

## Abbas Abad Garden; A Bride with a Thousand Grooms

Abbas Abad Garden located in Behshahr county is a garden belonging to the Safavid era that is expanded in the suburban area representing a gorgeous bride in the heart of the forest at a height of about 400 meters above sea level. Its natural beauty with a picturesque landscape was so great that, despite being hard to reach area and the difficulty of operating construction, persuaded Shah Abbas Safavi to undergo building this garden in this area, as he kept it hidden from many people's eyes after completion. In confirmation of this idea, it can be mentioned that there is no specification or description of the garden spaces available in the historical documents. Its vicinity to the untouched and natural forest next to the built-in garden according to the geometry of Iranian gardening and the existence of a lake in the southern part of it, similar to a precious gem, has increased the inexpressible beauty and calmness of the garden. After the reign of Shah Abbas, the garden was abandoned, and consequently, due to the dominance of natural events, the built-in garden was buried in the heart of the forestry area, as the precious lake of Abbas Abad and the remains of Chartaghi in the middle of it were the only representatives of the garden, so that there was no request for this place except the residents of the neighboring villages. The garden was registered in the list of national monuments in 1967 despite the construction of a hydraulic dam in the area, and the presence of a building between the lake and the dam wall, with no trace of the remains of the built-in garden. The story of the garden did not end with this issue, and after the Islamic Revolution of Iran, by facilitating access to the area, new requests<sup>1</sup> for this area gradually appeared, as each of the interested organs took possession of the property. In the 90s (70s SH) following the initiation of excavation operations around the lake, the built-in area of the garden appeared and came out of the ground, as this gorgeous bride thoroughly presented itself again, and the reputation of the garden became more and more popular. Despite of all the adversities that occurred to this magnificent area, eventually, it become possible to be registered in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2011 together with eight other Iranian gardens. Following the registration, it was expected that all kind of organizations whether public or private, from national or domestic corporations, take their actions to protect the values and aesthetic aspects of this work; however, each organization was merely thinking about its interests to benefit from it; And meanwhile, it is only the Cultural Heritage of the country that has not benefited from it. Lowering the position and value of this unique garden to a place for vulgar<sup>2</sup> or 'negative tourism', exploiting it for trade purposes, benefiting specific groups from it merely for short-term profitable targets, and requesting their share will eventually turn this gorgeous bride into a crone, old woman over time, which increases the risk of removing it from the list of the world works; the level of vulgarity in this area is so high that even the domestic cultural tourists who come to this place for the fame of Abbas Abad Garden, have no desire to get off their cars, and leave the place regretfully for the careless approach is applied to this place. From the beginning of 2015 onwards, by disclaiming the cultural heritage organization of the country from the tourist areas of the place and around the lake, known as the forest park (Park-e Jangali), unfortunately, the situation of the garden as a registered work has been depreciated along with many intrusions in the location, inattention to the rules of the World Heritage, all have given an unpleasant appearance to the cultural landscape of the area and greatly destroyed the historical monuments in the area. The final shot was fired at this place following the approval of the Behshahr Master Plan by the 'Supreme Council of Urban Planning and Architecture' in August 2022, without consulting the Ministry of Cultural Heritage; as a result of this action, this sub-urban area was transferred to the jurisdiction of Behshahr city and its management was given to the municipality. The collection of unpermitted activities, unregulated authorizations, and unorganized presence of tourists coupled with harmful activities are the adverse outcomes of the two mentioned decisions. Certainly, the persistence of these activities, diminishing the power of Cultural Heritage, and the position of this world garden bring destruction to the Abbas Abad Garden and this gorgeous bride will be lost forever. What would happen, if Shah Abbas was alive today!!

1. Organizations such as Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization, the Regional Water Company, Enforcement Police, Private Sectors, and Municipality.
2. Kind of tourism with a low level of attention and careless activities that damage the cultural heritage and the environment.

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