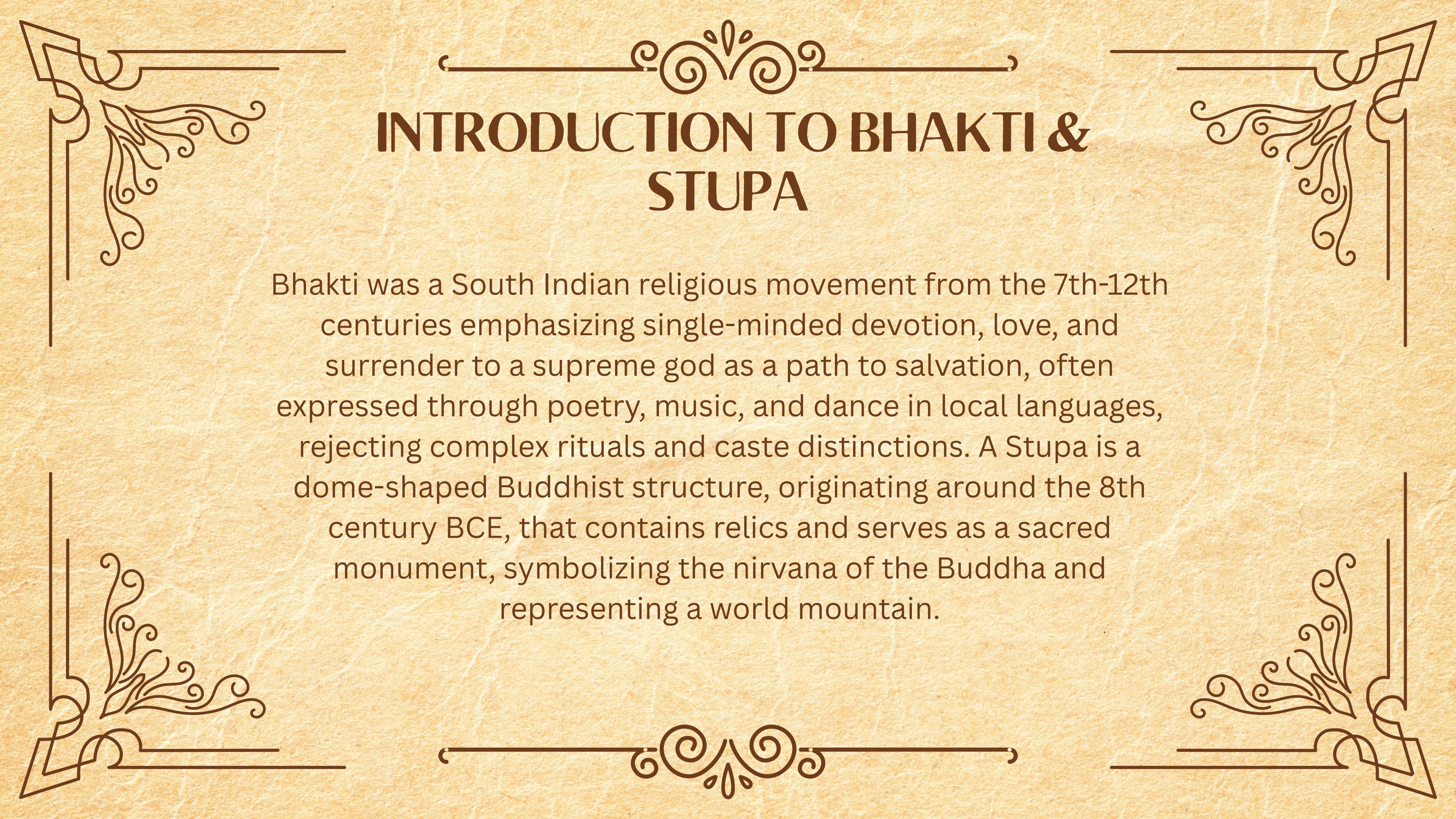


# BHAKTI STUPA

By Vandana Bera

Subtitle: Symbol of Devotion, Peace &  
Spiritual Architecture





# INTRODUCTION TO BHAKTI & STUPA

Bhakti was a South Indian religious movement from the 7th-12th centuries emphasizing single-minded devotion, love, and surrender to a supreme god as a path to salvation, often expressed through poetry, music, and dance in local languages, rejecting complex rituals and caste distinctions. A Stupa is a dome-shaped Buddhist structure, originating around the 8th century BCE, that contains relics and serves as a sacred monument, symbolizing the nirvana of the Buddha and representing a world mountain.

