

BABUR - THE PRINCE OF GARDENS

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Abstract

In given article we will try to analyze history of architecture of Charbagh gardens and it's evolution process. Moreover, we will try to clear up the role of Babur in formation of such kind of gardens. Lastly, we describe how Babur gardens has begun and its development over the years, also, we have given an evidence supporting our points.

Index Terms : Islamic gardens, Persian gardens, Central Asian gardens, Indian local traditions, Babur gardens, Baghi-Wafa, Baghi-Kalon, Baghi-Nilufar, Baghi-Fathpur Sikri.

To analyze the gardens created by Babur, first of all, it is necessary to study the evolutions of the creation of these gardens from the aspects of both chronological and architectural formation. The architectural styles in the gardens created by Babur are based on the ancient concept of "Chahar Bagh", and such gardens were built in many countries before Babur. Therefore, in the art of creating a garden, it is the demand of the time to bring these ideas from which traditions Babur inherited, as well as his personal contribution to the development of this art.

The "Chahar Bagh" style of garden creation is inherited from Persian traditions, and it is known from inscriptions of the era of Cyrus II (500 BC) that gardens of this style were built in Persia from the Achaemenid era.[1] The garden style was originally developed in the Pasargada Garden, built by Cyrus II in Ancient Iran.[2] The fact that gardens of this type were built many times is also found in the literature



of the Sassanid era. There is information that even the “Hanging Gardens of Babylon” were built in this style. This style was widely used during the Muslim era. It was unprecedented at that time to supply water using underground canals and create a green garden with beautiful flowers for long 30 km. The great poets of the East, Firdawsi, Sa'di, Shirazi, and Omar Khayyam, praised Persian gardens in their works.[3]

Persian gardens are built on the basis of specific projects, and the garden is divided into four squares. Between the squares there are waterways, in which lotus and lily flowers are flirtatious. Such gardens were popularly called "Charbagh"s, i.e. (a garden consisting of four squares). Four small waterways connect at right angles in the center of the garden, uniting the four parts. The corridors are decorated with cypress and maple trees. The cypress tree is famous as a symbol of eternity in Persia due to its evergreen color. The maple tree, with its huge stature, soft and cool atmosphere, ensured the garden's tranquility. The Persian garden is terraced with corridors, and water forms the basis of the garden. The water flowed uniformly, that is, at the same rate, sometimes along a large corridor, sometimes through a small corridor. To maintain such a standard, the water pipelines required the construction of canals and waterfalls based on exact dimensions and plans. That's why the poets who saw such gardens described it as follows: "Clear flowing waters flood and shine on the cypress trees bathed in darkness, as if they gave a bright blue light, and the gray blue sky was stunned to see this." In fact, the Persian gardens were very beautiful and had a peaceful atmosphere.[3]

According to P. Wilson, “Such gardens formed during the Achaemenid period were further developed by the addition of pavilions during the Sasanian period. By the time of the Abbasids, the gardens belonging to the Persian culture were assimilated into the Islamic culture and used in the palace in Samarra. As the Abbasid rule expanded, the idea of Persian gardens spread to oases from eastern Iran to Sicily. "Charbagh" entered the Central Asian region during the Samanid`s period, and this technique led to the creation of the famous Samarkand Gardens during the Timurid period." [4] So, the gardens of Samarkand during the Timurid period were formed according to the tradition of Persian gardens. Almost all the architects who designed these gardens were imported from Iran. It is known that the main issue for the creation of ponds was water. Many tributaries of the Zarafshan River have served as a solution to this problem. In Samarkand, Amir Timur created a lot of gardens in the



charbagh style. In 1404, the Spanish ambassador Clavijo recorded in his diary the gardens that he personally saw, such as Baghi-Dilkusho (Garden of Enlightenment), Baghi-Shamol (Windy Garden) and Baghi-Nav (New Garden). According to him, "This garden is surrounded by a big wall and has six big pipes. From these pipes, water flows over the corridors and passes from one to the next. There are five paths in the garden surrounded by tall and shady trees. The path between the trees looks like a big city boulevard. Five large walkways and small walkways serve to pass through all parts of the garden. An artificial hill was built in the center of the garden." [5] In fact, at that time, the widespread use of this style in the urban planning of Samarkand, that is, the construction of tree-lined avenues supplied with water, starting from the paths in the gardens, and joining these avenues to the central parts of the city, including palaces and residences, was very popular.

