

# The Comparison of Concept of Belvedere in Iranian and Indian Gardens

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## Abstract

The belvedere as one of the most important elements of Iranian garden is that part of garden that you can look through it from an upper level towards the garden. This element, in Iran and India's gardens, seems very differently. In the Iranian garden, it is selection of a point for looking at the garden's landscape. In this case, viewer's look is completely referred to the garden's view and is tied up to its aesthetical elements. In the Indian garden, point of the belvedere is not that important. Moreover, the aim is various views in different areas of garden and showing the organized geometric system on its bed. This research attempts to study concept of the belvedere in two aspects, content and the body, in Indian samples to find the reasons of mentioned varieties.

According to this article, despite of Iranian samples, the belvedere in Indian gardens not for the decorated and selected landscape comprehending in Main Street, but it is designed for a full domination on its various levels. Actually, the different perception that emerges from landscaping the Indian garden varies the concept of belvedere.

## Keywords

Belvedere, Iranian Garden, Indian Garden, Concept, Landscape.

## Introduction

Iranian garden, as one of the first gardening samples in the world, always was in views of artistic gardeners and landscapers of other nations. In addition, Iran's cultural relations and artistic exchanges with other countries cause that Iranian garden as an affective element and a cultural phenomenon goes to other territories and changes regarding to condition and the present background. India is the land that Iranian garden was taken there in the time of Mughal government and then gardens with Iranian's gardening methods introduced in various cities of India.

In comparison of Iranian and Indian gardens, we attend their effects and similarities, especially in geometry and total structure; but with more observations, we can see some variations that are in not only appearance and body, but are in the concept and the significance of the garden. However, the Indian garden formed based on the dominated system on Iranian garden, but nowadays its late samples shows that it has distanced from Iranian method. Furthermore, these changes had caused by the belvedere of common elements in the garden. Now there are questions as what differences are between the belvedere in Indian gardens and the Iranian samples? Besides, in other view, are these differences only in its formation and body or the concept of art of gardening had also a role in its formation? To answer these questions, these Indian samples, (Humayun tomb-garden in Delhi, Taj Mahal in Agra, Bibi-ka garden-tomb in Aurangabad and Amber fort aqueous garden in Jaipur) had been studied. Comparing to Iranian garden, differences between landscaping of Iranian and Indian garden and its effects on the concept of belvedere had been indicated. After that, we will get to belvedere's form in this two garden types and the structural and formation differences of the belvedere, its place in architecture and gardening of these two lands and then changing process of it from entering to Indian garden will be surveyed.

## Hypothesis

Despite of Iranian sample, the belvedere in Indian garden not for the decorated and selected landscape comprehending in Main Street, but it is designed for a full domination on its various levels.

## Landscape of garden from Iranian garden's belvedere

The landscape of Iranian garden important and forms targeted. This view is defined by selected elements and creating a spectacular space. Actually,

it does not appear by random and careless lying of natural and manufacture elements. These factors form the Iranian garden system; the system that is particularly for this garden and is made of elements like the main axis, water, plant, wall and the structure. In addition, the landscape that created in the main street is so important. Surveying of the garden view from Iranian garden belvedere is not possible without attention to the street's landscaping that is in the view from entering the garden until reaching the belvedere. In Iranian garden's view classification, the main axis landscape has more importance and usually includes two perspectives from the entrance to pavilion and pavilion to the entrance (Heidar Nattaj, 2011: 78).

Therefore, there is a mutual relation between view from garden to belvedere and view from belvedere to garden in this axis. The main axis is spine and main Structure of garden that forms the principle view and is a place for main elements standing. Axis forming, despite of this that is the place of functional elements of garden, is not based on its function role, but the aim is creating a unity space that the view is originated in it. In this action more than locating the functions, creating the space and spectacular view that produce the specific status of Iranian garden is aimed. Releasing the physical outside and attending to the spiritual inside (Mansouri, 2005b). The main axis is traced in the length of the garden and gets to the middle or the last pavilion of the garden. The belvedere is the very last point that is viewing, and it is visible only to the person who is walking through the main axis. The traced trees in sides of the axis, increase this landscape orbit-oriented and depth of view; until the viewer moves to the belvedere or pavilion unconsciously.

One of the other important properties of Iranian garden's landscape is being sensational and contemplative. In Iranian garden, you cannot walk without considering the landscaping. In fact, this garden creates a space that persuades the viewer to meditate, and it is a sensational and great place for pondering and intuitional comprehensions. In these kinds of landscaping, the product of the view and its function sits as the main aim (Ibid).

