

COMMONWEALTH HERITAGE SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMME 2026



ORGANISED BY



THE COMMONWEALTH HERITAGE FORUM

The Commonwealth Heritage Forum (CHF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation and promotion of the shared built heritage across Commonwealth nations. The forum serves as a network for individuals and organizations interested in preserving historic buildings, areas, structures, and manufactured landscapes. Its core mission is to foster a collective understanding of this heritage, exchange professional knowledge and expertise, and provide opportunities for learning and skills development. The CHF achieves this through various initiatives, including managing large-scale training programmes such as the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Commonwealth Heritage Skills Training Programme. This programme focuses on teaching traditional craft skills to young people in countries where heritage is at risk and conservation capacity is limited. By doing so, the forum aims to encourage sustainable regeneration, create jobs, and ensure that the diverse and historically significant built environment of the Commonwealth is protected for future generations.

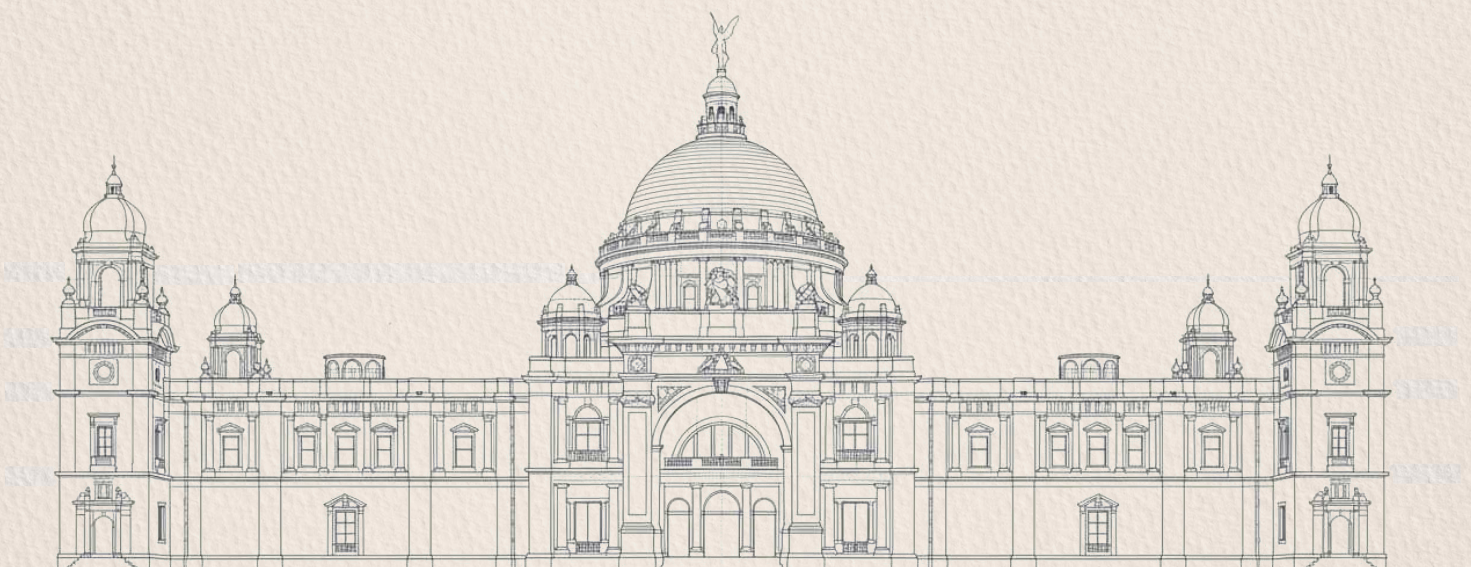


COMMONWEALTH HERITAGE SKILL TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Commonwealth Heritage Skills Training Programme is a large-scale initiative launched by the Commonwealth Heritage Forum and funded by the Vinehill Trust. Named in honour of the Queen's seventy years of service to the Commonwealth, its primary goal is to protect and rejuvenate historic buildings and monuments at risk across Commonwealth nations. Over five years, the programme will train over 600 people, with a particular emphasis on young people and those from disadvantaged communities. The programme aims to teach traditional artisan techniques and sustainable strategies for repairing at-risk historic buildings. Phase 1 of the initiative Supported heritage training schemes in Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica, Barbados, and India, while Phase 2 is extending its reach to several other countries its reach to as many as twenty countries.

