

Middle East Garden Traditions: Unity and Diversity
Questions, Methods and Resources in a Multicultural Perspective
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Unity and Diversity of Mughal Garden Experiences

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The architecture and landscape character of Mughal gardens (1526-1748 A.D.) changed considerably with the decline of Mughal rule. The Sikhs (1748-1849 A.D.) obliterated the design and removed precious stones from garden structures, in particular in the cities of Lahore and Sirhind, and original planting was lost during the British period (1849-1947 A.D.). At present none of the gardens preserves its original planting design. In a number of cases, such as the Shalamar Garden in Lahore, the original hydraulics system was replaced with a modern mechanical water supply system. So the still extant remains of these gardens should be studied from original sources and literary traditions. This demands acknowledging the mutual embedding of nature and architecture that was achieved by Mughal culture and the specific mood that it created. Gardens inspired lyric poets who praised the scents of flower, the song of birds, the beauty of running water, the softness of grass underfoot and the serenity of the physical environment.¹ Their verses reflect the relationships between man and nature in a Mughal garden to which we shall draw attention.² We shall see how the various experiences of gardens by Muslim believers gave rise not only to a religious sensuality or to mystical pursuits, but also to ethical experiences of nature.

Functional Diversity and Poetical Unity

The Mughals introduced a variety of architectural and building typologies to the region of Asia comprising modern Afghanistan, Pakistan and Northern India. One of the most significant among them is the garden, or *bāgh*. Formal gardens, introduced by Emperor Babur (r. 1526-1530 A.D.), flourished under the reign of Humayun (r. 1530-1540; 1555-56 A.D.) and Akbar (r. 1556-1605 A.D.), and reached a zenith during the reign of Jahangir (r. 1605-1627 A.D.) and Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658 A.D.) They were continued until 1748 under the last Mughal emperor, Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-48 A.D.). The best description of the *khāna bāgh* in the mansions of princes and great amirs can be found in a household manual of the late seventeenth century entitled *bayāz-i-khushbū'i*.³ Three out of thirteen sections are devoted to house gardens. Section seven, "On the Construction of Five Kinds of Buildings and Gardens for the Khans," provides guidance for the great man's architects (*mi'māran*) and horticulturists' (*chaman pīrāyān*). The inclusion of the garden (*khāna bāgh*) among the five kinds of buildings hints at the importance of garden experiences in daily life since it sets them on a par with the central structure with its audience halls and porticoes, the *īdgāh*,⁴ the minaret of a household mosque, and the bath (*hammām*). This importance is confirmed by the ubiquity of gardens constructed during the Mughal period as it is reflected by their names: pleasure walk (*sayrgāh*), tomb garden (*raẓwa*), house garden (*khāna bāgh* or *pā'in bāgh*), imperial journey gardens (*manāzil*

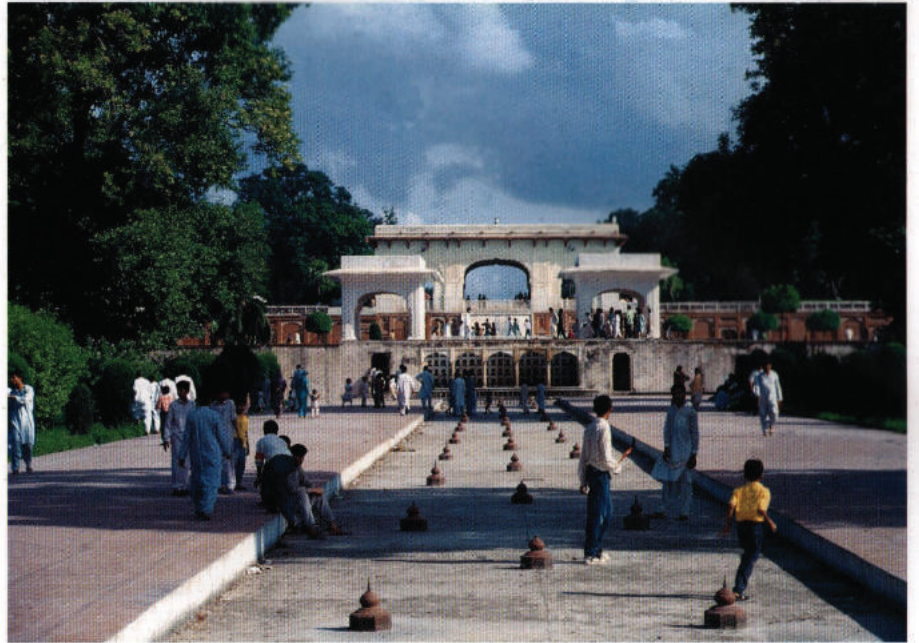
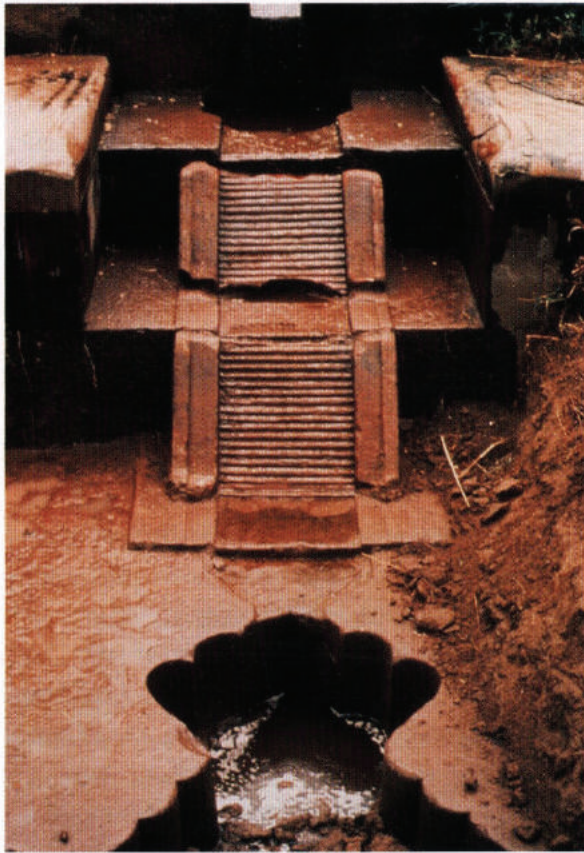


Fig. 3. One of the earliest Mughal period *chādar* at Bagh-i Nilofar, Dholpur (by Abdul Rehman).

Fig. 4. *Sāvan bhādon* in Shalamar Garden, Lahore, facing lower terrace (by Abdul Rehman).

