PARADISE IN CONFLICT: REEXAMINING AND SAFEGUARDING THE GENIUS OF THE MUGHAL GARDENS OF KASHMIR

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1 ABSTRACT
The history of garden making in Kashmir goes back to ancient times with garden making closely linked to the natural beauty and spirit of the place. During the Mughal period in Kashmir these traditions reached unprecedented heights. Through the implementation of the Islamic chahar bagh and Paradise Garden concepts onto the topography of Kashmir hundreds of Mughal gardens were created.

Since the decline of the Mughal Empire many of these gardens suffered neglect and only a small number of the gardens still exist today, with the traditional use and significance of these sites and their wider settings being undermined. The paper’s focus is on the gardens in Indian-administered Kashmir. To date this heritage remains under-examined and at risk, particularly given the context of the ongoing conflict in Kashmir, with Nishat Bagh and Shalimar Bagh included in the 2008 World Monument Fund List of 100 Most Endangered Sites.

The paper presents evidence of historic and new threats to this irreplaceable heritage due to inappropriate development and change and a limited understanding of the history and significance of the sites. In the meantime the paper raises awareness of the importance of this heritage and illustrates recent preservation initiatives to address these issues, including the ongoing preparation of a UNESCO World Heritage nomination dossier. In doing so, the paper hopes to garner support from the international landscape architecture and preservation communities in investigating this heritage and safeguarding the genius of the Mughal gardens of Kashmir.

1.1 Keywords
Mughal gardens, Kashmir, preservation, landscape planning, UNESCO World Heritage
2 THE BIRTH OF A GARDEN HERITAGE

The history of garden making in Kashmir (Figure 1) extends before the Mughal period to ancient times. Predominantly Hindu Kings ruled over Kashmir before Islam arrived in the 14th century in Kashmir with the Shahmri Sultanate. In the Hindu period, gardens were created in the valley of Kashmir reflecting the vatikas concept of wooded pleasure grounds with orchards, flowers and herbal plants (Wani, 2011a). For instance, literature sources indicate that an early villa and garden stood at Shalimar during the reign of Pravarassena II in the late 6th century, when the garden was a sacred site (Patterson, 1972).

The Sultanate dynasty brought with them Persian traditions including their passion for gardening. During this period it is known that many gardens were created, most notably by King Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen and reflecting the stylistic patterns of the Persian Paradise gardens (Wani, 2011a). It is for instance documented that under 15th century Muslim Rule and King Zain-ul-Abideen’s reign the Shalimar Canal with a bund (embankment) was created (Patterson, 1972). The Canal remains a key feature at Shalimar Bagh. Ashraf Wani highlighted the embedded traditions of flowers and gardens in the Kashmiri culture, giving the example of the traditional earthen roofs that were planted with flowers (Wani, 2011a).

The Mughals arrived first in Kashmir during Babur’s reign when they attempted to conquer the region (Beg, 2011). During Emperor Humayun’s reign in the mid-16th century the Mughals ruled briefly over Kashmir, and in 1586 Emperor Akbar fully conquered Kashmir, after which it was ruled as a Mughal province (Wescoat and Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1996). Inspired by the beauty of the valley and the cooler climate, the Mughal Emperors and nobles made frequent visits to Kashmir. The valley offered a perfect setting and inspiration for garden making, with Akbar credited as saying ‘Kashmir is a garden, do not call it a country’ (Beg, 2011). Akbar visited Kashmir three times, and in doing so, started a tradition amongst successive Emperors of using Kashmir as a summer resort (Beveridge, 1902–39). Emperor Jahangir (1569-1627) spent a total of fourteen summers in the valley (Rogers and Beveridge, 1909-14).

By the time the Mughals arrived in Kashmir in the 16th century the valley would already have been dotted with gardens featuring terraces, central water channels, fountains and planting schemes (Wani, 2011a). For instance, Achabal had already become a well-known site before the arrival of the Mughal Emperors, with Emperor Jahangir recalling his visit in his memoirs, the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri (Rogers and Beveridge, 1909-14). Jahangir wrote in his memoirs about a fountain and waterfall at Achabal, of lofty chinar trees (Oriental plane, Platanus orientalis), poplars and a garden with flowers. Jahangir referred to the spring at Achabal as being more plentiful than the spring at Verinag, which also already was a well-known site (Rogers and Beveridge, 1909-14). Francois Bernier, a French traveler during the time of Emperor Aurangzeb, also mentions in his travelogue that a royal country house existed at Achabal prior to the Mughals (Bernier, 1891).

