf. *Bulletin of the Victoria Memorial*, Vol. VI-VII (1972-73), Pl. III b. A 'Birth of Christ' in the National Museum, New Delhi, is adapted from a European original, no doubt, but the Virgin and her attendants are Indian clad and the interior decoration is wholly Mogul and a hatted 'Portuguese' is seated in front with some texts that look *devanagiri*.

<sup>149</sup> Arnold, *Catalogue, op. cit.*, XIII and Pl. 82.

<sup>150</sup> IOL J. 1-16 with rather mature angels.

<sup>151</sup> Skelton records one illustrated in the Palais Galliera Catalogue for 5 Dec. 70, Lot 72.

<sup>152</sup> Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, AG 1119.

<sup>153</sup> This Poona picture is in Löwenstein, *op. cit.*, Pl. 24.





THE LAST SUPPER

MOGUL

*(From the India Office Library, J. 6-6)*



There is a Golconda 'Adoration of the Magi' with the Holy Family who wear Portuguese-style pointy halos, (or are they West Asian Islamic style?) and angels, in which the king's gifts look Mogulish but one of the kings is a hatted Portuguese—again!<sup>154</sup> A change in the holy family is 'Christ, the Virgin Mary, and St. Anne' mentioned above which Welch says is 'translated into essentially Mughal terms. The hot, glowing colors, Indianized costumes, and gestures are here far removed from the engraving or painting that suggested them'<sup>155</sup>—the ladies are wearing see-through cholies (short blouses), or less, and their gesture is 'hands folded', the background is Mogulish too. Another change is 'The Virgin and Child with St. John the Baptist and Elizabeth.'<sup>156</sup> which follows an engraving of Jan Sadeler after a painting by Christopher Schwartz<sup>157</sup> but places the figures inside an Indian abode, adds jewellery to the Virgin, and provides a new background of mosque and minarets in the distance seen through the archway. But the greatest change is in the 'Holy Family at a Saivite Temple' in which the Virgin kneels in prayer or adoration before a small temple or shrine containing a lingam, Joseph is bearded and has a cane, and the Child is nude and seems to be walking toward the shrine—or maybe dancing; there is a 'flag' on the shrine and a tree in the background.<sup>158</sup> I cannot explain this picture; but I rather like it. This is late, when Hindu as well as Christian pictures were being painted. Perhaps the painter merely sought a religious background for a religious group of figures; perhaps not.

<sup>154</sup> Ettinghausen, *op. cit.*, Fig. 9, Freer Gallery No. 07.267.

<sup>155</sup> Welch, *op. cit.*, p. 30 and Pl. 14.

<sup>156</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, I.M. 14A-1913.

<sup>157</sup> See Devapriam, *op. cit.*, pp. 103. ff.

<sup>158</sup> There may be several versions of this picture. Skelton records one in the Sotheby Catalogue of 9 Dec. 70, Lot 87. He has a slide of one attributed ex-Dara Shikoh Album collection. And he has a photograph of one in the collection of Martin Orskey, 1967. Devapriam, *ibid.*, reproduces one of these as Fig. 77.

## Life of Christ

There is a slightly coloured miniature of the Circumcision in the British Museum.<sup>159</sup> Maclagan mentions a picture of a young Christ with a cross underneath a portrait of Jahangir in the Chester Beatty collection.<sup>160</sup> A young and almost nude Jesus as the Master Mariner of the ship of salvation appears as a major border figure on a miniature that is mainly calligraphy ; this figure is loaded with symbols including the Pillar of the Flagellation, Cross, Crown of Thorns twice, Nails twice, the two Lashes used for the Flagellation, and others.<sup>161</sup> Maclagan found in the Lahore Museum, illustrating a book he thought was Father Jerome Xavier's *Life of Christ*, about which more follows, one picture of Christ raising his hands in prayer after being baptized and another, somewhat defaced, of Christ healing the man with the withered hand.<sup>162</sup> Also in the Chester Beatty collection is a slightly coloured adaptation of an engraving of what appears to be Christ preaching ;<sup>163</sup> and ' A half-length painting of Christ after a European original, three-quarter profile to the right. The right hand is lifted in benediction and the left holds a golden orb. The cloak, fastened with a large trefoiled gold ornament, is green with a purple lining ; the robe is light purple, showing a white under-sleeve. The hair is auburn, long, and slightly curling ; the beard and eyes are light brown ; the drawing of the face is of very high quality, but it is much damaged. The halo is gold and the background black.'<sup>164</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Noted by Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 253 as B.M. 1920-9-7-0276A ; who notes that IOL J. 14-3 may be the same subject.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> Ettinghausen, *op. cit.*, pp. 393 f. and Pl. 7; Freer Gallery No. 56.12.

<sup>162</sup> Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

<sup>163</sup> Arnold, *op. cit.*, Pl. XLVI. It may be this picture that Maclagan, *ibid.*, suggests might be a representation of Christ among the Doctors in the Temple.

<sup>164</sup> Arnold, *op. cit.*, Pl. L.

There is a coloured picture ' of a stormy sea with two boats struggling against the tempest, in one of which are four men in European hats and in the other one such passenger accompanied by a haloed figure, perhaps representing Christ, in an attitude of prayer.'<sup>165</sup> Another picture shows the entry into Jerusalem.<sup>166</sup> Another has Mary Magdalene cleaning Jesus' feet with her hair.<sup>167</sup> In Hyderabad ' Christ the Lord of the World ' stands on rolling ground with tufts of grass, He is robed in rather Gandhara style, He has a beard and long slightly curly hair, His hands are spread out in blessing and He has a small illuminated Heart—which becomes a major motif in modern times.<sup>168</sup> An Agony in the Garden is in gold and colours.<sup>169</sup> There is a Last Supper.<sup>170</sup> There is another curious picture that may be a last Supper ; (Plate II) A haloed Jesus, in profile, is seated holding a cup at a spread table around which nine European gentleman are sitting and standing ; it is set in a Mogul palace parts of which might well be the Red Fort—or this might be a Marriage in Cana.<sup>171</sup> ' Christ Crowned with Thorns ' (Plate II) is not altogether pleasing ; Jesus, seated and holding a mock sceptre and wearing a mock royal-robe, is very well-built and has a slightly oriental face ; the three who are crowning Him look like round-faced European idiots; the setting is Mogulish with a vessel or hookha in the foreground and something like a temple in the background.<sup>172</sup> A ' Christ and the Instruments of His Passion'

<sup>165</sup> Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 253 of B.M. 1920-9-17-032.

<sup>166</sup> Skelton records this illustrated in the Sotheby Catalogue of 5 July 65, Lot 62.

<sup>167</sup> Skelton records this illustrated in the Sotheby Catalogue of 6 July 65, Lot 61.

<sup>168</sup> Löwenstein, *op. cit.*, Pl. 37.

<sup>169</sup> Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

<sup>170</sup> Bharat Kala Bhavan in *Nehru Abhinandan Granth : A Birthday Book*, New Delhi : 1949, Pl. XVI.

<sup>171</sup> IOL J. 6-6.

<sup>172</sup> From the collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd, Portland Art Museum, No. 67. Maclagan, *op. cit.*, pp. 253 f. describes B.M. Stow, Or. 16. fol. 168, which is another ' Christ with a Crown of Thorns '.

in Teheran is actually an original engraving overpainted in vivid colours by Jahangir's painters.<sup>173</sup> In some of Jahangir's albums original unretouched engravings of Christian pictures have been found.<sup>174</sup>

Miniatures of the Crucifixion are not uncommon—MacLagan's inability to find a single example of this event notwithstanding.<sup>175</sup> The Christ of 'The Crucifixion' in Benares closely resembles the 'Christ Crowned with Thorns' (of Plate III) with the idiots mentioned above—stylistically this painting is close to Durer's work; notes on the back, perhaps one in Jahangir's own hand, indicate that it is in the style of European line drawing, that it is of 'the auspicious time of Jahangir', that it is a leaf from an album of paintings in similar style, that it is first quality work, and that it was 'a present from Maqsd Beg, the nephew'.<sup>176</sup> There are no other people in this picture; the background is rolling with some Mogulish plants and buildings and includes *three* empty crosses—which seems at least one too many! Only ten of Löwenstein's plates deal with 'Jesus Christus'<sup>177</sup> but three of these are crucifixions and one is an entombment. In one of these crucifixions a female saint is before the cross.<sup>178</sup> Another includes the Virgin and saints.<sup>179</sup> Among other crucifixions I have seen is one with the Marys.<sup>180</sup> A major border picture in another miniature which is mainly calligraphy shows an European female in the

<sup>173</sup> Asok Kumar Das, *Mughal Painting during Jahangir's Time*, Ph.D. typescript, University of London, 1967 (forthcoming from Asiatic Society, Calcutta), p. 422 and Pl. 131.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Ettinghausen, *op. cit.*, p. 392 and figs. 4 and 5.

<sup>175</sup> MacLagan, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>176</sup> Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 408 f. and Fig. 594; Bharat Kala Bhavan Acc. No. 5411.

<sup>177</sup> *Op. cit.*, Plates 36-44 plus the frontispiece which is Pl. 1.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 43; Lucknow Museum 21.143.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 42; Punjab (Lahore) Museum.

<sup>180</sup> Skelton records this illustrated in the Sotheby Catalogue of 25. Nov. 68.

ان عمره که پست ازین است  
خورد آخر کرم کما سار



ازین جان بوی است  
تو یافت تو است

CHRIST CROWNED WITH THORNS

MOGUL

(From the Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon, collection of Edwin Binney 3rd)



ASCENSION OF JESUS WHO IS DRESSED AS A JESUIT MOGUL  
(From the Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon, collection of Edwin Binney 3rd)

process of painting a crucifixion—the female is an adaptation of an engraving of the personification of *Geometria*.<sup>181</sup> A very strange crucifixion has been included in one of the pictures of the Jaipur *Razm-nama* (the Persian translation of the *Mahabharata* made and illustrated for Akbar) which is of the ‘Tortures of the damned in hell shown to Yudhishtira’, this includes a female body being crucified.<sup>182</sup>

Löwenstein’s frontispiece is actually a fine ‘Descent from the Cross’ from Hyderabad in which the many who are taking Him down are portrayed as Portuguese in dress and feature.<sup>183</sup> There is another descent from the cross which is copied from a Flemish engraving ultimately based on a lost Raphael and which is probably one of two pictures Father Xavier saw being painted under Prince Salim’s supervision in Lahore in 1598.<sup>184</sup> There are other descents from the cross which are said to exhibit ‘a curious combination of Oriental (meaning *Indian* I suppose) and European conceptions.’<sup>185</sup> An ‘Entombment’ in Hyderabad shows Him being put into a coffin or tomb.<sup>186</sup> A ‘Women and Angels at the Tomb of Christ’ is said to be another of the original engravings overpainted by Jahangir’s painters in vivid colours.<sup>187</sup> Finally, or perhaps only penulti-

<sup>181</sup> Beach, *op. cit.*, p. 77 and Pl. 7; Gulshan Library, Teheran.

<sup>182</sup> T.H. Hendley (ed.), *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition*, 1883, London: 1886, Vol. IV, ‘The Razmnamah MS’ Pl. CXXXII, Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum photo 17/11 shows this in great detail.

<sup>183</sup> *Op. cit.*, Pl. 1.

<sup>184</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, I.S. 133-1946; Fig. 79 in Robert W. Skelton’s article in *Victoria and Albert Yearbook*, 1969 (Vol. I), London: Phaidon, 1969; Pl. 1 in *Art and the East India Trade*, London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1970.

<sup>185</sup> Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 254; B.M. 1920-9-17-0276B (which Skelton, I believe, calls an ‘Entombment at the Foot of the Cross,’) and another version of this picture with some slight variations shown by Mrs. Jopling Rowe in the Festival of Empire Exhibition, 1911.

<sup>186</sup> Löwenstein, *op. cit.*, Pl. 44. Skelton records another version of this in the Lewis Collection, Philadelphia M 92.

<sup>187</sup> Das, *op. cit.*, p. 422, referring to E. Kuhnel and H. Goetz, *Indian Book Painting*, London: 1926, p. 57 and Pl. 41.

historically wrong) portrayals of Jesus as a Jesuit or of His followers as Jesuits or Portuguese.

I am inclined to guess that none of these Lahore pictures was ever a part of any book of Fr. Xavier's. Fr. Hosten visited the Lahore Museum prior to 1922 and reports of this manuscript :

'The label above it said : "New Testament pictures as drawn for the Emperor Akbar." . . . The book bore Akbar's seal and the subject of it was *The Life of Our Lord* in Persian by Fr. J. Xavier. Date : 1602. Size : 10 inches × 6 inches. It contained 79 leaves with 15 lines per page and was interleaved with 11 pictures. Many pages of the *Life of Our Lord* are missing, and it looks as if most of the pages belong to another treatise.<sup>198</sup>

Robert Skelton who has visited the Lahore Museum and who has examined many of the paintings we are here concerned with feels, on the basis of some hasty manuscript comparison, that the Lahore text to which they are related and the rubrics on the pictures themselves do not seem related to any version of Jerome Xavier's *Life of Christ*.<sup>199</sup>

I venture to suggest that many, perhaps all, of these pictures were painted to illustrate some earlier Persian version of the Gospels—and that they were painted before the flood of European Christian pictures. We know that Persian Gospels existed.<sup>200</sup> We also know that Akbar ordered the translation into Persian of Hindu and other religious texts, including the Gospels which he asked Abu-l-Fazl to translate—and that the Hindu texts, at least, were illustrated.<sup>201</sup> The Jaipur

<sup>198</sup> Hosten, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>199</sup> My references to Robert W. Skelton in this section are based on my notes of a most illuminating conversation with him in July, 1973.

<sup>200</sup> Camps, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 ff.

<sup>201</sup> *Ain-i-Akbar*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, *passim*.





PLATE V

CHRIST CARRYING THE CROSS

NANDALAL BOSE



CHRIST AND JOSEPH

JAMINI ROY

*(From the collection of K. C. S. Paniker)*

*Razm nama*, the Persian translation of the Mahabharata made and illustrated for Akbar around 1585-87—before the first Jesuit mission—has some pictures that are equally anachronistic. One of these is ‘The white horse is being taken carefully to the Zenana, that the family of Krishna may see it, when Anusal takes it forcibly away’ which shows the Krishna scene very like a Mogul court scene in almost every respect—even to a saintly picture painted on a Mogul canopy.<sup>202</sup> If Krishna could be put in a Mogul court I guess that Christ could easily have been put in the robes of one of His priests and that His followers could easily have been portrayed like the only Christians then known—priests (mostly Jesuits) and Portuguese layman. A somewhat similar anachronism, of putting a leading follower of Christ in the clothes of a Jesuit priest which he would never have worn, occurred as recently as the late 1950s when a popular Bengali film of the early Baptist missionary and Bengali folk hero William Carey constantly shows him in the white robes of a ‘Park Street Jesuit’—which, I dare say, he would have shunned.<sup>203</sup> To dress Christ and Christians in this way really makes considerable sense—it has a certain logic. But once European Christian pictures arrived at the Mogul court its logic would be lost.

The ‘Ascension of Jesus who is dressed as a Jesuit’ (Plate IV) is described above. It is a very Mogulish painting—but all of the people in it are dressed as Jesuits or as Portuguese. It has been attributed to Fr. Xavier’s *Life of Christ*.<sup>204</sup> One of the Portuguese is lying on his back, with one hand under his head, and his knees raised, watching the ascension. Mac-lagan reports what may be a somewhat similar figure :

<sup>202</sup> Hendley, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, Pl. LXXXVI; shown in detail in Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum photo 17/2.

<sup>203</sup> This film, *Carey Sahiber Munshi*, from a book of the same title by Pramatha Nath Bishi, is a perennial favourite in Bengal.

<sup>204</sup> In the catalogue when the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd, was exhibited in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

‘ In the State Museum at Berlin there is a curious seventeenth-century picture in which a woman with an Indian type of face and wearing a cross on her necklace is seated on a chair with a child. A man who resembles a Saint from an Italian picture is standing by with a book in his hand, but in the foreground are two Europeans, one pouring out wine and one lying back in a helpless attitude. The seat on which the woman is sitting is tilted back at an unsteady angle.’<sup>205</sup>

I have not seen this picture, alas, and I do not know about the angle of the chair. But I do wonder about the relation of this fellow who is lying back to the fellow who is lying down in the ‘ Ascension ’. It has been suggested that this picture might be a parody of the birth of our Lord.<sup>206</sup> So it might be. Might it not, however, be an honest attempt to deal with the theme without pictorial models? A drinking Virgin, if she is drinking, seems no more curious than an ascending Jesuit.

There is a picture which was in the Howard Hodgkin Collection, which had a number of pictures attributed to Fr. Xavier’s *Life of Christ*,<sup>207</sup> which may be of ‘ Christ surrounded by His Disciples ’ in which Christ, if He it be, is bearded and baldish, the very image, I would guess, of a Mogulish learned religious teacher with a mudra-gesturing right hand. He is seated on a cushion on a slightly raised platform with His legs crossed, on what I see as a Mogul palace-like porch. My notes fail me for a description of His disciples but memory tells me that some or all of them are Jesuits.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 405 citing Sotheby, *Catalogue of fine Western and Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, London: 1965, nos. 56-63, pp. 16-18.

<sup>208</sup> Skelton records this as described as ‘ Christ in the Temple with the Doctors ’ in the Sotheby Catalogue of 5 July ‘65, Lot 60.

Maclagan describes from the Chester Beatty Collection a possible Christ among the Doctors in the Temple as ;

‘ Christ standing upon a raised platform, surrounded by a halo, and addressing a body of men and women, among whom both Indians and Europeans are depicted’.<sup>209</sup>

He does not specify that this is a traditional-looking Christ—but it would not surprise me if He were. We know that there were some pictures of Christ before any Jesuits arrived—so at some stage His face might sometimes have been copied. I think that it is likely to be the explanation for a ‘ Last Supper ’<sup>210</sup> (Plate II) in which Christ is clear and in profile, seated at a table, having a halo and holding a cup. He is with nine men, some seated and some standing, most of whom are clearly in European dress. The table is spread. This takes place in what I see as an utterly Mogulish palace courtyard that could be right out of the Red Fort in Delhi—although the drapes on the doorway strike me as Europeanish, but I have never seen the Red Fort furnished (such drapes might have existed there).

Another picture, which may have belonged to a Christian work, shows someone who looks like a prophet, perhaps the same man I think is Christ in ‘ Christ surrounded by His Disciples ’ above, disputing with a crowd in a landscape.<sup>211</sup> If he is Christ I suppose that this might be of the Sermon on the Mount.

One of the pictures still with the so-called *Life of Christ* in Lahore shows someone dressed as a Jesuit being presented to a seated dignitary by three laymen.<sup>212</sup> Mr. Skelton specu-

<sup>209</sup> Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

<sup>210</sup> IOL J. 6-6, sometimes called a ‘ Marriage at Cana ’.

<sup>211</sup> Das, *op. cit.*, p. 430, who records that this picture is illustrated in the Sotheby Catalogue of 15 June 59.

<sup>212</sup> Fol. 3b, described by Hosten, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

lates that this may be ‘Christ being shown to a seated dignitary.’

There is a ‘Madonna with Child’ in which the Pair are surrounded by many admirers, mostly Portuguese.<sup>213</sup> Perhaps the Pair were copied, for we know of the early arrival of madonna pictures, while the Portuguese were added in all good faith. So too, perhaps, with the Hyderabad ‘Descent from the Cross’ with many who are taking Him down portrayed as Portuguese in dress and feature, as mentioned above.<sup>214</sup>

Butler, who finds what I take to be honest, indeed moving, anachronisms ‘ludicrous’, describes another of the pictures still in Lahore as ‘a mysterious picture, probably meant for “Simeon blessing the Child Jesus”, but with the details much astray and with an apparent “Nativity” taking place in a balcony for good measure.’<sup>215</sup>

Another picture said to be ‘detached from some copy of Father Jerome Xavier’s *Life of Christ*’<sup>216</sup> is ‘The Inn at Bethlehem’<sup>217</sup>. Here the Virgin, before the birth of Christ I suppose, is sweeping the wall of an upper veranda—probably getting everything ready for her labour. The building is wholly Mogul and is certainly the inn and not the manger. The three magi have already arrived, indeed there is the head of a fourth, apparently on a camel and an ox. One of the men is a Mogul prince, to my eye; I used to think that he was one of the three, he is motioning at the stairs that lead up to the floor the Virgin is on—now I am inclined to suspect that he is Joseph. The next man, certainly one of the magi, as I think, is thoroughly Portuguese; the next seems Mogulish to me; the final head wears a cap that I cannot identify—

<sup>213</sup> Löwenstein, *op. cit.*, Pl. 23.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 1.

<sup>215</sup> Butler, *op. cit.*, pp. 65 f.; this is Löwenstein, *ibid.*, Pl. 49.

<sup>216</sup> Maclagan, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>217</sup> Reproduced in *ibid.*, facing p. 203; this is now I.S. 170-1950.

PLATE VII



CHRIST

K. C. S. PANIKER

*(With permission of K. C. S. Paniker)*



PLATE VIII

CHRIST

NIKHIL BISWAS



but it certainly is not Mogul. The Portuguese wise man appears in other pictures of the magi too, as I noted above—I cannot guess why.

In closing I would note that there were Jesuit painters in South India from 1600 and 1607 but that their paintings found no place to root—even though it is said that one of them ‘ painted a panel of pictures relating to Jesus, which Venkata hung, it is said, in a prominent part of his Palace at Vellore.’<sup>218</sup> Much later in those regions the Muslim ruler Hyder Ali seemed as tolerant as Akbar. He worshipped Hindu gods too. But he did not share Akbar’s interest in religions, let alone Jesus, nor his interest in the arts.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> C. Hayavadana Rao (ed.), *Mysore Gazetteer* (New Edition), Bangalore : Government Press, 1933, Vol. II, pp. 2212 ff., 2217 ff.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 2539, 2543.

### III. BENGAL SCHOOL AND AFTER

For several decades ending sometime in the 1960s almost every Indian painter of note painted pictures of Jesus. I believe, with Mark Tobey, that ; ' The content of a painting is tied up with time, place and history. It is always related to man's beliefs and disbeliefs, to his affirmations and negations. How we believe and disbelieve is mirrored in the art of our times.'<sup>1</sup> These painters (I am excluding painters known to be members of the Christian Community from this chapter) have been responding to what they know of and feel about Christ. They have been responding from an intellectual background that from the time of the Bengal Renaissance took Christ very seriously.<sup>2</sup> This is a background in which it has been possible to affirm, in some sense, ' Jesus is Lord ' without converting to the Christian community.<sup>3</sup> Such an affirmation is no doubt made somewhat easier within what might be called the oriental mode of thought in which to affirm one thing (or prophet) is not necessarily to negate the other (although this is not to deny the tension in such situations). They take Christ so seriously that in single page interview-writeups in a 1970 secular collection of the work of fourteen of them, at least three of them mention Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless I suppose that many of the painters are at least as interested in the Christ motif as they are in the man

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Josef James (ed.), *Indian Art since the Early 40s*, Madras : Artists' Handicrafts Association of Cholamandal Artists' Village, 1974, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. M.M.Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, Madras : CISRS, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Taylor, ' On Acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus Christ Without Shifting Tents ', *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Nirode Mazumdar, *Drawings by Fourteen Contemporary Artists of Bengal*, Calcutta : Kala Mandir, 1970.

Jesus Christ—and perhaps many are interested primarily in the motif. Yet, most of them do talk and write about the man Jesus and His life—when given an opportunity. As for the motif : A leading poet and intellectual of Calcutta has suggested that there have been these three major iconographical breakthroughs in history : (1) The suffering Christ on the Cross, showing suffering (service) *for* others ; (2) The smile of Buddha, displaying, in a way, the unspeakable he had found ; and (3) Nataraja, showing the creativeness of Siva in a form other than the lingam.<sup>5</sup> It seems to me that it is just this aspect of the suffering service of Christ which is central to the Christ motif of many modern Indian painters.

Be that as it may, I find it of interest that some of the Christian painters whom I treat in the next chapter have attempted to appropriate all three of these iconographical breakthroughs for painting Christ. Several give Him a head somewhat like Buddha's in very many respects—although I am inclined to think that they just miss the smile. And at least, one, Jyoti Sahi, has painted several Christ-natarajas.

#### SOME PAINTERS

##### **Nandalal Bose**

was one of the greatest Indian painters of the first half of this century. (In Bengal Bose is sometimes transliterated as Basu.) He studied under Abanindranath Tagore, the leader of the Bengal School of painting, and became the chief artist and teacher of painting at Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan ashram school and university. Several of the Christian painters we must take very seriously, including Angelo da Fonseca and Vinayak S. Masoji (who stayed on to teach there), studied under him there. All others who have been

<sup>5</sup> P. Lal in a lecture at St. John's University, Collegeville, on 15 Feb. 1973.

influenced in any way by the Bengal School have been influenced by Nandalal.<sup>6</sup> Very many of Nandalal's paintings are of Hindu religious themes and subjects—often arising from the ancient canonical epics and tales. The saints and deities in his paintings no doubt retain their essential character but with a kind of modern interpretation—a kind of Shantiniketan interpretation; which is to say a kind of Bengal renaissance interpretation.<sup>7</sup> He once painted a marvellous Buddha Carrying Lamb—that is, Buddha as the good shepherd.<sup>8</sup>

Nandalal painted Jesus in the same manner. So far as I can tell all of his paintings of Jesus include the cross. In 1945 he painted at least two versions of 'Christ Carrying the Cross.' One of these (Plate V) was painted for Jaya Appasamy before her departure from Shantiniketan. Miss Appasamy says the choice of the subject was Nandalal's. The other is reproduced on the cover and also as a frontispiece of a volume of some of Rabindranath Tagore's Bengali writings about Jesus—being mostly some of his annual Christmas homilies at Shantiniketan and some poems including 'The Son of Man.'<sup>9</sup> The version which was given to Miss Appasamy is on handmade paper, done entirely in Indian red and black in a semirealistic manner though in the touch method. It is signed and dated around Nandalal's 'chop' mark—an oriental seal affected by many in the Bengal School of painters. The published version appears similar although there is no black in the reproduction. In them both, Jesus is down on one knee holding the cross with his left hand and straining

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Panchanan Mandal, 'Biographical Sketch' in *The Visvabharati Quarterly*, Vol. 34 (1968-69, Nandalal Number), pp. 182-196.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jaya Appasamy, *Abanindranath Tagore and the Art of his times*, New Delhi: Lalit Kala Akademi, 1968, p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> Mandal, *op. cit.*, P. 188.

<sup>9</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Khristo* (ed. Pulinbehari Sen), Calcutta: Visvabharathi Book Dept., 1968.

to get up. A woman stands behind him, helping. Jesus has a halo and a crown of thorns. He is bare to the waist and then has a cloth wrapped around himself exactly as an Indian peasant would have. I think Miss Appasamy's version is better. In it Jesus seems far more human; his hand and foot are helping him to press the cross up more realistically and his eyes looking out seem to me more satisfactory than his eyes in the other version—although there they do add to a feeling of his concern for his load. The woman in Miss Appasamy's version is helping more realistically and looks less like a shrew than in the other version.

I think it legitimate to look into Tagore's text for clues to Nandalal's understanding of the Jesus he painted. Tagore's understanding was undoubtedly central for the whole of the core group at Shantiniketan, of which Nandalal was a principal member. And this particular painting, painted soon after the period from which the homilies about Jesus come, was selected to be the major picture of Jesus to accompany them. In them Tagore outlines various historical reasons of foreignness and 'community' which led to a wide rejection of Jesus in Bengal.<sup>10</sup> He goes on to regret these and to outline what he feels is important and acceptable about Jesus and His teachings. He admires Jesus for not giving in to the worldly temptations of Satan and several times cites some of the beatitudes as very acceptable teaching, writing 'In this way by pointing to the Kingdom within man, he (Jesus) has glorified man.' He then stresses Jesus's call to service and writes, 'The son of man....touched the un-touchable, he ate with the outcastes and instead of rejecting the sinners he beckoned them to the way of salvation.... He called his disciples and said "he who feeds me, he who

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* The Rev. Prof. Soman Das and his mother did a rough translation of the Bengali text for me and I owe much of my understanding of it to them.

clothes those without clothes, clothes me.” . . . Service to man is the worship of those who take Christ’s teaching seriously.’

Then Tagore lifts up Our Lord’s suffering. ‘By his (Jesus’) advent God’s love has been revealed to man. Who has preached the greatness of man as Jesus Christ has? His disciples called him a man of sorrow. He accepted sorrow in a great way and thereby has made man great. When man makes himself known on the basis of suffering then man announces his undiluted humanity which cannot be quenched by fire or rent by weapons. He has preached the love of God through the love of all mankind. So it is not surprising that he should take upon himself voluntarily the suffering of man. It is the religion of love to come forward and bear the burden of sorrow voluntarily and vicariously. . . The love that has life gains glory by self-sacrifice, by affirming suffering.’ Tagore goes on to speak of God’s revelation in Christ. He calls Jesus, or perhaps it is God in Jesus, Big, or The Big. He writes ‘He who is big is redeeming us with his blood, with his pain, with his tears. . . . The Big says, “kill me no one will be able to bear your beatings.” Then we say with tears, “we will not injure you any more because you are greater than we. . . . We sit at your feet and bear your sorrow—you take all. You have loved us and we will love you also.” This is how clash is overcome and reconciliation is reached.’

Finally Tagore speaks of Jesus as *Mahapurush*. *Maha* means big or great. *Purush* means man, ‘male person’, but not so much mere man as ‘primal man’.<sup>11</sup> Toward the end of the *Rig-Veda purusha*<sup>12</sup> becomes one of the most impor-

<sup>11</sup> R.C. Zaehner, *Hindu Scriptures*, London and New York: Everyman’s Library, 1966, pp. vi ff. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, New York: Grove Press, (1954) 1959, pp. 240 f.

