Rooftop Landscape, Life in the Heart of the Sky

Cool nights, starry sky, dawn breeze and companionship with the neighbors have given rise to the tradition of nocturnal life on the rooftops of the Iranian houses. The disordering of the ordinary life and movement to new places provide the households with fervor every night; it seems as if they go to a party at night and normal persons appear in new roles. The same is also happening on the neighbor's roof. The beds are spread on the rooftop from the early sunset to become cold; they eat night snacks and spread the dinner table in the faint light of the lamp that cannot suppress the darkness of the night.

The nocturnal life on the roof expands the domain of the individual and social perceptions. The experiencing of the night, sky, star, breeze and fear brings about another perception of the nature that cannot be achieved during the day. Cognition acquires a stronger instrument and the experience of the nature occurs more subtly. The book of the nature becomes more legible for the human being who experiences its various moods and forms. Solitariness, privacy and tranquility set the ground for a trip to the inward soul and discovery of its deep world. Human beings of yesterday were more nature-loving and introverted due to, inter alia, their living in such situations.

The social life was also strengthened in the same way. The neighbors who were separate from one another in the privacy of the walls lived in close vicinity of each other at nights on the top of the roofs with a privacy of a small distance. They ate each other's dinner and had more interactions with one another. The normal life seemed to have another meaning. Another life began at nights with the rooftops being the locus of its flow. The concept "neighbor's daughter" was created in these interactions with the meaning of a "familiar gem" that could lead to the formation of a new family.

The best function of the space is when it can influence the conceptions and relations of the users, deepen the human recognition and set the ground for the formation of a community. Nocturnal gathering on the rooftop has been frequently represented in novels, films and paintings, which can also be dealt with as the subject in the new studies.

The society's reaction to the change in the houses' architecture and the emergence of the high-rise apartments seminally caused the desertion of the roofs that were subsequently turned into abandoned spaces, places for storing additional objects and fixing of building's installations. Therefore, the rooftops visage was disordered as the result of humans' inattention to them.

The rooftop gardens gradually came about in the contemporary life. In the first specimens, the rooftop garden was created in Corbusier Residential Complex in Marseille, France, as a modernistic accomplishment compensating for the lack of yard and as a garden for the low classes. Later on, rooftop garden became a luxurious and expensive tool for glorifying the rich persons' houses and symbolizing their distinction. In a functionalistic approach in the cities with high frequency and volume of rain, rooftop garden was transformed into the instrument of collecting water and managing surface waters.

It appears that the capacities of the rooftop are so many to be welcomed by the landscape architects and it is by the revitalization of the lost landscape of life on rooftop that part of the shortages of the today's human being can be met in line with the elevation of the housing quality.

Editor-in-Chief
Seyed Amir Mansouri
amansoor@ut.ac.ir