Wani stated that what perhaps the Mughals did ‘...was to work on a refinement of the set pattern, and thus taking them to a new height....’ (Wani, 2011a). Typical features of the Mughal gardens of Kashmir became the implementation of the Islamic chahar bagh (‘four gardens’ or quadripartite garden) onto the mountainous topography, the terraces, the central water channel with chadars (cascades), hauz (water tanks), fountains and baradaris (pavilions) (INTACH J&K, 2005). In many cases water flows through the terraced gardens to a larger water body, such as a stream or a lake.

Sources speak of over 700 Mughal gardens in Kashmir at the height of the Mughal period in the mid-17th century (Crowe et. al., 1972). Many of these gardens were located in the vicinity of the city of Srinagar (Figure 2), particularly near the city centre and on the shores of Dal Lake, which provided a more secluded location for the royalty (Hamdani, 2011). Well known gardens near Srinagar include Nishat Bagh (Figure 3), Shalimar Bagh, Path Mahal and Chasma Shahi. Other gardens are located throughout the valley, such as Verinag and Achabal Bagh, which are located in the vicinity of Anantnag (Figure 2).
Figure 1. Location map of Jammu and Kashmir in India and the city of Srinagar. Haenraets, J. and Hollingsworth, M.

Figure 2. Location of Shalimar Bagh, Nishat Bagh, Chasma Shahi and Pari Mahal near Dal Lake in Srinagar, and the location of Achabal Bagh and Verinag near Anantnag. Haenraets, J. and Hollingsworth, M.

Figure 3. The central axis and channel of Nishat Bagh in 2010 with its terraces sloping up against the hillside and views framed by the chinar trees (*Platanus orientalis*). Haenraets, J.
3 HISTORIC NEGLECT, ADAPTATIONS AND THREATS

In order to assist in raising awareness about the significance of this irreplaceable heritage, the types of threats and the required preservation initiatives, it is useful to first look at how the gardens have evolved since the Mughal period, particularly given that threats and neglect are not a new phenomenon and occurred throughout the gardens’ lifespan. Little detail is known to date about the state and management of the gardens during the period of Afghan rule, after the Mughal rule, but some descriptions give an indication of the state of the gardens (Hamdani, 2011). For instance, Sajjad Kausar described how ‘...with the downfall of the Mughal emperor in the 18th century chaos prevailed in the subcontinent. Mughal gardens became ideal camping grounds for invading armies from Persia and Afghanistan....’ (Kausar, 2006). Arif Shafi Wani also described how under the Afghan rule many of the Mughal gardens were vandalized to show supremacy of the new rulers (Wani, 2011b).

Kashmir was transferred to Maharaja Gulab Singh upon defeat of the Sikhs in 1846 (Kak, 1933). This was the start of the Dogra period which lasted until the Indian independence in the mid 20th century. More records provide an indication of the state of gardens during the Dogra period. For instance, the travelogues by early European visitors to Kashmir, such as Francois Bernier (Bernier, 1891), or the historic images by early photographers such as Samuel Bourne are most valuable documentation (Bourne, Shepherd and Robertson, 1860-75). An investigation of such sources illustrate how certain garden features were modified, repaired or rebuilt, and what state some gardens were in during this era. The photographs by Bourne show for instance the state of Achabal Bagh and its pavilions. Of the main pavilion only part of the ground floor walls remained in a ruined state and the gardens looked run down (Bourne, Shepherd and Robertson, 1860-75). The garden compartments are still planted with orchards but lawns appear compacted and worn out. Bourne’s images of Shalimar Bagh and Nishat Bagh show however several pavilions that now have disappeared. In comparison to the present day conditions Nishat Bagh and Shalimar Bagh appear minimally maintained, rustic and wild, but nevertheless with much historic integrity intact (Bourne, Shepherd and Robertson, 1860-75). Early 20th century photographs by Jean Hilary, a British visitor in 1929, show similar impressions, such as at Chasma Shahi, where the garden and setting were still unspoiled from the developments that would occur later in the 20th century (Hilary, 1929) (Figure 4 and 5). It is well-documented that in the 19th century Maharaja Rambir Singh (1830-1885) undertook several refurbishments, such as of some pavilions in key gardens, and in many cases to accommodate and entertain European visitors (Wani, 2011b). For instance, the baradari at Achabal Bagh was rebuilt and the Black Marble Pavilions at Shalimar Bagh was adapted (INTACH J&K, 2010).