<sup>12</sup> *Rig-Veda*, X, xc. Entitled ‘The Sacrifice of Primal Man’ in Zaehner’s translation, *ibid.*, pp. 8 ff. Called ‘Hymn of the Primeval Man’ by Basham, *ibid.*

tant entities. His sacrificial death giving rise to the multiplicity of creation is described in great detail. Tagore's religious roots were in the Hindu reform movement of the Brahmo Samaj which sought to purify Hinduism by dropping late distortions (he writes of sweeping 'our house clean' and throwing 'the rubbish away' early in these homilies), in order to return to the purity of the Vedas. So it seems to me highly significant that he should select *purusha* from the final development of the fundamental veda, the Rig-Veda, as the basis for his final treatment of Jesus—Jesus as *Mahapurush*. Of Jesus Tagore writes 'By sacrificing this *Mahapurush* has reached the door of death and brought the message of love. Because of this he opened the supreme path by being born in a poor home. His followers did not understand his message—they were overwhelmed. This message was not pursued only by the Christians. Many in the history of the world have rejected his message. They are the people who have crucified the Christ again and again.'<sup>13</sup> Tagore continues, 'Christianity has raised the dignity of man. When I can sacrifice in the name of truth, when I can say "brother" with undiluted love, that day the son of the Father will be born in me. That would be our Christmas. Even today Jesus Christ is being crucified every day through greed and war perpetrated and perpetuated by the western nations. He called man child of the heavenly father. He said that brother should be reconciled with brother. He sacrificed his life at the alter of humanity. Christmas is the time to repent—a time to make us humble. . . . *Mahapurush* came to give freedom to man. . . . He has blessed life by his self-sacrifice. . . . His life was illumined by the sorrow and suffering of his cruel death, by his ordeal of agony. . . . Jesus took upon him-

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<sup>13</sup> This passage of Tagore's sounds a bit like the thought of the painter Nikhil Biswas, see below. Biswas was also heir to the Bengal renaissance.

self the burden of man's suffering and wore the thorny crown of sorrow. Man's salvation lies in this suffering. God has expressed his solidarity with man at the point of his suffering. Truly suffering has been overcome by the freedom and joy generated by Christ.<sup>14</sup>

At one point in the book for which it is the cover picture and frontispiece this painting 'Christ Carrying the Cross' of Nandalal is referred to as 'Son of Man'. This must also refer to Tagore's poem 'Son of Man'<sup>15</sup> which is also in the book in Bengali and which is a description of the crucifixion and includes the line 'in the bitter cup of death He poured his deathless life for those who came to the call and those who remained away.'

This concern for an understanding of Christ's suffering and cross must have been in the immediate background of Nandalal's painting. Very likely he had heard Tagore and the great Gandhian Christian theologian, C. F. Andrews, who lived at Shantiniketan, discuss these things at great length—as we know they did.<sup>16</sup>

A warning : it is by no means clear to me that the *purusha* of the Rig-Veda sacrificed himself. It seems to me that he was sacrificed. (But then I suppose that it could be argued that Jesus did not crucify himself ; He was crucified.) Having said that, I should also point out the likeness of the relation *purusha/mahapurusha* to the relation Adam/new Adam—which I think is striking.

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<sup>14</sup> A somewhat more general attempt at relating Christ's sacrifice to the vedas was made by the Christian theologian Krishna Mohan Banerjee in his *The Religion Between Christianity and Hinduism*, Madras, C.L.S., 1892, and elsewhere. Cf. Kaj Baago, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity*, Madras : CISRS, 1969, pp. 15 f., 97 ff, Cf. also K.M. Banerjee, *Arian Witness* (1875).

<sup>15</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Collected Poems and Plays* (ed. Amiya Chakravarty), New York : Macmillan, 1971, p. 364.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Daniel O'Connor, *The Testimony of C. F. Andrews*, Madras : CISRS, 1974.



Nandalal was a 'staunch supporter of Mahatma Gandhi,'<sup>17</sup> and both versions of 'Christ Carrying the Cross' seem to have been painted during the period of 1945 when Gandhi 'during his stay at Shantiniketan, came to Kala-Bhavana (where Nandalal taught and painted) and had long discussions with Nandalal.'<sup>18</sup> So I think we may hope to understand something more of Nandalal's understanding of the cross by looking quickly at Gandhi's understanding. It seems clear that although Gandhiji found some roots for his thought in the thought in the Sermon on the Mount he also took the suffering and death of Christ very seriously. One of his favourite hymns was 'When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died.' It is reported that Gandhiji was deeply touched by a picture of the crucified Christ because he was wearing only a loin-cloth. He looked so very much like an Indian peasant on the cross.<sup>19</sup> (Nandalal's Christ looks exactly like an Indian peasant in a loin-cloth.)<sup>20</sup> From this impression Gandhiji went to meditate on the importance of a cross-experience in the lives of individuals and nations.

All of this, and perhaps more, must be behind Nandalal's paintings of the crucifixion events.

### Jamini Roy

painted in his own Bengali style—developed with great sophi-

<sup>17</sup> Appasamy, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>18</sup> Mandal, *op. cit.*, p. 194. Gandhi had, of course, been at Shantiniketan as early as 1915—*cf.* Vincent Sheean, *Lead, Kindly Light*, New York: Random House, 1949, p. 116.

<sup>19</sup> *The Diary of Mahadeva Desai*, p. 82; cited by S.J. Samartha, *The Hindu Response to the Unbound Christ*, Madras: CISRS, 1974, p. 92.

<sup>20</sup> I am reminded of C. F. Andrews's vision of Christ as a coolie. Andrews was also much in Shantiniketan, *Cf.* B. Chaturvedi and M. Skyes, *Charles Freer Andrews*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949, pp. 112 f., 326; Gandhi's liking for 'When I survey the wondrous Cross' is mentioned on pp. 207, 273.

stication on the basis of village folk 'pat' technique.<sup>21</sup> This has also been called Jamini's abstract Kalighat style.<sup>22</sup> At its best (mostly during the period 1945-53) his work became almost Romanesque.<sup>23</sup> He told me that as a painter he did not mean to illustrate but to provide food for the eye just as music and poetry are for the ear and sweet or spicy food is for the mouth. By way of example, he suggested that the old translation of the Bible is poetry, food for the ear, as the new translations are not; thus, I surmised that he looked to the Authorized Version and the Serampore Bengali versions of the Bible for his Christ-themes. He said that his style was a search for something typical which will transpose into all geographical (I think that he meant cultural) settings, forms and types and thus is especially appropriate (my word) for Jesus and other deities who, in a similar way, are at home in air or fire or on water—in all settings.

Part of this style is a wide-eyed, folk art look which he used in all his work and which has been widely imitated. I told Jamini Babu that it has been said of one of his paintings, an excellent one entitled in one reproduction 'Maria Tujhe Pranam', that 'In this Madonna the large staring eyes are called in Sanskrit by a word which means literally "fish eyes". A fish, having no lids, never blinks, and its eyes in Hindu thought represent the gaze of a holy person fixed on God.'<sup>24</sup> I find this picture particularly interesting because of the

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<sup>21</sup> I spent a morning in his studio talking with him and seeing a large collection of his work in May, 1966, and several times thereafter exchanged letters with him.

<sup>22</sup> I must acknowledge the help of Edward C. Dimock, Jr., in understanding this.

<sup>23</sup> Perhaps he recognized this. He mentioned the European eleventh century as being the end of the period when the West was not 'too machine-minded.'

<sup>24</sup> United Presbyterian in the United States of America, *Christ in the Art of India: Filmstrip Guide and Reading Script*, 1963. frame 13; also reproduced as Art India cards R. 9 and R. 12; and in *Aikya*, Vol. 13, No. 11 (November 1967), cover.

alpana-like *tikka* or *bindu* that *both* Mother and Babe have on their foreheads. And I told him it had been said of another, one of his best Last Suppers, that 'The elongated lidless eyes in the central Christ figure signify God's constant watchfulness, his eyes never closed to the needs of men'<sup>25</sup> He responded that he had never heard of these ideas; consequently I surmise that they are not properly applied to these paintings.

Nevertheless, in his fine paraphrase of parts of the *Mahabharata*, R. K. Narayan, writing of the great gods Varuna, Indra, Agni and Yama who had assumed the form of Nalas at the Swayamwara of Damayanti, says '...the four gods looked on with unwinking eyes (which is the sure mark of a god), while the human Nalas' eyes fluttered normally.'<sup>26</sup> So it may not be so surprising that some thought the wide eyes of Jesus intentionally godly—at least until one remembers that the paintings of shapely village girls which sold so very well for Jamini Babu have exactly these same eyes.

Jamini Babu felt that traditional western painters, some of whom he had followed and almost copied in some of his early paintings of Christ,<sup>27</sup> had put Jesus in their own clothes and that this was a great error because He is not so bound, nor is He (so) human. He felt that the simplicity of his own style helped him to avoid this error. He said that Christ is above us, yet we can attain to Him—to the higher realm of common humanity. I understood him to be suggesting, somewhat like Keshub Chunder Sen (his fellow Bengali), that with Christ's coming the possibility for all men to evolve up to His level, in a sense, was opened up.<sup>28</sup> However,

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, frame 25.

<sup>26</sup> R. K. Narayan, *Gods, Demons, and Others*, New York; The Viking Press, (1964) 1967, p. 170.

<sup>27</sup> One of these, a descent from the cross, probably after Tintoretto, is owned by Edward C. Dimock, Jr.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. M. M. Thomas, *op. cit.*, Chapter III.

he also said that Christ is above and greater than human emotion and that therefore in his paintings, even the crucifixion and crucifixion-like<sup>29</sup> paintings, shows no suffering. This is utterly different from the painters who are primarily concerned with the suffering of Jesus. In fact Jamini Babu said that he saw Christ as being without emotion almost exactly as he thought of himself ideally as *painter* without emotion—anger, sex, and so on. I gathered that mathematics was without emotion in the same sense. I must confess that I find this view as unattractive aesthetically as theologically.

But actually Jamini Babu probably did not function exactly like that. Years ago he told Malcolm Pitt about painting Christ carrying the cross: When reading the gospel story he had *felt* the dust and heat in his face—but he had suddenly realized that the cross he carried really did not weigh that much, *that* physical cross he could have carried easily.<sup>30</sup> Jamini was far from feelingless!

It seems to me that the main part of Jamini Roy's lifetime production dealt with Hindu mythology and gods and with Christian mythology in identical style and in something like equal proportion. He displayed comparatively for me a painting of Krishna killing a Nag and one of Christ in a commanding and very similar stance. We also compared the admitted similarity between the interesting donkey as the centre of interest in a 'Flight into Egypt'<sup>31</sup> painting and the happy tiger as the centre of interest in a painting of the Hindu myth of riding a tiger. The donkey in this 'Flight' is clearly related to the Bankura horse of Bengal folk art and Cottage Industries fame. But it is elongated and has

<sup>29</sup> These show Jesus with outstretched arms and with nail holes. Some of these, Jamini Babu told me, are post-resurrection portrayals.

<sup>30</sup> Professor Pitt told me this story in La Jolla California, in 1973.

<sup>31</sup> Similar to that reproduced in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 29 Nov. 1964.

great big eyes. Mary crowned (Jamini used crowns unsparingly in Christian themes) rides side-saddle holding the Child on her lap. Joseph leads, wearing a curious cap. All three are big-eyed, large-eared and wholly Jamini. Some alpana-like dotted circles are scattered around as decoration—I do not recall these in the painting I saw but they appear increasingly in Jamini's later work (and they reappear in Christian imitators with numerical theological significance—especially in Bairagi treated below). Alpana (sometimes spelled alpona) is the decorative art in which village and other women make patterns on their floors with white material, usually rice flour. I confess that I find these and most of the painting containing them excessively folksy.

Finally Jamini Babu suggested that it would be wrong to paint Christ like us because we are not like him. We cannot stand on air, walk on water and so forth. No doubt, he continued, people are more at home with people like themselves. They run away from miracles; consequently, they run away from Christ when He is painted differently because He *is* different.

Jaya Appasamy gives an excellent description of one of Jamini's madonnas :

' We may take as an example a "Madonna and Child" of his middle period. This is a rectangular composition with a background of opaque Indian red. The space is divided into three equal vertical panels. In the centre is the Madonna sitting on a stool, holding the Christ Child in her arms. The figures have strong resemblance to the wooden dolls already mentioned under folk art with undifferentiated bodies and large heads in which the biggest feature is the eye. . . . The Madonna is seen against a house, here stylized into a decorative frame. She wears a blue patterned gown and the background is brilliant vermilion. In the panels on either side

are four kingly figures with and without crowns, some bearing offerings in bowls....The effect of the whole work is highly decorative.....In adopting such a decorative manner Jamini Roy loses some of the qualities of high art, especially a personal expression and emotional qualities which succumb to his stylized formula. Simply as decoration his compositions are effective and handsome.'<sup>32</sup>

I venture to suggest that in her criticism of Jamini Babu Miss Appasamy is far too much the product of the Bengal School in which she was trained. She expresses very well what the Bengal School thought of Jamini. But it seems to me that Jamini cannot be dismissed so easily. Indeed a leading South Indian painter and teacher has written :

'Jamini Roy...was a path finder and as such did not belong to the effete Bengal School of Abanindranath. He turned to the vital Indian folk art of the day for release from the overpowering influences of the west. But he was at once a deeper student and critic of the west as well, deeper than any other artist of his generation.....His works of the late forties were inspired by the life of Christ, the art of Romanesque France (the sculptured figures of Christian saints) and his own background of love of the work of his contemporaries, the folk artists (*patwas*) of Bengal. These pictures of the Christ series are his real contribution to modern painting. He did very little after that and ceased to be a force in Indian painting.'<sup>33</sup>

Joseph James says of these same pictures :

'In a few remarkable pictures that he did towards the beginning of the forties, Jamini Roy took his mind comple-

<sup>32</sup> Appasamy, *op. cit.*, pp. 100 f. The picture is in the Oberlin College collection.

<sup>33</sup> 'C.A.', 'Modern art in India—a search for identity' in James (ed.) *op. cit.*, p.8.

tely off the modern European analytical techniques and struck out with figurative statements of astounding power. He drew boldly from native folk art and from the pre-renaissance art of Europe. But he was ignored for the outright thing that he did because he was one man in his life time against the many who stayed charmed with the romantics. More so perhaps, because he was himself unable to sustain the initiative he had taken in those remarkable pictures.<sup>34</sup>

Exactly these Christ pictures of Jamini's are found in every important collection of modern Indian painting. I am inclined to guess that they are one of the reasons for Christ being taken so seriously by Indian painters for a decade or so after Jamini painted them.

In one of Jamini's many other madonnas I think the four flanking individuals might be the evangelists; this one also includes two yellow-faced angels.<sup>35</sup> Jamini's angels often look like small-winged editions of his village girls. Another madonna has a crowned mother sitting on a traditional painted wood high-backed chair with a crowned Child; the pillar-like frames have crossed fish on them, which I take to be a Christian symbol.<sup>36</sup> A fish design also appears alpina-like in a corner of one of his annunciations.<sup>37</sup> There is also a remarkable madonna-like picture of the crowned Babe on Joseph's knee<sup>38</sup> (Plate VI) of which it has been written.

<sup>34</sup> In James (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> In the National Art Gallery, Madras. Reproduced in James (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 134; and in *Artrends*, Vol. 1, No. 2. (January 1962), p. 2

<sup>36</sup> This picture was given by the Most Revd. Lakdasa De Mel to the chapel of the Pratt Memorial School, Calcutta.

<sup>37</sup> I saw this in his studio in 1966.

<sup>38</sup> Reproduced in James (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 135 (where the colours are poor); and in *Artrends*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (January 1962), p. 1; and on the dust cover and as a frontispiece to the bound *Artrends*, 1961-'67 (where the colours are also poor).

‘The picture of the Christ and Joseph belongs to his last and most important period. With this work and a few other pictures of that period around 1948, Jamini Roy establishes himself as modern India’s greatest living painter.’<sup>39</sup> Not far from the truth I would think—but I do think that Jamini did have a later, lesser, period.

One of Jamini’s best paintings of the Crucifixion<sup>40</sup> has a yellowish Jesus with his arms raised, holes in his hands and feet, red palms, large eyes, drooping moustache, minimal fringe of beard, wearing a loin-cloth and a crown, standing on a kind of pedestal. He has an almost identical figure on either side of Him, except that these two figures are darker—the two thieves, without doubt. The background is made up of many onlooking devotees, many with ‘hands folded’ wearing unisex clothes but some have moustaches while others seem female, some of these onlookers are also crowned. A somewhat similar Christ stands alone in another Crucifixion.<sup>41</sup> In another<sup>42</sup> this same Christ with a cross in outline behind him has a small female with crowns, earrings and folded hands on each side of him and there are two alpina-like dotted circles—one on each side while the whole is enclosed in a painted frame—the circles and the frame add more folksyness than I like and I suppose that this is a rather late work. Although it seems as if this frame does give a sort of stained-glass-effect.

Some of his large paintings of the Last Supper are quite

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<sup>39</sup> Sunanda (a pseudonym of K.C.S.Paniker), ‘Jamini Roy’ in *Artrends*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (January 1962), pp. 2 f.

<sup>40</sup> National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, Acc. No. 157. Reproduced in the National Gallery’s *A Handbook of the Bengal School*, p.31.

<sup>41</sup> In the collection of Mary Lyon and R.W. Taylor.

<sup>42</sup> No. 9 in the exhibition ‘The Passion of Christ’ presented by The Board of World Missions of the Lutheran Church in America, New York, no date.



remarkable,<sup>43</sup> and seem more 'human' than much of the rest of his best painting. These, like many of his other paintings, were replicated frequently on his theory that this was basically a development of Bengal folk art in which replication is not only permitted but is the whole point of the exercise. Many painters trained in the western pre-supposition that each work is singular have found it impossible to understand Jamini at this point.

Sometimes, in fairly early pictures I think, Jamini Babu depicts Christ wearing a stole as if he was in a modern liturgical church service. One of these is 'Christ Preaching'<sup>44</sup> which is a water-colour in which Christ has a slight beard and moustache, carries a book in his left hand and has his right hand in a preaching-mudra—with the stole included He looks rather like the complete clergyman. His 'Bengali Madonna',<sup>45</sup> who would fit well in many Calcutta settings, may be from the same period; it has a red alpina-like circular design in an upper corner and the Mother is wearing a simple, ordinary non-alpanaish red *bindu* or *tikka* on her forehead—as Bengali women do.

### K. C. S. Paniker

is the doyen of South Indian painters and, in my view, probably the most continuously creative throughout a lifetime of anyone painting in India today. In the fifties Paniker took his artistic cue from Jamini Roy and this may well be one reason for his interest in painting Christ at that time. It has been well written that,

'K. C. S. Paniker was one who had all along refused to submit to the "realism" of modern European analytical

<sup>43</sup> There is one in the large side chapel in St. Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta, and another across the street in the Bishop's House. Cf. also note 25 above.

<sup>44</sup> National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, Acc. No. 64.

<sup>45</sup> Art India card 010.

styles. And when Jamini Roy did those remarkable pictures<sup>46</sup> Paniker immediately grasped what was meant by them. Rather than to keep straining at the native subjects with western analytical techniques the natural thing to do is to stand by the integrity of the native subject and to hazard new and more serviceable techniques for making adequate statements of it. Jamini Roy's work had proved that radically different kinds of statements were, in fact, feasible in the medium. With something like that for an assurance, Paniker and a group of painters in Madras ventured out in the late fifties and in a short while of five to six years of work they obtained convincing results.<sup>47</sup>

At the beginning of this period Paniker painted Christ themes. In at least some of them he was trying to say something which he then felt the Christ figure—the Christ motif—would help him to say.<sup>48</sup> In others he seems to have been referring directly to Christ. He also mentioned pictures which he feels are especially 'Christian' but which do not portray Christ. One of these is 'Two figures'<sup>49</sup> a very striking black nude mother kneeling with a child standing and looking right into her face—against a red background. Paniker said of it, 'This is very Christian.' Once when he was painting Christ, he told a friend that he was not painting Christ but that he was painting 'agony' and that Christ occurred to him as the appropriate subject—I would be inclined to say motif—and that he could not associate this 'agony' with any Indian

<sup>46</sup> This refers mostly to Jamini Babu's pictures of Christ mentioned above, especially in the quotation of note 34 above.

<sup>47</sup> Josef James in James (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>48</sup> My understanding of Paniker is based mainly on a conversation we had in November 1965 and on later conversations with our mutual friend Josef James of Madras Christian College.

<sup>49</sup> No. 1 in M. Anantanarayanan (ed.), *Paniker*, New Delhi, Lalit Kala Akademi, 1961; Also reproduced in *Artrends*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (October 1961), p. 2, where it is titled 'Love'.

image.<sup>50</sup> At this same time he would dismiss Indian subjects including Buddha, as effeminate. It was then he said that, if you scratch Buddha, you will see a prince, whereas if you scratch Christ there is the carpenter's son, someone authentic.

Briefly the setting for this is as follows :

' From the 1940s onwards the early tendency of artists in Madras where the most significant centre of experimentation (in Tamilnadu) is, was realistic in character and owed some debt of influence to artistic tendencies abroad. The period was followed by that of social realism in the depiction of human labour. This was succeeded by attention to the portrayal of human suffering, in the case of K. C. S. Paniker depiction of suffering as personified in the suffering of Christ.

' The 1960s have seen a determined movement away from this tradition. Rather than using the human figure to express or personify humanity or to portray individual men, there has been an experimentation in the use of non-human symbols in an attempt to depict humanity as a whole. This was regarded as a transition from "realism to reality". The symbols used are very often taken from the Tantric art. The intention of this is to search for symbolism and orientation in the heritage of the past that may give a clue to the meaning for the present and the future. This is sometimes described as "looking backward that we may go forward". This search for symbols continues so that they may say what they wish to say.'<sup>51</sup>

Paniker told me that he had been fascinated with the 'Christ theme' from his days as a student at Madras Chris-

<sup>50</sup> I speculate that he may have been painting 'Scourged' which is No. 2 in Anantanarayanan (ed.), *ibid.* Arup Das, whom I treat below, dwells on agony.

<sup>51</sup> 'Group report' in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XVII, No 4 (December 1970), pp. 89 f.

tian College. He sees Jesus as a blood and flesh man, but special and strange. He was not meek and mild ; here Paniker cited His chasing out the money-changers and some other New Testament examples. He was not loving, but He was lovable. His eyes were strange, not loving. He saw through you ; here Paniker referred to Ramakrishna's vision of Christ in which he met Him on a particular street in Calcutta—in a very ordinary place where he recognised Him because of His semitic nose and his 'strange' look. This semitic nose is clear in several of Paniker's paintings. He pointed it out to me in his 'Woman taken in adultery'<sup>52</sup> where it is very clear as it also is in his 'Christ'<sup>53</sup> (Plate VII) and in his 'Healing of the leper.'<sup>54</sup> In all three of these paintings, as in his other non-Christ-themed paintings of the same period, Paniker features heads which are shown relatively larger than bodies—somehow the figures look a bit like curiously proportioned china dolls. But this is not unpleasing ; and they by no means look like people from China. In 'Healing of the leper' Christ has His hands raised, in blessing I suppose ; and the leper is kneeling and looks anxious. In 'Woman taken in adultery' Christ's hands are down at His side, but show some activity, and the woman is kneeling and, perhaps, wringing her hands ; a fellow with a stone in his raised left hand looks puzzled and two faces in the background look as if they wished that they were somewhere else. All the feet that are seen in these three pictures are bare. Paniker added that in the portrayal of Christ he could not get entirely away from a European Christ—'because that's the root by which he came to us.' I am inclined to think that he means by this the

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<sup>52</sup> 'Woman taken in adultery' is actually No. 8 in my copy of Anantanarayanan (ed.), *op. cit.*, where it and No. 28 are interchanged in the detailed listing with titles at the back of the book.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 24.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 26.

use of something like a traditional beard, and sometimes a nearly traditional hairdo, when portraying Christ.

The best tale of Ramakrishna's vision of Christ that I have been able to find goes like this :

' When the desire to realise the Christian ideal arose in his mind, the Divine Mother fulfilled it in a strange way, without any struggle on his part. One day the Master was in the parlour of the garden-house of Jadu Nath Mallik at Dakshineswar, on the walls of which were many beautiful portraits, one of them being Christ's.<sup>55</sup> Sri Ramakrishna was looking attentively at the picture of the Madonna with the Divine Child and reflecting on the wonderful life of Christ, when he felt as though the picture had become animated, and that rays of light were emanating from the figures of Mary and Christ, and entering into him, altogether changing his mental outlook. When he realised that his Hindu ideas were being pushed into a corner by this onrush of new ones, he tried his best to stop it and eagerly prayed to the Divine Mother, " What is it that Thou art doing to me, Mother ? " But in vain. His love and regard for the Hindu gods were swept away by this tidal wave, and instead a deep regard for Christ and the Christian church filled his heart, and opened to his eyes the vision of Christian devotees burning incense and candles before the figure of Jesus in the churches and offering unto him the eager outpourings of their hearts. Returning to the Dakshineswar temple he was so engrossed in these thoughts that he forgot to visit the Divine Mother in the temple. For three days those ideas held sway in his mind. On the fourth day, as he was walking in the

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<sup>55</sup> This very picture is said to now be in the Hindu Temple in San Francisco, California; Swami Gambhurananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1957, pp. 15 f.—where the same tale is told more briefly.

Panchavati, he saw an extraordinary-looking person of serene aspect approaching him with his gaze intently fixed on him. He knew him at once to be a man of foreign extraction. He had beautiful large eyes, and though the nose was a little flat, it in no way marred the comeliness of his face. Sri Ramakrishna was charmed and wondered who he might be. Presently the figure drew near, and from the inmost recesses of Sri Ramakrishna's heart there went up the note, "There is the Christ who poured out his heart's blood for the redemption of mankind and suffered agonies for its sake. It is none else but that Master-Yogin Jesus, the embodiment of Love!"

'Then the Son of Man embraced Sri Ramakrishna and became merged in him. The Master lost outward consciousness in Samadhi, realising his union with the Brahman with attributes. After some time he came back to the normal plane. Thus was Sri Ramakrishna convinced that Jesus Christ was an Incarnation of the Lord.'<sup>56</sup>

A further tale of Ramakrishna referring to this experience is :

'Long after, in discussing Christ with his disciples who were able to speak English, he asked, "Well, you have read the Bible. Tell me what it says about the features of Christ. What did he look like?" They answered, "We have not seen this particularly mentioned anywhere in the Bible; but Jesus was born among the Jews, so he must have been fair, with large eyes and an aquiline nose." Sri Ramakrishna only remarked, "But I saw his nose was a little flat—who knows why!" Not

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<sup>56</sup> *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, 6th. ed., Almora : Advaita Ashrama, 1948, pp. 253 ff.; fully quoted in Claude Alan Stark, *God of All*, Cape Cod: Claude Stark, 1974, pp. 86 f. The same tale is well retold by John Moffitt, *Journey to Gorakhpur*, London : Sheldon Press, (1972) 1973, pp. 257 f.

attaching much importance to those words at the time, the disciples, after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, heard that there were three extant descriptions of Christ's features, and one of these actually described him as flat-nosed !'<sup>57</sup>

It seems to me as if Paniker's Jesus looks more like his recollection of the Ramakrishna description than like this description in the current literary versions of it. I am not entirely clear about just what a flat nose looks like—but Paniker's noses of Jesus, while different from his other noses in paintings of the same period, do not look flat to me ; but they do look semitic.

Paniker mentioned more than once Ramakrishna's understanding of Christ as influential on his own interpretation. Once he asserted that Christ's life almost shook Ramakrishna's faith in Hinduism. During our discussion of this he declared, 'I am a Hindu but *He* is mine—as a great man.' Ernest Renan's *Life of Christ* was another major influence on Paniker's understanding and interpretation. Renan, according to Paniker, did not deify Christ but saw Him as a simple man, not acquainted with pomp, luxury or honour. We looked together at a print made from his really powerful oil painting of a muscular Christ straining on the cross. On query I gathered that Paniker in this painting was really much more interested in His great-manness than in His sacrifice.

K. C. S. Paniker's early, huge, fresco-like, 'Blessed are the Peacemakers'<sup>58</sup> which he did for Rajbhavan (the Governor's mansion) in Madras, shows Christ, Buddha and Gandhi, each huge compared to the multitudes of ordinary people, standing in large crowds of poor, sick and naked, giving blessing, show-

<sup>57</sup> Swami Ghanananda, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Unique Message*, 3rd. ed., London : Ramakrishna Vendata Centre, 1970, pp. 91 f.; fully quoted in *Stark, ibid.*, pp. 87 f.

<sup>58</sup> Anantanarayanan (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 31 ; also *Artrends*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (October 1961), p. 3.

ing concern and giving peace. This is another example of Christ being seen by Paniker as a great man—one of the few greatest ones (and the only one of the three from beyond India).<sup>59</sup>

I would like to suggest that Paniker's paintings of Christ tend to have more of a social dimension than the Christ-paintings of most modern Indian painters, and of most Indian Christian painters for that matter, who tend largely toward the events of His passion—when they are not painting the baby Jesus. While Paniker does refer to His passion in some of his paintings he nicely balances this with Christ with the poor and suffering, with the leper, and with the captured adulteress.

### Nikhil Biswas

was a major artist of the younger generation in Calcutta.<sup>60</sup> His later works, mostly in ink on white paper or on large scrolls of kraft paper, are concerned with man's struggle and suffering, with Christ before, during and after crucifixion and with clowns representing modern men's attempt to hide their inner selves. Of about thirty works selected by Biswas to be shown in East Germany shortly before he died, fully one-third were Christ-themed. The Biswases were not Christians but they did celebrate Christmas with their Christian friends.<sup>61</sup> Biswas was basically a modern secular Bengali artist. Sometime in the early 1960s, I guess, he had gone to Benaras and from this trip had come a series of portraits of holy men seen there and of some of the houses, ghats and streets;

<sup>59</sup> Balakrishna Sama, one of the most honoured elder painters and writers of Nepal, told me in 1966 that Buddha, Christ and Gandhi were the three greatest of men because they were highly religious *and* they served people!

