

Refresher Course in Gender Studies conducted at UGC-HRDC, University of Kashmir from January 13th to January 25th, 2020: A Report

Prof. Shabir Ahmad Bhat



A two-week long interdisciplinary Refresher Course in Gender Studies concluded recently at UGC-Human Resource Development Centre, University of Kashmir. Course was attended by a total of 40 Assistant Professors belonging to various colleges and universities of the Kashmir valley. Participants were from diversified academic disciplines of arts and humanities, law, social sciences, basic sciences, applied sciences and technology, commerce and management. Prof. Nilofer Khan of the Institute of Home Sciences, University of Kashmir was the Course Coordinators whereas Dr. Muzamil Jan served as Co-Coordinator. Director and Coordinator of HRDC supervised the overall conduct of the course.

Gender studies have assumed a special place in academics and research and are receiving greater attention worldwide owing to their direct linkages with overall progress and development of nations. No meaningful development and sustainable progress is possible in the contemporary world in absence of gender equality and gender justice. Be it education, health, culture, work-life, polity or economy, conventional gender stereotypes need to be abandoned and gender equality should be ensured in all walks of life in order to bring about all round and inclusive development of the society at every front. As long as archaic notions of patriarchy and gender discrimination continue to be a norm, egalitarian society and a balanced male-female relationship in a socio-cultural context will continue to remain a distant dream. Teaching-learning process, pedagogy and knowledge systems too need to be liberated from all kinds of gender disparities and sex-related vulnerabilities. We need to evolve and gender balanced curriculum and gender sensitive pedagogy for our progeny considering the significance of Gender Studies at global level. Two-week long refresher course on gender studies was organized by the UGC-HRDC, University of Kashmir with these very aims and objectives.

In her valedictory address, Prof. Nilofer Khan stated that main aim of the course was to study various epistemological, pedagogical and ontological aspects related to gender with a view to comprehend the progress made by human civilization in the march towards a society free from all kinds of exploitation and oppression of women. Prof. Nilofer Khan hoped that the participants

would utilize the knowledge acquired through this course in their personal as well as official life and would contribute their bit in addressing the related issues at the societal, institutional, community, national as well as international level.

Prof. Shabir Ahmad Bhat, Director, UGC-HRDC, University of Kashmir in his address stated that the idea behind organizing this course was to make the participants understand the nuances of gender justice and its significance in the contemporary world so that they could spread awareness among their students and the society against systemic gender discrimination of all sorts. He emphasized that the participants of the course were provided with a platform where they could freely discuss the issues related to gender discrimination, women empowerment and emancipation that in turn could help them contribute towards a knowledge system and pedagogy free from all kinds of gender stereotypes. Prof. Shabir also hoped that the course will sensitize the participants effectively towards gender justice and power relations defining the male and female relationship in a socio-cultural context.

Assistant Coordinator, Dr. Muzamil Jan of the Institute of Home Sciences stated that faculty members who value, practice and espouse gender equality would definitely inspire their students to make their career decisions in an unbiased and unprejudiced manner. Dr. Muzamil Jan also furnished details of the resource persons invited and the topics related to gender studies covered during the two week long course that had commenced on January 13th, 2020.

Coordinator, UGC-HRDC, University of Kashmir, Dr. Mohammad Ishaq Geer while speaking at this occasion hoped that the course will be helpful to the participants in future in designing a gender-sensitive curriculum and teaching-learning process that in turn would be instrumental in bringing about positive social change towards an egalitarian society. He stated that various aspects related to gender specific vulnerabilities and sex-based disparities in terms of socio-cultural, political, economical, health, education, job opportunities, leadership roles etc were discussed threadbare during the course.

Some of the resource persons who were invited to deliver lectures during this course included Prof. Nilofer Khan, Institute of Home Sciences, Prof. Mehraj-ud-din, Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir, Justice (Retd.) Bashir Ahmad Kirmani, former Judge, J&K High Court, Prof. Parveen Pandit, Controller of Examination, Central University of Kashmir, Prof. Nisar Ali, Former Dean, University of Kashmir, Dr. Abba Chauhan, Dept. of Sociology, University of Jammu, Dr. Nayeema Jabeen, SKAUST-Kashmir, Prof. Fozia S. Qazi, School of Mathematical Sciences, IUST, Awantipora, Prof. Abdul Majid Ganai, Department of Community Medicine, Govt. Medical College, Baramulla, Prof. S. Mufeed Ahmad, Prof. Mushtaq A. Darzi, Department of Management Studies, University of Kashmir, Mr. Ajaz-ul-Haque, EMMRC, Dr. Farrukh Faheem, Institute of Kashmir Studies, Dr. Javed Ahmad Dar, Dept. of Political Sciences, Dr. Muzamil Jan, Institute of Home Science, University of Kashmir. All the sessions were thought-provoking and raised new questions in the minds of the participants. I am confident it will go a long way in creating awareness about new issues and challenges in Gender Studies.

Some of the topics that were discussed during the two week long Refresher Course included Introduction to Gender Studies, Importance of Gender Audit in Higher Educational Institutions, patriarchy & Everyday Life: Issues & Challenges, gender & development, women in War & Armed Conflict, Gender & Entrepreneurship Development, Gender & Time Management Gender, Justice & Western Classical Tradition, Gender Based Violence, Law & Women's Movement, Gender & Property Rights in India, Gender & Property Rights in J&K, Gender

Justice: The Hype & The Reality, Women Leadership Personality Development: An Instrument of HRD, Gender in Mathematics: Stories, Gender Issues in Agricultural Rural Livelihood & Programmes for Development through KVKS, Gender & Health, Legal Laws for Women, Gender Justice, History of Women Empowerment in Kashmir. The participants of the course were actively engaged in all the sessions and their participations enriched the proceedings of each session.

In the valedictory session of the course, Prof. Nilofer Khan and Prof. Shabir Ah. Bhat distributed certificates among the successful participants of the course whereas Coordinator, UGC-HRDC, University of Kashmir, Dr. Mohammad Ishaq Geer conducted the proceedings of the session and proposed vote of thanks. Written feedback about the course was collected from all the participants in which they expressed satisfaction about the content, design and conduct of the course and also expressed their gratitude towards Director, UGC-HRDC for organizing this course amid rough weather conditions.

(Author is Director, UGC-HRDC, University of Kashmir)