Figure 4 and 5. The entrance to Chasma Shahi in a photograph by Jean Hilary from 1929 (left) and the much altered entrance area in 2010 (right). Hilary, J. and Haenraets, J.

In the early 20th century the British Archaeological Survey India started to conduct surveys, mainly ‘...on the persuasion of British experts...’ (Beg, 2011). The British Archaeological Survey India also launched codes with guidance for the preservation of monuments (Marshall, 1923). The reroofing of the baradari at Shalimar Bagh in 1908 has been described as the first restoration of any cultural property in
Kashmir that followed such codes, by involving the Public Works Secretary W.H. Nicholas for guidance (Beg, 2011).

The post-1947, post-Independence period, has been a period of continuous unrest and conflict in Kashmir and has seen many gardens extensively change and evolve (Beg, 2011). At times Kashmir found relative peace, such as in the 1970s when good numbers of visitors would travel to Kashmir and also visit the Mughal gardens (Haenraets, 2010b). At moments of heightened unrest, such as during parts of the 1990s, Kashmir was much closed off from the rest of the world, which impacted the general presentation and upkeep of the gardens.

The 1960s and 1970s were a brief period of relative stability and more visitors found their way to Kashmir. The most well-known gardens became popular visitor attractions with them being managed by the Department of Agriculture until 1969 (INTACH J&K, 2005). In 1969 they moved under the jurisdiction of the Department of Floriculture, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, which currently still manages these gardens (Naqash, 2011). To facilitate the growing visitor numbers, the Department of Floriculture undertook initiatives of refurbishments and adaptations for visitor reception. Ticketing facilities, new entry gates and paths, restaurants, car parks, restrooms, sound and light installations, formal rose gardens, flower displays, and so on, were built in the most popular gardens (Haenraets, 2010b).

While this in many cases had benefits, this often resulted in irreversible changes. Such as in various cases where existing structures and buildings were adapted or even removed. An example is the removal of part of the historic stone wall of the Zenana garden in Shalimar Bagh to accommodate better viewing during commercial sound and light shows. Hakim Sameer Hamdani highlighted the case of the demolition of two baradaris in Nishat Bagh around 1975 and how ‘the spirit of the place’ has been affected (Hamdani, 2011). Hamdani is of the opinion that such interventions have damaged and compromised the ‘...hierarchies of spaces and their relation with key built and landscape features...’ (Hamdani, 2011) and concluded that since 1947 the Mughal gardens have faced a sad depletion of their historical character. It is also around this time that one of the baradari in Chasma Shahi was demolished (Figure 6 and 7).

Figure 6 and 7. The bagh at Chasma Shahi with fruit trees and the now lost baradari, as photographed by Jean Hilary in 1929 (left), and the same garden area in 2010 with much of its integrity lost and the pavilion removed (right). Hilary, J. and Haenraets, J.

By the 1990s the gardens were visited and enjoyed by thousands of local and national visitors. The number of international tourists was still much influenced by the political climate and recurring periods of unrest and instability. By the 1990s the visitor facilities and the gardens themselves had an overall tired appearance and proper protection and appropriate preservation and presentation of the gardens remained a concern (INTACH J&K, 2005). By the late 1990s the Department of Floriculture continued to manage and maintain the most well-known and intensively visited gardens. Landscape aspects like planting schemes, flower displays and maintenance of lawns were the responsibility of the Department’s horticulture wing. The engineering wing of the Department handled civil works, such as the periodic maintenance of the water channels, the repair and upkeep of structures, the boundary walls and the construction of new features (Naqash, 2011). Since about 2000 the unrests in the valley due to the conflict have reduced, with more visitors, particular Indian, again finding their way to Kashmir and the Mughal gardens (Naqash, 2011). Several of the historic gardens can still be visited, but of the hundreds of Mughal gardens that once dotted the valley,
many of the gardens have been lost altogether. In many cases due to urban development, lack of funds or awareness, and it can be said that now only the ‘tip of the iceberg’ survives (Wani, 2011a). The appearances of the gardens that remain will also be much different from how they would have looked in their heyday. This is not only the case for the Mughal gardens in Kashmir, but as Kausar suggested, by the beginning of the 21st century there was most probably ‘...not a single Mughal Garden in the subcontinent which still retains its original landscape....’ (Kausar, 2006).

