

IMPACT OF URBANIZATION ON ANCIENT GARDENScape OF LAHORE AND THE WORLD MONUMENT OF SHALAMAR GARDEN (PAKISTAN)

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The Mughals brought the tradition of creating formal gardens with canals of running water, tanks, fountains and pavilions to South Asia from Central Asia in the beginning of 16th century ACE that was entirely different in expression than the gardens of earlier period. A number of gardens were laid soon after the first Mughal Emperor, Zheer-ud-Din Babar established the Mughal Dynasty in the South Asian Sub-continent in 1526 ACE that lasted for more than two centuries. Among the four capital cities of the Mughals, Lahore remained a city of special importance to many Mughal rulers because of its moderate climate and location between Kabul and Delhi (Picture #1). Therefore, the Mughal rulers and their governors selected the city of Lahore in Pakistan, for laying out gardens. All of them thus, contributed to making it the most beautiful city of gardens in the sub-continent. The tradition of laying out new gardens continued even after the decline of Mughal rule even by their successors such as the Sikhs before the arrival of the British colonizers in 19th century ACE. The basic plan and other elements of the Mughal gardens in fact, reflected the Islamic concept of paradise on earth with rows of trees and flowerbeds, centrally placed canals, waterfalls and running fountains. The gardens were traditionally divided into four, eight, sixteen or thirty-two equal parts with watercourses and brick-lined walkways and causeways. This plan is historically known as the *Char-Bagh* or 4-quartered garden which was originally inspired from Iran.

The city of Lahore was literally a “City of Gardens” in South and Central Asia. In the late 19th century, Lady Dufferin, wife of the Governor General of British India saw Lahore encircled by the gardens which extended towards northeast for five miles (Picture #2). She called Lahore a city of trees, flowers, fruits and fields. There were more than fifty gardens of the Mughal period in Lahore and the Sikhs added at least 24 more gardens (Picture #3). Most of the gardens were in existence when the British annexed Punjab in the middle of 19th century. The gardens were laid around the mausoleums or attached to the palaces. The large gardens were designed as halting or camping places or places for recreation and pleasure in which pavilions were constructed with waterways and fountains. Many gardens came to be known after the fruits or flowers planted in them,

namely rose garden, gardens of dates, almond and pomegranate. A high wall for protection and privacy generally enclosed the gardens. Among the largest gardens planned around the mausoleums is that of Jehangir, the fourth Mughal Emperor, on the right bank of the Ravi River. It is the very best and well preserved garden in *char bagh* style which was originally created in the middle of an extensive garden which as been recorded by many travelers.

Until the beginning of 20th century, the original layout of gardens around the city of Lahore had survived. It is reported that the old city of Lahore had a series of connected gardens around its fortification wall and the moat, which provided a refreshing and beautiful look to the city from all sides. The area between the city of Lahore and Shalamar Garden on the Grand Trunk Road was studded with a number of gardens for a distance of five miles (Picture #4). Various gardens that were created by the Mughal rulers and their successors and governors were not less than eighty in and around Lahore. However, the very best and largest of all the gardens in Lahore is the World Heritage monument of Shalamar Garden (Pictures #5, 6, 7, & 8). It was built under the patronage of the Mughal builder-king Shahjahan in 1642 ACE outside the city of Lahore. It is the most beautiful and elaborate garden ever created by the Mughals and also unique for being the largest in size created during the period of Shahjahan as compared to those in Srinagar (Kashmir) and Delhi (now extinct). Adjacent to the Shalamar garden were three other gardens in an open space around which have disappeared since long.

The picture of Lahore as the “Garden City” of Asia that had lasted until the beginning of 20th century. It has now changed and even destroyed completely as a result of rapid urbanization, thoughtless planning of new colonies and unlawful or unrelenting growth of encroachments around and inside the monuments and gardens. As the buildings within the gardens such as the tombs of nobility, pavilions and canal system were left to deteriorate, the gardens were abandoned, the boundary walls of gardens were mercilessly pulled down and materials carted away to make room for urban development. The gardens were the worst sufferers of human vandalism, apathy and neglect in the process of urban renewal or development and for creation of city

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infrastructure. A picture that emerged after ruthless destruction and deterioration of original landscape was distressing indeed. Recent surveys and documentation carried out by a team of Pakistani architects of the University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution, U.S.A., glaringly show complete disappearance of most of the gardens and tragic loss of historical and cultural evidence not only in the immediate vicinity of Lahore city but also in the areas around (Pictures # 9 & 10). What has survived are only a handful of gardens, which were declared by the government of British India and later by Pakistan as “protected” monuments under the Antiquities Act.

