

***The Greatest of All Time:  
Leonardo Da Vinci***

---

*Mohamed Irshath*

---

# Preface

If I was talking about a man called Da Vinci. Would you recognize him?

"Yes, the one who painted Mona Lisa."

But Da Vinci means 'from Vinci!'

So, who's Da Vinci?

Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci (5 April 1452 – 2 May 1519) was an Italian polymath\* of 14<sup>th</sup> century belonging to the Italian Renaissance period. He was brilliant in Inventing, drawing, painting, sculpting, architecture, science, music, mathematic, engineering, literature, anatomy, geology, astronomy, botany, zoology, writing, history, physiology, histology, embryology and cartography. He has been called the father of palaeontology, ichnology, architecture and painting. He is considered as the best painter of all time. He is the one who created the concept of parachute, helicopter and tank. He

epitomised the Renaissance humanist ideal. Many scholars regard Leonardo as the “Universal Genius” and “feverishly inventive imagination”. He is considered as the most talented individual ever lived. The scope and depth of his interests were without precedent in recorded history. “his mind and personality seem to us superhuman, while the man himself mysterious and remote” told an art historian Helen Gardner. Marco Rosci notes that, while there is much speculation regarding his life and personality, his view of the world was logical rather than mysterious, although the empirical methods he employed were unconventional for his time.

\* is a person whose expertise spans a significant number of subject areas, known to draw on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems.

---

---

# Childhood

Leonardo was born on 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1452 at the third hour of the night in Tuscan hill town of Vinci, in the lower valley of the Arno river in Republic of Florence. He was out of a wedlock named Caterina and son of the wealthy Messer Piero Fruosino

di Antonio da Vinci, a Florentine legal notary. Leonardo had no surname in modern sense. His full name was Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci which means Leonardo, (son) of (ser)Piero from Vinci. "ser" indicated shows that his father was a gentleman. More about his early life is unknown. He spend his 5 years in Hamlet of Anchiano (village near Vinci) in home of his mother, and from 1457 lived with his father, grandparents, and Uncle in a small house in Vinci. Later his father married a 16year old girl named Albiera Amadori, who loved Leonardo but died Young, In 1465 without children. When Leonardo was 16 years his father married again 25-year-old Francesca Lanfredini, who also died without kids. Piero's Legitimate heir was born from his 3<sup>rd</sup> Margherita di Guglielmo (who gave birth to 6 children) and his 4<sup>th</sup> and final wife Lucrezia Cortigiani (who also gave birth to 6 children).

In all Leonardo had total of 12 half-siblings, who were so younger then him (in fact Leonardo's last sibling was born when Leonardo was 40 years old). Leonardo had very few contacts with his Half-siblings and Step-Mothers because they cause him difficulties after his father's death in dispute of inheritance.

Leonardo received an informal Education in Latin, geometry and mathematics.

Vasari, a 16<sup>th</sup> century biographer tells a story of Leonardo as a young man A local peasant made himself a round shield and requested that Ser Piero have it painted for him. Leonardo responded with a painting of a monster spitting fire that was so

terrifying that Ser Piero sold it to a Florentine art dealer, who sold it to the Duke of Milan. Meanwhile, having made a profit, Ser Piero bought a shield decorated with a heart pierced by an arrow, which he gave to the peasant.

---

---

# Physical Characteristics

Descriptions and portraits of Leonardo create an image of a man who was tall for his time & place. He was extremely handsome. He was at least 5'8" according his length of skeleton. His portrait indicates that as an old man, he had long hair, at the time most men wore cropped short. His hair reached his Shoulders. When most men prefer Clean-shave or short beard, Leonardo's beard flow till his chest.

His clothing was described being unusual in his choice of bright colors. At his time when most mature men wear long garments, Leonardo's preferred outfit was short Tunic and hose generally worn by younger men.

## Vasari's description

As said by Vasari "In the normal course of events many men and women are both with various remarkable qualities & talents; but occasionally, in a way that transcends nature, a single person is marvelously endowed by heaven with beauty, grace and talent in such abundance that he leaves other men far behind... Everyone admitted that this was true of Leonardo da Vinci, an artist of outstanding physical beauty who displayed infinite grace in everything he did and who cultivated his genius so brilliantly that all problems he studied were solved with ease. He possessed great strength and dexterity; he was a man of regal spirit and tremendous breadth of mind..."

## Left-Handed

It has been written that Leonardo "may be the most universally recognized left-handed artist of all-time", a fact documented by various Renaissance authors and manifested conspiracy in his drawing and handwriting. In his notebook he wrote in mirror image because it was easier for him, he was falsely accused for trying to protect his work.

