

Zen Garden Tradition and Influence

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to draw a comparative analysis between the traditional Zen gardens that originated in Japan and China for the modern and transitional form of Zen gardens adopted in India. The author studied the historical origins of Japanese Zen gardens in eastern Culture. The paper discusses the change in the vocabulary of traditional Japanese Zen gardens concerning materials and designs. Leading to a division of study into two parts by studying the traditional Japanese ZEN gardens and changes in material and designs. The comparative study is done by considering the Zen gardens in Three countries – Japan, China, and India

Keywords

Eastern culture, Modern landscape, Tradition, Zen gardens, etc.

Introduction

Garden design throughout the world has been influenced by various cultures and rules that emerged in due course of time. Few which are recent and find deeper roots and evidence in history are Japanese gardens, Chinese gardens, Mughal gardens, etc. However, there are mentions of 'VAN' in Indian Puranas but the evidence is missing. Predominantly, cultures that emerged in different sectors of the world have a strong bonding with nature (Meng et al., 2018) (Nonaka, N., 2008). Several characteristics of this Culture and tradition are reelected in the built spaces and gardens. The treads of the traditional garden design are seen in modern gardens too. One of these gardens which are also based on healing therapies is ZEN Gardens.

Zen gardens thrived and developed in medieval Japan under religious, geomantic, and aesthetic influences (Aji, Artbanu., 2012). Their origin is around the 14th century by ZEN monk – Muso Soseki also known as the father of zen landscaping. The zen gardens are organic in design with local materials and basic arrangement. Unlike the Persian, Roman, and Mugal landscapes which are strict in geometry and a strong foreground to huge structures. The recreation of these ZEN gardens in the present or the location change has resulted in the influence of the current trends that are been meticulously seen. Thus, the objective of the research design are –

- 1 To understand elements of traditional zen garden
- 2 To study the evolution of zen gardens.
- 3 To evaluate and compare the zen gardens of Japan, China, and India

Literature study

The Typical traditional Zen garden or karesansui is a type of dry garden or the elements like stone, sand, wood, and a few plants extensively used in its designs. This is minimalist in nature. The designed components used are a bridge, stone lanterns, and statuary. This assembly is enclosed could be a courtyard or a fence (Nakase, I., 1988). As the gardens are dry and based on hardscape little change is seen with a season change. However, the design or pattern created in sand observes a constant change (Polat et al., 2010). The presence of these gardens is in temples and monasteries mainly for meditation.

Elements of traditional Zen Gardens

Rock / Ishi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The basic element of Japanese gardens are rocks to ishi . • The rocks symbolizes mountain or the figure of Buddha as a gesture of power and strength . • Stones also act as a symbol of welcome • Stones in water are used as a designed pathway • Classification of stones can be done as:- the main stone, accessory stones, unifying stones holding the arrangement together, and linking stones between the main and unifying stones



Fig -1 - Daisen (1509 – 1513) (internet)




Sand


- Granular Sand is one of the important and old element of landscape.
- The ground was played by washed sand so that it is purified and protected from animistic sprits.
- The sand is spread in rectangles or free flowing spaces to represent river.
- White Sand also is a part of front scape of important buildings like palaces etc. also seen in Imperial Palace in Kyoto.




Fig- 2- Ryoan-JI in Kyoto, JAPAN (16th century) (internet)





<p>Water:Mizu</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ponds, streams, and waterfalls are important elements to life, mizu, or the water element • Water is representation for purification and cleansing. • The silent water cover helps the reflection of the entire scape. • Water and water sound add on to the effect of meditation. <p>Falls have several symbolic overtures, and dripping indicates the passage of time.</p>
	<div data-bbox="715 752 1129 1093" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="639 1106 1209 1142">Fig 3 -Example: Daisen-in, Kyoto (internet)</p>
<p>Waterfall :Taki</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Japanese gardens include multiple waterfalls in design elements. • The waterfalls use real water for streams or ponds, and in Zen gardens gravels represent the dry streams. • Single-step cascades are commonly found in small scale and while huge waterfall is a part of bigger gardens. <div data-bbox="708 1458 1088 1711" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="639 1720 1209 1756">Fig 4 - Example: Tenryu-ji, Kyoto (internet)</p>


<p>Plant: Shokobutsu</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant selection is on priority with respect to colour and form. • Cherry trees with its pink flowers in spring, are strongly preferred along with plum , pine and bamboo. • Bamboo plant have a wind flow to create a sound used as healing in one of the ZEN principle.  <p>Fig 5 Example: Nanzen-ji, Kyoto(left) and Shinjuku Gyoen (right) (internet)</p>
<p>Bridge :Hashi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hashi, or bridges, are symbolizing the journey and connections of the inner and outer world. • The connection and walking on them provides a feel of transition and connection .  <p>Fig 6 Example: Daisen-in, Kyoto (internet)</p>
<p>Lanterns: Tenkeibutsu</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lanterns are used as symbols of enlightenment and are form of tenkeibutsu, or ornamentation • The typical garden lanterns are more functional rather than decoration.  <p>Fig 7 - Example: Snow lantern at Kenrokuen (internet)</p>