However, architecture and man-made artifacts are never excluded from the poetical encounter with nature afforded by a garden. To the contrary, the forecourt of a princely garden (*Jilawkhāna*) prepared visitors for a very special experience following their entrance into the *bāgh*. Yet, a short review of their physical organization is necessary to present the poetical experience of nature visitors could enjoy in these gardens. They were protected by walls from hot winds, and divided into terraces (*tabaqa*) especially when located on a sloping site (Kambo⁸ 1967, 2: 285-87) that enhanced the sense of being in an unusual place. Mughal landscape architecture, with its terraced sites, *chārbaḡh* or *chahārbaḡh* plans, and raised walks, is perhaps most renowned for its dramatic and inventive use of moving water (Fig. 2). *Khīyābān* and *nahr* form the central axis of the plan. The most favored devices included fountain jets, water chutes carved with raised patterns in their floors to enhance water sparkling and singing, and niches with lamps set behind the cascades that glittered in the night. Both the central streams (*nahr*) and pool (*hawz*) were decorated with a large number of fountains (*favvāra*). At every change of level, water cascades (*chādar*) created a dramatic effect of sight and sound of falling water, forming an important element of visual design when the difference of level was high. This element was found for the first time in *bāgh-i-Bābur* in Kabul. From terrace to terrace beautiful sheets of water (*chādar*, literally: shawl) would run down marble slopes or stone chutes carved in various patterns so that water would leap and break into ripples and splashes (Fig. 3). Terraced Mughal gardens were normally entered from the lowest level. Moving from lower to upper terrace one would face a retaining wall where a variety of water related features such as *chīnī khānas* and cascades were created to provide dramatic effect as one proceeded to the higher level.

The *sāvan bhādon*⁹ (Fig. 4), another water feature used in places with a high level difference, encapsulated a dramatic evocation of natural phenomena. *Sāvan* and *Bhādon* are two months of the Bikrami calendar that fall during the monsoon period. These are months of heavy rainfall and yet the sky is very often clear and, at night, stars are visible even in heavy rains. In these architectural devices people enjoy watching the galaxies of stars. The structure of *sāvan bhādon* is

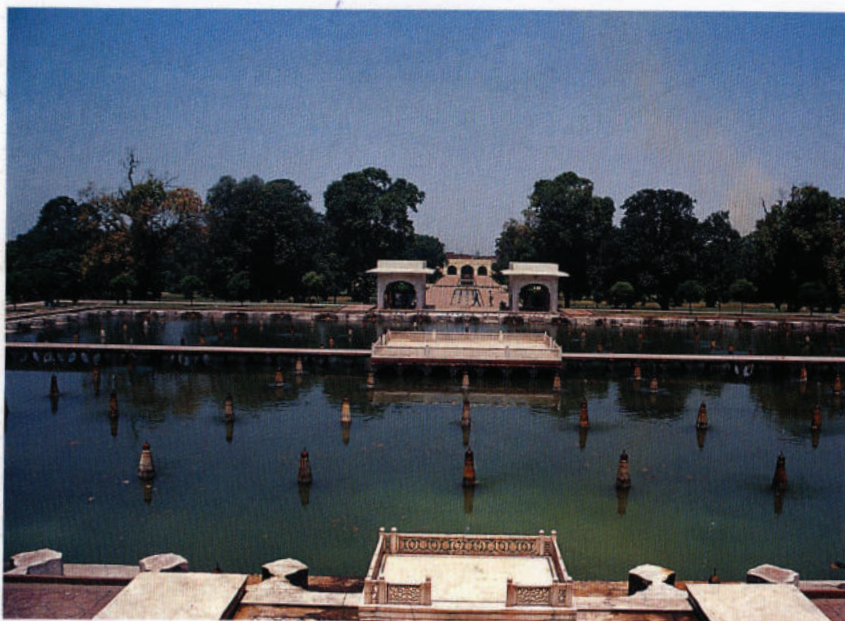


Fig. 1. Mahtābī and Ābgīr in the middle terrace of Shalamar Garden, Lahore (by Abdul Rehman).

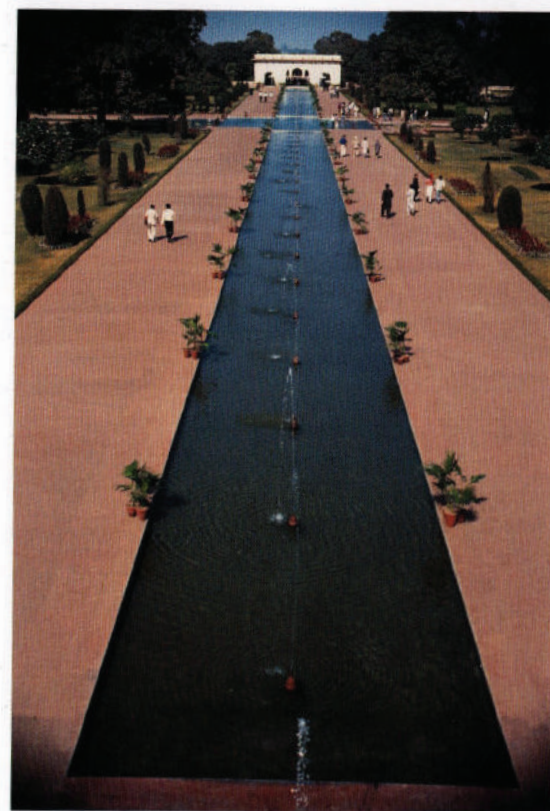


Fig. 2. *Ṭabaqa-yi bālā* (upper terrace) of Shalamar Garden, Lahore. *Khīyābān* and *nahr* form the central axis of the plan (by Abdul Rehman).

gāh), paradise garden (*firdaws* or *bihisht*), halt garden (*furūd gāh*), hunting garden (*shikārgāh*), and small home garden (*bāghcha*). Mughals also gave different names to gardens according to types of plants: aromatic or vegetable gardens (*būstān*), fruit orchards (*chaman*), rose garden (*gulistān*, *gulzār*), flower garden (*gulshan*), lawn garden (*sabzazār*), meadow (*marghzār*), and tulip garden (*lālazār*). The diversity of forms, functions, and plantings contrasts, however, with the unity of garden experience reflected in poetry.