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

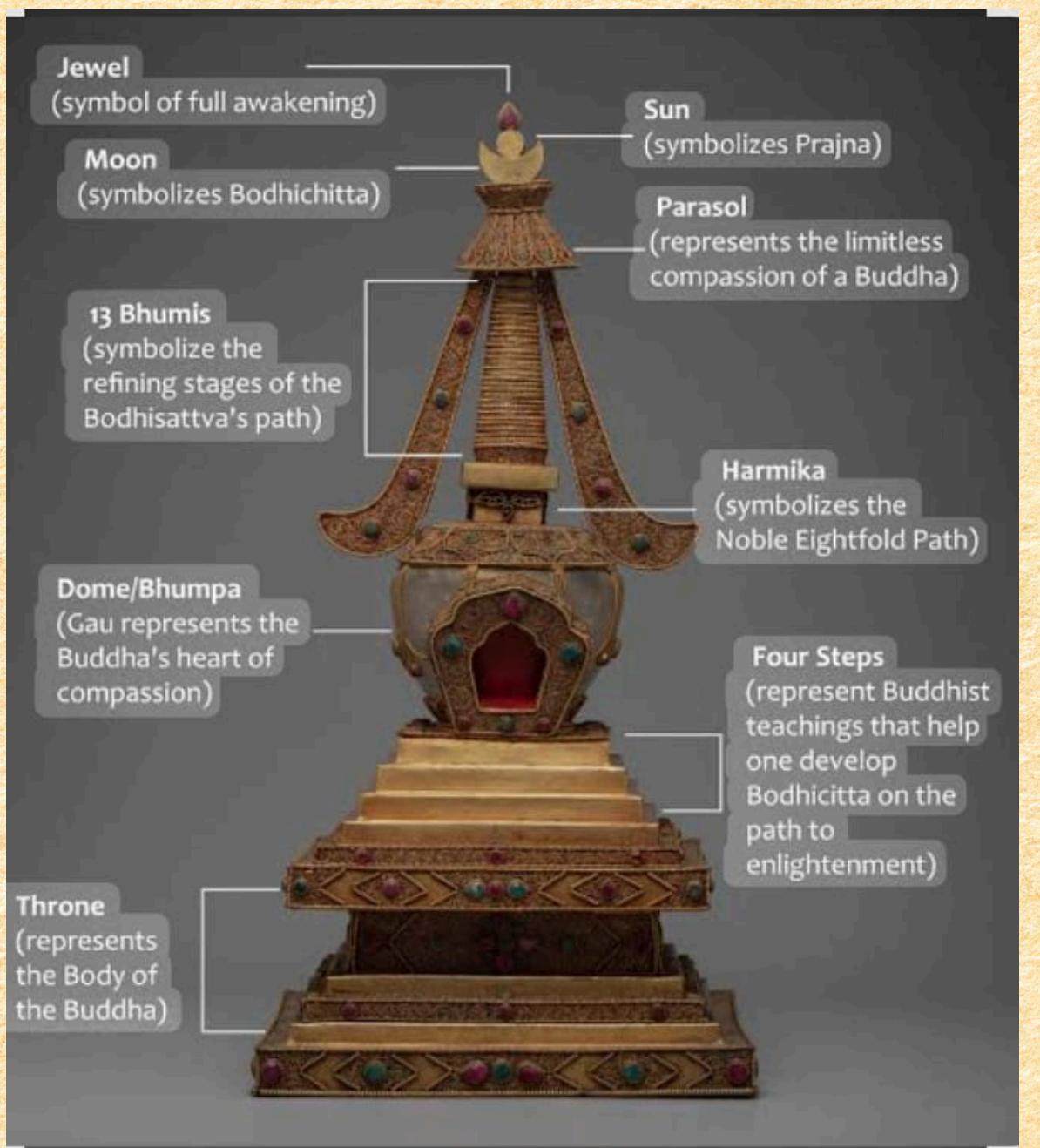
Stupas began as reliques to house the remains of great teachers and saints before the 5th century BCE and later became sacred sites and memorials dedicated to the Buddha and his disciples as Buddhism spread. Emperor Ashoka redistributed Buddha's reliques and built 84,000 stupas across India, leading to a rapid increase in the construction and spread of stupas.

