

**EXALTATION OF WOMEN IN SERICULTURE INDUSTRY AND GROWTH OF
COMMUNITY****Mr. S.V. Ghonmode**

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Introduction

Sericulture also commonly known as silk farming involves about 95% of total production of silk in Asia which includes China, Brazil, India, Korea and Japan contributing for the raw silk production. India is the second largest producer of silk in the world. Different species of silkworm like *Bombyxmori*, *Antheraeamylitta* and many more are used to produce silk of different varieties. It provides employment for the Indian women and men equally. Major operations involved in sericulture industry are cultivation of food plants for silkworm, rearing of silkworms, reeling the cocoons, post cocoon process such as twisting, dyeing, weaving, printing and finishing. Women play a very crucial role in all the above activities and create opportunities from themselves making them more independent, socially, economically, politically (Geetha and Indira, 2010, 2011; Goyal, 2007; Pillai and Shanta, 2011; Thomas. Muradian, de Groot and de Ruijter, 2010; Vasanthi, 1992; Vijayanthi, 2002).

History of Sericulture and employment generation

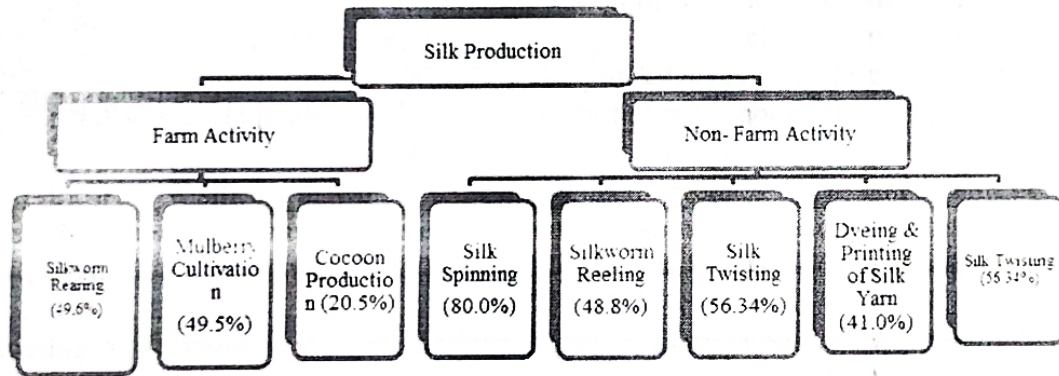
India is the second largest country in the world to produce silk. The different kinds of silk produced are tasar, mulberry, eri and muga. Skilled and unskilled labours both are getting employment in sericulture, a village based industry (Lakshmanan and Jayram, 1998). Sericulture industry involves various processes like cultivation of silkworm food plants, rearing of silkworm, reeling of cocoon; other post cocoon related processes like twisting, dyeing, weaving, printing and finishing (Kunal Sarkar et al., 2017). Approximately 45000 villages are practicing with sericulture based industry. From this about 5.15 million people are getting employment for running their livelihood. Now the employment generation in the country is raised to 8.60 million persons in 2017-18 compared to 8.51 million persons in 2016-17, indicating a growth of 1.06%. (Central Silk Board (Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, 2019). Out of this 50% constitute women population. In most of the ago based industry and other farm related activities women constitute the major proportion of labour force than men. However in earlier days women were not considered as decision makers. (Nathan and Kelkar, 1997; Rahman and Routray, 1998; Joshi, 2000; Barman, 2001; Bose et al., 2009; Satyavathi, Bharadwaj and Brahmanand, 2010). Now the present day scenario is that women are also equally engaged in various work activities helping their family for the livelihood. Apart from this they are good decision makers. Sericulture plays a very effective role in utilization of natural resources for the socio-economic development and their livelihood, employment and generation of income (Mallik et al., 2008).

Contribution of Women in sericulture

Sericulture is an extensively agro based cottage industry which involves rearing of silkworms to obtain silk. This provides employment and additional income to marginal section (Best & Maier, 2007; Bhatta & Rao, 2003; Geetha & Indira, 2011; Vijayanthi, 2002). Women in India constitute of almost half of the population (Men- women ratio=1.0: 0.933). Majority of labour force is from village which accounts for total of 264 million and

rural women labour accounts for about 83 million, representing 31.5% of rural labour force(Source; Census report, Govt. of India, 1991). Women laborers are full time workers and help in looking after the silkworm rearing process and management. Thus their contribution is more in sericulture farming than men. Women contribute about 50% and 60% of labour to mulberry cultivation and silkworm rearing respectively(Gate, 2001; Goyal, 2007; Kasi, 2011; Panda, 2007; N.Singh, 2006; Srinath, 2008 Thamizoli, 2001; V. Vijayalakshmi, 2002). Silkworm rearing involves leaf cutting, feeding, bed cleaning, worm spacing, mounting, harvesting and disinfections which are done by women in a better manner than men. Apart from silkworm rearing women take active participation in mulberry plantation, weeding, manuring, irrigating, picking of leaves, transportation of leaves and its storage. Women help in removing weeds from the fields. Leaf plucking is very delicate and skilled operations which are beautifully performed by women.They pluck leaves of different sizes suitable for different instar larvae. This work is done in morning hours till noon after which they return to the rearing houses where women often assist men in feeding silkworm. Women also help in changing the bed of silkworm which is a very delicate operation performed with great care and patience. Chawki rearing is used for rearing of young age silkworm upto 2nd moult thus women help in transferring them into chawki. If the chawki rearing is good then the harvest will also be good. Women place the silkworm separately with utmost care so that there is no overcrowding of silkworm and hence no formation of double cocoon will be there. These types of double cocoons may result in production of poor quality of silk. Mature silkworm are transferred to bamboo made chandrikas when they are about to spin cocoon. The other important work done by women is sorting of good quality cocoons and remove flimsy, stained, double and malformed cocoons.

Figure-1 Involvement of Women in Silk Production



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

Contribution of Women in post cocoon technology in sericulture

Women are actively involved in the post cocoon process. The process involves silk reeling, weaving and garment manufacturing in industries. Women due to their adroitness are mostly preferred in the industry as they can do all the activities whether it is steam filature, cottage basin, charkha or automatic or semi automatic reeling (Eswarappa Kasi, 2013).

Conclusion

Women are performing their duties with utmost care and dedication. They play a very important role in achieving higher goals in agriculture, sericulture and allied activities. Sericulture industry has opened up the opportunities of employment and has helped women in decision making process whether it is household or community related decision. Active

involvement of women is very important in the development of the country. Women in this sector are less qualified and hence the government and sericulture departments are organizing various training programmes and workshops to upgrade their knowledge. Sericulture is thus suited for land and labour abundant economy like India as it is low capital intensive and female labour intensive. Sericulture helps in the gender promotion, social transformation and poverty eradication. Thus it will lead to economic development and empowerment of women entrepreneurs by promoting them. Sericulture thus gives the economic strength to landless, farm and non-farm women laborers and helps to uplift their economic status.

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