

**Declaration by members and friends of the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University
(AM, 1.3.2016)**

The South Asia Institute (SAI) at Heidelberg University and its friends are puzzled by the fact that the lecture “What is South Asian Knowledge Good For?” delivered by Professor Sheldon Pollock at the celebration of its 50th anniversary on May 8, 2012, has resulted in a petition (<https://www.change.org/p/mr-n-r-narayana-murthy-and-mr-rohan-narayan-murty-removal-of-prof-sheldon-pollock-as-mentor-and-chief-editor-of-murty-classical-library>¹), initiated by Professor Ganesh Ramakrishnan from IIT Bombay, to remove him from the General Editorship of the Murty Classical Library of India published by Harvard University Press (<http://www.murtylibrary.com/>). Following the motto of Heidelberg University (*semper apertus*, “always open”), the SAI has always been a place of religious and political tolerance, freedom of speech and diversity of intellectual and methodological approaches. It would never have tolerated a key note that would contradict these principles, and in fact – as is clearly evident from the text of the lecture (<http://crossasia-repository.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/3183/>) – Professor Pollock, in his lecture, highlighted the importance and value of Indian traditions and knowledge systems – quite the opposite of what is claimed by the authors of the petition.

We, the undersigned, condemn all *ad hominem* attacks on bona fide scholars and students as well as any attempt to limit academic freedom and the freedom of speech on campuses. We are shocked by the deliberate misrepresentation of Prof. Pollock's message. We regard it as our duty, as intellectuals and as citizens, to work cooperatively with our Indian colleagues toward better understandings of each other, of our pasts and our present. Such improved understanding requires continual rethinking and, if necessary, revision of existing theories, along with a mutual respect for religious, philosophical, political and social ideas.

P.S.: Colleagues who would also like to undersign this declaration should contact Axel Michaels (michaels@ASIA-EUROPE.UNI-HEIDELBERG.DE). We will update versions on the homepage of the SAI. Please feel free to widely share this declaration.

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¹ Due to massive protest, the petition has meanwhile been changed and the SAI is not mentioned anymore. For the original version, see <http://www.newsgram.com/132-indian-academicians-call-for-removal-of-sheldon-pollock-as-general-editor-of-murty-classical-library/>.

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