



In 1924, New York publisher Condé Nast built a duplex apartment on a rooftop on 1040 Park Avenue. Decorated by interior designer and socialite Elsie de Wolfe, the grand space, with its 75ft conservatory and multiple entertaining spaces, became famous for lavish parties. It was one of the earliest examples of the penthouse apartment – a typology that has since been associated with luxury, where those with means can enjoy a home and open space in the heart of the city, far from the crowded streets below.

... Meanwhile, in Delhi the roofspace is vanishing. Since India's economy liberalised in the 1990s, its planning laws have changed to allow increasingly high-rise construction in residential areas – raising the allowance to four storeys led to the demolition of family homes to make room for developer-built apartments. “Real estate in Delhi is so expensive now that it doesn't make sense for anyone to not use buildable space,” says Sonali Rastogi, a member of the public conservation group Delhi Urban Arts Commission and co-founder of architecture practice Morphogenesis. “And that has led to the decline of the barsati.”

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