

Special Characteristics of the Sinhalese Stūpa Architecture

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Abstract: India did have and still has its cultural relations with various countries around the world. If discussed, we can see the direct linkage between South and Southeast Asian countries from the third century BCE to the twelfth century CE. From the beginning, Sri Lanka has had cultural connections and influences from India. It was during the reign of the Mauryan emperor *Aśoka* that Buddhism came to the land of Lanka or *Tāmrāparṇī* (*Tambapaṇṇī* as known in his inscriptions) by his children, *Mahendra* and *Sanghamitrā*. Obviously, being an integral element of Buddhism, the construction of the *stūpa*, its establishment, and worship also reached this land, and soon, it became a major popular part of the Sri Lankan or Sinhalese culture. The shape and size of the Sinhalese *stūpas* were very unlike that of the two prominent examples of Sanchi and Amravati, not limiting them only as the memorial or relic shrining structures but as having more associated aspects. The paper presented sheds some light on the architecture of the Sinhalese *Stūpa*.

Keywords: *Stūpa*, Sri Lanka, *Dāgaba*, *Dāgæba*, Buddhism, Sinhalese, Symbolism, *Dhamma*, *Seya*, *Sæya*, *Mahāvamsa*, *Stūpa* architecture

Received : 20 March 2025

Revised : 21 April 2025

Accepted : 25 April 2025

Published : 29 June 2025

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Samaddar, S. (2025). Special Characteristics of the Sinhalese Stūpa Architecture. *Journal of History, Archaeology and Architecture*, 4: 1, pp. 37-50.

INTRODUCTION

India has cultural relations with various countries worldwide, especially the Southeast and South Asian nations, one of which is Sri Lanka. Although it is now a separate country, Sri Lanka has strong cultural roots from India. During the reign of the Mauryan emperor *Aśoka*, around the third century BCE, Buddhism was introduced to the land of Lanka, or *Tambapaṇṇī* (*Tāmrāparṇī*) as referred to in his inscriptions, mainly through his children, *Mahinda* and *Sanghamittā*, at the time of King *Devānampiya Tissa*, and it became the state religion. The Major Rock Edict XIII of *Aśoka* mentions *Tambapaṇṇī* and *Aśoka's* connections with the *Choḍas* (*Cholas*) and the *Pāṇḍyas* in the South (Hultzsch 1925: 46, 48).

Despite the fact above, Sri Lanka has a cultural connection to India that predates *Aśoka*. In addition to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, among the literary sources that discuss the early history of the land, the two chronicles (*itivr̥tta*) – the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvamsa* from Sri Lanka stand out as the primary sources of reference (although they cannot be entirely relied upon in historical terms) that document the continuous history of the activities of the kings of Lanka from pre-Buddhist times up to the reign

of King *Mahāsena*, written in *Pāli* language. They refer to the account of the early colonisation of the land by King *Vijaya*, who came from ‘*Lāṭa*’, along with his North Indian settlers, on the exact day of Buddha’s *Mahāparinibbāna*. The account details the land’s previous conditions before their arrival and how they established the city of *Tambapaṇṇī* (‘*paṭhamam nagaram*’ – first city – the *Dīpavaṃsa*, 9.31) (Allchin 1995: 158; Oldenberg 1879: 56), Anuradhapura, and further spread to other parts of the land, acculturating the original people by bringing thousands of families from 18 craft guilds to settle there (Allchin 1995: 158). Although scholars differ in their opinions about whether ‘*Lāṭa*’ (*Lāṭa*) is the province of Gujarat or Bengal, it is certain that *Vijaya* was from India. *Tambapaṇṇī* was probably named ‘*Simhala*’ after *Vijaya*’s father, *Simhabāhu* (Vidyalankara 2013: 300). Furthermore, the presence of various sects, such as *ājīvakas*, brahmins, *nigaṇṭhas*, *samaṇas*, etc., during the reign of King *Paṇḍukābhaya* (Geiger 1912: 75; Perera 1998: 9; Allchin 1995: 182), as described in the *Mahāvamsa* (X. 96-102), hints at the influences and connections with India.

Also, considering the archaeological evidence obtained from the excavations at Anuradhapura, we find early traces of writing in Sri Lanka from period J.5, ASW2, including *Brāhmī* letters on potsherds, dated to 450-350 BCE (Allchin 1995: 176), which predates *Aśoka*. Therefore, this highlights the evidence of India’s contact with Sri Lanka before the arrival of Buddhism in the region.

HISTORY OF STŪPA-WORSHIP IN SRI LANKA

In the early stages of Buddhist art, the presence of the Buddha and the four Great events of his life were expressed through symbolic representations, such as his ‘birth’ symbolised by a lotus springing from a vase or by a lion-crowned pillar; his ‘enlightenment’ symbolised by the *Bodhi* tree, under which an empty throne and footprints are sometimes placed; the ‘first sermon’ by a wheel-crowned (*dhamma-chakka*) pillar; and the ‘*Parinibbāna*’ by a *stūpa*, often with worshippers standing around it. Among all, the ‘*stūpa*’ or ‘relic mound’ was the most significant symbol of early Buddhism. After the cremation of the Buddha, his relics were divided into eight parts, each placed in a *stūpa*. *Aśoka* is said to have opened these *stūpas* and distributed their relics in 84000 new *stūpas* throughout India.