Other major causes of destruction (i) the total lack of coordination in planning the development of cities especially, the new urban areas, (ii) lack of interest in restoring existing structures and in maintenance and above all, (iii) not integrating gardens in the life of the communities living around who have inherited the beautiful environment as a part of their heritage. As a result, even historically important and architecturally outstanding gardens like Shalamar, which were protected and maintained by the Archaeology Department of the Federal Government, suffered tremendously when the open areas surrounding it came under very heavy pressure from various stake holders willing to invest in town planning. All gardens around Shalamar were wiped out from the surface of earth and the land was “developed” into several housing colonies to such an extent that only a small strip of passage around the ancient boundary walls is left out. The present situation of the destruction of landscape and environment around Shalamar is completely different from that existing less than a century ago. Shalamar now stands suffocated from all sides with modern structures. In addition, a wide road running on the southern side has cut through an ancient water system, which provided water to the garden and was part of the original system of water supply (Picture # 11). The water was originally brought to Shalamar from a distance of one hundred miles through a canal specially constructed for this garden. Nothing of that canal and water system has survived. Where only the gateways to now extinct gardens have survived, congestion of new constructions around and heavy traffic has further frustrated efforts of preservation. The case of Chauburji, a gateway to an ancient garden is one of the worst examples of the once city of gardens (Picture # 12)!

The problem of preservation and maintenance of garden and their settings in the face of economic pressures, urban growth and often lack of coordination and planning may not be peculiar to this world heritage site in Pakistan. These

problems might have emerged in other areas of the world under similar or different circumstances to be taken care of by the heritage conservators. Gradual deterioration in the gardens and their settings could be avoided if an affective legislation to control urban growth around the gardens were in place. In case of Lahore, most of the gardens were destroyed and the land occupied before the new legislation called the Antiquities Act of 1962 (revised in 1972, 1992) came into existence. Even after the enforcement of Antiquities Act the relevant provisions to stop encroachments near the monuments were not strictly followed specially by the city planners and administrators. The city laws in fact, are in serious conflict with those of the Federal and Provincial/ State Governments, which prohibit in principle, construction of any structure with 200 to 500 feet of the protected monuments. The situation has been complicated by the sheer lack of coordination and absence of public involvement or representation in the preservation of ancient gardens. There is now growing realization though belated, that these vestiges of history and documents of beautiful landscapes should be preserved as a part of the townscape.

It is still possible, although a difficult task, to remove modern structures and to provide some breathing space to the monuments such as the Shalamar Garden. Such activities cannot be undertaken without concerted and collaborative efforts of all the agencies concerned in which the Archaeology Department can play an important part because of its direct responsibility to protect, maintain and preserve the historic gardens and their cultural landscape. The difficulties being faced to achieve these objectives bring into focus the need to re-assess various threats and potential dangers of urban growth to the historic gardens with their original settings before bringing a garden site on the world heritage list. The existing monuments such as Shalamar Garden and city of Lahore have been in serious threat not only by the public but also because of political and official interference. Such pressures and dangers can only be eliminated by informing and involving the public in the development of the sites and making gardens a part of their cultural and historical past and the present.

Abstract

The South Asian Subcontinent inherited a long Central Asian tradition of garden layout in a geographical setting and environmental modification based on a unique “char bagh” concept of paradise on earth. The Mughal dynasty founded in Pakistan and northern India in early 16th century AC, created a number of elaborate and beautiful walled gardens that were marvels of hydraulic system, symmetrical and balance of buildings, alignment of elaborate canal system, fountains and pavilions. Shalamar Garden in Lahore, recognized as the World Heritage of universal value, is the largest of all the surviving gardens, is under serious threat due to rapid urban growth and disregard for preservation of gardens and their original settings by the town planners.

The paper to be presented at the Scientific Symposium will highlight the extent of destruction of ancient gardens both within and around the historic city of Lahore known as the “Garden City” until the early 20th century. Drastic changes in the gardenscape of Lahore and consequent loss of originality and historicity of the settings, have posed a serious challenge to the heritage managers and conservators. These issues are being addressed in cooperation with various agencies involved in planning and development.

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7. Credits for pictures
Numbers. 1, 4 and 9: (Wescoat 1996)
Number 2: Courtesy Dr. Farrukh, Lahore
Numbers 3 & 10: (Hussain *et al* 1996)
Numbers 5 & 11: (Kausar 1990)

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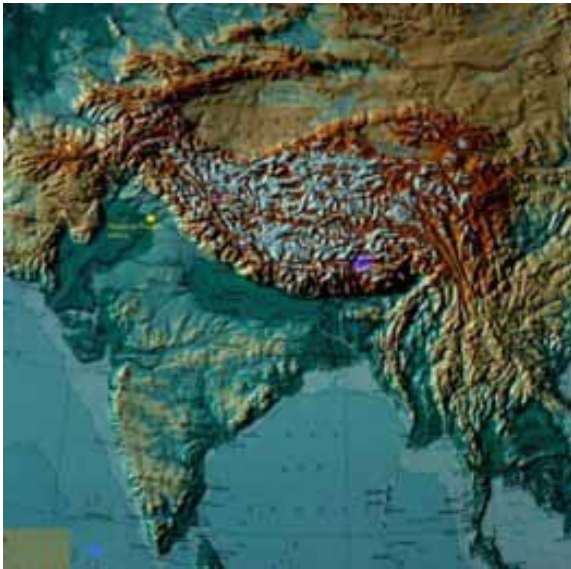


Fig 01. Location of Shalamar Garden in Pakistan.