Babur had visited the ramshackle forts built by his grandfather Amir Timur in Samarkand many times, and he understood their construction method very well. He occupied Samarkand several times and witnessed these gardens. In fact, in his "Baburnama" he describes them as follows: "The gardens and neighborhoods of Samarkand, and how many other districts of this (Zarafshan) are beautiful with water. There are many buildings and gardens of Timurbek and Ulugh Bek Mirza in the neighborhoods of Samarkand. In the east of Samarkand, he built two gardens, one of which is more distant, called Buldi Bagh, and the closer one is Dilkusho (entertainment) Park. He made an avenue from there to Feruza gate and planted poplar trees on both sides. Dilkusho Garden also made a lot of noise. It depicts Timurbek's wars in India. At the foot of Kohak hill, he built a garden on the black water of Konigil (this water is also called Obi-rahmat). The pattern is called Jahan (World). At the time I saw this garden, it was destroyed, and the name was gone. In the south of Samarkand is Baghi Chinor (Maple Garden), which is close to the fortress. In the lower part of Samarkand, there are Baghi Shamol and Baghi Bihisht. During the time of Sultan Ahmad Mirza, beks (emirs) and small beks built many gardens. Among them, Darvesh Muhammad Tarho Din's charbagh is pure and airy, and there are few charbaghs that brighten the eyes. The garden is lower than the Maidan, on the hill, adjacent to the Kulba plain, a pond was built. This nakedness lies beneath him. Even in Charbagh, the people who have carefully planned the low and high lands and planted cypresses and white poplars, it is a beautiful destination. [6]



It is clear from this information that Babur not only described the gardens, but also explained and criticized the specific characteristics of the gardens, and he himself tried to apply this knowledge in practice by creating a garden.[7] Babur skillfully mastered the science of creating gardens and beautifying them. He was especially familiar with the method of creating terraced gardens. It was in 1508 that he built Baghi-Wafa in this style in Kabul and paid attention to the availability of clean running water.[1] Regarding this garden, he writes in Baburnama: "In front of the fortress of Odinapur, on a hill on the south side, I built a garden in the year nine hundred and fourteen (1508). It is called Baghi Wafa, adjacent to the stream; the stream is between the fortress and the garden: there are many oranges and pomegranates. The year I defeated Pahar Khan and took Lahore and Dinalpur, I planted banana (banana) and it was bruised. They also planted sugarcane last year, and the sugarcane was good. The land is high, the water flows constantly, the air is mild in winter, and there is a small hill in the middle of the garden; a water mill is always flowing through the middle of this garden and over the hill inside the garden. The "chor-chaman" (square flowerbed) in the middle of the garden was built on this hill. On the south-west side of the garden is a ten-by-ten pond, surrounded entirely by orange trees; there are also pomegranate trees. The banks of this pond are full of orchards. This is the greenest part of the garden. Oranges look best where they turn yellow; a good garden was created." [6] Said Rezavi, who researched this garden, gives interesting information in his work: "Before the construction of Wafa Garden, there is no information about the architectural drawing in the Indus land. Babur criticized the asymmetrical and unplanned buildings in India. A painting in "Akbarnama", preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum, clearly shows Babur with a rectangular design in front of him. This image shows the process of construction of Babur's Baghi Wafa based on the project drawing". [8] It can be seen that Babur created the gardens on the basis of a precise and careful project, and he directly participated in the creative work with the architects.

Babur also describes the similar quality of Baghi-Kalon "Large Garden" as follows: "District Istalif is not known such garden. In this city, there was a garden called Baghi Kalon belonging to Ulughbek Mirza. I paid the owners. Outside the garden there are tall maples. Under the sycamores is a green and lush destination. In the middle of the garden, a water mill is always flowing. In the middle of the garden on



the banks of this stream, maples and other trees grew. The nose was crooked and ugly. Under my direction, this ditch was made visible with a proper plan." [6]

In addition to these, he also builds gardens in Kabul, such as Baghi-Binafsha (Violet Garden), Baghi-Padshahi (King Garden), Baghi-Chinor. It can be seen that Babur inherited the tradition of creating a garden in the style of a charbagh from the gardens of Samarkand during the time of Amr Timur, which were based on the ancient Persian gardens. However, Babur's special love for gardens, his attention to clean running water in his built gardens and harmony with rare trees and flowers, Babur's contribution is incomparable.

Indian people lived near the places where the river crossed from time immemorial. Even the central Hindu temple - "tirthas" - are built on the banks of rivers or lakes. Because in Hindu religious views, it is emphasized that during the worship of the deities, the place should be quiet and the water should be clean. An example of this is the lines written in the "Brhat-Samhita" belonging to the 5th century AD: "A big well should be dug and filled with water for worship, and a garden should be created and a temple should be established here." "The gods come around water gardens, natural or artificial." "The gods live in cities with forests, rivers, mountains, and gardens with waterfalls." [9]

It can be seen from these that the Indian people have closely connected their religion with water and natural environment since time immemorial. The ancient Indian people not only created natural gardens, but also created artificial gardens by passing water channels. There is also a lot of information about the creation of such gardens in the famous epic "Ramayana".

