

Field Work



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B. A History (H)
2016-19 Batch



CASE STUDY.

Qutub Minar

1. When was it built: Construction started in 1192 and completed in 1220. Restoration works/additions were made in 12th century, 14th century and 19th century.
2. Who built it: Qutb-ud-Din Aibak, Iltutmish added 3 storeys, Firoz Shah Tughluq carried out restoration work.
3. What makes it special: Indo-Islamic architecture.
5. Which organisation looks after the monument's conservation: UNESCO and ASI.
6. How to reach? By Metro - board from any DMRC station and reach Qutub Minar station and then follow rail map to reach the minar; by DTC buses; by Hop On Hop Off sightseeing Bus service offered by Delhi Tourism.

Qutub Complex.

Qutub Minar or Qutb Minar, a 73m (240ft) high tower made of red sandstone and marble is not only the highest brick minaret in the world but also one of the most famous historical landmarks of India. The construction of this tower was started by the founder of the Mamluk Dynasty in Delhi, Qutb-ud-Din Aibak and completed by his successor and son-in-law Iltutmish. Located in the heart of Delhi, this UNESCO World Heritage Site, visible from different parts of the city attracts thousands of visitors every day. It is one of the most popular tourist spots in India and a must visit tourist spot in the itinerary of first time visitors to Delhi, both national and international.

History of this Colossal Tower.

Qutb-ud-Din Aibak, the founder of the Turkish rule in north-western India and also of the Mamluk Dynasty in Delhi commissioned the construction of this monument in 1192 A.D. Aibak dedicated the minaret to the Muslim Sufi mystic, saint and scholar of the Chisti Order, Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki. Different beliefs surround the origin of the minaret.

While some sources believe it was constructed as a tower of victory marking the beginning of Muslim dominion in India, some others say it served the muezzins who called the faithful to prayer from the minaret. Uncertainty hangs around naming of the tower with some suggesting it was named after the Sufi saint, Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki while others believe it was named after Aibak himself.

The tower was completed by Aibak's

son-in-law and successor Shams-ud-din Iltutmish, regarded as the founder of the Delhi Sultanate, in 1220. Iltutmish added three more storeys to the monument. This historical monument faced a few natural disasters. A lightning hit the top storey of the minaret in 1369 A.D., knocking it off entirely. The then ruler of the Sultanate of Delhi, Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq, took charge of its restoration and constructed two more storeys to the minaret made of marble and red sandstone. Again when an earthquake damaged it in 1505, the then Sultan of Delhi, Sikander Lodi, reconstructed the top two storeys of the minaret with marbles. Perso-Arabic and Nagari characters engraved in various sections of the minaret speak about the history of its construction. The minaret faced the wrath of nature yet again when a major earthquake on September 1, 1803 damaged it severely. In 1828, it

was renovated by Major Robert Smith of the British Indian Army, who installed a cupola atop the tower. However, in 1848, as instructed by the then Governor General of India, Henry Hardinge, 1st Viscount Hardinge, the cupola was uninstalled from the tower and placed in the east of it where the cupola remains situated.

Architecture of the Minaret.

The 73m (240ft) high tapering minaret has a base with diameter 14.3m (47ft) and diameter of 2.7m (9ft) at top. There are six storeys in the minaret with the first three constructed with red sandstone and the next three with sandstone and marble. A circular staircase of 379 steps allows one to reach the top of the tower to witness a panoramic view of the city. Verses from the Qur'an are etched on the bricks of the minaret that are covered with elaborate iron

carvings. Each storey of the tower has a projected balcony surrounding the minaret and supported by corbels that are ornamented with Muqarnas or honey-comb vault, a type of architectural ornamented vaulting. The architectural styles developed over different eras starting from the time of Aibak till that of Tughlaq, as also the materials used in construction of different stages of the tower are conspicuously varied. The tower is tilted from 65 cm above the ground.

The Qutb Complex.

A number of monuments and buildings that are historically significant and associated with the minaret surround it and the whole area forms part of the Qutb complex. The structures inside the complex include the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, the Iron Pillar of Delhi, the

Tomb of Imam Zamin, the Tomb of Alutmish and Major Smith's Cupola among others.

