

Identification

<u>Nomination</u>	The Qutb Minar and its Monuments
<u>Location</u>	Delhi
<u>State Party</u>	India
<u>Date</u>	26 October 1992

Justification by State Party

The rust-free iron pillar is standing testimony to the metallurgical skill of ancient Indians, while the Quwwatu'l-Islam mosque is the earliest extant mosque in northern India. Qutb Minar is the most unique monument of the ensemble - an architecturally eloquent, visually arresting, and well preserved lofty minaret.

History and DescriptionHistory

Lalkot is the first of the seven cities of Delhi, established by the Tomar Rajput ruler, Anang Pal, in 1060. The Qutb complex lies in the middle of the eastern part of Lalkot.

Building of the Quwwatu'l-Islam (Might of Islam) congregational mosque was begun in 1192 by Qutbu'd-Din Aibak and completed in 1198, using the demolished remains of Hindu temples. It was enlarged by Iltutmish (1211-36) and again by Alau'd-Din Khalji (1296-1316).

The Qutb Minar was also begun by Qutbu'd-Din Aibak, in around 1202 and completed by his successor, Muhammad-bin-Sam. It was damaged by lightning in 1326 and again in 1368, and was repaired by the rulers of the day, Muhammad-bin-Tughluq (1325-51) and Firuz Shah Tughluq (1351-88). In 1503 Sikandar Lodi carried out some restoration and enlargement of the upper storeys.

The iron pillar in the mosque compound was brought from elsewhere in India. It bears a 4th century AD Sanskrit inscription describing the exploits of a ruler named Chandra, believed to be the Gupta king Chandragupta II (375-413).

Of the other monuments, the Tomb of Iltutmish was built in 1235 by the ruler himself and Alai Darwaja was built in 1311 by Alau'd-Din Khalji, who also began the construction of the Alai Minar.

Description

The Quwwatu'l-Islam mosque consists of a courtyard, cloisters, and a prayer hall. The high arched screen facing the prayer hall was added in the 14th century.

The Qutb Minar is a column built of red and buff sandstone blocks rising to a height of 72.5 m, tapering from 2.75 m diameter at the top to 14.32 m at the base, making it the highest stone tower in India. In addition to its traditional use for calling the faithful to prayer, it also has a monumental purpose, since a later Nagari inscription calls it Alau'd-Din's "victory monument" (Vijaya-stambha). In its present form it consists of five storeys, the topmost of the original four storeys having been replaced by two storeys during the reign of Firuz Shah Tughluq. Each storey is separated from the next by highly decorated balconies, with pendentives and inscribed bands. The three earlier storeys are each decorated differently, the lowest being of alternating angular and rounded flutings, the second with rounded flutings alone, and the third with angular flutings alone; the same vertical alignment continues, however, through all three storeys. The whole structure was originally surmounted by a cupola, which fell during an earthquake and was replaced by a new cupola in late Mughal style in the early 19th century. This was so incongruous that it was removed in 1848 and now stands on the lawns to the south-east of the minaret.

The Iron Pillar is 7.02 m in length, 0.93 m of this being below ground. It is built up of many hundreds of small wrought-iron blooms welded together and is the largest known composite iron object from so early a period. The remarkable lack of corrosion is attributable to the combination of several factors, among them the high corrosion-resistance of wrought iron, the climatic conditions in Delhi, and the likelihood that it was frequently anointed with ghee (melted butter). The deep cavity at the top suggests that it may at one time have been crowned by a Garuda image.

The ornate Tomb of Iltutmish is in the north-west corner of the mosque. It consists of a square chamber of red sandstone with the tomb itself in the centre on a raised platform. The lower part of the interior is covered with fine Islamic carvings and arabesques. There is a marble mihrab in the centre of the interior west wall.

The Alai Darwaza, built in red sandstone and elaborately carved, is the southern entrance to the enlarged enclosure of the Qutb complex. The Alai Minar, to the north of the enclosure, is the base of a second minaret which was to overtop the Qutb Minar. It was begun by Alau'd-Din-Khalji, but he died before it reached the first storey and work on the structure was abandoned.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The Qutb Minar group of monuments is owned by the Government of India and protected under the Ancient Sites and Remains Act

1958. The area around the complex has recently been declared a Heritage Zone by the Governor of the region: one immediate effect of this has been the rerouting of a main road that previously passed in front of the entrance.

Management

The complex is managed by the Archaeological Survey of India, using the Consolidated Funds, and is open to the public.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The Qutb Minar has constantly been the object of restoration and maintenance work since it was built in the early 13th century. In addition to the 14th century reconstruction after lightning strikes, it was also repaired between 1805 and 1828 following major earthquake damage in 1803. In 1920 bulging of the facing stones necessitated repairs, and major structural work was carried out in 1944-9 to deal with similar problems, when the affected areas were replaced using lime mortar and stainless-steel dowels. The foundations were strengthened by grouting in 1971-2, and further work was carried out in 1989-92 to replace damaged facing blocks and strengthen the inner core.

As with all monuments in the care of the Archaeological Survey of India, there is a regular annual monitoring and maintenance programme, combined with a rolling programme of special restoration projects. Regular maintenance and restoration work is carried out on all the elements of the complex, and the gardens have been laid out and maintained.

Authenticity

In view of the damage wrought to the Qutb Minar by lightning strikes and earthquakes, coupled with increasing atmospheric pollution in the past half-century, it is not surprising that the minaret should have been the subject of periodical restoration and reconstruction work. The authenticity of many of the existing facing stones is not great in terms of age; however, replacement has been carried out with scrupulous attention to accuracy in techniques, tools, and materials, as studied by an ICOMOS expert while the work was in progress. The remaining monuments within the complex do not suffer from the same stresses as the minaret and restoration work on them has been minimal, so that the level of authenticity is high.

Additional comments

The nomination dossier gives no indication of a buffer zone around the monument. However, all protected monuments in India are surrounded by a 100 m zone in which all development is strictly controlled by the Archaeological Survey of India, and by a further 300 m zone within which all proposed development has to be submitted to the Survey for comment.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criterion iv:

- Criterion iv The religious and funerary buildings in the Qutb Minar complex represent an outstanding example of the architectural and artistic achievements of early Islamic India.

ICOMOS, October 1993

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREA QUTB

