

# THE BEGINNING OF THE JESUIT MISSION, THEIR PERCEPTION OF AKBAR IN THE MUGHAL COURT (1580-1605)

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**Abstract:** The coming of the Jesuits to India, as in other post-colonial countries, has been a constant topic of heated debates, especially on the nature of their connection with the “other” in the colonial encounter. Recent works on the Jesuits reveal the importance and need of their cultural adaption and accommodation to the local population and culture. What the standard narratives similarly overlook is the practical involvements of the Jesuits, which reveal their differences and agencies as well as that of the colonial “other”, which is else portrayed as a passive victim. The interest of this article is therefore the aspect of cross-cultural dynamics in the missionary encounter with the Mughals, which necessitated reciprocal understanding and contingency. The Jesuit’s ‘changing perceptions of the Mughals’ during these 180 years, as available to us through their correspondence, did not get the attention they deserve. Therefore, this study might add new findings to the general scholarly discussion about the Jesuit-Mughal dialogues. I try to investigate into the nuanced relations between the Jesuits and Akbar at the Mughal court at different time points, highlighting the changing meanings of interactions when Mughal power was increasingly at its zenith.

**Keywords:** Akbar, Cross-cultural dialogue, Jesuits, Mughals, Portuguese, Perception, Religion.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The first half of the sixteenth century was hectic with several developments that had a lot of bearing upon India. On the one hand the entry of the Portuguese in India mainly in search of spices altered the nature of power relations in deep South Konkan and Gujarat coasts, so much so that Pius Malekandathil opines the first hundred years of the European entry in India as the “Century of Spices”<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, the establishment of the Mughal power house initiated a series of new political processes in North India. The entry of the Portuguese from the sea-side and the Mughals from the land-side gave a shattering impact on the various political houses that were then in deep slumber.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the founding of the Jesuit Order in Europe by the end of the 1530s and the entry of the first batch of Jesuits in India in 1542 happened as another remarkable event that made this period significant, as the Jesuits for a long period of time served as bridges between the Portuguese and the Mughals through their dialogue processes.<sup>3</sup> In the third quarter of the sixteenth

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<sup>1</sup> Pius Malekandathil, ‘Indian Ocean in the Shaping of Late Medieval India’. *Studies in History* 30, no. 2 (August 2014): 125–49.

<sup>2</sup> The Portuguese by 1510-30 had almost consolidated their hegemony in western India, and Babur, the first ruler of the great Mughal dynasty defeated the last Lodi ruler in 1526, making their power more pronounced during Akbar’s time.

<sup>3</sup> Donald F Lach, and Edwin J. Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*. Vol. III: A Century of Advance. University of Chicago Press, 1993.

century, particularly with Akbar's rise to power and with his rule being extended to coastal Gujarat and Bengal, the Portuguese began to feel the pressure of the larger land-locked kingdom of the Mughals. This was a time when the Mughals were emerging from their tiny possessions into a large empire through marriage relations and conquests. Akbar needed the support of the Portuguese for ensuring a safe passage for the members of the royal harem and others for their pilgrimage to Mecca. His concern for the pilgrims and import of bullions made it inevitable to have a working relationship with the Portuguese who were trying control its trade through "various devices and tools of coercion".<sup>4</sup> Akbar realized that the bridging between the Portuguese and the Mughals can be effectively done by inviting the Jesuits for religious dialogue.<sup>5</sup>

The Jesuits got involved in a variety of exercises besides religious dialogue, at times traveling with the emperor through different parts of the empire, often discussing religious matters with the elites and power groups of the city. In the midst of the entire processes, the Jesuit missionaries were also trying to understand the Mughals, their world and mentality and were transmitting these pieces of information to their immediate superiors in Goa, Lisbon and finally to Rome. It is through these writings that we get a detailed picture of their interaction with the Mughals and of the way they perceived the Mughals as the "other". This article proposes to look into the historical context of the Jesuit mission at the Mughal court and the type of images that the Jesuit missionaries derived from their dialogues with the accommodative and liberal Mughal rulers Akbar and Jahangir as well as with the conservative Mughals Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb.