Students from diverse nations have worked on conservation projects together since the programmes began in 2022, fostering cross-cultural learning. Since the first training activity in Hyderabad in October 2022 over 400 individuals have participated in training course or have been funded to attend courses in over 20 locations across the world.

The forthcoming phase of the programme is scheduled to be conducted across India and Sri Lanka, with a thematic focus on Indo-Saracenic architecture. Emphasis will be placed on the structural systems, material technologies, and conservation methodologies exemplified by the Madras High Court in India. Participants will undertake practical training in traditional construction techniques, architectural documentation, and the application of scientific conservation approaches tailored to the preservation of Indo-Saracenic heritage structures.



ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The 15-day skill training programme is a multiphase initiative conducted across India and Sri Lanka, with Phase 1 spanning 9 days in India and Phase - II comprising 6 days in Sri Lanka. The training emphasizes Indo-Saracenic architecture, focusing on the specialized techniques and conservation practices employed at the Madras High Court in India. Participants receive practical instruction in traditional construction, architectural detailing, and conservation methods pertinent to this distinctive architectural idiom.

VELLORE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VIT)

Established in 1984 as a self-financing institution under Section 3 of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act, 1956, Vellore Engineering College was founded by its founder and Chancellor, Dr G. Viswanathan. It was conferred University status in 2001 by the Union Ministry of Human Resources Development. Guided by its vision of transforming life through excellence in education and research, the University is committed to delivering world-class learning rooted in ethics and critical thinking, fostering cutting-edge research, nurturing impactful and compassionate individuals, co-creating with global partners for innovation and development, and serving society with knowledge and care. Consistently ranked among the nation's top institutions, VIT continues to push boundaries with the aspiration of becoming a global leader in higher education and research. In the QS World University Rankings by Subject, VIT is ranked 142 globally and 9th in India in the field of Engineering & Technology.

HERITAGE TECHNICAL TEAM

The Heritage Technical Team at Vellore Institute of Technology serves as a leading centre for heritage conservation and restoration in India. It is headed by Dr. Thirumalini Selvaraj, who has over 15 years of specialized expertise in the preservation of ancient structures and monuments. Under her guidance, the HTT emphasizes the application of organic lime applications and provides scientific validation for heritage restoration initiatives nationwide. Dr. Selvaraj functions as a scientific consultant for various archaeological societies at both national and state levels, as well as for numerous consulting firms engaged in heritage conservation. The team includes Mr. Ravi Chandra Malladi, Ms. Aswathy Ajayan S, Ms. Gayathri Chandran, and Mr. Sindhe Ashish, whose combined expertise encompasses lime mortar and plaster applications, clay and limestone technologies, material characterization, and restoration-oriented lime consolidation.

The HTT's notable contributions are demonstrated through the successful restoration of over thirty iconic structures within India and abroad, including three patents. Over the past decade, the HTT has been instrumental in the preservation of India's cultural heritage at VIT, integrating traditional knowledge with contemporary scientific approaches. Their dedication to safeguarding cultural legacy through comprehensive research and evidence-based practices has established them as trusted experts in the domain of heritage conservation, making meaningful contributions to the protection of India's invaluable historical monuments for future generations.