In literature *bāgh* appears both as a prime and ancillary source of nature imagery. As a poetic image, it stands for order and beauty: the mythical link between man and nature, heaven and earth. It refers comprehensively to all the natural wonders within the garden in Persian literature.⁶ Plants, birds, water and man-made objects are joined in concert by larger natural elements such as the air, sun, moon, and stars to amplify the symbolic message of *bāgh* as a microcosm. Poets extend the external image of the garden as earthly paradise, *behisht* or *firdaws*, to create a symbolic imagery evocative of the internal and spiritual meaning of Heaven. Many gardens derived their names from poetic depictions. The Mughal gardens at Wah were named *bāgh-i-bihisht āīn* (paradise-like garden) and the two terraces of the Shalamar Garden were known as *bāgh-i farah bakhsh* (Bestower of Delight) and *bāgh-i fayz Bakhsh* (Bestower of Bounty) (Fig. 1). These poetic names should not be construed as a conventional figure of discourse, but rather as the expression of a sense of place, as a specific mode of garden perception. The cypress tree, *sarv*, for example often resonates in poetry with the beloved and true believer in mystical contemplation, and the *bāgh* is also represented as a symbol of divine beauty which both displays and conceals the beauty of the archetypal gardener, Allah Almighty. In Persian and Urdu classical literature⁷ the seasons were associated with various appropriate moods in the gardens. *khazān* (autumn) was associated with sadness and *bahār* (spring) with happiness and prosperity as in *bāgh-u-bahār tabī'at* (cheerful nature like freshness of a garden) and *dil ka bāgh bāgh hona* (heart in an extremely happy condition), allowing, of course, for a tension between personal mood and the seasonal mood suggested by a garden.



Fig.5a. Pool in the middle of *chārbağh* of Behram Khan at Attock (by Abdul Rehman).



Fig.5b. Fountain basin in the middle of *Dīvān-i Khās* and *Khwābgāh-i Shāhjahānī* quadrangle at Lahore Fort (by Abdul Rehman).

nahr there was a pool (*hawz*). The size of this pool varied from small to very large and special attention was given to its design and fountain basins (Fig. 5a and 5b). It should be noted that the term *hawz* calls to mind the clean water of the ablution tank in a mosque, illustrating that garden features cannot be described without evoking the experiences they were meant to provide. For this reason we have maintained the use of vernacular names for different architectural elements of gardens rather than use English equivalents which would have lost touch with these cultural connotations. Sometimes in the description of a particular *bāgh*, man's relationship to nature is the central theme. In these cases the description excludes the harsher modes of nature such as hot winds and drought and includes amenities like protective

enclosed on three sides with *chīnī khānas* created through a series of small niches carved out of the wall (*tāqcha*), and water drops in front of them.

Large meadows (*sabzazār*) where flowers were arranged in exquisitely designed flowerbeds (*kīyārī*),¹⁰ and trees, shrubs and flowering herbs gave life and soul to the gardens. A few Mughal period sources even give details of the flora in the description of gardens (Kambo 1646, folio 118-121). They express attention for the best varieties of flowers such as the iris, lilac, daffodils, narcissus, and tulips for gardens in Kashmir; and such as carnations, roses, jasmines, hollyhock peonies, lotus, marigold, violets, tuberose, and zinnia in the region of Delhi and Agra. Learned and enlightened men would draw lessons from the flora, fauna and other landscape elements in these gardens and ponder the ideal life of the true believer described by the Quran. In the words of an eighteenth century *Pushto* mystic poet (Rehman 2001, 28): "Every tree and every shrub stands ready to bend before Him; every herb and blade of grass is a tongue to utter His praise."

Khīyābāns, the most important feature of architectural garden plans were considered to be more pleasing than a long life. Streams of water (*nahr* or *jūybār* or *nadī*) flowed in their center and the reflection of poppy flowers (*papaver somniferum*) on the two sides raised comparisons with the lips of beautiful women. The central stream of water was considered a source of life for both the *chārbağh* plants and the design. At the point of intersection of the

walls, stressing improvement of nature for the material and, even more, spiritual benefit of mankind. This tendency implies a deep relationship between garden and buildings, as we see in the following inscription on Delhi Red Fort sleeping chamber (completed 1058 A.H./1648 A.D.): “The gardens are to these buildings as the soul to the body, and the lamp to an assembly; and the pure canal, the limpid water, is to the person possessing sight as a world reflecting mirror, and to the wise the unveiler of the secret world.”¹¹

Mughal Gardens and their Explicit References to Paradise

The relationship between architecture and paradise is readily apparent in the inscriptions and imagery found on gateways and pavilions, as well as in the variety of flowers, vases and dishes full of fruits in places comprising terraces, canals, fountains and cascades. These, in addition to the abundance of fruit trees and flowering shrubs, are all evocative of the paradise promised to the faithful and the righteous. A main gate (*bāb* or *dar*) marked the entrance to a *bāgh* with inscriptions and images—such as dishes of fruits—providing very significant symbols for understanding the garden inside the walls (Fig. 6). The following inscriptions (Latif 1892, 134-35) can be read on the gate of The Ghulabi *Bāgh* built in Lahore (1655 A.D.) by Mirza Ghiyas Beg:¹²

The founder of this magnificent garden, the opener of the gate of bounty,
Is he who through (the favor of) the Lord of firmament constructed a garden equal to the garden of paradise.
What a pleasant garden, a garden so beautiful that the poppy is marked with the spot of envy, (?)
The flowers of the sun and moon are fitted to adorn it as a lamp...

This inscription shows that this is a gate of bounty (or the gateway of paradise), and that the garden with flowers of the sun and moon (both for the day and night) is inspired by the garden of paradise. Similarly, three Persian couplets (Rehman 2001, 13-19) inscribed just above the dado panel on both sides of the entrance of Akbar’s tomb explicitly use paradise imagery:

Hail, blessed space happier than the garden of Paradise!
Hail, lofty building higher than the Divine Throne!
A paradise, the garden of which has thousands of *rizvān* as its servants,
A Garden, the terrain of which contains thousands of Celestial Paradises.
The pen of the mason of the Divine Decree has written upon its threshold:
These are the gardens of Eden, enter them to live forever.



Fig. 6. Vases and dishes on the gateway of Jahangir tomb, Lahore, depict entrance to earthly paradise (by Abdul Rehman).

The inscription on the south facade of the Taj Mahal entrance gateway (Aziz 2004, 1:474), which consists of the entire Sura 89 of Quran, "The Daybreak (*al fajr*)" furnishes perhaps the most telling evidence for the symbolic program. The Sura ends: "Enter Thou My Paradise!" (*va udkhulu Jannāti*), the only instance among all Quranic references to paradise in which God offers such a direct invitation. Certainly the paradise symbolism of the Taj's garden would have been abundantly clear to Muslim visitors during the seventeenth century.¹³

Textual sources also relate these gardens to paradise. Abdul Hamid Lahori, the official court historian of Shah Jahan, describes Shalamar (Kashmir) in a particularly elegant manner (Lahori 1967, 2: 34-37) and further sheds light on the meaning and form of the earthly paradise:

The best of all these (gardens of Kashmir) is Farāh Bakhsh garden, which was laid out by royal command, as a sample of eternal paradise and its fruits are reminder of the delights of the next world. Its *shāh nahr* (canal) and avenues are specimens of *salsabīl* (a fountain in the paradise) and *kawthar* (a canal in the paradise) and its lofty pavilions are equal to flawless *palaces* of paradise. The founder of these edifices is His Majesty Sahib Qiran (Shah Jahan).

