



# Sericulture Industry: Erudition of Women to lead Sustainable Lives

**Sharyu Ghonmode V**

Sericulture is labour-demanding agro-based rural industry. Women contribute greatly to decision-making, and this helps in the development of community. Females have been known for performing their duties with utmost care and personal attention. Women's ability to quickly become familiar with new technologies is one of their qualities. They are adopting recent technologies and are involved in the development of industry of sericulture. Their loving nature and maternal instincts proved to be helpful in successful silkworm breeding. Sericulture industry gives employment to lower caste people, poor, rural people, NGO's, landless people, farmers, men and women. The present chapter thus reveals the involvement of females in sericulture, which is based on agriculture and more or less similar to household activity and also the involvement of women in development and growth of a community.

**Keywords:** *Sericulture, Women, Community development, Agro-based cottage industry*

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## Introduction

Sericulture is the process of cultivating silkworms and extracting silk from them. It is also known that over 95% of silk production in Asia, with countries like India, Brazil, China, Japan, and Korea, comes from silk farming, which also contributes to the creation of raw silk. World's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest producer of silk is India. Several species of silkworm, such as *Bombyx mori*, *Antheraea mylitta* and numerous more, are utilized to make silk of several kinds, such as Eri, Muga and Tasar. Silk has historical, cultural and economic value. Cost of the silk increases with the durability, lustre and silky texture. Indian women and men benefit equally as it provides employment. Developing silkworm food plants, rearing of silkworms, reeling cocoons, and post-cocoon procedures like (i)twisting, (ii)dying, (iii)weaving, (iv)printing, and (v)finishing are main activities in the sericulture sector. In all of the aforementioned tasks, women are extremely important because they generate possibilities for themselves and increase their independence socially, economically, politically

“(Geetha & Indira, 2010, 2011; Goyal, 2007; Pillai & Shanta, 2011; Thomas, Muradian, de Groot & de Ruijter, 2010; Vasanthi, 1992; Vijayanthi, 2002)”.

### **History of sericulture and employment generation**

India ranks 2nd globally in terms of silk production. Several silk varieties are generated, such as mulberry, tasar, eri and muga. Both expert and less-skilled labourers get employed in sericulture, an industry based in a village (Lakshmanan & Jayram, 1998). Sericulture industry includes several procedures such as production of silkworm feed plants, silkworm rearing, cocoon reeling, other post-cocoon related procedures that includes (i)twisting, (ii)dyeing, (iii)weaving, (iv)printing, and (v)finishing (Kunal Sarkar et al., 2017). About forty-five thousand villages are working for industry based on sericulture. Approximately 5.15 million people are employed in this sector to support their livelihood. As of right now, the country’s employment generation has risen to 8.60 million people from 2017 to 2018, compared to 8.51 million persons from 2016-2017, representing an increment of 1.06percent (Central Silk Board (Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, 2019). Of these, females make up half of the population. In the majority of Agro-based industries and other farm-related activities, women make up a larger share of workforce than males. In the past, women weren’t seen as making decisions “(Nathan & Kelkar, 1997; Rahman & Routray, 1998; Joshi, 2000; Barman, 2001; Bose et al., 2009; Satyavathi, Bharadwaj & Brahmanand, 2010)”. In current situation, women are also equally involved in a variety of work-related tasks that support their families financially. In addition, they are proficient at decision-making. Sericulture is vital for consumption “of natural resources for socio-economic development and livelihood, employment and generation of revenue (Mallik et al., 2008)”.