INDO-SARACENIC ARCHITECTURE

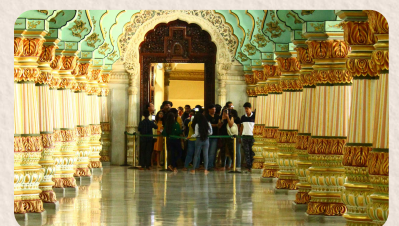
Indo-Saracenic architecture is a distinctive style that evolved as a unique amalgamation of native Indian and colonial British architectural elements, reflecting the intricate cultural, political, and technological interactions that occurred during the British Empire. This architectural style, which emerged after the 1860s, exemplifies a hybrid form that amalgamates Mughal, Gothic, and classical themes, functioning as a visual manifestation of imperial authority across South Asia. The style gained prominence after the Great Revolt of 1857, when the British shifted from European classical architecture to Indo-Saracenic designs as a political strategy to legitimise their rule by connecting themselves to India's Mughal heritage.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Indo-Saracenic architecture fused diverse construction methods, including red brick with white marble, reinforced brickwork (RB) using mortar and bars, onion-shaped domes with timber frames and brick tiles, Byzantine domes with pendentives and squinches, and true arches built on bamboo or timber centring. It showcased stone carving (sandstone), wood carving (teak, rosewood, sandalwood), and metalwork (bronze, iron, cast iron integration). Decorative arts included inlay, mosaic, stucco, stained glass, jali lattices, cusped and scalloped arches, chhatris, chajjas, minarets, and parapets with lotus motifs. Designs emphasised climate-adaptive features, such as thick walls, verandas, and natural ventilation, which are rooted in Indian spatial planning.



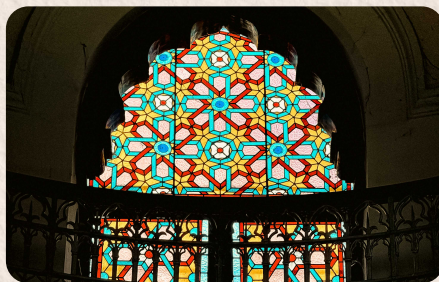
Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai



Mysore Palace, Mysore

MADRAS HIGH COURT: AN EPITOME OF INDO-SARACENIC ARCHITECTURE

Madras is the birthplace of Indo-Saracenic architecture. Paul Benfield designed the influential Chepauk Palace. The Chepauk Palace's style influenced buildings not only across India but also in Pakistan, Malaysia, and Singapore. The 127-year-old Madras High Court complex remains a relatively unexplored part of the city. It was formed through the amalgamation of the Supreme court of Judicature at Madras and the Sadr Diwani Adalat, under the British rule. It is one of the three chartered high courts instituted by the British along with Bombay and Calcutta. Designed by JW Brassington, then consulting architect to the Government, its grand Indo-Saracenic structure was completed by Henry Irwin in 1892. The structures were built on a robust foundation, featuring striking red brick and granite. They are adorned with elegant minarets, petite towers, stained glass works, ornamental latticed jallies, and graceful domes. Two prominent lighthouses, one crowning the High Court and another standing independently within the grounds, are majestic landmarks. The high court buildings have demonstrated considerable durability and weathered the challenges of the 19th and 20th centuries, continuing to shine as guiding lights of justice even today.