The Poetic Encounter with God's Creation

No better words can explain the concept and philosophy of the Mughal garden than the description of Shalamar Garden—the epitome of Mughal gardens—written by Muhammad Salih Kambo four years after its completion (27 Zul Hijja 1050, February 1646). The author relates how all aspects of nature support one another to make the garden into a whole that not only provides freshness, but also invites meditating on the purpose of Creation:

I am paying tribute to the dust of this garden so that I can give new life to my writings. The beauty of this garden is heavenly. It gives freshness to each and everything with the help of spring. This freshness has given bounty and liberality to its greenery. One can find fate, happiness, and success in its dust. The nightingale has started scattering melodies there....Its beds are full of flowers and give the impression that a galaxy of stars are knit together. Its fragrance seems like the soul of pious people.... the favor of the Lord of firmament constructed a garden equal to the garden of paradise (Kambo 1646, folio 119).

Salih Kambo continues with a description of the whole atmosphere and the contribution of various natural beings to its environment and concludes "the gardens of paradise feel depressed to see its grassy plots." Then he turns to its man-made architectural elements:

In the center of this earthly paradise a sacred stream flows gently with its full elegance and sweetness. This stream flows with its charming, fascinating, and exhilarating nature and passes through the garden irrigating the flower beds. Its smile is like the smile of the sun. The moon which is the source of illumination in the dark obtains light for the purity of water in this stream. Its water is as beautiful as greenery. The divine mercy is clearly apparent from its existence.... (Kambo 1646, folio 119).

This reminder, that the divine mercy is made manifest by the interlacing of nature and architecture, simply invites the faithful to deepen his devotion. Here the poem reveals the philosophical dimension of a garden experience:

The moon is keeping an eye on it for light and coolness. Intelligent and enlightened people who are fond of the light of devotion can learn from the clarity of water. The niches can be seen on its sacred bank which has lamps on them. Each lamp is like a divine light which gives the light of leisure to the world, and makes this land a wonder place in the eyes of the sky... (Kambo 1646, folio 120).

The poem then repeatedly shuttles between descriptions and evocations of self-reflective quests; sometimes veiled by the recurrent use of Persian imagery:

The chute (*chādar*) (Fig. 7) under the surface of the crystal-clear water along with the light niches are springs of bounty and are glittering like happy faces. The lamps are burning face to face, eliminating darkness and bringing clarity like the heart of pious people. These lamps are as self-centered and involved in themselves as innocent people who sometimes become lost in a deeper sea of realities. The chute of water together with the lamps appear to be spreading beads and arches along with cascades which are shining like scholarly people...The garden has permanent light from their luster. They have opened their lips in praise of Almighty God...

This stream, which has a quality of freshness and dampness, has fountains at its surrounds. The fountains always emit beads from their mouth. The vast greenery is the color of emerald. The abundance of red roses which are blooming there has brought the meaning closer to the reader....

Sometimes tears come out of the eyes of the fountain because of the sight of the cypress trees, and sometimes sweet fountain melodies surprise the cypress trees. It seems as if two beautiful lovers in this beautiful courtyard were picking the flower of love and relationship. Glory to Allah! What a fascinating scene is this! The rose is twisting and twining due to the beauty of this scene. Its courtyard is cleansed of every darkness and impurity like the heart of the pious people. (Kambo 1646, folio 120-121)

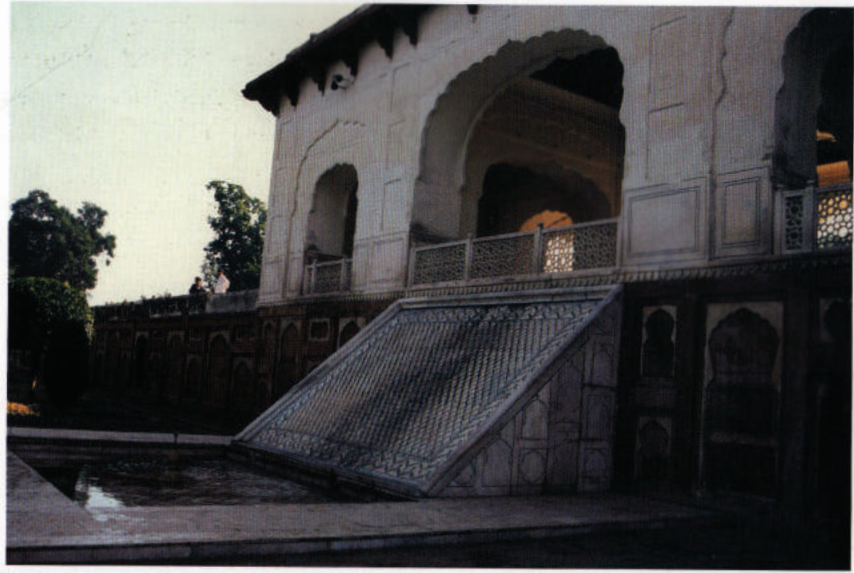


Fig. 7. Marble *chādar* in the middle terrace of Shalamar Garden, Lahore (by Abdul Rehman).

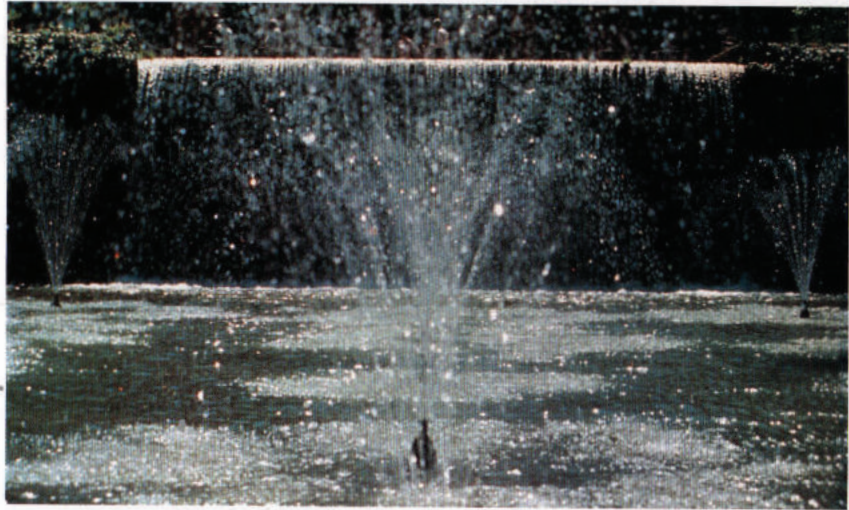


Fig. 8. Fuvvāra in Achbal Garden, Kashmir (Credit: Hasan Uddin Khan, Roger William University & M.I.T, USA).