4 RECENT PRESERVATION INITIATIVES

4.1 Widening Research and Understanding

In the late 1990s the Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage, Jammu and Kashmir Chapter (INTACH J&K), a non-profit organisation, started to raise concerns about the sad depletion of the historical character of the gardens and the continuing threats (Beg, 2011). INTACH J&K and the main INTACH headquarters in Delhi recognised that there was an urgent need for better preservation, presentation and in-depth study of the Mughal gardens of Kashmir. Most importantly, INTACH J&K acknowledged that it was fundamental to enhance the understanding of the sites, their evolution and significance, and enhance preservation in line with the established international preservation methodologies and principles (Beg, 2011).

This was not a new concern and even as early as in 1913 Constance Mary Villiers-Stuart voiced how she could not understand that the Kashmiri gardens remain so ignored and neglected, in comparison with, for example the ‘Italian Baroque’ gardens. Villiers-Stuart questioned that ‘...When these Italian gardens are so much admired, photographed, and visited, why are the Mughal baghs of the Indian foothills...ignored?....’ (Villiers-Stuart, 1913). She was of the opinion that even the Chinese and Japanese gardens received more attention. In more recent years, new calls for improving the knowledge base have been voiced. For instance, James Wescoat raised in the late 1990s that the planned research project by INTACH J&K on the preservation of Mughal gardens was ‘...an opportunity to speak to modern interests in garden history and conservation in that embattled region....’ (Wescoat, 1999). Wescoat also concluded in his assessment of recent progress with research on Mughal gardens that over the past decades studies undertaken to assess the practical and comparative interests of Mughal gardens in Kashmir

‘...seem repressed, unvoiced, or underexamined...A research project on Kashmiri gardens, for example, would no doubt harbor some hope, however modest, for conservation and conciliation in that embattled region of multiple cultural identities. How can such practical aims be envisioned, articulated, and pursued?...we lack the theoretical and methodological apparatus needed for comparative practical inquiry. Probing conservation projects, linked with further historiographic research on Mughal gardens...might illuminate some of the possibilities, and pitfalls, for comparative research, and thereby contribute to a constructive reweaving of scholarly and practical interest in the gardens of the world....’ (Wescoat, 1999).

A major breakthrough occurred in 2004-05, when INTACH J&K and the INTACH headquarters in Delhi got approval for a project to survey three gardens and develop management guidance (Beg, 2011). The Department of Floriculture wished to undertake certain repair works on built structures in the gardens and there was an agreement that to inform such work a combined Preliminary Conservation and Management Plan that included the gardens of Shalimar Bagh, Nishat Bagh and Achabal Bagh would be prepared (INTACH J&K, 2005). This was a significant step towards recognition that the gardens require expert preservation planning to safeguard their historical significance, integrity and authenticity. This survey was a first of its kind in Kashmir and for INTACH J&K.

The proposals and recommendations of the Preliminary Plan convinced the Department of Floriculture, in partnership with INTACH J&K as architects, to progress by 2008 various on-site preservation actions of key buildings and structures (Hamdani, 2011). Some additional analysis of archival material and explorative archaeology at channels, structures and buildings further helped to inform these preservation works. Projects included the repair of the last surviving baradari at Nishat Bagh, the preservation of the Hamman at Shalimar Bagh, and the repair of the water channels, pools, cascades and baradaris at Achabal Bagh (Figure 8). In the meantime the Department of Floriculture continued day to day maintenance and presentation of the gardens and their planting schemes (Naqash, 2011).
4.2 Limitations of Initial Survey Work and Gaps in Expertise

While the Preliminary Plan and the start of on-site preservation works must be seen as major achievements, it was acknowledged that there were shortcomings in the planning process (Beg, 2011). Not only time and budgetary restrictions limited the depth of the Plan, but a gap in historic landscape preservation expertise in Kashmir restricted its scope (Haenraets, 2010b). As a result the Preliminary Plan had a strong focus on buildings and structures and major gaps remained regarding the survey of horticultural and landscape features, the wider historic landscape and areas beyond the garden (INTACH J&K, 2005). Without the inclusion of comprehensive landscape and horticultural survey documentation the recommendations and conclusions of the Plan remained incomplete and there was a risk that progressing initiatives on the basis of the plan could pose serious threats to the sites or cause irreversible damage (Haenraets, 2010b).