<sup>60</sup> Biswas died in November, 1966. My understanding of him is largely based on two conversations we had early in November, 1965, and on conversations with his widow and some of his associates in 1968. His name is sometimes transliterated Nikal.

<sup>61</sup> Such Christmas celebrations are not uncommon in Bengal.



however, there were no 'religious' themes in this work. I am inclined to suspect that he did not think of his Christ-themes as 'religious' either.

Biswas said that his interest in Jesus was because He was the most maladjusted man in history—the greatest and most maladjusted man. Or rather, he said, we all are non-adjusted to Him. Jesus was relevant, or is relevant, but we do not recognise this, or we do not accept Him. So, He continues as a concern for artists, until there is some realisation of what He preached. Biswas and I spoke of many things and several friends, and I got the impression that he was excitingly involved in his art and thought, in moving toward some kind of an existentialist position. The implication seemed to be that Jesus was right and we are wrong; perhaps that He was correct and we are fallen—his torturous mob scenes, including one called 'Immigration' (from nowhere to nowhere, he volunteered) give a sense of this predicament of fallenness. Biswas also felt that Christ was special in that He came to us as man and remained man to the end, declining to rescue Himself by a miracle. Biswas's understanding of Jesus reminded me a bit of V. Chakkarai's understanding of Him as the 'Man of Men'<sup>62</sup>—although their basic viewpoints are certainly different.

Once Nikhil wrote something like this :

'To me Jesus Christ symbolises the pain and agony of a suffering man. Hence, he is the fittest symbol of the soul stirring the (*sic*) pangs and helplessness of our age. Europe in her zeal to make a god of him has overlooked the simple truth that he was essentially a human being.'<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Cf. P.T. Thomas, *The Theology of Chakkarai*, Bangalore : CISRS, 1968.

<sup>63</sup> Adapted and translated from an article by Nikhil Biswas in *Sambit*, a Bengali monthly, in Nirode Mazumdar, *op. cit.*

Biswas's Christ-themed paintings show us what happened to Jesus and they show us how cruelly He was misunderstood, or rejected, in a very profound and moving way. But they do not really show us why this happened to Jesus because there seem to be no pictures of His teaching ministry which is, I would contend, exactly what was being rejected. The pictures go from 'Christ's entry into the City' through several pictures of His scourging, a number of crucifixions, and an 'Entombment' to at least two of the resurrected Christ.<sup>64</sup> A number of them are of the same size and seem to make a series.<sup>65</sup> 'Scourged Christ' is rather typical in several ways. The scourgers are very simple-faced hollow-eyed fellows with roundish heads and low foreheads who appear in almost all of the Christ-themed works. For Biswas they seem to be everyman who is more anxious than bitter or vicious. Biswas shows everyman very like this in his clowns who, he told me, are us—necessary, minor, unremembered, faceless performers who are of the essence of the circus which is life. In this same picture, however, Christ has character. There are arrow-like darts around Him, particularly around His head. In the crucifixions these become arrows but here they seem nervous and dart-like. In his 'Christ' (Plate VIII), a post-resurrection ink study, a single, simple scourger—everyman—is looking in dull astonishment at the nail-hole in His uplifted hand. Here too are the darts—almost a crown of darts. In the crucifixions, including two versions of 'Under the Cross' showing only His feet and the heads (or heads and shoulders) of some simple-faced scourgers, there are arrows in His body—sometimes along with the conventional nails. In one 'Crucifixion' the crowd has several spears and I have the impression that they are being used on His body. Sometimes

<sup>64</sup> Post-resurrection portraits of Christ by painters who are not Christians seem rather rare. One of Biswas' is a modernistic oil.

<sup>65</sup> Most in this uniform size were done after I last met him.

Biswas shows Christ strong and straining under scourging or on the cross<sup>66</sup>—but more often he is beset with uncomprehending stares and the darts of, I suppose, rejection and anxiety.

### Arup Das

is a Bengali now working in New Delhi.<sup>67</sup> One of his early memories is of two paintings that his widowed mother had side by side in their living room—one of Christ and the other of a blue Lord Krishna—and of her explaining to him, when he asked, that there is no difference between Christ and Krishna and other gods. Mr. Das thinks of himself as deeply Hindu but as not being a very religious man in the sense that he does not practice any austerities or follow any other strictly religious practices. So, while he is too humble to qualify himself as a religious devotee of Christ he says ‘but I like Christ.’ He has seen visions of Christ. He thinks of himself as a mystic and reports that he does not follow the Bible but his own personal feeling for and toward Christ. He speaks of getting vibrations from Christ. And asserts that his own *path* is that of mysticism related to psychic pain. This seems to make Christ special for him but he is quite clear that Christ is like Krishna and Siva—that they too were once flesh and blood.

Visions of Christ are not at all unusual in Indian culture. In a consultation of about thirteen educated Christian converts from Hinduism about ten reported visions of Him around the time of their conversion.<sup>68</sup> I suppose that Mr. Das’s experience is something like the *anubhava* (mystic experience) through which a good many Hindu and Christian

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<sup>66</sup> As in the crucifixion ‘Christ’ reproduced in Nirode Mazumdar, *op. cit.*, which also has darty arrows.

<sup>67</sup> Mr. Das very kindly entertained me in his home in October, 1970, when we talked about his paintings and ideas.

<sup>68</sup> The report of this consultation and some papers from it are in *Religion and Society*, Vol. X, No. 3 (September 1963).

thinkers claim their direct and basic experience of Christ. Such an initial *anubhava* is a very acceptable starting point for a response to Christ for many individuals and it deserves to be taken much more seriously by the church than it has been in India in recent decades. S J. Samartha has recognized this in his recent book where he writes :

‘The word *Anubhava* inadequately translated “experience”, is not a psychological feeling in the individual nor is it the subject-object relationship of cognitive understanding. It is the experience of being grasped by God in Jesus Christ, opening human life to a deeper dimension of reality . .

‘*Anubhava* is the chief source of knowledge in Hindu philosophy, particularly in *advaita*. Sankara, the great exponent of this system, points out that *Brahman* cannot be known through perception because it cannot be regarded as an object among other objects. Neither can it be known through inference because no inference can logically lead to it. *Brahman* can be known only through *anubhava*. This direct, intuitive experience carries with it its own authority. *Atma sakshikam anutapannam* (the witness of the inner self is best). It is usually pointed out that this *anubhava* cannot be expressed fully in intellectual terms or communicated in words. It is like asking a sleeping man the question : are you asleep ? If he answers he is *not* asleep ; if he *is* asleep he cannot answer, he can only be silent.

‘However, if this experience should be meaningful to others, it has to be expressed in intelligible words and categories . . .’<sup>69</sup>

I think that Samartha is on to something very important here. But I would dispute the last sentence I have quoted by sug-

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<sup>69</sup> Samartha, *op. cit.*, pp. 152 f.

gesting that Arup Das's *anubhava* may be much more meaningfully expressed to others through painting than through intelligible words and categories. I would venture, further, that painting and the other arts are usually far better bearers and communicators of *anubhava* than words and categories are.

Almost all of Arup Das's paintings of Jesus are of His agony and suffering because, as he says, this is what happens. For his one-man show in Delhi in 1970, the theme and title of which was Agony, Das wrote the following:

'The paintings I am showing are on the theme of Man, who, I believe, is born to live and love and to let others live, if I may add. But something has gone despicably wrong with him. We all live under the same sky and on the same planet, nourished by its astonishingly rich resources. I should say we ought to live. But, we have made this life a mess. Nor are we alone to blame or the modern times, but we have failed all along. There is no room for the good man on earth when he does appear amidst us. His life is cut short by the same people whom he loves. One such soul was Jesus of Nazareth. Near home we had Gandhiji. They both met the same fate.

'These paintings of mine owe very much to the theme of Christ. I chose Christ, to Gandhi, quite unconsciously in the beginning and then I realised that nobody suffered as much as HE in all history. His crucifixion was transcendental and his agony unparalleled. In fact Agony is the theme of my paintings. Agony, not of Christ and Gandhi alone but of Man, miserable man.'<sup>70</sup>

Each of seventeen of the twenty-five paintings and drawings in that show were entitled 'Agony'.

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<sup>70</sup> From a four-page brochure entitled *Arup Das* and printed by Printing and Packaging Division of PPI, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-8, 1970.

I guess that Arup Das is saying that he sees Jesus in His suffering as an ideal man, perhaps as *the* ideal man—and that this is completely tied up to his suffering. But this does not mean that Das' Christs are particularly attractive. They are not. He told me that he had experienced great difficulty in selling his paintings of Jesus because potential buyers, including Roman Catholic 'Fathers', want a pretty-faced Christ without character. But, said Das, Christ was not a bourgeois—he belonged to everybody.

'Christ'<sup>71</sup> is a large work with a huge, inviting, post-resurrection Jesus standing in the middle. (Das tends to paint huge Jesuses). Nail holes in His hands and feet show the time. All around are scenes from the most important events of his life. There is a madonna—probably the only one Das has ever painted. Also included are the star and magi, a last supper, a Gethsmane, some fishing, a healing, and the three crosses—about nine scenes from his life in all. This 'descriptive' combining of various life episodes into a single composition about a king, saint or deity is very traditional in Indian painting—but in the traditional use there would not ordinarily be such a central figure.<sup>72</sup>

Several of Das's paintings of Jesus come directly from his visions. One such is a large yellow Christ in the middle of a jumble of bodies and hands and some horses. It represents all time from the dawn of earth (creation) before the ten commandments and Christ in all and above all. Another shows Christ being confronted by a dark person on a strong horse.

<sup>71</sup> In the collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, No. 1392, and reproduced in Lehmann, *op. cit.*, Pl 147. A very similar 'Christ' is reproduced in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 29 Nov. 1964.

<sup>72</sup> I have been instructed in this by Josef James who also pointed out that most Indian epics are a collection of some such episodes without clear central focus and finish. Nandalal's 'Bapuji' which has a huge Gandhi against a background of many small village scenes is reproduced in *The Modern Review*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 3 (September 1930), facing p. 245.

This, Das says, represents black force—that is the dark side of human nature.

I suppose that about half of Das' paintings of Jesus involve the cross. In one of these Christ is on the cross and almost dead. Of this Das said, the people will just try to throw him away, to kill him. In this picture there is an inset of chaos—chaos because nowadays, at least, said Das, we have no trust, affection or love, we are empty and craving. In a huge 'Descent from the Cross' Christ's body is being lowered in slings. A Roman eagle is looking on. There are unrestful people on both sides in the background. This, Das told me, represents a crucifixion not of Christ (or perhaps not merely of Christ) but of humanity. Crucifixion happens now and then to everybody. It happened once to Christ too. Of a pen and ink sketch titled 'Eli Eli Lama Subactani' with Christ across the top and a central everyman upright and strained, Das said that these words were once said by Christ, now they are said by everybody. Another very moving crucifixion includes a long text in Bengali in the lower right corner which expresses Das' feelings.<sup>73</sup> As Das translated it for me then this text includes 'Son of almighty God . . . the word came and told us and he was Jesus . . . in him then we are not free . . .' There is also an early crucifixion somewhat in the style of Jamini Roy, and with stylized men and women (who are not in the same Jamini style) kneeling and worshipping at the foot of the cross.<sup>74</sup> Of this Das says that it is too emotional and further that emotions are never, meaning (I guess) seldom, true.

Several of Das' paintings include a smaller Jesus in a larger scene. One of these, 'The Concentration Camp', which

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<sup>73</sup> This whole crucial text has been cropped off in the reproduction in Lehmann, *op. cit.*, Pl. 149—in which the definition is so poor that three sisters are merged into a single white blob in the left centre.

<sup>74</sup> This is in Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 150.

was exhibited as ' God that failed ' includes a rather beat looking Jesus with thorns on His head. Of this Das said that he was showing human, mental, ethical and physical suffering and that ethical suffering leads to physical suffering. Another, a very large painting called ' Human Landscape ', shows many people, at high noon, doing everything—all desires shown. Yet, Das continued, do not forget there is Christ (in centre, normal size), there is peace.

Das sees in Christ as a subject the great hope of painting—along with a blending of Indian philosophy. It is clear that Das himself has much to say through Christ as a subject for his painting. In a letter to me he refers to his paintings as ' my research work on Christian subject and other mystic paintings.'<sup>75</sup> His other mystic paintings, except for some early paintings of scenes from Ramakrishna's life, are tantric things, which sell well, and are done in a very different style.

### **M. Reddeppa Naidu**

is a distinguished younger painter working in Madras whose pictures have been exhibited internationally and hang in important public collections in India.<sup>76</sup> He had not painted Jesus until 1967 when he did so on commission for St. George's Cathedral in Madras—having been introduced to the authorities there when they decided to get some Indian paintings on Christian themes for their parish hall. Reddeppa had been painting religious themes. Much earlier he had painted some of the church buildings of Madras in a modern style—accenting their planes and angles.<sup>77</sup> Later he did some temples

<sup>75</sup> Dated October 3, 1970.

<sup>76</sup> Reddeppa and I talked about his work and ideas twice in the autumn of 1969.

<sup>77</sup> Three of these are reproduced in *Artrends*, Vol. III, Nos. 1&2 (Oct. '63, Jan. '64). pp. 1 f.; one of which, ' St.Thomas Cathedral', is also reproduced in James (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 98. One is in the collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.



and then a terribly powerful series of Hindu deities.<sup>78</sup> He says that he started out painting the life of people but later wondered about their religious performance and personal misery. This led him toward religious themes. For Reddeppa his painting is a means to self-realization.<sup>79</sup>

When Reddeppa was commissioned to do these three paintings he started reading again about Jesus's life in the New Testament. He was already quite familiar with it from his years as a student in a Christian high school. Then he painted three large pictures.<sup>80</sup> One shows a foot-washing before the last supper. The table is set in a rather western style. Christ, who is doing the washing, has thin long hair and beard—hippy style. Reddeppa has tried to bring out the disciple-master oneness of equality in this painting. The second and very large picture is 'Christ with sinners'. It is a composite picture with one large Christ surrounded by different presentations of the downtrodden and needy who need His help—a very Indian composition, I judge. I once commented to Reddeppa that this picture seemed somehow to go beyond the final powerful painting of his deity series.<sup>81</sup> He agreed, and suggested that it was so because this very large painting includes the human misery and condition of the real world and its healing by Jesus in His then human form. The third painting is a resurrection—a victorious resurrection. Christ's face is very forgiving here. The colours around Him are like a rainbow and seem to say something about mystical space.

After his deity series Reddeppa continued to paint religious themes with increased concern for mystery and mysticism and basic metaphysical themes. His titles were Hindu scriptural

<sup>78</sup> One of these is reproduced in James (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>79</sup> He has a salaried job to avoid financial dependence on his painting.

<sup>80</sup> By April 1975, these pictures were badly faded, alack !—I guess because of excessive exposure to sunlight.

<sup>81</sup> A painting showing a bit of temple and a remarkable semi-abstract deity which I have admired, praised and coveted.

texts.<sup>82</sup> Then again in September-October 1969 he painted four Christ-themed pictures on cloth. Three were crucifixions; one was of the resurrected Lord Christ. They are in bright-dye colours. The crucifixions give the impression of being blood-red drenched. Reddeppa once told me that religious affirmation leads to sacrifice—which he related to the treatment of Christ by the world. In each of these crucifixions Christ's body is well-muscled but smooth. The resurrection (Plate IX) seems somewhat related in feeling and composition to the resurrection in the cathedral parish hall. It also seems to me to be related to his deity series. In it Christ is portrayed standing in something like a niche—very like those holding deities around the outside of many Hindu temples. He is detailed, also, like some of the deity series.<sup>83</sup> Besides Him, as if on the sides of the niche, are angels. I suppose that angels properly go with the risen Christ just as other appropriate 'vehicles' are shown in the deity series—such as a lion in one and a white elephant with Indra in the sky. Below the niche are three round, floating—I feel, ball-like things; might these refer to the Trinity? Christ's right hand is raised—giving peace and blessing, it could be *abhaya* meaning 'fear not' I think. I am unable to decide whether this is an Indian or western *mudra* (hand gesture)—but it fits in marvellously well. His left hand is lowered, perhaps in *varada mudra* the boon-conferring gesture. Early in 1971 Reddeppa wrote, 'For a happy society religion is a must but it should be understood in a most contemporary condition. I think in this con-

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<sup>82</sup> Some in the Sao Paulo Exhibition: 'I am the sweet fragrance of the earth and the heat in the fire; the life in all beings, the austerity in ascetics'; 'There is no purifier in this world like knowledge; he that perfects his practice of selfless action finds that knowledge in himself in due time.'; 'I see Thee everywhere, with arms, trunks, mouths and eyes multitudinous, or shape limitless. I see no beginning, middle nor end of Thee, Lord of the Universe, Form All-embracing.'

<sup>83</sup> Especially, I should say, His feet and toes.

text the painters and writers can give a lead.'<sup>84</sup> I reckon this is what Reddeppa hopes he is doing in his Hindu-themed and his Christ-themed painting.

### Shiavax D. Chavda

has been a very prominent and well-known painter in Bombay for many years.<sup>85</sup> He is a Parsi. Many of his paintings of Christ have been published. He seems willing to use any religious theme pictorially. When I visited him one of his many mother-and-child paintings had a blue baby and was called 'Eternal Balakrishna'. He also showed me a picture of a very jolly 'King Ganesh'. He was then at work on a Kulandini series of interestingly designed and coloured snakes.

Chavda's 1949 series of Christ-themed paintings were a response to Fr. Heras' query, 'Why don't you paint Christ?' Chavda liked Christ, he knew the stories of His life, and from his study tour of Italy he was aware that the theme had great promise pictorially. The particular themes he painted are traditional ones undoubtedly found in Italy. He treats them with considerable pictorial imagination.<sup>86</sup> They are in rich pastels and tend to reproduce poorly. The 'Nativity'<sup>87</sup> is a rather traditional Europeanish treatment. There is a 'Flight into Egypt'<sup>88</sup>, a 'Driving out the money changers' in which Christ is a strong type with a circus-master's whip, and a 'Last Supper' in which there is a table of a very different shape—Chavda said he wanted some difference—perhaps from a vegetarian hotel. His 'Crown of thorns' is very strik-

<sup>84</sup> In a letter to me of 16 Feb. 1971.

<sup>85</sup> I had a long session with him in February, 1971.

<sup>86</sup> Some of the paintings of this series are reproduced in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 24 Dec. 1950.

<sup>87</sup> Reproduced on the cover of *Illustrated Weekly*, 25 Dec. 1949; also in *Christ in Indian Art, op. cit.*, frames 10, 38; also Art India card R. 13.

<sup>88</sup> Reproduced in *Together*, December 1957.

ing, it is modeled on a Naga woodcarving. In it Christ has a primitive type of face, a fringe of His tribal shawl is showing; He is popeyed and pretty grotesque. The 'Crucifixion'<sup>89</sup> is fairly modernistic, all three crosses have bodies on them, and only the body of Jesus is black—odd! The 'Descent from the Cross' deals in a very different body; here He has a domed head with curly blonde hair—a viking perhaps? Finally there is a 'Pieta'.<sup>90</sup>

In 1950 Chavda did a series of drawings from life at the performance of a passion play at St. Xavier's School.<sup>91</sup> These are related to the dance and ballet drawings from life for which Chavda is very well known. He could not always biblically identify the scenes he had drawn. He had done one or two of the 'agony in the garden' which he hesitatingly thought might be the sermon on the mount. I guess that the garden was up a little hill.

In 1962 Chavda painted a 'Crown of Thorns' in which Jesus is said to look like Vinoba Bhave. Perhaps this is why it won critical acclaim. It runs to blacks, browns and burnished golds and is quite effective—although I do not find it very affective. Then in 1968 came a rather literal 'Crucifixion' which is tall and modern and colourful. Again Christ is golden headed—I think this is hair but it just might be intended for a halo.

Chavda's Christs seem to have sold well. They have been published widely. But I did not hear him suggest that they represented any special interest in or understanding of *Christ*. I am inclined to think that Chavda does not take them quite

<sup>89</sup> Reproduced in *Illustrated Weekly* 29 Nov. 1964; *Together*, Dec. 1957, p. 41; *Christian Art in India*, *op. cit.*, frames 32, 90; and Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 145; Jesus on the cross also has a black body in Chavda's 'The Path He Made' which is on Art India card R 11. Black for death I suppose—but far too simple.

<sup>90</sup> Reproduced in *Dharmayug*, 29 Dec. 1949; also this or a similar picture in *Illustrated Weekly*, 5 Aug. 1962.

<sup>91</sup> Some of these are reproduced in *Illustrated Weekly*, 25 Mar. 1951.

seriously as painting since the Lalit Kala Akademi booklet of his work,<sup>92</sup> which must have been published after 1958, shows no Christs at all.

### S. Y. Malak

paints in Nagpur.<sup>93</sup> I know of no other member of the Muslim community in India who paints Jesus so frequently. He is the uncle of the present leader of the Madhi Bagh sect in Nagpur. His treatment of various biblical themes in an Indian setting is very innovative. This includes the use of a vast variety of interesting head-dresses. Sometimes he uses colours symbolically. In his 'Let the Children Come to Me'<sup>94</sup> Jesus looks like C. F. Andrews—friend of Gandhi and Tagore who was known throughout India by his initials C.F.A. as Christ's Faithful Apostle<sup>95</sup>—and one of the children wears a Gandhi cap. A 'Madonna'<sup>96</sup> has the whole of Luke 2:40 written in an upper corner; Mary is semi-topless, has the classical bosom of Indian sculpture and if she stood up might look much like the Yakshi from Didarganj;<sup>97</sup> she is sitting on the floor beside the little boy, Jesus, who is dressed in a 'babasuit'. The fishermen, but not the boats, in 'Follow Me'<sup>98</sup> would be at home on the Bay of Bengal; one wears a hat that could be from the fisherman community at Gopalpur-on-sea. The Jesus of Malak's 'Ye are the light of the World'<sup>99</sup> looks every bit like an Akali whose spear has become a crook—not

<sup>92</sup> H. Goetz (ed), *Chavda*, New Delhi : Lalit Kala Akademi, n.d.

<sup>93</sup> Where I met him in 1958.

<sup>94</sup> Reproduced in Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 154.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. O'Connor, *op. cit.*, also Chaturvedi and Sykes, *op. cit.*

<sup>96</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 155.

<sup>97</sup> One of the most magnificent women in Indian sculpture; cf. Parmeshwari Lal Gupta (ed.) *Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities*, Patna : Patna Museum, 1965, Pl. 1.

<sup>98</sup> Commission on Christian Literature of the Methodist Church in Southern Asia, *Christian Art in India*, Lucknow, n.d., P. 19; also *Christ in the Art India*, *op. cit.*, frame 58.

<sup>99</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 160.

a bad idea in my judgement, although I know that the various colours mean piously significant things to the painter. In 'The Crucifixion'<sup>100</sup> there is a rather conventional loin-clothed Christ on a very conventional cross which has a notice at its top but the mountains in the background are surrealistic and in the multitude which surrounds the cross there may be seen the burnouses of at least five Arabs and the hat of at least one Parsi. 'Christ Appears to His Apostles'<sup>101</sup> in the countryside; of the eleven, two look to be brahmin priests, one of whom is prostrating himself, two wear Gandhi caps, both wear dhoties and one wears nothing above his waist; I see a Dutch master and an European navigator; there is a young village labourer, a Parsi, a prostrate fellow with a turban, a devout old man with a funny hat and another chap in early European dress—if this group were not so utterly beyond belief the picture might be quite suggestive.

### Others

Abanindranath Tagore, the founding father of the great Bengal School of painting, painted Jesus more than once. One of his paintings is called 'Rome's pratidandi' which means Rome's competitor.<sup>102</sup> In it Jesus is a stout beardless round-faced fellow with blonde curly hair that is not very long. He carries a strong wooden staff taller than himself and looks as if He knows how to use it. He has a large, pale halo and there is a stylized cross behind Him. The whole suggests great power—partly mystical. Abanindranath did a mask called 'Pain'<sup>103</sup> which is Jesus-like and in 1926 he

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 158.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 159.

<sup>102</sup> In the collection of Rabindra Bharati, Calcutta, where there is also a sketch for it; reproduced as a second frontispiece in R. Tagore, *Khristo*, *op. cit.*

<sup>103</sup> In the collection of Rabindra Bharati.

painted a 'Jesus' in watercolour on cloth.<sup>104</sup> Abanindranath also has a 'Sadhu Christ'<sup>105</sup> in which He has the fixed look of the adept practising meditation.

Ravi Varma the great romantic painter of Kerala who first portrayed events from Hindu epics in a grand style on large canvases has done a rather conventional 'Madonna' that includes John the Baptist as a baby too.<sup>106</sup>

From the late forties until the middle sixties many, perhaps most, major Indian painters tried to say something of importance in painting Jesus. I know of some of these. Tyeb Mehta did a 'Blue Christ', a lithograph. E. Alakazi painted Him. So did Gieve Patel. A. Ramachandran did a 'Resurrection' and an 'Entombment.'<sup>107</sup> Sayeed Bin Mohammed has a picture of a blonde Jesus with long hair and a goatee beard wearing a crown of thorns and some kind of vestment with a white cross on His chest, and with white skin, as the most prominent object in his 'Still Life.'<sup>108</sup> R. S. Bisht did a 'Boy Jesus in the Temple' in which Jesus is dark skinned like Krishna because Bisht feels 'a similarity between Lord Krishna and Lord Jesus in that both, during adolescence, demonstrated their wisdom and understanding while talking with learned sages.'<sup>109</sup>

S. R. Khastgir has a 'Jesus Christ and the Woman'<sup>110</sup> in which a huge Christ is facing, and seems to be blessing, a

<sup>104</sup> I am grateful to Ingrid Aall for information about this taken from a handwritten catalogue.

<sup>105</sup> Described to me by Mark Sundar Rao.

<sup>106</sup> In a church at Mannanangal; illustrated in *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of India*, Trichur : 1973, Vol. 2, following p. 40.

<sup>107</sup> Exhibited in 'Indian Painters, 1969' at Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta.

<sup>108</sup> Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad.

<sup>109</sup> *Christian Art in India*, *op. cit.*, pp. 14 f.; also *Christ in the Art of India*, *op. cit.*, frames 17, 53.

<sup>110</sup> *Christ in the Art of India*, *ibid.*, frames 22, 75; *Aikya*, Vol. 13, No. 11 (November 1967), p. 81.

woman and child in a pose that must be an intentional reflection of the huge Buddha saying a final farewell to his normalized wife and child in an Ajanta mural. Khastgir also has a head of 'Jesus Christ'<sup>111</sup> against the cross in the background. This is a very moving picture and a very colourful picture even though the head is quite conventional in many ways. Rathin Maitra has a modern, sad, bearded Christ in his 'The Crown of Thorns.'<sup>112</sup> In A. S. Jaganathan's 'We caused thine death'<sup>113</sup> a sad, large-eyed, crowned and bearded, shirtless Christ is painted with a city and one wailer in the background. Anantanarayanan's 'Christ in the Garden'<sup>114</sup> is stylized. Christ is praying and the cross is in the background. Nirode Mazumdar's 'The flight into Egypt'<sup>115</sup> is well done in greens and light blues. In it Mother and Child ride on a large model of a Bankura-like brass toy horse with four wheels and all—I suppose that this cannot but be descended from the Jamini Roy 'Flight' noted above. Mazumdar also has a 'Christ in Majesty'<sup>116</sup> which is pretty traditional in outline with Christ crowned, haloed and enthroned holding a book in His left hand and gesturing in peace and blessing with His right hand, surrounded by an oblong with stars and with symbols for each of the evangelists in the four corners. But this picture actually comes across to me as being remarkably fine; it feels like some of Jamini's best—although it does not much look like them. But it does not look European either—the evangelists' symbols are much too realistic for that. And Christ somehow looks more holy than He usually does when in majesty—or so I feel.

<sup>111</sup> Reproduced in *New World Outlook*, March 1970; and *Christ in the Art of India*, *ibid.*, frames 31, 88.

<sup>112</sup> *Illustrated Weekly*, 18 Apr. 1965.

<sup>113</sup> National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, No. 2025.

<sup>114</sup> National Art Gallery, Madras.

<sup>115</sup> *Illustrated Weekly*, 13 Dec. 1964, p. 19.

<sup>116</sup> *Illustrated Weekly*, 29 Nov. 1964, p. 49.



Kanwal Krishna has an etching, 'Christ',<sup>117</sup> in which He is anything but conventional although He does wear a crown of thorns, which looks a bit like a laurel wreath, and a sacred heart, which looks more like an exposed fuctional heart. He has ear-length hair, elongated eyes, and is unshaven. He is not attractive ; but is somehow moving. Devayani Krishna has a batik 'Christ'<sup>118</sup> which is simple and rather ugly while not being unattractive. He has elongated eyes and nose with a small mouth with three odd teeth, all upper teeth, curious long hair and a small beard. His upper torso is rounded with two large nipples. Satish Gujral's 'Christ in Gethsemane'<sup>119</sup> and his 'The Resurrection'<sup>120</sup> are influenced greatly by surrealism as all of his painting from their period was.<sup>121</sup> Jehangir Sabavala, a Parsi, did 'The Crucifixion'<sup>122</sup> which is very stylized and verging on the abstract in which the faceless mourners hold my attention by their mourning more than the faceless Crucified does. He also did a 'Pieta'<sup>123</sup> which is very very busy with lots of people and at least three frolicsome angel-children helping to lift His limbs. Gopal Sanyal painted many Christian themes and a number of views of Christ.<sup>124</sup> He tends to resort to distortion with big bulging eyes and long noses. In his 'Head of Christ' He is making a gesture of protection (*Abhava*) from the cross itself—a Christian commentator is very critical of this although he admits that this

<sup>117</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 151; and *Illustrated Weekly*, 6 Apr. 1958, p. 12.