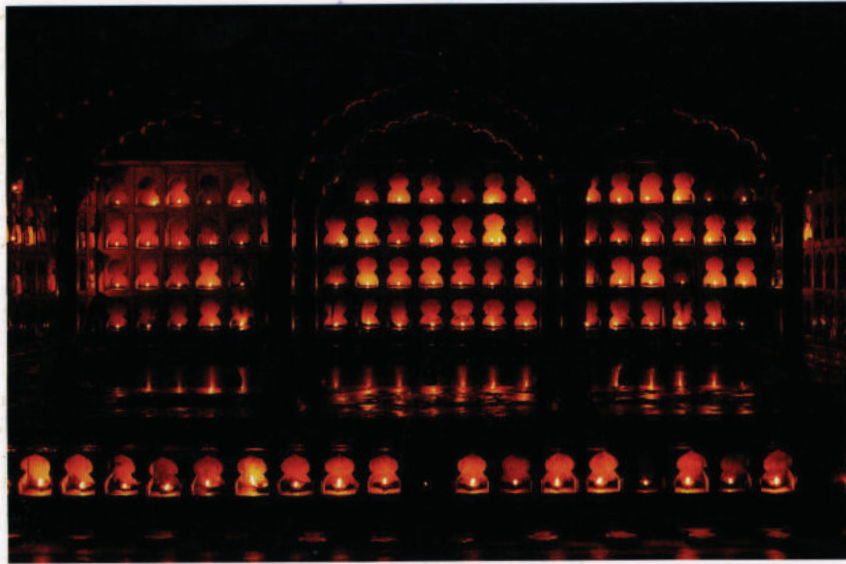


Fig. 9. Oil lamps in *chīnī khānas* at Shalamar Garden, Lahore (by Abdul Rehman).

Kambo's poetic description shows that the purpose of the creation of human beings and elements of nature are one and the same; it also shows that one can learn in the garden a lesson about the ideal life for which human beings have been created. The light of devotion is related to the clarity of water; lamps are related to divine light, glittering like happy faces, eliminating darkness and involvement in the deeper sea of realities. The fountains emit beads (each drop of water emitting from the fountain is like a bead which is precious and rare) and so human beings must speak kindly and in well-chosen words. The message of love is repeated a number of times. This garden mood, the Mughal garden ambience can only be illustrated by the response of a poet to this

particular garden. A mood is not a meaning. As we mentioned earlier when alluding to seasonal moods in a garden, it can be shared in many different ways, it can be indulged or resisted depending upon personal circumstances. It can also be ignored to the benefit of purely material and immediate purposes or cherished and further enhanced for cultural reasons. The moods of a Mughal garden derived their unity from the exalted relationship to God's creation, which they made possible.

We shall now turn to a discussion of three examples of the internal diversity of these moods within Mughal culture, beginning with poetical responses to the most sensual aspects of garden experience, then turning to the development of mystical Sufi responses to gardens, and lastly to a more recent ethical reception of the Mughal garden by a twentieth century poet.

Cultural Receptions of Mughal Gardens

Poetical Praises of Sensual Presence

Gardens were places for meditation and contemplation, as each plant or water form in a garden could trigger a variety of senses and emotions and suggest divine attributes. In the Shalamar Garden in Lahore 300 fountains were laid on three terraces. In Persian literature, the fountain, *fayvāra*, is often associated with the state of sadness, and Shah Jahan's poet Kalim (d. 1651) referred to the high jet of water as a prayer issuing from a pure breast (Thackston 1996, 224). Whenever a fountain produced rhythm and dynamism, each drop of water appeared as a pearl reflecting in the sunshine all the colors of the rainbow (Fig. 8). Whenever the serene movement of water through a channel extolled calmness, the waterfall produced the opposite effect.

Zeb un-Nisa, the eldest daughter of Aurangzeb—an important poetess whose pen-name was Makhfi (concealed)—composed the following quatrain while looking at the white *ābshār* (waterfall) in the Shalamar Garden at Lahore (Latif 1892, 141 and Kausar, et.al 1990, 68).

O waterfall! For whose sake art thou weeping?
 In whose sorrowful recollection has thou wrinkled thy brows?
 What pain was it that impelled thee, like myself the whole night.

To strike the head against the
stone and to shed tears?

But the sight of water drops could not be appreciated unless variations of light introduced a dramatic change. The sun makes a garden into a place of light (*nūr*). It does not only make things visible, but also creates dramatic effects when reflected by polished marble and sheets, streams and sprays of water.

Mughal gardens achieved glorious effects during the day by reflecting and refracting sunlight through flowing water, and similarly dramatic lighting effects by various kinds of illumination at night. On some occasions in the Imperial Mughal gardens, special lighting was carried out on the banks of water courses and water works. Salih Kambo (d. 1085 A.H./1674 A.D.) has described such lighting on the banks of a large water tank (*fānūs hā va chirāghān bar aṭrāf-i tālāb*), which gives the feeling of fireworks in the night time (Fig. 9). A similar account is also found in Jahangir's description of the feast of Nur Jahan on the banks of a *tālāb* (Jahangir 1974, 385-86).

The Mughal garden is a dynamic realm of visual, acoustic and aromatic effects produced by diurnal and seasonal changes. All its features—flowers, trees, birds, breezes (*bād-i s abā and bād-i nasīm*), animals, built structures, water, and light—enhance the experience. The intoxicating effect of gardens is due to the combined presence of different forms of natural life that change dramatically throughout the day with the course of the sun (Fig. 10). Thus, birds¹⁴ glorify it with their sweet voices, and bring it to life. Animals like deer and peacock, in particular, were kept there.

The garden becomes an ideal setting for poets during the spring season since it is filled with flowers and mirrors. Flowers fill the gardens with metaphors. Flower beds look as if filled with colored beads and galaxies of stars. Sweet scented flowers, however, cannot be appreciated in the absence of a breeze spreading its fragrance. Flowers and greenery give a sense of freshness. The poetical dimension is never divorced from the sensual experience of nature; to the contrary, they merge into a deep sense of the poetics of nature.



Fig.10. Nishat Bagh, Kashmir, with Dal lake in the background (Credit: Hasan Uddin Khan, Roger William University & M.I.T, USA).