In addition to the Preliminary Plan, some survey and planning work occurred for other gardens. For instance, the Department of Floriculture requested in 2009 from INTACH J&K the preparation of a survey and development vision for Chasma Shahi (INTACH J&K, 2009). Proposals were formulated for redevelopment of the historic site, with a new restaurant and visitor centre, and the extension of existing terraces. However, similar shortcomings in available landscape expertise meant that within the context of international preservation methodologies, the completed landscape survey remained limited in scope and investigation (INTACH J&K, 2009). As a result, the redevelopment proposals were seen by Haenraets as major threats to the surviving historic fabric and Mughal design composition of Chasma Shahi (Haenraets, 2010b).

Another reason for concern was that such preservation and redevelopment proposals and actions occurred without firm legislative protection of these sites in place. In 2004 INTACH J&K prepared listing documentation for key Mughal gardens (INTACH J&K, 2005), but only in 2010 preliminary listing of some sites under the Jammu and Kashmir Heritage Conservation and Preservation Act No. 15 of 2010 progressed, with notification still pending. The relevance and urgency to address and improve the preservation needs of the gardens was further demonstrated by the inclusion of Nishat Bagh and Shalimar Bagh in the entry for the Srinagar Heritage Zone in the World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites of 2008 (World Monument Fund, 2008).

4.3 New Initiatives to Address Gaps in the Existing Surveys

Aware of the continuing threats to the gardens and the potential to improve their preservation and presentation, INTACH J&K and Haenraets started in 2010 with additional survey and research work (Haenraets, 2010a; Haenraets, 2010b). The initial objective was to address the shortcomings in the surveys and gaps in available expertise, and to continue work to achieve the ambition to progress the
long-term preservation of the sites within the spirit of international preservation methodologies and principles (Beg, 2011). For this purpose Haenraets first reviewed the Preliminary Plan from 2005 and established a framework methodology for a more comprehensive preservation management planning process (Haenraets, 2010b). The methodology reflected approaches in the United Kingdom and the United States, where several organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Trust, the National Trust for Scotland, the National Park Service and the Olmsted Centre for Landscape Preservation of the National Park Service have developed sound preservation management plan methodologies, such as the Cultural Landscape Report approach of the National Park Service. It was believed that only by addressing the gaps in the preservation methodologies and approaches, proper recommendations for the sites could be developed. Widening of the surveys also appeared essential to understand the full significance of the sites, their wider context and the impending threats to this heritage (Haenraets, 2010b).

Due to the 2010 unrests in Kashmir and valley-wide curfews and strikes the initial trial surveys looked predominantly at Nishat Bagh and Shalimar Bagh. Nevertheless, the survey produced new documentation and suggestions for: Site History and historical phases of development; Understanding of the *chahar bagh* concept in the gardens and the significance of the wider landscape; Development of landscape character areas for the gardens and wider landscapes; Historical key features and existing conditions by character zones; Treatment options and proposed treatment alternatives; and recommendations for management and further study (Haenraets, 2010a; Haenraets, 2010b). As part of the outcomes also draft Masterplan visions for Nishat Bagh and Shalimar Bagh (Figure 9) were developed. The investigations and reports were seen as draft versions and recommendations, which would require further investigation, consultation and expert input. It was however hoped that the framework structure and surveys could raise awareness and set an example, which would allow for a continuation of initiatives and adoption of the methodology to other gardens.