<p>Paths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways and walk ways are a strong element to connect all the view points of the gardens and also provide a visual axis. • Strolling gardens have circular pathways and stepping stones. • Pathway also help to segregate different areas
	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Fig 8 - Example: Various stone paths at Kotoin (left), Kiyosumi Teien (center) and Shugakuin Imperial Villa (right) (internet)</p> </div>




Evolution of Zen Gardens through Ages:










Time Period	Characteristics
<p>Early Japan (Before 794 AD)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The oldest type of Japanese garden were in the middle of nature and was marked by pebbles. • The Ise Shrines, whose temples are surrounded by vast pebbled areas is an early style. • After 16th century the japnes gardens have evidence influence from Chinese and buddhist cultures. • The main purpose of gardens was for imperial palaces and for leisure for important people • The ponds and streams were the replica of famous places replicas.

<p>The Heian Period (794-1185)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heian Period was comparatively calm and the capital was relocated from NARA to KYOTO. Art flourished in this period • The Shinden grounds were the part of Villas for recreation spaces like fishing and boating etc. • The Shinden Gardens were extensively described in the classic Tale of Genji. • The gardens inspired by Chinese landscape has ponds and islands with arched bridges. • Gravels covered the entire pathways and pavilions were facing water bodies.
<p>Periods of Kamakura and Muromachi (1192-1573)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in politics from the aristocratic to the military class led to the adoption of Zen Buddhism. • also resulted in a major shift from consumerism to spiritualism and Zen Buddhist concept had an impact on garden design. • The role of gardens shifted from leisure to meditation and religious advancement • Gardens got smaller retaining the elements • The water is represented by the arrangement of rock formations to represent dry cascade (karetaki) and by patterns drawn in sand to create a dry stream (karenagare).
<p>Period of Azuchi-Momoyama (1573- 1603)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tea gardens (Chaniwa) had already developed in earlier periods, but got importance during the Azuchi- Momoyama Period • They had rustic simple character even seen today. • Tea gardens are often modest and functional, • Stepping stone walk way is seen from entrance to tea house Stone lanterns were used for lighting and decoration, and a wash basin (tsukubai) is used to carry out ritual cleansing. • The tea house now has bigger gardens.
<p>The Edo Period (1603-1867)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Edo Period, garden design experienced a shift back from simplicity to consumption and relaxation. • As a result the size increased the elements like ponds, islands and bridges increased leading to multiple view points. • Huge bolder were retained from previous style.

<p>Gardens of the Present (1868 to present)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the Meiji Period, Japan was influenced by modernization and Westernization, with construction of city parks in western-style . • The previously private strolling gardens now were made public. • The shift of gardens creations from the hands of aristocrats, military, monks now is with politicians and industrialists. • The flower beds and large lawn areas are new elements added to the gardens in new areas of Tokyo .

Comparative Analysis of Zen Gardens of Japan, China and India

Element	Japan	China	India
Origin	Kamakur Period 1192 – 1338 KYOTO	Songdynasty 960 -1279	21st Century
Example	<p>Saihoji</p> 	<p>Suzhou garden</p> 	<p>Zen-Kaizen Ahmedab</p> 
Characteristics	Passive, grim, and minimalist, multiple view point place	Bold, exotic, and ornamental. structures, paths, and scenes	Peace, poise and simple, Concrete pathways

	 <p>Example: Rock Garden, Ryoan-ji, Kyoto</p>	 <p>Example: Suzhou garden</p>	 <p>Japanese garden Chandigarh</p>
<p>To block and to cover</p>	 <p>“Landscape changes at every step”</p>	 <p>“to block”</p>	 <p>“Landscape changes every step like Japan Zen garden”</p>
			

Conclusion:

Thus, the elements of the landscape and the Designs are strongly influenced by the culture and traditions of a particular society. The maximum growth of these Zen gardens is seen in the Medieval period. The reflection of these gardens is mainly at the elemental level as the traditions are hybrid with a hybrid culture (Tonder et al., 2002) (Saitō, Y., 2017).

Also, a strong change is seen due to the geographical change i.e. the use of soft landscapes in India with a heavy plantation in huge spaces.

The private and mediation usage shifted to massive gardens as public space taking away the purpose of granting strength and power.

Future design guidelines

The replication of these ZEN gardens must look into the factors of private and cozy mediation spaces rather than large public gathering spaces.

The factors of silence and light water sound to be retained with the original instruments rather than the advanced sound systems

The lighting again could be retained with the original lanterns rather than the dramatic modern lighting and automation of dramatic effects.

Thus, whenever the threads are drawn from the past to the present it is just not the physical characters to be considered but the essence lies in the spiritual and influencing

characters.

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