

The Aesthetics of Garden's Concept in **Miniature** and Gardening of India (With Emphasis on the Mughal Era)

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Abstract

The garden concept is a common concept amongst the garden designer, briefly in this article refers as gardener, and miniature artists which has been affected by worldviews of different land during the history which implies a variety of objective manifestations. The Iranian gardener and miniaturist due to this common Iranian Islamic worldview available in land followed by that common understanding of garden concept agree on the common elements of garden. Gardening and miniature are of that conceptual arts have been entered into the territory of Iran, coincidence with the Mughal era.

This common worldview and understanding has been made the author to follow up the questions of how the garden concept has been emerged in art works. Since gardening and miniature in India comprises the Iranian- Islamic archetype, there is a question of whether this archetype has been lasting continuously in Indian gardening and miniature over the time?

The garden concept in Indian gardening and miniatures under the influence of Mughal worldview and more over the characterization of Indian Territory has taken away from those conceptual implications of original archetype and made an independent entity in form of a dominant aesthetics. The greatness of the architecture inside the garden, the manifestation of platform divan, trimmed vegetation of interior garden and the existence of water as decorative arrays, are of those characteristics which encompass the conceptual implication of garden concept in Indian miniature and gardening.

Keywords

Garden Tomb, Miniature, Mughal, India, Dominant Aesthetics.

Introduction

The appearance of garden consist a set of common concepts which is created under the influence of time and environment. The common concepts per se originated from a dominant worldview of a land which appears in common elements and forms its visual aesthetic and conceptual beauty. The intention of aesthetics of garden is the interpretation of form and content order of garden elements unifying all together the entirety of a garden.

The Indian gardening and miniatures have been created by Mughal's modeling of these two Iranian art. Babur, the founder of India's Mughal dynasty (1483-1530 A.D.) considered gardening as the best symbol of power in organizing a land; as much that, following the conquest of a territory he would build a garden on its agenda. Babur in India, a territory of the Empire Mughal period, in his memoirs, by expressing his dissatisfaction with the existence of disorder in the land, outlined to make it order as part of his goal. His action was continued by his followers as much they considered any effort in this regard as honor to deal with.

Gardening in India, over the time and under the influence of land properties including, environment, culture and dominant worldview has been altered and adopted by the mimicked worldview and culture. Therefore, although the Indian gardening is formed under the initial influence of Iranian aesthetics aspects, but later on and under the effect of dominant worldview of Mughal, these aspects has been verified. This article aims to deal with the aesthetic aspects of common elements of garden concepts in Indian gardening and miniatures by focusing on Mughal's era.

Hypothesis

the concept of Indian "tomb-garden" and miniature follow a dominant aesthetics under the influence of Mughal worldview.

The Common Aesthetics Concepts of Indian Garden and Miniature

Water element: The presence of water in forming the Iranian gardening plays a pivotal and integral role as "Imagining the Iranian garden as a whole entity with no role of water is almost impossible" (Mansouri, 2005). The diversity of water presence in Iranian garden implies three functions of semantic, practical and aesthetic which have been under the influence of Iranian history, worldview and culture (for more detail see Ibid). Following the entry of Iranian garden to India, the triple function of water element verifies under the influence of Mughal's environment and worldview, so that in Indian garden the practical and semantic function of

water ponds and streams have been lessened whilst the aesthetic function of it, in terms of symbolic and decorations aspects, has got highlighted. In Indian garden, water is no longer an element of landscape construction however in its place serves geometric order dominating Indian garden. Furthermore, the flat area of the Indian "tomb-garden" (except Kashmir, which is not the subject of this study), avoids the dynamics of water circulation in garden and gives it an immobile aspect. However, by attending Indian gardens, it is highly felt that the presence of water and its movement in space is not comparable as we are witnessing in the Iranian garden, but however it is an element which is also impossible to be removed from the Indian garden (Figs.1).

Figs.1. The water element in Indian garden has a decorative and symbolic function.

Fig.1a. Bibi-ka's Tomb. Photo: Padideh Adelvand, 2012.



Fig.1b. Humayun's Tomb. Photo: Padideh Adelvand, 2012.