## II. THE ARRIVAL OF THE JESUITS IN MUGHAL COURT AND THE IMAGING OF THE "OTHER"

When the *farman* of Akbar of 1578 reached Goa requesting for the missionaries from Jesuit order, the viceroy initially suspected that the invitation might be a political game played at the Portuguese against the background of intensified tensions between the two. Naturally, Akbar's political considerations were in the forefront of his mind. It would be useful to have Portuguese at his court who could give him information about Europe and the lands from which these potentially troublesome intruders came, and if necessary, could serve as intermediaries with their authorities on the Indian Shore.<sup>6</sup> When the Jesuits came to Fatephur Sikri for the first time in 1580, there were already Portuguese residents who came along with Portuguese captain Tavares. Monserrate writes in his commentary that there were Christian Europeans who were in the Mughal army in 1581, whom Akbar took to Kabul.<sup>7</sup> Even Shah Jahan and Dara Shikoh are said to have employed Europeans in the Mughal Army later.<sup>8</sup>

N R Farooqui,<sup>9</sup> argues that Mughal diplomacy was governed by the political exigencies, geopolitical realities and had characteristics of a modern diplomatic apparatus, which is justified by the diplomatic reasons behind Akbar's invitation of the Jesuits to his court. When the letter from the emperor reached Goa, the Viceroy, the Archbishop etc. were hesitant to send the mission, and some stated that they had no confidence on Agarennus.<sup>10</sup> After some hesitations a group reached

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pp. 601-629.

<sup>4</sup> Pius Malekandathil, 'Portuguese and the Changing Meanings of Oceanic Circulations between Coastal Western India and the African Markets (1500-1800)'. *Journal of Indian Ocean Studies* 18, no. 2 (August 2010): 206-23.

<sup>5</sup> Pius Malekandathil, 'Akbar, the Portuguese and the Politics of Religious Dialogue', 3-9. Tellicherry, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen F.B.A. Neiel, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginning to AD. 1707*. Cambridge University Press, 1984. p. 171.

<sup>7</sup> Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*. Reprint. Haryana: Vintage Books, 1990. p. 268.

<sup>8</sup> Niccolao Manucci,, *Storia Da Mogor*. Translated by William Irvine. New Delhi, 1913. p. 226.

<sup>9</sup> N.R. Farooqui, 'Diplomacy and Diplomatic Procedure under the Mughals'. In *Exploring Medieval India (16th-18th Century)*, edited by Meena Bhargava. New Delhi, 2010. p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> Monerrate refers to Agarennus for Musalman in his 'commentary', Hoyland, J.S., and S.N. Banerjee, trans. *The Commentary of Father Monserrate on His Journey to the Court of Akbar, 1580-1582*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1922. p. 3.

Akbar's court at Fatehpur Sikri on 27 February 1580<sup>11</sup> with the mission of converting the Muslim empire into a "Christian empire". Monserrate writes that while on their way to Akbar's court, they stopped at Surat. On seeing the pictures of Mary and Jesus Christ many visitors kissed them and reverently placed them upon their heads.<sup>12</sup>

Akbar reveals his 'political agenda' in selecting the Jesuits from the Portuguese power centre of Goa, while there were already Christians (Armenians) in Delhi, Bengal and Cochin. The first Jesuit mission comprised three personnel having different cultural backgrounds. They were Fr Rudolf Acquaviva, an Italian, Fr Antonio de Monserrate, a Catalan, and finally Fr. Francis Henriques who was a Persian from Hormuz.<sup>13</sup> Abul Fazl, along with Hakim Ali Gilani looked after the comforts and health of the guests. Father Monserrate was appointed tutor to Akbar's son, Murad.<sup>14</sup> Against the background of warm reception and respect that they got in the court, the Jesuit missionaries seem to have overestimated Akbar's favorable interest towards the Christian religion and probably missed the point that he invited the missionaries out of intellectual inquisitiveness.<sup>15</sup>

