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In the cause of social sciences

PRAMOD MELLEATTI

An academy is being set up in Kuvempu University to revive a neglected subject

KASSH structure to reflect inter-university orientation

The Karnataka Academy for Social Sciences and Humanities (KASSH) is being set up in Kuvempu University. It will have jurisdiction over all the conventional universities in Karnataka to address the situation arising out of the neglect of the study and research of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Because of the rapid changes occurring in the country, immense social and cultural problems are coming to the fore. Religious communities are increasingly facing each other in a hostile fashion; social groups are turning against each other, fighting for economic and political benefits; and rapid urbanisation is throwing up social and cultural problems.

It is precisely at a time when original and innovative research in social sciences and humanities is needed, that the departments and faculties in these fields are beginning to feel neglected.

In Karnataka, there is almost a total absence of informed intellectual debate by social scientists. "KASSH intends to play a role in fulfilling these needs," says J.S. Sadanand, Head of the Post-Graduate Department of Political Science at Kuvempu University, who is coordinating the setting up of the KASSH.

"In Karnataka, there is practically no research in this field. With the entry of privately funded (and foreign) universities, there is a growing need to rejuvenate social scientific research in India."

Objectives

KASSH's objectives include the evaluation of the current syllabi in social sciences and humanities and to propose changes in them that respond to the needs of society today. It also intends to produce (to begin with) a vision document outlining the nature of education required for the 21st century.

KASSH has plans to involve international and Indian scholars of repute to evaluate, design and

implement curricula. It also intends to introduce social science and humanities modules in the engineering colleges not only with an eye to provide students with all-round education but also to equip them with advanced insights into their own and western culture.

KASSH intends to provide training in teaching these modular courses in all the universities and colleges in Karnataka and produce appropriate teaching material. It wants to become an institution that can be replicated in all parts of the country.

Even though KASSH will be physically located on the Kuvempu University campus, its organisational structure, which is being planned at the moment, will reflect inter-university orientation.

It intends to come into existence as a joint initiative between the Flemish Inter-University Council (VLIR), represented by the Ghent University in Belgium, and Kuvempu University. The Ghent University has already signed a MoU with Kuvempu University. KASSH plans to: re-work the syllabi of the engineering colleges in order to introduce more social science subjects; build a cadre of social science faculty in KASSH which could then be absorbed into the engineering colleges; train the faculty in all universities in Karnataka to teach the modified social science curricula; and initiate collaborative efforts among other universities in the area.

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