

Phenomenology of the Surrounding Wall In Persian Garden

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Abstract | Gardening Art is an outcome of Iranian civilization and culture which its elements and principles has not been revealed completely yet. Besides the main street and streamlets, Persian garden is composed of some other elements which their entity and role in creating the garden should be recognized. Surrounding wall, which has been repeated in all samples of authentic Persian garden is a kind of mixture of iconic cultural complexity and functional simplicity elements. Surveying the wall as a conspicuous element can reveal some secrets in Persian gardening style and its role in landscaping. Wall is a multi-conceptual element which its application to enclose the garden, regardless of its functional benefits, has an important role in creating an Iranian identity for the garden, as Persian Garden is an arena for illustrating the nature and human's pondering in verses of cosmos. Due to the audience mentality and the landscape (and space) capacity, this field needs to adhere to certain traditions which this wall is among the most important ones.

Keywords | Wall, Persian garden, Garden's elements.



Pic 1: The individual gardens on the outskirts of the city of Kashan which are enclosed with bulky walls.
Photo: Ayda Alehashemi, 2012.

Introduction | Reviewing the history of the Persian Garden, either on the remaining samples and or its reflection in other arts shows the antiquity of using fences and walls around garden area. Applying this element frequently in various Persian gardens, in different periods and in different climates propound the hypothesis that "the enclosing wall is a principal element of Persian garden".

This paper attempts to identify the scope of concepts correlated to the wall in Iranian perspective by referring to some samples in Iranian culture and civilization and reviewing the latent concepts of the wall in each sample. Then we can recognize its place in Iranian landscaping art by realizing some common criteria in wall.

The main theory in this study is as followed: "Wall is a main element and a priority in Iranian Gardening and a Persian Garden would not be completed without it".

Philosophy of wall

Coming back from Sialk hill near Kashan, and watching the remnants of an ancient city of the fifth millennium BC, some gardens landscape in plateau apart from each other and surrounded by bulky walls attracted my attention (Pic. 1). I explained some information about the surrounding wall to the students who were accompanying me. I also talked about the Belgian landscape architecture, René Pechère, and his research which was about Iranian gardens and was published by "ICOMOS" in which he mentioned two narratives about the reason of building such a wall around the garden: first, security and maintenance of the garden; second, security of its occupants and protecting them from strangers evil eye (Pechère, 1993).

Our late teacher, Mr. Piernia had also mentioned before that

protecting the trees from climatic adversity such as storms and hot winds could be the main purpose of building the wall around the garden. At the time, none of us asked or even thought about the reason of building these walls in the central region of Iran where there is no such a climatic adversity.

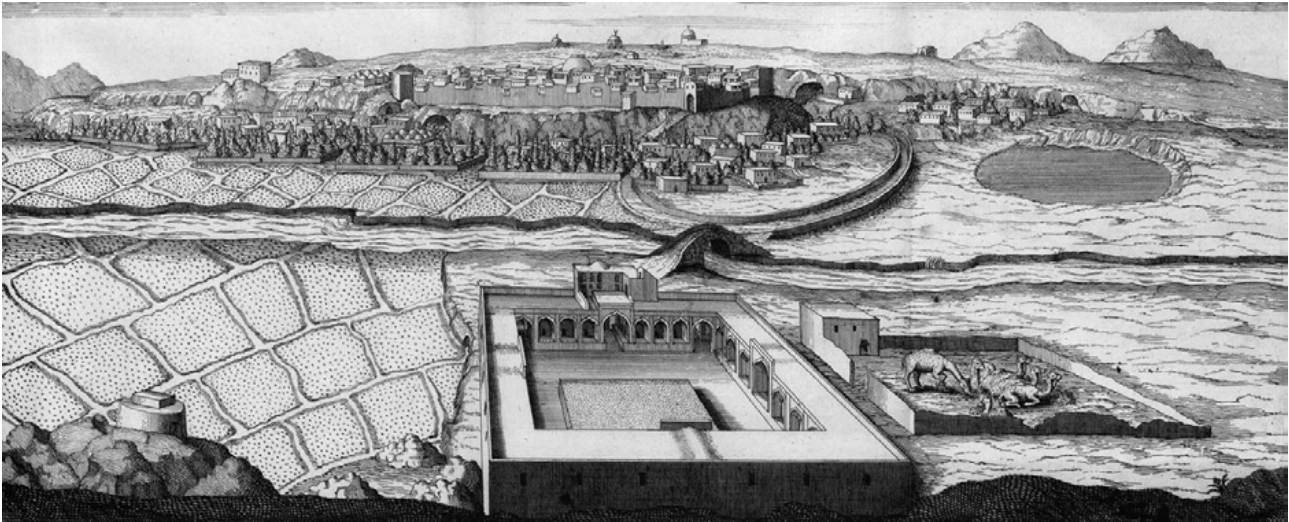
The idea of maintaining privacy by an enclosing wall is also considered since the garden of the wealthy was their house too. But there is still an unanswered question left: "Why non-residential gardens followed the same style?"

