



## **Abstract of the Keynote Speech by Professor Sasanka Perera**

South Asian University  
New Delhi

### **Reclaiming Social Sciences and Humanities: Notes from South Asia<sup>1</sup>**

At the most basic level, this address is expected to cut across the disciplines in humanities and social sciences. There is a general sense in most academic circles in the world today that social sciences and humanities are in crisis. Personally, I share this anxiety. However, I have not seen a similar sense of urgency among my Sri Lankan colleagues. I make this observation based on the relative lack of concerted and engaged debate and discussion on this and related issues, compared to other academic domains in South Asia. I will take this sense of global disquiet juxtaposed with relative local inertia as my point of departure.

Initially, I will reflect upon what humanities and social sciences have meant historically at the global level, and place in context how their institutional locations have changed in more recent times.

Second, I will place in context how scholars working within different fields of social sciences and humanities in South Asia assess the situation. My overall question is, whether this sense of disquiet reasonably reflects the status and futures of our disciplines?

Finally, within this background, I will outline my own views on the situation prevailing in Sri Lanka by offering some thoughts on how the research and institutional agenda of an entity like NCAS could ideally look like, and by extension, think about the agenda for research in social sciences and humanities in Sri Lanka in general.

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