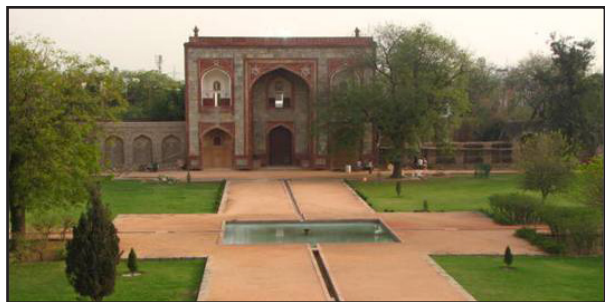


Fig.1c. Bibi-ka's Tomb. Photo: Padideh Adelvand, 2012.



It is interesting to note that this role is also evident in the Indian paintings. Detection of Indian paintings with the theme of garden is dependent on the presence of pond water. In other words, if there is water in an Indian painting, it is definitely associated with a garden. By examining the images, it might be possible to divide the water element in two major groups: 1. the images in which the subject is to exposure the garden, such as the images are pictured in the Bāburnāma as an explanation of Babur to the garden and gardening. In this group, the water element is very important as much that the texts of these images are also highly focused on describing the pond and its effect on how to make a garden. The quadrate pond associated with its branches is located in the center of the image and attracts the most viewer's attention. Since these images are pictured based on the Babur's description of how to make garden, we are facing with the functional aspect of garden along with its dynamic presence in the image focusing on the flourishing and vitality of it. It seems the images implying the Iranian model of Indian garden (Figs.2).

2. The images which are explaining other subjects

than garden but still in context of it. The presence of water in this group is showing as a small symbolic and decorative pond in front of the governing seat, as in some images it has not even fully pictured. The center of image which attracts the most viewer's attention is focusing on subject other than the water element. Here, watering the garden and its flourishing is not of important that much. So that, there is no sign of garden and the foot of trees as we were facing with in the first group. It seems, the presence of the water in these images is not resembling the functional and aesthetic aspects of them but rather is originating from the Babur's desire of gardening to give an order to the chaotic land of India at that time. In other words, it can be said that the symbolic aspect of the water is of significance implying the ruling power in ordering the environment that was belonging to them (Figs.3).

Plant Element: Nature in Islamic Iranian world-view is a tool for making an appropriate environment for human inside. Iranian man is allowed intervention in nature to the extent that raises him. Man and nature in art of Iranian gardening are in-

Figs.2. The Paintings with garden theme are recognized by the presence of pond water and its branches.

Fig.2a. Garden Landscape. Source: bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk

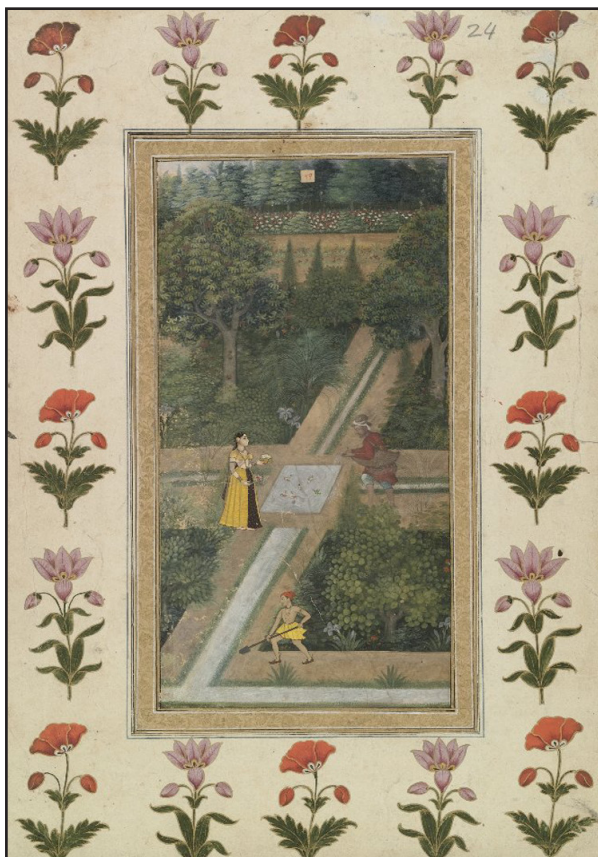


Fig.2b. Babur Garden. Source: depts.washington.edu





Fig.3a. A leaf out of Razmnama (combat). Source: www.columbia.edu

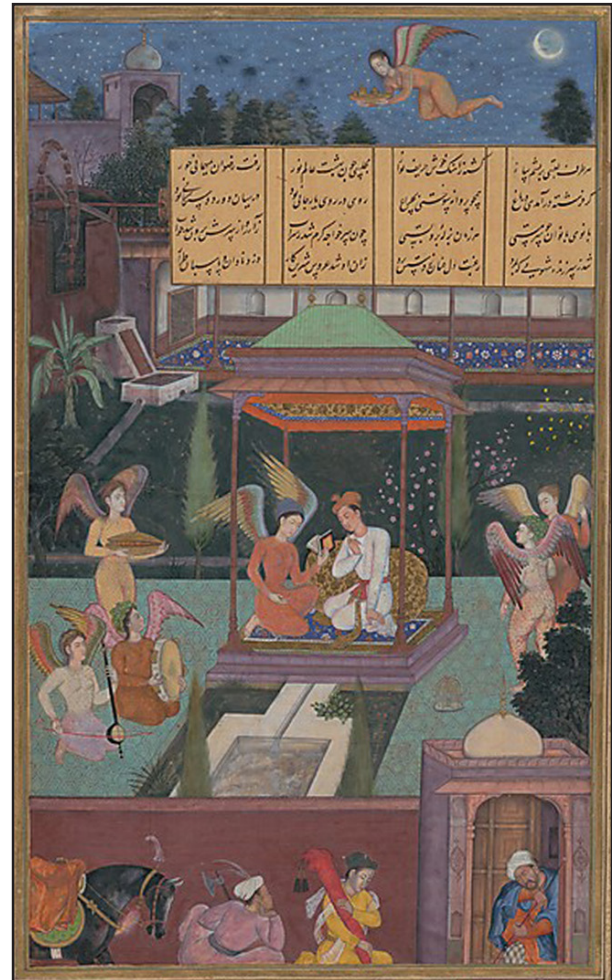


Fig.3b. Prince with the presence of Angels in garden. Source: www.metmuseum.org

Figs.3. The iconic image of pool water in paintings implies the subject of paint in the context of garden.

dependent entities that together have a role both in producing and dealing with the landscape. Human being by organizing the space and ordering the garden in his specific layout presenting himself while nature with diverse appearance merged expansively with space highlights its role. Iranian garden take this role of ordering the space and landscape from man and his conceptual mind therefore the micro-environments are decorated by the originality of nature. It can be said that Iranian garden comprises dual order, anthropocentrism, in its general order, and Naturalism in its all tangible spaces and details (Ibid). Considering the ideas mentioned above and reviewing the experience of being in Indian garden personally, it is appear that the point of differentiation between Indian and Iranian garden is originated from this reality that in Indian garden in spite of anthropocentrism and dominant order, the micro-environment and its tangible spaces do not consist

natural characteristics. So the presences of trees in this garden are separate elements implying merely symbolic picture of garden do not create a contemplation space for viewer.

In the same way, the plant element lose its functional and semantic application which its symbolic aspect is the only characteristic appearing. The Islamic worldview, emphasizing on interaction with nature as a source of cognition and perception has been decamped in Indian garden. The plant everywhere in Indian garden is appearing in symbolic manner either in form of a single tree among garden plots or as a row of trimmed trees located in main axis of the garden which again dominated by the mentioned leading worldview. Generally, in Mughal's landscape the plants presents a faded role considering the fact that the land of India is rich in vegetation, as beyond the garden fence we are witnessing a very dense vegetation cover. Nasrin



Fig.4a. Taj Mahal's Tomb. Photo: Padideh Advand, 2012.



Fig.4b. Bibi-ka's Tomb. Photo: Padideh Advand, 2012.

Fig.4c. Humayun's Tomb. Photo: Padideh Advand, 2012.



Figs.4. Scattered distribution of plants in Indian garden and its symbolic presence in the main axis of the garden shows the lack of engagement with nature.

Faghih (2005) describing the decline of the garden landscaping plants in Mughal history that in the late 16th century, Mughal garden is summarized in a series of awe-marble palaces which is more about showing power than creating a paradise for enjoying its environment as a gift to nature.

It seems trimming the garden from the presence of trees emphasizes the Mughal rulers' attempt for ordering the disorder existed at that time of Indian Territory (Figs.4). In Indian paintings, plant is not considered as an exciting element in space, except the "Baburnama" paintings which are specifically depicted based on the description of garden as we

are witnessing huge number of them (It should also be noted that because of the literature role in period of Akbar, the painters in spite of the dominant worldview and aesthetics aspects, were loyal to the literary descriptions. The plant element in other paintings is presented either beyond the garden fence or in form of symbolic and decorative elements often in small sizes nearby the water element, as though it seems implying the mentioned manufactured order of Mughal rulers as a means of showing their glory. Therefore dominance over nature rather than dealing with it well is evident in these images (Figs.5).

