HERITAGE COURSE 2026

The Heritage Course was organised by the Department of History in collaboration with Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). The theme for this year, "Living Heritage," provided a meaningful framework for understanding how heritage continues to evolve and remain relevant in contemporary society. The course began with a field visit on 5 March 2026 to the DAG exhibition, "Destination India (1857–1947)," held at the Alipore Jail Museum. The exhibition explored the works of foreign artists who travelled to India between the Uprising of 1857 and Independence in 1947, representing a later phase of Orientalist art. Unlike earlier artists, those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were more diverse in style and approach, focusing more on people, society, and everyday life rather than monuments, and came from different parts of the world. This visit helped students begin reflecting on the idea of "living heritage" and understand how artistic expressions can remain alive and meaningful over time. The introductory session, conducted by Dr. Sukanya Mitra on 19 March 2026, further explained the concept and key features of living heritage. It helped establish a clear foundation for the course and prepared students for the topics discussed in the subsequent sessions.

The first lecture was delivered by visual artist Mr. Soumyadeep Roy, who discussed how paintings can be understood as forms of living heritage. He focused on Mughal miniature paintings and later developments in the works of Abanindranath Tagore. The lecture highlighted how artistic techniques evolved over time, the differences in styles, and the influence of foreign elements on Indian art. On 27 March 2026, Ms. Ananya Bhattacharya, a social and cultural entrepreneur, delivered a lecture on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), with reference to the UNESCO Convention of 2003. The session explained the different domains of ICH and discussed important measures for its preservation, such as awareness programmes in schools and colleges, proper documentation, and the promotion of responsible tourism. This was followed by a field visit to the Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden on 28 March 2026. The visit was guided by Ms. Nilina Deb Lal, archivist and architect, who took the students through Roxburgh's House and the Herbarium located within the garden. Although the Herbarium is currently under restoration, the visit provided valuable insight into conservation practices. Ms. Deb Lal explained how heritage buildings are restored, what makes them different from modern constructions, and the importance of sustainable methods. She also shared the historical background of the garden and its structures, helping students understand their significance. On 31 March 2026, Mr. Rajesh Sen, a heritage entrepreneur, delivered a lecture on how living heritage can be found in everyday life. He explained that heritage is not fixed, but is continuously shaped by daily practices and interactions. On 1 April 2026, Ms. Nilina Deb Lal conducted another session focusing on urban landscape approaches. She discussed the development of Alipore in Kolkata and examined how recent government urban development projects have affected important heritage sites such as Hastings House, Alipore Jail etc. The lecture also addressed how unsustainable development practices can negatively impact both the cultural and ecological environment of an area.

On 2 April 2026, students participated in an interactive workshop conducted by Ms. Purnima Dutt, Principal Director of INTACH. The session began with a discussion on the diversity of India's heritage, followed by a film showcasing INTACH's conservation efforts and opportunities for student involvement. The workshop concluded with a group activity where students suggested ways to preserve different forms of heritage, such as important buildings and festivals. The course concluded with a visit to the INTACH Conservation Laboratory, Kolkata Chapter. During this visit, conservators introduced students to various conservation methods and explained the factors that contribute to the deterioration of historical objects. This was followed by practical demonstrations of document and oil painting restoration. Overall, the course was an enriching and informative experience, providing students with both theoretical understanding and practical knowledge about the importance and relevance of living heritage.


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Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose
Indian Botanic Garden
Prosopis cineraria (L.) Druce
Common Name: Shami / Khejri / Spunge Tree
Family: Fabaceae
Mythological Aspects: In Indian mythology, the plant holds deep mythological, spiritual, and astrological importance in Indian tradition, closely linked with Shani (Saturn), Kumbh Rashi (Aquarius), and Dhanishtha Nakshatra.
Uses: The Khejri tree is often called the "King of the Desert" because of its ecological, medicinal, and economic importance. Its leaves (known as Loong) and pods (called Sangri) are valuable livestock feed.
Dhanishtha Nakshatra
Aquarius
Shani