



Indian Sericulture Industry for Sustainable Rural Social Economy

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ABSTRACT

Silk is a way of life and no ritual is completed without silk in India. It is an inseparable part of Indian culture and traditions. Sericulture is the art and technique of silk production. It is an ancient industry in India dating back to the second century B.C. Traditionally, India dwells in the rural areas its economy is largely dependent on the success of agriculture and allied farm activities as more than 70 percent of the people's livelihood security is depending on this sector. Sericulture being an agro-based enterprise plays a predominant role in shaping the economic destiny of the rural people and fits very well in India's rural structure, where agriculture continues to be the main industry.

Out of the 6,38,588 villages in India, sericulture is practiced in about 52,360 villages providing employment to about 7.52 people. Sericulture is providing livelihood for 9,47,631 families. The pursuit of sericulture offers gainful employment to the rural masses. Being a labor intensive rural based industry it offers a qualitative and quantitative change in the poverty alleviation with a chain creation of employment from unskilled farm labourers to skill artisans to all sections rural folk. In view of the importance of sericulture enterprise for the rural development as well as its cultural bondage, the paper tries to enlighten and discuss the significance of sericulture and strategies to be taken for the sustainable development of Indian sericulture industry for the rural development.

KEYWORDS: Sericulture Industry, Rural Economy, India.

INTRODUCTION:

The silk industry encompasses different on-farm and non-farm activities, with diversified nature of skills, involving a heterogeneous group of people, bringing people of various walks of life together work for the production of silk. Sericulture is a continuous activity and employment is available throughout the year. Sericulture involves low investment with frequent income with 5-6 crops per annum once the mulberry

plantation is established it will continue to yield consistently for 15-20 years with a minimum expenditure for maintenance.

Division of mulberry garden into plots with alternate harvesting timings could enable the sericulturists to carry out silkworm rearing throughout the year continuously with 10-12 crops/year.

Basic sericulture activities are village-based; hence migration of people from rural to urban areas in search of jobs can be minimized. India continues to be the second largest producer of silk in the World. Among the four varieties of silk produced, as in 2011-12, Mulberry accounts for 79.23% (18,272 MT), Eri 13.32% (3072 MT), Tasar 6.8% (1590 MT) and Muga 0.54% (126MT) of the total raw silk production in the country. Sericulture is an important labor-intensive and agro-based cottage industry, providing gainful occupation to around 7.56 million persons in rural and semi-urban areas in India.

STRENGTHS OF SERICULTURE INDUSTRY IN INDIA

- Silk is a way of life in India, occupied a prime position and carries an aura of royalty. It has a sacred place in the cultural heritage of Indians and it has merited mention at several places in the epic scriptures. It has also become the religious tradition for the Indian brides to wear silk saree in the marriage ceremony. Truly, silk has a fine blend with the cultural heritage of the Indians. Silk is indispensable in ceremonies and religious rituals, being a must in weddings and festivals.
- Traditionally, India dwells in the rural areas its economy is largely dependent on the success of agriculture and allied farm activities as more than 70 percent of the people's livelihood security is depending on this sector. Sericulture as an agro-based is an economically rewarding enterprise consisting of several sets of activities and plays a predominant role in shaping the economic destiny of the rural people.
- India being blessed with prevalence of favorable climatic conditions; mulberry is cultivated in almost all states. The crux of the India silk industry lies with the Indian traditional states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Jammu & Kashmir and West Bengal. These five states collectively account for 95% of the total area under mulberry cultivation and 92% of raw silk production in the country. Now, as a result of growing realization, sericulture is gaining ground in non-traditional areas too.
- Sericulture is best suited to a country like India, where manpower and land resources are in surplus and sericulture has potential to provide employment at home for the entire family members by way of Chawki rearing, Cocoon production, silk reeling, hand spinning etc. and it is woman friendly, domestic chores can be attended conveniently combined with productive work.
- India enjoys the distinction of being the only country producing all the five known commercially exploited silks i.e. mulberry, tropical tasar, temperate tasar eri and muga. The golden yellow muga silk is exclusive to India and the pride of the Nation. Vanya silks are the products of rich salubrious climate and nourishing vegetation. Therefore, Vanya sericulture offers protection to the forest wealth and providing livelihood for the tribals. Indian vanya silks enjoy a niche market the world over.
- At the moment silk production in India is 23,060 (2012) metric tons, but the actual consumption of the country is around 30,000 metric tonnes. Hence it is obvious that India's requirement of silk is much higher than its current production. Therefore, there is a lot of scope for the expansion of the industry. In addition to the domestic market there is huge export potential for Indian silks.
- Mulberry, the sole food plant of silkworm is a perennial and drought resistant which could be grown in varieties of soils both under irrigated and rained conditions, so where the other crops can't grow there the farmer can grow mulberry and earn livelihood by undertaking sericulture. When most of the agricultural crops do not revive even after a few showers mulberry being a perennial crop will