In addition, the view that is being watched from the belvedere of Iranian garden is a chosen and pointed landscape. In this case, it is not possible to dominate on garden as the whole because the present elements take eyes attention to the axis and defined landscape and the tree rows, rivulet and pavement are stabilized elements of this view. In the gardens, that pavilion stands in center, there is a view from four sides of it; the paths in every four-side end to

the pavilion. The existence of these front sights of belvedere and especially planting the trees in the both sides of it has the essential role in creating garden's landscape. Moreover, it shows that more lengthened and makes it looks width (Heidar Nat-taj, 2010).

The other point is this that the belvedere of Iranian garden, due to create the suitable and favorable view and landscape, stands in a higher level than the garden. This causes that attention of the viewer not only gets to the inside landscaping and garden's aesthetics, but there will be a wide view to the outside of the garden because the outside view of garden also is one of the aims of Iranian belvedere. Surveying the paintings (Negareh), plans and historical descriptions of gardens in Safavid age shows that the pure nature tantamount to a quintessential part of the face of garden and its view from the wall was what the Iranian garden had wanted (Alemi, 2012). So the belvedere in Iranian garden is the point to look into the extremes and the aim of it is creates a relation with the nature. The belvedere had been created for comprehending and relat-

ing deeply to the nature not to dominance to it. so its localization always had a great importance. In addition, aesthetics of landscaping and the oriented belvedere is also considering. And it attempted that belvedere becomes a place to show the selected elements and the spectacular Iranian garden (Fig.1).

### Garden's landscape from Indian belvedere

In the first gardening samples in India, regularity was one of the specific properties and the factor in forming the garden. "Babur!", as the starter of Indian garden, knows about the regularity in the garden and attempt to make India's nature regular by forming regular gardens; thus helps to expressing its qualifications (Latifian and Najjar Najafi, 2009).

Following the straight linear four-part pattern of Iranian garden in Indian garden plan was so important that stabilized as an important part of Mughal landscaping in view of this garden.

In fact the Indian garden always attempts to show its geometric regularity to the viewer (Kausar, 2010); the absence of trees and pointed elements caused that the whole formation system of the garden have

Fig.1. Oriented landscaping that is accomplished by selective elements in opposite axis of Persian garden belvedere. Fin garden. Photo: Mohammad Hosein Askarzadeh, 2009. Drawing: Shervin Goodarzian, 2012.

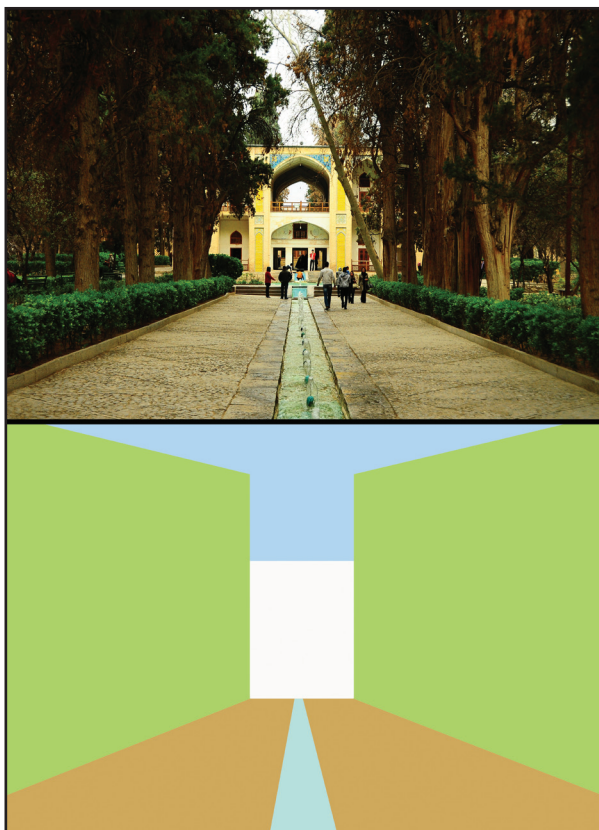


Fig.2. Vastness of observer view in the center area of Indian garden and lake of deep view in the landscaping of such garden. Taj Mahal garden, Agra. Photo & drawing: Shervin Goodarzian, 2012.

