

SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE: JAPANESE INFLUENCE ON LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE OF ISLAMABAD

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Introduction

Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, is among the few capitals of the world which were planned and constructed in the later half of the twentieth century and where landscape development was given prime importance. Greek planner Constantinos A Doxiadis was commissioned to prepare master plan of the capital city in 1959 and soon after construction work commenced on a virgin site. The master plan was based upon the philosophy of dynapolis and gave a lot of importance to nature. Doxiadis expressed this as "Nature provides the foundation upon which the settlements are created and the frame within which they function." The master plan divided the city into residential block each measuring 2 kilometer square. Each block was numbered from A to H from northwest to southeast and 1 to 20 from north east to south west. Each block was termed as sector. Thus sector F-9 was termed as Capital Park, now known as Fatima Jinnah Park was considered to be developed keeping in view the objectives of the master plan. The success of the objectives of the master plan was thought to be achieved with the collaborative efforts of master architect and landscape architects. The services of Landscape architects were hired right from the inception and implementation of the master plan. The idea behind such expert services was that after the implementation of landscape plan and looking at the importance of landscape in an urban environment, that other cities would follow the same exercise. Derek Lovejoy and Associates of Britain was hired as landscape design consultant for the new capital. However, Mr. Roy Takahashi, a Japanese Landscape expert under Colombo plan worked on the landscape of Capital Park and made an important contribution on developing relationship with nature in line with the Japanese tradition. The plan prepared by Takahashi was not fully implemented but important features were retained in the subsequent plans. These contributions have not been previously documented and will become focus of the present paper.

Landscape Design Concept of Capital Park

The site of capital parks located in sector F-9, slope north to south from 1880 to 1800 feet from mean sea level, play an important role in providing fresh air to the capital in addition to being an important source of recreation for the local inhabitants. The site is uneven with two perennial streams traverse it and join in the south providing strong basis for the master plan. The site was initially used for agriculture and therefore, had the potential for development as

a park of desired quality. The idea of large scale central urban park was approved in the late sixties. The initial concept of the park was prepared by Mr. Roy Takahashi, the Japanese landscape architect and graduate of Chiba University. He came to Islamabad in 1968 and stayed three years to work on the master plan of Capital Park, now known as Fatima Park. Ever since several proposals by the foreign as well as the local consultants were put forwards but none of them has fully implemented as yet but in all proposals the basic concept given by Takahashi remained the same. In early 1991, it was decided to hold national design competition but unfortunately again the result were not up to the required standard. Subsequently it was decided by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) board that the design prepared in 1971 by the landscape unit of the Authority in association with Mr. Takahashi may be adopted for the development of the park. Consequently, a loop road was developed to create different zones as perceived by the landscape architect. In 2005, it was felt to make another effort to review the plan once again and the work was entrusted to Mr. Nayar Ali Dada and Associates, a Pakistani firm, based in Lahore. The design prepared by Nayar Ali Dada and its so far implementation followed the Japanese landscape tradition. The local materials and elements taken from nature to be used in natural way formed the basis of the landscape design.

The basic design theme revolves around passive planning concept and uses functional and aesthetic requirement. The detailed design of variety of functional areas was considered to have their own identity maintaining unity in planning and visual form in the presence of vehicular and pedestrian pathways. Access to variety of areas has been designed keeping in view the topography and natural features of the site. The primary work which includes construction of fence work and loop road was completed in 1993 to provide access to following six functional zones: i). Formal garden and children amusement/play areas, ii). Educational area including sizable rock garden iii). Recreational area iv). Central Water Body (lake). v) Wood land / future city centre and finally vi) Area of Cuisine [1].

More recently the services of a Mr. Kitayama Yasuo, a leading landscape artist from Japan was hired to develop a Japanese-style garden in a portion of the Park for which initial modalities with the Capital Development Authority (CDA) have been finalized. This garden will be spread over an area of about four acres of land. According to the architect it will be a traditional Japanese garden with waterfalls being one of the key attractions in addition to bridges and ponds. As he said "I am not too sure about the water situation here but I will look into it, for water features will be an essential part of the garden," he said and hoped that the residents would feel great pleasure visiting the facility. Pakistani ingredients such as plants and flowers intended to be used in developing the garden with the help of local labor and gardeners as "I think Pakistanis' technique of using stone is of high quality and their skills are exceptional." According to Yasuo, "My first impression of the city was that it is very green and resembles Nagano." He hoped the garden he would eventually create here would help people learn more about the Japanese culture. "Our style of garden is not only good to look at, it is also a fine place to hold tea ceremonies [2]."



Fig. 1: (Left). Tee house under construction.



Fig.2: (Right): Use of natural rocks

The more important aspect of original concept and later interventions was the continuity of the idea of symbiosis between man and nature. In fact, the use of water, rocks and plants have been used in an intelligent manner without being dominating the man made intervention over the nature. Bridges over the perennial streams at different intervals united the different landscape zones with one another. The varying width of streams at interval helps to retain water in non rainy seasons to promote water harvesting. At the same time a number of collection ponds of rainwater harvesting have been constructed all over the park. The waterscape is further strengthened by the construction of the series of waterfalls either at the change of levels or building artificial mound lined with raw stones. In this way the water falls have been given a more natural look. The idea of use of waterfall has been derived both from the Japanese as well as Kashmiri landscape tradition [3].



Fig 3: (Left). Perennial stream and water harvesting cascades



Fig. 4: (Left). Use of stones in

The most important aspect of landscape design is the use of rocks in the natural manner. The rocks have been successfully used for the first time in Pakistan in this park. This particular feature clearly took inspiration from the Japanese tradition. The rocks and pebble stones have been used in parking areas, steps or simply arranged in a natural manner. A variety of shapes of rocks depicting movement, calmness and progression and development create liveliness in the natural environment.

The northeastern corner of the park has so far been largely developed where in addition to

above mentioned features an open air theatre has been developed following the natural topography of the site. In addition, a tea house having a thatch roof has been developed over the perennial stream. The tea house has been constructed in the depression with lowest level. The location at the lowest contour as well as use of natural materials integrated it well with the nature.

Local native trees, shrubs and ground covers have been used. Dense plantation along the ravines dominated the central areas and provided visual segregation between different parts of the park. In this way the only possibility of accessibility of one part with another is through loop road.

Conclusion

The project implemented so far gives a complete different outlook as compared to other parks in Islamabad or elsewhere in Pakistan. The inspiration taken from Japanese landscape tradition is a complete departure from earlier Mughal or English landscape tradition. This particular paper will discuss these themes in detail..

References.

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