

Rajbir Singh Judge, AIPS Junior Fellowship Narrative
University of California, Davis

With the generous support of American Institute for Pakistan Studies, I conducted five months of archival research at the Punjab State Archives in Patiala, the National Széchenyi Library in Budapest, and the Bodleian Library in Oxford for my dissertation, which examines the key alliances the Theosophical Society formed between Sikhs in the Punjab through the narrative of Maharaja Duleep Singh. Though my dissertation has changed slightly because of archival restraints,

Though originally, I wanted to conduct research in Chennai I only went to Chennai briefly since I faced some difficulties researching at the site. Instead, I did research in Patiala at the Punjab State Archives. At the archives, I found numerous colonial state documents which, though not what I entirely hoped for, opened spaces in my argument about the relationships between the TS and Sikhs, especially the conceptual landscape the Theosophical Society entered in Punjab at the end of the nineteenth century. The records reveal how Duleep Singh remained an open symbol of contestation, able to be reworked according to not only historical context, but Sikh principles. At the National Széchenyi Library, I examined and scanned Umrao Singh Shergill's, the former President of the Lahore Theosophical Society's, letters and photographs. Shergill's letter provided a numerous wealth of empirical information especially his attempts to translate Muhammad Iqbal's work into Hungarian. In general, Shergill's foregrounding of the occult in his thought and refusal to think in terms of authenticity in relation to his exile offer a worthwhile counterpoint to Duleep Singh's desire to re-inaugurate himself in the Punjab. Indeed, Shergill reveals how the occult provided numerous points of entry to the terrain of resistance so easily reduced to the nation-state formation today.

In London, I visited the London Theosophical Society, which provided numerous helpful contacts to continue my research—providing both new archival opportunities unbeknownst to me. Moreover, in London, I examined the large holding of private papers and correspondences of Duleep Singh while he lived in exile in London as well state records about Singh, which are in the British Library. This immense record of papers highlight the contested nature of Sikh resistance and the importance of *Sikhi* to people's understanding of resistance at the end of the 19th Century in Punjab, which remained irreducible to contemporary historical context. In the Bodleian Library, I examined the letters written by Henry Steel Olcott, one of the founders of the Theosophical Society, to Max Muller, furthering my understanding of Theosophy's relation to both Orientalism and their own theological framework.

Alongside my research, I also participated in the intellectual communities in the respective sites. For example, I presented my work in Patiala at Punjab History Conference held by the Department of Punjab Historical Studies of Punjabi University, Patiala on March 18th, 2017. In England, I attended the International Sikh Research Conference held at the University of Warwick held on June 17th, 2017.

Overall, the sources I collected and the relationships I cultivated thanks to the support from the American Institute of Pakistan Studies were critical for both my dissertation and academic career. Many thanks to the AIPS.