

9-day training programme for women entrepreneurs begins at KU

Srinagar, Feb 3: A nine-day training programme for women entrepreneurs started at the University of Kashmir on Wednesday.

Dean Students Welfare Prof Raies A Qadri presided over the programme, organised jointly by the varsity's Department of Social Work (DoSW) and Usha International, an organisation working for empowerment of women entrepreneurs, under its Usha Silai School (USS) initiative. Today's programme marked the launch of 10 Usha Silai Schools in Budgam district after establishing 20 similar schools each in Srinagar and Ganderbal districts since the launch of the initiative in Kashmir in 2018.

In his presidential address, Prof Qadri said such grassroots-level programmes would lead to real empowerment of women.

"The participants will not only be able to earn a decent livelihood after being trained with necessary skills in a particular craft but can also act as agents of change at community-level by training more women in their households and vicinities in future," he said.

He said there was a need to look at this programme from beyond the prism of mere training on stitching, sewing, cutting and tailoring.

"It is about psychological empowerment of women. It is about making such trainees to act as resource persons tomorrow to train more women in other districts," Prof Qadri said.

Principal, Institute of Music and Fine Arts (IMFA) Prof Mohammad Hussain, who was a guest of honour, said the National Education Policy-2020 focusses a lot on skill development and today's programme is a great initiative in that direction.

"Such programmes will make women trainees become self-reliant," he said, asserting that academic, corporate and other institutions were duty-bound to take such empowerment initiatives under their social responsibility obligation.

In his welcome address, Coordinator DoSW Dr Aadil Bashir said the role of their department runs beyond classroom teaching.

"This is a joint outreach activity of the DoSW and Usha International to help empower young women entrepreneurs from Budgam district," he said, thanking Vice-Chancellor Prof Talat Ahmad for his all-out support to the initiative.

Dr Bashir said the department would soon launch a certificate course in fashion designing and take today's initiative to the next level.

Ms. Shaysta Ayoub, Project Manager Usha International, highlighted women empowerment programmes being undertaken by the organisation in collaboration with KU's DoSW.

"Women who were trained in our Silai Schools have exhibited their products in several parts of the country," she said.

Dr Shazia Manzoor, Assistant Professor DoSW and Ms Mantasha Binti Rashid also spoke on the occasion and said the training programme was a wonderful opportunity for young women to learn a set of skills to empower themselves both economically as well as psychologically.

Fashion Designer Ms Surbi Khindri shared her experiences while pursuing her course and training in fashion designing.

"The fashion industry is ever-expanding. It is important for young women to come forward and carry forward the Kashmir crafts beyond the boundaries of this Valley with newer dimensions and innovative approaches," she said.

DoSW faculty members Dr Javed Rashid and Dr Wakar Amin conducted proceedings of the inaugural session and presented vote of thanks, respectively. Trainees from Ganderbal and Srinagar districts also spoke on the occasion and shared how Silai Schools helped them earn their livelihood and promote their skills beyond J&K.