

Sefideh Waterfall in Yazd Province attracts ecotourists and geologists



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Iranica Desk

The central province of Yazd, with a significant number of historical, cultural and natural sites, hosts a large number of Iranian and foreign travelers every year.

The province is home to a number of famous deserts; however, the vision of a waterfall in a desert setting is really something to see. Nodoushan is a city located in a mountainous region of the province where many people live on farms and have fruit gardens. Sefideh Waterfall of Nodoushan,

located two kilometers from Nodoushan-Meybod road, is among the most beautiful waterfalls in the country, chtn.ir reported.

The uniquely beautiful waterfall is surrounded by salt lamps, boiling springs and amazing landscapes. The white color of its water is due to the presence of lime salts and that is why it is called Sefideh Waterfall. 'Sefid' means 'white' in Persian.

This waterfall freezes strangely during the cold days of the year and creates a very stunning view. There are several small water-

falls in the vicinity of this natural attraction and on the water flow path from the heights to the plains. This waterfall irrigates the pastures of the region, the economy of which is highly dependent on livestock breeding.

Moreover, due to its unique geological features, the waterfall attracts a significant number of geologists to the area, which is known as a geotourism site.

A great number of tourists traveling to the mountainous area are ecotourists who are interested in hiking and rock climbing.

Sefideh Waterfall was inscribed on Iran's National Heritage List in 2007.

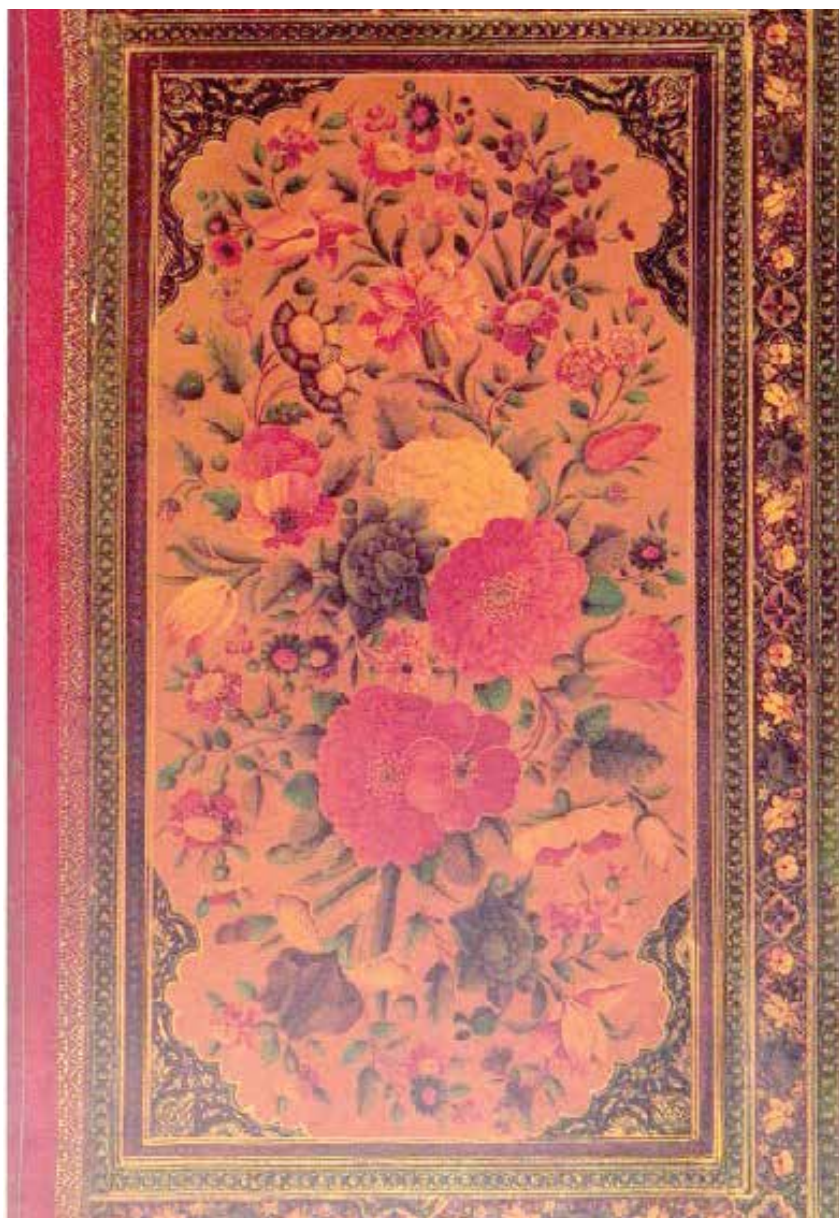
Various species of animals including leopards, rams, sheep and goats, birds such as partridges, eagles, chats and reptiles such as agama, geckos and Schokari sand racer live around the waterfall.