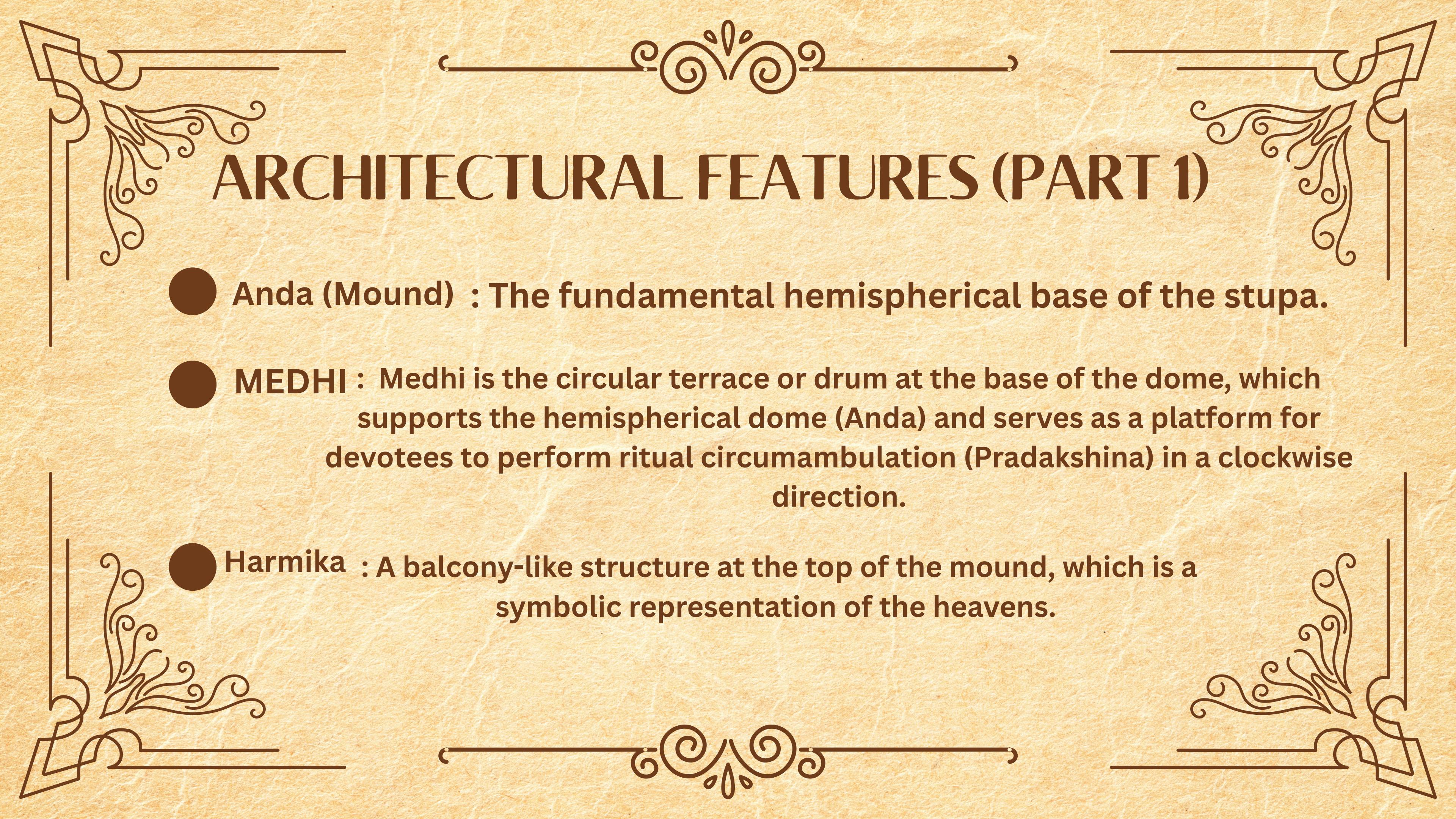
# SPREAD OF STUPAS

The spread of Buddhist stupas began in ancient India after the Buddha's death, notably under Emperor Ashoka, who distributed relics to establish numerous stupas across his empire and beyond. The concept then disseminated with Buddhism throughout Asia, evolving into local forms like Sri Lankan dagobas, Borobudur, and Chinese pagodas.



# SYMBOLISM OF STUPA





# ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES (PART 1)

- **Anda (Mound)** : The fundamental hemispherical base of the stupa.
- **MEDHI** : Medhi is the circular terrace or drum at the base of the dome, which supports the hemispherical dome (Anda) and serves as a platform for devotees to perform ritual circumambulation (Pradakshina) in a clockwise direction.
- **Harmika** : A balcony-like structure at the top of the mound, which is a symbolic representation of the heavens.



## ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES (PART 2)

- **Yashti** : A central mast or pillar that rises from the harmika.
- **Chhatri** : A series of stacked umbrellas on the yashti, symbolizing royalty and spiritual protection.
- **Pradakshina Path** : A circumambulatory path around the base of the stupa, which is central to Buddhist devotional practices.

# Amaravati Stupa (Andhra Pradesh)



# ROLE IN BHAKTI TRADITION

Bhakti serves as a devotional relationship with the divine, emphasizing personal love for God over rigid rituals and caste-based distinctions, thereby promoting social equality, empowering women and marginalized groups, fostering the use of regional languages in spiritual expression, and inspiring significant cultural and religious reform movements. The bhakti tradition bypasses intermediaries, allowing direct, intimate connection with the deity and fostering a unified spiritual experience for all.



# ARTISTIC & CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Bhakti significantly impacted Indian art and culture by promoting devotional expression in regional languages, inspiring vernacular literature and music, and fostering a more inclusive social structure that challenged the caste system and empowered women. This cultural renaissance manifested in various art forms, including poetry, songs, dance, and sculpture, while also laying the groundwork for greater religious tolerance and a syncretic cultural ethos that continues to influence India.