We know from their memoirs that Mughal emperors delighted in the colors and scents of flowers such as violets, jasmine and roses; that they planted trees and shrubs for color and shade; and that they also took great pleasure in the produce of their gardens. Babur (r. 1526-1530) declared that "to have grapes and melons growing in this way in Hindustan filled my measure of content." Jahangir, while visiting the garden of Gulafshān, expressed (Jahangir 1974, 2: 95, Schimmel and Welch 1983: 4) the same feeling by quoting from the following verses from a small manuscript copy of Anwari's Diwan (1589 A.D.):

This is a day for pleasure, for delight in the garden,
When roses and fragrant herbs await.
The dust is perfumed with musk and amber
The seam of the zephyr is scenting the air.

Deeper thoughts attached to these exalted sensual feelings could only be put into words by poets. Mir Taqi Mir (1723-1810 A.D.), the greatest lyricist of the early Urdu poets, describes the perennial theme of the transitory nature of beauty. It is the subject of one of his verses, in which the 'smile' of the bud signifies that it is opening, a premonition of decay (Schimmel 2005, 257):

How long is the life of the rose?
The bud just smiles.

Sufi Abodes in the Gardens

Sufi saints shared the above passion for nature and drew lessons from every creature. We should not be surprised, therefore, that they spent much time in gardens. Some Sufi saints even created gardens, such as Mullah Shah Badakhshi (d. 1072 A.H.), a poet and disciple of Mian Mir, and spiritual saint of Dara Shikoh, who also founded a garden in Kashmir. Their writings on gardens reveal three moments in the development of a Sufi garden culture in the Mughal world. First, Abul Fazl (1551-1602 A.D.) and Abdul Hamid Lahori (d. 1065 A.H./1655 A.D.) gave merely factual information about gardens and landscape features in their writings. Second, Salih Kambo (d. 1085 A.H./1674 A.D.) and other Sufi saints related gardens and landscapes to Allah's creation, and showed that every aspect of creation has some purpose and role to play. Third, a group of poets that includes Kalim (d. 1651) tried to account for the symbolic meanings of landscape features, including plants and flowers.

Sufi saints frequently visited princely gardens. There they held scholarly discussions and poetry readings. Dara Shikoh has discussed at length the various gardens where Hazrat Mian Mir and his disciples used to go and meditate. Princely suburban gardens became spiritual centers, in a dynamic departure from their previous, almost exclusively dynastic functions. There, mystics were least disturbed during the day and could concentrate in prayer. They also visited other Sufi graves, meditated under trees, and assembled in gardens for collective prayers. This explains why there are many graves of Sufi saints located around some princely gardens. Hazrat Mian Mir, for instance, often visited many gardens such as *bāghcha* Swafi Ajal near the garden of Prince Pervaiz, and Naulakha *Bāgh*, as well as the garden of Mirza Kamran. Dara Shikoh has mentioned the specific locations where he used to sit most often under the pavilions (*barādari*) and under the trees¹⁵ (Dara Shikoh 1992, 101-103). Gardens held deep mystical significance for them.¹⁶

In Personal Pursuit of Ethics

Muhammad Iqbal¹⁷ (1877-1938) suggests a different way of looking at a garden. In his beautiful and almost naturalistic poem, "The Flower" (*gul*) he calls on the flower to give a lesson of self-respect and self-sufficiency (Khalil 1982, 341):

O flower! Why do you worry for the nightingale's wounded heart?
First you should darn the slit of your own dress.
If you long for respect in the rose garden of existence
You should get accustomed to living entangled in thorn!

The poem of Muhammad Iqbal takes an unusual look at the rose in a garden. It develops an allegory of the difficulty of her life, making it into a source of meditation for the reader's or the garden visitor's scrutiny of his own attitudes towards life. The poem conveys a powerful message while addressing the flower in simple words. The main idea is that one should not indulge in eternal complaints (caring for the nightingale's wounded heart) but rather learn to live with others, study one's own self instead of looking at the weaknesses of others. A person who wants to achieve self-respect in the rose garden of existence must grow used to coping with his or her own limitations and dilemmas (the thorns of the rose bush):

The Juniper in the garden is free as well as chained to the soil
You should acquire freedom within these constraints!

Despite feeling fettered and deprived of freedom, one should still see that some freedom is possible. Like the juniper, an individual must learn how to exercise freedom without ignoring or lamenting his or her limitations. Like the rose, the reader or the garden visitor may present to the world the shameless beauty of his mastery over his limited conditions.

You can overcome bitterness with your power of contentment without leaving a trace of shame!
Your inherent beauty more powerful than dew drops can intoxicate the vision of beholder.

It does not befit self respect that you should be picked from the garden
Some put them in their turban while other makes necklace to adorn their neck!

The dew said to budding flower and vanished
"Seek the vanished splendor in color and fragrance only if you have the taste for the pain of being plucked"

If you want to remain unacquainted with the autumn
First you should abandon desire for beauty's world.

Look, in this alone is concealed your life's perfection
If you should be the decoration of some beauty, robe.

People very often pick flowers from gardens and decorate their turbans or make necklaces out of them just to look smart and elegant. According to Iqbal this is not a sober act. One should always care for one's self-respect and think before doing such petty actions to satisfy selfish desires. Similarly, addressing the flower, it is stated that if you (flower) want to remain unacquainted with the autumn then you should abandon the desire for beauty. Iqbal has stressed the importance of beauty of all the four seasons and states that if you want to remain unacquainted with autumn, life in the garden will become monotonous which is against the principal of beauty. The lesson for a person, therefore, is that there are always upheavals in one's life. Sometimes life has success, like in spring, other times it is monotonous and dull and devoid of color. Therefore, if one does not like the realities of nature and life, then he must forget the beauties of this world.

Finally the poem concludes that the real message of success and perfection lies in understanding of the self. It lies

in accepting and overcoming difficulties with patience and courage. There are upheavals in life—at times miserable like thorns—but with courage, struggle and patience, life may become like a flower. Self-respect and dignity should be kept in view while taking any action to satisfy ego or to look elegant.

