



ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE SILK INDUSTRY OF MURSHIDABAD

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ABSTRACT

The "Queen of Textiles," silk, has been an integral component of Indian heritage and culture for thousands of years. India is both the world's second-biggest producer of silk with more than 18% of global production and the largest consumer of silk due to the fact that no ritual can be completed here without it. Because it is an agro-based industry, the activity that begins with mulberry farming, silk worm rearing, and acquiring silk and ends with the creation of finished silk products, falls under this sector's purview. The climate in India is suitable for the development of all the silk kinds known as Mulberry, Tasar, Muga, and Eri, with Mulberry silk being the most well-known and widely used type of silk. Women are essential to this business since they perform 60% of the labour and consume 80% of the silk produced. Because West Bengal's Murshidabad area is well-equipped for producing and weaving silk, the silk industry in this state, which is primarily confined to this region, is frequently referred to as "Murshidabad Silk."

Keywords- Industry, Sericulture, Silk, Women

INTRODUCTION

The "Queen of Textiles" silk is supposed to be able to bring a touch of added elegance and radiance to any outfit, whether it be western or traditional. Sericulture is the practise of raising silkworms for their silk, which is used to make cocoons. Due to its agro-based nature, which combines both agricultural and industrial aspects, the silk industry refers to the work that begins with mulberry cultivation and continues through the raising of silk worms, the production of silk, and the creation of finished silk products. This makes it an ideal sector for a country like India with a heavily dependent rural economy. Geographically speaking, Asia is the region that produces the most silk, while the majority of it is made in China and India. Due to its cultural significance, the silk industry has a unique place in India, where no ceremony would be complete without it. India is the world's largest consumer of silk and the second-largest producer of it, contributing more than 18%

to global silk output as a result of internal strong market demand. The total raw silk production in India reached 31,906 MT in 2017–18, surpassing the 30,000 MT threshold (Annual Report of Central Silk Board, 2017–18). India is fortunate to have a climate that is suitable for producing all of the silk kinds known as Mulberry, Tasar, Muga, and Eri. Mulberry silk is one of the most well-known, well-liked, and highest-quality types of silk that can be purchased, and West Bengal ranked third in terms of output in 2015–16 (2351 MT). In West Bengal, sericulture is a significant rural occupation that provides year-round family employment. Due to its modest initial investment and large guaranteed returns at regular intervals, it is suitable for both marginal and small-scale land owners. More than 1.2 lakh West Bengal residents depend on it for a living and work (Seri States Profile, 2019). Mulberry silk is famously produced and woven in the West Bengal region of Murshidabad.

WOMEN AND SERICULTURE

Sericulture has several unique qualities that make it perfect for women to engage in. First of all, it is an indoor activity that can be done quickly and easily adjacent to the home, which is suited for the traditional rural Indian community. Second, because of the flexible work hours, it can be changed to other jobs. It is common for men to move to urban regions in search of strong economic possibilities, leaving women to carry the full weight of household maintenance. Thirdly, reeling and spinning operations require nimble fingers, while raising silkworms requires maternal instinct and care. Women are particularly skilled and patient in this procedure, which requires both.

STUDY AREA

The Murshidabad district is located between 23°43' and 24°52' North latitude and 87°49' and 88°44' East longitude, next to the Ganga River, which made the town a potential site for silk commerce. It spreads over an area of 5324 Square Km. With almost 7 lakh population, it is one of West Bengal's most populous districts (Census of India, 2011). According to Robert Clive, "The city of Murshidabad is as extensive, populous, and rich as the city of London" (Guha, 2005). The district is divided into 5 sub-divisions and 26 blocks. The soil of Murshidabad, which is greyish or reddish in colour and combined with lime and iron oxide, is suitable for mulberry farming.

The English East India Company, which had a significant trading interest in raw silk and thought Murshidabad to be a remarkable location for trade and commerce because it was the capital of Bangladesh, Bihar, and Orissa, has a long history of association with the silk industry. However, over time, the capital has shifted with diminishing political importance, despite the importance of the silk industry.

