

**Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices**  
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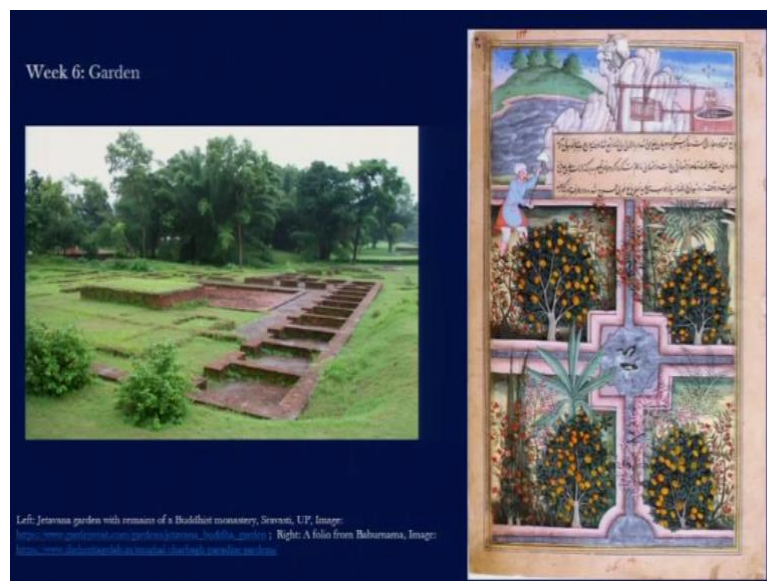
**Lecture – 26**  
**Idea of Garden**

Hello everyone. I am Rajarshi Sengupta and we are here in the week 6 and module 6 of our syllabus. And then today we will be talking about the idea of garden. So, we see that this idea of the garden here and then if we follow the syllabus, we see that there is a particular stress on the idea of garden in Islam and it is of course in the afterlife. So those are the ideas will be the guiding principles for our module as well as this week.

So, for this week, we will be looking into some of the garden structures as well as like some of the architectural remains of the garden as well as how garden is represented in the miniature paintings. And then also what are the other significance of garden, for example as we see even in the city plans and so on, there is a resonance of the planning of garden and also in the tomb structures and so on.

So, all those things will be there and at the same time, we will also be touching upon some of the other issues, for example alchemy and then the idea of astrology and all those different issues, how they also relate to the idea of garden.

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Now, if we think about the history of the gardens in India, then it certainly goes back to the Buddhists times perhaps and even though there are also gardens and the places for pleasure those are mentioned in many different religions as well as in the royal context in the civic places and so on. What we find some of the historic records on the gardens in the Buddhist context, for example the one we have on screen that is a Jetavana vihara.

And this was the garden which was gifted by Jeta and that was there in the town of Sravasti in today's Uttar Pradesh. So we know that how there were some of the people who have contributed to making a particular site as a monasteric place. So the entire garden was transformed into a place where the monks can inhabit and it was not like entirely an architecture that is what the monastery is.

But the entire area around it, that garden area, the plants, the trees and everything else, those were also very much part of this entire setup of Jetavana. So, this is also a reminder for us to think that what are the elements in a garden. So, in a garden as we know that there are plants, there are animals, there are birds and the difference between a garden and a forest of course it will be that how a forest is not cultivated, but a garden is always a cultivated land.

So garden is something that is carefully manicured and carefully constructed by humans and that is how this careful at the same time playful space which comes for recreation, which comes for different kinds of reflection as well as a very integral part in making art and also practicing religion. So, all these different things they come together in the idea of garden. Now one of the challenges for also looking at the history of garden is there are very less evidences of the gardens that we have today.

Because the plants, the animals and the birds, they cannot really stay forever just like the way the architecture or the sculptures or images can stay, the paintings can stay for example. So that is one of the biggest challenges of reconstructing the history of the gardens in the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere. And for example, if you also see on the left side of the screen as we have the architectural remains at the Jetavana vihara, the site of the Jetavana vihara in Sravasti.

So, we see that there are only the bases of the architecture made of brick and so on, those are the ones which are remaining, but we do not really know what all plants and trees and animals

and birds were there originally when this place was inhabited by the Buddhist monks and so on and the disciples of Buddha. So similarly, if we take this idea further, we see that similar kinds of concerns have been brought up by the historians, by the art historians that how do, we reconstruct or like how do we understand the significance of garden.