![Figure 9. A Masterplan vision for Shalimar Bagh to revive the *chahar bagh* concept and planting, as based on the 2010-11 investigations. Haenraets, J., Schwann, A. and Atelier Anonymous.](image)

### 4.4 Threats and Neglect in the Wider Garden Compartments

As mentioned, as a result of the Preliminary Plan of 2005 several on-site preservation actions were already taken forward by the Department of Floriculture (Naqash, 2011). However, the 2010 investigations also revealed that the garden management and presentation at Nishat Bagh and Shalimar Bagh by the Department of Floriculture focuses largely on areas along the central channels in the gardens. The garden compartments further away from this central axis received minimal maintenance attention (Haenraets, 2010a; Haenraets, 2010b). However, evidence from the 2010 surveys indicated that these compartments were significant parts of the overall composition and sophistication of these Mughal *baghs*. The 2005 Preliminary Plan still downplayed this significance and suggested that the Mughal
The Mughal gardens in Kashmir did not strictly follow the historic *chahar bagh* concept given the topography of Kashmir. The 2005 Plan indicated that the Mughal gardens in Kashmir often followed a more linear garden layout arranged around the central channel. Nishat Bagh was presented as an example of this approach (INTACH J&K, 2005).

The 2010 survey studied this central axis, but also reinvestigated the wider garden compartments within the boundary walls. The findings lead to the conclusion that these side compartments are an essential part of the composition and that the gardens’ dimensions and layout reflect the *chahar bagh* concept. The significance of this appeared to have been overlooked in Kashmir in recent years and in the current management of the sites. Haenraets suggested that the layout of the terraces is as complex and significant in the side compartments, as in the central axis (Figure 10). This potentially means that in Kashmir the *chahar bagh* principle was taken to another level and that this contributes towards a new typology of ‘Mughal Terrace Gardens’, which potentially can be a specific Kashmiri contribution towards Mughal garden history (Haenraets, 2010a). Further investigation would be required to fully understand the importance of these findings.

![Figure 10. The investigations of 2010 showed that in Nishat Bagh terraces exist throughout the whole garden. This sketch plan indicates the rough outlines of existing terraces. Haenraets, J.](image)

It is in these side compartments at Nishat Bagh that the majestic historic avenues of *chinar* trees can be found. Avenues and plantations of trees became a key component of the Kashmiri gardens’ geometrical ground plans, with the *chinar* having evolved as the most iconic tree in the Mughal gardens and parks of Kashmir (Wani, 2011). The *chinars* are used to frame vistas, such as the panorama from Nishat Bagh to Dal Lake.

The 2010 investigations also confirmed that the side compartments had been much damaged by inappropriate developments and changes. At Nishat Bagh and Shalimar Bagh various buildings and visitor facilities had been constructed in these compartments since the 1970s (Haenraets, 2010a; Haenraets, 2010b). A recent example of damage was observed during the authors’ investigations in 2011 when a *hauz* (water tank) on the central axis in Nishat Bagh was being restored and excavated. The surplus soil was deposited at the edge of one of the side terraces in a garden compartment that received little maintenance and therefore few visitors. This resulted in unplanned and undocumented changes to the historic contours of the terrace, a practice, which apparently had already altered terraces in the past. The preservation work of one feature lead as a result to the disfigurement of another significant feature. The new investigations also concluded that the presentation and horticulture in the side compartments was very poor, with many of the historic orchards lost (Haenraets, 2010a).
4.5 Threats to the Wider Historic Landscapes

When the new survey work started in 2010 and reviewed the findings of the 2005 Preliminary Plan, another significant conclusion was that gaps remained in the investigation of the historic landscape outside the baghs’ boundary walls (Haenraets, 2010b). Sources highlight though that the significance of the Mughal baghs in Kashmir rests much in the relationship between the gardens and the surrounding landscape. Wani pointed this out by stating that:

‘...another innovation made in the kinder land of Kashmir is that instead of separating the surrounding landscape, it is drawn inwards to the heart of the garden. Thus while in Persia we find a complete separation from the surrounding landscape, in Kashmir the garden walls were modified from the complete barrier of the Persian originals to allow the landscape and the garden to drift into each other. Certainly, the corner pavilions which we see in the Mughal gardens of Kashmir like Tudor and Jacobian gazabs were meant to enjoy the charming surroundings. After all, unlike elsewhere in the plains where there was inner paradise and outer deserts, in Kashmir the surrounding was a natural paradise...' (Wani, 2011a).

This confirms that in the Kashmir Mughal gardens the walled garden spaces engage with the wider settings and landscape. Using engineering skills the natural topography was sculpted into garden terraces, with the mentioned gazebos or viewing towers at its corners. With the terraces sloping down and trees such as the chinars in place to frame the views, the garden became a central part within a wider landscape composition, which captured the beauty of the place. Wani described how the Mughals ‘...invested their huge human and material resources to create paradies within paradise...' (Wani, 2011a). This implementation of the Islamic chahar bagh and Paradise Garden concept onto the topography of Kashmir, could be argued as having resulted in a highpoint of garden history.