Except those nurseries for tree which no beautification action took place to organize its planning, inner lot and its view to improve its landscape, hardly we can find a standard and organized garden without any wall.

Hitherto, four reasons namely security, climate, protecting from evil eyes and privacy has been considered as main reason of building the wall, however none of which can cover all purposes.

While watching the view of gardens laid in an arid plateau from top of a hill, I noticed that all gardens or arid lands were surrounded by some walls which were much more noticeable and also more magnificent than their lands and gardens. Yet, so many of them had non-precious broken gates which were just the symbol of entrance and exit and did not play any role in maintaining of their gardens. Why? Why are such poor and broken gates still in use for these magnificent gardens while beautiful portals and expensive gates for very simple walls are more common nowadays?

Landlords have made such expensive beautiful walls for their arid land while the inside of the land does not cost so much, even not as much as the wall. Why are the walls popular with people? This question can take some points about walls into



Pic 2: Yazd-Khast Caravanserai, by Jean Chardin, the 17th century.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:51_Chardin_Izadkhast.jpg.

consideration.

Mythology of Wall (Deevâr)

"Deevâr", which means wall, is a Persian word and consists of two parts: "Deev" as the main part of the word which means "beast" and "ar" as a suffix which by adding it to a name makes a word that changes the meaning to something similar to that name; likewise "Deevâr" means "Beastlike". "Deev" was also a name for one of Iranian and Indian ancient goddesses who was the goddess of wisdom and mercifulness; and in this regard, "Deevana" in "Tadayoon" terminology is considered as a goddess of Iran and India. In Ahouramazda's era and afterward, "Deev (the beast)" turned to the symbol of Satan and "Deevâneh", which means crazy, is a person whose wisdom has been hunted by a beast (Deev). In Iranian culture, the height of wall is the symbol of power and the term "short wall" shows weakness. In Iranian culture, the height of wall is the symbol of power and the term "short wall" shows weakness. "Four walled" is an expression used for the house which refers to ownership and to the most important place of living for human beings. So, the house is made of four walls and the importance of other elements in building a house is at a lower rank.

Old towers or castles' walls were in priority to introduce their surrounded area (Pic. 2). People living outside a castle considered these castles as mysterious places where only the wealthy and powerful people were allowed to enter. Inside the castle, there was a strange world full of magic and secrets surrounded by high bulky walls, and the main source of power, wealth and glory were placed inside of it. Correlation of wall with the superior world turned it to the symbol of highness and superiority. As mentioned above, Iran's cities were at the same situation before the advent of Islam in which high rank people used to live inside the castle and ordinary people lived in suburb areas which were called "Rabath"

(Mansouri 89:49). Destroying the walls and integration of people from different ranks was a symbolic event which took place by development of Islam and the edict of equality of human beings. Before the advent of Islam, only citizens were allowed in the city and countrymen were stopped behind the wall of city (Hoof 1369). Being known as a device for segregating people reveals the historical role of the wall. People living out of city considered other side occupants as some powerful people who mastered their life and property; just like aristocrats who live "behind the wall".

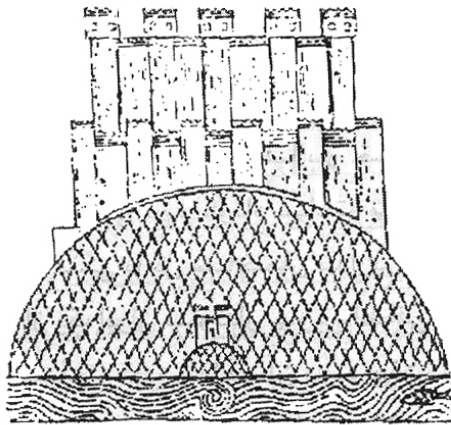
There are some pictures which are the best evidence to prove the power and a blaze of glory of walls surrounding the city (Pic. 3). These pictures illustrate the aesthetics of Iran's minds living in the era when walls were considered as a symbol of and the element of meaningfulness.