Architectural Element: The architectural elements of pavilion (Kooshk) which has a special role in Iranian garden is appeared in Indian garden with dominant aspect of tomb and the species of "tomb-garden" have become the indicator of Indian gardening in Mughul era. Making tomb as an introduced element from Iranian land plays a major role in achieving the dominant pattern of Mughul even in life after death. The importance of garden's building located in the center of garden with large dimensions standing on a platform impeding direct access to it, is the architectural characteristics of Timurid which is consistent with the Mughal thought as though is presented similarly in their garden. On the other hand the center located building, represents the political despotism of Mughal era, dominating rest of the society. As garden is the epitome of paradise, the ruler is the shadow of God on earth; As God is one and has no partner, the shadow of God on earth should be the one, Akbar quoted (Tripathi, 1998 cited by Kusar, 2006). During the Mughal dynasty in India

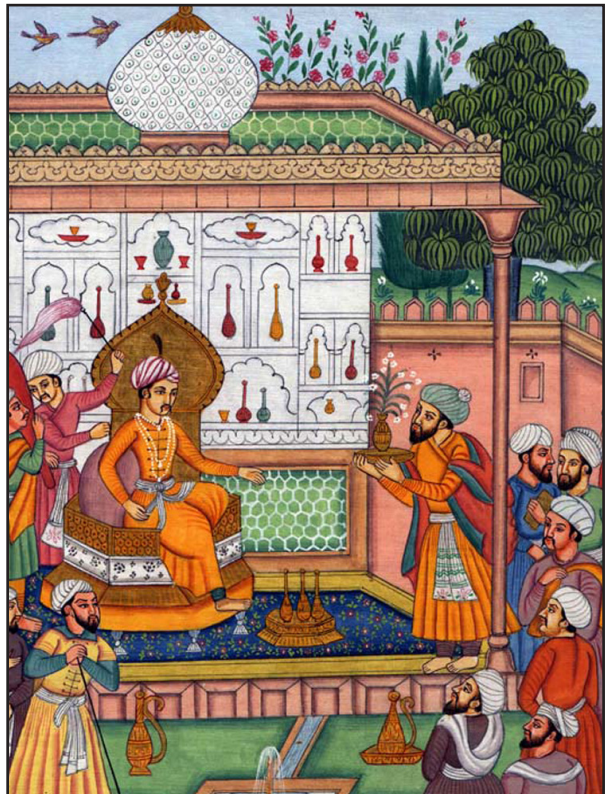
Figs.5. Although in descriptive painting of garden the vegetation is at its highest level, but in other paintings a comparable description is not available and simply the subject of painting in garden space is considered. The plant element shows either decorative presentation or is depict beyond the wall of the garden.

Fig.5b. Royal House Garden. Source: www.corbisimages.com



Fig.5a. Babur watching the construction of garden of Bagh-e Vafa (Garden of Fidelity). Source: www.warfare.uphero.com

Fig.5c. Royal House Garden. Source: www.culturalindia.net



(From 16 to 18 century A.D) we are witnessing the importance of this aspect of garden displaying the power and glory of Mughal Empire even up to the present time. By entering to the Indian's "tomb-garden" the magnitude of building is such significant to let viewers focusing on other subjects of surrounding. It shows significant difference with other set of elements including water and plant in lacking the interaction with them and more over enforcing them to admire its power (Figs.6).

Figs.6. Considering the magnitude of the monument in the context and the contrasting colors with the surrounding environment showing the dominant aesthetics of Mughal empires.

Fig.6a. Humayun's Tomb. Photo: Padideh Adelvand, 2012.



Fig.6b. Taj Mahal's Tomb. Photo: Padideh Adelvand, 2012.

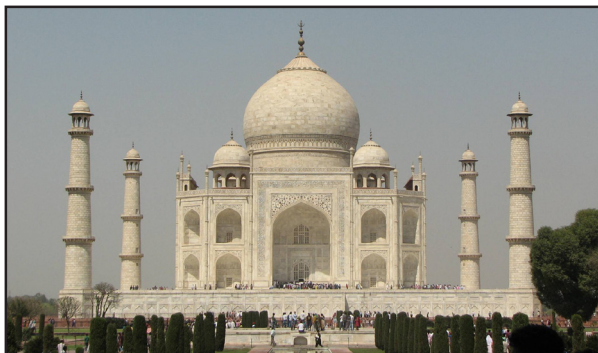


Fig.6c. Bibi-ka's Tomb. Photo: Padideh Adelvand, 2012.

