



REDUCTION OF RURAL POVERTY THROUGH SERICULTURE IN SPECIAL REFERENCE OF RURAL WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The contribution of rural women in sericulture in since ages, particularly in some of the critical areas is more of result of her innate attachment with the process of producing the best-the Queen of Textiles- and had been unarguably more than a cliché. We ought to learn from the past experiences that suggest devising a frame work of equitable and sustainable development of her participation on a consistent basis. Keeping in view the involvement of rural women in sericulture and silk industry, their present status in society and need for their empowerment, strategies to be incorporated in the various developmental initiatives are suggested.

Keywords:

Sericulture, Rural poverty, Sustainable development, women welfare, integrated approaches.

INTRODUCTION

The reduction of rural poverty continues is to be a paramount goal of the developing countries like India, so far various strategies (sericulture is most appropriate out of them) have been pursued to address this concern and rural employment creation is one of the major aspects. The global scenario clearly indicates the enormous opportunities for the Indian silk industry, because India is the second largest producer of silk in the world, it has the unique distinction of being only country producing all the five commercially traded varieties of natural silks namely Mulberry, Eri, Muga, Tropical Tasar and Temperate Tasar also it has distinct advantage of practicing sericulture all throughout year, yielding a stream of about 4-6crops as a result of its tropical climate.

Women have assumed a significant role in the development of silk and silk industry. In India out of about six million people involved in sericulture and silk related activities, women constitute about 53% of those employed in downstream activities of sericulture. There participant is about 57% in case of silk reeling, spinning and weaving. Besides, they are full time house wives also attending to all the domestic works.

Sericulture has been fully recognized as an important rural industry in India and also elsewhere and is mainly practiced as a house hold industry. It is a labour intensive, export oriented industry, generating high employment and income per unit area of land. Nearly 60 percent of people employed in this industry are women. (Prabha Sekhar and Ravi Kumar 1988).

Sericulture involves rearing of silkworm and production of silk. Silk is highly valued natural textile fiber of animal origin. No other fabric has fascinated man over millennia as silk. Silk is popular

because of its qualities like texture, luster, tensile qualities, comfort, and adaptability to all climatic condition, royal look soft, inherent affinities for dyes and vibrant colors, high absorbance, light weight and natural shine.

Sericulture provides following opportunity to rearers:-

- High employment potential
- Low Gestation, High return
- Eco friendly activity
- Equity concerns
- Nutritional value
- By Products
- Ideal Program for weaker Sections of the Society
- Opportunities for rural women in sericulture

Here I am focusing on the most important aspects of sericulture is:

OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL WOMEN IN SERICULTURE

Women in India have been generally considered as 'Home makers' but not as those who also work for a livelihood to support their families. Women also form more than half of all agriculture labor in India. But, different Women studies have proved beyond doubt that women's contribution towards sericulture is quite significant. Women contribute to the family income generation in rural through sericulture to a great deal. If the rural households are to be made economically viable self-sustaining units the employment and income generation by rural women need to be given utmost priority (Prabha Sekhar and Ravi Kumar 1988). Here, women play a major role in various activities of sericulture right from egg production to weaving.

Income generating employment opportunities in sericulture where woman are actively participating in:-

I. Mulberry Cultivation. II Silkworm Rearing. III Silk Reeling. IV Weaving.

EFFORTS DONE SO FAR IN THE IMPORTANT AREAS

According to Central Silk Board and major silk producing states of the country addressed several issues of women in sericulture. With major projects which focused mainly on overall development of women through sericulture. Several science and technology organizations were engaged to study the techno-economic empowerment of women under the plethora of social constraints. Some of the main issues addressed were;

- Access to land, credit and family assets through formation of women groups
- Technical awareness and silk development
- Access to marketing and marketing awareness
- Malady Remedy approach to address occupational hazards

FUTURE STRATEGIES

Based on the experience gained from the past experiences, Central Silk Board has chalked out certain strategic approaches. The proposed strategies have been grouped into a three pronged

approach, so that the sectoral requirements are taken care of at appropriate levels. They are: I General guidelines. II Exclusive women oriented programmes and III Integrated approaches for taking up women exclusive projects.

GENERAL APPROACH

Some of the important general approaches are:-

- Creation of women development cells in Central Silk Board
- Increased subsidy to women participants under different schemes can be considered
- Empowering women in decision making areas ensuring their participation
- Making available the industrial sheds of the industry departments to the women entrepreneurs
- Establishment of sericulture equipments and supply centers through women groups

EXCLUSIVE WOMEN ORIENTED PROGRAMMES

Some of the important Women Exclusive approaches are:-

- Establishment of women technical service centers introducing
- Subsidized credit facility for women
- Setting up of sericulture stores, start up expenditure
- Establishment of women *chawki* centers

INTEGRATED APPROACHES FOR TAKING UP WOMEN EXCLUSIVE PROJECTS

There must be recognition of the fact that working with poor women requires much more time and investment than is possible under a time bound limited budget scheme, but projects that are long term and programmes that are consistent for longer periods have to be taken up.

Such recommendations backed by the special emphasis being laid by the union and state governments on gender issues, and empower them to enjoy their economic and social independences, reward rather overdue for her untiring efforts and sacrifices in making and managing her home and the country as well.

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