# Portraits

Leonardo's face is best known from a drawing in red chalk that appears to be self-portrait. However, there was some controversy over the identity of the subject, because the man represented appeared to be greater than 67 in age.

---

---

# Character

Leonardo da Vinci was described by his early biographers as a man with great personal appeal, kindness, and generosity. He was generally loved by his fellow.

According to Vasari "Leonardo's disposition was so lovable that he commanded everyone's affection". He was a "sparkling conversationalist" Who charmed Ludovico il Moro with his intelligence. Vasari sums him up by saying: "In appearance he was striking and handsome, and his magnificent presence

brought comfort to the most troubled soul; he was so persuasive that he could bend other people to his will. He was physically so strong that he could withstand violence and with his right hand he could bend the ring of an iron door knocker or a horseshoe as if they were led. He was so generous that he fed all his friends, rich or poor.... Through his birth Florence received a very great gift, and through his death it sustained an incalculable loss."

Some of Leonardo's Philosophies can be found in a series of fable that he wrote.

Little is known about Leonardo's intimate relationships from his own writing. Some evidence of Leonardo's personal relationships emerges both from historic records and his writings of his many biographers.

---

---

# Verrocchio's workshop

In 1466, at the age of 14, Leonardo was apprenticed to the artist Andreas di Cione, known as Verrocchio, whose workshop was finest in Florence. HE appeals as a studio boy to Andreas di



Verrocchio, the leading Florentine Painter and sculpture of the day (and would do so for 7 years). other painters would associate with Domenico, Perugino, Botticelli and Lorenzo di Credi. Leonardo was exposed to both theoretical learning and vast range of technical skills. Including drafting, chemistry, metal working, plaster casting, leather working, painting, sculpting and modeling. Much of Verrocchio's production was done by his employees. According to Vasari, Leonardo collaborated with Verrocchio on his The Baptism of Christ, painting young angel holding Jesus' robe in a manner that was so far supercilious to his master's that Verrocchio put down his brush and never painted again. Leonardo may have been model for 2 works by Verrocchio: The brown statue of David and the Archangel Raphael in Tobias and the Angel.

Florence at the time of Leonardo's youth was the heart of Christian humanist thought and culture. Leonardo commenced his apprenticeship with Verrocchio in 1466, the year that Verrocchio's master, the great sculpture Donatello, died. The painter Uccello, whose early experiments with perspective were to influence the development of the landscape painting, was a very old man. The painter Piero Della Francesca & Filippo Lippi, sculptor Luca Della Robia, and architect and writer Leon Battista Alberti were in their sixties. The successful artists of the next generation were Leonardo's teachers Verrocchio, Antonio del Pollaiuolo, and the portrait sculptor Mino da Fiesole. The latter's life like busts give the most reliable likenesses of Lorenzo Medici's father Piero and uncle Giovanni.

By 1472 at the age of 20, Leonardo was qualified as a master in the Guild of the Saint Luke, the guild of artist and Doctor of Medicine. Later Leonardo's father set him up a workshop, still his attachment with Verrocchio continued to collaborate with him. Leonardo's earliest known dated work is in a pen and ink of the Arno valley, drawn on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1473.

---

---

# Personal Relationship

## Pupil

Leonardo maintained enduring relationship with 2 pupils who were apprenticed to him as children. These were Gian Giacomo Capprotti da Oreno, who entered his household in 1490 at the age of 10, and count Francesco Melzi, the son of a Milan

aristocrat who was apprenticed to his father in 1506, at the age of 14, remaining with his until his death.

Gian Giacomo was nicknamed Salai or il Salaino sense “the little Devil”. Vasari defines him as “a graceful and beautiful youth with fine curly hair”. The “little devil” lived up to his nickname: a year after his entering the household Leonardo made a list of the boy’s crimes, calling him a ‘thief, a liar, stubborn and a greedy gut”. But despite Salai’s thievery and general delinquency – he made off with money and valuables on at least 5 occasions, spent a fortune on apparel, including 24 pairs of shoes, and eventually died in duel – he remained Leonardo’s servant, and assistant for 30 years. At Leonardo’s death he bequeathed the Mona Lisa, a valuable price even then, valued in Salai’s own will at equivalent of £200,000.

Melzi escorted Leonardo in his final days in France. On Leonardo’s death he wrote a letter to inform Leonardo’s brothers, describing him as “like an excellent father to me” and goes on to say: “Everyone is grieved at the loss of such man that Nature no longer has it in her power to produce. Melzi played an important role as a guardian of Leonardo’s notebook, preparing them for publication in the form directed by the master, but was not to see project realized.

Little is revealed about Leonardo’s sexuality, as, although he left 100s’ of pages of writing, very little of it is personal in nature. He left no letters, poetry or diary that indicate romantic

interest. He never married but it is said that he had secret affair with La Gioconda or popularly known as Mona Lisa.

