

Empowering women weavers with confidence and skill for increasing earnings by making quality fabrics as per taste of the consumers.

Within days of celebration of the International Women's Day on the 8th March, *SHRADDHA* NGO, setup under the inspiring leadership of Dr Sanjay Kumar Panda, former Secretary, Textiles, organized valedictory function of a 45 days long training program on the 21st March 25, in the Maland Village of Tirtol block of Jagatsinghpur District.

The training program aimed at sensitizing, and providing market information, skill along with assets to women weavers of rural area to weave fabrics with new design, color and new fabrics (dress material in place of saree) as per the taste of elite customers, who have taste for hand woven fabrics and disposable income.

Supported by the Haridaspur-Paradip Railway Construction Limited (HPRCL) under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) intervention, twenty women weavers were trained for 45 days under the technical guidance of Shri Surendra Kumar Patra, former Deputy Director Weavers Service center & Vice President of *SHRADDHA*.

Shri Prashant Kumar Tarai, Sub Collector, Jagatsinghpur, the Chief Guest (on behalf of Collector, Jagatsinghpur District) addressed the weavers and stressed the importance of handloom for generating income and productive employment in the rural areas.

Shri S K Satpathy, Company Secretary HPRCL briefly touched upon the background of CSR and expressed his satisfaction on the work done by *SHRADDHA* for empowering the marginalized segments in a meaningful manner with dedication.

Shri Ashutosh Mohanty, zonal Deputy Director of Textile, gave an account of the ongoing government programs for the promotion of handloom. He appreciated the *SHRADDHA* organization for its sincere efforts.

Shri Bansidhar Mahapatra, Secretary, *SHRADDHA* conducted the program and highlighted various activities of *SHRADDHA*.

On behalf of the trainee weavers Smt Taapoi Nandi and Smt Lovabati Sahu narrated their training experiences covering the skills acquired on weaving, designing, soft skills, visit to the Weavers Service Centre and *Kalabhoomi*, Bhubaneswar and participation in the sales exhibition. They mentioned that by weaving dress materials and saree with lighter shades and smart designs, their earning has gone up by 50%.

Wrapping up the discussion, Dr. Sanjay Kumar Panda, President, *SHRADDHA* mentioned that in the rural areas, handloom has potential to provide a decent income to the weavers, women in particular. This has been possible by weaving fabrics as per the taste of customers, who have disposable income and are able to purchase handloom fabrics throughout the year for wearing and gifting. In the summer season, cotton fabrics with light color, plain design and running yardage (than) have a huge attraction and demand. Weavers can weave such fabrics easily with the skill acquired during the training. This will be the easiest and surest way of getting a decent income and leading a happy life. He also stressed the importance of getting connected with potential customers by using mobile phones to know their taste, producing and selling fabrics to them directly. He mentioned about the initiative taken for branding which will facilitate winning trust of the buyers and online sale. These will enhance their income further by eliminating the middlemen. The participants appreciated these points.

The event was dedicated to empowerment of women and promotion Odiya *Asmita* (pride of Odisha) and got enthusiastic response from the weavers and local villagers.



Shri Prashant Kumar Tarai, Sub Collector, Jagatsinghpur addressing the gathering



SHRADDHA group in discussion with the women weavers