In context of Sri Lanka, the first Buddhist monument was *Mahāmegha Mahāvihāra* in Anuradhapura, established by *Tissa* in his royal park for *Mahinda* and the *Saṅgha* (Perera 1988: 17). This was followed by the first *stūpa*, also constructed in Anuradhapura, named ‘*Thūpārāma Dāgaba*’ which enshrines the right collarbone and other relics of the Buddha. Additionally, the planting of a scion from the *Bodhi* tree in the *Mahāmegha* garden was celebrated with festivities and veneration by the people (Allchin 1995: 182-3; Perera 1988: 19). The chronicles mention various other monasteries that *Mahinda* established.

Next, we see the establishment of the ‘*Marichavaṭṭi Vihāra*’ by King *Duṭṭhagāmaṇī Abhaya* and his affection for *stūpa*-worship. As mentioned in the *Mahāvamsa*, he never used to eat anything before giving alms to the monks. Once, he forgot and ate pepper beforehand; in repentance, he built the *Marichavaṭṭi stūpa* (*Mirisaweṭṭiya stūpa*), enclosing a spear with the relic in the *chetiya* and *vihāra* around it. Also, a consecration-celebration is mentioned while donating it to the *Saṅgha* (Geiger 1912: 179-81). Further, he constructed the ‘*Lohapāsāda*’ or Brazen Palace, a nine-storeyed structure for the monks and donated it to the *Saṅgha*, similar to the case of *Marichavaṭṭi vihāra* (the *Mahāvamsa*, chapter 27) in circa 100 BCE (Allchin 1995: 183). It was then that the *Ruwanweliseya* or ‘*Mahāthūpa*’ was established by *Duṭṭhagāmaṇī*. The detailed descriptions of the consecration festival for laying down its foundation stones are mentioned in the *Mahāvamsa* – its work beginning on the *pūrṇimā* of *Vesākha* (*Vaiśākha*) and the foundation stones laid on the full moon of *Āsāḷha* (*Āṣāḍha*) months, with

ministers adorning the place of *chetiya*, dancers surrounding, various articles set out, and thousands of *bhikkhus* from various places (Geiger 1912: 192-3).

For the day of enshrining relics held on the '15th *uposatha* day of *Āsālha sukka pakkha*', the city and the road leading to it, the whole island to be adorned, people in festal robes, arrangements made, dancing women, women with flower baskets, boys with flags, horses and elephant with golden casket, enshrining of the relics in the *stūpa*, a detailed mention is done in the chronicle (Geiger 1912: 212, 217-8). In the early centuries of the Common Era, both the '*Jetavana*' monastery, with its enormous *stūpa* and accompanying monastic buildings, and the '*Abhayagiriya*' monastery, with its still larger *stūpa* and extensive monuments, were built. Anuradhapura, in a way, was a major centre of Buddhist monuments.

STŪPAS IN SRI LANKA AND THEIR SHAPES

In Sri Lanka, the *stūpa* is known by various names such as '*Dāgaba*' (*Dāgæba*), '*Seya*' (*Sæya*), '*Vehera*', '*Thūpa*', etc. It is evident that under the influence of Buddhism, the concept and architecture of the *stūpa* have flourished in Sri Lanka. Being a *Theravāda*-following country, it is obvious that the *stūpa*, the 'symbolic representation of Buddha', was important to its followers. Thus, it was natural that so many *stūpas* were built in this country. Later, due to the close ties of Sri Lanka with India and some influence of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, adaptation and making of the images of the Buddha and the other Buddhist deities might have taken place which also formed part of few of the *stūpas* in Sri Lanka, quite different to the fact that in *Theravāda*, Buddha was worshipped through non-human representations or symbols. Many colossal *stūpas* were also constructed in this land, the biggest of which is '*Jetavanārāmaya*' in Anuradhapura.

The different parts of the Sri Lankan *stūpa* (Parker 1909: 337; Govinda 1934: 99, Mishra & Dixit 1974: 125) (**Figure 1**) are –

- *Pesāvaḷalu* – the three berms or terraces of the *stūpa* forming its lowest levels, also called '*trimāla*' or '*tunmāl pesāva*'.
- *Garbhaya* or *Gæba* (*Aṇḍa*) – the hemispherical dome, in the middle of which a relic chamber (*dhātu garbhaya*) was built to enshrine the relics with various other objects, even valuable items.
- *Hataræes Koṭuva* – railing on top of the dome (relics are also sometimes enshrined in this part, other than the main relic chamber).
- *Devatā Koṭuva* – the cylindrical neck portion above the '*hataræes koṭuva*', where figures of deities are sometimes carved on the surface.
- *Kot Kærælla* – the conical spire above the '*devatā koṭuva*' (the replacement of *daṇḍa*, and *chhatra* or *chhatta* of the Indian *stūpa*).
- *Kota* – the metal pinnacle on top of which a precious crystal or gemstone (*chūḍāmāṇikya*) is placed (*kota* is not separate and usually forms part of the '*kot kærælla*').

