Having decided to write an M.A. thesis on the refugee problem in Delhi after the partition of India 1947, I left for India at the beginning of January in order to collect relevant material in the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (NMML).

The travel expenses and living costs for the 3-months’ research trip were partially borne by the German Academic Exchange Council (DAAD). In Delhi, I received generous support from Evelin Hust, Director of the SAI’s branch office. She helped me in my dealings with the local bureaucracy and introduced me to Delhi-based academics affiliated to the Institute. Due to their help and support, it was quite easy to find my way through the rather bewildering maze of rules and regulations for conducting academic research in India. Furthermore, pursuing research in a well-organized and pleasantly situated library such as the NMML was an unforgettable experience.

Besides having the opportunity of meeting well-known academics like Judith Brown, I collected a lot of relevant material for my thesis. Apart from consulting unpublished government records and private papers (such as the files of the Delhi Police Branch or the Mountbatten papers) in the NMML’s manuscript section, I searched for information on the refugee problem in Delhi daily newspapers dating from August 1947 to the end of 1948, available on microfilm. Thanks to the helpful staff of this section of the library who asked all users to take a “rest time” of 15 minutes after having consulted the newspapers for 45 minutes, my research was both effective and stressless.

Using my spare time to experience as much of Delhi’s culture and everyday life as possible, I attended various cultural events organised by the Max Müller Bhavan, took part in religious festivals such as Lohri and Holi and, of course, did not miss out on one single episode of the Hindi soap opera “Sas bhi kabhi bhi bahu thi”.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the DAAD (without whose financial help my trip would not have been possible) as well as to the History Department of Delhi University for their academic support. Furthermore I would like to encourage my fellow students to utilize the opportunity to do research abroad.

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