

THROUGH THE LEADERSHIP OF OUR Mira and Ajay Shingal Center for Dharma Studies (CDS), the GTU has established an ongoing relationship with Radhanath Swami, one of the key spiritual leaders of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). This winter, CDS Director Dr. Rita Sherma and I flew to India to visit Govardhan, one of ISKCON's Ecovillages. We were there not only to discover more about their work but also to build toward a time when GTU students interested in Sustainability Studies can visit and learn firsthand.

The Govardhan Ecovillage is completely sustainable and recycles everything. The remarkable buildings there are made from compressed soil bricks and natural materials. Residents grow all their own food, and capture all the fresh water they need for the year during the Monsoon season. This innovative project is guided by spiritual principles derived from the Vedic texts held sacred by this Hindu group.

During our travels, we also visited the Bhaktivedanta Medical Center in Mumbai, which serves a population of 100,000, many of whom are unable to afford payment for medical treatment. Holistic care and spiritual well-being are woven into every aspect of the hospital's regimen, from doctors' interactions to the way food is prepared and presented.

Dr. Sherma and I were also given the opportunity to address the 450 attendees at a Nexus Conference on Water, held at the Bombay Stock Exchange. This conference was another example of the intentional weaving of spiritual discernment and education, giving attention to the search for creative and practical solutions to real-world problems.

Another visit was to a brand new high-rise

building in Mumbai where an entire floor is devoted to providing online education and video conferencing for academic, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations. The GTU has committed to preparing and delivering five online courses on Hinduism and other religions for students in India over the next 18 months. Our leadership of these online courses will be facilitated by the new Collaborative Learning Space that's been created on the main floor of the GTU Library. (See page 13).

We're building toward a time when GTU students interested in Sustainability Studies can visit this innovative project and learn firsthand.

The connections established and deepened on this trip to India are part of the GTU's effort to create dynamic engagement with groups in other countries that are also working to fuse spiritual values, educational programming, and attention to persistent, perplexing problems. Such work fits well with the GTU's new campaign to develop interreligious student cohorts that will be examining a variety of challenging problems that demand sustainable solutions to enhance human flourishing while caring for the planet and all its life forms.

If you'd like to join in these conversations, the GTU and its Center for Dharma Studies are hosting a major conference on April 28-29 entitled "Sustainable Societies: Interreligious, Interdisciplinary Responses." This conference will feature lectures and panel discussions from more than 40 scholars representing the GTU, its member schools and centers, and more than a dozen other colleges and universities. Find out more on page 14, or register to attend at <https://gtu-sustainable-societies.eventbrite.com>.



Riess Potterveld and ISKCON monk Nimai Prabhu at the Govardhan Ecovillage.

Riess Potterveld