Wall and Security

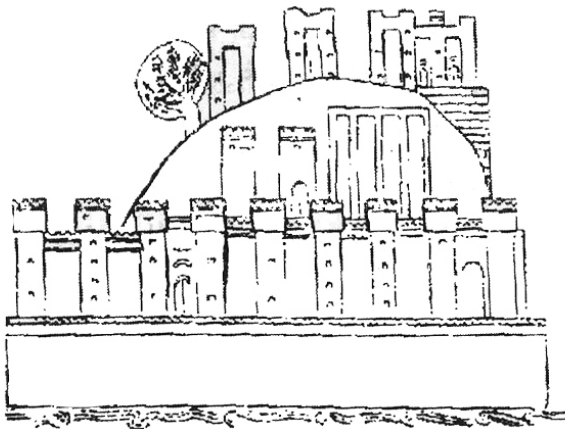
Defensive role might be considered as the first function of the wall and the main reason of its development. To live in peace and comfort and to be protected against wild animals, plunderers and storms led people to find a shelter which consequently led to initiate walls as a safe haven, a source of blessing and a sign of human's wisdom.

The main element of a house, which is recognized as the most popular place to have privacy and comfort, is wall and the other can be considered as major extensions inside. So, the first parts which must be built for a house are its four walls.

René Pechère's opinion about protecting people from evil eyes and jealousy is an evidence to reveal the important role of walls in protecting people against spiritual and psychological assault. Jung, in his book "Man and his symbols", introduces the cave as an archetype which is the symbol of safety and protection for today's human life (Young, 1377). Although due to the periodic intervals and distinctions in life style of today's human and caveman, his idea is not easy to believe;



Median Castle, Based on relief from Dur-Sharrukin (End of 8th Century)



Median Castle of Xarxar, Based on relief from Dur-Sharrukin (End of 8th Century)

Pic 3: Median Castle.
Source: Sarfaraz and Firouzmandi, 2002: 24.

accepting the wall as a symbol of security and safekeeping is easier because the wall was always accompanying people since they have left the cave and no changes can be seen in application of wall so far.

The Great Wall of China which protected China's central areas from invasion of the Mongol living in northern parts is a good example of walls protecting role.

Gorgan's defensive wall, which date back to the Parthian era, was built from the Caspian Sea to the Mountains of northern Afghanistan to block the Turks way from Central Asia. The walls comprehensive and historical role gradually turned its concept into a security device.

Wall and Segregation

There is an experimental test famed to illustrate the subjective role of wall in segregation: imagine two large and small fish in an aquarium with a glass wall placed between them dividing aquarium into two parts, each time the big

fish intend to attack the little fish the wall, which can be consider as an invisible protection, blocks his way. After removing the glass barrier, the big fish is still in this notion that the wall stands between them and its natural intention to inhibit is restrained.

The notion of invisible wall which are thrown between human beings as a boundary for segregation is an interesting subject for artists and poets, and this shows the desire of people to point out the cities without walls and without any boundary between people. And a suitable city is a city which is not surrounded by any wall.

Prison is a place for punishment which has been developed by human and prison walls prevents normal communications and daily trips. In fact, the wall is used for punishing. Animals also have some realms for themselves where their behavior is different in and out. Inside the realm, animals defend themselves and their families to death, and advocates their privacy and territory; but out of their realm, they only fight if the victory is guaranteed (often for food).

Animals do not build any physical wall to determine the borders for their territory; however an invisible border such as smell of animal's urine or body is defined as a wall and a symbol of ownership.

In Iranian traditional culture, enclosing is a symbol of ownership within legal disputes, and is a criterion for judgment, even if the property is enclosed by fence or wall, or the border is specified with non-fixed signs such as wood or riprap. To enclose the property in supporting the ownership, wall emerges gradually as a symbol of ownership.

Wall as a Symbol of Limitation

The historical role of Wall as the "frontier" turned the wall gradually to a device and element of "creating" two separated things from a unified element and this can undermines the unity of objects which leads to "restriction" and forming two separate components.

This feature has led the intellectuals to pay more attention to the role of wall. Jamal Mirsadeghi in the collection of stories, "The Wall", has named it as a symbol of restrictions and red tape before the modernism. (Bar, 1389: 52). In the miniature "Homa and Homayoun" (Pic. 4) wall is the symbol of restriction and restraint for lovers union too.

In the story of "Sheikh San'an" by Attar, Sheikh found his beloved one, the Christian girl, in a room through a window but the room was surrounded with the walls so view and access was restricted (Attar, 1383). In this story, the wall is in contrast with window as window is the contact icon plugged in the wall; and wall is the symbol of constrain and restricting.

