

University of Exeter Students Testimonial

“The whole trip was an incredible experience and I felt fully immersed in Indian culture and customs right from the start, which makes it exceedingly difficult to highlight just one experience as that which I enjoyed most. Nevertheless, the one day that made the greatest impression on me would have to be our visit to the Om Shanthidhama, a traditional Gurukula-style school. I was extremely impressed by the way in which such an ancient educational system was still thriving and had not been compromised by modern adaptations, such as the IT suite. Whilst one would expect ancient traditions and / or beliefs to fall at the hands of modernization (in particular, Westernization), I was amazed to see them run so perfectly in parallel in this educational institution. Whilst only constituting one part of Indian culture, this, I believe, served as a perfect example of contemporary India: a country open to adaptation to a new generation and way of life as opposed to the replacement of ancient customs entirely.”

Thanks to the thoughtful and in-depth programme of activities which Jain University delivered, the students gained a unique insight into the Grand Challenges dilemma they were examining. Professor Sam Smiles, Programme Director for Art History and Visual Culture and Academic Lead for the Society and the Arts: The State, Censorship and Social Responsibility dilemma has said,

“The project on which the students were working was focused on cultural patrimony and its preservation. Their experiences at Jain University provided them with a wealth of insights into that dilemma, both in and around Bangalore but also as it pertains to India as a whole and its many distinctive communities, cultures, languages and histories. Our students returned full of enthusiasm and respect for what they had been introduced to and showed in their project's outcome that they had come to understand something of the nature of contemporary Indian society and its relationship with such a complex legacy of cultural heritage. Our colleagues at Jain University clearly went out of their way to offer a well-rounded, informative and highly appropriate programme for Exeter Grand Challenges students and I am sincerely grateful to them for the care and consideration they showed in making their British guests so welcome.”