While the importance of the wider landscape is most significant, it is however here that some of the most worrying cases of neglect and threats to the historic integrity of this heritage were observed during the investigations.

The Land Use Plan of the Srinagar Metropolitan Area, Master Plan 2000-21 (Srinagar Development Authority, 2003) gives stipulations for land use around the gardens and proposed that the Mughal gardens were to be expanded in order to meet the requirements of recreation for growing local population and tourists, and this to overcome the backlog of additional recreational land that is needed in Srinagar Metropolitan Area. However, by 2010 it became clear that in large areas of these designated areas already much illegal urban development had occurred (Haenraets and Hollingsworth, 2011a).

A good example of this is the Shalimar Canal between the walled garden and the Dal Lake, which even predates the Mughal garden. The Canal was the historic access route to the garden and it is set within a working cultural landscape with much integrity. Nevertheless, the Shalimar Canal has been much damaged by urban development and neglect, with as recent as 2011 a new asphalt road being constructed on its southern bank (Figure 11).

Acknowledging the importance of the wider setting of the gardens an initial landscape character assessment and viewpoint assessment for the buffer zones and wider landscapes around Shalimar Bagh and Nishat Bagh was prepared in 2011 (Haenraets and Hollingsworth, 2011a). The assessment mapped how inappropriate urban developments were damaging the integrity of the wider landscape. The assessment was also intended as a tool to inform required decisions about legal protection and the potential boundaries of a World Heritage Property and buffer zones.
Another concern arose when in 2011 the Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA) was exploring the idea to develop a new public park in the area of land at Shalimar Bagh that was designated in the Land Use Plan for park expansion. This concerned the rural land along the Shalimar Canal, between the garden and Dal Lake. A potential designation of this area as open space was positive, but the creation of a public park also raised concerns, given that this could result in turning this living rural cultural landscape into an urban public park. INTACH J&K together with Jan Haenraets and Melissa Hollingsworth therefore made in 2011 the suggestion to LAWDA to prepare a Masterplan proposal for this park (Haenraets and Hollingsworth, 2011c) (Figure 12). In the meantime a similar exercise was undertaken for Nishat Bagh Fore Shore, which also included an area designated for park expansion (Haenraets and Hollingsworth, 2011b). It was hoped that the Masterplan suggestions would raise awareness of the significance of these areas amongst LAWDA, and show that alternative approaches to the current damaging developments could help to safeguard the cultural landscapes, and assist with the environmental issues and pollution of Dal Lake. Urban encroachments and overly engineered lake and waterways developments had already altered the character and ecosystem of these features in a devastating and unsustainable manner (Haenraets, 2010b). Most importantly, from preservation perspective these spaces could function as key buffer zones for the Mughal gardens. The visions for these areas potentially could include new state of the art visitor and interpretative facilities, relocated parkings and retail facilities. However, LAWDA appears not to have altered its development intentions and since the preparation of the Masterplans various developments occurred, such as the new asphalt road along Shalimar Canal (Figure 11).
4.6 Towards UNESCO World Heritage Listing

The new findings and conclusions from the 2005 and 2010 surveys strengthened the position that the Mughal Gardens of Kashmir are of universal significance and should be considered for UNESCO World Heritage listing. To date no Kashmiri site has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The inclusion of the gardens in the UNESCO World Heritage List could bring much needed local, national and international attention to the significance and conservation of the gardens, but just as important, it can assist with enhancing the image of Kashmir to the wider public and world, and help to rejuvenate Kashmir as an internationally recognized cultural and heritage tourism destination (Beg and Haenraets, 2011).

The final UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List application was submitted in October 2010 to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) with the approval being confirmed in December 2010 (INTACH J&K and Haenraets, 2010). The serial nomination included six key gardens and it was suggested that the gardens nomination would qualify under the following three UNESCO criteria (Iqbal, 2011): ‘to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius’ (Criteria 1); ‘exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on development in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design’ (Criteria 2); and ‘to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates significant stage(s) in human history’ (Criteria 4) (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2008).

