



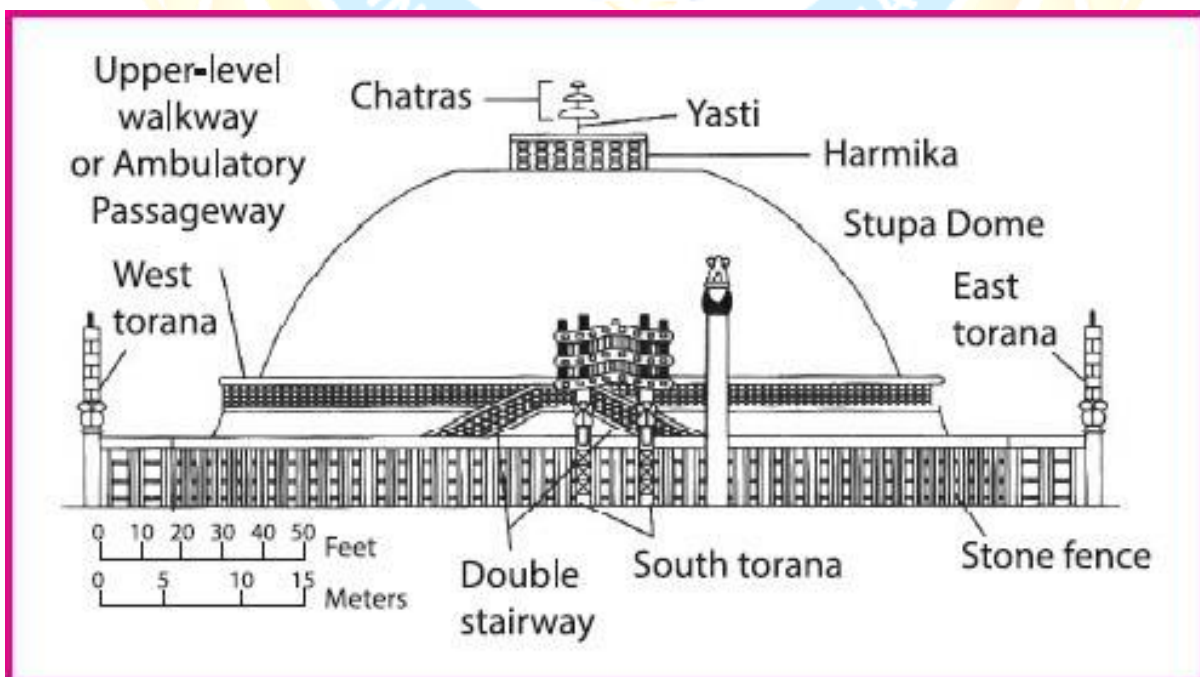
## SANCHI STUPA: ART & CULTURE

**NEWS :** External Affairs Minister **S. Jaishankar** visited a replica of the East Gate of Sanchi's **Great Stupa**, displayed in front of the **Humboldt Forum Museum in Berlin**. This replica, a 1:1 reproduction of the original structure, was unveiled in December 2022, standing almost **10 meters tall and weighing about 150 tonnes**.

