

Comparative Study of Iranian Garden Concepts in Iran and India

This article retrieved from the research project of "the interplay of Indian and Iranian Art" and a field research trip, which was organized in 2012 by NAZAR research center.

Mehrdad Soltani

Assistant professor of architecture faculty at the University of Zanjan, Iran m_soltani@znu.ac.ir

Introduction

Iranian Garden can be considered as one of the greatest achievements of Iranian culture and civilization which over the years presented the view of Iranian human towards the world around, and formed a part of its ontology. Iranian garden is genuine product of the interaction of mind and Iranians life in their natural environment (Mansouri, 2005). Iranian human's perception of Garden is its understanding of nature, and contains its aestheticism taste toward elements of this world and their concepts. Cultural and political interactions that governing human society, has made this unparalleled product to be considered by many governors and artists from other civilizations for centuries. Hence, different levels of effects of such garden-building can be seen in landscaping arts of various ethnicities and civilizations across the world. By conflicts of Timur's offspring, Timurids government in Iran was declined, but Timur's descendants formed a new government in India that Europeans called it the Great Mugal (Ansari, 2011). Timur and his successors were interested to the Iranian Garden and Gardens of Samarkand are proof of this claim. Therefore, after dominance of Goorkani dynasty on Indian subcontinent, Iranian garden was entered in India as a perfect product along with new governors. yet, by accepting the fact that Iranian garden is a phenomenon of mixed nature

and culture, this issue arises that existence of major differences between the new and former host regarding components such as: worldview, culture, art and particularly continent has led to changes in concept of Iranian garden. Basically, the new host had different perception about Iranian garden and its components. Research trip to India provided an opportunity that researcher investigating different aspects of the constructed Iranian gardens and also to evaluating the domain of changes created in concepts and the shape of the garden by adjustment comparison with domestic samples. Accordingly, instances of Iranian garden existed in India and their components were studied separately in a series of parallel studies, as a result new thinking and perception of garden can be identified. The obtained results from initial research lead to the formation of a general theory, based on this theory the general attitude towards Iranian garden in India considering the Iranian garden not only as Naturalistic landscaping but an architectural construction which regulate and organizes India's unorganized background. Then, after completion of the studies which are on the basis of written sources, the obtained results would be investigated and analyzed with a single view until clearer aspects about changes in Iranian garden concepts in India's background achieved.

Analysis of research findings

As mentioned above, different aspects of Iranian garden in India have been investigated in form of a series of separate studies and the results presented as a distinct papers. Each of these studies considered occurred conceptual changes from their point of view which a summary of them can be presented as follows under general and common attitude:

- According to the results obtained from a research in regards to architecture of gardens buildings, it found that addressing the building of the garden is in priority than other natural areas in tombs located in India. In this process the structure of garden designed such that other elements of the garden emphasizes on the main building (tomb) as most important part of the garden. In fact the kings and creators of these gardens, by considering magnificent and collocation in spatial system and design of these buildings, sought showing their power and dominance on chaotic and tumultuous India.
- Investigating impact of Indian gusto (taste) and elegance on constructed gardens in India indicates the fact that Iranian garden influenced by Indian verve that includes grace-oriented gusto and also some changes have been made in appearance but not on contractual elements. These decorations on components and constructive elements of garden can be seen in form of: planting design, building decorations, natural elements (water, tree), landscaping decorations, floor and edges. The presence of a grandiose and rich-ornament architecture in some tombs such as: Humayun Tomb-garden, Taj Mahal Tomb-garden, and Bibi-Ka Tomb-garden, had a key role in landscaping of gardens, which proofs the influence of Indian gusto in creation of tasteful, decorative and fair view.
- Other research indicates that "hard surface" in construction of gardens of tombs located in India played an important role in garden's landscape in compare to Iranian gardens, and also influenced landscaping of the garden. Hence, the extend of hard surfaces and their geometric arrangement besides low volume trees in the garden caused that Iranian gardens in India perceived as more disciplined gardens in compare to other samples.
- A study regarding the role of "belvedere" in Indian gardens indicates that unlike the Iranian samples, in these gardens vision direction from the belvedere is not much significant, and the aim of existence of belvedere is to create different views in different areas of the garden and also to shows organized geometric system in surface of Indian gardens. And also establishment of "belvedere" in relatively high altitude from the ground level causes that the landscape beyond the garden's wall be-

ing visible, and this illustrates the conflict between inside geometry and outside unaltered nature.

- Research on the basic element of "Water" in gardens in India indicates that, by high decorations in ponds with relatively stagnant water and existence of numerous fountains, the water has become a decorative element. And also caused that ponds and streams with elegant decorations to look more important even than the water element. In fact, the water has symbolic and semantic role along with functional aspects (irrigation) in Iranian garden, the water is considered as single decorative element in Indian garden-building that is respected for its aesthetic aspects.

- Latest research has been explored "reflection of concepts of garden-building practices in Indian miniature art" Consideration to the landscape beyond the garden fence, greatness of the palace within the garden by its placement on the platform, vegetation trimming in interior space of the garden, geometry governance and human-oriented collocation within the garden, are the characteristics which Indian garden-builders take them into consideration, and it seems that Indian miniaturists endorse the same elements that previous Indian garden-builders affirmed and emphasized. Miniature in Mughal royal court, despite the presence of Iranian miniaturists could not resist against the rulers viewpoint, ideal and heavenly spaces in gardens at Iranian miniatures replaced by grandeur-oriented and human-oriented definitions.