To analyse the condition of the women engaged in this industry Nabagram block has been chosen.

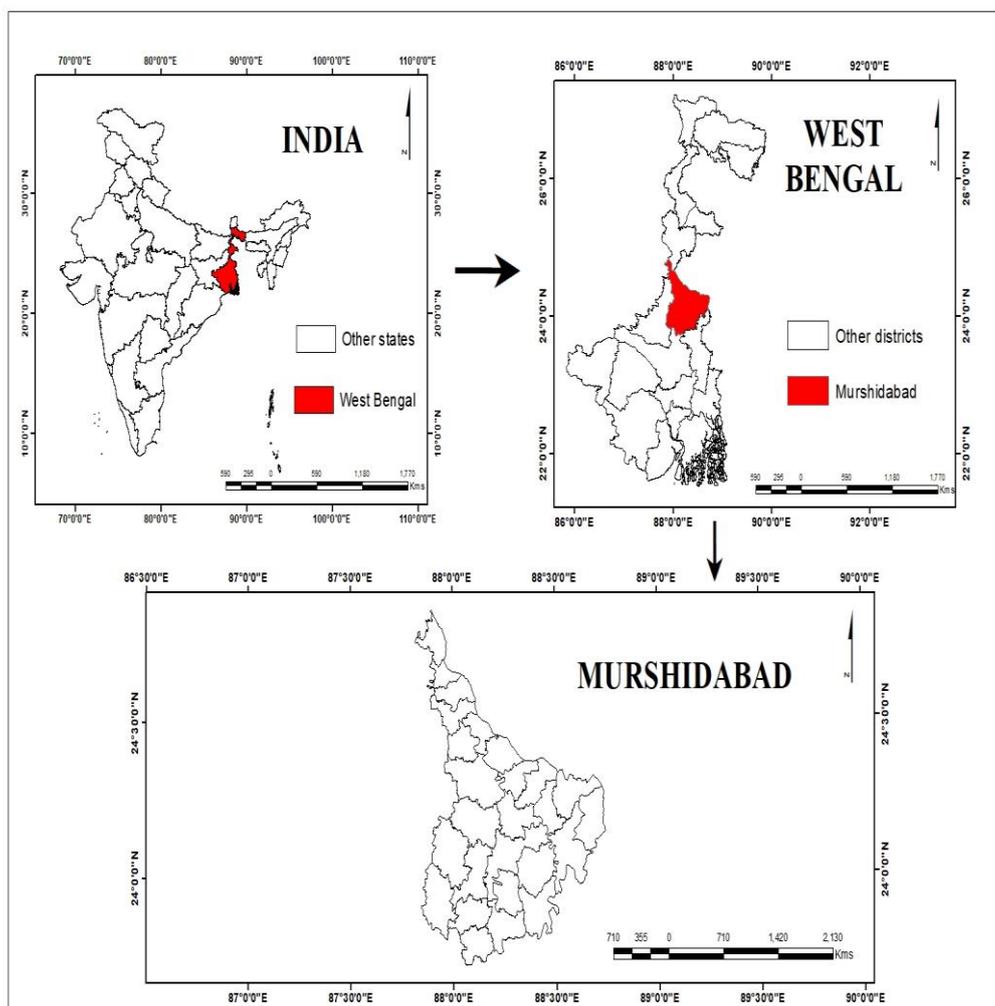


Fig. 1 STUDY AREA

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data are collected from the website of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India (Sericulture Statistical Yearbook of India, 2020). Primary data are collected through a structured household schedule. Multi stage sampling procedure is used for collecting primary data. The selection was based on block wise sericulture adopted villages. The highest numbers of sericulture adopted villages are found in Nabagram block. Saheb Nagar, Derul, Bankipur, Sahidpur villages have been chosen. from each village 25 houses have been chosen based on random sampling. A total number of 203 female respondents have got in the final stage. The collected data was classified and analysed in tabular forms and finally represented with suitable cartographic techniques.