Later, various other structures were added to the *stūpas* of Sri Lanka. One is '*Vāhalkaḍa*', a frontispiece or structure, built at all four cardinal directions around the *stūpa* for decoration (**Figure 2**). Stone slabs were added to these *vāhalkaḍas* to facilitate the offering of flowers at the *stūpas*. Another is '*Vaṭadāge*' or '*Chetiyaḡhara*', a circular structure constructed around small *stūpas* for their protection, decorated with elaborate stone carvings (**Figure 3**). The *Vaṭadāge* might have had a

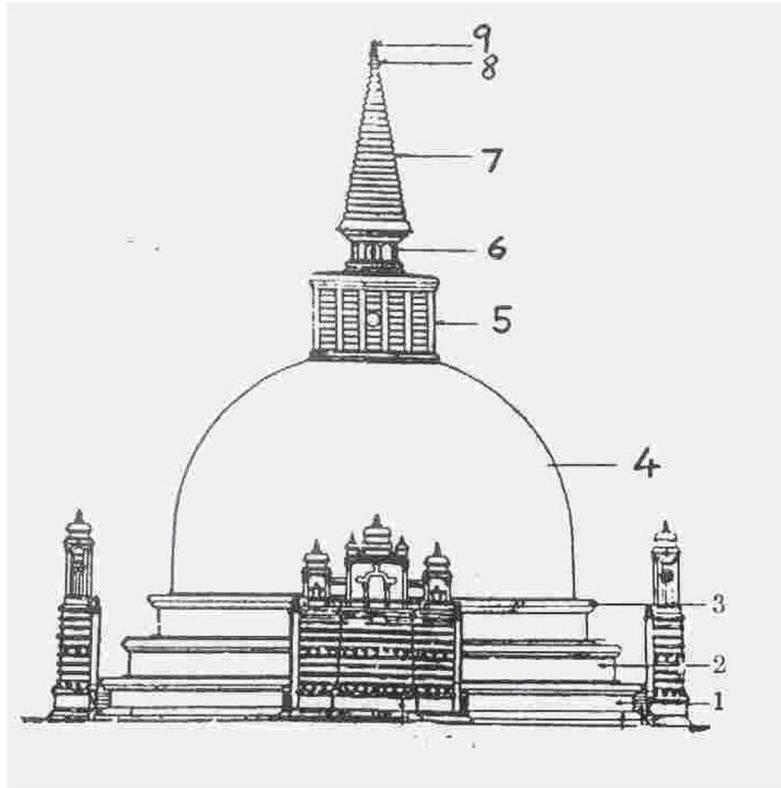


Fig. 1: Parts of a Sri Lankan *stūpa*: 1-3 – Basal rings (*Pesāvaḷalu*), 4 – Dome (*Garbhaya* or *Gæba*), 5 – Square chamber (*Hataræes Koṭuva*), 6 – Cylinder (*Devatā Koṭuva*), 7 – Spire (*Kot Kærælla*), 8 – Minaret (*Kota*) and 9 – Crystal (*Chūḍāmāṇikya*).

Source: Ranaweera, Munidas & Helarisi Abeyruwan (2006). Materials Used in the Construction, Conservation and Restoration of Ancient Stupas in Sri Lanka, *Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Construction History*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, p. 2576] (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265309684_Materials_Used_in_the_Construction_Conservation_and_Restoration_of_Ancient_Stupas_in_Sri_Lanka)



Fig. 2: *Vāhalkaḍa* at the *Ruwanweli Mahā Seya*, Anuradhapura.



Fig. 3: *Vaṭadāge* at Polonnaruwa.

wooden roof over it, supported by a number of stone columns arranged in several concentric rows, and its entrance varying from one or all four directions. The *Vaṭadāge* at Polonnaruwa is the best example of this structure in Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka, various forms of *stūpas* (Parker 1909: 336, Mishra & Dixit 1974: 125) were built, varying according to the shapes of the ‘*garbhaya*’ or *gæba* (dome) of the *stūpa* (Figure 4). They are –

- Food grain heap-shaped (*Dhānyākāra*)
- Bell-shaped (*Ghaṇṭākāra*)
- Bubble-shaped (*Bubbulākāra*)
- Pitcher-shaped (*Ghaṭākāra*)
- Lotus-shaped (*Padmākāra*)
- *Āmlaka* (*Nelli*)-shaped or Indian gooseberry-shaped (*Āmlākāra*).

The *stūpas* in the shape of a ‘food grain heap, are Kelaniya *Stūpa* (Mishra & Dixit: 1974: 125), *Jetavanārāmaya* and *Abhayagiri stūpas* in Anuradhapura. The *Ghaṇṭākāra stūpas* are *Thūpārāmaya dāgaba* (Mishra & Dixit: 1974: 125) in Anuradhapura and *Sela Chetiya (Ambasthala dāgaba)* in Mihintale. The bubble-shaped *stūpas* are *Ruwanweli Mahā Seya* (Mishra & Dixit: 1974: 125) in Anuradhapura, *Rankoth Vehera* and *Kiri Vehera stūpas* at Polonnaruwa. The *Ghaṭākāra stūpas* are *Kiri Vehera stūpa* in Kataragama, *Somāwathi stūpa* in Polonnaruwa and *Sithulpawwa stūpa* in Kirinda. Examples of lotus and *āmlaka*-shaped *stūpas* have not been found in Sri Lanka (Figures 5-8, **Sri Lankan *stūpas* of different shapes**).

In the *Mahāvamsa* (chapter 30), we see the reference to the master-builder who let some water fall to cause a great bubble like a half-globe of crystal and said the *Mahāthūpa (Ruwanweli Seya)* would be made so to King *Duṭṭhagāmaṇī* (Geiger 1912: 199), and so it is made.

