



Figure 22.1 shows the first balcony of the Qutb Minar. Qutbuddin Aybak had constructed this monument in Delhi around 1199 CE. Notice the pattern created under the balcony by the small arches and geometrical designs. Can you find two bands of inscriptions under the balcony? These are words written in Arabic. Notice that the surface of the minar is curved and angular. Placing an inscription on such a surface requires great precision. Only the most skilled craftsmen could perform this task. Remember that very few buildings were made of stone or brick 800 years ago. What would have been the impact of a building like the Qutb Minar on observers in the thirteenth century?

Between the eighth and the eighteenth centuries, kings and their officers built two kinds of structures: the first were forts, palaces and tombs – safe, protected and grandiose places of rest and the second were structures meant for public activity including temples, mosques, tanks, wells, caravan *serais* and *bazaars*. Kings were expected to look after their subjects, and by making structures for their use and comfort, rulers hoped to win their praise. Construction activity was also carried out by others including merchants. They built temples, mosques and wells. However, domestic architecture – large mansions (*havelis*) of merchants – has survived only from the eighteenth century.

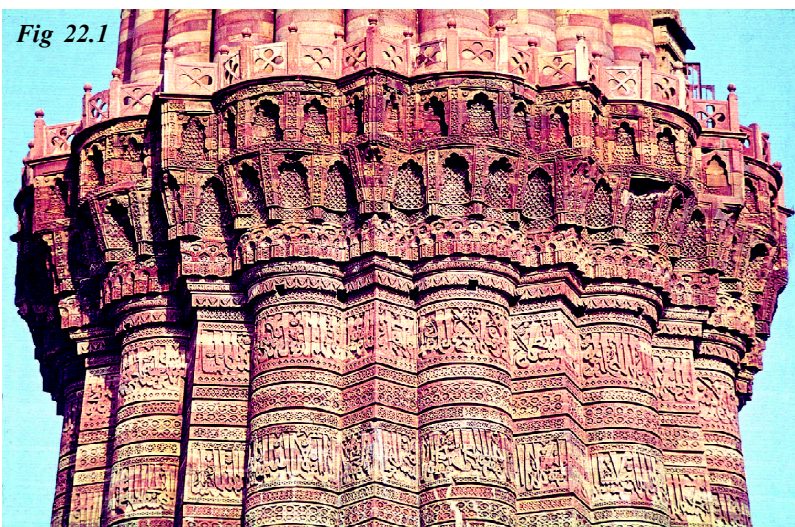


Fig 22.1

Figure 22.1: Qutb Minar is five storeys high. The band of inscriptions you see are under its first balcony. The first floor was constructed by Qutbuddin Aybak and the rest by Iltutmish around 1229. Over the years, it was damaged by lightning and earthquakes and repaired by later kings.