GOALS OF THE PROGRAMME

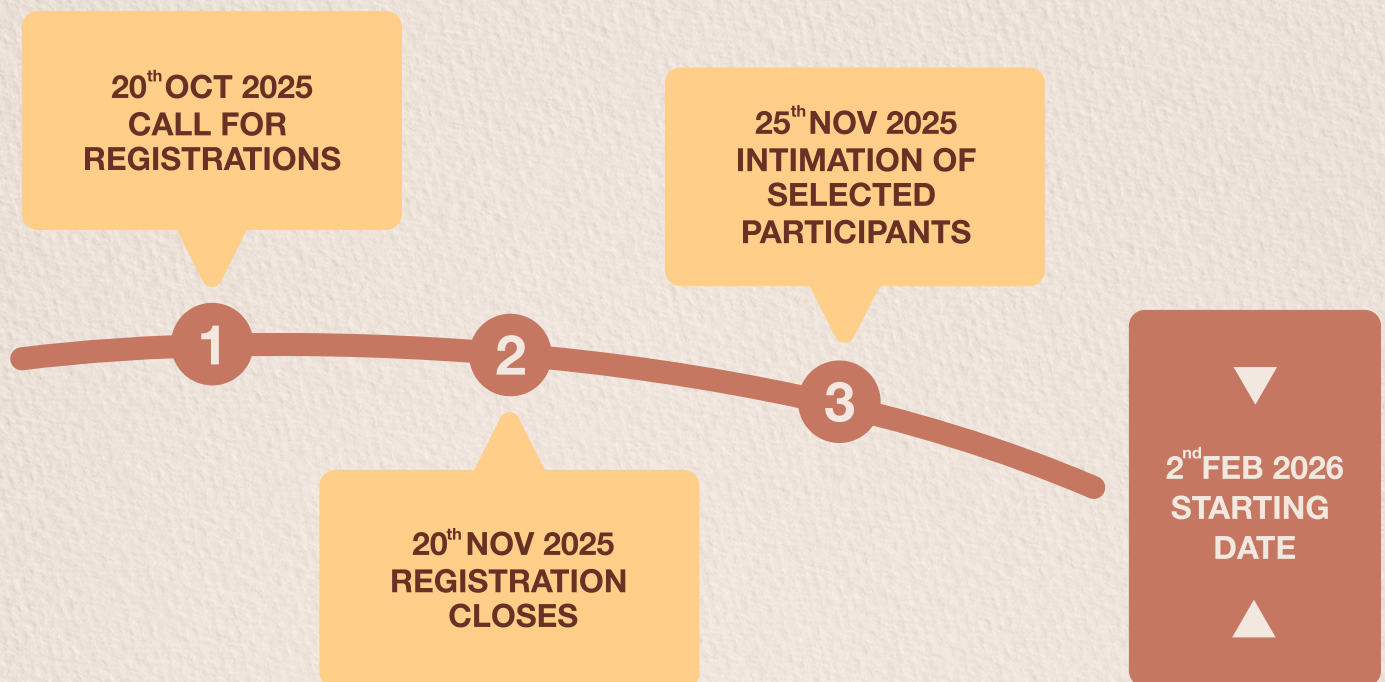
- Understand the political and cultural symbolism of the Indo-Saracenic style as a British colonial architectural statement. And hands-on skills for the restoration of Indo-Saracenic buildings using traditional methods and materials.
- Master lime mortar preparation techniques using traditional formulations and learn authentic Indo-Saracenic plastering methods through a scientific approach.
- Study the compatibility of traditional materials with historic substrates to prevent deterioration.
- Implement 3D scanning and photogrammetry for accurate recording of architectural details.
- Create detailed condition assessments using non-destructive testing methods.
- Master identification and restoration of bulbous onion domes, study various arch types, Glass and Mural Paintings used in the construction of the Madras High Court.

REGISTRATION



- Registration form ([Click here](#))
 1. A caution deposit of INR 10,000 will be collected at the time of registration.
 2. Confirmation of registration will be sent via email/phone.
 3. The policy clearly stipulates that only those attending at least 90% of the sessions will receive certificates, along with a refund of INR 10,000.

KEY DATES



WHO SHOULD JOIN THIS JOURNEY ?

- Practicing masons with experience in traditional building methods.
- Academicians with background in Architecture and Civil Engineering.
- Conservation architects and restoration professionals.
- Government officials and heritage site/project managers involved in overseeing heritage buildings.
- Contractors, supervisors, and artisans involved in the restoration and maintenance of historic structures.
- NGO participants and cultural heritage advocates.

PATRON

Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore

Dr. G. Viswanathan, Founder and Chancellor

Mr. Sankar Viswanathan, Vice President

Dr. Sekar Viswanathan, Vice President

Dr. G.V. Selvam, Vice President

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Dr. S. Murugavelh, Professor & Director

CO₂ Research and Green Technologies Centre

The Commonwealth Heritage Forum

H.E. Sir Rodney Williams, Chief Patron, Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda

Philip Davies, OBE. Consultant Chief Executive

Sarah Neville, Project Development Consultant

Victoria Hellewell, Training and Skills Consultant

ORGANISING COMMITTEE (VIT)

1. **Dr. Thirumalini Selvaraj**, Lead, CO₂ Research and Green Technologies Centre
2. **Ms. Aswathy Ajayan S**, Clay and Limestone Specialist
3. **Mr. Ravi Chandra Malladi**, Restoration Engineer and Material Specialist
4. **Ms. Gayathri Chandran**, Clay and Limestone Specialist
5. **Mr. Sindhe Ashish**, Restoration Engineer and Consolidation Specialist

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