The desire of Akbar to know more about foreign cultural practices, curious behaviour and rituals could be contrasted with the over enthusiasm of the Jesuit missionaries to convert the ruler to Christianity. One day after the Fathers reached Fatehpur Sikri, they enquired about Akbar's mind regarding Christianity, but he excused and questioned the Christian perception of 'God begetting a son from a virgin, having suffered on the cross, and having been killed by the Jews'<sup>16</sup> However, the Fathers were given full freedom to preach and practice, and make conversions in the kingdom. Though Akbar made several inquiries about the new religion, he stated candidly that he found the 'doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation'<sup>17</sup> to be stumbling blocks in embracing Christianity. Since Akbar's aim was only to keep a cordial relation with the Portuguese, he tried to keep the Jesuit missionaries in good humour and at times he attempted to keep himself away from the Jesuits. However the Jesuits did not understand Akbar's practice and instead took it as an encouragement from a Muslim king for their Christianization ventures.

The Jesuits were keen on getting the king converted to Christianity; something the Jesuits perceived was deep in Akbar's heart. This is reflected in the writing of Fr. Monserrate, who makes Akbar say: "if there is no other way of my becoming a Christian without rousing a tumult, I will pretend that I wish to go on pilgrimage to Mecca, and will go to Goa to be baptized".<sup>18</sup> These words naturally encouraged the Fathers and a depiction of Akbar being ready even to go to Goa to get baptized under a pretext was an image that aroused a lot of expectation in Goa and Europe. Here we find the Jesuit missionaries beginning to perceive the Mughals in the way their superiors in Goa and Europe would like Akbar to behave, and they credulously passed on this imagery to the European audience.

Meanwhile the visit of Akbar, his three sons and several nobles to the chapel of the Jesuits, and the amount of reverence that Akbar showed to the pictures of Christ and Virgin Mother made the Jesuits overjoyed and think that the course of development was towards embracing of Christianity. Monserrate's writing shows that Akbar praised their own efforts more than once and eulogized the superiority of Jesuit missionaries, though there were many learned men in the court being summoned by Akbar. These exercises were meant make them feel that they were important in the court of the

<sup>11</sup> Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Da Mogor*. Translated by William Irvine. New Delhi, 1913. p. 140.

<sup>12</sup> J.S. Hoyland and S.N. Banerjee, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate on His Journey to the Court of Akbar, 1580-1582*(trans).. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1922. p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Pius Malekandathil, 'Akbar, the Portuguese and the Politics of Religious Dialogue', 3-9. Tellicherry, 2007.p. 2; Hosten, H. *Jesuit Missionaries in Northern India and Inscriptions on Their Tombs, Agra (1580-1803)*. Calcutta, 1907. p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> J.S. Hoyland and S.N. Banerjee, trans. *The Commentary of Father Monserrate on His Journey to the Court of Akbar, 1580-1582*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1922. p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

Mughals, whose returns Akbar expected in the form of security and safe passage. The Jesuit writing also throws light into the intriguing plan of Akbar, who selectively sent his children for Portuguese and Islamic education.

The Jesuits perceived Akbar as a friendly person, who highly regarded the Christian religion and gave them immense opportunities which he conferred to no one, but his kindness to the Fathers was more than once opposed and suspected by the Musalmans.<sup>19</sup> Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Muhammad Hakim (1554-1585), planned to attack Akbar and once lost hundred cavalries by drowning while trying to cross the Indus. Referring to that, Monserrate writes, 'it was undertaken out of express enmity to the religion of Christ'<sup>20</sup>. The latter joined Akbar's force on 8 February 1581, and when they got time Akbar asked with much interest about the contents of his sacred books, pictures etc., but his curiosity did not exceed the externality of the books and pictures and had nothing to do with the actual content of the religion. It should not be forgotten that besides his usual self-indulgence in hearing religious debates, it was a sort of amusement to remain active at the halting places. Though Akbar did not hesitate to give reverence, kissed the picture of Christ publicly and sometimes pretended to be thinking seriously,<sup>21</sup> at every occasion he seemed to have doubt about the story of Christianity. However the Jesuit letters give the impression that Akbar somehow managed to get the process of religious discussions on Christianity pushed by making casual inquiries about Christian dogmas and doctrines. In the initial stages the sons of nobles came to the Fathers' school to learn Portuguese. But almost in the end of the sixteenth century, the conversion of the lower classes also started happening.