Conclusion

By examining the interlacing of art, architecture and nature in the creation and the reception of Mughal gardens we can see that these gardens were meant to turn their visitor's attention towards God's creation by emulating the perfect garden of paradise that is promised to the faithful and the righteous. From their creation until the early twentieth century, poetic reception of these gardens has expressed the variety of cultural experiences that the particular mood of the Mughal garden provided. This mood results from the sensual encounter with the divine presence thanks to life and light of nature and its ordinary as well as extraordinary forms. This is a paradisiacal experience. It certainly proceeds from sensual experiences, but it should also be understood as a constant reminder to Muslims that they should follow the straight path of Islam in the best interest of humanity, and that only then can they enter into the ultimate world of paradise. It is the source of unity of feeling stimulated by the Mughal gardens, and also the background, upon which different cultural receptions have developed. The first cultural reception illustrated the importance of poetry as the most appropriate mode of sensual encounter with the gardens. It insists that the senses are a necessary departure but never the end of the engagement with nature in the garden. Yet rather than a sentimental relationship, this seems to invite a meditation on the transience of all life experiences. The second presentation of the cultural appropriation of gardens by Sufi saints would call for much longer presentation of their mystical meditation and its complex relationship to the world of appearances of the changing seasons, colors and texture of flowers and variety of fruits. Sufi's were mystics who held the True Reality to be inaccessible to human perception, contrary to the world of appearances in which humans lead their life. So, it was important for the interpretation that we propose to show that, nevertheless, they attached great importance to gardens. We think that it demonstrates the importance of the sense of Divine Presence in the gardens. The last important lesson which poets such as Iqbal derived from his engagement with nature within these gardens was an ethical message. He laid great emphasis on individual responsibility in reforming oneself and contributing to the development of a more ethical world. His poetry shows how, attending to the fate of shrubs and flowers in the garden, one can understand that in spite of their predicaments they constantly spread perfumes, remained fresh, and effectively enchanted the garden. And he invited human beings to draw inspiration from them. These examples show the garden as an extraordinary place where the sensual encounter with nature invites an exalted overcoming of worldly experience. The study of Mughal poetry suggests some ways in which these gardens contributed to a development of religious minds turned towards self-reflexivity, and how garden nature could frame all activities in poetical, religious or mystical imagination.

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Notes

¹ Although a number of books were written on Mughal gardens, only a few discuss the concepts and terminologies derived from the original sources. The most recent publications in this respect are: Rehman, Abdul, *Earthly Paradise: The Garden in the Times of the Great Muslim Empires* (2001) and MacDougall, E. B, and Richard Ettinghausen, eds., *The Islamic Garden* (1976). Besides the memoirs of Mughal emperors, *Bahār-i-Sukhan*, one of the most important unpublished sources written by Muhammad Salih Kambo has been referred to in this paper. We are extremely thankful to Prof. Michel Conan for his valuable comments on the initial drafts of the paper which helped a lot in its improvement.

² The history of literature in the Mughal Empire is basically the history of Persian. Persian was introduced in the South Asian subcontinent as an administrative vehicle at the end of the tenth century by the invading Ghaznavids, Oghuz Turks who established an empire in Punjab that outlasted their home empire in Ghazna by almost a century and a half. Throughout the changing dynasties that succeeded, the Persian language remained stable. During the Mughal Empire it became the court language. During this time the out of work educated elites, poets and other luminaries left Iran in record number for better employment opportunities. During the Mughal period the four persons who held the title of *Malik-ush Shu'ara* (king of poets) or poet laureate, only one was a native born subcontinent. The first was Ghazali of Mashad appointed to the post by Akbar. After Ghazali's death in 1572, the title was conferred upon Faizi, son of Sheikh Mubarak of Nagaur. Under Jahangir the title went to an Iranian émigré, Talib of Amul, and in Shah Jahan's reign it was held by Kalim of Kashan. Kalim produced beautiful poetry describing imagery of gardens and plants. Similarly, prose writers as well as historians produced some excellent literature. *Bahār-i-Sukhan* (the Spring of Prose) written during Shah Jahan's period by Muhammad Salih Kambo is an excellent work describing the gardens of Lahore, Akbarabad and Shajahanabad. The ideas, concepts, themes and expressions came into Urdu from Persian language and literature.

³ The manuscript of *Bayāz-i Khwushbū'ī* (The Sweet Smelling Notebook), according to Prof. Irfan Habib (1963, 397-409, 421) on the basis of internal evidence, is an early seventeenth-century (ca. 1628-38) Shah Jahan period household manual. This anonymous work is, in fact, a fairly detailed description of various parts of a garden and related buildings complete with measurements and ideal proportions, each with an imperial and sub-imperial exemplar. It is mainly concerned with architecture, dimensions and ratios. Not a single flower or tree (with the exception of trefoil) is mentioned by name. Its copy (late seventeenth century) is located in India Office Library, Pers. Mss Ethe 2784. See also Bailey, Gauvin 1997, 129-139.

⁴ The specialized architects dealing with the gardens also had to know agriculture (*zar'*) and several treatises describe the knowledge of agriculture and plants, especially fruit, grown in gardens. There are several manuscripts on agriculture in the Punjab University Library Lahore, which includes Faiz, Sadr ud Din, *Sultan ul Busātīn*, Anonymous. *Rasāla Gulzār-i Falāhat* 1362, Anonymous, *Rasala dar 'ilm-i falāha* MSS. 1392/4443 etc.

⁵ *Īdgāh* is a mosque where two *īd* prayers are said, one to break the fast of *Ramaān* and the other on the tenth day of the last month of the Islamic calendar. These mosques are constructed outside the built up areas of human settlements and consist only of a *qibla* wall.

⁶ The Persian literature referred to here dates from the reign of the first Mughal emperor Zahir ud Din Muhammad Babur (1526) to Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (1938).

⁷ Urdu sporadically started as a literary language (Dekhni or southern Urdu) at the end of the fifteenth century in Deccan, Golconda, Bijapur and the surrounding regions. The language became *rekhta* (mixed) with the addition of Indian, some Turkish and many Persian elements. The first known Delhi Rekhta poet was Zafar Zatali, a humorist, whose satirical verses led to his execution by the Emperor Farrūkh Siyar in 1713. During the reign of Muhammad Shah Rangila (ruled 1749-48), a number of poets began leavening their native languages with elegant Persian. They discussed amongst themselves the application of Persian prose form to Urdu. The poets gathered together in a small mosque (Zinat al Masajid) in Delhi and decided the rules of the language. Literary historians describe the most influential poets of the eighteenth century as the 'four pillars of Urdu'. They are Mir Taqi Mir, Khwaja Mir Dard (died 1785), Mirza Sauda (died 1781), and Mazhar Janjanaan (died 1781).

⁸ Muhammad Salih Kambo, one of the most important historians of the Shah Jahan reign, was brought up by Sheikh Anayat Ullah, who served as Mir Munshi in the court of Shah Jahan. Salih Kambo gradually started showing his expertise in philosophy and prose writing and therefore had no difficulty gaining access to Mughal nobility. He became Diwan of the Lahore province. He also served as *farmān navīs* (writer of royal decree). Salih Kambo wrote two books: *Aml-i Sālīh* or *Shah Jahan Nāma*, and *Bahār-i-Sukhan* (The Spring of Prose). *Shah Jahan Nama* is an unofficial history of the Shah Jahan reign. He wrote daily affairs in chronological order. The events, including a description of gardens, are recorded realistically, objectively and without any bias. The second book *Bahār-i-Sukhan* or the 'Spring of Prose' provides a clear understanding of the concept, meaning and form of Mughal gardens. Comprised of four parts, the book discusses in unprecedented detail the meaning of the garden environment. The third part provides detailed descriptions, for the first time, of the building of Shah Jahanabad, Lahore and Agra. The book gives a philosophical explanation of various elements of landscape in popular and cultural context. (For more details, see Rehman, Abdul 1996 and Tufail, Muhammad. ed. 1962: II, 967 Naqoosh, Lahore Number).