Reviews outlined above comparing semantic aspects of whole Iranian gardens and their constructive elements in India. One side of these comparisons is Iranian garden which naturalism and semantic/physical attention to the elements of nature are its important principles. This manifested in different forms in garden-building works, pre-Islamic period architecture and Iran's Islamic period, and its foundation must be discovered in worldview of Iranian culture and civilization, and in Islamic teachings as well. Since many years ago, Iranians were interested to construct a garden or flower bed in their yards or around their buildings (Pirnia, 1994). And its foundation must be discovered in worldview of Iranian culture and civilization, and in Islamic teachings as well. Iranian garden is a nature-oriented environment in which elements of nature presented in symbolic and ideological form, and also provides context of interaction between human and nature. But on the other hand, this garden by entering into different areas in India and under dominance of new users, its shape and implications has changed. In the meantime, although, the physical differences that existed in these gardens and Iranian samples takes place in

the eye of the beholder, but this change in lower layer indicate the occurrence of different concepts which affected the identity of this phenomenon and also distinguish it from what is called worldview of Iranian human. Accordingly, "Hindi garden" is a product which contributed Indian victors and Muslim rulers to consolidate and proof their dominance on new territories. The gardens that helped out Babur to adapt with foreign lands, had vital role in growing territories of Mughal Empire. And yet it has everything that should be a sign of civilization and Aboriginal art in its background, to be reflected as an excellent phenomenon and excelled of the works in India. Humayun's tomb in Delhi Typically is a return to large-scale monuments of Samarkand. Whereas, up to that time such combination of garden and huge tomb, has not ever seen in central Asia nor Iran (Michell & Pasricha, 2011: 20). It means that the Iranian garden environment influenced by its magnificent building for the first time. Finally, however Iranian garden itself has a manmade landscape and indicates human intervention in the nature, but above statements pointed the changes so that reflecting the constructed gardens in India as a fully organized environment with strong emphasis on manmade discipline symptoms

in compare to naturalistic aspects of the Iranian garden.

Result

- Iranian garden which is a symbol of human ontology, after entering into India's new background, witnessed changes in its form and implications.
- Iranian garden is a significant symbol of expatriate ruler's culture and religion in India's background, in this regard; changes in concepts of the garden can be evaluated.
- The process of transformation is such that the naturalistic concepts of garden replaced by human presence and dominance in designed environment.
- Configuration and concept of each of the components and elements of the garden was modified in accordance with changes in the whole garden, In fact, creating a new concept in Hindi garden is the result of the changing role of each component.
- Despite changes in form and content of the components and elements of Iranian gardens which has led to change the concept of the garden in India, the structure and skeleton of the garden still comparable with its original samples. In other word, existed samples in India are still recognizable as a kind of Iranian garden.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion we can conclude that the Iranian garden was considered and entered in India by timur's successors' as a perfect product which is outcome of the Iranian human perception about world and elements of the nature. Iranian garden, in one hand satisfied naturalism sense of ancestral of mughal kings and in the other hand it was glorious symbol of Islamic civilization which used in many territories by them. In this process, naturalistic concepts of Iranian Garden changed, and new hosts considered this product in accordance with their climatic, social and cultural background in order to meet their demands, and naturally this has led to creation of new perception about this phenomenon. Foundation of this new perception is Discipline-based attitude towards the garden and its construction as a work of architecture, rather a landscape design. In other word, the purpose of garden-building with Iranian style in India was not to create of exciting and cheerful atmosphere for interaction between human and nature nor landscaping associate with Iranian Aesthetics but Iranian garden in India is a perfect product which organizing chaotic India. Natural elements in this garden subdued garden's human aspects until it become a manmade space in which the element of nature are presented on it in form of decorative, but not a manifest of a nature.

Reference list

- Ansari, M. (2011). Persian garden, the common language of landscape architecture in India and Iran. *Journal of MANZAR*, 3 (13): 6-11.
- Diba, D. & Ansari, M. (1995). *Bagh-e Irani* [Persian Garden]. Majmou-e maghalat-e kongere-ye tarikh-e memari va shahrsazi Iran (jeld-e 2) [Proceedings of the Congress of Iranian Town-building Architectural History (Volume 2)]. Tehran: Cultural Heritage Organization: 42-25.
- Mansouri, S.A. (2005). An introduction to the esthetics of Iranian Garden. *Journal of Baghe-I-Nazar*, 1 (3): 58-63.
- Michell, G. & Pasricha, A. (2011). *Mughal Architecture & Gardens*. Mumbai: The Shoestring Publisher.
- Pirmia, M.K. (1994). Baghha-ye Irani [Persian Gardens]. *Journal of Abadi*, 4 (15): 4.
- Wescoat, J.L. (2010). *Mughal gardens and geographic sciences (then and now)*. In Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design, edited by Attilio Petruccioli, 187-202. Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill.