

Certificate Course in Introduction to Ancient Indian Temple Architecture
January 5 to March 15, 2025
Mode - Online

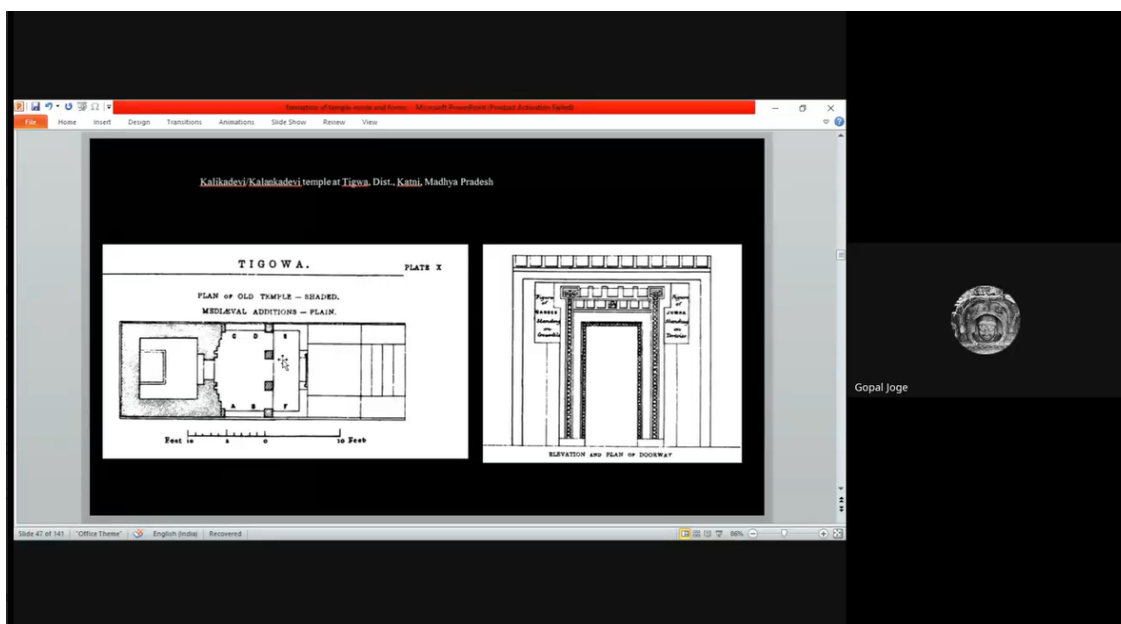
The **45-session certificate course** titled *Introduction to Ancient Indian Temple Architecture* commenced on **January 5** and concluded on March 15. The *Online Certificate Course in Introduction to Ancient Indian Temple Architecture* was an academically oriented programme designed to introduce participants to the fundamental concepts, symbolism, and architectural principles that shaped ancient Indian temple traditions. The course aimed to build a strong foundational understanding of temple architecture through a chronological and regional approach, situating temples within broader historical, cultural, and religious contexts.

Conducted by Sambhasha Foundation in collaboration with Gandhigram Rural Institute, the course brings together an interdisciplinary perspective by engaging scholars and practitioners from the fields of art history, archaeology, architecture, and cultural studies. The collaborative framework strengthens the academic outreach of the programme and enables meaningful knowledge exchange across institutions.

Course Objectives:

- To familiarise participants with the key concepts, symbolism, and foundational principles of ancient Indian temple architecture.
- To outline the historical origins, evolution, and regional developments of temple-building traditions across India.
- To provide an overview of major ancient Indian temple styles and their defining structural and aesthetic features.

Sessions were facilitated by a diverse faculty comprising senior scholars, researchers, and practitioners from across India, allowing participants to engage with multiple methodological and interpretative approaches bridging the gap between academic scholarship and common understanding. March 15 marked the conclusion of the course with the distribution of certificates.



Mumbai Visit- AUGP

March 8, 2026

Mode - Offline - On site - 5

Sambhasha Foundation facilitated a visit to Mumbai for students from AUGP program of Asia University, Japan, as a knowledge partner offering an immersive introduction to the city's layered historical and urban landscape.

The visit began at the iconic Gateway of India, where students were introduced to its historical context within colonial India and its continued symbolic significance. The group then explored the South Bombay Fort area, engaging with the urban fabric shaped during the colonial period.

Particular focus was given to the Victorian and Gothic architectural heritage of the precinct, including landmarks such as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus and Bombay High Court, through which students examined stylistic features, urban planning, and the role of architecture in expressing imperial power.

The session also encouraged students to observe Mumbai's evolving cityscape, reflecting on the intersections between historic structures and contemporary urban life. The visit provided a comparative perspective, allowing students to connect these observations with their own academic contexts and experiences of urban heritage in Japan.

Overall, the programme offered a contextual and engaging exploration of Mumbai's architectural and cultural landscape, fostering cross-cultural understanding and critical engagement with built heritage.

Entering a Memorandum of Understanding with Institute of Oriental Studies March 19, 2026

A key highlight of this period was the formalisation of a strategic partnership between Sambhasha Foundation and the Institute of Oriental Studies. Through the signing of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), both institutions commit to a collaborative framework focused on developing **academic programmes and organising cultural activities**.

This partnership aims to strengthen interdisciplinary engagement in the fields of language, history, and cultural studies, while also creating accessible platforms for learning and public participation. By combining the academic expertise of the Institute with Sambhasha's experience in educational outreach and community-based initiatives, the collaboration seeks to foster meaningful knowledge exchange and promote sustained cultural engagement.

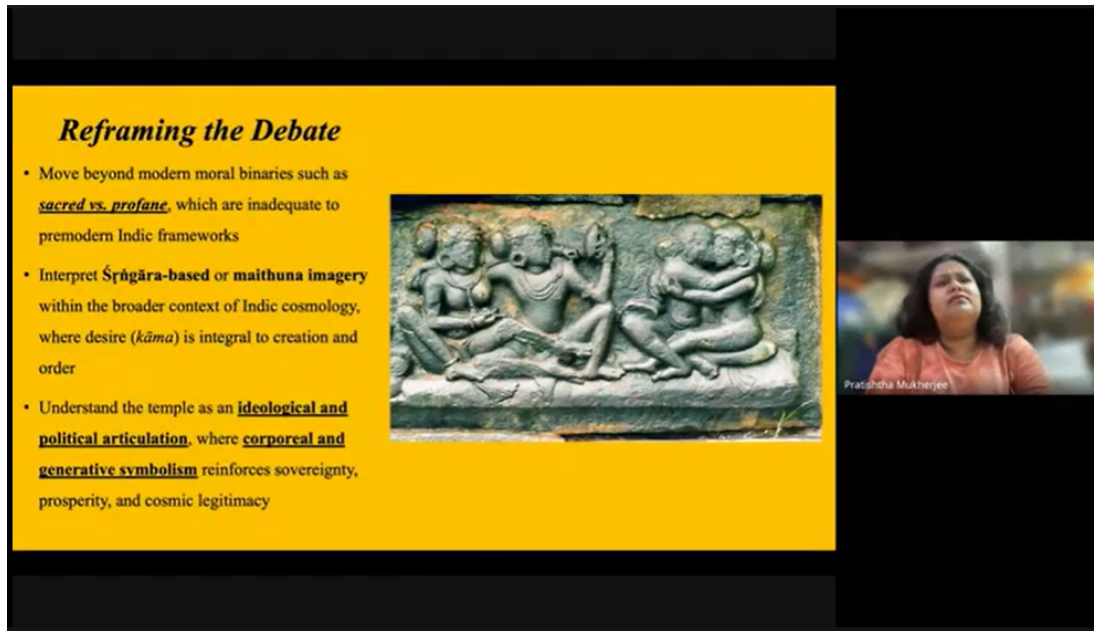
Lecture Series- Desire in Indian Temple Art - Erotic, Sacred, Political: Re-reading March 27, 28 and 29, 2026 Mode - Online - 19participants

Sambhasha Foundation hosted a three-day course titled *“Erotic, Sacred, Political: Re-reading Desire in Indian Temple Art”* conducted by Dr. Pratishtha Mukherjee. The programme brought together participants for a critical and layered exploration of erotic imagery in Indian temple art through iconographic, aesthetic, political, and historiographical perspectives.

