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### **Alternative South Asian Cultural Studies**

South Asian studies and South Asian cultural studies in Nepali universities aim at broadening the areas of university pedagogy. The alternative concept seeks to redraw the boundary of South Asian cultural studies and finally develop newer methodologies for university pedagogy in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The alternative model identifies issues from the margin to broaden the methods and contents of existing cultural study of South Asia. Asian Cultural Studies in general incorporates the study of the marginal locations but such inclusion is not very much evident in South Asian cultural studies pedagogy.

South Asian Studies programs need to be critiqued and modified as the existing pedagogic programs in different parts of the world predominantly address Indic discourse and footnotingly ignore myriad issues of the margins from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, and other countries of the region. The hegemonic Indic discourse, though extremely necessary to comprehend the subject matters of South Asia, falls short in accommodating the alternative perspectives and discourses from the margin. The study can take, for instance, Nepal as a knowledge location.

The area of research can be proposed as South Asian Cultural Studies/Nepal program (SACS/N). Since South Asian Studies at U.S., Canada, Great Britain, and Europe are predominantly India focused, Nepal as an alternative perspective will open up newer avenues to study South Asia. Furthermore, keeping in mind the Indic hegemony in South Asia related pedagogy, “/Nepal” perspective distances, introduces, reconciles, and appropriates South Asia as a further object of study. It, however, is significant to notice that Nepali location is methodological for alternative South Asian Cultural Studies rather than being Nepali study per se.

There are some theoretical questions which are relevant to the present research project: What happens when the viewpoint is shifted from the center (India, for instance) to margin (Nepal, for instance) while developing such a program? What are the implications and what modalities such a program can have and develop? Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka etc are just examples and if the methodologies can be identified they can be tools for any kind of cultural studies.

Furthermore, the other nations around India have multiple relations with it: they are dependents, rivals, and/or "small brothers" as margins. Is it then appropriate to think about cultural studies, historical viewpoints from alternative locations? Or are such ideas not possible theoretically because the dominant is a necessity? How then can this very necessity be negotiated or re-written? One may also think about a further question: does it matter to think about a marginal-nation point of view study of South Asia? Nepal's role is negligent or documented marginally in South Asian history.

How can this fact be incorporated in textual and historiographic discourse? What happens to South Asia as a concept when seen from a different/alternative viewpoint? What happens when an alternative model is looked for to study South Asia and even India, or any dominant culture for that matter? In this sense the program is both South Asian Cultural Studies/Nepal and trans and/or post-Nepal studies.

In regards to the theoretical and methodological concerns, the pedagogic aim of the program may be fulfilled with the inputs from Comparative Literature models, Subaltern group's postcolonial theories, and Interdisciplinary cultural studies.

Thus the objectives of the research are: identifying and introducing courses in the tradition and knowledge beyond and within the legacy of India so as to discuss alternative potentialities in other modernities across the subcontinent; focusing on developing methodologies for such a program; representing South Asian academic programs by studying oral literary tradition, translated texts, and multilingual textualism; looking at the immediate fringes of colonial experiences; accepting numerous, varied, and disjunctive temporalities and spatialities in marginal traditions.

### **The Focus of the Individual Panelists**

Arun Gupta will focus on the pedagogic plans and the theoretical aspects of SACS/N. He will discuss how the theoretical aspects of such a program are connected with the methodologies of Cultural Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies, Comparative Literature, and Subaltern Studies. He will also introduce a brief sample course for graduate programs in the Humanities and Social Sciences and critiques its significance and relevance in modern day education.

Anand Sharma will identify the issues of the margin in South Asia so as to discuss the significance of such issues to design courses on Cultural Studies and Area Studies. He will also discourse about the significance of some of the key local issues which may have wider discursive significance in the context of South Asia.