And the other thing is that we cannot really ignore the significance of garden in the Indian art that is because there is an image as we can see on the right side of the screen and it is a folio that comes from this very celebrated manuscript Baburnama and in which we find that there is a garden, there is this four part garden and we will be discussing the various parts of them, but apart from that what we see here there is water at the centre as we can see and then there are channels through which the water flows at the centre.

There are birds that are playing in the water. And then there are different kinds of trees, which are there. Here we see a particular person who is perhaps taking care of the garden and then here we see there is this arrangement for fetching water, perhaps for this garden, right like for how the water will flow through the channels in the garden and then they will flow through this entire space. So those arrangements are made.

So, as I have already mentioned that how a garden is always a cultivated place as opposed to a forest or a natural space, so that is something this particular character, we find that to be emphasized in this particular painting here as well. What are the other things we find? There are different kinds of trees and different kinds of plants, creepers and so on, all those things we will find in a garden. So, for example here we see there is a prevalence of these trees bearing fruits.

So, this is something that is an integral part of the gardens that the tree is there, they need to bear fruit, they need to bear flowers. Also, they need to provide shade and we know reassurance. So all these different kinds of things, we find them that what kinds of decisions people make when they make a garden, so what kind of trees, what kind of plants and every all the other things they become part of this entire plan.

And I think that also one can see that how this entire garden is different from the landscape that we see in the upper half of this or not the upper half, but the upper register of this image where we see this is an uncultivated land, which is not as lush and diverse as this particular garden

spaces. So those are some of the things we need to keep in mind that how garden also differs from the natural landscape. And this is a very carefully manicured land, almost like making an architecture or sculpture or a painting.

So, one can imagine that I mean garden is also a way of art making and that is also the reason why this has been such an important part of Indian art. Now, if we compare these two images that we have on screen, for example the image of the Jetavana vihara and where we have only the architectural remains and nothing else. And then we can see there are certain images and the if the images they come from the time period when the gardens were existing.

So those images might show us that how the gardens might have been. So, in a way putting the architectural remains and the images together that way one can reconstruct, that way one can think that how the gardens might have been in the past. So, this is one of the models and this is one of the ways in which we will be continuing our discussions, for this module as well as this week.

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Now, as I have said this idea of the garden certainly has its roots in the in the pre-Islamic times in India. However, we also see the in Islam, especially in Islam and not just in South Asia, but when it starts in the Middle East, it has a prevalence in terms of understanding what is garden, why garden is such an important part. And garden is not something that is considered to be just a place for pleasure, but it has a philosophical underpinning to it. So for that, we need to understand that what are some of the prime features of Islam.

And how that also leads us to understand the; significance of garden in India and in the Indian subcontinent. Now, Islam as we know that is the third religion in the line of the three Abrahamic religions starting with Judaism, Christianity and then of course Islam. And for Islam, we also know that how the Prophet Muhammed is considered to be the last prophet in the line of this Abrahamic Prophet starting with Moses, then Jesus Christ, and then of course Prophet Muhammed.

So, what we find that this is the city that we have on the left side of the screen in Saudi Arabia, the city of Mecca that has the prime importance in Islam and that is because of there is this one particular structure that we have that is there on the right side of the image and this is this particular structure that we have here. This rectangular structure, a closed structure which is usually not opened for the visitors.

And this is a structure which has its roots in the pre-Islamic times and it was considered to be the house of God or Kaaba. And then Kaaba is something is a space where we have found that from the pre-Islamic time there was a practice of visiting Kaaba for pilgrimage and paying respect to this particular shrine. So, what we find here is that there are no particular images of Gods, of course after Prophet Muhammad's intervention.

And what happens here is this particular way of paying homage or paying respect of circumambulation at this idea that we have already discussed in the Buddhist and Jain context, we see that that is a particular idea also is prevalent here in Islam as well. Now, Kaaba, if we think about this particular idea of this axis mundi, something we have already discussed that how there is this idea of the centre of the universe or centre of the entire existence.