The course began by situating desire within the framework of **Śṛṅgāra Rasa**, as discussed in the Nāṭyaśāstra, highlighting its role as a metaphysical and cosmological principle linked to fertility, auspiciousness, and creation. The second day examined the relationship between erotic imagery and royal patronage, demonstrating how temples functioned as expressions of sovereignty, prosperity, and dynastic legitimacy.

The final session addressed the impact of colonial interpretations, particularly Victorian morality, in recasting such imagery as ‘obscene,’ and encouraged participants to critically reassess these inherited frameworks.

Overall, the course enabled participants to move beyond reductive readings and engage with temple art as a complex intersection of theology, aesthetics, and power, aligning with Sambhasha Foundation's commitment to context-driven heritage education.



Reframing the Debate

- Move beyond modern moral binaries such as sacred vs. profane, which are inadequate to premodern Indic frameworks
- Interpret Śrīgāra-based or malthuna imagery within the broader context of Indic cosmology, where desire (*kāma*) is integral to creation and order
- Understand the temple as an ideological and political articulation, where corporeal and generative symbolism reinforces sovereignty, prosperity, and cosmic legitimacy



Pratishtha Mukherjee

Study Group

March 27, 2026

Mode - Online

The Sambhasha Foundation like every month conducted an engaging online study group session titled “*Narmada Parikrama: The Adjusting Faith*”, led by Amulya Dixit, a doctoral candidate at Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham and a Junior Research Fellow specializing in the cultural landscapes of the Narmada Parikrama.

The session explored the Narmada River not merely as a geographical entity but as a deeply sacred and cultural lifeline. The speaker highlighted how the Parikrama, a traditional pilgrimage around the river, embodies a living heritage shaped by centuries of faith, movement, and interaction with the landscape. Participants were introduced to the historical continuity of this practice, tracing its roots from ancient texts to contemporary experiences.

A key focus of the talk was the transformation of the riverine landscape due to modern infrastructural interventions, particularly large-scale dam projects such as the Sardar Sarovar and Indira Sagar. The discussion emphasized how these changes have submerged temples, altered pilgrimage routes, and reshaped sacred geographies. Despite these disruptions, the resilience of faith emerged as a central theme, pilgrims continue to adapt, redefining their journeys and sustaining traditions in evolving contexts.

The study group concluded with a reflective discussion, where participants engaged with questions around continuity, loss, and adaptation in sacred traditions. The session successfully

fostered a deeper understanding of how faith practices are not static but dynamically respond to changing landscapes.



Deccan College Walk

March 28, 2026

Mode - Offline - 24

The Sambhasha Foundation conducted an engaging and interactive *Museum Story Walk* for the M.A. Japanese students of Savitribai Phule Pune University at the Deccan College campus. The session aimed to introduce students to India's rich archaeological heritage through a narrative-based and experiential learning approach.

The walk primarily covered the Archaeology Museum, which houses a vast collection of artefacts spanning from the Stone Age to the early historic periods, offering a chronological understanding of human cultural evolution. Students were guided through multiple galleries showcasing tools, pottery, burial practices, and other material remains, enabling them to visualize the lifeways of early communities and the development of ancient Indian societies.

A key highlight of the session was the facilitator's effort to contextualize the artefacts within the students' academic framework. Pottery and material culture from prehistoric India were thoughtfully connected to Japanese prehistoric traditions, allowing for a comparative understanding of cultural developments across regions. This approach made the session more relevant and intellectually engaging, fostering cross-cultural connections between Indian and Japanese archaeological narratives.

Further enriching the experience, an object handling session was conducted using stone tool replicas. This hands-on component allowed students to physically engage with the material,

understand tool-making techniques, and appreciate the functional aspects of prehistoric technology. The tactile interaction deepened their comprehension of early human innovation and added an experiential dimension to the learning process.

Through storytelling techniques and interactive discussions, the session encouraged active participation and critical thinking. Students reflected on similarities and differences between cultural trajectories, creating a dynamic space for dialogue and exchange.

Overall, the Museum Story Walk successfully combined academic insight, storytelling, and hands-on learning. It not only enhanced the students' understanding of India's archaeological heritage but also demonstrated the effectiveness of experiential and comparative approaches in heritage education.