Fig 02. Sites of ancient gardens around Lahore, AC 1000 - 1800 (Wescoat 1996).



Fig 03. Extant gardens in the 19th century (Hussain 1996).

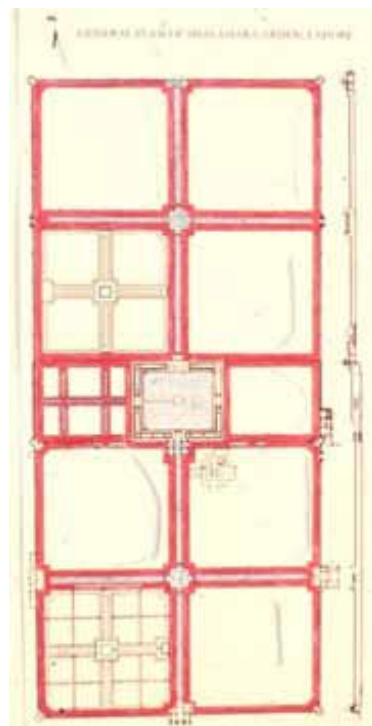


Fig 04. Layout of the Shalamar Garden with canals and Walkways (AC 1642).

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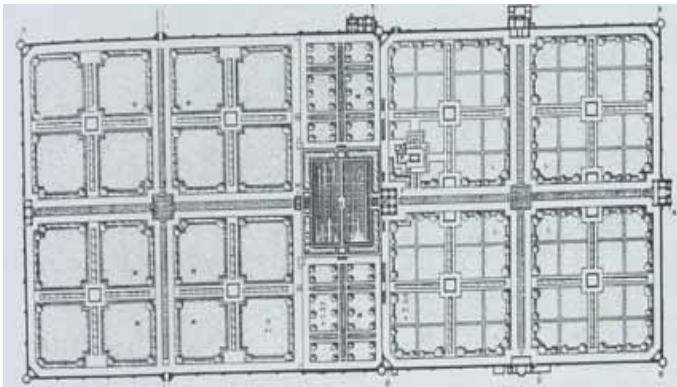


Fig 05. The "Charbagh" (four-quartered) concept represented at Shalamar, Lahore.



FIGURE 06. Shalamar. A view of canal from the pavilion at the third terrace.



FIGURE 07. Shalamar. The central canal with fountains at the third terrace.



FIGURE 08. Shalamar. Tank at the junction of four canals.



FIGURE 09. Shalamar. The main tank at the second terrace with fountains and pavilions.



FIGURE 10. Shalamar. The second terrace flanking the main tank.

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Fig 11. Shalamar. Partial view of the lawns at the second terrace.



Fig 12. Other gardens (now extinct) near Shalamar (Wescoat 1990)

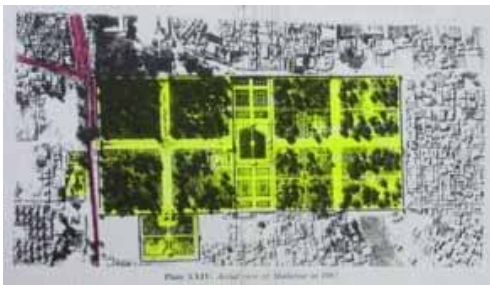


Fig 13. Shalamar encroached upon by modern houses (Kausar 1990).



Fig 14. Modern constructions close to the wall of Shalamar.



Fig 15. Encroachments viewed from a corner pavilion of Shalamar.



Fig 16. Pavilion of Fatehbagh near Shalamar, now demolished (Hauuain 1996).

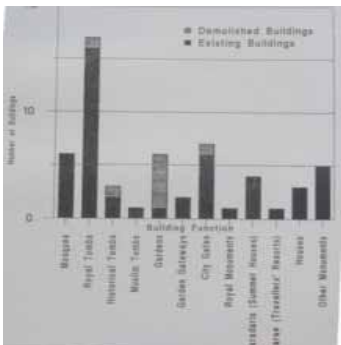


Fig 17. Graph showing destruction of ancient buildings including gardens around Lahore (Awan 1996).