

Name; waqar ahmad

ID ; 16117

Sec ; A

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Indo Islamic architecture

The medaeval period saw great developments in the field of architecture in India. With the coming of Muslims to India, many new features came to be introduced in buildings. The development of Muslim Style of Architecture of this period can be called the Indo-Islamic Architecture or the Indian Architecture influenced by Islamic Art. The Indo-Islamic style was neither strictly Islamic nor strictly Hindu. It was, in fact, a combination of Islamic architecture elements to those of the Indian architecture. The architecture of the medieval period can be divided into two main categories - **Architecture of the Delhi Sultanate** or the Imperial Style and the **Mughal Architecture**. The Imperial Style developed under the patronage of the Sultans of Delhi. The Mughal Architecture was a blend of the Islamic Architecture of Central Asia and the Hindu Architecture of India.



The Delhi Sultanate was predominantly spread in and around Delhi in North India and it slowly spread its rule across several parts of the Indian subcontinent for over three centuries starting from 1206 to 1526, particularly during the Tughlaq Dynasty. The rule of the sultanate comprised of five successive dynasties starting from the **Mamluk Dynasty** whose founder in Delhi, Qutubudin Aibak, also the founder of the Turkic dominion in north-western India, became the first sultan of Delhi. The three of the other four successive dynasties namely the **Khilji Dynasty, the Tughlaq Dynasty** and the **Sayyid Dynasty** respectively were also of Turkish origin. The last dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate was an Afghan Pashtun dynasty called the **Lodi Dynasty** that was founded by Bahlul Khan Lodi. The dynasty saw its fall under the reign of Ibrahim Lodi after it faced defeat at the hands of Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire in 1526, which brought an end of the Delhi Sultanate.

During the rule of various Sultans, several politically significant Hindu temples located in enemy states were vandalised, damaged and desecrated and the development of Indo-Islamic architecture initiated. The grand and imposing edifices and monuments constructed by the Sultans of the Delhi Sultanate stand as the first illustration typifying Indo-Islamic style of architecture. A mix of Indian and Arabic styles of architecture emerged during the Delhi Sultanate that, as opined by Sir John Marshall, developed into a peerless form of art and

architecture comprising of architectural brilliance of both Hindu and Muslim artisans.

Some of the unique features of architectural styles preferred by the Delhi Sultanate are palpable from their palaces that adorn elaborately decorated and embellished arches and domes. Teachings from the Holy Quran and various floral patterns are visible in the arches while swastika, lotus, bells and other Hindu motifs used widely by the sultans form parts of other embellishments of the palaces thus giving them a grand and exquisite appearance.

The Qutb Complex

The 'Qutb Complex' comprising of a number of historically significant monuments and buildings is one of the foremost examples of Indo-Islamic architecture. Some of the important constructions of the complex include the 'Qutb Minar', the 'Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque', the 'Tomb of Iltutmish', the 'Tomb of Imam Zamin', the 'Iron Pillar' of Delhi, and Major Smith's Cupola.

'Qutb Minar' - The 73 m (240 ft.) colossal tower called '**Qutb Minar**' made of red sandstone and marble located within the complex stands not only as the highest brick minaret in the world but it is also as one of the most famous tourist attractions in India. Construction of this UNESCO World Heritage Site was initiated by Qutb ud-Din Aibak, the founder of the Mamluk Dynasty in Delhi, in 1200 AD and completed by his successor and son-in-law Iltutmish in 1220 AD. This minaret was dedicated by Aibak to the Muslim Sufi mystic saint and scholar of the Chishti Order, Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kali.

The fortified city of Tughlaqabad built by emperor Ghiyath ud Din Tughluq; the fourth medieval city of Delhi called *Jahanpanah* and the 'Adilabad Fort' built by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, son of Ghiyath ud Din Tughluq; and the Ferozabad fort and palace constructed by Firoz Shah Tughluq, successor of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, marks the architectural style of the Tughluq dynasty.