

INTRODUCTION

Our examination of the Self-Study Report of Kannada University presented in three parts gives only a partial idea of its uniqueness until we visited it in person and saw with our own eyes its physical environments and felt, after holding discussions with the Vice Chancellor, teachers, members of the Syndicate, students, administrative and service staff, and some others interested in the Progress of the University, the kind of idealism and vision with which the University was planned and given shape. About the last, the members of the Peer Team kept in mind the objectives of the University as spelled out in the Kannada Vishwavidyalaya Adhiniyama (Karnataka Act 23 of 1991) on the basis of which the University was established, with Dr. Chandrashekhara Kambara as the Special Officer, later appointed the first Vice Chancellor of the new University. Dr. Kambar gave definite directions in which the University was to grow and progress and his successor Dr. Kalburgi translated many of his dreams into reality. The present Vice Chancellor, Dr. Lakkappa Gowda is continuing and expanding their work with verve and tenacity, further elaborating the dream.



The Objectives were clearly spelt out in Chapter II of the said Act. We quote only some of them in order to remind ourselves that this University is a special kind of institution, and stands far apart from a conventional university. The Act enjoined that this University: “should function as a high level research center in Kannada Language and Literature”. Further, it is to impart training to those desirous of studying Kannada Language and Literature. In addition, it has “to facilitate and regulate advanced study and research in fields like Art, Archaeology, Architecture, Literature, Grammar, Linguistics, Epigraphy, History, Religion Philosophy, Geography, Earth Sciences, Astronomy, Ayurveda, Siddha Medicine, Handicraft, Engineering Sciences and any other Science that have developed in Kannada Language and Literature”.

We need not quote from the Act all the objective enlisted in the same chapter to understand the unique nature of the Institution. A look at how it has evolved in about a decade is sufficient to reinforce that understanding. Located in a spacious and attractive natural setting at Hampi, a place, which, in spite of its economic backwardness today, still retains the memory of the high glory of the Vijayanagara Kingdom, whose relics are found everywhere in the locality. It was only appropriate that such a University would have Hampi, a major base of Kannada culture, as its seat. By making Hampi the location of the new University, its founding fathers also sought, it seems, to bring into focus the cultural importance of the North Karnataka region, which has, in the course of history, lost out to its southern counterpart in terms of economic development.

There have of course been universities before which focused on a single language and culture, in contradistinction to them, Kannada University, the Peer Team feels, is the one which has resisted the temptation to become a conventional University in order to accommodate a huge load of teaching programme, admitting hundreds of students seeking conventional degrees. Its emphasis on research and production of knowledge continues unhampered. The university is placed far away from the humdrum of urban existence, on a hilly terrain that provides an ideal milieu for undisturbed intellectual pursuits. Beginning its academic function in 1992, it has so far been able to establish four faculties comprising of 16 departments in all, every one of them engaged in vigorous research activity. The Faculty of Language consists of the departments of Kannada Language and Literature, Kannada Language, Dravidian Cultural Studies, Translation, Manuscriptology and Women Studies. The Faculty of Fine Arts has departments of Sculpture and Iconography, Painting and other Visual Arts and the Department of Music and Dance. Whereas the departments Folklore Studies, History, Archaeology, Epigraphy, Tribal Studies, Anthropology and Developmental Studies constitute the Social Science Faculty of these, as we found out, the Department of Anthropology is not functioning now due to the lack of qualified teachers and other constraints, and the component of Dance is still to be introduced in the Music and Dance Department. Such developmental setbacks often take place when the nature of university is unusual and further, it is situated far away from large city-centres.

Apart from these regular departments, there are four Chairs instituted by the University for well-defined and specified studies in Dalit Culture, Shantaveri Gopalgowda, Shamba Joshi and Purandar Dasa. The Self-Assessment Report of the University states that it would like to establish three more departments and seven more chairs, widening the scope of area study and research.

We will not, at this juncture, go into the merits or feasibility of what the University would like to have in future, but will, instead, have a look at what it has done so far.

In doing so, we find that the University has been able to build itself up as a unique center of research in Kannada Language as was envisioned in the Act that led to its establishment. It has a balanced emphasis on both the past and present issues of the region. We must hasten to add that we do not consider past, present and future are fully segmented and distant entities with no impact on one another. In a country like ours, the past coexists with the present, and the future, in its turn, is shaped by both. When we categorize the departments in terms of such time

segments, we do that only for convenience's sake. Departments of Manuscriptology, folklore Studies, History, Archaeology, Epigraphy and that of Sculpture in its component of Iconography have the Past as their major area of attention, while others look at the present status of the region and its people from a developmental point of view, which covers language, literature, women, tribal communities, Dalits etc. We think such judicious choice is to be maintained in the University's future plans for adding departments and chairs.

We as a Peer Team, face a peculiar kind of dilemma when we come to assess and accredit such a monolingual, regionally focused and research-oriented University. The component of teaching-learning transaction is much less here compared to other conventional universities. Only the departments of Music and those in Visual Arts impart some teaching and training to a handful of learners. And the distance education programme, of course, of course, has a large component of teaching. This year, in addition, a new course of integrated M. A. Ph. D has been introduced which will have regular semesters of teaching, leading to research. As of now, however, teaching is not a major responsibility with the teachers, who are engaged in almost breathless research activity. This has been further highlighted by the comparative young age of the University. It has, we think covered a lot, given the short time in which it had at its disposal. Here is an institution, then, where the regular norms of NAAC evaluation cannot be applied mechanically, and have to be suitably adjusted to the distinctive nature of the Institution. Keeping this in view, we proceed to make the following statements, first as general evaluator observations on the strengths of the University and the likely pitfalls it may have to guard against; and then as criterion-wise comments.