The spring season, when the waterfall is roaring thunderously, is the best time to travel to Nodoushan.

However, those interested in snow and ice can visit the region in the winter.



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Marginal and book covers designs

Decorated bookbindings were an important feature of Islamic manuscripts, the designs on the covers, both inside and out, incorporating arabesques and floral motifs similar to those used on illuminated pages within the book.

Most Islamic bindings have an extra triangular flap attached to the back cover which folds over the pages and tucks into the front cover to protect the edges of the leaves and to keep out dust.

The outside of the flap and the covers were often stamped with a central medallion or oval shield decorated with floral and arabesque designs which incorporated animals and birds in the designs. These were either gilded or left plain. The inside of covers would be decorated with arabesque designs cut out of paper or leather and pasted over a blue or gold background. The Persian preference was for gilded paper on either a background of lapis lazuli blue or sometimes of a network of square or rectangular and oval shapes in dark or pale blue, green, pink and orange which gave a patchwork effect. Turkish bookbinders favoured finely brown leather arabesques stuck on a deep blue background.

By the 16th-century Safavid Period in Iran, painted and lacquered covers were used on particularly fine manuscripts. Made of papier-mache or thicknesses of paper glued together, the bindings were covered in layers of transparent lacquer. The same kind of scenes which appear as illustrations within a manuscript would be painted on the outside. These includ-

ed festivities in gardens. Although the paint has a tendency to flake some very fine painted covers have survived. In Iran both in the 18th century and particularly in the 19th century during the Qajar Dynasty and the reign of Fat'h alishah, elaborate flower paintings on the outside of covers with a single flower, perhaps an iris or narcissus, painted on the double covers were very popular. Lacquered and painted covers were a feature of Mughal manuscripts also but Turkey continued the tradition of leather bindings usually stamped with a design although arabesques were sometimes painted in gold directly on to the covers.

Another form of book ornamentation was the decorations of the borders of pages using floral and animal designs. These occur in Persian manuscripts from the 14th century and were nearly always painted in gold. Some of the finest are to be seen in the Khamseh of Nizami for every page is embellished with different designs painted in two tones of gold. Silver was also used, mainly for waterfalls and streams and for the hoofs and horns and antlers of animals, but as so often happens with silver it has turned black from oxydisation. Trees, plants and flowers figure widely in the landscapes in these border paintings against which animals are seen at play or hunting. The simpler floral designs are mainly used for the borders of miniatures so that the eye is not distracted from the central theme.

Like miniature painting the art of the border decoration was introduced into

Mughal India and Turkey by Persian artists. And, in the same way, over the years, the Mughal and Turkish artists developed their own characteristic styles. The Mughal artists introduced human figures into the designs, a feature seldom seen in Persian manuscripts. Where figures do appear in 17th-century Persian works the artists may well have been influenced by Mughal designs.

The Indian artists maintained floral and arabesque motifs and also introduced compositions into border paintings which were far more ambitious and, although painted in gold, were miniatures in their own right. Indigenous trees such as palm, pipal, banyan and mango joined the willow, Cyprus and poplar in the more sumptuous designs.

Colours was introduced in the figures, a feature not seen in Persian border painting, and Mughal borders began to be used to extend the themes of miniatures.

In Turkey, too, the indigenous artists absorbed the Persian traditions of painting and then proceeded to decorate the borders in their own characteristic style. They adhered to the main theme of floral or arabesque design but introduced realistic or fanciful drawings of particular flowers, fruit, animals and people as well as grotesque caricatures, all in the finest gold. Seventeenth-century manuscripts were often decorated with cut-out or collage work of flowers and other designs pasted round the edges of the pages. Some of this work was very fine, both in execution and delicacy.

A /recovered and painted book cover

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a book entitled, 'Plants and Gardens in Persian Mughal and Turkish Art', written by Norah Titley, published by British Library. The photo was taken from the book.