Research Projects

PGKM School Project based learning programme ‘Exploring Maharashtra’ Grade V

Building on the success of the previous year’s project-based social science learning programme conducted with Grade VI students of PGKM school, this ongoing initiative aims to explore the impact of early experiential learning in shaping foundational social science understanding among younger learners. Observations from earlier programmes have indicated that introducing students to the study of their surroundings and their formation through activities, interaction, and storytelling significantly enriches the overall learning experience.

In response to this, Sambhasha Foundation has designed a customised curriculum titled **“Exploring Maharashtra,”** developed specifically for Grade V students, conducted with Grade V students of PGKM school. The programme adopts a project-based learning framework that connects key concepts of social science with students’ lived experiences, thereby emphasising the relevance of historical and geographical knowledge in their immediate surroundings.

The programme is being implemented in close alignment with the school’s monthly interdisciplinary themes to ensure that learning remains both meaningful and integrated. By linking social science concepts with other subjects such as environmental studies, language, and art, *Exploring Maharashtra* seeks to create a holistic and contextually rich educational experience for young learners.



Oral History Documentation Project

1. Ms. Athale Documentation

This month, Sambhasha Foundation continued its oral history documentation project through detailed conversations with **Ms. Athale**, a century-old woman whose life journey spans the pre-independence, independence, and post-independence periods of Indian history. A degree holder in Political Science, she emerges as a well-informed and politically aware citizen whose observations offer a valuable, impartial lens into India's evolving socio-political landscape.

Ms. Athale hails from a family that actively supported reformist ideologies, which shaped her worldview and civic engagement from an early age. Her life experiences are further enriched by her residence in multiple regions across India, owing to her husband's service as an army doctor. This geographic mobility allowed her to witness regional variations in social practices, political awareness, and everyday responses to national events, all from within domestic and community spaces.

The project involves in-depth conversations not only with Ms. Athale but also with her daughters, enabling a layered understanding of her life, values, and intergenerational perspectives. These narratives collectively offer insight into how political ideas, national movements, and social reforms filtered into everyday household life rather than remaining confined to public or institutional domains.

This documentation aligns with what historian **Gerda Lerner** described as “the history of the majority”—the histories of representative individuals whose lived experiences, though not extraordinary in a conventional sense, collectively shaped social consciousness. Ms. Athale's testimony reveals how political ideologies were understood, negotiated, and practiced within domestic spaces, offering an essential counterpoint to elite or event-centric historical narratives.

2. Nitsure Life Documentation

The *Balkrishna Nitsure Life Documentation Project* focused on recording the life, craft practice, and philosophy of Balkrishna Nitsure, an independent woodcraft practitioner based in Pune. Trained in basic technical skills during his schooling and professionally engaged as a typist for several decades, Nitsure represents a rare example of a self-taught artisan who consciously chose to practise craft solely for personal fulfilment, rather than commercial gain.

The documentation captures his transition from professional life to full-time engagement with woodcraft after retirement, highlighting his sustained commitment to hand-crafted processes, patience-intensive carving techniques, and the use of found or reclaimed wood. The *Balkrishna Nitsure Life Documentation Project* is being undertaken using an oral history-based documentation methodology, as Balkrishna Nitsure is no longer alive. To reconstruct his life,

practice, and philosophy, detailed conversations are being conducted with his family members, friends, former students, associates, and neighbours, allowing for a multi-vocal understanding of his personality, creative process, and everyday life.

In addition to oral testimonies, the project includes site-based documentation, with a visit to his former residence and workspace, where observations were recorded regarding his working environment, tools, spatial organisation, and the material traces of his craft practice. e. The documentation contributes to preserving the legacy of a non-commercial, self-motivated craft practice and demonstrates the value of oral history in recording intangible cultural heritage.

Documentation of Old Talims in Pune

Sambhāṣā Foundation has initiated a new project to document the old Talims of Pune, many of which were established during the Peshwa period. These Talims are not merely wrestling schools but historic institutions that nurtured physical discipline, moral values, and social leadership. They significantly shaped community identity and played an important role in Maharashtra's social and political awakening. However, with rapid urban change, modernization, and declining patronage, many traditional Talims face the threat of transformation or disappearance. This makes systematic documentation crucial to preserve their histories, practices, and cultural relevance for future generations.



