



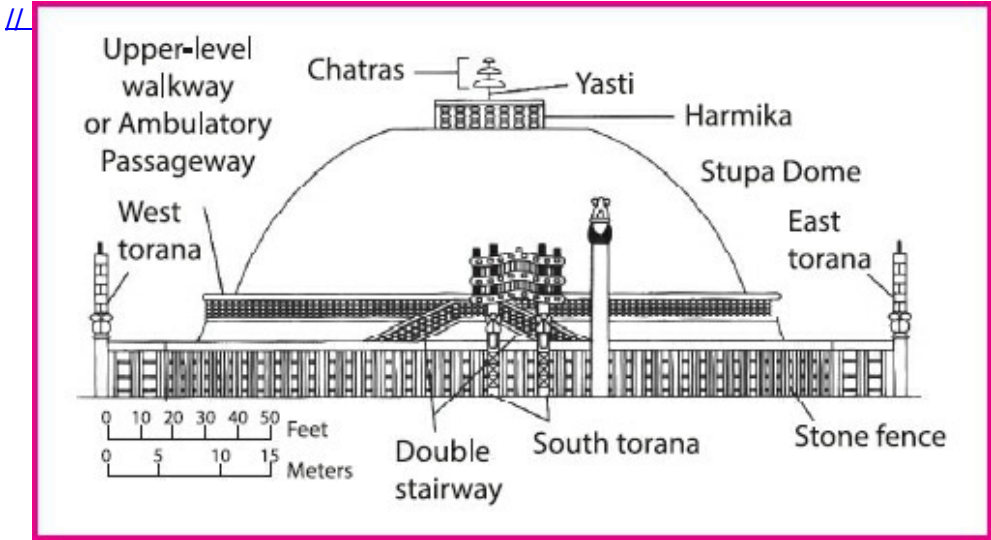
Journey of Sanchi Stupa to Europe

Why in News?

Recently, India's External Affairs Minister visited the **replica** of the [East Gate of Sanchi Stupa](#) standing in front of [Humboldt Forum museum](#) in Berlin, Germany.

Key Points

- **Construction of Sanchi Stupa:** It was built by [Ashoka](#) in the **third century BC**.
 - Its construction was overseen by **Ashoka's wife Devi**, who hailed from the nearby trading town of **Vidisha**.
 - The development of the Sanchi complex was supported by patronage from Vidisha's **mercantile community**.
- **Expansion:** During the **2nd century BC** ([Shunga period](#)), the stupa was enlarged with sandstone slabs, a **circumambulatory walkway**, and a [harmika](#) with a [chattra](#) (umbrella).
 - From the **1st century BC to the 2nd century AD**, four stone gateways or **toranas were added**, adorned with detailed carvings depicting Buddhist iconography and stories.
- **Rediscovery of Sanchi Stupa:** It was in abject ruins when it was **discovered** by British officer **Henry Taylor in 1818**.
 - [Alexander Cunningham](#) led the **first formal survey** and excavations at Sanchi in **1851**.
- **Preservation Efforts:** In **1853**, **Sikander Begum of Bhopal** offered to send Sanchi gateways to **Queen Victoria**, but the removal plans were delayed due to the [1857 revolt](#) and transportation issues.
 - In 1868, the Begum renewed the offer, but the colonial authorities declined it, opting for **in-situ preservation**. A **plaster cast** of the eastern gateway was created instead.
 - The site was restored to its present condition by [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) director-general **John Marshall in the 1910s** with funding from the begums of nearby Bhopal.
 - Marshall's efforts led to the creation of a **museum in 1919** at the site to preserve artefacts and manage conservation.
- **Architecture of Sanchi Stupa:**
 - **Anda:** It is a **hemispherical mound** built on earth.
 - **Harmika: Square railing** on top of the mound. It is believed to be the living place of god.
 - **Chattra:** It is the **umbrella** built on the top of the dome.
 - **Yashti:** It is the **central pillar** supports a triple umbrella structure called chattra.
 - **Railing:** It **surrounds the stupa**, demarcating the sacred area and providing a physical boundary between the holy space and the external environment.
 - **Pradakshinapatha (Circumambulatory Path):** It is a **walkway around the stupa** that allows devotees to walk in a clockwise direction as a form of worship.
 - **Torana:** Torana is a monumental **gateway or entrance** structure in Buddhist stupa architecture.
 - **Medhi:** It refers to the **base** which forms a platform on which the main structure of the stupa stands.



- **UNESCO Recognition:** Sanchi Stupa was inscribed as a [UNESCO World Heritage site](https://www.unesco.org/whc) in 1989.

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