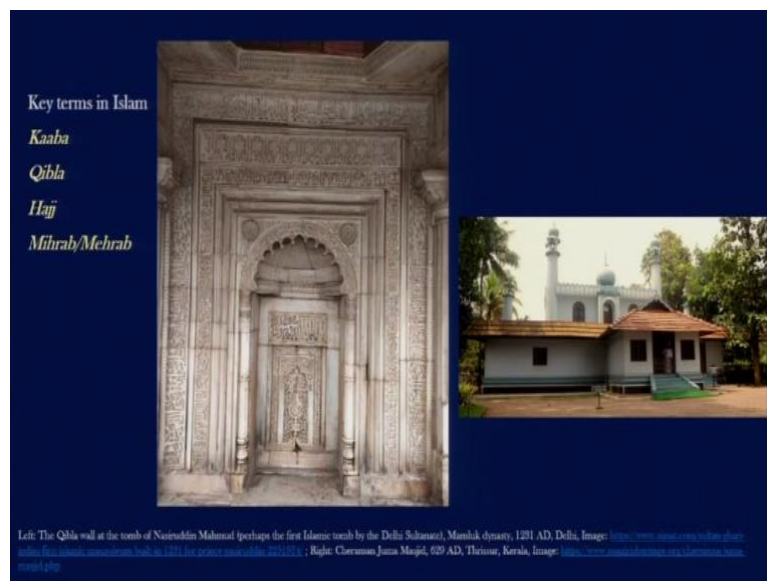
So perhaps Kaaba that is there as the symbolic axis mundi we can imagine for the Muslims, the believers of Islam, of course the believers of they came in the line of Prophet Muhammed. So, this is what we find here to be a very interesting that Saudi Arabia is a place which is barren, which is dry, hot and it is a desert like landscape, and idea of Hajj when it actually started, it started during it marked the arrival of rains or monsoon.

And so that is something we find that from the very early times, even before Islam was made into this organized religion, even during that time this idea of Hajj or pilgrimage that also had its relationship with water. And then imagine that if this is a desert like landscape we are talking

about in Saudi Arabia and then the arrival of water and how water also transforms the landscape so that is something that had been there ingrained and embedded in the Islamic philosophy as well.

So, the transformation of a landscape and transforming this desert like landscape into the garden of paradise or Jannat-ul-Firdos is something that we find to be very important in Islamic philosophy.

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Now, before we move on with these ideas further and also get into the details of how that made its impact on the garden structures. So, first let us just look into some of the terms which will also be very useful for all of us. So, there are some of the key terms in Islam and as well as our study of Islamic architecture and different kinds of visual material. So, the first thing will definitely be Kaaba and Kaaba is the house of God or this particular shrine which stands at the centre of Masjid-al-Haram.

And then there is also Qibla. And Qibla is the particular wall that we have in any religious architecture in Islam and that is the wall if we find that if there are places which are in the east of Mecca, then the Qibla wall will be facing west and the Qibla will always direct the devotee's attention to or towards Mecca. As I have already mentioned that this particular structure here Kaaba it is considered to be the focal point of the believers.

So that is the reason what we find that all the religious institutions, the Islamic religious institutions around the world, they will have their focus towards Kaaba in Saudi Arabia. So, if

there are religious institutions, for example the prayer halls or masjid, they will be situated towards the east of Kaaba, then their walls the Qibla wall will be towards the west. And if there are institutions which are in the west side of Kaaba, then this particular wall, the Qibla wall will be situated towards the east.

So, these are some of the basic characteristics that we find and they also become very much integral part of the architecture that we study. Now, there is also this idea of Hajj that I have already mentioned that this is the annual pilgrimage and this has been considered to be one of the major tasks of all Muslims around the world and it had been continuing for at least for the last 1400 years or so. These are some of the important part of the key terms in Islam.

And the fourth important term will be Mehrab or Mihrab. So Mihrab or Mehrab is basically this arched gateway that we find in the centre of the Qibla wall. And the Mehrab is also the place which is an abstract representation of the direction towards Kaaba. So, in the western wall if I am talking about the masjid or the prayer halls in India or in the east side of Mecca, so in these institutions we find at the centre of the western wall, there will be the Mehrab at the centre of it.

And the Mehrab is as I have said this is an arched gateway motif and then there is a small niche as we can see here in the image on the left side of the screen. So, this entire area is called Mehrab where we find there is this arched gateway and then there is this particular this niche like space that is something that is understood as Mehrab and this is the place which also guides the devotees to face that particular direction while they are praying.

So, this is something we find to be also very important part of the Islamic architecture. Now, if we are talking about Islamic architecture, then what are the early examples of it? So, for our time constraint and everything else, we are not touching upon the impact of the Delhi Sultanate and some of the other sultanates that we find in the various parts of northern India, however, there is this one particular structure that we have here and this is the tomb of Nasiruddin Mahmud.

