

REPORT ON THE HERITAGE CERTIFICATE COURSE

The Heritage Certificate Course was conducted by Loreto College in collaboration with Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) over the months of February and March 2025, beginning on the 5th of February, 2025. Organized with the objective of deepening our understanding of heritage and its multifaceted dimensions, the course brought together eminent professionals and practitioners from various fields. The program was structured to offer a comprehensive blend of theoretical knowledge, field exposure and practical engagement with heritage-related activities.

The inaugural session of the course was held on 5th February, 2025 and was conducted by Ms. Sangita Goel. In this session, the resource person introduced participants to the foundational concepts of heritage, delving into its definitions, classifications and real-world relevance. She elaborated on the different types of heritage, including tangible and intangible heritage, natural and cultural heritage, and discussed in detail the career opportunities available within the field of heritage conservation, research and policy-making.

The second session was delivered by Mr. Sujaan Mukherjee on 6th February, 2025. His lecture traced the origin stories of four key museums in Kolkata, namely the Indian Museum, the Victoria Memorial Hall and two private museums — the now-defunct Gurusaday Museum and the Goutam Sen Memorial Board Game Museum, the latter being founded by Mr. Souvik Mukherjee. The session was deeply engaging and provided valuable insights into the development, transformation, and historical significance of these institutions within the cultural landscape of the city.

In the third session, renowned architect Mr. Manish Chakraborty addressed the practical aspects of heritage conservation. His lecture emphasized the importance of restoration, preservation, and sustainable conservation practices. He illustrated, through examples, how conservation efforts must strive to retain the authenticity and integrity of heritage structures, while adapting them responsibly to contemporary contexts.

A field trip was organized on 8th February, 2025, to the *Jolabhumi Utsav 2024-25*, providing participants with a first-hand experience of the East Kolkata Wetlands. This immersive event blended culture, creativity, and community participation, showcasing how youth voices, especially those of school students, are actively shaping the future of conservation. The experience highlighted the importance of community-led initiatives in safeguarding ecological and cultural heritage.

On 11th February, 2025, a captivating session was conducted by Ms. Avanti Chakraborty, a distinguished figure in Bengali theatre. Through this interactive session, participants were introduced to the nuances of cultural heritage, with a special focus on the evolution of theatre in Bengal. Ms. Chakraborty's discourse highlighted the diverse forms of traditional and modern theatre, offering a cultural historical perspective on the performing arts as a living heritage.

To extend our understanding of heritage spaces, a special session was conducted by Dr. Sukanya Mitra on the concept of Heritage Precincts. This was a significant addition to the curriculum as it introduced participants to the importance of spatial and contextual preservation of heritage buildings and monuments. It emphasized how preserving a precinct as a whole offers a more holistic approach than merely conserving individual structures.

One of the most enriching aspects of the course was a two-day practical workshop facilitated by Mallika Roychowdhury, focusing on the preservation of intangible heritage. Students were encouraged to explore their personal and familial histories through curated projects. Each participant was tasked with creating a project file that included - a narrative of their individual family history and documentation of two family heirlooms, including their photographs, significance, and the stories associated with them.

On the second day of the workshop, participants presented findings based on interviews with their grandparents. These oral histories highlighted societal values and key historical insights from the perspectives of the older generation, enriching our understanding of how intangible heritage is passed across generations.

Another remarkable feature of the course was a field trip to Chitpore Road, one of Kolkata's oldest historical corridors. Guided by Ms. Sangita Goel, the students explored age-old shops, by-lanes and alleys steeped in untold stories and rich legacies — tales often missing from conventional textbooks. As a token of this experience, Ms. Goel gifted each participant a vintage postcard depicting the legacy of Chitpore, a heartfelt souvenir that will remain a cherished reminder for all students of history.

The course culminated with an insightful session by Mr. G.M. Kapur, the Director of INTACH. This session outlined the role and functioning of INTACH in heritage documentation, advocacy and conservation. Mr. Kapur extended an exclusive invitation for a one-day visit to INTACH, where students were given the rare opportunity to witness live restoration processes. The experience of observing centuries-old artifacts being meticulously restored left a profound impression on all participants, highlighting the scientific precision and artistic sensibility that heritage preservation demands.

In the final component of the course, each student was required to write a research paper on a heritage-related topic of their choice. These papers were later presented in the form of PowerPoint presentations before the class, allowing for peer learning, constructive feedback and academic discussion.

The greatest outcome of participating in the Heritage Certificate Course was a deeply personal and eye-opening experience. It helped me move beyond textbook definitions to truly feel what heritage means—through spaces, stories and people. The sessions offered diverse perspectives but what resonated most was the personal storytelling workshop. Documenting my family history and heirlooms made me reflect on the heritage I carry within my own home. Interviewing my grandparents was especially moving - it connected me to a generational past I had not explored deeply before. The field visits brought forgotten corners of the city to life, while moments like receiving a vintage postcard from Chitpore felt both symbolic and lasting. Overall, the course reshaped how I view heritage - not just as preservation of the old but as a living thread between the past, present, and future, just like the simple meaning of the term itself “Heritage is simply what we inherit”.