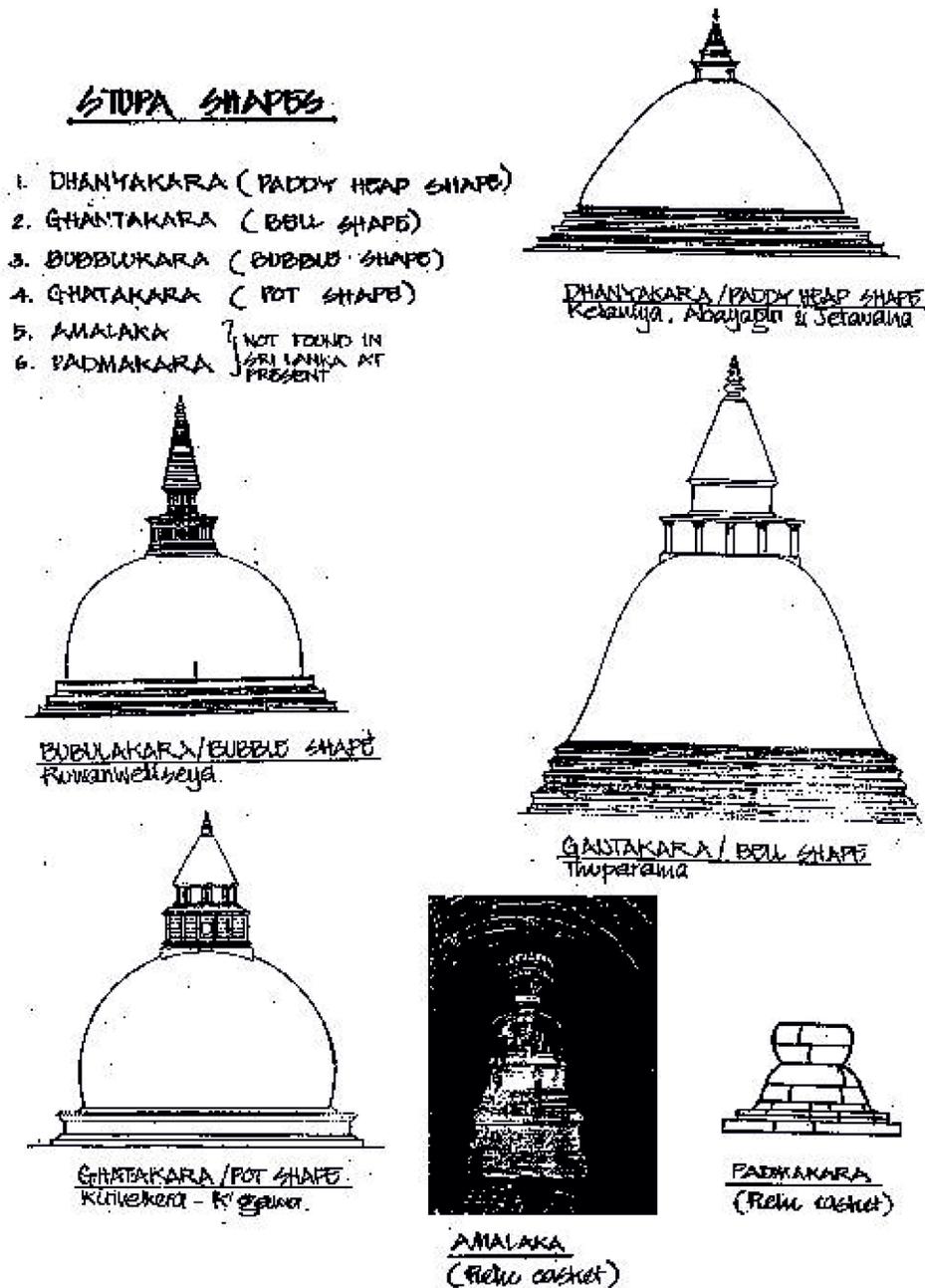


Fig. 4: Different shapes of Sri Lankan Stūpas.

Source: Karunaratne, L.K., The History of Buddhist Architecture in Sri Lanka, *The 1998 International Symposium on Design & Developmeay of Buddhist Architecture*, pp. 85-96]
(http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-AN/an027_4.htm)

CONSTRUCTION PROCESS OF THE STŪPA IN SRI LANKA

As mentioned above, the first stūpa in Sri Lanka was made by Tissa on the collarbone (*Haṃsulī dhātu*), which was known as 'Thūpārāma'. The *Mahāvamsa* describes the process of stūpa-construction in the context of the *Ruwanveli Dāgaba*. First, the plinth was dug and filled with round-shaped stones (*Gūṭṭhavāsānake*). After that, these stones were beaten to fit in the foundation-plinth by big-sized



Fig. 5: Food grain heap-shaped *stūpas* (from top to bottom): Kelaniya *stūpa*, Jetavanārāmaya and Abhayagiri *stūpas* in Anuradhapura.



Fig. 6: Bell-shaped *stūpas* (from top to bottom): Thūpārāmaya *dāgaba* in Anuradhapura, and Sela Chetiya in Mihintale.

hammers (*Kūtehi*), and further elephants had to run on the plinth by binding skin on their legs (*Chammāvanaddhapādehi*). The use of soft soil (*Navanīta-mattikā*) was the following step, which was then covered with a layer of soil and mortar over it. To strengthen the plinth, iron rods (*Loha-paṭṭa*) were also used. Next, the platform was built on which circular-shaped structures (*Pesāvaḷalu*) and a huge half-egg-shaped structure (*Aṇḍa* or *Gæba*) were constructed, followed by Railing (*Hataræes Koṭuva*), Neck (*Devatā Koṭuva*), *Kota*, *Daṇḍa*, *Chhatra* and *Vāhalkaḍa* (niche) in which small terracotta and stucco images of Buddha were placed to decorate the *stūpa*. Finally, the *stūpa* was plastered (*Sudhā-kamma*) (Mishra & Dixit 1974: 124-5). Around the *stūpa*, *Vedikās* were made, which were decorated with elephant motifs (*Hatthi-pākāra*). (Figure 9)

SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES BETWEEN INDIAN AND SRI LANKAN STŪPAS

In the beginning, *stūpas* in Sri Lanka were made of mud, similar to those of India. Later, bricks were used for them. Like the Sanchi *stūpa*, the railings and the *torāṇa-dvāras* of Sri Lankan *dāgabas* were

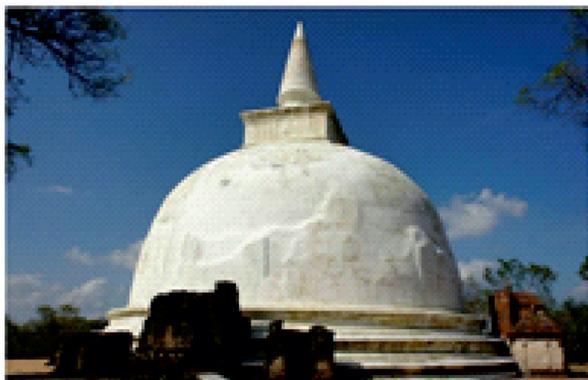
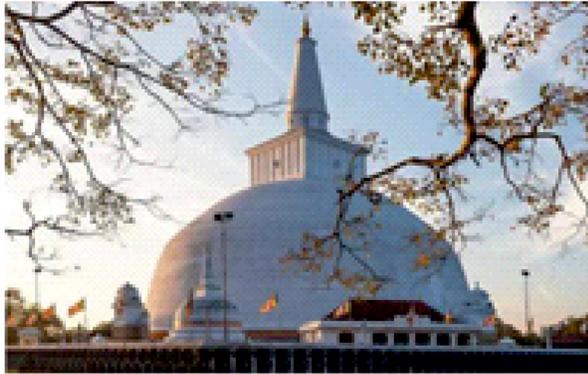


Fig. 7 :Bubble-shaped *stūpas* (from top to bottom):
Ruwanweli Mahā Seya in Anuradhapura,
Rankoth Vehera and *Kiri Vehera stūpas* in Poḷonnaruwa.

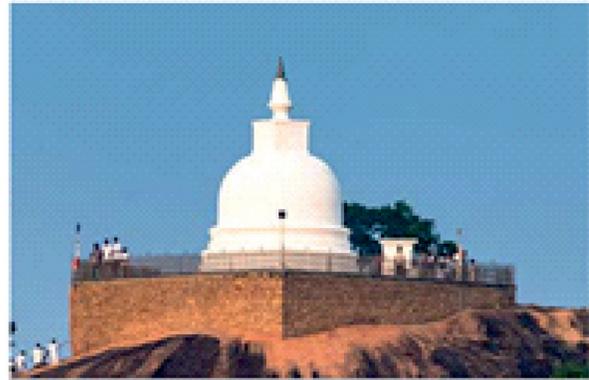
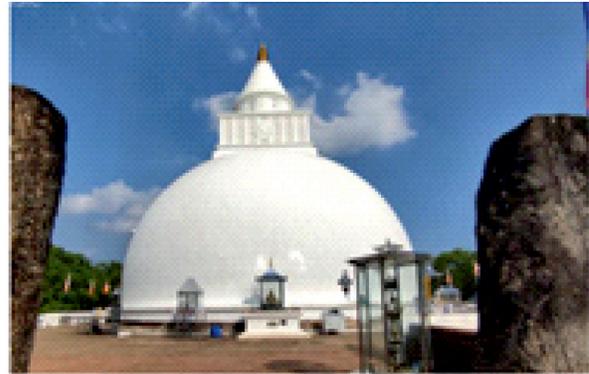


Fig. 8: Pitcher-shaped *stūpas* (from top to bottom): *Kiri Vehera stūpa* in Kataragama, *Somāwathi stūpa* in Poḷonnaruwa, and *Sithulpawwa stūpa* in Kirinda.

also made of wood; stone was used later. Relics were kept at the top of the structure in Indian *stūpas*, while in Sri Lanka, they were placed in the middle by constructing a relic chamber along with images of Buddha and other precious items. In comparison to the Indian *stūpas*, the Sinhalese *stūpas* are huge in size and shape. Around the *stūpas*, a tradition of making *Vaṭadāge* was in fashion, constructed on pillars. In the second century CE, *Vāhalkaḍa* were made all around the stupas, and to decorate the structure – elephant motifs (*Haṭṭhi-pākāra*), *makaras*, and botanical items or patterns were used. In the beginning, wooden pillars were used, but from the seventh to the eighth century CE, decorated stone pillars replaced the wooden pillars. On top of these pillars, images of lotus, lions, dwarfs, etc. can also be seen.



Fig. 9: *Hatthi-pākāra* around the *Ruwanweli Seya* in Anuradhapura.

WHY *STŪPA*-WORSHIP BECAME FAMOUS IN SRI LANKA

A *stūpa* is more than a symbol of the ‘*Parinirvāṇa*’. It is a complete symbol system that inhibits many other symbols, marking it as a symbol of ‘*Dhamma*’ and ‘the enlightened state of the Buddha’. Irwin, Coomaraswamy and Govinda have related the symbolism of a *stūpa* to its Vedic meaning, however, focusing on its Buddhist aspect based on Gustav Roth (Harvey 1990: 83; Harvey 1984: 67), it can be inferred that after the Buddha’s *Mahāparinibbāna*, while his physical relics were important, ‘*Dhamma*’ was visualised as more significant and valuable. It can be inferred that the *stūpa*, which was the primary focal point of early Buddhist devotion, from then on, was not only visualised to be the structures to enshrine the relics of the Buddha or a monk, but also were seen as the symbols of *Dhamma* or the Buddha himself in the form of his *Dhamma*-body. Such a symbolic association of the *stūpa* with Buddha in fact, is reflected in the early *Vinaya* texts in which, where a *stūpa* is seen as having its ‘own property’, such as land and offerings, it is sometimes perceived as ‘the property of the *stūpa*’, and sometimes as ‘the property of the Buddha’.

SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF THE *STŪPA*

The components or parts of a *stūpa* have various symbolic meanings (Harvey 1990: 85-95). They are –

- the dome containing the precious relics represents *Dhamma*.
- a *Dhamma*-Wheel (the strong interior walls radiating from the centre, which were added sometimes in the stupas, and the circular dome, give such an impression).
- a lotus flower or the circle of the earth (the lotus designs on domes and the circular plan to resemble the circle of an open lotus).

- the *stūpa*-axis symbolises *Dhamma* and all its sacrifices, its great stability and the unshakeable nature of the mind, full of *Dhamma*; it also represents ‘Mount *Meru*’, the home of the gods.
- on the top of the *stūpa* dome is a cool ‘top enclosure’ and a *yaṣṭi*, complete with honorific parasol discs equivalent to a *Bodhi* tree, the symbol of Buddha’s enlightenment and his enlightened mind. (Figure 10)

Stūpas became the object of reverence, not only to accommodate the relics, but because of the symbolism each of their parts holds, they sufficed to create an overall ‘spiritual statement’. It represents that through the process of spiritual growth, based on a firm basis or foundation of the practice of the *Dhamma*, an enlightened mind rises from within, ultimately leading to enlightenment. When one is full of *Dhamma*, one becomes reverent and develops an unshakeable mind. Thus, the *stūpa* represents ‘*Dhamma*’ and the transformations it brings to its practitioners, leading to enlightenment.

The different layers of the structure of the *stūpa* represent specific aspects of the *Dhamma* and of a Buddha’s nature. Peter Harvey (1990: 97) has quoted Gustav Roth to mention the two ancient Sanskrit texts translated by the latter from their Tibetan versions, which visualise *stūpa* as a ‘symbol of the *Dhamma*-body’ in the sense of the thirty-seven ‘*Bodhipakṣīya dharmas*’ and certain other spiritual qualities. Each layer of the *stūpa*’s structure represents a group of spiritual qualities cultivated on the path, while the spire represents the powers of a Buddha (Figure 11). In the second text, the symbolism differs slightly and further, the ground is seen to represent ‘*Śīla*’ and the first platform as ‘*Dāna*’.

Harvey (1990: 97) also refers to Roth for the ‘*Kṣudraka-Vastu*’, the first-century CE *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, which links the stupa with ‘*Bodhipakṣīya dharmas*’ and deals with the

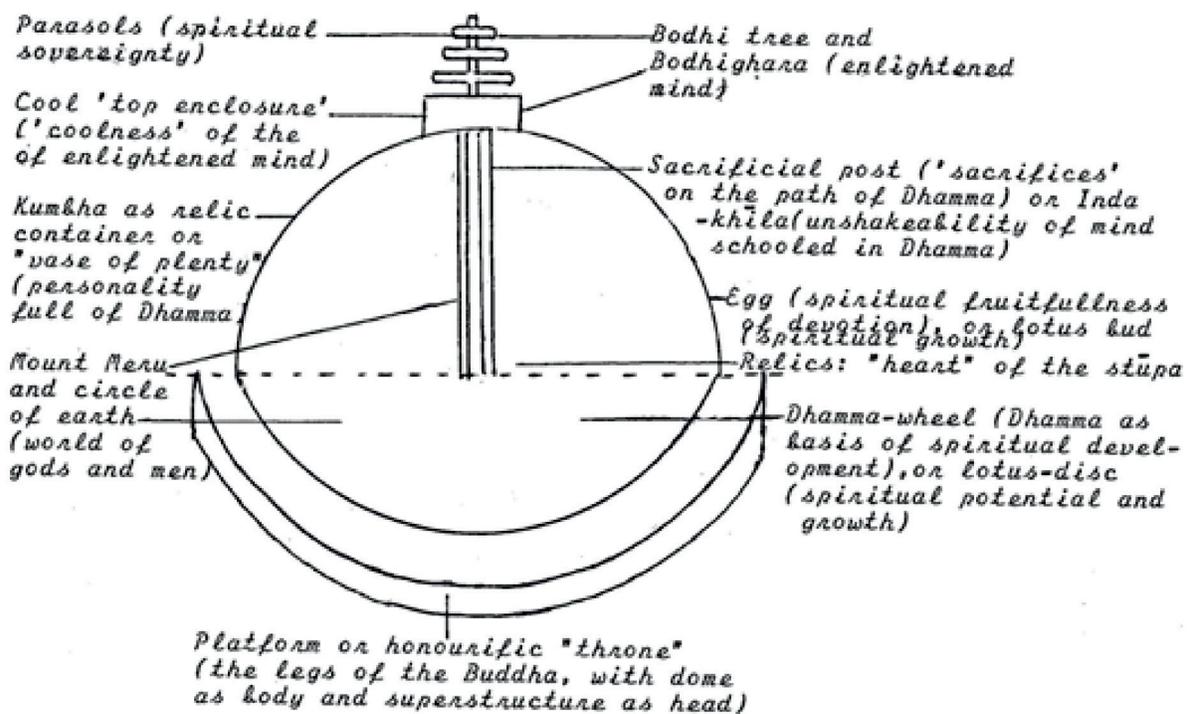


Fig. 10: Diagram of cross-section and partial plan of a *stūpa*, showing component symbols with their meanings in brackets