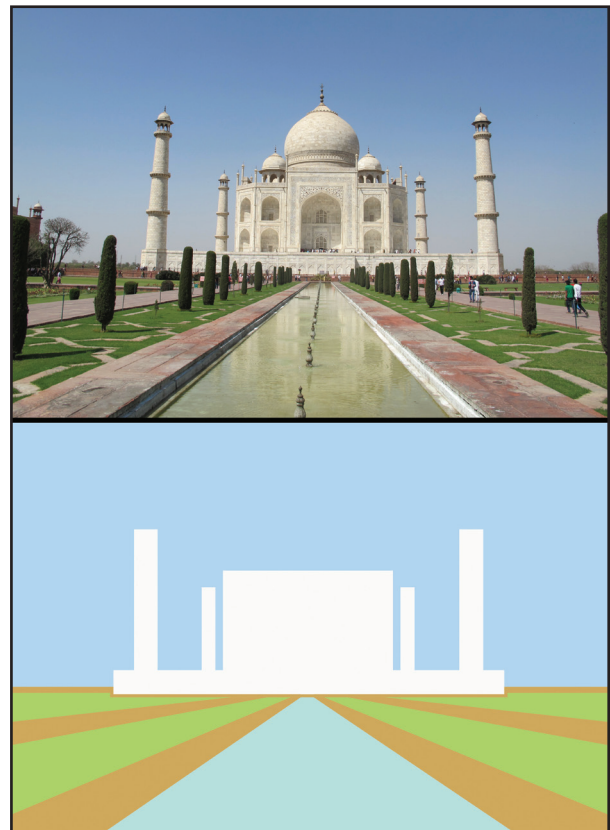






Fig.3. Dominance of observer all around garden from Indian Garden belvedere. Humayun tomb-garden, Delhi. Photo: Shervin Goodarzian, 2012.



Fig.4. Lake of oriented row tress in main axis causes vastness of observer view in Indian Garden belvedere. Bibi-ka tomb-garden, Aurangabad. Photo: Shervin Goodarzian, 2012.

been watched and understood by the viewer. This characteristic gets to the highest level in the Indian aqueous garden, until that only geometric lines and patterns form the garden and the regularity is the dominated element (Fig.2). The belvedere, with standing in the highest level of the garden, is dominated on this formation system and always shows the organized regularity on the garden's bed to the viewer. From other point of view, stabilizing of the belvedere on rather higher height towards the earth, caused the view to be seen from behind the wall and is expressing the conffiction between inside geometry and the pure outside nature. Therefore, despite of the Iranian garden, which tends more to the nature and relating to that, the main point here is showing the strength of human as a nature organizer and dominating on it.

As another characteristic of Indian gardening land-

scape is its non-directional, which there are no more specific and pointed elements of Iranian garden and the role of main axis has become inconspicuous. The row of high and dense trees does not seem anymore; there is only a row of cedar trees that had been planted in a symbolic way as a sign of eternity and greenery (Ibid). In this garden, the deep view and specific singular point perspective of Iranian garden is not the main point; in fact, the viewer not only from the main axis, but also from every other places can see the belvedere. The only difference is that here the belvedere is not the extreme view. It is the center of gravity, which is outstanding towards other elements. In the belvedere, actually, orientation of view was not that important and according to its width to every point, various views in every arenas of garden and its full domination is the main aim (Figs.3&4).

Another aspect of Indian garden is the important place of the structure and attention to it. This importance caused the organization of the garden, especially the main axis, due to attention to the structure and raising its place. Changing in landscaping and signalizing the architecture elements of Indian garden, gently have mutated concept of the garden to Indians, And reduced its significance value as the Iranian garden. Indian garden's role as a place for interment and formation of garden-tombs caused inconspicuousness of the garden and importance of the tombs. As in none of the pilgrimages of "Akbar<sup>2</sup>" from Humayun tomb, was no word of its garden (Wescoat, 2010). Thus with signalization of the structure, the body of belvedere gets more important and the target of showing garden's view to the viewer becomes less important.

### **The comparison of form of belvedere in Iranian and Indian gardens**

However, the whole form of belvedere in Iranian and Indian garden is similar to each other, but concerning the conceptual changes in Indian garden, its body of had been changed in details. In body perspective, the common Belvedere s between Indian and Iranian gardens are classified as pavilion, stoop and porch.