### **Contribution of women in sericulture**

The cottage industry of sericulture, which is heavily reliant on agriculture, involves raising silkworms for silk production. This offers employment and extra pay to marginal segment (Best & Maier, 2007; Bhatta & Rao, 2003; Geetha& Indira, 2011; Vijayanthi, 2002). In a country like India, women make up over 50 per cent of population (male-female ratio: 1.0:0.933). A major part of workers belongs to village, making up a total of 264 million, and women labour in rural areas make up approximately 83million, demonstrating 31.5percent of labour force in rural areas (Source: Census report, Govt. of India, 1991). Female workers are regular employees who assist with managing and caring for the silkworm growing process. Therefore, they contribute more to sericulture cultivation than men do. Women’s contribution is approximately 50 per cent and 60 per cent “to mulberry production and silk form rearing, respectively (Gate, 2001; Goyal, 2007; Kasi, 2011; Panda, 2007; Singh, 2006; Srinath, 2008; Thamizoli, 2001; Vijayalakshmi, 2002)”. Females are more adept than men in the tasks of rearing silkworms, which include feeding, cutting of leaves, cleaning the bed, worm spacing, mounting, disinfecting, and harvesting. Women are actively involved in the harvesting process using a variety of techniques, such as collecting leaves, chopping branches, and harvesting top shoots. Women actively participate in mulberry plantations, weeding, manuring, irrigating, gathering leaves, transporting leaves, and storing them in addition to breeding silkworms. Women assist in clearing the fields of weeds. The delicate and skillful process of leaf plucking is exquisitely executed by women. They harvest leaves of various sizes that are appropriate for various larval instars. They work until noon in the morning before going back to the raising houses, where women frequently help men feed the silkworms. Women also assist in changing the silkworm's bed, a delicate procedure that requires time and extreme care. Women assist in moving young silkworms into chawki, which is used to raise them until their second moult. The crop will be good if the chawki is raised well. To prevent congestion and the subsequent creation of a duplicate cocoon, women carefully arrange each silkworm individually. These kinds of twin cocoons could produce silk that is

of low grade. When the mature silkworms are ready to spin their cocoon, they are moved to chandrikas made of bamboo. Sorting high-quality cocoons and removing fragile, discolored, double, or deformed cocoons is another crucial task performed by women.

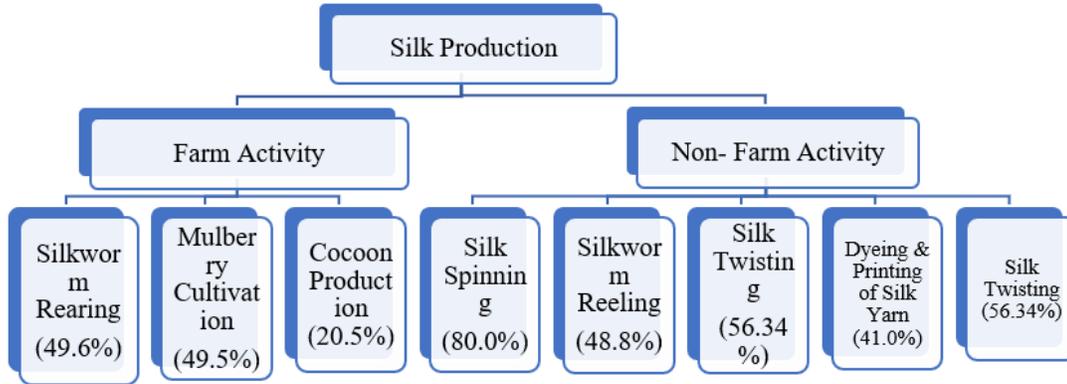


Figure 1. Involvement of women in silk production

Source: Central Sericultural Research and Training Institute (CSRTI), Mysore, Gangopadhyay (2008)

### Contribution of women in post post-cocoon technology in sericulture

The post-cocoon phase involves active participation from women. In industries, the process includes weaving, silk reeling, and clothing production. Females, because of their skillfulness, are generally chosen in the industry as they can complete all tasks, it as Charkha, steam filature, automatic or semi-automated reeling, or cottage basin (Kasi, 2013).

### Initiatives for community

In sericulture, women can start self-help groups to actively participate in silk farming. Their engagement in sericulture is strengthened by these groups, which provide opportunities for group decision-making, mutual aid and resource access.

### Empowerment and entrepreneurship

In sericulture sector, women can launch their own companies. They can also start small-scale silk-related businesses like handloom, weaving or silk reeling procedures.

### Conclusion

Females carry out responsibilities with commitment and care. They are essential in reaching greater aims in sericulture, agriculture, and related fields. Industry of sericulture has introduced employment opportunities and assisted females in making decisions, whether they are domestic or related to community decisions. Women's participation is very crucial in the nation's development. Since women are underqualified in this field, the government and sericulture agencies are hosting a variety of training programs to increase their understanding. As sericulture requires little capital and a lot of female labor, it is consequently well suited to economies like India that have an abundance of land and labor. Sericulture aids in eradicating poverty,

promoting gender equality, and transforming society. By supporting them, it will therefore result in economic growth and the empowerment of female entrepreneurs. Thus, sericulture serves to improve the economic standing of landless, farm, and non-farm women workers by providing them with economic strength.

### **Conflict of Interest**

No conflicts of interest exist.

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