It is said that the newly converts were provided economic help by the Fathers, who got funds in the early days from the king. But protestant writers like Thomas Roe, Whittington, Terry and others have criticized that the Jesuits were not real Christians but were baptizing for the sake of money, that they, for want of means were content to wear crucifix.<sup>22</sup> The criticism was conspicuous for the fact that the Jesuits were very influential in the court and at that time they were the most powerful missionaries in the Indian Ocean.

It is the large bulk of letters that they sent to their superiors of Goa, Lisbon and Rome that give a tentative picture of how the religious dialogues between the two were like. Through these sets of correspondences and letters, they were constructing a certain type of image and perception about the Mughals for the Western audience, which continued to remain in the cultural domain for long. The letters, reports and the annual reports submitted by the provincial at Goa, especially during the early days when the Mughal mission enjoyed the favour of Akbar and his successor Jahangir, were mainly to secure publicity for the Jesuit successes in the mission field. Therefore, their letters could supplement a source of high importance; we should also not forget that sometimes their works might have been written for their own sake merely for completing their tasks of writing. When the Jesuits were writing their letters they must have realized their struggle in Europe, within and outside the religion.

Maclagan, valuing the works of Jesuits, writes that, 'though they may at times be coloured by enthusiasm, the letters from Mogor are not open to any charge of intentional falsehood, as in many instances they candidly admit failure and we may in general accept them when they tell of success'<sup>23</sup>. Through the dialogue process the Jesuits conveyed their sense of cultural superiority and the relative inferiority of the Mughal world. Monserrate, writing about Haji Begum, mother of Hakim and wife of Humayun, told that she was devoted and had maintained hundreds of poor people by her alms, and that

<sup>19</sup> One of them being Khwaja Shah Mansur, a supporter of Mirza Muhammad Hakim against Akbar, who was enraged of the latter's attention towards the Christians. Ibid. pp. 65-67.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 72. But we should also keep in mind that even before the entry of Jesuits and Akbar's interest in Christianity taking shape, Mirza Hakim made abortive attempts to displace the former when he had difficulties at home due to rebellion of the Uzbegs in 1566 and the Bengal revolt in 1579-80, though attempts in 1581 were said to have been aroused due to Akbar's alienation from the orthodox Muslims. Here we see that Monserrate had taken this subject too closely to Christianity rather than looking more generally into the previous attempts of Hakim.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*. Reprint. Haryana: Vintage Books, 1990. p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> Foster. *Early Travels in India*, 1921. p. 223; Foster's Roe, p. 275; Maclagan, Sir Edward. *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*. Reprint. Haryana: Vintage Books, 1990. p. 278.

<sup>23</sup> Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*. p. 17.

hers would have been the life of a heroine had she only been a Christian<sup>24</sup> For the Fathers, every good deed done within the Court were attributed to Christianity, to be a stand-off against all the other religions.

For the purpose of talking directly to the ruler and various co-sharers of power, the Jesuits learned Persian very soon. The early Jesuits perceived that Akbar was not actually interested in listening to what they conveyed. Fr Rudolf Acquaviva depicts the characteristic feature of Akbar during the process of dialogue: 'He was a bad listener and never heard an explanation till the end and started a new subject of discussion before listening to the explanations given to the earlier queries'.<sup>25</sup> They came with the ardent desire to convert the emperor in the way the King of Tanore (1548-1552) and the King of Maldives (1552) were earlier converted to Christianity.<sup>26</sup> It was a time when missionaries in general believed that by converting the ruler the entire subjects could be brought to Christianity. The perception of the first Jesuit mission was that Akbar could hardly be convinced to get converted to Christianity and, seeing the futility of the dialogical process, the missionaries wanted earnestly to return to Goa, which Akbar did not allow immediately.<sup>27</sup>