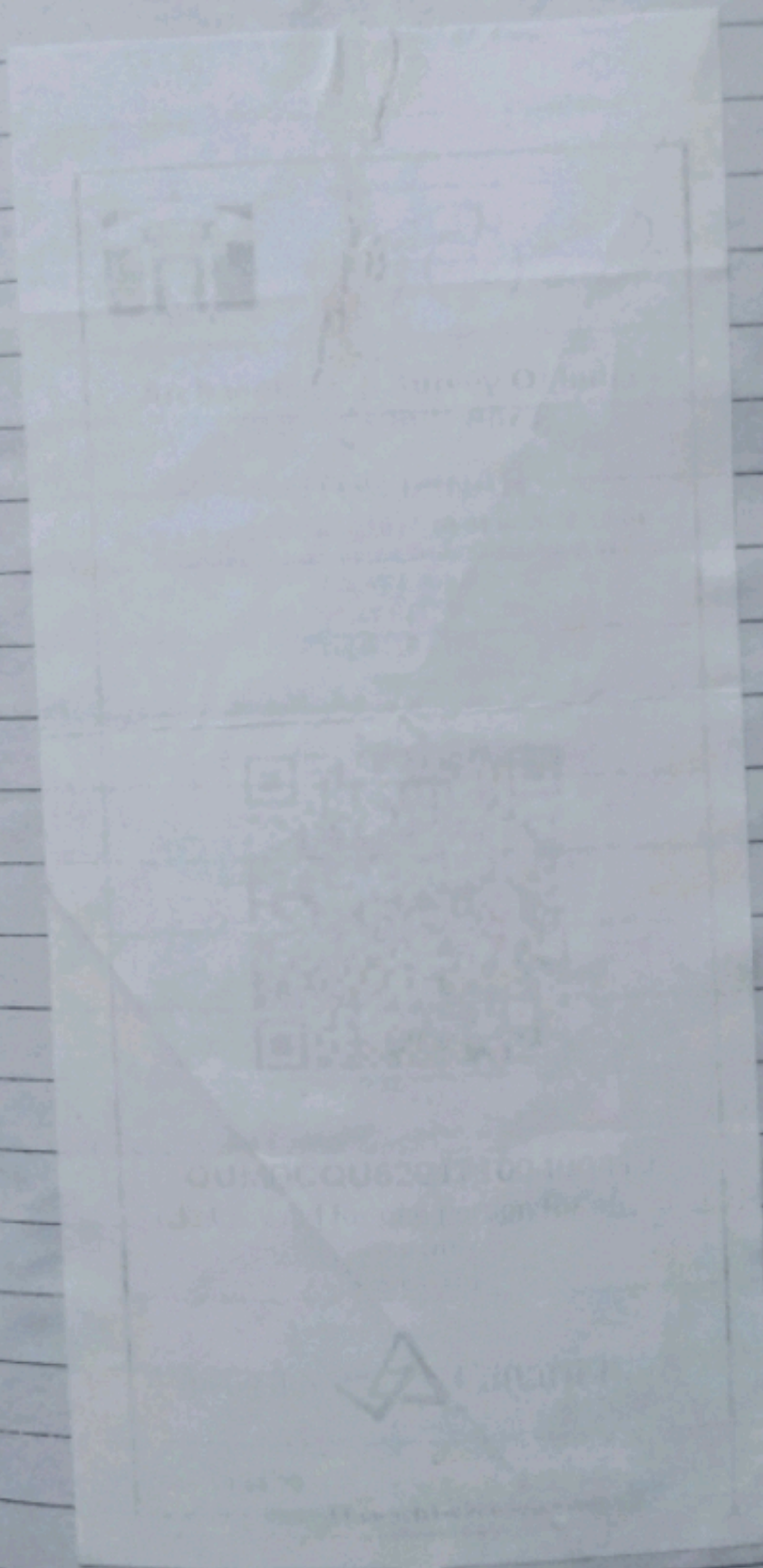
Of these the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque located at the north-east foot of the minaret holds significance as the first mosque that was constructed in India. Commissioned by Aibak, the construction work of the mosque started in 1193 and completed in 1197. This magnificent structure consists of an inner and an outer courtyard ornamented with shafts, most of which were taken from the 27 Hindu and temples demolished to build the mosque. A provocative inscription carved over the eastern gate of the mosque records such information manifesting the presence of typical Hindu-Tanka ornamentation in a Muslim mosque.

Another notable attraction inside the

Qutb complex is the 7m (23ft) Iron Pillar, a rust-resistant iron column that not only attracts tourists but also draws attention of archaeologists and material scientists. This pillar from the Gupta Empire has Brahmanic inscriptions. It is commonly believed that if one can embrace the pillar with both hands while standing with one's back facing the pillar then his/her wish gets fulfilled.

A masterpiece of the medieval age India, the Qutub Minar has over times remained one of the most popular tourist spots in Delhi and a recent collaboration with ASI has made it possible to have a 360° walk through of the tower.

TICKET



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