Source: Harvey, Peter (1990). Venerated Objects and Symbols of Early Buddhism, in Karel Warner (ed.), *Symbols in Art and Religion: The Indian and Comparative Perspectives*. London: Curzon Press Ltd., p. 96]

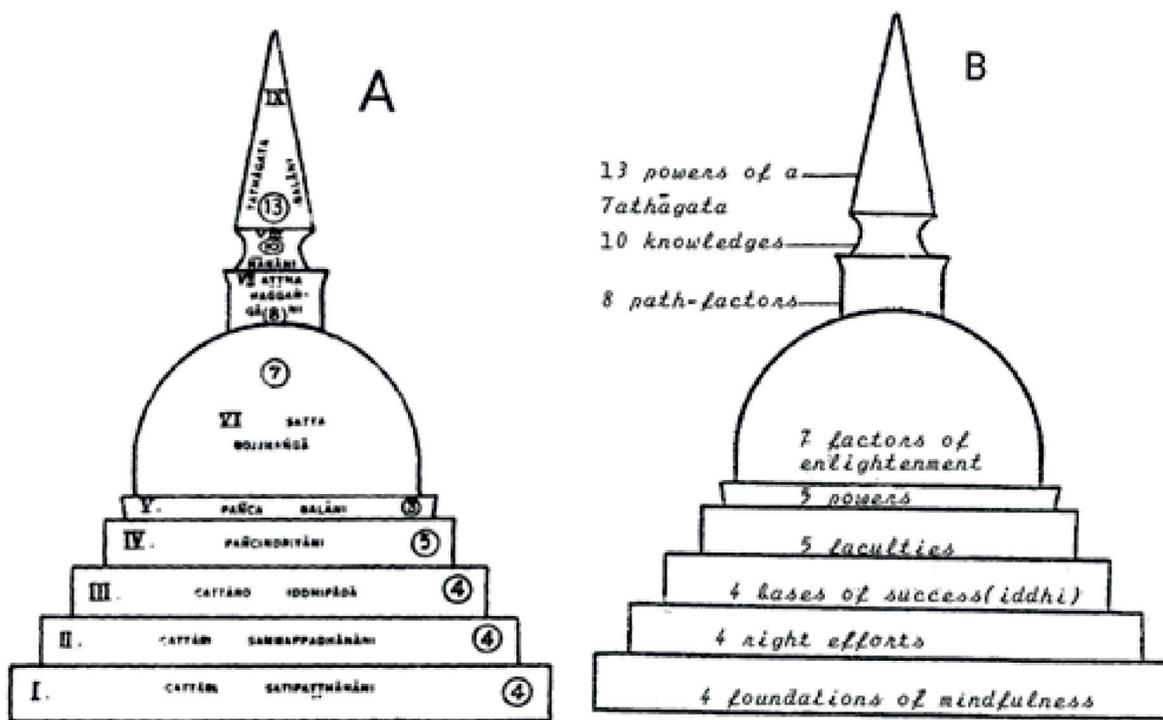


Fig. 11: Stupa diagrams showing the correspondences to the 37 Bodhipakṣīya dharmas

Source: A – Govinda, Angarika (June 1936). Some Aspects of Stupa Symbolism, *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Vol. IV, No. 1, p. 36; B – Harvey, Peter (1990). Venerated Objects and Symbols of Early Buddhism, in Karel Warner (ed.), *Symbols in Art and Religion: The Indian and Comparative Perspectives*, London: Curzon Press Ltd., p. 98.

death of *Sāriputta* (*Śāriputra*), the chief disciple of the Buddha, in the form of a conversation between the Buddha and *Ananda*. Harvey infers that, although in the physical sense, *Sāriputta* was gone, with his relics remaining behind, the *Dhammas* cultivated by him, *i.e.*, the *Dhamma*-body, also remained behind. He also opines that it would have been very natural for Buddhists to see the *stūpa* not only as containing the physical relics of the Buddha or a monk, but also as symbolising the essential *Dhamma* qualities (a Buddha symbol) that the person embodied, which still existed to invite others to incorporate them.

The '*stūpa*' may have originally been intended to be a 'model of the Enlightened personality', containing relics (some of the '*mahābhūtas*' that formed the body of the Buddha). Its dome can be seen to represent his '*kāya*', the relics to represent the 'essentials of his body', and the central *yaṣṭi* and parasol-discs (and later, also the axis) represent his 'consciousness' which has received the message of '*nibbāna*' and has been transformed by it. The base, the dome and the superstructure of the *stūpa* can be thought to represent 'the legs, body and head of the sitting Buddha'.

A second century CE relief from Amaravati showing the three key events of the Buddha's life – his 'enlightenment' by a throne, the Bodhi-trunk and a circle of branches and leaves of the Bodhi-tree; his 'first sermon' by a throne, a pillar and a *Dhamma*-wheel; and his '*parinibbāna*' by a stupa with a large base, indicates that the idea of depicting both the Buddha's physical and spiritual personality existed in early Buddhist art. One can truly agree with these observations above of Harvey (1990: 99-100), and conclude with his statement that even prior to its complex symbolism in the '*Vajrayāna*' Buddhism,

the *Stūpa* did develop from its simple beginnings into a complete symbol-system which represented the ‘*Dhamma*’ and the ‘Enlightened personality’ embodying the culmination of the practice of the *Dhamma*.