When Monserrate congratulated the emperor for the successful expedition in Kabul, the latter was very much pleased and wanted that the message of this development should reach Spain.<sup>28</sup> Later in Lahore, Akbar disclosed to Rudolf Acquaviva his intention of sending an embassy to the King of Spain,<sup>29</sup> and he was very particular that one of the priests should be there in the embassy, so that what they saw in Mughal domains might be well depicted before the Spanish crown, who at this point of time was the ruler of Portugal, too. Jesuit letters show that Akbar wanted the same priest who had been with him in camp to accompany his ambassadors, of whom one should sail to Spain and the other stay at Goa.<sup>30</sup> Either this was to convey to the King of Spain the nature and weight of Akbar's power through the language of the priests with first-hand information about the extent and impressiveness of his empire<sup>31</sup>, or else it was just a pretense to ward off the suspicion of the attacks that were happening in Western India between the Portuguese and the Mughal officials.<sup>32</sup>

Akbar is presented as being curious to know about the number of the Apostles and their names. In this endeavor it seems that a great ruler like Akbar who had many armies in his kingdom was comparing himself to the king of the Christians of which a great power like Portugal was worshipping.<sup>33</sup> And by the end of the first mission it was clear to the Jesuit priests that Akbar instead was trying to find a new religion,<sup>34</sup> an idea that eventually got cemented on seeing different religious teachers being invited to the court to find out something different from them for Akbar's new religion. Akbar was showing greater leniency towards the Hindus, forbidding the sale of buffalo-flesh in the meat market, watching the dawn

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 101.

<sup>25</sup> Father Pierre Du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits*. (Trans). New Delhi: C.H. Payne, 1926. p. 30.

<sup>26</sup> Pius Malekandathil, 'Akbar, the Portuguese and the Politics of Religious Dialogue', 3-9. Tellicherry, 2007. pp.6-7.

<sup>27</sup> Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*. Reprint. Haryana: Vintage Books, 1990. p. 37.

<sup>28</sup> One time Akbar asked the Fathers about the Pope's dignity and greatness and the meaning of the term 'Pope'. J.S. Hoyland, and S.N. Banerjee, trans. *The Commentary of Father Monserrate on His Journey to the Court of Akbar, 1580-1582*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1922. p. 172.

<sup>29</sup> His purpose of the embassy was to invite Philip II of Spain to join Akbar in a league against the Turks. Ibid. 172.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 163.

<sup>31</sup> It is proved by Akbar's Eagerness to send an Embassy to Spain. Ibid. 163.

<sup>32</sup> On the other hand Akbar swore himself he had no responsibility about the wanton attacks in Daman which Monserrate writes critically of Akbar that he was swearing falsely. Ibid. 168.

<sup>33</sup> It indicates how the Jesuits were constantly talking about their 'King', which they so revered and worshipped, that it must have intimidated him in some way to have inquired so much. Ibid. pp. 172-3.

<sup>34</sup> 'Din-i-ilahi', it was about this time (i.e. in 1582) that Akbar first publicly promulgated his new religion, the *Din-i-Ilahi*, or 'Divine Faith'. Father Pierre Du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits*. Translated. New Delhi: C.H. Payne, 1926. p. 226.



and worshipping the rising sun<sup>35</sup> In fact, Akbar gave the royal order to worship the sun four times a day (in the morning, the evening and at noon and midnight),<sup>36</sup> which externally might appear to be a ritual practice built upon the past memories and Hindu cultural roots of the city-dwellers.<sup>37</sup> Akbar's practice of drinking only Ganga water (and that too collected from Sorun in sealed jars) and adding Ganga water to locally collected water for cooking in the royal kitchen of Agra<sup>38</sup> was, as Pius Malekandathil says, in fact a cultural impact of similar dialogues with the Hindu cultural world.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, it is certain here that Akbar was influenced not only by Christianity alone, but also by many other religious systems. Akbar's cultural borrowing from one religion had nothing to do with the embrace of that religion that the cultural practice was intimately linked with before.