And Nasiruddin Mahmud he was a ruler from the Mamluk dynasty and he died in this particular tomb that we have on screen in the left side of it. This comes from this particular site in South Delhi which is known as Sultan Ghari and this is a place which was built around 1231 AD. So,

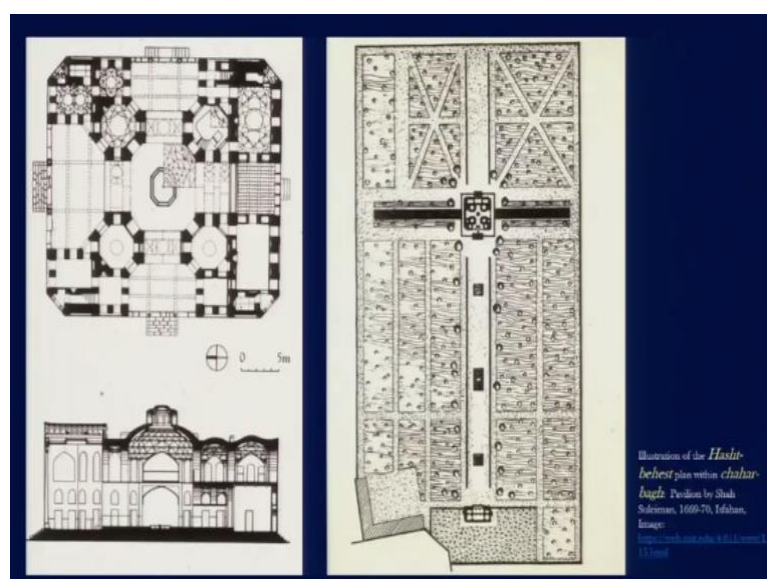
it is a 13th century structure and this is considered to be the earliest surviving Islamic tomb in the entire Indian subcontinent.

So, in this tomb what we find that there is the tomb structure and right beside the tomb structure there is also the prayer hall or a masjid, and there in the masjid we have the Qibla wall which we see here and in the centre of the Qibla wall we have the Mehrab. So, these are some of the basic characteristics of the tomb structures and the adjoining prayer halls and so on that is something that we find from 13th century and they will be continuing in the latest structures as well.

Now apart from the tombs, we find that the prayer halls or the Masjid. So, they actually came into being in the Indian subcontinent perhaps from much earlier times. So, we find that in Kerala, we have the Cheraman Juma Masjid and which was established around 629 AD that is around 630 AD. It was during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammed in Saudi Arabia. So, we know that this is perhaps the earliest surviving mosque in the Indian subcontinent.

And of course, if we see the recent structure of it, it does not look like it had been built in the 7th century because it had been heavily renovated the exterior building. As we can see here, the building has been heavily renovated, so that is the reason it does not really look like something that was built in the 7th century. But some of the structures, the beams and some of the wooden structures inside this Juma Masjid complex that actually still comes from 7th century and those are the evidence of this early arrival of Islam in the Indian subcontinent.

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Now, from there if we see that how in Islam the idea of garden became more really significant, so we see in Islam there is this idea of the paradise and the paradise has usually been understood as a space which is a garden space. And in the garden, what we also find that there are four rivers; four rivers of milk, of honey, of wine and so on. So, they flow into a central space.

So for example, if we think about that there are four pathways or four channels, so they can be considered as the symbolic rivers of the heaven and all of them they flow to this one particular point and that is how there is, it is not just that all these water channels they form this one particular reservoir, but it is also these four channels, they make this space divided into four. So, like 1 part, 2, 3, 4 and that is how this entire idea of chaharbagh, we see that to be coming in prominence.

So, this is also an idea of chaharbagh architectural planning and that is relevant to understand the structure of these paradisaical gardens in Islam that came into being in the Persian architectural forms. So, this chaharbagh planning that is also something we have already seen in this particular image where we find in Baburnama that how these rivers or these particular water channels they flow to the centre of the image forming this small pond like space or like a reservoir.

And then how these four channels they also divide the entire garden space with a square or rectangular into 1, 2, 3, 4 four parts. So, this is how the entire space is divided, as the same time they are also organized. So, this chaharbagh planning; which show the paradisaical garden or Jannat-ul-firdaus. This is also a place which has been understood that where the God resides or Allah resides. So, that is the reason we find that there is minutest of the details of the people who have recreated these gardens on earth.

They have actually paid much attention to have different kinds of plants and trees and the animals and birds to inhabit this space so that it becomes a piece of paradise in the middle of the earth. Now, apart from this particular planning that we have here, we also have another ground plan in the Persian architecture that came into existence at least since like 13th and 14th centuries that is the Hasht-behest plan.