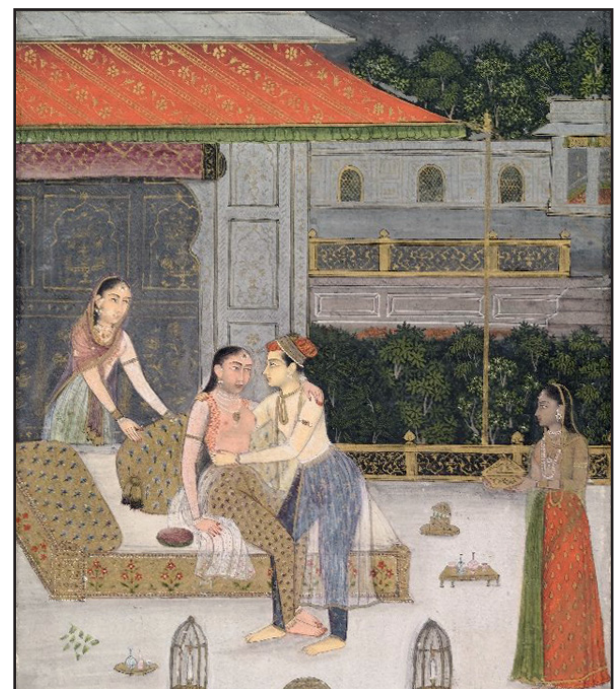


Figs.7. Pavilion and platform divans are characteristics highlighted in Indian paintings showing its significance among Mughal rulers.



Fig.7a. Babur watching the construction of the garden, standing on a rock platform, Baburnama. Source www.gallery.ca

Fig.7b. The king and his mistress on Pavilion. Source: bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk



Noticing that the Pavilion (Kooshk) is placed on the platform divan (Sofa) which impedes direct access to it in the Mughal paintings is to some extent that would be considered as the characteristics of these paintings. Sitting on platform divans, is traditional among Mughal, whether in Pavilion space or outer environment, presents the dominance of ruler on them. In some paintings the governor is shown on a rock platform which resembles the same platform divans. The lack of tall and shaded trees on the main axis of the garden which highlights the magnitude of pavilion on central point of the garden is also considered in these paintings by occupying the

maximum space of Pavilion in the image composition and the occurrence of events on platform. Similarly, in some of the paintings the presence of tent in the center of artwork as a Mughal tradition originating back to their nomadic thoughts reinforces the importance of this element among them (Figs.7).

"Kasravi" in his article entitled "A classic and organic view on Islamic tombs of India" considers the "tomb-garden" order as a classic style of architecture due to having a geometric regularity showing its dominance on nature, in other words, an autocracy order is ruling over it.

Conclusion

Gardening and miniatures art are originated in Iran. These two artworks at the beginning of Mughal era comprise all their aesthetics elements but over time and under the influence of Mughal worldview and Indian context the primary functions of them have been changed.

As mentioned in the introduction, the Mughal garden is not only interacting with nature but also seeking to dominate it, the concept which was followed in Mughal's gardening and miniature, contrary to the Iranian garden.

In Mughal's worldview, dominant ism has always been important, therefore miniature in Mughal's divan in spite of the presence of Iranian artists could not resist the special view of Mughal as we are not witnessing the Iranian paintings of heaven and idealistic spaces.

This outlook to existence is so dominant that in "tomb garden" of Mughal the exaggerated magnitude-ism of Tomb monument resembling the power of ruling over land are shown as this dominance on garden atmosphere has become one of the characteristics of Mughal's gardening style. The same concept is happening to the paintings as the spaces made by them are not only surrounding the pavilion but also standing over its platform overlooking surrounding landscape originates from the authoritarian thinking mentioned before.

In tomb-garden and paintings of Mughal era, human being is not in contact with nature but in contrast is obliged to apprehend the magnitude of the ruler. Therefore the whole elements of garden by presenting a symbolic and decorative function are serving this kind of outlook.

Generally, the aesthetic aspects of garden concept in "tomb-garden" and paintings of Mughal era has been formed under the influence of this worldview so the prophecy of garden designers and miniature artists of this period toward the common concept of garden is not about praising the nature but instead is dealing with dominance on it as such it seems is narrating a dominant aesthetics of art world.

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