On the Job Training (OJT)

The On-the-Job Training (OJT) initiative by SAMBHĀṢĀ Foundation is conceived as a step towards strengthening the capacity of the social sciences field itself by nurturing informed, skilled, and socially sensitive young researchers. By engaging students in ongoing research, heritage initiatives, and field-based projects, the programme contributes to building a sustainable knowledge ecosystem grounded in practice and critical inquiry. Through hands-on exposure to fieldwork, documentation, market research, and data interpretation, students not only develop individual competencies but also contribute to the long-term capacity building of the field by addressing current gaps, emerging needs, and methodological challenges. Guided mentorship and interaction with experts enable participants to bring fresh perspectives and innovative approaches, thereby reinforcing the academic and societal relevance of social science research.

As part of training and guidance a session on Research Methodology, Ethics, Literature review and Bibliography was engaged with the OJT candidates.

1. Ravivaar Peth Art Deco

As part of On-the-Job Training (OJT) at Sambhāṣā Foundation, candidates are engaged in a research and documentation project focusing on Art Deco architecture in the Raviwar Peth area of Pune. This project involves studying the historical background, evolution, and local adaptation of the Art Deco architectural style, tracing its global emergence and examining how it was interpreted within the urban and cultural context of Pune.

The work includes field documentation of Art Deco buildings in Raviwar Peth, with careful observation of architectural features such as geometric forms, streamlined facades, decorative motifs, balconies, and material usage. Particular attention is given to identifying how international Art Deco elements were blended with Indian traditional motifs, regional symbols, and locally available materials, resulting in a distinctive architectural expression unique to Pune.

The project also examines the coexistence and visual relationship between earlier wada architecture and later Art Deco structures, highlighting the layered urban fabric of the area. Through systematic documentation, photography, architectural observation, and contextual research, this project contributes to understanding Raviwar Peth as an important site reflecting Pune's transition into architectural modernity while retaining its cultural continuity.





2. Documenting the Talims of Pune

Sambhasha Foundation has engaged students as part of an ongoing research project, **Documentation of the Talims of Pune**—traditional community spaces that historically functioned as centres for physical training, social interaction, and cultural exchange. Through guided field visits, oral history interactions, and archival exploration, students are actively documenting the architectural features, historical backgrounds, intangible traditions, and present conditions of selected Talims. These spaces, once central to wrestling (kushti), martial arts training, and local socio-political life in pre- and post-independence Pune, are being studied to trace their evolution and assess their relevance within contemporary urban contexts. By involving students in recording these narratives, the project not only builds research capacity but also contributes to preserving an often-overlooked dimension of Pune’s cultural identity before it fades from collective memory.



4. Documenting the Sugandhis (Attar Makers) of Pune

This research project focuses on documenting the Sugandhi community of Pune—the traditional artisans engaged in attar (natural perfume) making. For generations, these families have preserved the delicate art of distilling and blending fragrances using natural ingredients such as sandalwood, rose, jasmine, and vetiver.

The project aims to explore the cultural, historical, and sensory dimensions of attar-making in Pune, tracing its journey from temple rituals and ceremonial use to everyday life, festivals, and contemporary markets. Through interviews, field documentation, photographic records, and tool documentation, students will capture the craftsmanship, oral traditions, trade practices, and lived experiences of the Sugandhis. By preserving these narratives, the project highlights an important form of intangible heritage that connects memory, identity, and Pune's old factory and artisanal culture.

5. Chronological Mapping of Indian History

Understanding history through a chronological framework is fundamental to comprehending the evolution of cultures, political systems, and artistic traditions. This project focuses on developing accurate and comprehensive chronological timelines of Indian history, ranging from broad national narratives to region-specific and theme-based studies.

Students will work on creating a general timeline of Indian history as well as more focused timelines such as the Timeline of Maharashtra, Timeline of Ancient Indian Art and Architecture, and period-specific timelines covering phases like Prehistoric, Mauryan, Satavahana, or Maratha history. The project involves extensive research to identify accurate dates, dynasties, events, and cultural milestones, supported by reliable academic sources and site-specific examples.

Through this exercise, students will gain a deeper understanding of India's historical chronology while learning to analyse, verify, and visually represent historical data. The project also introduces timelines as interpretive tools that help connect political, cultural, and artistic developments across time.