However, when Babur came to northern India in 1526, he lamented that the natural environment was in a deplorable state and that he did not see a garden with clean running water nearby. He wrote, "The cities and provinces of India are very desolate. All cities, all settlements are built in the same way, gardens are not surrounded by walls. Most of the land is flat. The banks of some rivers and canals have been washed away by the spring rains, and it is difficult to walk through them." [6]

After the battle of Panipat in May 1526, Babur arrived in Agra. As this period is the hottest time of the year, Babur suffers from hot temperature, heat and dust. He writes in Baburnama: "I have always thought that the one great drawback of Hindustan is that it does not have running water." Wherever we need to settle down, we can make wheels, run water and build gardens with a plan. A few days after our arrival in Agra,



we crossed the river Juun and examined the land for the construction of a garden for this purpose. These lands were so unsightly and desolate that we crossed the water again and left without being satisfied. Due to the unsightly and unattractiveness of this place, my thoughts about the pond also disappeared from my mind. But there was no other vacant land so close to Agra that after a few days we had no choice but to start work on this land. First, a big well was dug, now bath water is taken from there. We also worked on a piece of land with anvil trees growing and an octagonal pond. After that, a large pool and courtyard were built. Then a pool and hall were built in front of the stone building. After that, the "Khilvat khana" (house for rest) and houses were built. After that, a bathhouse was built. Well-ordered buildings and flat gardens were built in such an unsightly and chaotic Hind. In every corner there were pleasant flower beds, good flowers and plants were planted in an orderly manner. And Khalifa, Shaykh Zain, Yunus Ali, and whoever had land on the banks of the river, built beautiful gardens and ponds. They installed wheels and brought running water in the manner of Lahore and Dinalpur. The Indian people had never seen places of this order and appearance. They named the side where these buildings are located as Kabul."[6]

From such information, it is worth noting that Babur built artificial hills and created artificial waterfalls and water corridors (terrace) on flat lands with a specific project. The garden is built based on the law of exact symmetry, and the water flows from one garden stage to the next. "By Babur, Char-Bagh was built in a symmetrical position on the river bank, and later Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal mausoleum right in front of this garden".[10]

When Babur was in Agra, he spent the main funds not on political affairs, but on the creation of gardens, which made him popularly known as "Babur - the prince of gardens".

Babur creates the Garden of Nilufar in Dholpur, and the Fath Garden in Fatehpur Sikri in the style of a garden. It can be seen that Babur introduced Persian and Samarkand traditions of garden creation to India slowly. These traditions that he brought from Samarkand, Herat and Kabul later led to the formation of traditions of creating squares, building complexes with running water pipes and fountains in front of residential buildings.[3]



Among the gardens built by Babur in Agra, only the garden named Rambagh has reached us. This park is located on the eastern left bank of the Jumna River, between Baland-Bagh (High Garden) and Chinika-Rauza Garden. The original name of this garden was Baghi Gulafshan (Flower Garden), and over time it was called Aram Garden (Garden of Rest). The real name has been completely forgotten over time.[11] Its original state has been changed many times. However, although the garden has been renovated, it is clearly visible how magnificent and unique its original appearance was. Baghi Gulafshon, water is first collected in a large pipe and water is poured into a small waterfall based on an inclined path. The water flowed from this waterfall along the wide terraces and surrounded all the platforms. The water again passed to the lower garden, that is, the second terrace, through eight large waterways. There were stairs on both sides of each corridor. Water from the corridors was poured into a small waterfall, and from here water reached the necessary places to irrigate the gardens based on small tributaries. It can be seen that the running water used for the garden not only created beautiful architecture, but also ensured that the water needed for the garden went to the right place and in the right amount.[3]

In the case of the Gulafshan Garden, Babur not only created a clear and skillful architecture of the garden, but also found an excellent solution for the drainage system along with the design of the garden. Such a style was undoubtedly a novelty among Indian gardens at that time.[11]

Babur created large gardens, he not only created gardens but also revealed the tradition of garden creation for future generations. Historian Abul Fadl writes about this in his work "Ain-i-Akbari" as follows: "Before, the Indian people built simple gardens for themselves, but when Babur came to India, the gardens began to be built magnificently according to a clear plan. Babur is a person who established the tradition of magnificent creation of garden art in architecture".[3]

In fact, Babur created a revolution in medieval architecture. Because before, the architect was content with designing the building, but now, the architect for the building project, and the garden designer and the water engineer for the garden project had to work together in consultation. During such a complex project, all efforts are focused on the main goal, from big details to small details, working together to arrive at a solution.



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