sprout and yield leaves for silkworm rearing. Once mulberry garden is established it will give consistent yield for 15-20 years with minimum expenditure for maintenance.

- Sericulture highly suitable to small and marginal farmers, as sericulture involves simple technology and requires low investment. It is the only cash crop which provides frequent attractive returns with minimum investment and low gestation period. Sericulture farmer can have ten to twelve crops per annum Indian Sericulture Industry for Sustainable Rural Economy 75 Sericulture industry is an excellent avenue for providing employment with various entrepreneurial opportunities for the rural development, stability is the vital requirement for sericulture enterprise. With the onset of reforms to liberalize the Indian economy in July 1991, a new chapter has dawned for India and her billion plus population. This period of economic transition has had a tremendous impact on the overall economic development of almost all major sectors of the economy; Sericulture Industry is one among them. Survival in the new global business market calls for improved productivity. Due to the market becoming worldwide, sericulture industry have to upgrade the quality of the products, use technology skillfully and utilize all the avenues provided by the Government in order to face the increased competition.

The challenge before India is to reorient the production strategies to suit the requirements of both national and international markets, by developing the good quality silk with low cost.

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

It is obvious that the Indian Sericulture Industry is at cross roads, therefore there is an urgent need to bring in a holistic approach i.e. from leaf to fabric production and marketing and ancillary units of the industry to produce the best at the lowest possible cost so that the country could benefit and rely less on the imported silk in view of the present global scenario.

- Production of silk in India has been rationally driven by domestic demand mainly for heavier handloom based fabrics like sarees. Silk in India produced from the hardier and indigenous variety of multivoltine silkworms, the silk produced from these silkworm strains is not gradable. The changing consumer tastes in the domestic market from the traditional heavy handloom fabrics like sarees to lighter materials, are sending signals to the industry to reorient its production plans to match the changing demand patterns. Hence, the challenge before the Indian sericulture industry is to orient the production strategies to suit the requirement of both national and international market demand, by developing the bivoltine silk sector.
- The Indian reeling sector is mainly cottage based and highly decentralized; employing a variety of reeling devices and producing low to medium quality of silk in limited quantities. The equipment's used in the silk industry are simple, conventional and less capital intensive. This leads to the low value addition, heavy dependence on manual skill and attention and scale and scope economies being negligible. These features create a situation where the industry becomes highly competitive, very risky and inhabited by many small firms. Much needs to be done in the silk machines manufacturing sector. Unless adequate infrastructure and capabilities are built within the country, it will be difficult to be competitive. There are certain gaps and links that are amiss. Fragmented and very small units would not have the strength to upgrade or understand and react to the market forces. In this context systematic and organized restructuring of the silk industry to emphasize and enhance the production of high quality raw silk on a commercial scale, so as to facilitate export of Indian raw silk and lowering of imports is an essential component in global perspective.
- The pre-requisites for a progressive silk industry would be the availability of raw silk of the right quality in adequate quantities at competitive prices consistently. The present day problem is that the raw silk lots are quite small and the cocoon prices are quite high (for the quality levels anywhere in the world) and as a consequence the demand for good quality raw silk in bulk quantity at a competitive price is not being met.