- Pavilion: According to available applications, the pavilion was one of the main elements of Iranian garden. Pavilion and palace always was present in "Achaemenian" and "Sasani" ages. The stabilization of these elements in the place of two garden axis's crossing was customary in this age. Even after Islam, Pavilion still is present in Iranian garden and its coincidence with the culture of Mughal caused it to stabilize in Indian garden.

In Safavid age, it gets to its culmination (Wilber, 1969: 19 ; Ansari, 2011). In Iranian garden, the pavilion always stood in a place with the best view; the construction had been external and stood where to define the specific landscape of garden for the viewer. Creating the best view for pavilion caused using "Charsoffe" and "Hashtbehesht" patterns, and it lets the viewer to view every part of garden from every point. In addition, often it had been constructed in two floors and the important spaces were at the second floor for the best view.

The pavilions, often, had four sides with equal body characteristics that according to importance, pointing and standing in front of the specific view of garden one of the sides were more particular towards other ones (Sultanzade, 1999: 58). The pavilion, with all these properties, entered to the Indian garden, but after turning into tomb structure,

lost its conception as the belvedere of the garden, and turned to a spectacular symbolic element in Indian garden. Therefore, its formation remained as before but its function was changed and the important places at the upper floor were deleted. While with "Hashtbeheshti" pattern, its relation to the garden and landscaping has been ruptured. There are only "shabbak", which takes an inconspicuous view from garden to the construction. So attending to the inside is more important than the outside.

- Stoop: It is an important element in Iranian architecture that had been used symbolic and was a sign for moving upward; thereafter, they used it as an elements for creating better views. The attention to the view, looking at nature better, infusion of holiness was most important reasons for standing on the stoop. However, this element was completed during time, but the main quintessence never was forgotten. These cases show that the stoop had been used with aiming to create a place dominant to a specific view in Iranian architecture. Just like this, the element got into the Iranian garden, and in its organization, especially in phenomenon and slope soils had an instrumental role. The stoop always with showing the specific landscape of Iranian garden, and as an important belvedere had role in Iranian Bed-gardens (Mansouri, 2005a: 32-57 ; Heidari Nattaj, 2011: 147-150).

However, stoop in Indian gardens, had been used with the concept, attention to the upward, but the authority aspect and domination on the whole garden is so important. In addition, standing of structure on a high stoop caused the magnificence impression, and its width to the all points caused full domination of viewer on the garden. Therefore, in most Indian garden-tombs, tomb's construction forms on a high and wide square stoop showing a symbolic view (Ansari, 2011). In fact, the magnificence is stoop's aim in Indian garden. Standing of Humayun tomb on a high and wide stoop has given a great magnificence to the tomb and architecture structure but it has weakened its landscape part. Moreover, the presence of this element in Amber fort aqueous garden in Jaipur, with another aspect causes the great domination of geometry in garden and the opposition to the surrounding nature (Figs.5&6).

- Porch: As a phenomenon that has been made by Iranians is another important element in their architecture. The main function is creating a view and landscape to the inner and outer spaces (Mansouri, 2005a: 75). This element expresses in Iranian garden and by mixing with the pavilion structure, creates a spectacular Iranian belvedere. The depth and





Fig.5. Dominant geometry of aqueous garden and try to showing the conflict between garden and around nature. Amber fort aqueous garden, Jaipur. Photo: Shervin Goodarzian, 2012.

Fig.6. The Placement of tomb on high stoop for creation sense of magnificence and showing the belvedere building of Indian garden important. Source: Michell & Pasricha, 2011: 74.

