

## Chaukhandi Stupa

The Chaukhandi Stupa in Sarnath was built during the Gupta period. The Guptas were orthodox Hindus, but allowed and encouraged the Buddhists to practise their religion. The Chaukhandi Stupa is of great cultural and religious significance, and part of India's architectural heritage. It symbolises India's great religious diversity.

### Chaukhandi Stupa Sarnath History

The Chaukhandi Stupa has an awe-inspiring history. It was constructed in the 5th century AD and is revered by us Indians, as well as by avid tourists from across the globe. The stupa was constructed to commemorate the reunion of Buddha with his five companions, known as the Panchvargiya Bhikshus.

This monument is, therefore, a symbol of Buddhist sovereignty in Sarnath. The history and conception of the monument are vital for the UPSC preparation. One of the key significances of this stupa is its location in Sarnath, as it is perceived to be the place of Buddha's reunion. The lore states that the five companions of Lord Buddha had previously abandoned him at Rajgir only to meet him at this spot. This historical and religious context makes this monument a noteworthy site to visit.

### Chaukhandi Stupa and the Mughals

The UPSC syllabus is inclusive of in-depth knowledge about historical monuments like this. So, it is vital to learn about the relationship between the Mughal rulers in India and this stupa. Even though the construction of the stupa is believed to have taken place during the Gupta period in the 5th century AD, the actual build of the monument is attributed to Govardhan.

Govardhan was the son of Raja Todar Mal, who was a Finance Minister for the Mughals. Govardhan built this stupa to commemorate the visit of the powerful Mughal ruler, Humayun. Although Akbar, the great Mughal ruler and son of Humayun, had a large role in constructing this monument, the Chaukhandi Stupa in its present shape and appearance was facilitated by Govardhan. Therefore, this monument is a gateway to the Buddhist city of Sarnath and has a rich tie in Mughal history.

### Additional Chaukhandi Stupa UPSC Information: Shape, Features and a lot more!

One of the unique features of the Chaukhandi Stupa is its massive rectangular shape atop a terraced plinth. This plinth is rectangular, too, while the actual tower itself is octagonal. This architectural pattern is highly uncommon for the period in which it is believed to have been built.

Similarly, the mystery surrounding the visual style of the stupa is also quite intriguing. The stupas of Buddhist affiliation are generally dome-shaped, such as the famous Sanchi Stupa. However, this stupa is distinctly octagonal in shape, making it appear unique for a Buddhist stupa.

Old architectural structures like the Chaukhandi Stupa usually have mysteries and lores surrounding them. This makes them an ideal subject for historical research, and an important topic for those doing their IAS preparations.

The Chaukhandi Stupa was declared a monument of national vitality and heritage by the Archaeological Survey of India in 2019, and is currently being preserved by the ASI. It is a place of interest not only to Buddhists across the globe, but also to tourists belonging to different cultures and religions.