TABLES AND MAJOR FINDINGS

Table-1. RAW SILK PRODUCTION IN WEST BENGAL (2019-20)

Type	Raw Silk Production (MT)
Mulberry Silk	2524
Vanya (Non-mulberry silk)	
Tasar	37.10
Eri	3.8
Muga	0.2
Total	2565

Source- Sericulture Statistical Year book India, 2020

Table-2. Top Five Largest Silk Producing States in India (2019-20)

State	Raw Silk Production (MT)				
	Mulberry Silk	Vanya (Non- Mulberry Silk)			
		Tasar Silk	Eri Silk	Muga	Total
Andhra Pradesh	5970	1.30	-	-	5971
Assam	52	-	3619	139	3810
Jharkhand	1	2630	-	-	2631
Karnataka	9571	-	-	-	9571
West Bengal	2524	37.10	3.8	0.2	2565

Source- Sericulture Statistical Year book India, 2020

➤ The total raw silk production of West Bengal in the year 2019-20 was 2565MT.

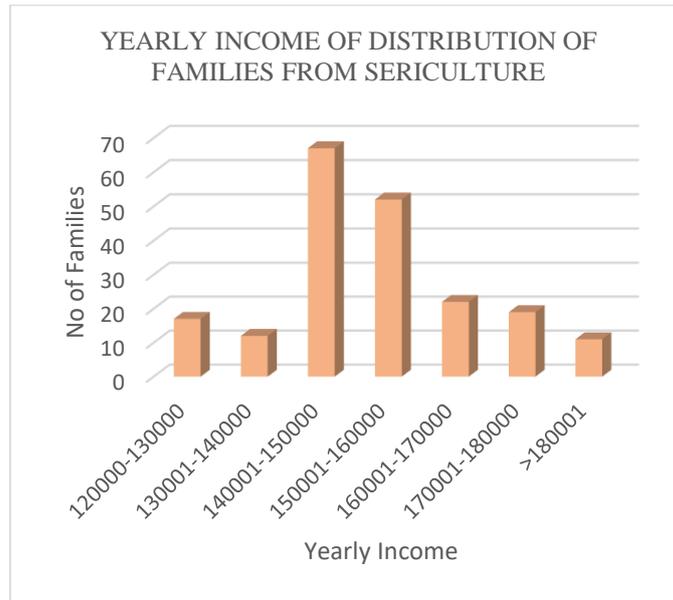


Fig.2 Source- Primary Data

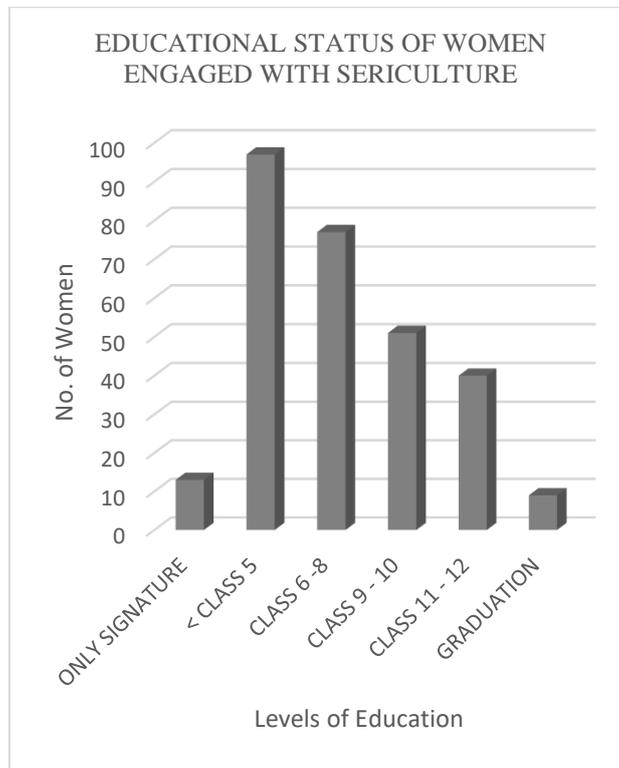


Fig.3 Source- Primary Data

➤ There is no such positive relationship in between the educational level and the working status of the women silk workers, as only 8 women engaged in silk sector is Graduate.