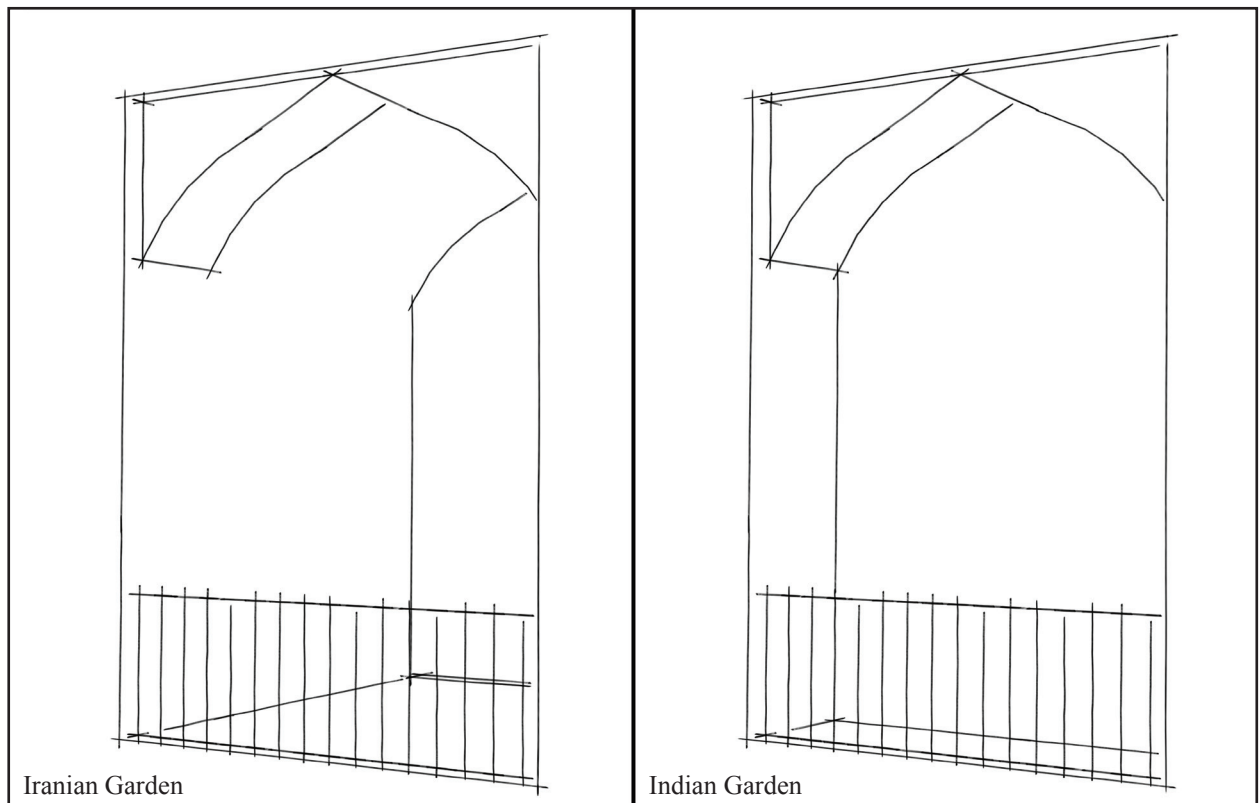






Fig.7. Loss of the porch view depth in the Indian garden caused it's concept to change. Bibi-ka tomb-garden, Aurangabad. Photo: Shervin Goodarzian, 2012.

Fig.8. Changing of porch as belvedere in the Indian garden caused difference in body of this element in Persian and Indian garden. Drawing: Shervin Goodarzian, 2012.



pointed viewing are of the most important aspects of it, which is one of the aims of Iranian belvedere. The porch always had been present in the main aisle of pavilion and had been altered according to its front view. Main point is this that this element in Indian garden had lost its role by time passing

and now it is just its formation that is remained in Indian garden's pavilion. In the construction of Humayun tomb in Delhi, Bibi-ka in Aurangabad, and Taj Mahal in Agra has been seen that the porch had lost its depth and pointing and only remained there as an architectural element (Figs.7&8).

## Conclusion

All researches and comparisons between Iranian and Indian gardens show that, even with primary similarities in formation, conception of belvedere is completely different. And with a closer look, it will be districted that this difference is rooted in the context of Indian garden's landscape, in way that completely changed the meaning of belvedere and has another aim of its creation.

Regarding to constructing Indian gardens based on Iranian gardening methods (Safavid age), many similarities, especially in the bodies and specific elements has been seen in landscaping between these two gardens. Nevertheless, by time passing, these elements got many changes and nowadays the landscaping of Indian gardens has been distanced from Iranian gardens. In fact, different comprehension of spectacular landscaping of Indian gardens, and difference between values and the place of elements, especially in the main axis, with strengthening of symbolic characteristics of this garden, caused that the conception of Belvedere gets different and the domination aspect and full domination and the garden's regularity and different to background gets predominant. So the main aim of Iranian belvedere gets inconspicuous and the Belvedere, itself, is in significant. According to this difference, the formation of belvedere of porch, even with the main axis, the ideal defined landscape of Iranian garden turns to a wide stoop around the main construction with higher level towards the floor of Indian garden. Finally, it shows the geometric system of the whole garden and human's role as a powerful and dominated creature in the nature.

## Endnote

1. Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, originator of Mughal empire of India (1483-1530 A.D)
2. One of the kings of Mughal empire (1542-1605 A.D)

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