Well aware of the risks of limited preservation expertise in Kashmir, in May 2011 INTACH J&K and the University of Kashmir, with the support of the Department of Horticulture, organised an international seminar on the subject of ‘Mughal Gardens of Kashmir: Towards the UNESCO World Heritage nomination’ (Haenraets, Hollingsworth, and Aertgeerts, 2011). International Mughal gardens experts were invited to share experiences and expertise with the objective to arrive at recommendations for the preparation of the UNESCO World Heritage nomination dossier. The outcomes also added valuable insights to the development of sustainable management visions for the gardens (Beg and Haenraets, 2011). Following the seminar, INTACH J&K prepared initial funding applications to assist with the preparation of a comprehensive World Heritage Nomination Dossier and the required conservation planning documentation (Haenraets, 2011). However, the preparation and implementation of new long-
term visions and conservation management plans for the properties to achieve a UNESCO World Heritage Listing will demand a multi-disciplinary and integrated approach. With a limited number of trained preservation experts in Kashmir, the challenges posed by skills shortages remain a major issue in achieving the UNESCO listing and proper on-site conservation actions (Haenraets, 2011). The findings of the recent surveys and lessons learned from the international seminar also resulted in initial suggestions for the creation of a type of Mughal Gardens of Kashmir Conservancy and a potential Mughal Gardens World Heritage Office, such as parks conservancies in the United States, or World Heritage expert offices at key sites in the world (Haenraets, Hollingsworth, and Aertgeerts, 2011).

5 CONCLUSIONS
The Mughal gardens of Kashmir are part of a rich cultural and architectural heritage. They are important and irreplaceable physical evidence to the understanding of Mughal and Kashmiri history and Mughal Garden history. The paper illustrated that the gardens have much evolved over time and that threats and neglect occurred throughout the gardens’ lifespan. It is known that only the ‘tip of the iceberg’ of the over 700 Mughal gardens that once existed in Kashmir still remain.

The paper presented evidence of historic and new threats to this irreplaceable heritage and illustrated some of the recent preservation initiatives to address these issues. INTACH J&K has managed to raise awareness about the gardens to key organisation, governmental bodies and the public, while various preservation projects occurred on-site. The knowledge base about the significance and historic evolution of the gardens is now also continuously expanding. Nevertheless, the lack of landscape architecture and preservation expertise in Kashmir continues to cause concerns regarding the maintenance and management of key gardens and their wider historic landscapes.

An important conclusion from the new investigations is that more attention should be given to the understanding of the significance of the wider garden compartments. A recommendation from the recent investigations is that there is an urgent need to raise awareness amongst the management authorities of the significance of the landscaping, terraces and horticultural features in the wider garden compartments. Evidence suggests that the sophistication of the use of terraces in Kashmir contributes to a new typology of Mughal Terrace Gardens. Further in-depth research is required to investigate and verify these findings.

Another key conclusion from the investigations is that the significance of the cultural landscapes outside the walls of the Mughal baghs is not sufficiently recognised. The paper showed how these areas are severely at risk and suffered much from neglect and urban encroachment. Legal protection of the baghs, their wider historic landscapes and buffer zones is urgently required as the existing measures appear to fall short as effective protective measures.

The inclusion of the Mughal Gardens on the Tentative List for UNESCO World Heritage illustrates how there is a clear shift in attitude towards the gardens, but while the achievements have been extraordinary and must be applauded, there remains a massive amount of work to be done before it can safely be said that the Mughal garden heritage of Kashmir is sufficiently recognised, safeguarded and protected. While the momentum to prepare a UNESCO nomination dossier is a step forward, it also should not be forgotten that this project concerns only the most popular sites, while many other lesser-known sites that make a significant contribution to the wider Mughal gardens heritage exist and are in many cases at risk. An overarching Mughal Gardens of Kashmir initiative, such as the suggested Gardens Conservancy, could therefore play an important role in investigating all garden sites, and start with the compilation of an inventory, database and research archive.

To achieve such ambitions the paper pointed out that it is crucial to establish skills and expertise in Kashmir. With the new research and preservation actions, and the 2011 international expert seminar, an important first step has been made towards engaging more experts and the full re-examination and re-discovery of these gardens. These recent initiatives have created a momentum and it is the hope of the authors that new support can be created amongst the international landscape architecture and preservation communities in investigating this heritage and safeguarding the genius of the Mughal gardens of Kashmir.

6 REFERENCES


Srinagar: Greater Kashmir.

