

The capital originally consisted of five component parts: (i) the shaft (which is broken in many parts now), (ii) a lotus bell base, (iii) a drum on the bell base with four animals proceeding clockwise, (iv) the figures of four majestic addorsed lions, and (v) the crowning element, *Dharmachakra*, a large wheel, was also a part of this pillar. However, this wheel is lying in a broken condition. The capital without the crowning wheel and the lotus base has been adopted as the **National Emblem** of Independent India.

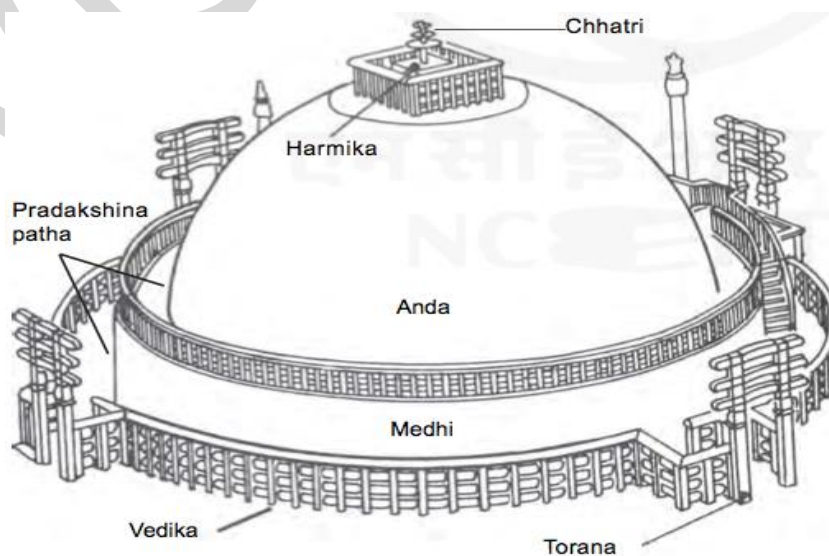
The surface of the sculpture is heavily polished which is typical of the Mauryan Period. The abacus has the depiction of a *chakra* (wheel) having twenty four spokes in all four directions and a bull, a horse, an elephant and a lion between every *chakra* is finely carved. The motif of the *chakra* becomes significant as a representation of *Dharmachakra* in the entire Buddhist art.

4.2. Stupas

The *stupa* was not unknown in India before the time of Ashoka. From the time Ashoka divided up the existing body relics of the Buddha and erected monuments to enshrine them, the *stupas* became the objects of cult worship. In Buddhist tradition, originally the 9 *stupas* were built after the death of Buddha - 8 of them over the relics and 9th over the vessel in which the relics were originally deposited. *Stupas* were constructed over the relics of the Buddha at Rajagaha, Vaishali, Kapilvastu, Allakapa, Ramagrama, Vethadipa, Pava, Kushinagar and Pipplavina.

The core of the *stupa* was made up of unburnt brick and the outer face of burnt brick, covered with thick layer of plaster. The *stupa* was crowned by an umbrella of wooden fence enclosing a path for *pradakshina* (circumambulatory path). One of the best examples of the structure of a *stupa* in the third century BCE is at Bairat in Rajasthan. It is a very grand *stupa* having a circular mound with a circumambulatory path. The great *stupa* at Sanchi was built with bricks during the time of Ashoka and later it was covered with stone and many new additions were made.

In the subsequent century, *stupas* were elaborately built with certain additions like the enclosing of the circumambulatory path with railings and sculptural decoration. There were numerous *stupas* constructed earlier but expansions or new additions were made in the second century BCE. The *stupa* consists of a cylindrical drum and a circular *anda* with a *harmika* and *chhatra* on the top which remain consistent throughout with minor variations and changes in shape and size. The three *chhatra* on the *stupas* represent *triratnas* of Buddhism i.e. Buddha (The enlightened), *Dhamma* (doctrine) and *Sangh* (order). Apart from the circumambulatory path, gateways were added. Thus, with the elaborations in *stupa* architecture, there was ample space for the architects and sculptors to plan elaborations and to carve out images.



Plan of Stupa