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

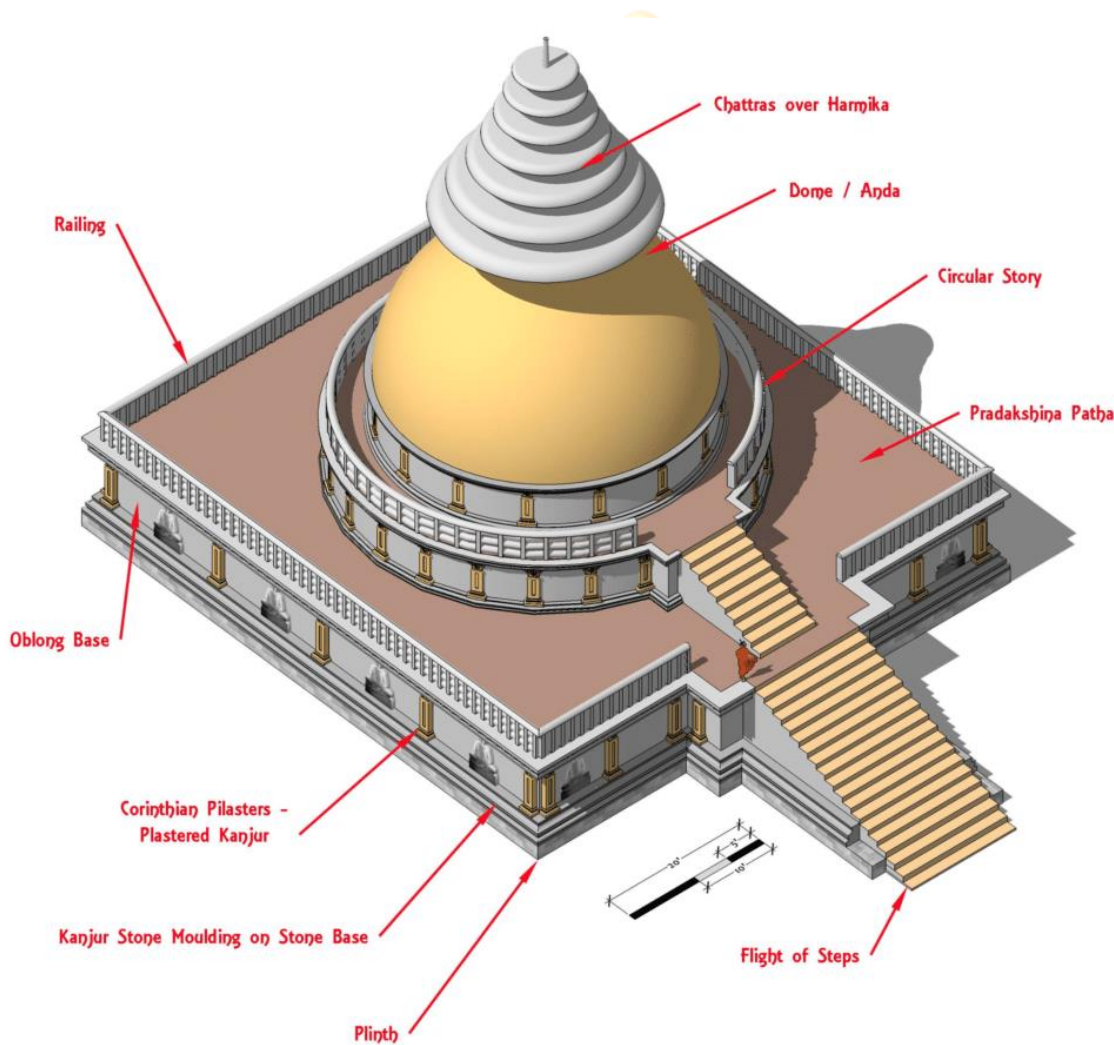
The story of the Great Stupa of Sanchi from Ashokan times to now

- **Great Stupa of Sanchi:** A **Buddhist commemorative monument** commissioned by Emperor **Ashoka** in the **3rd century BCE**, located in **Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh**. It is the largest and oldest stupa within a larger complex of Buddhist monuments.
- **Structure:** The stupa has a **hemispherical mound** that originally housed sacred **relics of the Buddha**. It is topped by a **chhatra** (umbrella-like structure) symbolizing spiritual protection and the Buddha's presence. The stupa's design was inspired by ancient burial mounds in India.
- **Supervision and Support:** The construction of the stupa was supervised by **Devi**, Ashoka's wife, who hailed from **Vidisha**. It received financial support from the local **mercantile community**.
- **Additional Structures:** The Sanchi complex features **stupas, temples, monasteries**, and other monuments, with some structures built as late as the **12th century CE**.
- **Four Toranas (Gateways):** The **four gateways (toranas)** are positioned at the four cardinal directions and were constructed in the **1st century BCE** during the **Satavahana dynasty**.





Each torana consists of **two square pillars** supporting a superstructure with **three architraves** (beams), intricately carved with **scenes from Buddha's life and Jataka tales**.



- **East Gate:** The **East Gate** of the Great Stupa is the most famous of the four. It was rediscovered in **1818** by British officer **Henry Taylor** and later restored by **John Marshall** in the early 20th century, with support from the **Begums of Bhopal**.
- **Replica of East Gate in Europe:** In the late **1860s**, Lieutenant **Henry Hardy Cole** made a **plaster cast** of the East Gate for the **Victoria and Albert Museum**. Over time, multiple replicas were created, and today, a **replica** is displayed at the **Humboldt Forum** in **Berlin**, made using **3D scanning** and modern craftsmanship techniques.
- **Cultural Symbolism of the East Gate:** The **upper architrave** depicts the **seven Manushi Buddhas** (past Buddhas), the **middle architrave** illustrates **Prince Siddhartha's Great Departure**, and the **lower architrave** shows **Emperor Ashoka** visiting the **Bodhi tree**,



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where the Buddha attained enlightenment. Other carvings include **shalabhanjikas (tree spirits)**, **elephants**, **lions**, and **peacocks**.

- **Humboldt Forum:** Opened in **2020** in **Berlin**, the **Humboldt Forum** is a major cultural and museum complex housed in the reconstructed **Berlin Palace**. It serves as a platform for **global cultural exchange**, showcasing **artifacts** from non-European civilizations, including Asian and ethnological collections.
- **Architectural Features of Humboldt Forum:** The building combines **Baroque elements** of the original palace with modern architectural designs. It emphasizes **sustainability** through energy-efficient construction and environmentally friendly practices, symbolizing a blend of history and contemporary innovation.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-culture/from-ashokan-times-to-now-sanchi-to-europe-story-of-the-great-stupa-9564786/>