When the first group of Jesuits wanted to go back to Goa, Fr Francis Henriques, who knew Persian very well, was allowed first to return (1581), Fr Antonio Monserrate from Catalonia was sent second (in 1582) and the Italian Fr Rudolf Acquaviva was permitted to leave Fatehpur Sikri only in 1583. The accounts of the first group of Jesuit missionaries give the impression that there was a hierarchy of preference for Akbar in dealing with these three Jesuits. The Hormuz-born Fr Francis Henriques who knew Persian was given relatively less attention, while the Jesuit priest Antonio Monserrate from Catalonia, which was then a part of Spain, was given greater importance, at times taking him for his political trips.<sup>40</sup>

In 1581, Akbar took Fr Antonio Monserrate to Kabul, while fighting against his half-brother Mirza Muhamad Hakim. At a time when the Spanish Philip II became the King of Portugal (1580), the selection of a Spanish Jesuit by Akbar to accompany his military trip to Kabul obviously carries more than just religious meanings. Monserrate was given a responsibility to accompany the Mughal embassy, which was sent to Spain to felicitate Philip II on becoming the King of Portugal, a job that fell on his shoulder because of his Catalan origin.<sup>41</sup> That the Italian Jesuit Rudolf Acquaviva with a renaissance background was made to stay longer in Fatehpur Sikri shows the cultural streams of dialogue that Akbar wanted to have along with religious dialogues.<sup>42</sup>

The first mission of the Jesuits had given lot of hopes to the Portuguese, though the missionaries returned to Goa in despair. But politically speaking, the viceroy and administrators of Goa viewed the Jesuit mission as a success that opened doors for both the Mughals and the Portuguese to interact and negotiate in an amicable manner.

### III. CHANGING MEANING OF THE JESUIT MISSIONS

In 1590, when Akbar's court was at Lahore<sup>43</sup> he again sent a letter to the Viceroy at Goa requesting another group of Jesuits his court.<sup>44</sup> In the same year, Akbar received the second group of Jesuit missionaries at Lahore, where he had

<sup>35</sup> J.S. Hoyland and S.N. Banerjee, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate on His Journey to the Court of Akbar, 1580-1582*(trans). New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1922. p. 184.

<sup>36</sup> Abul Fazl, *The Aini Akbari*. Translated by H. Blochmann. Vol. I. Delhi: D.K. Publishers, 1989. p. 210.

<sup>37</sup> Pius Malekandathil, 'Studding Memory into Urban Space: A Study in the City of Agra, 1558-1700'. JNU New Delhi, 2008. p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Abul Fazl, *The Aini Akbari*. Translated by H. Blochmann. Vol. I. Delhi: D.K. Publishers, 1989. pp. 57-8.

<sup>39</sup> Pius Malekandathil, 'Studding Memory into Urban Space: A Study in the City of Agra, 1558-1700'. JNU New Delhi, 2008. pp. 5-6.

<sup>40</sup> Monserrate accompanied Akbar's campaign to Kabul against his half brother, Mirza Hakim. Hoyland, J.S., and S.N. Banerjee, trans. *The Commentary of Father Monserrate on His Journey to the Court of Akbar, 1580-1582*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1922. p. 72.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Wicki, *Documenta Indica*. Vol. XII. Rome, 1964. p. 83. However he did not reach Spain; After a short stay in Goa, he was sent to Ethiopia and on his way thither he was taken a prisoner by Arab pirates.

<sup>42</sup> Rudolf Acquaviva, after much difficulty and promising to return if he could, arrived at Goa in 1583 and the next July he was murdered at Conculinum Hoyland, J.S., and S.N. Banerjee, trans. *The Commentary of Father Monserrate on His Journey to the Court of Akbar, 1580-1582*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1922. p. 192.

<sup>43</sup> Father Pierre Du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits*. Translated. New Delhi: C.H. Payne, 1926. p. 229.

shifted his power base from Fatehpur Sikri around 1585.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the liberal Fatehpur Sikri, Lahore was the heartland of orthodox Islamic teachings and could not tolerate the teachings of Fr Duarte Leitão, Fr Christoval de Vega and Brother Estevão Ribeiro who were in the mission. They did not get the response they had expected. The missionaries were soon frustrated on the futility of their efforts and hence they returned to Goa, which Akbar did not actually like.<sup>46</sup> The picture that the correspondences of the second Jesuit missionaries give is that Akbar had no intention of becoming a Christian at any juncture of time; but he wanted to continue the dialogues, whose actual purpose the Jesuit missionaries were then unable to trace. The mission abruptly came to an end shortly afterwards. In 1594, Akbar was greatly dissatisfied and dispatched another message to Goa for sending another mission to his court.<sup>47</sup>