<sup>118</sup> Lehmann, *ibid*, Pl. 153; and *Illustrated Weekly*, 19 Nov. 1959.

<sup>119</sup> *Christ in the Art of India*, *op. cit.*, frames 27, 81.

<sup>120</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .* *op. cit.*; Pl. 152; and *Illustrated Weekly*, 17 April, 1960.

<sup>121</sup> 'Sunanda' (Pseudonym of K. C. S. Paniker), 'Gujral' in *Artrends*, Vol II, No. 2 (Jan. 1963) p. 2.

<sup>122</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .* *op. cit.*, Pl. 174; and *Illustrated Weekly*, 17 April, 1960.

<sup>123</sup> Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 175.

<sup>124</sup> Some of these were shown at Artistry House, Calcutta, in March 1965.

is exactly what a Hindu god would do in similar circumstances.<sup>125</sup> Sanyal himself writes :

‘ I love to depict the ordinary life we see all around us where man is struggling hard against heavy odds. His is a life of struggle for existence. He is waging a war against everything detrimental to the growth of his aspirations for a better and peaceful life. Jesus Christ who occupies a unique position in my paintings can be deemed as a symbol of such a toiling humanity.’<sup>126</sup>

This sounds much like Nikhil Biswas to me.

An untold number of other painters, mostly lesser painters, followed the leaders to the Christ theme. Appukuttan Achary calls a modernish crucifixion ‘ Reward ’<sup>127</sup> in which Christ can be recognised by his sad bearded face, long hair, crown of thorns, halo, tied white loin-cloth and, alas ! His pinkish skin. Bireswar Sen paints miniatures after a morning meditation session—a few of them have biblical themes. N. K. Misra has done a madonna who with her bare midriff and filmy blouse fits in well with the Mogulish arch in the background, a flight in which the Child is on a mule and the site could be any North Indian village, and three Mogulish magi discussing the star over a city on a hill.<sup>128</sup> Chitaprosad has a woodblock ‘ Madonna and Child ’<sup>129</sup> with a sariied mother and a rather dull-looking child. Sudha has painted a fine ‘ madonna ’ (Plate X) somewhat in the style of Jamini with a multicoloured tentish structure in the background and very lively because the naked Babe is dancing in His mother’s lap

<sup>125</sup> L. C. Richard, ‘ Christ in Indian Art ’ in *The Christian Focus*, Vol. II, No. 1 (15 Jan. 70), p. 19.

<sup>126</sup> In Nirode Mazumdar, *op. cit.*

<sup>127</sup> Venkatappa Gallery, Bangalore.

<sup>128</sup> All of these are in the collection of the Corinne and David C. Scott; a nativity is Art India card Q 4.

<sup>129</sup> *Motive*, December 1962.

and making a *mudra* gesture. Svetoslav Roerich has several Christ-themed paintings.<sup>130</sup> They all seem very meaningful to him. One, 'Love Thy Neighbour', shows a blue-eyed blond. Roerich told me that it was a charismatic Christ and His most powerful, difficult and needed teaching. I am inclined to think that Roerich thinks and talks well beyond his ability to paint. Tapan Ghosh<sup>131</sup> has made some interesting experiments at combining serpent motifs and wheel motifs with what looks to be a man and a cross.

The painting of Christ continues into the seventies but on the whole it is not absolutely first rate. G. S. Shenoy has a 'Crucifixion'.<sup>132</sup> M. Noorullah did a 'Head of Christ', a 'Resurrection', a 'Pieta', a 'Lamentation'<sup>133</sup> and a descent 'From the Cross'.<sup>134</sup> These are all well done. Some very thoughtful work does still go on. Suhas Roy painted a 'Crucifixion' in 1970 which reminds me of Nikhil Biswas but it has a crown of thorns. Of it he writes :

'Crucifixion is a symbol of the cruelty that made a serious dent in our humanity many decades ago; and it still pervades the modern world in different forms. On one side of the drawing I have given a suggestion of foliage which represents a sense of hope and kindness that still exist side by side with cruelty. Here two sides of human character reflect a feeling of agony and pleasure which I want to convey to my viewers.'<sup>135</sup>

A marvellous large batik of Christ with a red halo, crossed eyes and a curious beard was done by Jayakar at Cholamandal only a few years ago.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Which he very kindly showed me in January 1971.

<sup>131</sup> In the Refugee Handicraft Exhibit, Calcutta, November 1967.

<sup>132</sup> In his show at Max Mueller Bhavan, Bangalore, February 1971.

<sup>133</sup> All in his show at the French Cultural Centre, Bangalore, March 1970.

<sup>134</sup> Venkatappa Gallery, Bangalore.

<sup>135</sup> In Nirode Mazumdar, *op. cit.*

<sup>136</sup> *Span*, Vol. XI, No. 9 (September 1970), p 28, in the background.

## SOME INTERPRETATIONS

The dominant religious motif of modern Indian painters has changed radically through the years. Ravi Varma<sup>137</sup> and the Bengal School<sup>138</sup> painted incidents from the lives of the gods and goddesses and holy men and women from Hindu religious literature in a romantic style. Nandalal Bose was especially creative when painting Siva and Uma.<sup>139</sup> The best of these pictures are magnificent and moving. Some painters continued to work on these themes. Then many painters took up the Christ-theme in an effort to communicate something about the nature and predicament of man in society. A few continue to work on this theme. More recently painters have taken up more esoteric and mystical, and perhaps more generalized, themes—often using Tantric symbolism. Some are presently using religious textual materials in their titles (Reddeppa) or even within their paintings (Paniker).

When they painted Christ most of the leading painters painted His suffering. They did not paint much about His life and teachings. But they speak about His life and teachings leading to His suffering. They also speak about His suffering service. At their best they take the great-Man-ness of Jesus utterly seriously. Often they see this as leading to His agony—which in some sense is prototypical of our life in this present world too. They dwell on the angularity<sup>140</sup> of Jesus. He is strange, awkward, unloved, difficult, misunderstood—and probably he is so, just because of his great (perhaps perfect)

<sup>137</sup> A representative collection of whose paintings are in the Sri Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery in the Jaganmohan Palace, Mysore.

<sup>138</sup> A representative collection of which is reproduced in *The Modern Review* beginning in the 1920s; and in *Chatterjee's Picture Albums*, Calcutta: Modern Review Office, n.d., which ran to at least seven volumes.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, 'Rupa Pati: The Master of Form' in *The Modern Review*, Vol. LIX, No. 6 (June 1936), pp. 622 ff.

<sup>140</sup> For this most apt word I am indebted to Don F. Talafous, o.s.b., in a conversation about an early draft of this chapter.

love and understanding. This angularity is, I dare say, precisely the necessary other side of His idealness as a man.

A visiting Christian priest said of Paniker's powerful, straining Christ on the Cross, 'He looks like a criminal.' How right! This was not said as a compliment. But it was. Jesus was there as a criminal.<sup>141</sup> Paniker had done his work well.

I venture that it may be because of their Hindu backgrounds that the painters have been so perceptive about the angularity of Christ—because some of their gods have another side, albeit a very different other side for the most part. I think especially of Kali and Narasimha—whom I do not find ultimately unattractive.

Next to the passion the most common Christ-motif of these painters is the madonna. In fact Paniker and a few others have radicalized this to include paintings showing mother love that are not of Mary and Jesus. I think that this lifting up of what is going on—of love between mother and child—is another important insight of these painters. The more important because it seems to me that it is often overlooked. Here too they have taken a Christ-motif as a kind of ideal of one pivotal aspect of humanness.

Some of the paintings have Christ making the hand gesture for 'do not fear' (*mudra abhava*) with his right arm raised with palm forward. This is a classical gesture frequently attributed to Buddha as well as to Hindu gods and it hardly differs from the similar gesture of blessing and peace in the western Christian liturgy. Like so much else in these paintings I find it highly appropriate.

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. William Stringfellow, 'Jesus the Criminal' in *Christianity and Crisis*, Vol. XXX, No. 10 (8 June 1970), pp. 119 ff.

#### IV. CHRISTIAN PAINTING

The ancient Syrian Christians of Kerala, who even now comprise almost a third of all Christians in India, do not seem to have taken much interest in Christian painting although eventually, at least, they must have had some paintings. There is a wall painting in the Orthodox Syrian Church at Chap-pad which is claimed to date from the thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup> And one of the decrees of the Synod of Diamper in 1599, after considerable western contact, stresses the need for beautifying the interior of the Syrian churches with images and painting.<sup>2</sup> There is an ancient painting from Kudamaloor showing Mary and Jesus with St. Peter and St. Paul in which the Child, with a necklace and holding His hand in a *mudra*, looks slightly brahminish.<sup>3</sup>

In Goa<sup>4</sup> the churches were full of paintings copied by the local painters most of whom eventually became Christians.<sup>5</sup> By the eighteenth century some of the Goan paintings had become slightly Indian in a kind of Mogulish style and through the introduction of some Indian settings—scenery, birds, and dress to a very slight extent. In the baptismal chapel of the Se Cathedral in Old Goa there is a painting of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in which the river with coconut palms in the background looks very Goish to me. The walls of the front part of the church of the Convent of St.

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<sup>1</sup> *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia . . .*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Reproduced in *ibid.*, Vol. 2, facing p. 184.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Carlos de Azevedo, *Arte Crista na India Pourtuguesa*, Lisboa: Junta de Investigacoes do Ultramar, 1959, pp. 91-123; and Azevedo, *A Arte de Goa, Damao e Diu*, Lisboa: 1970.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. letter of Luis Frois, s.j., dated Goa, 14 Nov. 1559 in J. Wicki, s.j. (ed), *Documenta Indica* (Vols. I-VIII, 1540-73), Rome: 1948-64, Vol. IV, pp. 342 ff., cited by Trois E. Johnson, Jr., 'Remarks on Indo-Portuguese Ivory Carving', Bangalore: typescript, 1973.

Francis of Assisi in Old Goa are covered with paintings of the life of St. Francis. In one Christ appears to St. Francis. In another Mary with her Child appear to him. Both of these have somewhat Indian rural scenes, including monsoonish clouds, for their background. Although I must confess that some wholly European paintings have backgrounds that might easily be taken for Goan—such as Raphael's 'Holy Family with a palm tree'<sup>6</sup> with its palm tree and swampy background.

What seems to have been the first picture printed in India representing Jesus on the cross with Mary and St. John standing on either side was printed in Goa and distributed in November 1560. In Carambolim, and probably elsewhere, 'Those who got a picture received it kneeling, kissed the feet of the Crucified and, in the traditional fashion, placed it on their heads.'<sup>7</sup> This was so eagerly received by the devout that soon a second impression of eight or ten thousand was made so that each village home might have one. I guess that this was the beginning of bazaar art in India.

Some cotton prints from India had Christian themes. I suppose that these were made primarily for export. There is one of the crucifixion on calico from the Coromandel Coast dated in the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

The painting of Jesus by Indian Christian artists began around 1930. Angelo da Fonseca was encouraged by reading some articles by Father H. Heras<sup>9</sup> who met him in 1928 or 1929

<sup>6</sup> In the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, on loan from the Duke of Sutherland.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony D'Costa, s.j., *The Christianisation of the Goa Islands*, Bombay : The Heras Institute, 1965, pp. 183 f., citing J. Wicki (ed.) *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 796 ff.,

<sup>8</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum I.S. 3-1953; reproduced in G. Frere-Cook (ed.), *The Decorative Arts of the Christian Church*, London : Cassell, 1972 (also published as *Art and Architecture of Christianity*, Cleveland : Case Western Reserve University Press), p. 267.

<sup>9</sup> H. Heras, s.j., 'Indian Art in Catholic Churches' in *The Examiner* (weekly), Bombay : 1927.

after da Fonseca had painted quite a few Christian pictures.<sup>10</sup> To the end of Fr. Heras's life he was one of da Fonseca's guides and encouragers. A. D. Thomas had begun to paint Jesus a year or two before he was recognised by the National Christian Council in early 1931.<sup>11</sup> Both these painters were greatly encouraged by the Christa Seva Sangha Ashram in Poona which was a pioneering experiment in an Indian style of Christian community. Da Fonseca lived there from about 1928 and continued to paint there until his death.<sup>12</sup> In 1932 the ashram published five of Thomas's pictures<sup>13</sup> and used a fifth in the special Christmas number of their *Review*.<sup>14</sup> By 1935 a committee based on the National Christian Council and financed by Clementina Butler was holding a series of contests for new biblical pictures in Indian settings some of which were cheaply published by the Lucknow Publishing House for use in Christian homes.<sup>15</sup>

### SOME MODERN PAINTERS

#### Angelo da Fonseca

was born in Goa but went to school in Poona and spent most of his life there.<sup>16</sup> He has written about his own ideas of Indo-

<sup>10</sup> Angelo da Fonseca, 'Indo-Christian Art in Painting and Statuary' in *Indica* (Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume), Bombay : The Indian Historical Research Institute, 1935, pp. 140 f.

<sup>11</sup> 'Art in the Indian Church' in *The National Christian Council Review*, Vol. LI, No. 3 (March 1931), pp. 115 f.

<sup>12</sup> Da Fonseca, *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *The Guardian*, 23 June 1931, p. 243.

<sup>14</sup> *Christa Seva Sangha Review*, December 1932, noted in *The Guardian*, 22 Dec. 1932, p. 553.

<sup>15</sup> *The Guardian*, 18 April 1935, p. 251 ; 10 Oct. 1935, p. 655 ; 7 Nov. 1935, pp. 713 f. ; 9 Apr. 1936, p. 231.

<sup>16</sup> I am indebted to Mrs. Ivy Fonseca, his widow, for help and information given and unpublished pictures shown to me in July 1970. She gave me a copy of : A.D.Lobo, 'Christian Art in India ; Its Pioneer Angelo da Fonseca' in *The Examiner*, 13 July 1957, pp. 349 ff. She thinks this an excellent article and keeps copies of it on hand to refer to.' Cf. also E. L. King, *The Art of Angelo da Fonseca*, Mysore : Wesley Press, 1949.



Christian art and his own development as an Indo-Christian painter :

‘ East is East and West is West, but Christian Faith belongs neither to the East nor to the West. It is of the whole world. Our Lord Jesus Christ was Himself an Easterner, a Jew by birth and human ancestry—a descendant of King David ; but His doctrine was not for Jews only, but for all men, without distinction of race or nationality. That is the reason why the Catholic Church has never had a style of her own in her churches and buildings, as a cursory glance at any general History of Art may easily evince. In point of fact, she has been the universal Maecenas of all arts, artists and styles ; specimens of paintings and sculptures housed in Museums all over the world are the best argument in favour of the universality of her patronage.

‘ These thoughts often passed through my mind in my young days since my artistic instinct began to develop ; and the great variety of the artistic production that has sprung under the encouragement of the Church all the world over—from the frescoes of the Catacombs of purely Roman inspiration down to the statuary of the Gothic cathedrals and the great Masters of the Renaissance period—could not but be contrasted with the poor stereotyped specimens we always saw in the churches of our country, the most common feature of which was always the same, that they were specimens of foreign art, and hence strange to our people, abhorrent to our culture ; exotic plants which cannot enjoy full life and vitality because the soil wherein they had been transplanted is not the soil of their birth. A Renaissance building under the sun of India, having the snow-clad Himalayas on its background, looks incongruous to say the least, something unwholesome and morbid, if

compared with the lofty specimens of our ancient religious architecture that try to emulate the high peak of Mount Meru or the majestic slopes of Kailasa. Why could not the Catholic Church find herself at home in India, since she is really Catholic, i.e. universal, Indian in India as she is European in Europe ?

‘Such were the youthful ideas of a budding artist, when I directed my steps to Bengal to study the art of painting. In the Sir J.J. School of Art there was still a European Principal. I wanted to be a *sisya* of the best Indian artist in the twenties of this century. Accordingly, I went to Santiniketan and was the pupil of Shri A. N. Tagore. I therefore belong to the Neo-Bengal school of painting which is a revival of the old famous Indian school of painting.’<sup>17</sup>

The Sir J. J. School of Art was in Bombay and that was very much nearer to Poona than Bengal was. The reference to the Himalayas is based on the thought of E. B. Havell the English Principal of the Government School of Art in Calcutta who encouraged the Tagores in their founding of the Bengal School of Art and became the leading scholarly apologist for it.<sup>18</sup> There is a sense in which da Fonseca was looking for Indian roots for Indian Christian painting in almost exactly the same terms that the Bengal school of painting had started out to seek Indian roots for all of modern Indian painting.

He also wrote at the beginning of his career,

‘We, who have embraced Christianity for centuries, have given up our painting, music and architecture. Having labelled them “paganism”, we have turned to the products of Europe. I hope in future we shall learn to treasure

<sup>17</sup> Da Fonseca, *op. cit.*, pp. 139 f.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, citing Havell, *The Himalayas in Indian Art*, pp. 31 f.



RESURRECTION

M. REDDEPPA NAIDU



MADONNA

SUDHA

what is our birth-right and receive it in our churches and homes.’<sup>19</sup>

After pursuing that career for almost twenty-five years he felt able to write :

‘ Our efforts to create a School of Indian Christian painting were blessed by Our Lord, and have produced such results as the most optimistic among us could never have expected. Our Christians understand the meaning of our ideals and appreciate the Christian works of art in the new style. The more cultured they are, the better they appreciate this *rapprochement* of Christian art to the soul of India. Some nevertheless—very few indeed—refractorily oppose an historical objection to our endeavours. “ Our Lady ” they say “ did never wear a *sari*, and Christ was a Jew. Why should they be painted as Indians ? ” The Christian faith has established a family relation between God and his creature, that is of Father and children, and He gave us his Mother for our own. If that is the case, they must resemble our own earthly fathers and mothers ; hence the reason of depicting them as we do. Surely they were Jews, but their love embraced us all. The Indian Catholic has generally been brought up on products of the West—very cheap and unartistic products at that, as a general rule—and consequently our art is strange to him. But if the priests introduce the art of India in our churches, the layman will naturally take it to his home. But we artists must make an effort to create real devotional pictures and not merely to put a halo behind the head of a beautiful woman or inscribe a label at the foot of an ordinary man. Let therefore devotion be the substratum of inspiration,

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<sup>19</sup> *Son of Man* (pictures and carvings by Indian, African and Chinese Artists), London : Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1939, p. 3.

and that fostered by the breezes that descend from the lofty Himalayas.<sup>20</sup>

Da Fonseca's family theology for justifying painting Jesus in Indian dress and setting as an Indian, is pretty simple. He seems to have felt it adequate. It is interesting to note that he makes nothing at all of any evangelistic purpose for such painting—a purpose that some later painters rate very high. He admits that it is the cultured elite who most readily accept such painting—I find this situation unchanged.

His concern is with devotional pictures growing out of the devotion of the painter. His cell-cum-studio in the ashram must have been an ideal setting for painting with this intention. He went to the ashram to take refuge from adverse criticism, especially in Goa. In the ashram he found :

‘The members of this Society had great ideas of adopting Christianity to Indian life and ideals. The life in the *ashram*, being thoroughly Indian, was very congenial and a great source of inspiration for Christian pictures in Indian style. There was besides intelligent appreciation and constructive criticism, which was a great encouragement in my early attempts. Fruit of this encouragement was the murals of St. Francis of Assisi, which I painted in the *ashram* itself about that time.’<sup>21</sup>

Later in a letter he wrote :

‘During the last four years I have almost exclusively produced religious themes, because I was afraid that dealing with non-religious themes at the same time I might render my interpretation of Christian thought too worldly.’<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Da Fonseca, *op. cit.*, pp. 151. f.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140. These murals are still on the walls of the ashram chapel.

<sup>22</sup> Lobo, *op. cit.*, citing Cardinal Costantini, ‘Il pittore Angelo da Fonseca’ in *Arte cristiana*, August, 1938.

He seems to have taken religious preparation for the painting of religious themes quite seriously. Some of the Hindu painters treated in the last chapter would certainly understand that. I find nothing of the larger social dimension in da Fonseca's writings or paintings.

In a booklet of reproductions of some of da Fonseca's paintings Schüler the Catholic art historian asserts that da Fonseca was very careful not to use anything that might be thought of as Hindu symbolism by selecting only Indian 'themes that are suitable for a Christian handling in contrast with the pagan representations that abound everywhere and spoil the Christian subject with unedifying associations.'<sup>23</sup> I suppose that this is a fair summary of da Fonseca's position. If it is it means that da Fonseca had already taken a clear stand on the central theological debate among Indian Christian painters which grew and which continues unabated today. This is the debate about Hinduization and sanskritization in Indian Christian painting. Da Fonseca stood firmly against it.

The finding of an Indian style of painting was da Fonseca's main problem. It was also the central problem of the Bengal School. This meant a search for and an adaptation of traditional roots. In painting in India the roots had been cut. There was no mainstream of continuity ; although there might have been substreams left in the villages and hills. European painting was taught and Indian art was ridiculed for several generations—probably even more so within the churches than within cultured Hindu society. Finally the Bengal school sought indigenous roots by rejecting most of the European tradition they had been taught, seeking to copy what they could from older India, and looking to the orient for clues of what might be incorporated into an Indian tradition. Da Fon-

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<sup>23</sup> Sepp Schüler, *Angelo da Fonseca India's Catholic artist*, Aachen : Wilhelm Metz, 1938.

seca asserts that he paints in the style of the Bengal School ; yet it seems to me that much of his work reflects the Goa tradition of painting which had already been slightly adapted to India. Perhaps the part of Fonseca's work with its thorny crowns and exposed, thorn-wrapped, flaming sacred hearts is more Goan-Bengal than neo-Bengal. Yet these pictures of da Fonseca are strikingly unique. In 'The Sacred Heart'<sup>24</sup> Christ looks very masculine in great contrast to most sacred heart pictures in which He is quite effeminate ; here He holds out His nail-holed hands. In 'Sacred Heart'<sup>25</sup> Christ looks a lot like an Indian holy man. Here too he is far from the ordinary effeminate Christ of the sacred heart. This picture seems to me to be painted in a style that would be completely at home in Shantiniketan. It looks to me as if it were done in Indian red and black, pigments used much in Shantiniketan, which gives His garment the saffron look of that of an Indian holy man. Mrs. Fonseca showed me a 1957 'Sacred Heart' in which the nail-hole in His hand is visible.

At least a few of da Fonseca's paintings might be called Beuronese in style.<sup>26</sup> This was the first basic style of painting of the liturgical renewal movement in the Catholic church in this century. I suppose that as a leading Catholic painter da Fonseca would have been exposed to it. His 'Christ on the cross'<sup>27</sup>, 'The Bread of Life'<sup>28</sup> and 'Crucifixion'<sup>29</sup> all are in this style—with a few slightly Indian garments added.

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<sup>24</sup> Art India card D 12. This is part of a series with 'This is my blood', D 11 ; and 'The Last Supper', D 10.

<sup>25</sup> Art India Card C 32. This is part of a series with thorny crowned 'See this man', C 30. The series, dated 1955, is in bazaar picture size.

<sup>26</sup> This was pointed out to me by Kilian W. McDonnell, o.s.b., who lived through the height of the Beuronese renewal of liturgical art at St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota.

<sup>27</sup> Art India card C 7.

<sup>28</sup> Art India card F 12.

<sup>29</sup> Art India card D 4.



Nevertheless, much of his work seems to me to be completely Indian in style and context and his 'Virgin-Mother'<sup>30</sup> is one of the most successful Indian madonnas I know. The attractive Mother looks Indian, almost like a goddess in her posture, has an Indian hairdo, is wearing Indian jewellery and garments and is sitting cross-legged on a large low stool. The Baba might have been the model for some of the best of the recent Balakrishna calendar painting, even to the welcoming gesture of His left hand (which may be a *mudra*)—except that his toy rattle takes the shape of an orb with a cross upon it. The whole of the picture is blue—which gives a blue Babe (like Krishna) without too much cultural shock.

In 1960 da Fonseca wrote that he did not know exactly how many Christian pictures he had painted but that it 'must be more than 500, out of which some 50 were done in oil while the other pictures were done in water-colours.'<sup>31</sup> I will try to describe a few more of these. Many of his paintings of small groups, especially madonnas, have a arch, or a part of an arch, in the immediate background through which a few hills or buildings may be seen. We are told that this is to focus attention on the most important element of the picture.<sup>32</sup> One of these is his 'Nativity'<sup>33</sup> which must have been one of his earliest Christian pictures to get wide acceptance in the wider world of Indian art. In it Mary in a sari sits on an elaborately carved chair slightly bent over (another attention-focussing

<sup>30</sup> Art India card A 8.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Arno Lehmann, 'A Brief History of Indian Christian Art' in *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. II, No.2 (December 1968), p. 154. Cf. Matthew Lederle, 'Interpreting Christ through Indian Art' in *Indian Spirituality in Action*, Bombay: Asian Trading Corporation 1973, pp. 135 ff.

<sup>32</sup> Lobo, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Reproduced in colour as the frontispiece of *The Modern Review*, Vol. LVIII, No. 6 (December 1935); and grossly cropped in Lehmann, *Die Kunst*, . . . *op. cit.*, Pl. 68; similar is 'Our Lady and the Holy Child' in *Son of Man*, *op. cit.*, facing p. 10.

curve I suppose) the Babe in her lap. The colours, pink, green, orange and tan, are dull and flat—as usual in Fonseca. This and his usual lack of use of perspective must be taken as coming from the Bengal School. Another madonna with an arch is ‘Epiphany’<sup>34</sup> in which she is seated, seated on a grass mat with the three gifts and bending over the Babe in a curve that repeats the curve of the arch. Other arch pictures are ‘Nativity’<sup>35</sup>, with Mary and Joseph seated folding their hands in worship of the Babe lying on straw, and the star seen through the arch, their light is a small earthen oil lamp (*dipa*); a ‘Mother and Child’<sup>36</sup>; a ‘Jesus with Martha and Mary’<sup>37</sup> and ‘At Emmaus.’<sup>38</sup>

In his attempt to present Christ in an Indian way da Fonseca even styled Him (but more usually Mary), along with settings, to appear to belong to regional cultures in India such as those of Rajasthan and Maharashtra.<sup>39</sup> Among the other madonnas is a Rajasthani ‘Mother of God’,<sup>40</sup> Another seems Maharashtra.<sup>41</sup> Still other madonnas include ‘Hail Holy Mother’<sup>42</sup> which is largely a line drawing of the sort he was so good at; ‘Indian Icon’<sup>43</sup> which is sort of Indo-Byzantine; and ‘Our Lady of the Lotus’<sup>44</sup> which shows a haloed, seated Mary holding a baba-suited Babe who is haloed with His arms out gesturing ‘come’ or ‘welcome’ and standing in the middle of a lotus pond—thus avoiding, I guess, having her on an open lotus flower as a Hindu goddess might well be.

<sup>34</sup> Art India card F 4; and in *Son of Man*, *ibid*, facing p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Art India card A 4.

<sup>36</sup> Art India card C 18.

<sup>37</sup> Reproduced in Costantini, *L'Arte cristiana* . . ., *op. cit.*, p. 264. There are several other da Fonseca reproductions in this work.

<sup>38</sup> Art India card F 13.

<sup>39</sup> Lobo, *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> Reproduced in colour in India on an unlabelled sheet.

<sup>41</sup> This has been reproduced in black and white, unlabelled and untitled.

<sup>42</sup> Art India card M 1.

<sup>43</sup> Art India card D 13.

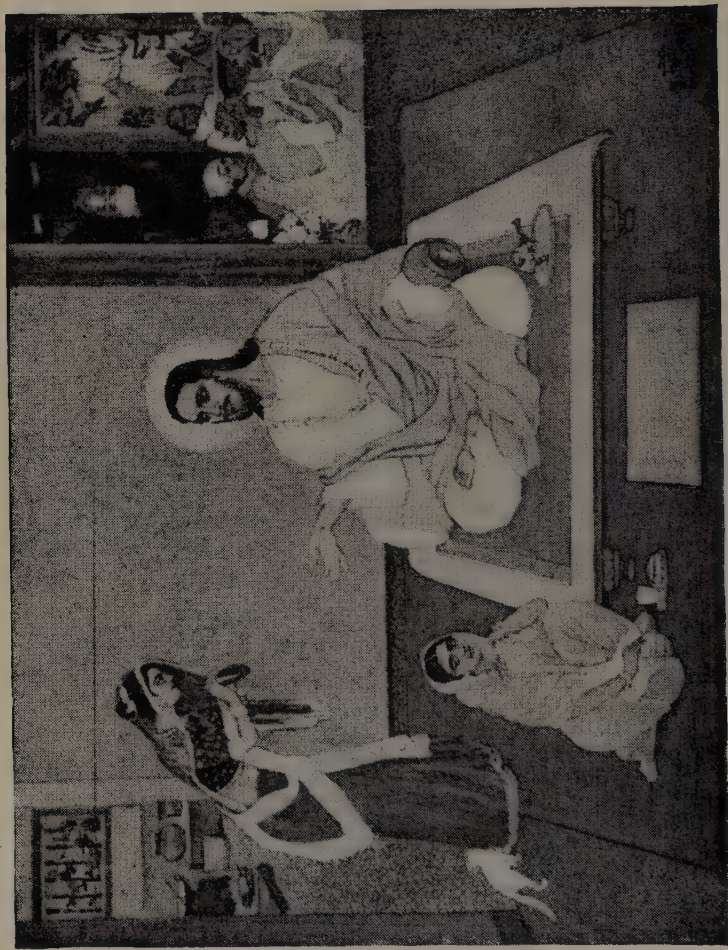
<sup>44</sup> Da Fonseca, *op. cit.*, Pl. IX.