And Hasht-behest plan is something that is eight heavens. So, if we see this particular structure that actually is a pavilion by Shah Suleiman in the city of Isfahan and this comes from actually 17th century but it is a good plan for us to understand the relevance of this Hasht-behest plan. So in the Hasht-behest plan, what we find in the centre there is this one particular unit which is also considered to be the seat of the supreme god.

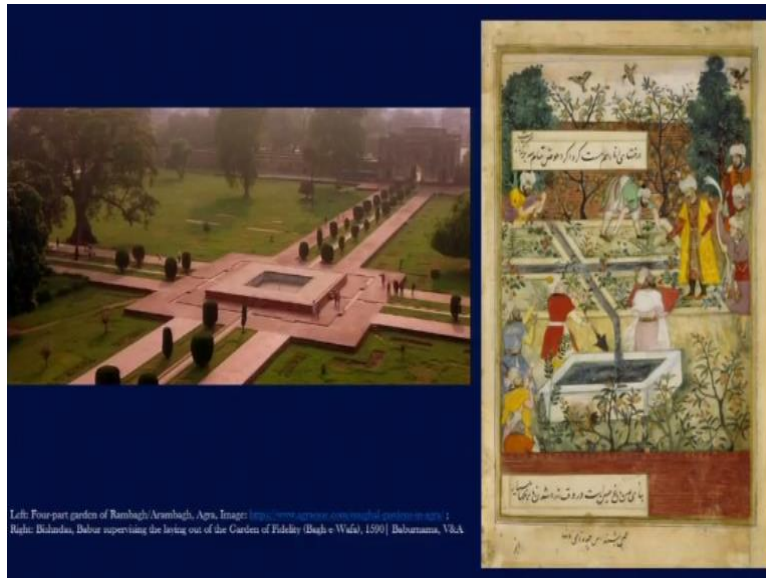
And then around that there are 8 units, so 1, 2, 3, 4 in the four corners and then 5, 6, 7, 8. So like 8 units are there around it. And sometimes we also find that how this Hasht-behest plan is also implemented in the two storeys' building, in which like those four units that we have on the corner, they also replicate in the upper storey. So, these are some of the ways in which we find how this Hasht-behest plan that is also something how this paradise which is built upon this grid like structure.

The four part garden that also something that is not just being restricted to making the gardens but also like built architecture, for example this pavilion that we have here. So that also says something that the idea of the garden, an idea of making this significant architecture that can be a royal palace that can also be a tomb, these things were not really distinct from each other.

So, making the architecture from the Hasht-behest plan and then making the garden from the chaharbagh plan they were all like combined together. So, if we see that how those were brought together here, so this is this entire pavilion that we have in detail and this goes here at the centre of this chaharbagh this complex. So, at the centre of the chaharbagh like where not necessarily the centre, but where all those the channels meet in this rectangular ground plan, this is the place where this pavilion is situated which is of high importance.

So that also says something about how this highly philosophical idea of representing the garden of paradise in the earth that had also made a huge deal of impact in terms of making the palaces of the royals, and then this comparison between the gods and the kings and the royals that is something we have already studied in the Hindu context and in the other context and so on. So, those are something that we find to be prevalent here as well.

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So, then we see that how these ideas are represented in these garden forms. So, if we think about it that how this chaharbagh plan came into being, so our motivation for starting in this discussion of the Islamic gardens or the gardens with the Mughal times is because that we see that there is a very conscious attempt to start these kinds of gardens in the Indian subcontinent by the first Mughal emperor Babur, Badshah Babur.

So with him, we find this this Timurid idea of making this four part garden and a tomb or a palace complex which will also be situated at the garden complex or like adjacent into this garden complex. These ideas that came into being with the arrival of Badshah Bahur in the Indian subcontinent. So just a brief background that Babur was; he came from both the lineages of Genghis Khan and Amir Timur.

And we find that he started his career or of course his journey from Central Asia which is now in Uzbekistan. And from there, we find that he had arrived in Afghanistan and slowly in the Indian subcontinent. So, when he arrived in the Indian subcontinent, already this idea of establishing garden wherever they take over a particular land or wherever they want to transform the land into something else so these ideas had already been there.

And in this detailed account that Babur had wrote which is known as Baburnama in which in this one we find that Babur had elaborated on his orders of making gardens in these newly conquered lands. So, we will be continuing more on that in the next lecture. Thank you.