The only historical document concerning Leonardo's sexual life is accusation of sodomy made in 1476, while he was still in Verrocchio's workshop.

Michael White points out that willingness to discuss aspects of Leonardo's sexual identity has varied according to contemporary attitudes. His near-contemporary biographer Vasari makes no reference to Leonardo's sexuality whatsoever. In the 20th century biographers made explicit reference to a probability that Leonardo.

---

---

## Patrons, Friends & Colleague

Leonardo da Vinci had several powerful patrons, including the King of France. He had, over the years, a large number of followers and pupils.

- His patrons included the Medici, Ludovico Sforza and Cesare Borgia, in whose service he spent the years 1502 & 1503 And King Francis I of France.
- He had working relation with two other notable scientists, Luca Pacioli & Marcantonio Della Torre and was a close friend of Niccolò Machiavelli.
- He had a close, long-lasting friendship with Isabella d'Este, a renowned patroness of the arts, whose portrait he drew while on a Journey that took him through Mantua.
- The de Predis brothers & collaboration on Virgin of the Rocks.
- His relationships with Michelangelo was always tense and ambivalent, as the two had such contrasting characters.

# Fame & Reputation

Leonardo's fame within his own lifetime was such that king of France carried him like a Trophy and claimed to support him in his old age and held him in his arms as Leonardo died. Everyone continued to admire his paintings & sculptor. He inspired many individuals to write books.

By 19<sup>th</sup> century the scope of Leonardo's notebook was known as well as his paintings. Hippolyte Taine wrote in 1866: "There may not be in the world an example of another genius so universal, so incapable of fulfilment, so full of yearning for the infinite, so naturally refined so far ahead of his own century and the following centuries." Art historian Bernard Berenson wrote in 1896: "Leonardo is the one artist of whom it may be said with perfect literalness: Nothing that he touched but turned into a thing of eternal beauty. Whether it be the cross section of a skull, the structure of a weed, or a study of muscles, he, with his feeling for line and for light and shade, forever transmuted it into life-communicating values."

# Interest

Vasari says of the child Leonardo "He would have been very proficient in his early lessons, if he had not been so volatile and flexible; for he was always setting himself to learn a multitude of things, most of which were shortly abandoned. When he began the study of arithmetic, he made, within a few months, such remarkable progress that he could baffle his master with the questions and problems that he raised... All the time,

through all his other enterprises, Leonardo never ceased drawing..."

## Music Ability

It appears from Vasari's description that Leonardo first learned to play the lute as a child and that he was very talented at improvisation. In about 1479 he created a lute in the shape of a horse's head, which was made "mostly of silver", and of "sonorous and resonant" tone. Lorenzo de' Medici saw this lute and wishing to better his relationship with Ludovico Sforza, the usurping Duke of Milan, he sent Leonardo to present this lute to the Duke as a gift. Leonardo's musical performances so far surpassed those of Ludovico's court musicians that the Duke was delighted.

## Love of Nature

Leonardo always loved nature. One of the reasons was because of his childhood environment. Near his childhood house were mountains, trees, and rivers. There were also many animals. This environment gave him the perfect chance to study the surrounding area; it also may have encouraged him to have interest in painting. Later in life he recalls his exploration of an ominous cavern in the mountains as formative.

# Science Inventions of Leonardo Da Vinci

Leonardo renowned in fields of civil engineering, chemistry, geometry, hydrodynamics, geology, mathematics, aerodynamics, physics, mechanical engineer, optic, pyrotechnics & zoology.

His scientific studies & theories are only capable of understanding in last 150 years. As an engineer, Leonardo convinced ideas vastly ahead of his time. He gave the concept of parachute improved version of helicopter, armored fighting vehicle, solar power, calculator and theory of double hull. He advanced great knowledge in anatomy, astronomy, physics, optics, aerodynamics & hydrodynamics.

## Approach of Scientific Investigation



During the Renaissance study of Science was not perceived as mutually exclusive; on the contrary, the one was informing upon the other. Although Leonardo's training was primarily as an artist, it was largely through his scientific approach to the art of painting, and his development of a style that coupled his scientific knowledge with his unique ability to render what he saw that created the outstanding masterpieces of art for which he is famous.

As a scientist Leonardo received no formal education in Latin and Mathematic and did not attend university. Because of these reasons his studies were largely overlooked by scholars. Leonardo's approach to science was intense level of observation and recording, his tools of investigations was entirely his Eyes.

# Leonardo's notes & Journals

Leonardo kept a series of Journals in which he wrote almost daily, as well as separate notes and sheets of observation, comments and plans. He wrote and drew with his left hand and most of his scripts is in mirror scripts which makes it difficult to

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