EASTERN MORN

FRANK WESLEY

*(From the collection of M. M. Thomas)*



JESUS AT MARTHA AND MARY'S HOME

*(From the collection of D. H. S. Lyon)*

VINAYAK S. MASOJI

Da Fonseca also painted the holy family in various Indian settings wearing various Indian styles of clothes. 'Flee to Egypt'<sup>45</sup> has Mary and Joseph sitting cross-legged facing each other on a rug laid on the grass under a banyan tree with a stream and palm trees in the background, the Child sleeps in His mother's lap; Joseph and Mary are dressed like a couple for an illustration for Omar Khayyam but my hunch is that they are intended to be Bengali Muslims. I once heard that da Fonseca had left the animal out of a painting of the flight lest it steal the attention of the viewers. Anyway, this works—especially when one recalls the centrally attractive Bengali animals in the flights of Jamini Roy and Nirode Mazumdar mentioned in the last chapter. 'Child of God and Mankind'<sup>46</sup> has the holy family inside a North Indian village dwelling, the walls, the fire, the vessels and the rope-cot on which the sari-ed Mary sits cross-legged with the Babe lying in her lap all fit in with this site; so does a Muslim-looking Joseph standing with folded hands behind the Pair. 'The Holy Family'<sup>47</sup> is much more flat and stylized, Jesus is standing and looks like a doll in a cassock, Mary is sari-ed, Joseph looks like a saint—I do not like this picture. It feels inhuman to me. 'Holy Family'<sup>48</sup> has a middle-class Indian family, possibly Kashmiris, with Mary carrying the Babe and Joseph with a walking stick; the wall in the background has alpana-like designs—the only such I have noticed in the work of da Fonseca.

'The Master'<sup>49</sup> is very well described by Mathew Lederle the always helpful doyen of all those who encourage or publish Indian Christian painting:

<sup>45</sup> Art India card O 5.

<sup>46</sup> Art India card M 14.

<sup>47</sup> Art India card C 1.

<sup>48</sup> Reproduced in Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl 69.

<sup>49</sup> Art India card P 21; also on their bookmark S 11.

'Angelo da Fonseca painted one of the best Indian Christs in 1967 a few months before his death : a portrait, clear, manly in its lines and discerning in the choice of colours. The brown face with steady eyes looking out, and the smooth lines of the long hair and beard show Nobility, depth, sanctity and affection. The head is surrounded by a red halo standing out from a violet background. A plain, yellowish kurta enhances the simplicity and majesty of the whole figure. The picture impresses itself as a genuine expression of the Christian faith : it does not reveal everything of Christ, but what it says is true and at the same time also fully Indian. One could expect this Christ to rebuke the winds and to tell the sea, "Be calm." His mouth could utter the words, "I am the Way, the Life, the Truth." In this picture the artist has found his style : the influences of his native Goa subsumed in his personal style, in a painting which is testimony to his own manly faith.'<sup>50</sup>

A portrait of 'Jesus as a Boy'<sup>51</sup> has the tunic which da Fonseca uses for Him so frequently and which Fr. Lederle well described above as a kurta—this time it is white ; He has long wavy brown hair and because of His lips and eyes looks pouty or pensive to me. 'Follow Me'<sup>52</sup>, another portrait, shows a face that I find mask-like—perhaps He is meant to look like a religious ascetic.

Da Fonseca seems to have painted very little of Jesus' ministry. One such picture, 'The Woman of Samaria'<sup>53</sup>, shows Jesus looking much like a conventional holy-man with the sari'd woman looking suspicious or surprised—or both.

There are some passion pictures. One 'Christ and the

<sup>50</sup> Mathew R. Lederle, s.j., 'Art India : Christian Paintings in Indian Style' in *Jeevadhara*, Vol. II, No. 9 (May-June, 1972), p. 283.

<sup>51</sup> Art India card D 3.

<sup>52</sup> Art India card M 3.

<sup>53</sup> Reproduced in *Son of Man*, *op. cit.*, facing p. 16.

Cross<sup>54</sup> shows a tuniced Christ like those da Fonseca was doing in the 1950s carrying His cross with very little effort ; there are already two crosses erected on the hill in the background. In addition to the Beuronese crucifixions mentioned above, in both of which the sign on top of the cross is in *devanagari* script, Mrs. Fonseca showed me 'Magdalen' in which only His bloody, nailed and haloed feet are shown on the cross; weeping Indian women in white saris with red borders are there ; Mary Magdalene wears a red-ochre bordered sari with a matching blouse and massive bangles ; she is barefoot. There is a 'Pieta'<sup>55</sup> with two women who might be from the Magdalen picture. In 'The Risen Lord'<sup>56</sup> He is levitating clad in a white sheet, within a room that I suppose is the tomb, on the floor on one side is a censer and on the other side a shield and sword from about the time of Sivaji—I think this one of the least satisfactory of all of the pictures of da Fonseca I have seen. In 'Peace to You'<sup>57</sup> Jesus, clad in something like a white cassock and wearing the white scarf of an Indian teacher, holds his nail-holed hands up in blessing to ten of the disciples (all but Thomas I expect) who are of all ages, are all clad in saffron cassocks and most of whom are kneeling ; everybody is barefoot and the nail holes show in the feet of Jesus ; they are in a slightly Mogulish room with some decoration, a closed door and a hanging Indian brass oil lamp—a wholly satisfactory Indian setting of the event. Finally Mrs. Fonseca showed me a 1960 Christ Pantocrator in which He stands in glory on an orb with a parrot on each side, His right hand (with a hole) is raised and His left holds a scepter. He has a sacred heart, very manly shoulders, a short, barbered,

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<sup>54</sup> In a New York collection of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church.

<sup>55</sup> This seems to be an Art India reproduction but is unnumbered.

<sup>56</sup> Art India card C 2.

<sup>57</sup> Art India card O 15.

full spade beard (as so often with da Fonseca) and holed feet. He is wearing a long golden robe.

One clue to da Fonseca's acceptance as a Christian painter is that in the Seminario de Rachol in Goa where there are deep European humanistic roots combined with a real interest in things Indian, a number of the walls were painted in the upper halls of the house in 1943 and 1944 by S. K. Parab with copies of great old Christian paintings from Europe—Lippi, Murillo and others. A good number of these are copies of da Fonseca's paintings ! They fit in very well.

Dr. Butler asserts that Angelo da Fonseca's 'use of a weakened Ajanta-Tagore technique has resulted in pictures dripping with sentimentality and unhistoricalness—and what errors could be more dangerous in India?'<sup>58</sup> Throughout the world critics of Dr. Butler's post-romantic generation have used such phrases as 'dripping with sentimentality and unhistoricalness' against the romantic painters they fought to discredit. Similar phrases were used in India by the post-Jamini critics and painters against the romanticism of the Bengal School. Now that some time has passed, and the romantics are regaining a certain critical popularity, such phrases sound as narrowly provincial and self-serving as the infamous and silly words with which Sir George Birdwood sneered at E. B. Havell's defense of the greatness of Indian art.<sup>59</sup> I think that Birdwood was wrong about Indian art, that Butler is wrong about the Bengal School, and that to a very large extent Havell was right about both. Da Fonseca was not wholly successful in his efforts, few of us are, but he was certainly headed in the right direction for his time—and that is

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<sup>58</sup> John F. Butler, 'Christendom for Export?' in *The Student World*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 2 (1955), p. 174.

<sup>59</sup> 'Sculpture and painting, as fine arts, are unknown in India', quoted in E. B. Havell, *The Art Heritage of India* (ed. Pramod Chandra), Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons, 1964, p. 188.





MADONNA

*(With permission of Jyoti Sahi)*

JYOTI SAHI



S. BAIRAGI

no small thing. As for Butler's accusation of some kind of theological error—I should have thought that a venture in the kairotic was just the opposite. I must confess that missionary Butler's damning of pioneering Indian Christian creative effort irks me greatly. It seems an example of just those attitudes that stunted the doing of Indian Christian theology for so very long.

### Alfred D. Thomas

has devoted a considerable part of his life to a career as an Indian Christian painter<sup>60</sup>—although he has lived abroad for many years now and I will not consider much of his production since he left India. He is an Anglican from the U.P. and paints in the style of the Lucknow School. Two of his early paintings were called 'Christ of the Indian Road.'<sup>61</sup> A contemporary description of them reads,

'Christ is here represented holding a child in His arms, while the mother of the child kneels before Him offering a lotus. Around Him are grouped two dozen typical figures of the Indian road, men, women and children, one of them mounted on an ass, another leading sheep and lambs, while behind is a ruined wall disclosing in the background the tower of a Hindu temple. The central figure of Christ arrests the eyes : robed in purest white, the face marking a departure from the traditional likeness, the dark hair crowned with thorns and set off by a halo of pale gold. (In an earlier version of the same subject Mr. Thomas chose for the setting of his picture a city street with architectural

<sup>60</sup> His most important work is reproduced in A. D. Thomas, *The Life of Christ by an Indian Artist*, London : Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1948 ; all of these pictures and several others by Thomas are reproduced in Lehmann, *Die Kunst...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>61</sup> The rural version of this was published by the Association Press, Calcutta, and is reproduced in Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 59.

background, but the new rendering has got more successfully the feeling of the Indian road with its thronging life.)<sup>62</sup>

The two pictures seem undoubtedly to have been painted in response to the book by E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*,<sup>63</sup> which had been published only a few years before. In this paragraph Jones has painted a vivid and attractive mental picture of his Christ of the Indian Road :

‘ A friend of mine was talking to a Brahmin gentleman when the Brahmin turned to him and said, “ I don’t like the Christ of your creeds and the Christ of your churches.” My friend quietly replied, “ Then how would you like the Christ of the Indian Road ? ” The Brahmin thought a moment, mentally picturing the Christ of the Indian Road—he saw him dressed in Sadhu’s garments, seated by the wayside with the crowds about him, putting his hands upon the heads of the poor, unclean lepers who fell at his feet, announcing the good tidings of the Kingdom to stricken folks, staggering up a lone hill with a broken heart and dying upon a wayside cross for men, but rising triumphantly and walking on that road again. He suddenly turned to the friend and earnestly said, “ I could love and follow the Christ of the Indian Road ”.’<sup>64</sup>

Actually this paragraph very likely set the style, and perhaps even the agenda, for most of Thomas’s painting of Jesus. He boldly paints Him ‘ dressed in Sadhu’s garments.’ And paints much more of His ministry than most other painters have done.

Thomas has painted several madonnas. One is ‘ The Visit

<sup>62</sup> ‘ Art in the Indian Church’, *op. cit.*

<sup>63</sup> E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, Lucknow : Lucknow Publishing House, (1925) 1964; cf. Taylor, *The Contribution of E. Stanley Jones*, *op. cit.*, pp. 6 ff.

<sup>64</sup> Jones, *ibid.*, p. 23.

of the Magi '65 in which Mary sits barefoot, wholly like an Indian woman with her water jugs nearby, under a holy pipul tree, holding the naked Babe in her lap, while the three in marvellous oriental clothing stand offering their gifts. Another is 'Nativity' '66 where Mary sits on the ground, barefoot, dressed in a sari, while the naked Babe sits on her lap, under a thatched roof held up by a pole, with the animals in the background. Others include a 'Madonna and Child' '67 in front of a village dwelling with the Child nursing; a rather traditional sari'd 'Madonna' '68; and an 'The Adoration of the Shepherds' '69 in which North Indian peasants bring offerings of lotus blooms. 'The Holy Family' '70 has them living under a thatched roof supported by poles and with no walls at all, the sort of thing a sadhu might live in; the Boy is playing with one of the poles and Mary, in a sari, is carrying a water-pot. In 'Flight into Egypt' '71 the family and their animal are resting in the desert—the animal is a camel!

As I have already said, Thomas painted Christ's life and ministry fairly intensively. 'Baptism of Christ' '72 shows John as a roaming sadhu, with a staff like a Hindu holy man—but with a cross on its top; John wears the saffron cloth of renunciation, has a smooth body bare to the waist with broad shoulders, carries the sadhu's pot, and pours water over Jesus from a small brass *lota*—the typical water bowl that a sadhu would carry—and his hair is tied like a sadhu's in a peak on the top

<sup>65</sup> A.D. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 2; Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . . , op. cit.*, Pl. 2; *Christ in the Art of India*, but with the pipul leaves cropped out, frame 47.

<sup>66</sup> Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 60; Fleming, *Christian Symbols . . . , op. cit.*, Pl. 39.

<sup>67</sup> Fleming, *Each With His . . . , op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>68</sup> Costantini, *L'Arte cristiana . . . , op. cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>69</sup> Fleming, *Christian Symbols . . . , op. cit.*, Pl. 40.

<sup>70</sup> Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . . , op. cit.*, Pl. 61; Fleming, *Each With His . . . , op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>71</sup> A.D. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 4.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 17; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 5; *Christ in the Art of India*, *op. cit.*, frame 54.

of his head ; Jesus stands in the water, is smooth and broad-shouldered, has shorter hair and is clad only below the waist in saffron. During His ministry Christ is usually portrayed by Thomas as a good-looking young sadhu. He wears His hair tied up—as John who initiated Him did; but now it looks more like some traditional religious leaders—as shown on some of the sculptures of the Buddha and of some Jain sculptures,<sup>73</sup> sculptures in which it is probably related to the *ushnisha* which is the protuberance on the skull of the Buddha. He wears a cloth which is usually saffron but sometimes white and He is usually bare from the waist up. His body is smooth, broad-shouldered and narrow-waisted. This is much the same body used for gods in human form and for god-like men in Hindu sculpture—that is to say it is like the ideal male body of classical Indian sculpture. So, this painted sadhu-Christ of Thomas' carries overtones of a godly, holy, god-man-like, religious leader or enlightened founder of a religion. This string of attributes is a fairly good fit for a common understanding of Jesus. It seems to me that what Thomas has tried to do in this painted exposition of Jesus is to take traditional representable characteristics from Indian tradition and combine and reinterpret them to understand and describe Christ in a truly Indian way. This means that Thomas was trying to do in painting almost exactly what most Indian Christian theologians were attempting to do theologically by using some Indian classical philosophical and religious terms and concepts, often recombined or reinterpreted, to understand and describe Christ in a truly Indian way. The danger of this is that it may lead to misunderstanding ; but the great hope is that it may lead to fresh understanding of at least some facets of the fullness of Christ.

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<sup>73</sup> Like the Jain sculptures at Ellora, for example in cave 32 ; cf. ' Lord Mahavira ' on the cover of *Bhavan's Journal*, Vol. XXI, No. 9 (24 Nov. 1974)—but for the marks on his chest he could be the Buddha.

In 'Our Lord and the Children'<sup>74</sup> the sadhu-Christ sits on a Mogulish platform holding one child while three others bring Him lotus buds ; He makes a mudra-like gesture with His left hand. 'The Rich Young Ruler'<sup>75</sup> finds the sadhu-Christ sitting on a similar platform, barefoot as usual, but now wearing a halo ; the ruler is thoughtfully looking at his very full purse. In 'Christ stills the Storm'<sup>76</sup> He looks the same, wears white, has a slight halo, stands in the prow of the boat, and His hand-gestures and stance suggest to me that He is exercising power ; with the waves, boat and crew this is a fine action picture in a flat Bengal School style. The 'Woman of Samaria'<sup>77</sup> carries her water pots toward a well of Mogulish design and the sadhu-Christ faces her and us clad from shoulders to feet in white with no halo but with a moon just over His head. In 'Mary Washing the Feet of Christ'<sup>78</sup> our same sadhu-Christ (who seems to have a light forehead which may denote enlightenment) wears kurta-pyjama and halo and sits against a bolster on a Mogulish platform making a mudra-gesture while Mary with her equipment—which includes a flower and an oil lamp, (or it may be incense)—I guess that is worship that is really happening—squats sariéd on the floor. 'Mary Anoints Our Lord's Feet'<sup>79</sup> is almost the same scene done from a different angle except that here He wears a white cloth and is mostly bare above the waist and there is an older man sitting near Him against a bolster.

Other paintings of the same sadhu-Christ include 'The Transfiguration'<sup>80</sup> in which He wears white, mostly below the waist, and is entirely in a multi-coloured flame-like halo with

<sup>74</sup> A.D. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 25; Lehmann, *Die Kust . . . op. cit.*, Pl. 15.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 27 ; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 24.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 21; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 34.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 29 ; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 53.

<sup>78</sup> *Son of Man, op. cit.*, p. 15; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 62.

<sup>79</sup> A.D. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 45; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 89.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 47; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 90.

His hands folded in reverent greeting ; the three disciples are bare above the waist and all are barefoot. Also ' Martha and Mary ' <sup>81</sup> in which He is bare above the waist, has a halo and raises His hand in a mudra-gesture ; it is sited in Mogulish architecture, the women have vessels and wear their saris well down on their hips, they have flowers in their hair and bangles on their arms—again all are barefoot. In ' The Raising of Lazarus ' <sup>82</sup> He again has the moon near His head but no halo ; one of the small group is a young disciple who has an almost identical hairdo—a sadhu-disciple I suppose. ' The Garden of Gethsemane ' <sup>83</sup> seems to be in a desert, He is bare above the waist and is kneeling with His hands clasped, and He is haloed ; the disciples in the background look older. In ' The Crucifixion ' <sup>84</sup> He wears saffron and a crown of thorns on His hairdo, He has no halo but a dark sun is near His head ; and a saried and bangled woman, at whom He looks, mourns and the only flower wilts (or else bends in homage). As ' The Risen Lord ' <sup>85</sup> He still has the thorny crown and the saffron cloth from the waist down, He carries a gardener's tool, a variety of hoe, and sits or leans against a holy pipul tree, He has a halo I think—but it may be the moon ; Mary wears Punjabi dress. Finally, of those I want to treat now, in ' The Ascension ' <sup>86</sup> Thomas' same sadhu-Christ sits on clouds with the moon, I suppose it is the moon, forming a halo around His whole torso, He still wears a saffron cloth but is bare above the waist, the thorny crown is still on his hairdo and He holds a lotus bud.

Thomas has been severely criticized for making his sadhu-Christ too Hinduised although I am inclined to think that his

<sup>81</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 41 ; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 100.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 43 ; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 109.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 49 ; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 110.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 53 ; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 120.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 55 ; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 137.

<sup>86</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 57 ; Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 138.





CHRIST IN PREACHING POSITION

A. ALPHONSO

*(From the collection of M. M. Thomas)*



supporters have outnumbered his critics.<sup>87</sup> Most of his critics seem to be foreign missionaries—who too frequently have felt called to enforce western orthodoxy on the Indian church, alack ! Some have been Indian Christian converts—and I can understand the need to protect every convert generation from backsliding.

John F. Butler is probably the most learned critic ; and potentially he seems to be one of the most sympathetic. He has asserted that Thomas' Christ is too soft and effeminate or feminine-looking and that this simply will not do because it neglects His manliness.<sup>88</sup> This is a very perceptive observation. Thomas' sadhu-Christ is soft and smooth and thin-waisted with rather delicate features albeit with broad if not massive shoulders. Yet it should be kept in mind, or so it seems to me, that in classical Indian art softness and smoothness are one thing, femaleness another. Dr. Butler appears to confuse the two. Thomas' females, as in his treatment of Christ with Martha and Mary, are not soft and smooth. Their bodies are shapely and exhibited to advantage.<sup>89</sup> But the point I wish to stress is that a soft, smooth, thin-waisted, broad-shouldered body and with rather delicate features is exactly the way gods are portrayed in much Indian sculpture. Goddesses, needless to say, look different.<sup>90</sup> I cannot, in all conscience, see why Thomas should not use such Indian artistic attributes of deity for Christ just as Indian Christian

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<sup>87</sup> A summary of some comments on these paintings is found in Lehmann *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 37 ff.

<sup>88</sup> John F. Butler, a review of Lehmann, *Die Kunst der Jungen Krichen* in *International Review of Missions*, Vol. XLV (1956), pp 467 f.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas was, after all, trained in the Lucknow School of Art which has prided itself on its style of painting beautiful and attractive women.

<sup>90</sup> This is most clearly seen, in almost every part of their bodies, in Ardhanarisvara (Siva and Parvati) and Gaurisvara (Purusa and Prakrti) figures which are combined god-goddess images, male on the right half and female on the left.

thinkers, P. Chenchiah for one,<sup>91</sup> have used Indian philosophical attributes for Him.

Dr. Butler has also said of these paintings of Thomas that, ' . . . one must be deeply concerned that the Christ is portrayed as so much like the Buddha. This figure is not God Almighty, entering in love into the joys and sorrows and now especially into the temptations of His world : rather it is the young prince who found peace in world-renunciation. Doctrinally it is wrong. It may do no harm in the West ; it may even do good there, by recalling us to some forgotten minor aspects of the truth. But in India, for which presumably it is primarily intended, it is dangerous'<sup>92</sup>

I think that Butler's basic problem here is that he identifies the hairdo that Thomas uses on his sadhu-Christ with Buddha. I have already indicated above that it is used also by the Jains and that Thomas himself uses it at least once for a disciple. Thomas also uses it more than once in his paintings which are not of Christ. One of these, ' The Harijan '<sup>93</sup> has a sadhu with such a hairdo turning a harijan women away from a village well.

Thomas himself seems to have heard this criticism and responded to it. One of his best and most famous paintings in his sadhu-Christ series is ' The Good Shepherd '<sup>94</sup> in which the sadhu-Christ in a white cloth and a moon for a halo behind His head is on the side of a steep and rocky incline rescuing a

<sup>91</sup> Cf. D. A. Thangasamy, *The Theology of Chenchiah*, Bangalore : CISRS 1967.

<sup>92</sup> John F. Butler, ' Non-European Christian Art and Architecture ' in Gilbert Cope (ed.), *Christianity and the Visual Arts*, London : The Faith Press, 1964, p. 96.

<sup>93</sup> No. 510 in the Sri Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery, Mysore. ' There is a similar hairdo in No. 509.

<sup>94</sup> A.D.Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 35; Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . .*, Pl. 54; *Christ in the Art of India*, *op. cit.*, frame 70 (excessively cropped).

lamb caught in a thorn bush. Thomas has painted another picture identical in all respects except that he has lowered the topknot and added a thorny crown.<sup>95</sup> I feel that what Thomas means to say through this is that this Christ is not the young Buddha, and certainly not a young prince, but E. Stanley Jones' and Thomas' sadhu-Christ of the Indian Road.

Christian pastors in Java instinctively understand this. Theirs is a culture steeped in Hinduism and Buddhism. Borobudur, the greatest Buddhist monument in the world, is there. Parambanam and many lesser Hindu sites are there. The puppet shadow-plays of the Ramayana are at the core of their culture. They recognize Thomas' sadhu-Christ as their kind of Christ and are enthusiastic about Him.<sup>96</sup>

In his 'Temptation',<sup>97</sup> an oft-criticised painting, Thomas has his sadhu-Christ, who seems to have been sitting in contemplation, spurning a tray of food and drink borne by a maiden in the bloom of maturity with flowing hair and wearing nothing but two bangles. As a Parsi friend remarked on seeing it, 'Who would feel hungry?' Of course the Buddha was tempted by the Evil One in the shape of an attractive woman (or women) but Thomas seems not to have been aware of that story when he made this painting.<sup>98</sup> Thomas said of this painting.

'I wanted to bring out the Tempter's wiles in a concentrated way, in a way that would portray their charming nature and seductive treachery. Since a woman is known

<sup>95</sup> 'The Passion of Christ' *op. cit.*, No. 1.

<sup>96</sup> This was reported to me by the Revd. M. Azariah of Madras who recently made a study tour of Java where he was introduced to A. D. Thomas, *op. cit.*, by several different pastors.

<sup>97</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 19; Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 14; Cope (ed.), *op. cit.*, Pl. 63.

<sup>98</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 40, reports his conversation with Thomas about this.

to be the strongest seductive force, much stronger than even gold or power, I therefore gave the Evil Foe this form ; I did so after much deliberation.'<sup>99</sup>

Butler points out that Tintoretto once used an unclad woman as part of the illustration of the same event.<sup>100</sup> I think that it is terribly important to point out that Thomas here assumes, what many in the Western Christian tradition have not dared to face, that Jesus' full manhood must include, in some sense, his authentic maleness. That Thomas is free to assume this may be largely due to the fact that he is working out of an Indian cultural background rather than out of a European background—so that sex does not frighten him so much.<sup>101</sup> On the one hand, as a contemporary theologian of the arts, writes, 'To put it bluntly, a sexless Jesus can hardly be conceived to be fully human. As long as Jesus is somehow above-masculinity or femininity, the drift toward a Docetic Christ is inevitable.'<sup>102</sup> On the other hand, nude women in Indian religious art are not uncommon. Thomas himself in another of his sadhu-Christ series, 'The Women taken in Adultery'<sup>103</sup> has the woman standing before Him stripped to the waist—unlikely in Western Christian art of the same period. Interestingly, it appears that the order of Christ's temptations (cf. Luke 4:1 ff.)—physical needs, ambition for power, and spiritual pride relating to occult power—follow the same order as the three *gunas* of the Gita : *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*; this material is repeated in Lehmann, 'A Brief History . . .', p. 155.

<sup>100</sup> Butler in Cope (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 96 and Pl. 64.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. my review of Spratt, *Hindu Culture and Personality in Religion and Society*, Vol. XV, No. 3 (Sept. 1968), 73 ff.

<sup>102</sup> Tom F. Driver, 'Sexuality and Jesus' in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. XX, No. 3 (March 1965), p. 239.

<sup>103</sup> A.D. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 39 ; Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 72.

<sup>104</sup> Dr. Erna M. Hoch first pointed this out to me.

Thomas painted other pictures of Jesus too. There is a 'Jesus Stilling the Waves'<sup>105</sup> in which Jesus stands outside the boat and has a fairly conventional hair style and face. 'At the foot of the Cross'<sup>106</sup> shows only His feet with two mourners. 'Christ Carrying His Cross'<sup>107</sup> is quite conventional. There is a conventional 'Crucifixion'.<sup>108</sup> Two are highly imaginary. One of these is 'Come unto me'<sup>109</sup> in which He is dressed like a sadhu and has his hair up and with a halo and is preaching to a group of villagers who labour and are heavy laden ; one of them is a topless labouring woman carrying something heavy. The other 'Christ the Dawn' is a

'Full-size mural representation of Jesus Christ the Light of the World, dawning upon folk of every caste and creed . . . At the right, in semi-darkness, are Hindu temples. High and low caste, Moslem and Hindu, one blind and one burdened move toward the central light. Standing in the water is a high-caste widow who begins to understand the meaning of the Light. Leaning upon a crutch is an "untouchable" cripple rapt in adoration of the Light of Love which is even for him. On the left are Christians—men and women of different castes and creeds who have come into His presence . . . Our Lord, in glowing white garments, stands upon the rocks above the riverside beckoning lovingly to men. A tiny yellow flower, springing from the rocks at Jesus' feet, bends in adoration and gives promise of new life and joy and hope.'<sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Fleming, *Each With . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>107</sup> *Son of Man*, *op. cit.*, facing p. 18; Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 64.

<sup>108</sup> Published in India in large size in colour, perhaps by the Christa Seva Sangha as mentioned in *The Guardian*, *op. cit.*

<sup>109</sup> Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 63 ; Fleming, *Each With . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>110</sup> Fleming, *ibid.*, p. 65, with reproduction.

This suggests to me that Thomas' descriptions of some of his pictures would surely differ from those I have given.

### Angela Trindade

studied painting at the Sir J. J. School of Art in Bombay. It still had a European bias and her father was an accomplished painter in the European manner. But she decided to paint in Indian style and did a series of madonnas some of which were published together in a booklet.<sup>111</sup> Most of the rest of her pictures that I know are used to illustrate a life of Christ written in Hindi.<sup>112</sup> This book contains eight colour reproductions of her paintings done in something like the Ajanta style and a large number of her line drawings.

In 'Mother Most Amiable'<sup>113</sup> Mary, who looks completely Indian with sari, jewellery and bangles, sits in clouds in a starry sky, holds the Child on her lap and has a white lotus in her hand ; the Child is in kurta-pyjama and seems to be making some hand gesture ; both have halos. This is a fine picture but with one jarring note—Mary has blue eyes ! In 'Mary with Jesus and John the Baptist'<sup>114</sup> Mary sits in an Indian coloured wooden chair holding Jesus who wears a shirt of Indian material, no pants although He is covered below the waist by a loose cloth over His lap and an anklet—a very typical get-up for a young Indian boy; young John stands by stands by the side and looks as though he wants to play with Jesus—he seems to be wearing an especially Johnish garment which covers only one shoulder. This is a rather conventional picture with Mary wearing a full-length garment cin-

<sup>111</sup> Cf. da Fonseca, *op. cit.*, pp. 142 f. I have heard that the booklet was published in Poona.

<sup>112</sup> G. Proksch, s.v.d., *Kristayn*, Indore ; Sat Prachar Press, 1952.

<sup>113</sup> An early Art India reproduction in a large size. I am unable to read the number.

<sup>114</sup> Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 76. This has been well reproduced in colour on paper in India—with no details of publication.



ched at her waist. A really marvellous nativity called 'Cave in Bethlehem'<sup>115</sup> takes place in an old, disused, Indian temple—it looks to be an Ellora-like cave temple ; typical sculpture is shown on its pillars and walls. Mary, sitting with her hands folded in adoration, and the Babe—lying ; both have halos and are on cloths spread on straw ; the Babe rests in the beam of light from the star ; some vessels which may have been left by the magi are beside Mary. A man without a halo, probably Joseph, sits on a roll of bedding ; his staff is on the floor and he is holding a bunch of white lotuses, maybe he is offering them to the Babe ; there is a basket of more white lotuses nearby—I like to think that they were left by the shepherds. Their donkey with a bright, worked, Rajasthani saddle-cloth stands looking on. There is an oil lamp for light and a herd of cattle in the background within the temple—I suppose it is where they usually spend the night. Another 'Nativity' pales by comparison ;<sup>116</sup> here too the star's beam comes in through the cave-like door, but there are no sculptured walls ; nor are there any vessels, nor any lotuses ; Joseph has his hands folded in adoration and both he and Mary have halos, they have a small wood-fire ; the same donkey is resting, as is the only cow to be seen in the background. If I had not seen the cave-temple version I might like this one ; but having seen the other this seems to me to be improverished. In 'The Flight to Egypt'<sup>117</sup> Mary and the Babe, with halos, are on a donkey which is being led by Joseph, with his stick, through a surrealistic desert ; overhead a wonderful pair of *apsaras*

<sup>115</sup> Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 75, taken from *The Christian Home*, No. 9; Cover picture of *The Treasure Chest*, December 1949 and December 1961; Also reproduced in colour on paper in India in several sizes without publication details.

