

Towards a Problem and Solution-Oriented New South Asian Studies for Modern Global Challenges: Its Whys and Hows

by

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Abstract:

New South Asian Studies differs from *Old South Asian Studies* in two major respects.

New South Asian Studies not only highlights significant events, personalities and institutions in the region's society and history but also brings to the forefront experiences from its 5,000-year history to address current global challenges. This includes ecological collapse, women's question, caste system, competing nationalisms, the societal impact of artificial intelligence, stress in the daily life, ageing population, and the evolving roles and definitions of religion, among others. Frequently, solutions proposed and introduced by various government measures and movements were and are already part and parcel of normal daily life in different phases, regions, and countries of South Asia. These 'realized' solutions demonstrate the limitations of the proposed measures and

enable the initiation of new attempts at the second stage drawing upon the pre-existing 'solutions.'

The second distinctive aspect of *New South Asian Studies* is the endeavor to reconstruct daily life across various phases, regions, and social strata of South Asia. Examples include excerpts from archaeological excavation reports and anthropological studies, Kautilya's *Arthshastra*, pre-modern autobiographies such as Banarasi Das's *Ardhakathanak*, historical novels by Rahul Sankrityayan, autobiographies of domestic workers like *Aalo Aandhari* by Baby Haldar, and compendiums such as *San 2047 ka Bharat* (India in 2047) published in Kolkata in 1999. These extracts allow students and scholars to undertake a time journey to explore and 'experience' the diverse 'worlds' of South Asia.

Combining these methods with a regular re-evaluation of the gap between lived experiences and anticipated futures in sociological and literary works could pave the way for new approaches of teaching and learning about South Asia.