

TITLE: Religion and Sustainability: Perspectives from India in a Conversation with Dr. M. H. Mehta

HOST: Jane-Marie Law, with guest Dr. Mahesh Mehta

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This topical lunch hosts our visiting scholar from India, Dr. Mahesh Mehta, and is a continuation of our conversations in the fall regarding religion and sustainability. Dr. Mehta is a noted scholar in agriculture, and his vast experience working on community projects in India and Africa, and collaborating on projects around the globe provides a concrete perspective on how religion can interact, both positively and negatively, in projects affecting sustainability. Dr. Mehta will speak about some of the projects he currently works on. This topical lunch is part of a one month visit of Dr. Mehta to the Cornell campus, and is an opportunity for Cornell faculty to meet him in an informal setting. His bio is included below.

Dr. M. H. Mehta holds B.Tech. and Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from IIT, Bombay. He has published over 150 papers, 3 books and holds 16 patents. He is the author of the well-known book Profitably Preventing Pollution. During his long and varied career, he served for a time as an adviser to the World Bank India Environmental Programme & Planning Commission Steering Committee and as chairman of the National Committee for Agriculture Technologies, NRDC and on the board of directors of the National Bio-fuel Committee of ICC. Currently, he serves as the president of the National Bioshield Technology and as president of the Indian Association of IT in Agriculture (IAiTA). In 2000, he was invited to serve as Vice Chancellor of Gujarat Agricultural University where he served for revitalizing and modernizing Education, Research and Extension. In his semi-retirement, he has started The Science Ashram in his city of Baroda, an institution dedicated to making the science and practice of environmental sustainability and ecological restoration available to communities in India and Africa. In this capacity, he is directing the community based ecological restoration project of the Vishwamitri River. With a long list of awards to his name, in 2011, he was awarded the Padma Shree Award by the Government of India for his work in Agriculture and Sustainability. At this juncture in his life, his main interests lie in promoting dialogues and understanding across diverse segments of Indian society and with projects around the globe that promote a harmonious and sustainable future while addressing the pressing concerns of climate change, food distribution and the pressing demands on agricultural communities. A noted scientist, he is also a musician and plays classical Indian music on the Kast Tarang, a traditional Indian instrument. He writes poetry and enjoys sports, his large and active family and especially his granddaughters.