<sup>116</sup> *Christ in the Art of India*, *op. cit.*, frames 11 and 39; *Mensual*, December 1974, p. 8.

<sup>117</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, Pl. 176; *Christ in the Art . . .*, *ibid.*, frame 49.

hold a saffron umbrella, symbol of spiritual authority, over the Babe.

Trindade's paintings and drawings in *Kristayn* start with Christ's baptism and go through His ascension. In the paintings Christ looks reasonably Indian and usually wears the saffron of a sadhu, but He always has a halo and His face is always conventional enough to be instantly recognized. Often some of those who seem to be the disciples also wear saffron. Those who are around Him are sariied women, peasants, children and Hindu religious. Pilate is a brahmin who appears to have a 'caste mark' on his forehead.<sup>118</sup> Both the paintings and drawings seem to be sited in some Hindu state about the period of Sivaji, the middle class and rich men wear headdresses of that period and the soldiers have equipment from the same period.<sup>119</sup>

In the painting of Jesus with Mary and Martha He sits under a tree under which there are set, so typically, stones carved with serpents and other gods.<sup>120</sup> In a picture not in the book but which seems to be in the same series, 'Let the Children Come to Me',<sup>121</sup> He is larger than life, although sitting. In one telling juxtaposition the drawing of John the Baptist talking to a group of people<sup>122</sup> shows John as a charismatic young husky, partly clad in a skin, with hair on his chest. In the next painting<sup>123</sup> where an ascetic Christ is being baptised John also becomes an ascetic type without liveliness, with a pious look, a long robe, and neatly oiled and combed long hair and whiskers; Christ too is similar—stripped to

<sup>118</sup> Proksch, *op. cit.*, facing p. 288.

<sup>119</sup> Some of the paintings are reproduced in Lehmann, *Christ Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pls. 180 f.; and in *Christ in the Art of India*, *op. cit.*, frames 19, 57, 61 and 69 (which is grossly cropped). I think all eight of them have been reproduced on paper in India—unlabelled.

<sup>120</sup> Proksch, *op. cit.*, facing p. 128.

<sup>121</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 178.

<sup>122</sup> Proksch, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, facing p. 30.

the waist for immersion we see His hairless chest. No doubt Angela Trindade realised that the hollowness of this ascetic Christ would have been exposed had she carried a charismatic John over into the same picture with Him. This seems to be the problem with almost all of her pictures of Christ in this book.

### S. S. Bundellu

is an evangelical Christian of the Bakth Singh variety who paints in Bombay.<sup>124</sup> He teaches in a school and prefers to teach Bible classes. When I met him he was President of the Christian Artists' Central Association the objective of which is, he told me, to preach the gospel through art. He said that the CACA helps Christian painters avoid idolatry and I gathered that it serves as an institution to promulgate and enforce a rather conservative understanding of Christian painting in which Bundellu was greatly reinforced by a foreign lady-missionary who thrives on encouraging so-called Indian Christian artists and who had been posted in Bombay during at least a part of Bundellu's presidency. From this point of view he has written of A. D. Thomas :

'The paintings by Mr. A. Thomas are very good and have artistic merit. However in my opinion they will not prove to be suitable for Christian purposes. This is the case because the artist has not told the true story of Jesus Christ and has not portrayed Him as true God, for his conception of Jesus Christ is that of Buddha . . . Should pictures like these ever find their way into the Bible or into any Christian literature, I would oppose their use humbly but firmly no matter who the artist might be. Understandably they would be a grave threat to Christianity. . . . I declare emphatically that I am opposed to the idea of seeing Jesus

<sup>124</sup> He very kindly entertained me in his home in March 1972.

represented as a Hindu holy man or as a Buddhistic monk . . . . . If such pictures should get into Christian literature, the Hindus would think that Christianity is nothing else than another sect of Hinduism or of Buddhism . . . I sincerely hope that our historic background and our culture and the environment shaped by it will not get lost.<sup>125</sup>

He told me that this criticism applied equally to Angela Trindade and to some extent to Frank Wesley and to Lem Patole whom I consider below. He had been partly driven to his position by his reaction to a book in Marathi by Babarao Sawarkar which contends, as many do, that Jesus really got His ideas from Hinduism in Kashmir and that He is buried there; *but* then goes on to analyse pictures of Jesus to show that Jesus was really a Hindu. This book got greater attention than it otherwise might have because its author was the elder brother of the politician and freedom fighter Swantrantrya Veer Vinayak Damodar Sawarkar.

The chart which appears on the dust cover and in the introduction of this Marathi book<sup>126</sup> has copies of parts of four European pictures of Jesus and a part of one of Mary. The first picture shows Jesus in an orange robe, making a sign of blessing and carrying a staff on His shoulder; Sawarkar contends that the saffron robe is worn in a typically Hindu style and that the hand gesture (*bhadra mudra*) and staff (*sanyasi dand*) are in the unique Hindu style of all Hindu yogis. The second picture is of the Good Shepherd carrying a lamb on His shoulders and wearing a head-cloth, a flowing loin-cloth and a staff; this is said to show His hair tied like a Hindu sage, a dhoti of Hindu style, a Hindu celibate's staff and a

<sup>125</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 37 f.

<sup>126</sup> Babarao (alias Ganesh Damodar) Sawarkar, *Krist Pricya artat Kristacen Hindutwa*, Belgaum : Virbharat Press, 1946, I am most grateful to S. M. Adhav for finding a copy of this rare book for me; and to Mr. Londhe of the Y.M.C.A. for helping me to understand it.

Hindu sacrificial mood. The third picture is of Christ teaching, making a gesture with His right hand and with a book in His left hand and there is some kind of mark on His forehead ; it is asserted that his forehead mark is Hindu. The fourth picture is a crucifixion of a beardless Christ wearing a loin-cloth ; the loin-cloth is seen as a Hindu dhoti again. In the final illustration Mary is standing and there are some frown-marks, or something like that, on her forehead ; she is said to be wearing a Hindu sari with Hindu daubed marks on her forehead—thus showing that Christ's mother also became a Hindu ! This picture chart may seem excessive, but I can well understand how it might cause anyone like Bundellu to advocate avoiding giving any Hinduish impression whatsoever of Christ at all costs.

Bundellu favours using an Indian style, by which he seems to mean sitting, for pictures of Jesus but insists that the *character* must be Jesus Christ and not some Buddhist or Hindu holy man. He further asserts that saffron is not a suitable colour for Jesus to wear because saffron is a colour of age or aging—green grass turns yellow with age. White, for purity, and red are suitable colours for Him—bright and lively. Bundellu argues that the usual hairdo and beard of Jesus have so long been the convention that they are almost as good as being in the scriptural line. And he says that since European artists have not painted Him in hat and suit<sup>127</sup> why should Indian artists show Him in Indian garb.

Bundellu suggested that instead of Indian garb the Christ of the Revelation might be painted in modern style. He intends to try. He showed me an attempt in this direction by his friend and fellow CACA member A. O. Pengal<sup>128</sup> which he admitted was not entirely successful—and which I thought

<sup>127</sup> In the Introduction, *supra.*, I mention a case where something very like this was recently published in Rome.

<sup>128</sup> This is in Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 170.

was of God the Father when I saw it. He saved his strongest stricture for those who paint Christ with a lotus, saying that a lotus is the symbol of the Buddha and suggesting that such a painting would be just like painting a cross in the hand of Buddha or Krishna. He pled that the purpose of Christ should not be changed and stressed that His Jewish character is essential, asking 'otherwise what is the purpose of bringing Him through the generation of Abraham?' He feels that there will be a great problem for the understanding of non-Christians if Christ is not portrayed correctly.

Of his painting 'Jesus and Thomas'<sup>129</sup> Bundellu has written :

'It was the earnest desire of my heart to draw a picture of Jesus Christ, a living Lord. Everywhere I used to see the picture of the crucifixion and whenever I saw such pictures I felt the incompleteness of the Lord which is shown in the picture. For He is the Living Lord. These thoughts led me to draw Jesus risen from the dead. For He is just the same yesterday, today and forever.

'I did not use any particular model but keeping in mind that Jesus was a Jew I used to study the Jewish character and structure to support the historical truth that Jesus belonged to the Jewish race.

'Now for this particular picture, I wanted to show that Jesus Christ is the light of the world so the worldly light is not more powerful than Jesus Christ. In the picture Jesus Himself is showing His light, power and glory to doubting people like Thomas. Behind is Peter with the key of heaven and James the vigorous disciple.

'This picture was painted in 1950, painted in the wash method in watercolour. When I completed the picture I

<sup>129</sup> *Christian Art in India, op. cit.*, p.43, shown somewhat cropped ; *Christ in the Art of India, op. cit.*, frames 33 and 93.

showed it to my artist friend. The next day he came and told me that he saw Jesus in his dream with all His glory, light was sparkling from His body.'<sup>130</sup>

After making the point that he is often wrongly accused of painting Jesus as a European and saying that this just is not so—what he is really doing is lightening His skin to show life and vitality, he says—we looked at some of his other paintings. These included 'Jesus and Judas'<sup>131</sup> in which Judas has the head of a snake and at a sketch in which a snake is over Peter and Christ is raising Peter from the snake ; in the latter the snake is the snake of Hindu mythology which means that it is the 'snake of unbelief' (Hinduism being unbelief). Of 'Jesus and the Ten Lepers'<sup>132</sup> he told me that the fire behind Jesus is the fire for the sinner which will, in time, fill the lake of fire. A painting of Christ as a babe<sup>133</sup> shows Him with knowing eyes and a halo with a lamb and an Indian bullock with the three gold and silver gifts ; but this Babe is a blonde—which does not fit very well with Bundellu's thesis of His West Asian Jewishness ! 'Temptation' shows a huge spiritual-looking Jesus guarding a praying Christian worker from anger, girls, worldly things, anxiety, etc.—I wondered, but did not ask, if He also protected Christian lady-workers from boys. The 'Presentation of Jesus in the Temple' reminded me of a dress-up Sunday School pageant of my youth with lots of Roman soliders and, again, did not strike me as very Jewish. With 'God so loved the World' Bundellu won a National Christian Council of India competition around 1959 ; it showed Christ reigning from the cross on a hill with

<sup>130</sup> *Christian Art in India, ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>131</sup> Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 144 ; *Christ in the Art of India, op. cit.*, frames 19 and 82.

<sup>132</sup> Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 143—in which the important fire is almost wholly cropped.

<sup>133</sup> Reproduced on the cover of *The Treasure Chest*, December 1958.

a road running up through jungle with folk of many races standing at the bottom and reminded me of the Government of India poster on literacy in which a person from each state was on the hill road as high as the literacy rate of his or her state. In 'Gethsemane' a very light-faced Christ is seen talking with God and there are three Arab-like fellows in the background—which is certainly West Asian. It seems to me that Bundellu knows exactly what he does not want to do and has a fair idea of what he wants to do but that as yet he has not been able to do it very well.

### Frank Wesley

is a North Indian Methodist.<sup>134</sup> He is intentionally very Indian. He sees Christ, as over against Western missionary theology, as an eternal being who *could* have come any time and any place. Because of this Wesley often paints Him in the blue of the sky which is the colour of eternity. For this reason, too, he frequently gives Him an ageless face. He sometimes refers to Him as Christ Eternal. Wesley also thinks of Him, in this sense, as eternal *Ruhu 'llah* and as eternal *Om*—or something very like them. I think it not far-fetched to suggest that this may not be too far removed from Indian Christian theological thinking about Christ at work in the world and about the Cosmic Christ.<sup>135</sup> Wesley asserts that this Indian viewpoint of his is based on the wholeness of things and upon their interrelatedness—for instance, the sower and the seed or the potter and the clay are seen as

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<sup>134</sup> As I have got to know him my admiration for his work has increased. I miss him very much since he left for Australia.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Richard W. Taylor, 'Christ Acting in Our Society' in H. Bürkle and W. M. W. Roth (eds.), *Indian Voices In Today's Theological Debate*, Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1972; first published as *Indische Beiträage zur Theologie der Gegenwart*, Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerke, 1966.



continuities rather than separately.<sup>136</sup> He sees Jesus as neither Indian nor Western ; rather as universal. He does not see Christ, importantly, as historical. No doubt biblical themes are in some sense historical but this, says Wesley, is where Indian(or Hindu) flexibility comes in. In fact Wesley is deeply versed in biblical themes and lore and brings this to bear in quite original ways in some of his paintings.

I guess that Wesley seeks to paint Christ with Indian feeling. He has not told me so but I am inclined to equate this with the classical Indian aesthetic idea of *rasa*—the taste or flavour or mood of a work of art—and to the giving of importance to this. This involves, for Wesley, the use, often the elaborate use, of Indian symbolism—even when he paints in Western or Japanese form or style, as he frequently does. He seeks to use *mudras*, colours, symbols and relationships based on Indian tradition to express meanings somewhat similar to traditional meanings about Christ. About feelings Wesley once said, ‘Crucifixion, Transfiguration and Resurrection-cum-Ascension are something that very few can really perceive, feel and express. On the other hand, these things to the Indian mind are the greatest achievements of Christ Eternal, thus the body or matter becomes secondary to feeling, senses and suffering—the Atma becomes *all* and pervades *all*.

Wesley has not used any overtly Hindu religious symbols so far as I know. He has sought the help of Christian theologians to find the ‘very basic reason, causes and metaphysical aspects of the shapes, forms and space of symbols and things that are very important in the Hindu religious life and practice’<sup>137</sup> with a view toward examining them and trying to use

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<sup>136</sup> I suppose that this is closely related to the aesthetic continuum of which F. S. C. Northrop makes so much in his *The Meeting of East and West*, New York : Macmillan, 1946.

<sup>137</sup> In his letter to me of 29 Feb. 1972.

some in his painting. I am sorry to have to report that so far as I know he got little if any help in this direction.

Sometimes, for Wesley, Mary's robe merges the blue of eternity and the red of earthly happiness to form the purple of (western) royalty. In his painting of Jesus healing a blind man<sup>138</sup> Wesley paints in Western style but uses profound symbolism in an Indian manner ; the points of the bodies of Christ and the man he is healing form a star of David and the two arches in the background form a rainbow which refers to the promise to Abraham. In his 'Blue Madonna'<sup>139</sup> he has used all of the lines symbolically, they are the continuous curvy lines of Mary, her sari and her halo, converging on the head of the Babe. They are the Parikrama of the universe including man—and blue is more for infinity here than in any of his other paintings—the never-ending creation and the created ; I get the flavour of something like the awesomely poetic metaphysics of Teilhard, or perhaps of the Cosmic Christ theme, in this blue madonna. Wesley's most powerful madonna is a black madonna—<sup>140</sup> black like the goddess Kali for *shakti* (female) power, and black also to show her low caste background ; she is boldly, I really want to say (again) powerfully, set off against red—red for happiness and for sacrifice. Having lived for years with Kali in Bengal I find this picture

<sup>138</sup> Wesley told me this was 'Pool of Siloam'; When it was reproduced in *Christian Art in India, op. cit.*, pp. 34 f., he mentioned Bartimeaus—who was a different blind man ; Lehmann, *Christian Art . . . , op. cit.*, Pl. 188, labels it, mistakenly I suspect, 'The Pool of Bethesda' and crops it so that all of Wesley's symbolism is lost. This is also well reproduced in *Christ in the Art of India, op. cit.*, frame 62.

<sup>139</sup> Well reproduced in colour on paper in India without publication details ; and in black and white in Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . . , op. cit.*, Pl. 80; in *Christ in the Art of India, op., cit.*, frame 43, it has been cropped on all sides and the symbolic line lost ; as also in *Aikya*, Vol. 13, No. 11 (November, 1967), back cover ; Wesley's 'Blue Madonna' published by World Literacy and Christian Literature is an entirely different picture.

<sup>140</sup> In the collection of R. R. and Sylvia Smyth.

overpoweringly meaningful. In 'The Adoration of the Babe'<sup>141</sup> Wesley shows a somewhat stylized mother and child with a large stylized open lotus beneath them—probably the hundred-petaled lotus—apparently meaning to suggest with this very Indian symbol the purity and purification involved in Christ's birth.

Wesley uses the same face for Mary sometimes that he sometimes uses for Jesus, but in different pictures. The family similarity is compounded by the fact that sometimes they wear identical ear rings and sometimes they wear identical necklaces and sometimes they have an identical *bindu* or caste mark. I think it a very Indian face. It is found on Mary in 'The Adoration of the Babe'<sup>142</sup> and in 'Come unto Me and I will give You Rest.'<sup>143</sup> It is found on Jesus in 'Christ and the Young Ruler',<sup>144</sup> in which Jesus is the copper colour of the rising sun giving promise for the day; and it is also found on Him in a painting of the Marys and Jesus on Easter morning (Plate XI)<sup>145</sup> and in a painting of Jesus and John the Baptist.<sup>146</sup>

Wesley often gives Jesus a light forehead to show his godliness and enlightenment.<sup>147</sup> This is true of the Babe in

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<sup>141</sup> This is well reproduced in colour on paper by the 'Indian Artists Series.' But both in Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 186, and in *Christ in the Art of India*, *op. cit.*, frame 45, it is cropped top and bottom to grossly distort the elongated composition and so as to eliminate most of the crucial lotus.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 96.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. 79; *Christ in the Art of India*, *op. cit.*, cover and frames 24 and 77.

<sup>145</sup> *Christ in the Art . . .*, *ibid.*, frame 91 is similar to but different from Pl. XI.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, frame 55.

<sup>147</sup> Nandalal's 'Shiva' seems to have this light forehead, reproduced in *The Visvabharati Quarterly*, Vol. 34 (1968-69), cover and again facing p. 24; also on the cover of *A Handbook of Bengal Painting*, New Delhi: National Gallery of Modern Art, 1975—where it is Acc. No. 74.

‘Madonna of the Mango Grove’<sup>148</sup> and in ‘Madonna’<sup>149</sup> and, I think, but it is not so clear, in ‘Nativity’.<sup>150</sup> This shining brow is also found on Jesus as an adult in ‘Miracle at Caana’, in ‘Christ and the Young Ruler’,<sup>151</sup> in the Easter morning paintings,<sup>152</sup> and in the painting of Jesus and John the Baptist.<sup>153</sup>

### Vinayak S. Masoji

studied painting at Shantiniketan with founders of the Bengal School and then stayed on there to teach, eventually becoming Vice-principal of Kalabhavan (the Fine Arts Department).<sup>154</sup> I suppose that he was the Christian most thoroughly involved in the second generation of the Bengal School of Painting—but he painted few Christian themes until his retirement; although he has told me of a 1922 painting of Christ by Gagandranath Tagore the elder brother of Abanindranath Tagore, and of how when the new hostel for boys was ready three groups of students, each with one teacher, decorated the three verandas of the hostel with subjects from the Mahabharata, Buddha’s life and Christ’s life (including a panel of Christ carrying the cross)<sup>155</sup>—so he was not a stranger to the painting of Christ even then. During that time he did paint an ‘Annunciation’ about which it is reported,

‘This picture . . . is painted in pale colours on tussore silk. The artist used to go to service at St. Mary’s Church, Bhowanipore, Calcutta, where the only religious pictures

<sup>148</sup> Art India cards Q 3 and Q 9.

<sup>149</sup> Art India card R 5.

<sup>150</sup> Art India card R 14 which is reversed left-to-right from a larger colour reproduction made in India on paper without publication details.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. note 144 *supra*.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. note 145 *supra*.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. note 146 *supra*.

<sup>154</sup> I first met him in 1957 in Nagpur where I resided and he had recently retired.

<sup>155</sup> From his letter to me of 5 May 1972.

were by Western artists. He was quick to see that the Indians ignored these pictures as having no appeal and no message to the Eastern mind. He determined himself to paint a picture of St. Mary the Virgin, which should express her holiness and surrender in terms that India could understand.<sup>156</sup>

I guess that his motivation for painting Christian themes has never changed.

After he started painting Christian themes upon retirement his paintings seem radically different from his previous ones because he had been painting in the style of the Bengal School and he chose a modified Mogul style (but not miniature) as most suited to his Christian story-telling themes ; and this is what he started doing, visually retelling biblical stories and events in an Indian setting. For Masoji this is an Indian setting in cultural tone and imaged physical setting but not in basic intentional metaphysics. Perhaps because he had been in the Indian nationalist atmosphere of Shantiniketan most of his life Masoji did not need to strain for Hinduish religious roots and symbolism for his Christian themes. He usually has Jesus wearing a single, long, one-piece garment, usually in pastel colours, because he feels that such garb is worn by religious of all religions in India and hence not open to misunderstanding.<sup>157</sup> Yet this garment does not distract from His manliness by any means. In Masoji's 'Ye shall be a witness unto me unto the uttermost part of the earth'<sup>158</sup> Jesus wears a long thin (almost see-through) white garment with a white cloth flowing backward, *dupatta*-like, from around His neck and looks very virile indeed ; He is surrounded by clouds of whitish angels, and by clouds and by eleven men

<sup>156</sup> *Son of Man, op. cit.*, p. 3; the picture is reproduced facing p. 8.

<sup>157</sup> Masoji's subtle but bright pastel shades tend to reproduce poorly.

<sup>158</sup> In the CARAVS chapel in Jabalpur.

and four women of various skin colours doing homage with their hands folded ; by comparison with these people He is substantially larger than life. Here, as in many of his later paintings, the title-text is painted in English and in Hindi even though Masoji's own mother tongue is Marathi. 'Ascension'<sup>159</sup> is a similar painting with about the same people but His stance is different and the *dupatta* is not flowing. In trying to be relevant to India Masoji substitutes ■ banyan tree seed for mustard seed in the telling of that parable. Masoji's people are wonderfully and rightly Indian. In his painting of 'Jesus among the teachers'<sup>160</sup> the teachers could have been used as the pundits in the *Illustrated Weekly* feature on fortune-telling—they look so much like pundits. He has done a rather similar drawing with pen-and-ink called '12-year-old Jesus in the Temple.'<sup>161</sup> In one of his many woodcuts Masoji has done a very similar Boy Jesus<sup>162</sup> of which he has described some of the details :

'The stone pillar with a lotus pedestal creates a temple atmosphere. The cushion seat with a bolster is a seat of honour and respect that the young Jesus was offered by the learned teachers. Jesus sits crosslegged in a natural dignity ; and is seen explaining the questions put to him by the teachers. His left hand touches the sacred manuscripts. His mother's skill of embroidering the buttons of his garment unconsciously display a design of a cross which deletes every other guess and reveals his unique personality.'<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> 'An exhibition of interpretations by Vinayak S. Masoji of India,' presented by the Board of World Missions, Lutheran Church in America, No. 14.

<sup>160</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 162.

<sup>161</sup> 'An exhibition . . .', *op. cit.*, No. 3.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 2.

<sup>163</sup> 'Weekly Church Bulletin Service' of Fortress Press, U.S.A., dated January 9, 1966, with a reproduction on the cover.

The 'sacred manuscripts' appear to be palm leaf manuscripts. There is a bowl of three lotus blossoms in which one is closed, one half open and the third is in full bloom—symbolizing the growing Jesus who 'increased in wisdom and stature and favour with God and man.'

Masoji painted 'Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet'<sup>164</sup> for an experimental Christian community in Alipur village of Wardha district. In it the disciples look exactly like people I would expect to see walking around in that village—which I have visited often. It has been further described.

'The room is decorated with mango leaves (above the door), and incense is burned. These in addition to the flowers and the multilight lamp in the foreground make the scene festive and familiar to every Indian. Jesus smiles—Judas (at the right) with the left hand feels his purse and with the right hand seeks to prevent the act of the Master.'<sup>165</sup>

'Jesus at Martha and Mary's home'<sup>166</sup> (Plate XII) has a larger-than-life Jesus seated on a mat on a large flat square low stool leaning on a bolster with His left elbow and making a teaching gesture with His right hand. He is clad in a white garment and wearing a large saffron shawl and a garland of white flowers. He has put down a small bouquet which must have been given when welcoming Him to the house. His face and beard are traditional enough to assure His recognition—which the light halo reinforces. Mary and Martha are sariied, in Maharashtran style I think, and have their saris over their heads with flowers in their hair. A white cat is also in the room. A good view of the front room shows some peasants sitting on the floor talking. These, Masoji assures me, are

<sup>164</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 163, which is cropped substantially.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>166</sup> In the collection of Alison and D. H. S. Lyon.

the disciples. Beyond them, in perspective, is a doorway through which another peasant-disciple is entering with his dog—an Alsatian with a collar; a middle-class dog. Through the doorway and a window potted plants, some flowering, are to be seen. Through another door from the main room is the kitchen with modern-looking traditional utensils. The floors of the house look terrazzo—with a different colour for each room. The whole thing is wholly Indian and contains nothing specifically Hindu. I think it really is a painting of the Lord Jesus teaching at Mary and Martha's middle class home in Nagpur.

In 'Jesus and Fishermen'<sup>167</sup> He again wears white, has a halo and is larger than life. So too in 'The Raising of Lazarus.'<sup>168</sup>

In Masoji's 'Epiphany of our Lord'<sup>169</sup> the advent is situated on the porch of a contemporary village dwelling—perhaps in Bengal or Maharashtra where he has lived and worked; Mary is larger than life. She is also larger than life in 'Neighbours adore the Holy Babe'<sup>170</sup> which is sited in a village with a cow resting in the background and several village women who have come with their children with offerings on round trays—as, in other circumstances, might be brought to the deity of some local shrine.

Masoji has done quite a number of heads of Christ. In some of these He is on the cross: as in the woodblock 'Prince of Peace'<sup>171</sup> and 'Father Forgive Them.'<sup>172</sup> In 'Serene

<sup>167</sup> 'An exhibition . . .', *op. cit.*, No. 6.

<sup>168</sup> Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 165.

<sup>169</sup> Well reproduced in colour on paper by the Shivraj Press in Nagpur.

<sup>170</sup> In the collection of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, New York; reproduced in India on paper in black and white without publication details.

<sup>171</sup> *Christ in the Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, frames 34 and 94; 'An exhibition . . .', *op. cit.*, No. 9; in the collection of the Board of Global Ministries, *ibid.*; *World Encounter*, October 1963, cover; 'The Passion of Christ', *op. cit.*, No. 8; Art India card Q 8 with the title 'On the Cross'.

<sup>172</sup> 'An exhibition . . .', *op. cit.*, No. 11.



Silent Sufferer<sup>173</sup> we have His head and shoulders and He is carrying the cross ; He has strong-looking muscles and reminds me of Nandalal's (Nandalal was Masoji's teacher) cross-carrying Christ.<sup>174</sup> 'Christ in Gethsemane'<sup>175</sup> is another of his heads. There are more.

'The Last Supper'<sup>176</sup> is a marvel of majesty and domesticity. A very large strong Christ sits behind a low stool which is set with a fair white cloth offering bread and cup as much to the communicants as to the disciples who are on either side of him—and are rather ordinary looking Indian fellows. From one rear corner the ladies of the house have come out of the kitchen to see what is going on. In the other rear corner the very same Judas of the footwashing<sup>177</sup> is stealthily going out the door. Of this Masoji has written 'When the Church members kneel before the Altar to receive the Holy Communion there is a feeling that they join the disciples (in the painting by taking the front seats).'<sup>178</sup> Of all of the Indian Christian painters whose work I know I feel most comfortable with Masoji's. It seems to me to be least laboured.

### Jyoti Sabhi

is by far the most cerebral person of all of the Indian Christian painters I know. Listening to his ideas is always stimulating.<sup>179</sup> He is also the explicitly Christian painter who best knows, and takes most seriously, the wider world of modern Indian painting. He has written,

'Ultimately the purpose of art is to reveal to the wor-

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 12.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. chapter III, *supra*.

<sup>175</sup> 'The Passion of Christ', *op. cit.*, No.3.

<sup>176</sup> Done for the duplicate altar in All Saints' Cathedral, Nagpur.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. note 166, *supra*.

<sup>178</sup> In a note to me of 2 May 1972.

<sup>179</sup> We started talking in the summer of 1968 in Landaur.

shipper what *he* is. This is why we want an Indian Christian art. A foreign art cannot reveal to the Indian what *he* is. The question is not, "Was Christ ever in such a cultural environment? Was he dressed in such clothes? Did he move in such a landscape?" The purpose of a Christian art is to reveal to the worshipper the cultural environment in which *he* moves, the clothes *he* wears, the landscape *he* moves in, but all this in *Christo*. Christ is here, the Truth and Being of the worshiper.<sup>180</sup>

Jyoti has also written,

'I feel that the most important thing that Hindu aesthetics teaches us is how consciousness works within the complex of the senses. The *Guru-Shishya* relationship is essentially a deep understanding of how the consciousness of man, his power to *see* spiritual Truth is developed. Thus the schools of philosophy were called "*Darshana*", that is, "Ways of seeing". Ultimately, the disciple learns through *Satyagraha* to see the world as it *is*, and not as it appears to be. The central achievement of Hindu aesthetics is *realization*. Christian art should use therefore the techniques developed by Hindu aesthetics to realize the world redeemed in the Risen Christ. Here a new dimension to Christian Time is discovered. Typology (study of types of Christ originating perhaps in the 'Epistle of Barnabas' but developed by Byzantine Schools) was a way in which to remember Christ, centre of Redemptive History. But a new science must be added, the science of seeing that very Christ imprinted on the future. That is, all things, however worldly or imperfect, are already in some way transfigured into the image of the Risen Christ. This we have to learn to

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<sup>180</sup> Jyoti Sahi, 'The Yoga of Communication' in *Word and Worship*, Vol. V, No. 8 (October 1972), p. 269.

see, to recognize. As the Guru is, as it were, a projection of the *Sad Guru*, the True Guru of the heart, which the disciple must learn to see, so also we Christians must learn to see the world around us as a projection, an externalization of the Risen Christ.<sup>181</sup>

I guess that this is what Jyoti is doing in his 'Christ as Chandra'<sup>182</sup> which is a painting of the moon rising over the snowy peaks of the Himalayas as seen from Landaur in which that large part of the full moon which is over the mountains is His skull with His face painted in below. His body seems surrealistic and looks temple-like. His right hand seems to gesture *Abhaya mudra*, and holds something with a star on it, as Hindu gods hold symbolic things in their hands; while His left hand seems to gesture *varada mudra*, and holds something with an eye on it. The arms and hands do not fit the body—but somehow this does not matter. In my judgement this picture certainly does do something like what Jyoti is talking about in the paragraph I have quoted above—but I fear that it may only do this for those very few of us who have seen the full moon from Landaur, or from somewhere very like it. 'Christ as Sun' was painted to make a pair with this picture but it has never been hung in the place intended for it in the convent. Nor is 'Christ as Chandra' now hanging where it was intended for. This suggests that the generality of the church probably is not yet ready for this profound kind of painting of Jesus—which I think a real pity.