On receiving the letter of Akbar, the Jesuit superiors were a bit reluctant to send them for the futile exercises happening in the Mughal court in the name of religious dialogue. However, the viceroy realized that it was not a futile endeavour, even if it was so as far as religious conversion was concerned. He quickly pointed out to the Jesuit authorities the political advantages deriving out of the Jesuit missions at the Mughal court and finally convinced them. The new team, comprising Father Jerome Xavier, Father Emmanuel Pinheiro and Brother Benedict De Goes reached at Akbar's court in Lahore on 5 May 1595. However, Akbar purposely avoided core issues of religion like Trinity and divinity of Christ from being discussed, probably fearing that such a discussion would take matters to the level of conflicts and he did not want the Jesuits to leave his court as had happened earlier.<sup>48</sup> This reveals that the fathers did not engage only in their mission work but also played a significant political role, even if they were only giving him advises, the king still needed them because it was important to be with the Jesuits in order to negotiate with the Portuguese on complicated political issues.

The emperor maintained that there is no divinely accredited form of faith, because he found in all faiths something to defend itself, which was outside the ken of the Fathers who hailed from a society which relied on the inquisition to punish those who differed from the established norms. They mistook Akbar's toleration and search for knowledge as proof that he had abandoned Islam.<sup>49</sup> During the last years of Akbar, the platform of religious dialogue between the Jesuits and the Mughals had turned out more as venues for diplomatic dialogues of two power entities, in which religion formed only a smaller component.

Abul Fazl was an intimate friend of the Jesuits; however, after Abul Fazal's death, they continued to keep their relation with Prince Salim and Father Xavier is said to have visited the Prince in 1603 at Fatehpur Sikri, then a deserted city with a few prominent buildings alone surviving among a multitude of ruins. In November 1604 Prince Salim returned to Agra, but the next year Akbar died. Eventually the nature of Portuguese-Mughal relations got changed as there was a certain amount of estrangement happening in their relationship after the death of Akbar. This was due to various reasons, the most important among them being Mughal attacks on the Deccan states as well as the arrival of the English Ambassador Captain Hawkins in 1608 on a diplomatic mission, and the subsequent growing influence of the English in Mughal court, who very often manipulated the situation in the court against the Portuguese.<sup>50</sup>

Many have perceived the Jesuit mission in India as engaging in educational and social programmes, but it had permeated not only into those spheres; it spread to a wide variety of realms stretching from culture to economics of the region. And while one of the major objective of the Jesuits was to convert the emperor Akbar, and through him the people it was his interest in comparative theology and probably his apprehension about the emerging sea borne power of the Portuguese that made him invite the Jesuits.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 46.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*. Reprint. Haryana: Vintage Books, 1990. p.46.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p.46.

<sup>47</sup> Father Pierre Du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits*. p. 51.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>49</sup> S.M. Burke, *Akbar, The Greatest Mogul*. New Delhi, 1989. p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> Ahmed Afzal, *Indo-Portuguese Trade in 17th Century (1600-1663)*, New Delhi, 1991. p. 38.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Though no Mughal representative was stationed at Goa as an embassy of the Mughals, the Jesuits who went to the Mughal court for religious dialogue eventually turned out to be the official embassy of the Portuguese at the Mughal power centre. In that way he eventually transformed the Jesuits from being religious missionaries to the level of transmitters of the Mughal cosmos to the larger world and as negotiators between the Portuguese and the Mughals on matters related to commerce, culture and polity. Europe and Lusitanian power centres actually saw the Mughals through the eyes of the Jesuit missionaries, even though the Jesuit perceptions varied from time to time. During the period from 1580 till 1628 one notices a large shift in the Jesuit perception, which goes well with the changing nature of the context within which the Jesuits shaped their perceptions. The Jesuit perception till the entry of the English ambassador in Mughal court is easily discernible because of the Jesuit perception of cultural superiority that goes well with their notion of hegemony in the Indian Ocean that they maintained till then. However with the entry of the English in the court, and after the conversion of the Jesuits as only one of different European representatives in the court, we find the language of the Jesuits getting increasingly softened and the Jesuit criticism of the Mughal and Islamic practices increasingly diluted.