

**SASNET Workshop about Global Networking in South Asian studies, 27-28 August, in Lund**  
/Staffan Lindberg, April 2001

## **SASNET Platform and a suggestion of issues to be discussed at the workshop:**

### **1) Aims of SASNET - *Swedish South Asian Studies Network at Lund University***

Swedish South Asian Studies Network is a national network for research, education and information on South Asia. It should encourage and promote an open and dynamic networking process in which Swedish researchers/teachers co-operate and work in partnership with institutions and researchers in South Asia and globally. It is financed by Sida and Lund University.

A Swedish South Asian Studies Network should involve and integrate researchers from all disciplines and faculties, and co-operation between disciplines and across faculty borders should be given priority. It builds on the idea that South Asian studies can be most fruitfully pursued in co-operation between researchers, who work in different institutions, but are linked together via networks into programmes focused on South Asian studies.

An active network root node with a network co-ordinator and a secretary/webmaster will be based at Lund University. The network root node will operate an Internet Gateway for interaction and information in South Asian studies.

The network root node at Lund shall support South Asian studies within Lund University and Öresund University.

The main tasks of the network are to:

- Initiate, stimulate, and support research co-operation, by encouraging and promoting networking among researchers and support research programmes with financial resources for meetings, travel, visit of guest researchers, co-ordination, etc. over a period of several years
- Initiate, stimulate, and support networking and co-operation between teachers and institutions for the development of a number of undergraduate and graduate courses in South Asian studies, or relevant to South Asia, at Swedish and Nordic universities, if possible in partnership with South Asian universities
- encourage PhD studies specialising on South Asia in various ways, including networking among single research students in institutions that do not specialise on South Asia
- promote mutual student and researcher exchange between Sweden (the Nordic countries) and South Asia
- build, together with other institutions, an information system for South Asian studies servicing information networks, media, teachers, schools, business communities, NGOs, etc

- help co-ordinate consultations and exchange of information between researchers and governments, foreign ministries, aid directorates, other public institutions, private business, and NGOs

## 2) Suggestion of issues to be discussed at the workshop

**In the forthcoming workshop on global networking** we want to place our work in a broader discussion about patterns and mechanisms in the current global changes brought about by information technology, the growth of global “network societies” and the implications of this for researchers and teachers networking between the West (including Sweden) and South Asia globally. What positive contribution can a network like SASNET make in this context given these conditions for its work?

Some **general issues** related to the SASNET project that we are interested in are, for example:

- What can the globalisation of economic, cultural and political spheres mean to the sciences and education, especially in a global society where people simultaneously continue to be separated and divided by ecological, economic, cultural and political gaps as well as by contradictions and conflicts?
- How can we avoid contributing to information monopolies in the hands of Western elites and trans-national companies engaged in knowledge and science-based production or in multi-media production?
- How can we as researchers and teachers avoid becoming a tool in the processes of increased westernisation and commercialisation and in processes of marginalisation and impoverishment of large groups of people all over the planet?
- How can we avoid brain-drain on the one hand, while trying to contribute to open borders, partnership and exchange on the other hand?
- How can we ensure that the sciences and education will be concerned with the big material and social issues facing South Asian as well as other societies and also work towards alleviating and solving important social and material problems?
- How can a network like SASNET avoid being swallowed by the power emanating from India and New Delhi? How can SASNET avoid being confined just to the contacts we have already developed, often on the basis of Swedish aid interests and finance? How can we build networks for all of South Asia: Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives?

A couple of more **practical issues** are:

- What are the material and infra-structural aspects that SASNET needs to develop in order to move ahead? How should SASNET network and link up with smaller regional universities and institutes with weak infrastructures?
- What positive aspects of computer-mediated interaction can SASNET develop that allows South Asian researchers/teachers/students to participate on equal terms?

- What are the problems involved in interdisciplinary networks between South Asia and the West?