Elsewhere Jyoti has written,

'What we have to attain to is a state of consciousness whereby we see, not in the temporal light of the world, but the eternal light of the Resurrection. In that light the world

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>182</sup> Collection of ICM sisters, Bangalore.

attains its true beauty and there is seen nothing in the world which is not spiritual. This is the Vision of the world which Christian artists have always aspired to, a vision let me stress again, which is not divorced from physical perception but informing it with an immeasurably greater power to penetrate phenomena and discover in phenomena the haert of light, the true icon of the Resurrection.<sup>183</sup>

In an early 'The Resurrection' of Jyoti's he expanded the title to include the explanation 'The three Maries approach the cave in which an angel or Deva is seated. Christ they pass, working in the garden.'<sup>184</sup> The picture shows hillish fields and a kind of hill cave. Three crosses are shown on a distant hill. Christ as a gardener is tending a hillish plot with a South Indian hoe. The fields are fenced with stone walls. The deva is in white, sitting cross-legged and surrounded by a flamish halo—it is a relief to a student of Indian Christian art to see a wingless angel. Of this picture Jyoti has written,

'The Resurrection painting was painted at Kurisumala when I first began to experiment in religious painting and left teaching. At that time I thought that a religious art could perhaps be developed out of our response to nature around us. This idea I have developed throughout my work—linking religious art to worship of the world in and through a presentiment of the Holy. This presentiment of the Holy in creation—Holy energies if one were to link it with the theology of St. John Damascene—and these energies I link with Devas. But—and this is the intuition of the picture—the Deva who is found in the cave from which Christ rose—the cave from which flow the seven streams

<sup>183</sup> Jyoti Sahi, 'The resurrected Body' in *Word and Worship*, 'Vol. V, No. 4 (April 1972), pp. 151 f.

<sup>184</sup> At an exhibition of his works in July 1971 in Bangalore.

according to Syrian liturgy—is in a sense a blind alley. The three Maries are not looking for the Holy, but for Christ Himself. And He is working in the mundane as the gardener. The same idea of Christ's presence in the ordinary is continued in my series on the Home of Man. In a new approach to catechesis which I am working on I would like to begin with this primal sense of the Holiness of the world—and then suggest that the mundane is the “transfiguration of the Holy” or our concept of the Holy, into the resurrected body of Christ. I painted two pictures of the Resurrection in and through nature—the other is a painting of Christ saying “do not touch me” which is with a hospital in Bombay.’<sup>185</sup>

‘The transfiguration’<sup>186</sup> is also in the hills because the hills have always been thought of in India as places of realization. Christ emerges from the glory which is typical of figures of the emerging Vishnu. The two who appeared to Christ also are illuminated all around in yellow flames while Christ is in white flames.

Of this Jyoti has written,

‘Could one say, that, following through the ideas I have suggested before of Christ's separateness from the shaktis, that when we really see Him, we see the Real? What for the Jew was Transfiguration, implying some change, I have linked with essential isness of things which is also Resurrection. The Resurrection, as also the Transfiguration, are implicit in the whole of nature, it is only that we do not realize it. These central mysteries of the Faith cease to be problems of “how will the world change?” but

<sup>185</sup> In a note to me of 25 Aug. 1971.

<sup>186</sup> At the July 1971 exhibition.

rather become a question of our consciousness of the reality. The change is psychological and not cosmological.<sup>187</sup>

‘Presentation in the Temple’<sup>188</sup> takes place in an actual South Indian pillared-temple between giant door guardians; the priest wears only a cue of hair and a saffron lungi; Joseph wears a white lungi and is also bare above the waist. In ‘Christ breathing on the disciples’<sup>189</sup> Christ is represented as the bee descending upon the lotus—which is the blossoming Church—and with the wind caused by the movement of His wings fertilizing the Church, Himself building the first cell, Jyoti explains; here Christ is backed by a geometric design which I guess represents the wings of the bee. ‘The Baptism’<sup>190</sup> is explained by Jyoti—as hills are thought of as places of realization in Indian thought, the river is thought of as imparting wisdom and revelation; here the river *itself* descends as a hierophony of the Spirit (an idea related to the ‘Descent of the Ganges’ at Mahabalipuram); Christ and John are both mildly bearded, Christ wears long white, John short brown, and a white dove is also in the picture. ‘Christ showing the disciples of John where he lived’<sup>191</sup> is rather impressionistic and is sited in a fishermen village on the sea coast under coconut trees—it is a village that looks almost exactly the same in a non-Christ-themed painting by Jyoti of the same locale. All these pictures are fairly this-worldly and representational (even if mythic) rather than transcendental or mystical. Jyoti does the job as he has set out to do it.

<sup>187</sup> In note of 25 Aug. 1971. Cf. Jyoti Sahi, ‘Towards a Theory of Religious Art’ in *Word and Worship*, Vol. IV, No. 9 (Oct.-Nov. 1971); continued in Vol. V, No. 1 (January 1972); concluded in Vol. V, No. 3 (March 1972).

<sup>188</sup> In the 1971 exhibition.

<sup>189</sup> Collection of St. John’s Regional Seminary, Hyderabad.

<sup>190</sup> In the 1971 exhibition.

<sup>191</sup> Collection of Indian Social Institute, Bangalore.

A number of Jyoti's pictures have been sited in Kashmir. In 'Agony in the garden'<sup>192</sup> Christ is a mature local, dressed in white head-cloth, kurta and pantaloons; I suppose this is the local Muslim costume; the background is very Kashmiri with cypress and other trees, houses and snowy peaks; His hands are lifted, His face is up—but I am delighted to report that His face does not show the stilted agony that we are too familiar with. 'Christ weeping over Lazarus'<sup>193</sup> is also in Kashmir. So is the 'Raising of Lazarus'.<sup>194</sup> Jyoti has also done some woodcuts of the life of Christ in a Kashmir setting for some Kashmir teaching material—some of them remind me a bit of some illustrations I have seen of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Also in Kashmir, I learn from Father Lederle,

'Jyoti Sahi prepared a series of murals for the new All Saints' Church, Shrinagar (*sic*), rebuilt in 1968-70 after it had been burnt down in a riot in 1967. The murals are the only attempt of a Roman Catholic known to me of representing Christian themes in a modern Indian Muslim garb. The soldier piercing Jesus' side with a spear in 'The Crucifixion' wears a strange type of coat. The artist had to overpaint the original Muslim dress of the soldier, in order not to hurt Muslim feelings by giving the impression that a Muslim had pierced Jesus' side!'<sup>195</sup>

I know of two sets of stations of the cross that Jyoti has painted. In the first set<sup>196</sup> Jesus is done in classical Indian proportions prescribed for the human figure, this gives Him an elongated figure and broad shoulders. He wears an above-

<sup>192</sup> In the 1971 exhibition.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> Mathew R. Lederle, s.j., 'Interpreting Christ through Indian Art' in *The Indian Journal of Theology*, Vol. XXXIII, Nos. 3 & 4, p. 240.

<sup>196</sup> In the 1971 exhibition.

the-knee lungi and a see-through overgarment ; the soldiers wear much less ; the women are fully clad in saris and cholis and they are buxom (which means, and I follow Galbraith's Law, that they look very Indian). The church which had commissioned this set rejected it as being too naked. The final station in this set, of the ascension, has Christ sitting cross-legged in a yoga posture and looks more like yogic levitation than I am comfortable with. In the second set of stations of the cross<sup>197</sup> Christ is in a different yogic position in each station and there is a tree (not always the same tree) that takes a sympathetic attitude or a sympathetic stage-of-life in each station ; a worldly snake of ambiguity appears in a number of stations. There is an extra station for resurrection in which the tree starts to sprout again. These stations of the second set intrigue me but, like most Christians in India I think, I neither feel nor understand them without lengthy explanation—and I think stations of the cross should speak for themselves, but, to me, these, alas, do not.

Jyoti has done some two-colour drawings for printing on greetings letter-forms. They work well. 'The Holy Nativity'<sup>198</sup> is a madonna with a shepherd approaching. In 'Adoration of the Wise Men'<sup>199</sup> the crowned wise men look like the sculptures of South Indian Kings; the Babe dances in an enclosure in front of an eight-pointed star—which must mean something. 'Presentation'<sup>200</sup> has a barefoot young couple bringing their young baby to what looks like a local shrine. In 'The Boy Jesus'<sup>201</sup> the Boy stands in the middle of the scribes who are seated. The best, to my mind, of this lot was printed privately by Jyoti. It is a reclining madonna (Plate XIII)

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<sup>197</sup> Collection of H. Graffe who hopes to publish them in Germany.

<sup>198</sup> Art India No. P 1.

<sup>199</sup> Art India No. P 5.

<sup>200</sup> Art India No. P 3.

<sup>201</sup> Art India No. P 7.



following a marvellous motif that Jyoti insists is of Buddha and his mother but which scholars have also suggested is of Krishna and his mother. In Jyoti's version a well endowed mother reclines on a support on her left elbow gesturing a *mudra* with her left hand with the Babe lying below her left breast ; behind her is a stylized halo, an attendant and, toward her feet, two shepherds—one with a crook and the other with a sheep on his shoulders. In central India there is a fine piece of Indian sculpture, or perhaps more than one, which shows almost the identical mother, child and halo—backed up by four or five attendants, two of whom bear chauris. There is disagreement as to whether this babe is Krishna or Mahavira or Siddhartha.<sup>202</sup> In another quite similar version from Bengal the mother holds a lotus in her right hand and the babe wears a crown ; here there is only one attendant, at her feet, and it is thought to be of Krishna or Buddha or Siva.<sup>203</sup> If I had to declare my favourite Jyoti picture this would probably be it.

'Christ the Dancer on the Cross'<sup>204</sup> is a crucifixion within a typical Nataraj flame-halo-circle and with arm and leg gestures ; there is a multicoloured background with a tree. Jyoti says that this is really a mandala—by which I guess he means an object for meditation. He has done another Jesus Nataraj.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Cf. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, London : Edward Goldston, 1927, Pl. 178 ; Vincent A. Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, Oxford : at the Clarendon Press, 1911, P. 164, Pl. XXXVI ; E.B. Havell, *The Art Heritage of India* (Rev. Promode Chandra). Bombay : Taraporevala, 1964, Pl. 106A.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Radhakamal Mukerjee, *The Cosmic Art of India*, Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1965, Pl. 34 ; Rustam J. Metha, *Masterpieces of Indian Sculpture*, Bombay : Taraporevala, 1968, Pl. 64. In the Indian Museum, Calcutta, Gr. 1 and yo 11 are labelled 'Sena school ca. 12 Cent. A.D., Bengal'.

<sup>204</sup> Collection of Gabrielle Dietrich and Bastian Wielenga.

<sup>205</sup> In the Chapel of St. Stephen's College, Delhi.

Another mandala centres on a Trimurti<sup>206</sup> in which Jesus is in the middle with the mother and father aspects of God on either side—the unseen backside representing the incomprehensible aspect of God—each of the three makes a single *mudra* gesture. He has done at least one other Christ-Trimurti.<sup>207</sup> Jyoti has suggested that there is ‘a distinctive form of contemplative vision which is practised by the artist, and, in and through the artist, by all men.’<sup>208</sup> I am inclined to suspect that his mandala are particularly the result of this suggestion.

In his recent paintings of Yogi-Christ, Nataraj-Christ, Trimurti-Christ, Baby Krishna-Buddha-Christ and others Jyoti has been accused of excessively Hinduizing Christ. He does, in a sense, I suppose, Hinduize Christ. But I must say that I admire what he does because it has given me something of a new, and I think Indian, vision of some aspects of Christ. But I feel that when the artist uses Hindu motifs for Christian contemplation he is in the same difficult position as the theologian who uses non-Biblical scriptures.<sup>209</sup> The ultimate demand in this undertaking is to be true to Christ. But I would venture that the penultimate demand must be to be true to Hinduism; and further, that we cannot be really true to Christ in this context without being really true to Hinduism. Now this penultimate demand is not as easy as some seem to think. Dr. K. Sivaraman, then perhaps the brightest teacher of Hindu philosophy in Banares Hindu University, once spoke to me of one of the theologians who is now leading us toward

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<sup>206</sup> ‘Julu’ in a 1975 calendar of Jyoti’s mandalas published by MISSIO of Aachen.

<sup>207</sup> Collection of Klaus Klostermaier.

<sup>208</sup> Sahi, *op. cit.*, in *Word and Worship*, Vol. V. No. 3 (March 1972), p. 108.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. D.S. Amalorpavadass (ed), *Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures*. Bangalore: National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1975.

the use of non-Biblical scriptures. Sivaraman said, 'Father So-and-so knows everything there is to know about Hinduism ; he just doesn't understand it.' This is also the fundamental problem when painting appropriated Hindu motifs as a Christian vocation.

### Sister Genevieve

of Bangalore is a French nun and the only foreigner I take seriously as an Indian Christian artist.<sup>210</sup> She sees painting in Indian idiom as a way of entry into Hindu homes—whose children take the pictures home where they are kept ; whereas western Christian art taken to the same homes would be passed on to some Christian friend or neighbour, or thrown away. Sister Genevieve is a teacher of kindergarten children and teachers. She has done her painting in the little free time she has although as her popularity has increased she has been permitted to accept more commissions—including large pictures painted in the interior of some churches. She has read a good number of the classical works on Indian art in translation and has visited some of the Hoysala temples—the great Hindu temples in Karnataka State. She feels, as do many Indian Christian artists, that most Indian religious, clergy and lay Christians do not appreciate the Indian tradition and prefer the cheapest of western art.<sup>211</sup>

Sister Genevieve's people usually look very Indian in feature and dress ; except that too many of them have slanty eyes which I find neither accurate nor pleasing. And the Babe is much lighter than His mother too frequently for this

<sup>210</sup> I first enjoyed a visit with her in 1966 and others in 1975. A great deal of her work has been reproduced by Art India. A large set of slides of some of her work is available from Fr. P. J. Rzitka, s.v.d., Danthendey Str. 25, 8 Munchen 70.

<sup>211</sup> A well-known Indian Christian artist has told me of a non-Roman bishop who asked him why he bothered to paint in such an odd (Indian) style when Warner Sallman's 'Head of Christ', which the bishop, alack, found so satisfying, was readily available.

to be an accident ;<sup>212</sup> I do not like this at all ; perhaps she was influenced by Government of India family planning posters which seem intentionally designed to suggest that children in planned families are always fairer than their parents. Her settings also usually look quite Indian. Her animals are marvellous and, except for her deer, always add to the Indianness of the setting—and her deer remind me of Indian miniatures. Some of her paintings are in the style of such miniatures—but are not miniature in size ; some are not. Some of her paintings deal with western Christian mythology in Indian guise—which is not a bad idea since so much of early modern Indian painting dealt with traditional religious tales. Her ‘St. Michael throwing Satan out of heaven’ has a battle between light god-like Hinduish good deities and dark devil-like Hinduish evil deities. Why not ?

Her ‘St. Hubert and the Golden Stag’ about when St. Hubert went hunting on Sunday and the stag turned out to be golden and turned out to be Christ, comes off very well artistically. St. Hubert is a true-to-tradition Krishna-like Indian princely hunter stalking the stag, which has a little cross standing up between its horns, from behind some very good, stylized, miniature-like bushes with his bow and arrow. I confess to wondering how many Hindu homes would know some of these Christian legends anyway ; and to not fully understanding what such western legends might say about Christ in an Indian setting. But be that as it may, I venture to think that in a truly Indian setting of ideas this looks exactly like Mareecha (the uncle of the demon Ravana) appearing to Rama as a golden deer in order to entrap Rama (because of Sita’s fancying the beautiful animal).<sup>213</sup> Consequently, stories

<sup>212</sup> Art India cards N 18, 0 8, 0 9, P 17 and P 20.

<sup>213</sup> This widely known *Ramayana* legend is well retold in R. K. Narayan, *Gods, Demons and Others*, New York : The Viking Press, (1964) 1967, pp. 107 ff.

get mixed up and Sister Genevieve's good intentions probably fail.<sup>214</sup>

Of the thirty-one different Art India reproductions of Sister Genevieve's paintings thirty of them feature the Babe either in madonnas, often with other women, or in some kind of nativity scene. But she has done scenes from Christ's adult life in a Tamil life of Christ<sup>215</sup> in which His face is slightly Indian but rather conventional and he usually wears a long garment, a cinch and a shawl; in her 'Guru'<sup>216</sup> the same Christ wears the same garments and the long garment is white, the cinch red and the shawl saffron—all of which makes Him look almost too much like a theologically fashionable young bishop (although I suppose that Sister Genevieve probably would not give even such a bishop the gold aura surrounding His body nor the halo that He has here).

She is also illustrating a filmstrip life of Christ of which only the first part of sixty-four frames is available as I write.<sup>217</sup> From this filmstrip I learn that St. Joseph was a sardarji (a Sikh); that Jesus looked six months old when he was first laid in the manger; and that on a dark night the face of Jesus-yogi fills the whole horizon. Now all of this may not be representative of Sister Genevieve's best ideas because the organization that made and published this filmstrip is notorious for unfeelingly dominating and dictating to Indian Christian painters. But the Sister Genevieve I know would not have

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<sup>214</sup> Albrecht Durer's engraving 'St. Eustace' is based on a similar stag-Christ legend—probably transferred to St. Hubert. Another example is Pisanello's 'The vision of St. Eustace' in the National Gallery, London, and reproduced in Philip Hendy, *The National Gallery* London: Thames & Hudson, (1960) 1971. p. 276. The National Gallery's 'The Conversion of St. Hubert' by The Master of the Life of the Virgin is also in Hendy, *ibid.*, pp. 152 f.

<sup>215</sup> R. Arulappa, *Oolakin Ooyir*, Madras: Catholic Information Bureau, 1967.

<sup>216</sup> Art India card M 5.

<sup>217</sup> 'CARAVS Presents "Life of Christ" in Indian Art; Part I, Birth.'

painted to dictation but would have left—as several painters I know have done. So I must assume that she at least agrees with what she has painted. In the final frame showing Him Jesus has become a young sardarji. Now it is no doubt true that a good number of the carpenters in South India are Sikhs and that a large number of the Sikhs in South India are carpenters. So there is *some* logic in showing Jesus the young carpenter as a young Sikh. But this overlooks the fact that there are more India-wide ethnic jokes about Sikhs than about any other ethnic group—and this Jesus attracts all such jokes—which is why I feel this portrayal is a bad mistake.

Sister has painted some post-resurrection Christs that I think may be the best things she has done—and they are excellent. Her ‘Living Christ’<sup>218</sup> is meant to show resurrection and crucifixion, with the shadow of the cross behind Him; He is at least half-life-size, wearing only a saffron cloth, looking very Indian,<sup>219</sup> His arms are outstretched gesturing *abhaya* and *varada*—which she is quick to point out are not Hindu but all-Indian *mudras* since the Buddha is often shown as using them. More recently her post-resurrection paintings have portrayed remarkably well a Christ returned to this world after being really dead; He is sad and a little weak (like post-major-surgery—only more so), sad and wondering after the misery and earthy pain; the suffering of His passion is still there and as a man he is changed—so His expression has changed; He really died—and this gives Him a radically different perspective. She really believes that only the faithful believer can properly paint Christ—and I suppose her success with these pictures might be thought to reflect her own faith.

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<sup>218</sup> In the large chapel-cum-auditorium of the National Catechetical Centre, Bangalore.

<sup>219</sup> Malicious gossip says He looks just like the Director of the Centre.

At present Sister Genevieve is in full revolt against using any Hindu symbols that can be in any way misunderstood for Christian painting. Such misunderstanding is so easy and so misleading, she feels. She tells of the time that she painted Christ blue—only to have her simple school girls assume that He was Krishna even though He had none of the other iconographical attributes of Krishna. She seems to feel that ‘fishy’, by which I understand she means erotic, materials are almost omnipresent in Hindu symbols that may be borrowed by Christian painters and that symbols just cannot be cleanly and completely uprooted from their traditional context. She is, for example, particularly critical of Jyoti Sahi’s ‘Christ breathing on the disciples’ in which Christ is represented as the bee descending upon the lotus flower as I have described above; she maintains that the black bee always has an erotic meaning when used in painting—not to mention fertilizing blue lotus flowers; and at one level she is simply right. Jyoti has maintained that Christian painting should be concerned with Kerygma and not with Didache. But at the level of Didache Sister Genevieve’s concerns are real and important. What, really, will the simple seer see and feel? Jyoti, on the other hand, wants to give fresh, new, vision in Christ; and I would agree that it seems to me that in this particular painting he has done just that—but what about the little ones, the simple ones? I feel that there is no easy or quick solution for the tension involved here; and I, for one, hope that Jyoti and Sister Genevieve can get on with their separate, conflicting, yet perhaps equally creative vocations.

But I would make another point about this. If Spratt is right and Indian cultural ways of viewing sex are much more flexible than are western ways of viewing sex<sup>220</sup> then it seems to me that western fears of sexual connotations are something

<sup>220</sup> Cf. Taylor, book review of Spratt, *op. cit.*

that western missionaries should not impose on the Indian church.<sup>221</sup> Looked at another way: if erotic materials really are almost omnipresent in Indian culture then they must be dealt with and not merely shunned. I am inclined to suppose that they must be dealt with, finally, at the sexual level rather than at some more spiritualized level as most theologians in India presently seem to hope.

### Sister Claire

belongs to the same religious community in Bangalore as Sister Genevieve and she comes originally from Andhra.<sup>222</sup> She was trained in painting in Delhi for seven or eight years, has spoken of Sister Genevieve as her guru and says that her greatest debt is to Fr. Lederle who has guided and encouraged her. Her main object in painting has been to spread Christian bhakti for the Indian mind. So, she says, she seeks to have her paintings look like religious and devotional art. I find that her published paintings usually portray devotion to the Baby Jesus, but they do not look to me like, say, bazaar devotional art. Sister Claire is a full-time school teacher and part of her object is to have Christian-themed art that will be admitted to the homes of her pupils—most of whom are Hindus. Traditional Christian pictures are by no means welcome in most such homes and if she gives them to her pupils they prefer not to take them home for fear 'Mommy will scold'—but the parents have found her paintings very acceptable. Claire feels that this acceptability also depends on the spirituality of the artist.

Most of Claire's paintings for Art India and others are madonnas and nativities with women devotees and lamps of honour and worship in Indian settings (some North Indian

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<sup>221</sup> Protestant puritans are also guilty of this imposition as I point out in the paragraph on Sathe below.

<sup>222</sup> I talked with her in March 1975.



and some South) with great attention to composition that focuses upon the Babe. Often the Babe wears a cap—because Mary takes good care of Him. Mary usually wears a *bindu* on her forehead because, as Claire says, ‘without the *bindu* we are widows.’ Mary frequently wears an Andhra-style necklace and she often wears bangles. But Claire has illustrated a life of Christ in Kannada for which she has done a number of line drawings of Christ in which He has a fairly conventional face but does look somewhat Indian.<sup>223</sup> She has painted a similar head of Christ called ‘Shri Yesu Bhagavana.’<sup>224</sup> But for the reproduction in colour of the painting of the head in the book she takes no responsibility ; she does not like it and says that the father in charge of the project forced it from her.<sup>225</sup> So it seems that it is not only CARAVS (Christian Association for Radio and Audio-Visual Service) that denies freedom to its Christian artists.

For the cover of this book she simply painted two hands surrounded by a sort of flame halo.<sup>226</sup> This is a *mudra* of the hands of Christ and gestures ‘come’ and ‘protection’. With this she seems to have got into Indian symbolism for the first time. She has moved ahead in symbolism in some paintings she has done for the Bombay SVD house where inter-religious meetings will be taking place. One of these she calls ‘Trinity’; it shows only the hands of the Father and the Son and the dove of the Holy Spirit surrounded by red for the love of Father and son, yellow for the glory and riches of the Trinity, green for fertility and Blue for peace—and is altogether pleasing. Another called ‘Trinity’ uses the hands of God in a bold new way ; a leaf is in the back-

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<sup>223</sup> N. H. Rajamma (ed.), *Balina Belaku*, Bangalore : Eastern Press, 1973.

<sup>224</sup> Art India card S 7.

<sup>225</sup> Rajamma (ed.), *op. cit.*, facing p. 224.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, front cover.

ground, one hand is upright with its palm out, the other hand is horizontal and cradles the Babe and there is a dove ; here the leaf represents divine power, the upright hand and horizontal hand are God's hands and relate to the lingam-yoni motif—their love creating the Child ; and the dove, the Holy Spirit, is the result. This is a venturesome experiment for Sister Claire ; it is quite successful and is certainly to be encouraged. In ' Christ is the Light ' there is no bodily figure of Christ ; there is a large lamp, a cross and a stylized cross of the flame of the lamp. Claire explains that the flame is the most important part of the lamp. If this younger nun is allowed the freedom of her very creative imagination, combined with her painting skill, I expect increasingly important things from her.

### Sudhir Bairagi

is a very Bengali painter.<sup>227</sup> He was trained in formal and classical painting at the Calcutta School of Art and some of his paintings of Christ are in this style. But he has tried to mix in Bengal folk style with some classical characteristics in order to get an Indian Spirit. This includes an almost constant use of alpana-like white spot flowery patterns in his backgrounds. He says that when Jamini Roy took folk-style inspiration from Bengali toys there was no movement. Bairagi tries to break beyond this movementless barrier to Bengali life. His greatest venture in this direction is in his painting of the resurrection (Plate XIV).<sup>228</sup> In his resurrections there are seven of the alpana-like decorations scattered around the background and they symbolize the seven spirits of God

<sup>227</sup> We met first in 1971 in St. Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta, where so many of his paintings are—thanks to the wise patronage of Lakdasa De Mel.

<sup>228</sup> The two most important are in St. Paul's Cathedral—but following Bengali folk tradition Bairagi has made a number of replications.

(after the book of *Revelation*). The meaning of the alpana-like decoration varies from time to time and place to place in his paintings. For a number of years all of his Christian paintings had it. In most of these paintings the eyes are elongated very like those in the paintings of Jamini Babu. For Bairagi these eyes on Jesus mean that He can see you clearly and completely. But he uses them on Mary, Joseph and the rest merely for balance and to conform to the Jamini Roy Bengali folk style.

In a 'Holy Family'<sup>229</sup> the three alpana-flowers symbolize the Trinity. In 'Magi with gifts before Mary and Child'<sup>230</sup> there are many alpana-flowers and they are for joy. In a madonna with Joseph<sup>231</sup> there are five of these alpana—I do not know why. 'Flight into Egypt'<sup>232</sup> also has a number of them. But in another version of the flight there is only one and it rests on a stem with two leaves and so becomes a stylized flower.<sup>233</sup> This flower on a stem is also found in a madonna.<sup>234</sup>

Some of Bairagi's paintings have very contemporary backgrounds. A crucifixion commissioned for use on the high altar in St. Paul's Cathedral on Good Friday has Howrah Bridge, the General Post Office and the Cathedral itself dimly in the background.<sup>235</sup> And 'Christ's Agony'<sup>236</sup> in Gethsemane takes place near a thorn bush but with Calcutta including Howrah Bridge, the Ochterlony Monument and multitudes of people in the background. He has also done an extraordinary painting of a tall, white-robed Christ over the Delhi

<sup>229</sup> In St. Paul's Cathedral.

<sup>230</sup> In St. Paul's Cathedral.

<sup>231</sup> In St. Paul's Cathedral and reproduced in colour on a card by the Cathedral.

<sup>232</sup> In Pratt Memorial School, Calcutta.

<sup>233</sup> Reproduced by ISPCK, Delhi, as card I C 5/13.

<sup>234</sup> In Pratt Memorial School, Calcutta.

<sup>235</sup> This and some other paintings were stacked in the Cathedral library during my last visit.

<sup>236</sup> In St. Paul's Cathedral.

skyline.<sup>237</sup> During the time of the refugees from Bangladesh, with whom the Cathedral got very much involved, Bairagi painted 'Christ the Refugee'.<sup>238</sup> He also did a set of four 'Bangladesh Nativity'.<sup>239</sup> One of these, 'Child Nutrition' (which I suppose names a service of the United Relief Service), shows a madonna in a huge tent—camp of refugees with many emaciated adults and children waiting, with their bowls, for food. I believe that Bairagi is the first Indian Christian painter to include such social concerns in his paintings of Christ—and I welcome it. This may be a more real Indianization of Christian painting than either Yogi-Jesus or Rajasthani madonnas.

### Lemuel Patole

founded a Christian Art Studio in Bombay. His career as an Indian Christian artist can be seen as a cautionary study of the pitfalls of such a career—at least for a Protestant Christian. He was a well-trained commercial artist of considerable ability who started painting Christian themes and was encouraged in this by some missionaries. He seemed to thrive on missionary patronage and was given a trip abroad for further training and exposure. In India most of his paintings were sold to missionaries. In Christian mission-oriented circles abroad his work was appreciated—even lionized—and published. Back in India he tried to work for a Christian organization serving the church in communication and the arts; he felt that they could not accept some of his most creative ideas. He sought other avenues of service. Now he is living abroad with no definite plans to return to India. The

<sup>237</sup> In the Cambridge Brotherhood House, Delhi.