RECONNECTING ANCIENT BONDS

Various centers of Eastern India, especially Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, etc., did have inter-connections with other Asian countries, even with Sri Lanka. Due to the presence of the *Bodhi* tree and being one of the most important Buddhist sites, directly related to the life events of the Buddha, Bodh Gaya remained a major centre with which Sri Lanka retained its connections. Other to the bringing of the *Bodhi* tree by *San̄ghamittā*, we have various references to see the connections continuing up till the twelfth century CE, such as a pilgrim from *Tāmraparṇī* participating in the ‘gift of the railing’ under the tree about the first century BCE; sending of an envoy to the Gupta emperor *Samudragupta* by *Siṃhalese* king *Meghavarmā* or *Meghavarna* seeking permission to construct a monastery for the *Siṃhalese* monks; a *śramaṇa* named *Prakhyātakīrtti* belonging to the royal family of Lanka, worshipping at *Ratna-traya* in 5th century CE; *sthavira Mahānāman* dedicating an image of the Buddha and a mansion for it at *Bodhimaṇḍa* in 588-89 CE; installation of the Buddha image by *Udayasrī* from Ceylon about the twelfth century CE (Mitra 1971: 62-3).

The inscriptions of Bodh Gaya indicate towards the fact that monks from *Siṃhala* continued to come to Bodh Gaya up to the twelfth century CE. Even from the other eastern Buddhist centres, monks did go to Sri Lanka, for instance, the reference of *bhikkhu Sīvali* mentioned in the *Kalyāṇī* inscriptions, states him to go there, from *Tāmralipti* (Mitra 1971: 236-7; Chatterjee 2010: 19). This inter-cultural links and travels probably laid much influences, carrying the art styles and architecture from India over Sri Lanka, for instance the influences of *Pāla* style and Tantric Buddhism which can be seen on the *Siṃhalese* sculptures of *Gala Vihāra* in Poḷonnaruwa (mentioned as ‘*Uttarārāma*’ in the *Chullavagga*) (Chatterjee 2010: 19).

Although Sri Lanka is primarily a *Theravāda* country, the continuous connections between the two lands led to the influence of adopting and building images of the Buddha, *Bodhisattvas*, and other deities (which developed later on the Indian land). They were also incorporated in the *Siṃhalese Theravāda (Hīnayāna) thūpas*, monasteries, and structures, in niches (*vāhalkaḍas*). Also, it was only through the ‘worship of symbols’, simple ceremonies of consecrations of the objects of worship and meditation, not including much pomp, *Thervādins* were supposed to practice their faith, but the depictions of dancers, musicians, processions, on the Indian *stūpa vedikās* of Sanchi, Bharhut, Bodh Gaya and in the painting of *Bodhi* tree (dancers surrounding it) in Ajanta Cave 10 suggest the probability that association of the dancers, musicians, celebration were somewhere accepted from the very early period and so, it also became a part of image-worship in Buddhism in later period. The Chinese travel accounts, for example, those of Fa-Hien, mention the procession of Buddhist images held at Pāṭaliputra, accompanied by dancers and musicians (Chatterjee 2010: 127). Also, if assumed, we see in the *Mahāvamsa* that *Duṭṭhagāmaṇī*, while donating the *Marichavattī stūpa* and the *Lohapāsāda*, had simple celebrations. However, in the context of the *Mahāthūpa*, a detailed description of the festivities, procession, and dancer-musicians is provided (Geiger 1912: 180-1, 185-6, 192-7, 212, 218). Probably, the continuous interconnections with India may have led *Siṃhala* to adopt such grandiose celebration traditions for stupa worship and consecrations, in pace with the developments of Buddhism in India.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, it can be inferred that the *Stūpas* of Sri Lanka drew their basis from Indian *stūpa* architecture. However, they added their own characteristics to themselves, developing various kinds of shapes and enormous sizes that were distinct from their Indian counterparts and indigenous to the Sinhalese land. The new innovations such as the relic casket placed in a relic chamber and not on top of the *aṇḍa-bhāga* in the *harmikā*, adding of niches (*Vāhalkaḍas*), and new design to the *chhatra* (the spire in case of Sri Lanka, replacing indirectly the *yaṣṭi* and parasols of the Indian *stūpas*), and *Hatthi-pākāra* happened there in Sri Lanka, putting forth a complete new and different form of ‘*stūpa* architecture’ of its own, representing not only a ‘reliquary’ (place of enshrining relic) but was seen as the ‘*Dhamma*-body’ of the Buddha or any monk and the ideas, the knowledge they hold, the direct physical and spiritual embodiment of them, sacred to all Sinhalese people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author extends sincere gratitude to Dr. Gautam Kumar Lama, Professor in the Department of A.I.H.C. & Archaeology at Banaras Hindu University, for his invaluable guidance throughout the preparation of this paper. The author also wishes to acknowledge Dr. Arpita Chatterjee, Professor in the same department, whose critical feedback and insightful suggestions were instrumental in identifying and correcting numerous errors, thereby significantly contributing to the refinement of the final manuscript. Special thanks are also due to Mandaramunuwara Chandananda, Research Scholar in the Department of A.I.H.C. & Archaeology, Banaras Hindu University, for his meticulous assistance in ensuring the accurate rendering of Sinhalese and Pāli words and terms — an essential aspect of this study.

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