⁹ *Sawan Bhadvn*, an architectural feature in Mughal gardens, is a re-creation of the physical conditions of two months of monsoons in the Bikrami Calendar. During these months, rainwater pours continuously for several days. *Sawan Bhadvn* in a Mughal garden is an enclosure set within the walls on three sides and an open arcade on the fourth side. The overflow of the water from the main tank drops through various holes on the top and fountain jets inside the enclosure create conditions similar to a monsoon. It is evocative of the starry night sky under heavy monsoon rain.

¹⁰ *Kīyarī*-s (flower beds) in a Mughal garden are designed on the edges of the lawns near the walkways. They are generally rectangular and slightly lower than lawn level. At important locations and important projects, such as the Taj Mahal, the edges of the *kīyarīs* are defined with bricks or stone and acquire special shapes, mostly multi-lobed.

¹¹ This lengthy Persian inscription in the Red Fort relates Shah Jahan period buildings with the mention of heaven, records the date work commenced on the fort, and the fort's formal inauguration date. The inscription on the Hall of Private Audience describes it as a paradise on earth and recalls

many visual illusions to paradise. See Asher 1992, 199-200.

¹² Mirza Sultan Beg (d. 1068) came to the subcontinent in 1655-56 A.D./1066 A.H. from Iran at the request of Emperor Shah Jahan. He constructed Ghulabi bāgh in the same year. He entered the court on the recommendation of Mirza Ghiyas Beg (his brother from his mother's side, and an important noble of the court).

¹³ The concept of paradise (*Jannah*) is comprehensively explained in the Quran. It will be a reward for the faithful who do good deeds in this world. It will be for those who believe in Allah and his Messenger, fulfilling the duties of God, enjoying right and forbidding wrong, practicing prayers and charity, shunning vain conversation, paying heed to their prayers, guarding their modesty, witnessing to fair dealing, and guarding their pledges and covenants, etc. There are over 120 references to the garden or gardens of *Jannah* in the Quran. They describe not only the different levels reserved for various classes of the faithful, but also their design and landscape features. Some western scholars mention specific *Hadith*: "Paradise is in the shadow of the swords," and link it only with blasphemy. Possibly the mention of the *jihād* is the form in which the Andalusians will justify the emulation of Paradise. In the Quran, there are very clear orders about *jihād*. According to the Quran, one is allowed to enter into *jihād* only when the conditions have been made very tough for the believers (Ch. XXII, verse 39). It is also said that when you are in the battlefield, do not draw your sword on aged, women, sick and children. In these tough conditions those who sacrifice their life for Allah will be rewarded with *Jannah* (paradise). For a detailed description on the Koranic concept of *Jannah*, see also Abdul Rehman, *Earthly Paradise: The Garden in the Times of the Great Muslim Empires*.

¹⁴ Birds like bulbul (*Turdoides caudatus* and *Turdoides striatus*), koel (*Eudynamis scolopaceus*), parrot (*Psittacula himalayana*), cheel (*Milvus migrans*), Gidh (*Gyps bengalensis*), crows (*Adimilis albirictus*), Myna (*Acridotheres tristis* and *Acridotheres gingianus*), shikra (*Accipiter badius cenchroides*), sarus (*Antigona antigone*) and a variety of sparrows. Mahmood, Hadia, *Some Selected Urban Avian Biodiversity of Lahore with Special Emphasis on the Species Concern*. Master's thesis in Environmental Studies, Lahore, n.d. See also Alvi, M. A. and A. Rehman, *Jahangir - The Naturalist*, New Delhi, Indian National Science Academy, rpt. 1989.

¹⁵ This is only a partial list. Sources indicate that he also visited other gardens such as *bāghcha* Swafi Ajal near the garden of Prince Pervaiz, Naulakha *Bāgh*; Garden of Mirza Kamran; Garden of Kalij Khan, *Bāgh* Qasim Khan; Garden of Sheikh Johar, *Raja Bāgh*; Garden of Mir Taqi Diwan; Garden of Mir Ali Kotowal; Garden of mir Abdur Rahim Khan; and Mirza Momin Garden. Dara Shikoh has mentioned the specific locations where he used to sit most often under the pavilions and under the trees. Shehzada Muhammad Dara Shikoh 1992, 101-103.

¹⁶ Maria Subtelny has discussed in two separate papers the importance of "Rose" in Persian and Muslim tradition and gardens in the Persian Mystical imagination. The first paper describes at length the varieties of roses in Persia, rose in classical literature, and the popular and cultural importance of rose in Persian tradition (Subtelny 2007 a: 13-34). In the second paper she discusses the meaning of gardens in the Persian Mystical imagination. The concepts discussed in these papers are based upon classical literature (Subtelny 2007 b: Publication in progress). See also Schimmel, Annemarie 1997, 201-204.

¹⁷ Dr. Allama Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal, National Poet of Pakistan, was born in Sialkot on February 22, 1873. He received his early education from Molvi Mir Hasan, a renowned philosopher and intellectual of his time. Muhammad Iqbal studied philosophy from Prof. Arnold and earned his M.A. from Punjab University. Subsequently he taught philosophy both at Oriental College and Government College. In 1905 he received a degree in philosophy from Trinity College, Cambridge University and a Ph.D. from Munich University. At the same time he also received qualification in law. Allama Muhammad Iqbal returned to Lahore in 1908 and started practice as a barrister. In 1922 he received the honorary title of 'Sir' from the British government. He got elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly in 1926. Muhammad Iqbal entered into politics at a time when Muslims of India were oppressed under the biased and unjust policies of the British. He gave a concept of the two nation theory in Allahabad conference in 1930 which led to Pakistan's independence in 1947. Muhammad Iqbal inspired Muslims to overcome oppression, and gave them a message of hope, courage and self-understanding through his poetry now compiled in *Bāng-i-Dara*, *Bā-i-Jibril*, *Zarb-i-Kalim*, *Isrār-i-Khudī*, *Ramūz-i-Khudī* and *Piyam-i Mashriq*. His poetic fervor inspired the Muslims with a new life, new feelings and new inspiration. He died in Lahore on April 21, 1938. I have made slight changes to Khalil's translation of the poem "Phvl" in verses 4, 5 and 6 to stay closer to Iqbal's meaning, since Khalil's translation was too literal.

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