<sup>238</sup> Mentioned in *The Parish Paper* (of St. Paul's Cathedral), No. 526 (September 1971), p. 24.

<sup>239</sup> Published in colour by United Relief Service, 16 Sudder St., Calcutta.

Indian careers of A. D. Thomas and Frank Wesley and of several others have been too parallel to Patole's for me not to suspect that something in the pattern of their development in the Indian Protestant context is seriously amiss. I am inclined to think that the initial fault lies with the paternalistic style of encouragement given such budding painters by arty little old missionary ladies of all ages and both sexes. But the final fault very clearly lies with the inability of Christian communication organizations to give such persons creative freedom.

Patole paints well in many styles. His madonnas<sup>240</sup> have a kind of photographic idealism ; Mother and Child are pretty, loving and very modern middle class. Much of his recent work seems derived from those modern Indian painters interested in tantricism and from those following Paniker in the use of Indian script within their paintings.<sup>241</sup> Patole describes one of his paintings as being,

'Of Christ in Indian style with Lotus in his hand, Christians do not like (it) in the beginning. "Christ looks feminine." "He never had a Lotus in his hand", etc. ; they criticize. Then I interpret it to them ; a feminine-looking Christ portray (*sic*) his gracefulness, kindness, and motherly love ; the Lotus in Christian art indicates God's coming into this sinful world. This is an Indian way of looking at Christ.'<sup>242</sup>

Of another of his paintings Patole writes,

'Christians do not seem to like my modernistic painting of "The Agony" at first sight. The painting has thick layers

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<sup>240</sup> Art India card M 11 ; and 'Lotus Madonna' published by World Literacy and Christian Literature.

<sup>241</sup> I am grateful to J. H. Anand for sharing with me his colour transparencies of a large number of Patole's paintings.

<sup>242</sup> Lem Patole, 'Approach Through Art' in *Christian Teaching*, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (September 1969), p. 68.

of paint making very rough surface on the canvas. "The distorted figure of Christ painted in blue, black sad colour scheme with red patches, does not look beautiful and pleasing like traditional paintings" they criticize. Then I interpret it to them. The rough surface with the sad colour scheme depicts the hard struggle Jesus had to go through. Red patches suggest the sweat of blood. The distorted image of Christ depicts the inner struggle rather than his outward appearance.'<sup>243</sup>

This gives a good idea of what Patole was trying to do in these pictures. But I must report that he did not persuade very many of his Christian painter colleagues in the Bombay CACA to withdraw their criticism. In 'Christ' <sup>244</sup> and a number of portraits He is solemn with a rather conventional face and a light forehead. 'Christ weeping over Jerusalem' <sup>245</sup> is done in a modern style, largely in shades of gray with various planes and highlights—I get the impression of a bent-over seated body of one depressed, or maybe the body is seated *and* kneeling. In 'They made a crown of thorny branches and put it on his head.' <sup>246</sup> He is in profile, with rather conventional features and is being crowned.

In an introduction to congregational showings of his paintings in America Patole has written of some of his really very naive symbolism :

'NAGA (Serpent) : . . . . . The serpent kills and also protects, and is taken as symbol of the tremendous force of Cosmic Energy.

'FISH EYES (Fish-Shaped Eyes) : The significance of

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>244</sup> Collection of J. H. Anand.

<sup>245</sup> Collection of John Radhakrishnan.

<sup>246</sup> *Bringing Christ to the Nations*, Vol. XIV, No.2 (February 1972), front cover.

the prominent almond-shaped eyes of the human figure represents the gaze of a holy person fixed on the God. A fish having no eye-lids never blinks. A Sun with fish-shaped eyes represents the ever-watching eyes of God. The fish was the symbol of the early Christians.

'THIRD EYE : The symbolism of the third eye goes back to the legend of Lord Shiva when he performed the dance of destruction. To destroy the evil, he opened his third eye of spiritual fire and wisdom. Jesus opened his third eye in the wilderness to defeat evil.'<sup>247</sup>

### A. Alphonso

is a widely recognized younger modern Indian painter, an instructor in the prestigious Government College of Arts and Crafts, Madras, who happens to be a Christian.<sup>248</sup> He sometimes paints Christian themes. This has been encouraged by his teachers, especially K. C. S. Paniker. I suppose that as modern painters who are Hindu experiment with tantric or temple or deity themes it seems reasonable for those who are Christian to experiment with biblical themes. This is exactly what Alphonso has done. And it is exactly what makes him so different, in my opinion, from the so-called Indian Christian artists—no matter how good some of them may be in their own different way.

Alphonso tells me that he often turns to painting Jesus when he is feeling down—and that this makes him feel better. But he rejects my characterization of this as religious. He feels that Christ is a great man and a leader ; but that He is also divine. He knows nothing of the history of Catholic Christian painting in India—having heard neither of da

<sup>247</sup> Lemuel Patole, 'The Gospel Through Eastern Eyes', four duplicated pages, p.4.

<sup>248</sup> I have enjoyed several meetings with him since April 1975.

Fonseca nor of Lederle. But he knows of Newton Souza's Christs and thinks Souza a great painter. He deploras the bazaar reproduction of pictures of Christ made in Sivakasi and would like to do something better that could be used in Christian homes.

One possibility for such reproduction might be Alphonso's 'Christ in Preaching Position' (Plate XV) where we see His head and shoulders and His right hand. The hand is gesturing a *mudra* like that of Buddha preaching: His fingers are very long and the two that are raised are not shown to their ends. The painting is done in black and white except for a gold halo. His neck and robe have interesting angular highlights. His hair ends in curls; so do His beard, His moustache and His eyebrows. There are also curly lines around His nose. This particular kind of curliness, of all hair and nose, Alphonso has taken from a style of Indian folk art; he also uses it in his secular pictures which so have no religious themes. Christ's eyes are extra-large, broad, and blank—that is they have no iris or pupil. This, Alphonso says, is because it is too difficult to show spiritual eyes. He says that his understanding of Jesus has been influenced by the ideas of Bruce Barton<sup>249</sup> which he saw in the *Reader's Digest* that he feels gave a good description of Jesus with some unusual points.

Alphonso's 'Virgin Mary and Child' has both Mother and Child with curly noses and eyebrows and with large, broad, and blank eyes; they are done in shades of blue for divinity and peace; Mary is draped in white for purity and faith. I saw this picture in Alphonso's studio near a secular mother-and-child study and decided that there was much positive

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<sup>249</sup> Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows*, London: Constable, 1925. There was a long and enthusiastic review of this book, as helping to overcome conventional views of Christ, in *The Guardian*, 31 Dec. 1925, pp. 622 f.



about these blank eyes of his recent Christian paintings. 'Christ and Peter' is a marvellous earlier effort which shows Peter in an arab-like headdress, a shrewish woman accosting Peter and pointing her finger at Jesus; and Jesus, worried, recognizable, barefoot in a long white garment, guarded by a very fierce and evil-looking Roman soldier; all within a small crowd around a small fire. 'The Redeemer'<sup>250</sup> is of Jesus and the woman at the well, there are people and animals in the background looking on but not intruding; the woman is hiding her face in her hands—in embarrassment I guess; Christ is shown in profile and looks unconventional; I like it.

### Others

F. N. Souza is a leading modern Indian painter who is a Christian and has frequently painted Christian themes—especially rather bloody crucifixions.<sup>251</sup> Jyoti Sahi is critical of Souza for alternating between erotic pictures and crucifixions—but I should have thought that sex and salvation are two of the few great themes. Jose Pariera and R.L. Bartholomew are other senior modern painters who are Christians and have painted Christian themes.

Among younger modern painters who are Christian Anthony Doss has done an interesting, slightly folkish 'Madonna and Child'<sup>252</sup> and a 'Madonna'<sup>253</sup> in quite a modern style with broad, big folk-eyes, both Mother and Child have their hair streaming back as if in a high wind, the Child has a halo and Mary looks more explicitly womanly than motherly; Doss has also done a last supper. Peter Lewis has done a 'Christ with Cross' and also a picture of Christ entering Jerusalem

<sup>250</sup> *Artrends*, Vol. V, No. 4 & Vol. VI, No. 1 (July-Oct. 1966), p. 6.

<sup>251</sup> One such is reproduced in a double-page centrespread in *Illustrated Weekly*, 18 Apr. 1965, pp. 36-37.

<sup>252</sup> *Illustrated Weekly*, 5 Apr. 1964, p. 51.

<sup>253</sup> *Artrends*, Vol.1, No. 3 (April 1962), p. 7.

with the crown of thorns looming on the horizon waiting for Him. Frederick Chellappa has done a 'Calvary' and I guess that Christ may appear in his 'Resurrection'.<sup>254</sup> One Benjamin, still an art student in Madras, is painting some interesting Christs.

Joseph V. Ubale was a very promising early Indian Christian artist who died young in 1935.<sup>255</sup> He painted in a Bombay version of the Bengal School style and must have been very exciting and controversial in his time. He illustrated a book of bible stories in Marathi.<sup>256</sup> This includes a very Indian madonna with sari, earrings, necklace, bangles and anklets sitting cross-legged and barefoot on the floor playing with the Baby in her lap; both have light halos.<sup>257</sup> His 'Birth of our Lord'<sup>258</sup> shows a small and very Indian crowd gathered around with some animals on the fringe and a temple pillar in the background; a lotus seems to be among the offerings. His 'Woman at the Well',<sup>259</sup> which looks more like an anointing of His feet, is done in pastels, and has a very oriental looking Christ with blonde curls. Marcus Topo paints Christ in his thoroughly tribal setting in Chota Nagpur. 'The Shepherd's Adoration'<sup>260</sup> shows Him with tribal parents and tribal shepherds in a simple tribal building in which cows also live. 'The Holy Family'<sup>261</sup> is in the same building with, it looks like to me, one of the same cows. 'Children of the

<sup>254</sup> James (ed.) *op. cit.*, p. 110.

<sup>255</sup> His brother graciously showed me a collection of his paintings in Bombay in February 1971.

<sup>256</sup> D.P. Andrews, *Biblehdil Suras wa Ramya Katha*, Nasik: D.N. Tilak, n.d.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, front cover.

<sup>258</sup> Art India card 01.

<sup>259</sup> Lehmann, *Die Kunst . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 65. Fleming, *Each With . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 61; Joseph Jobe, *Ecco Homo*, London, Macmillan, 1962, p. 92.

<sup>260</sup> Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 70; *Christ in the Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, frame 42.

<sup>261</sup> Lehmann, *ibid.*, Pl. 73.

'Tribe'<sup>262</sup> has them with some of their parents outside with Him sitting on a rope cot.

Duckett J. Prim comes from the Punjab hills and paints Kashmiri fishermen in his 'The Beloved Fishermen'<sup>263</sup> of which he writes,

'I chose this subject because the sea and Fishermen have always fascinated me and one of my favourite passages in the New Testament is one which tells of the Fishermen who served Christ. It is not surprising that the loose-robed hardy peasants of Kashmir were best suited as models for my subject and the dark waters of Kashmir became for me the Lake of Galilee. I endeavoured to capture in the picture the blending of simple toiling humanity with the sunset sea over which a Christ would presently walk to meet his humble friends.'<sup>264</sup>

Prim has also done a thorn-crowned head, 'Agony',<sup>265</sup> from which some blood drips. Muthiah Sivanesan is a missionary protégè who has done a madonna derived from Jamini Roy<sup>266</sup> and a slightly abstract Christ derived from the old Sunday School picture of Him standing at the door and knocking.<sup>267</sup> His 'Madonna of Joy',<sup>268</sup> in which a young Indian Mary who seems to be dressed in *both* a Rajasthani skirt and a sari is featured, won an American missionary prize. P. Solomon Raj, a man of great and varied talent, has done a 'Christ with the Refugees'<sup>269</sup> in which a large, husky, thorn-

<sup>262</sup> Art India card R 8; *Christ in the Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, frame 23 (cropped).

<sup>263</sup> *Christ in the Art . . .*, *ibid.*, frames 20 and 59; *Christian Art in India*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>264</sup> *Christian Art . . .*, *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39; *Christ in the Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, frame 87.

<sup>266</sup> On exhibit at Christian Literature Society, Madras, for some years.

<sup>267</sup> Collection of Esther and Hunter Mabry.

<sup>268</sup> *Christian Mission Digest*, 1963-64, front cover.

<sup>269</sup> Collection of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, New York.

crowned Christ has His arm over a family of poorest peasants. This is a more human picture than Bairagi's pictures of Christ and the city and the pool.

G. R. Singh is the only theological professor in India that I know of who paints. And he paints largely by way of personal meditation and devotion. His 'Christ and the Woman at the Well' (Plate XVI) is done in the style of Kangra miniatures. The background is red and the cloth that Christ is wearing is blue. Christ reaching out and the woman pouring make a hidden cross design with the tree. Singh intends social meaning in this picture;<sup>270</sup> the woman is a social outcaste, other women have not come to the well with her, she is socially untouchable, yet the high caste Christ takes water from her—thus pointing to social reconciliation too. Singh has also done a holy family with a mosque and temple in the background.<sup>271</sup> G. D. Paul Raj has painted Christ and the children and the presentation in the temple and several other pictures with the holy family.<sup>272</sup> His wife has painted some very curvy attractive Marys. Fr. A. J. Thambu Raj, s.j., has done some very interesting Indian madonnas and some other paintings of Christ. Cherubim Kishi Mark has done some Indian stations of the cross.<sup>273</sup> Solomon Chavan was sent to Zambia to become a better Indian Christian artist.<sup>274</sup> And there are many many others.

But I would like to close with a note on Vinayak Monohar Sathe who has not become an Indian Christian artist.<sup>275</sup> He is a successful and well-known commercial artist in Bombay. He has done major commissions for Air India. He is said

<sup>270</sup> I learn from his letter to me of 10 Dec. 1974.

<sup>271</sup> Published as a Christmas card by Leonard Theological College.

<sup>272</sup> Cf. Lehmann, *Christian Art . . .*, *op. cit.*, Pl. 171.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. E. Daly, 'The Exodus of India' in *Word and Worship*, Vol. V, No. 8 (October 1972), pp. 303 ff.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. *Indian Witness*, 18 Mar. 1971, p. 8.

<sup>275</sup> I met him in March 1972.

to have revolutionized the Bombay Christmas card market. He has well illustrated some of the love verses from Omar Khayyam and the Geet Govind and these have had a very wide circulation on calendars and stationary. He is a devout Christian who would like to illustrate Christian themes. But the leadership of the Bombay Christian artists group, CACA, told him that their missionary lady patron would not approve of the way he drew women. So he has felt that they will not let him draw Mary, and others, in what he considers Indian style—that is, ‘like a lovely lovable womanly woman’. ‘Why not?’, he asks; ‘Christ was an Asian!’ I could not agree more.<sup>276</sup>

#### THE INDIGENIZATION DEBATE AND SANSKRITIZATION

If, as I think, art is people’s response to a given situation of human existence and, hopefully, penetrates to and displays some, at least, of the mystery of reality, then the painting of Christ in India must, hopefully, do for India today what was once recently done for the west by one of its great painters of Christ that made it possible to say, ‘The terrible grace of God . . . shines out from Rouault’s Christ figures . . .’<sup>277</sup>

The ‘hyphenated-Christian’<sup>278</sup>, prototypically the Nazi-sympathizing German-Christian, has been in ill repute since Karl Barth. But in fact there are Black-Christians, Indian-Christians and many other kinds of hyphenated-Christians who have been ideologically and theologically exploited by western Christians who from their position of power have fallen prey to the temptation of asserting that *their* hyphenated-Christian understanding of many things including theology,

<sup>276</sup> I refer again to Galbraith’s law.

<sup>277</sup> Joseph Sittler, ‘On Christianity and Art’ in *The Student World*, Vol. XLVII, No. 2 (1955), p. 146.

<sup>278</sup> I have been instructed in this by David Wills and rely heavily on an untitled unpublished paper of his drafted in 1972.

culture and art must be accepted by Indians, Blacks and others as normative Christianity. Now we are beginning to realize that this just is not so. However cautionary some bad examples of acculturated Christianity may be, and they are dreadful, they do not provide a realistic basis for imagining that any particular group can avoid, or live outside of, acculturations of its own. Such an ethnocentric situation is given—to all peoples, including all Christian peoples. It is, no doubt, a locus of sin—but to really live with ourselves with self-understanding we must live frankly within this ethnocentric situation rather than trying to flee from it. And *our* understanding of Christ must be formed from within our ethnocentric situation—where, and *only* where, he can be completely real for us. This means, I submit, that if there are no unhyphenated Christians there is in this world within our limited understanding no unhyphenated Christ ! If there is no Christian self-understanding that is not importantly shaped by our ethnocentric situation, there is no image of Christ that is not comparably affected. This, I think, is what the early Indian Christian painters meant when they spoke of a Christ of the Indian Road or of Christ seen through Indian eyes.

Wills has put it this way,

‘ It is precisely the image of Jesus Christ which serves as the counterpart of the Christian’s own self-image. As he sees himself, so he will see Jesus ; and as he sees Jesus, so he will see himself. Again, we are not saying that each Christian contrives his image of Jesus to fit a Christian self-image already devised beforehand. Rather, we are suggesting that the image of Jesus enters into the process of identity formation, affecting and being affected by the other elements involved, and emerging in a form congruent with the total identity which results from the process. Where the image of Jesus is not congruent with that identity,

there is an element of instability which seeks resolution—by the removal or revision of the image of Jesus, or the reconstruction of self-image.<sup>279</sup>

I suppose that this is at least a partial description of what is going on in the doing of Indian Christian theology and in the Indian painting of Jesus. And I am inclined to suggest that the formation of an Indian image of Christ in painting, or perhaps of several such images in creative tension, may make a fundamental contribution to forming an Indian Christian identity and a foundation for the doing of Indian Christian theology.

This is not to say that Jesus Christ is not a definite person, one and the same from wherever He is viewed—I believe that He is. But I also agree that,

‘ Interpreted by a monk, he may take on monastic characteristics ; delineated by a socialist, he may show the features of a radical reformer ; portrayed by a Hoffman, he may appear as a mild gentleman.’<sup>280</sup>

And would add that He may, and I think will, appear differently if clearly seen from India.

This Indian Christian view of Christ must be historically grounded in the Indian Christian community. (Although the views of Christ of modern Indian painters are, I would like to assert, utterly legitimate for them—and highly suggestive for the rest of us.) The historical situation is that the Christian community has, by and large, been cut off from deep Indian roots because missionization tended to mean denationalization. In part the problem faced by Indian Christian painters is how one can be both Indian and Christian. Some of the most creative responses to this problem, which I have

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3 f.

<sup>280</sup> H. R. Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

outlined above, have involved what I would like to call sanskritization—<sup>281</sup>—by which I mean attempting to go back to some real extent to the concepts, values and (especially), images of the mainstream of what has been called higher Hinduism ; which is seen as the mainstream of the richness of Indian culture. It seems to me that this seeking of such roots is a very healthy thing and is by all means to be welcomed and encouraged. This is not to say that this sanskritization may not involve excesses and mistakes, even errors ; it may—and probably it will. But it is only in taking these chances, these risks, that a greatly-to-be-desired Indian image of Christ—or maybe Indian images of Christ—may be created.

To those who oppose all sanskritization and allege that it is very easy to sort out permissible Indianish images of Christ from impermissible ones I can only say that I do not think that it is all that easy. For instance a bright young man who is now a presbyter of the Church of South India once had this experience :

‘ A young Sudra named Venkatesvara had a dream in which he thought he saw Krishna, who commanded him to accept the next marriage proposal recieved in the mail. A few days later such a letter did arrive, but it was from a Christian who wanted to find a husband of the same caste for his daughter, provided the young man would first become a Christian. The boy finally agreed, although this offer was less attractive financially than others he had previously received, because he came to believe that the figure he had had seen in his dream was not Krishna but Jesus Christ.’<sup>282</sup>

<sup>281</sup> I borrow the term sanskritization from M. N. Srinivas—but not his full definition. Cf. M. N. Srinivas, ‘A note on sanskritization and westernization’ in his *Caste in Modern India*, Bombay : Asia Publishing House, (1964) and consult his index for other uses of this term.

<sup>282</sup> P. Y. Luke and John B. Carman, *Village Christians and Hindu Culture*, London ; Lutterworth, 1968, p. 182.



My point being, in part, if it is that difficult to recognize Krishna or Jesus it probably is not possible to generalize in advance about exactly which sanskritizations are going to be acceptable.

The problem about sanskritization that I see is the danger of getting stuck at the level of sanskritization. Actually, as we have seen in the last chapter, many modern Indian painters have gone beyond sanskritization now and to get stuck at the level of sanskritization would mean to be stuck far from where I should think indigenization ought to lead us—that is to taking the images of Christ of modern painters very seriously. Of course there will then be the danger of getting stuck at that level.

## V. BAZAAR AND DEVOTIONAL PAINTING

Bazaar and calendar art is the most common kind of religious art in India. Examples of it are found in almost every home, office and shop and in a substantial majority of public vehicles. It must be taken very seriously because of its vast quantity and pervasiveness. Since I wrote of religious bazaar pictures, 'They are gaudy ; but they are not unpleasant. I find they have a certain charm;'<sup>1</sup> a number of theologically-trained friends have disputed this with me. I would like to reaffirm it. By no means are they great art. But I like them, I collect them and I find they have a certain charm. But I will confess that I find Christian bazaar art, on the whole, the worst of the lot. I guess that this is because it almost always seems to involve poor copies of popular western originals—of a time when popular western religious taste seems to me to have been at its worst.

Of course only a small percentage of all bazaar and calendar pictures are Christian-themed. Many of the Christ-themed ones are sold to non-Christians and are posted in their homes and elsewhere. There they may be truly venerated—as in the home of the painter Arup Das.<sup>2</sup> They also appear in many, perhaps most, Christian homes. For better or worse more 'Christian' paintings of this sort reach more people, almost infinitely more people, in India than does any other Christ-themed art. Christ and His sacred bleeding heart seems to be very popular ; so are crucifixions, usually with Him bleeding ; madonnas, heads of Christ and the holy family also seem quite popular. These seem to be exactly the same themes that are most popular in the list of Art India<sup>3</sup>—sug-

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor (1970), p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter III, *supra*.

<sup>3</sup> Lederle, 'Art India . . .', *op. cit.*, p. 281.

gesting common strains of devotional piety as underlying the degree of popularity. There are some pictures of Christ in the sky, ascending I suppose. Some show Christ along with a few Hindu deities or a few major religious leaders. I know of one that includes Christ, Buddha and Gandhi.

Probably Fr. Lederle's observation that, 'The buyer is . . . guided by cultic considerations. The picture is meant to nourish devotion,'<sup>4</sup> can be generalized to apply to bazaar pictures. And there is some truth, I guess, in a western cultured convert's comments on the western Christian pictures on which the Christian bazaar pictures are based that applies to the bazaar pictures as well ; he wrote, 'In religious art, I have learned, devotional values properly take precedence over purely esthetic considerations.'<sup>5</sup> But I can see no necessary reason why we cannot hope for Indian pictures that are satisfactory both esthetically and devotionally. Art India seems to have a few, like da Fonseca's final Head of Christ,<sup>6</sup> but Art India is not presently prepared to compete in the large-scale market—nor do they produce many wall-calendar-size pictures with which to compete. The Lucknow Publishing House which once sought to produce good Indian Christian wall pictures seems to have completely withdrawn from that venture.

Christian bazaar paintings must also be taken seriously because used and wanted pictures help us to understand what people probably really believe.<sup>7</sup> And if taken seriously these pictures might mediate between the faith of the theologian

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Avery Dulles, *A Testimonial to Grace*, New York : Sheed and Ward, 1946, p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter IV *supra*.

<sup>7</sup> I have been instructed in this by James B. Swain who treats it to some extent in his unpublished paper 'Toward a Study of the Religious Dimension of Popular Art in Batala', n.d.

and the faith of the common believer as each tries to understand and speak to the other. And, as Swain has written,

‘ Pictures are a little more orderly than are beliefs, and a little less schematic than are doctrines. Thus they appeal more directly to our “hearts” than do concepts, for they help one to retain and recall the *real* configuration of his feelings about and insights into the Eternal.’<sup>8</sup>

I think that the Ramakrishna Mission folk understand this as they frequently use a sacred heart picture when they want a picture of Jesus.<sup>9</sup>

In most of the bazaar pictures I have examined Jesus has light eyes, blue or green ; His hair is never black, although it is not always blond ; and His skin is almost invariably the colour of that of a white-man.

A special class of bazaar pictures is that of miraculous madonnas. The most interesting of these is that of Our Lady of Ransom of Vallarpadom, in the Cochin Harbour backwaters.<sup>10</sup> The Our Lady of the original imported picture had a history of making miracles. Then one day in about the year 1800 a Nair woman and her child were in a boat with some other members of their family when a tempest blew up and the boat capsized. The Nair woman and her child were missing for over twenty-four hours, and were believed to be drowned. When they were found the Nair woman said she had been under the protection of Vallarpadath Amma, the local name for Our Lady of Vallarpadom, and she and her son devoted themselves to the service of that church and shrine rather than returning home. Sometime soon thereafter the

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Accent*, Vol 1, No. 10 (December 1970) with its featured article ‘ The Christ We Adore ’ by Swami Ranganathananda and a sacred heart picture on the cover to illustrate the article.

<sup>10</sup> I am most grateful to the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Verapoly, Mgr. Fernandes, for considerable help in sorting out this history.

portraits of the Nair woman and her child were painted into a lower corner of the original miraculous picture. The Nair Woman has elongated loopy ears, from her heavy ear-rings, and is topless but for her sari. The most charming thing about this picture is that the face and hair of the Nair child look exactly like that of the Christ Child. Painted copies were made of this picture and more recently it has become popular as a bazaar replication. It is the only Christian bazaar picture I know that includes Indians (other than those with religious leaders) as important to the picture. Madonna pictures of Our Lady of Health of Vailankanni abound and some of these are printed with small marginal pictures showing some of her miracles—but none of those Indians who have been healed have found their way into her picture itself.

I have decided that it would be very difficult for any person in Bangalore, which is a pretty sophisticated city, who wanted a picture of Christ to get any kind of picture of Him other than a bazaar picture. All of the bazaar picture stalls stock several pictures of Him. I visited St. Philomena's religious art shop which serves visitors to St. Mary's Basilica and counted eighteen different pictures of Jesus for sale.<sup>11</sup> All were basically bazaar style, a substantial majority coming from Sivakasi. In all He looked very European. There were many sacred hearts, quite a few madonnas, several crucifixions, several portraits and several holy families. One of the madonnas was bazaar-byzantine—a replication of the chief madonna picture inside the Basilica. Then I visited the Bangalore Book and Tract Society (a branch of the Christian Literature Society) which is near St. Mark's Cathedral (Church of South India). There I found two last suppers, two madonnas, two holy families, two good shepherds, one sacred heart and three portraits (all in good supply) all in oleographic bazaar style

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<sup>11</sup> I made these visits in February 1975.

and with Him as a European—even the angels were blond ! Finally I visited the Evangelical Literature Service in the compound of St. John's Church. There were no bazaar pictures of Him here—but only because there were no pictures of Him at all. The management seems to have theological objections to pictures so they stock wall plaques instead ; of these eight had New Testament verses and twenty-two had Old Testament verses. I do not see this as a constructive solution of making available something other than bazaar paintings to those who might want other kinds of pictures. From this little survey I am compelled to conclude that there is precious little scope for selling non-bazaar pictures of Him ; and no hope at all for anyone who might want to buy something other than a bazaar picture of Him. But I do think that if there were buyers there would be sellers. I also visited these and other churches and found nothing but European representations of Him. I observe that this is true of homes I visit too. No wonder that there seem to be sellers and buyers for little else. And the volume of such sales is staggering. One calendar picture manufacturer in Sivakasi always has one picture of Christ in his yearly selection. He tells me that every year they alone sell more than one lakh (1,00,000) copies of their Christ picture.<sup>12</sup> There are other companies in Sivakasi that specialize in Christian pictures. As over against this Art India has a total turnover of well over Rs. 50,000 yearly mostly in small pictures sold in large quantities for the kind of Catholic occasions (annual masses, ordinations, jubilees, etc.) when all invitees receive a copy.<sup>13</sup>

I have heard it said,<sup>14</sup> that in many bazaar pictures Jesus looks like a bearded lady in a dressing gown. This may be so. But I think that we have something to learn from bazaar

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<sup>12</sup> A personal letter from C. Rajasingh, partner, Stanco Traders.

<sup>13</sup> A personal letter from Fr. Lederle.

<sup>14</sup> By Matthew P. John.

art. I think that we can learn from the acceptance it has got. For instance, it seems to me that at its core the tradition of the sacred heart, more as it has been written about than as it has been painted, has some very important congruencies with the bhakti traditions.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps these should be developed. I have before me now a marvellous glossy bazaar picture of Hanuman (monkey-god) with his weapon and crown and necklace and ear-rings and thread and halo standing against the skyline of a temple city ; he has ripped open his chest, not without blood dripping, to show seated there (in his heart) Rama and Sita.<sup>16</sup> Suggestive !

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Pope XII, *On the Sacred Heart*, Trichinopoly : The Catholic Truth Society, 1956 ; Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* (tr. Kruger), London : Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961 ff., Vol. III, Part Five, chapters 21 and 22 ; Josef Stierli (ed.), *Heart of the Saviour* (tr. Paul Andrews), New York : Herder & Herder, 1958 ; Hans Jacobs, *Western Psychotherapy and Hindu-Sadana*, London : George Allen & Unwin, 1961, pp. 193 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Published by Sharma Picture Publication, Bombay.

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