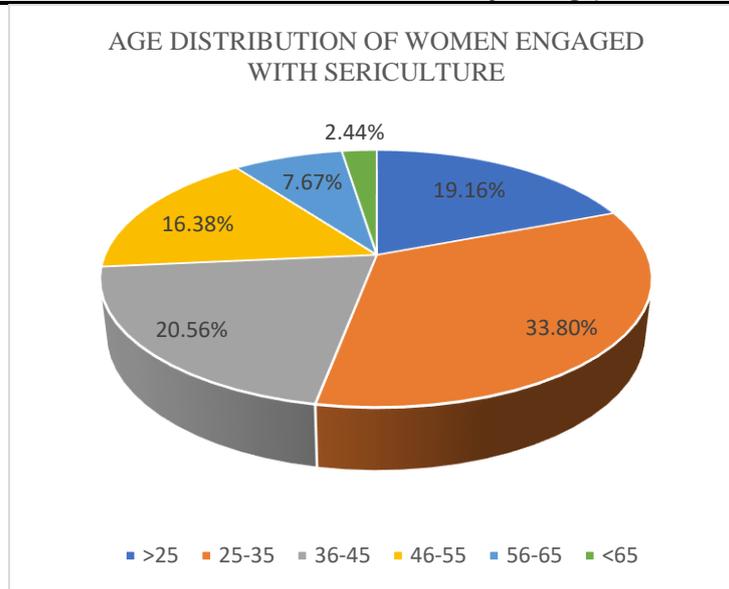


Fig.4 Source-Primary Data

- There is a relationship in between the age group and working status of the women as 33.8% women are under 25 to 35 years.

SUGGESTIONS

- Sericulture has historically been advantageous for an overpopulated nation like India since it influences both the industry and agriculture sectors of the economy. The federal and state governments of India should take more measures to support the rural population by putting plans into action and funding projects.
- Like before, this business is having trouble finding skilled weavers, and there are also some issues with silk's quality. The Mulberry silk must not be mixed with inferior fibres in order to preserve the illustrious past of Murshidabad's silk industry and to compete on the national and international markets.
- The sericulture sector is crucial in the income transfer from wealthy urban markets to underprivileged weavers. The sericulturists, reelers, twistors, weavers, and traders all receive money directly from customers. However, occasionally the middlemen's interruptions prevent it from being divided amongst them effectively. To prevent intermediaries from taking advantage of people, necessary precautions must be adopted.
- In Indian society, rural women's position is still relatively poor. A key characteristic of sericulture is the significant participation of women, which helps to reduce gender bias and improves women's economic security, improving their status in society. The government should view sericulture as a key weapon for eradicating the issue of gender awareness and for promoting sericulture among rural women on a national scale.

CONCLUSION

Sericulture can be a helpful technique to solve the problem of underemployment and unemployment that plagues India's rural economy. By creating jobs, sericulture significantly influences the future of rural residents. The only lucrative cash crop that offers frequent, alluring rewards with a small initial investment and a quick gestation is silk. Both statistically and qualitatively, it contributes to the reduction of poverty and establishes a flow of revenue from unskilled farm laborers to skilled craftspeople. It demonstrates that sericulture creates jobs for people without taking into account their caste, religion, or gender, making it crucial for a diverse nation like India. The double load that women typically bear—on both the family and the economy, especially in rural society—has a negative impact on their health. Sericulture is the ideal alternative for them to engage in because it is better for them to choose an activity that can be carried out close to their place of residence with little physical exertion.

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