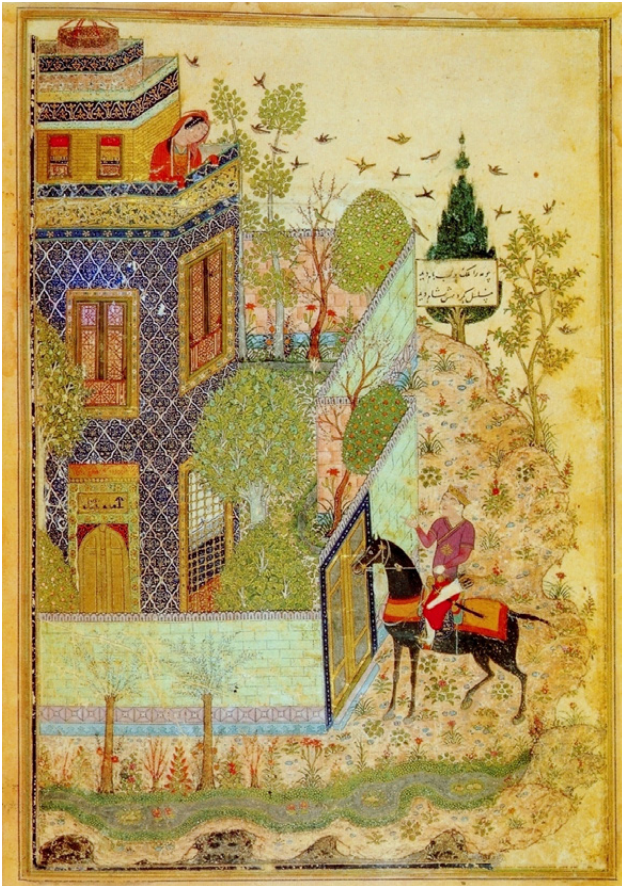
There was a sublime landscape;

With a girl sitting within;

...

In the skies of fairness, as the aster of beauty;

She was like an eternal sun;



Pic 4: Prince Homa'yun on the entrance of Homa's castle, Poem book of Khajavi Kermani, by Junaid Negargar, Baghdad in 1396.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Junaid_001.jpg.



Pic 5: The glazed tiles related to the Qajar period (1880-1890).
Source: Mehrbani Golzar, 2012.
Source: <http://www.kmkg-mrah.be/art-islamic-world>.

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In works of visual art (Pic. 5), including carpets, limiting the context is a common principle. The edge of the carpet functions as the wall of garden just like a frame, a border on the extent of carpet to endow unity and beauty to the rug and carpet.

In political history of the world, both the Berlin Wall and the Gaza wall are known as the solution to end the conflict and selected for expression within the sovereignty of each side of the walls. In Berlin, the destruction of the Wall is the symbol of unity and to end the separation of the territory of a nation.

Gaza Wall is the symbol of Israel's oppression of Palestine inhabitants by which traffic restrictions in areas of inhabitant homes is created for the people who have been living in that land so long. The destruction of the wall is main slogan of liberation movement to end the restrictions in the territory of historic Palestine.

Wall as destination

In the tradition of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), after constructing the first mosque, he always stood facing the wall toward Kaaba while praying. Regular lines of congregation behind also followed him facing the same wall praying. At the time, in this Mosque, there was not any adytum, and the direction to the Qibla was illustrated by the wall (Sadjadie, 1375).

In Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) tradition, wall is a device to find the direction of Qibla. Nowadays, "green wall" or "living wall" is a kind of consideration to nature that due to its entity, wall finds its subjective relevant. In a green wall which is different with green view, the whole green wall is consider as a place to culture plants and also their growth, while in a green view, the lower part of the wall is the situation for chlorophyll and growth.

Since ancient times, the wall has been known as media. Ancient inscriptions carved on the wall contains writings, images of mythological and epic paintings found in the mountains and in some areas people used to live, which all of these findings elevate the role of wall in its perspective as a whole (Pic. 6).

This application in today's world continues as graffiti to decorate the streets with paintings on the walls. The walls of the city are a haven for people and a media to express and raise their demands by the slogan written on walls. This process occurs during the revolution and a revolutionary movement can be known by graffiti on the walls.

Most recently, bringing up the issue of kindness wall and building a place to exchange unnecessary goods and supply them to needy, the wall has been considered again in the spotlight of social relations and people cooperation.



Pic 6: The carvings on the wall of Taq-e Bostan.
Source: Javadi & Avarzamani, [forthcoming].

Conclusion | In referring to Iranian culture and civilization since ancient era up to now, presence of walls has always attracted people's attention and gained its conceptual importance.

Although, wall was known as a device to defense and security element at first, gradually new roles has been taken to account and wall became a symbol carrying different concepts at the same time: limitation, power, holiness, security, segregation, protection, boundary, property, mercifulness, wisdom, Satan and so on.

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