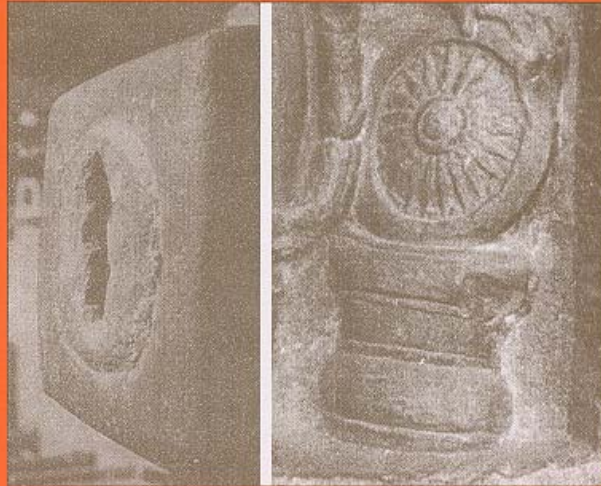


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The hollow slot on the top surface of the Delhi Iron Pillar (left) might have held a cake similar to *Vajracakra* (right), pp.192-196



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THE ORIGINAL IMAGE ATOP THE DELHI IRON PILLAR

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A reconstruction of the image that originally crowned the Delhi iron pillar is presented. The paper first addresses the nature of the capital that once crowned a pillar on the northern hilltop at Udayagiri and concludes that it represents a *nakṣatra-cakra*. The co-relation between the Delhi iron pillar, originally erected at 'Viṣṇupadagiri', and the hilltop pillar at Udayagiri has been utilized to propose that the iron pillar carried a *cakra* as well. The shape of the capital's top surface indicates that the *cakra* was fit vertically on a flat circular base. This was subsequently welded on to the top of the cylinder, around which the components of the decorative bell capital were shrunk fit. The striking similarities between the iron pillar's box pedestal and the support for Viṣṇu's *cakra* depicted to the left of the entrance to Udayagiri's Cave 6 have been pointed out. The paper concludes that the Delhi iron pillar originally carried a wheel-like disc of approximately 20" diameter and 2" thick.

Key words: *Cakra*, Delhi iron pillar, Mehrauli, Udayagiri.

INTRODUCTION

The Delhi iron pillar (also known as the Mehrauli iron pillar) has been a major attraction for historians, archaeologists, metallurgists and corrosion scientists due primarily to its antiquity, engineering and exceptional resistance to atmospheric corrosion. The known facts about the Delhi iron pillar have

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