Nikhil Kothakota, MPhil in Law
Ratanshaw Bomanji Zaiwalla Graduate Scholarship

Nikhil is pursuing an MPhil in Law. His research lies at the intersection of administrative law and environmental law insofar as he seeks to reframe how we understand development-induced displacement and change in land-use within Indian land acquisition frameworks. Through his research, he seeks to contextualize and then challenge dominant modes of judicial reasoning, which in emphasizing promotional narratives of infrastructure development, often fail to examine whether relevant considerations such as conducting Environmental Impact Assessment, obtaining land conversion permissions or assessing impact on food security were taken into account.

Prior to pursuing the MPhil, Nikhil read for the Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL) at Oxford. He remains grateful for the opportunity to pursue courses such as Advanced Administrative Law, Legal Concepts in Environmental Law and Comparative Human Rights, which helped him gain a critical understanding of the various frameworks within which public law operates. Nikhil has also previously worked as a judicial clerk at the Supreme Court of India, dealing with a variety of constitutional and environmental matters. He particularly attributes his research interests in land and resource justice, climate change litigation and Law and Political Economy approaches to his time assisting the 'Green Bench' in matters related to deforestation, mining and environmental clearances. While acknowledging the scholarship, Nikhil says:

"I would like to thank Mr. Zaiwalla for the generous support received in the form of the Ratanshaw Bomanji Zaiwalla Graduate Scholarship at the OICSD. I would not have been able to take up the MPhil offer with this support. Through my research, I hope to be able to set out a model of governance that views acquisition as inherent to environmental management, in a manner that collectively addresses issues of development-induced displacement and nature conservation. This idea stems from a long-standing interest in understanding how property ownership and public administration interact in India, and it is directly relevant to the core objectives of the OICSD so I am grateful for the opportunity."

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