- The multi-end reeling technology designed and developed by the Central Silk Technological Institute, Bangalore addressing the quality and productivity issues provides the advantages of pollution free working conditions, reduced health hazards and discourages child labour. There is a strong domestic market for silk in India which is expected to continue for a long period. However, the domestic production of raw silk is not sufficient to meet the rising domestic and export requirements. Hence the country is dependent upon imports to fill the demand and supply gap, mostly from China. Import of raw silk and silk fibre to India negatively affected the domestic producers and forced the Indian government to impose antidumping duty. Self-sufficiency in domestic production of raw silk and suitable business protection for domestic producers of silk may be a solution. The past four years' trends show that the demand supply gap marginally reduced probably due to improvement in domestic raw silk production and its quality.
- India has a number of distinct silk weaving clusters that are known for unique designs, weaves, colors, patterns, traditional knowledge (TK) and processes that are specific to a geographical region, and are guarded for centuries. Over the period, these products have become a brand by themselves, and recognized by their place of origin. Muga silks of Assam, Mysore silks of Mysore (Karnataka), Kanchipuram silks of Kanchi (Tamil Nadu), Brocades Banaras (Uttar Pradesh), pochampalli saris, Gadwal silks (Andhra Pradesh) are just to cite a few. The globalization has brought about enormous challenges to the trade and industry. The GI Act stipulates protection of the market of the producers and safeguards the interests of the consumers of these unique products through registration and taking infringement action against the infringers. It is believed, that the IPR Protection of unique textile products of the country with a predetermined market linkage strategy would help in brand building of the product, providing market linkages, generating more employment opportunities and enhanced income to the stakeholders. Hope all traditional silks will get the protection under the GI registry umbrella to avoid the exploitation especially in view of globalization.
- With the cheaper silk-like imitations, the consumers are easily being drawn away from silk. They are trying to derive a pseudo satisfaction of wearing a fabric with designs and colours hitherto available only on silk and the feel and appearance with a resemblance of silk. In the market there are numerous other textile materials sold in the name of silk i.e. Art silk, Artificial silk and other glamorous names. It is time that we educate consumers about the virtues of silk that makes it worthy of possession and drive home the fact that only silk is silk. The emotional chord, luxury image, status and eco-friendly nature of silk is to be brought to focus and this can happen with a strategy for generic promotion of silk. In view of this SILK MARK was launched on 17th June 2004 with an initiation of Central Silk Board, Ministry of textiles with major objectives such as Protect the interests of the consumer, Protect the interest of genuine traders and manufacturers of Silk, Generic Promotion of Natural Silk.
- Efforts for quality improvement should necessarily include quality based pricing of cocoons prior to transaction. Quality standards for seed cocoons, commercial eggs, reeling cocoons and raw silk is of utmost importance to build quality at all stages. Create a brand image for silks from India and build quality into the products, blending heritage with the market requirements.
- One of the serious problems for the sericulture industry is the wide fluctuations in cocoon prices. Unless steps are taken to have efficient and effective marketing organization to prevent wide fluctuations in the prices of cocoons, farmers will not have assured income and also new farmers may hesitate to take up this vocation. Hence the just and efficient marketing conditions will go a long way in better the conditions of sericulturists.
- Sericulture with its unique features plays an important role in upgrading the socio-economic conditions of the rural folk and with employment opportunities to the educated rural youth and women. Therefore, there is a need to provide appropriate forward and backward linkages with necessary technical backup will provide a gateway to the future prosperity of the industry. Indian Sericulture Industry for Sustainable Rural Economy 77

- India has the distinction of being the only country in the world producing all the five commercially exploited silk varieties. The Vanya silks have more potentialities to grow as "Very Indian Silk" in the global market. Being treated as tribal crafts of the hill folks these silks have great commercial importance because of huge demand in Indian as well as foreign markets. This is one of a huge area to be focused.

CONCLUSION: -

The Indian silk industry is an integral part of the Indian Textile Industry and is among the oldest industries in India. Sericulture with its unique features plays an important role in upgrading the socio-economic conditions of the rural folk and preferred rural enterprise in India. The recently developed tropical technology, which is low cost and appropriate, may be applied to develop and expand the sericulture industry in India. Sericulture brings significant change both in social and economic spheres of the rural and semi urban areas with its unique features. Globalization posed several challenges for the Indian Silk Industry. The need of the hour is to produce more bivoltine silk for the production of graded silk with advanced technical support, with best competitive price to meet the growing demand of quality silk at national and International level according to the changing fashion. Hence, it is time for all who involved directly or indirectly in the sericulture industry to join the hands to sail off the sericulture industry to the banks of safety and prosperity.

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