



Sericulture Sector - A Ray Of Hope For Empowerment Of Rural Women -A Study In Telangana

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Abstract

A country's progress and prosperity cannot be achieved unless women are given due share in the economic and social development. In an agrarian based economy like India, female labour force is not properly represented in various activities related to agriculture and allied sectors. Most these sectors prefer male labour force and as a result potential for participatory of rural women received much attention. Sericulture sector has become a source of livelihood for rural women as it requires more female for nurturing of silkworms for extracting of raw silk, reeling the cocoons for unwinding the silk yarn and other post-cocoon methods such as twisting, dyeing, weaving, printing and finishing. They constitute an exceptional ratio of the labour force along sericulture precincts apart of men. This sector opens the scope of collective advancement along promoting employment opportunities. Women's participation, being a crucial part against various strategies in work activities including in making decisions. Thus being an exceptionally labour occupied sector that gathered anchoring attachments against its initial situation of getting employment, also added income to rural women, of late, it has been observed in many of the studies carried out in different parts of our country that development of the sericulture industry acts as a spring board for employment of the rural women and ray of hopes for empowerment rural women in India.

Key words: Sericulture; Female labour force, Silkworm; Mulberry; Women participatory and Empowerment

Introduction:

It is a well established fact that in our country women who constitute nearly half of the total population are not deriving the economic empowerment to a desirable level. Particularly, they are not properly represented in the various institutions including agriculture and allied sectors. Although agriculture is the main occupation in rural areas of our country, major employment opportunities in various activities involved right from ploughing of the fields to transporting of output is mostly done by male. Female labour use is visible in few activities such as planting of seeds or at the time of weeding operations. As a result the role of women in agriculture is not encouraging one.

Importance of the Research Study:

Hence, sericulture cultivation has been receiving much attention in rural areas as it absorbs more female labourers. This can be broadly classified into Mulberry cultivation, silk worm rearing, post-cocoon processes and manufacturing of rearing appliance. It is a labour intensive and the production process consists of a long chain interdependent and specialized operation. Female labour force are put to use in larger proportions and as a result sericulture has become a ray of hopes for the empowerment of women. They get work in various operations and receive income and helping for eke out their living conditions. In fact broadened activities comprising along sericulture commodity enforces women centric activities. Particularly nurturing of silk worm plants, rearing of silk worms for the extraction of raw silk, reeling the cocoons process for dewinding the silk yarn etc. Further, female labour is required at the time of post-cocoon methodologies like twisting dyeing, weaving, printing and finishing.

Women are also employed in silk worm egg production, manufacture of sericulture appliances such as bamboo mountages, leaf baskets etc. In fact certain activities such as weeding leaf harvest, rearing of silk worm, silk reeling are carried out only by women.

In other words, sericulture provides continuous employment opportunities and income to women. From a mere traditional practice, it has now shaped into a viable agro industry. It is interesting to note that India contributes about 20 per cent to the raw silk produced in world ranking next only to China. It occupies only 2.4 per cent of the world's land area but it supports over 15 per cent of the world's population. Sericulture has proved to be an excellent vocation for the development of the rural women. Out of the total number of nearly six lakhs villages in India, Sericulture providing employment opportunities to about more than 5 million people in which about 50 per cent is contributed by women alone. Thus, the women participation in sericulture being increasing is it has become a stepping stone for empowerment of women.

An attempt has been made in this study to focus employment generation of rural women in sericulture in the selected areas of Hanumakonda district of Telangana State.

Review of Earlier Studies:

Plethora of research studies carried out in different parts of our country has highlighted the significance of female involvement in sericulture activities. Umpteen number scholars focused on the productivity income generation aspects and distributive influence on empowering families comprised of. The study carried out by Usha Rani (2007) has shown that the taking up of one acre mulberry garden for rearing 300 disease free layings of silk worms in two months generate 96.36 man days of employment, of which more than 70 per cent are women. Combined along broadened ratios of involvement of women candidates, also, enforced as an agent in deciding. She can positively act along deciding rather being actively playing an indirect respondent.

Infact, sericulture being severity in labour centric commodities that succumbs an anchoring situation against gathering employment, also adding revenue along weaker precincts/women (Vaij ayanthi, 2002; Rao and Bhatta, 2003; Best and Maier, 2007; Geetha and Indira, 2011). It has been mentioned in few studies that women enforcing about 50 to 60 per cent of lab out to mulberry nurturing and silk worm rearing respectively (Gate, 2001; Thamizoli, 2001; Vijayalakshmi, 2002; Singh, 2006; Panda, 2007; Goy al, 2007; Srinath, 2008; Kasi, 2011).

Thussurely focused from time immemorial, women have been involved in different activities of the silk sectors. A traceable element along such activity being is saturation amongst sericulture farmers, all classes earn similar amount through it. Though women has significant position along these processes pertaining to sericulture, thus initiates several opportunities, also proves their socially unique, economically, politically, also to achieve empowerment in all aspects (Vasanthi, 1992; Thomas et.al, 2010, Pillai and Shanta, 2011). Sericulture is a predominantly labour perspectives enterprises requires upto 538 man days of labour per acre along the similarities against labour necessities as 252 man days for the nurturing of the substitutive crops. Kannan (1987) study revealed that women being an substantial part of sericulture industry that includes weeding, leaf harvesting, chowki rearing, bed cleaning, spinning and harvesting of cocoons where proficient of women regularized their position on top as usual. Prakash Kumar (1986) enumerated in his gatherings as exactly 50% of women labour force are used in nurturing of mulberry and silk worm rearing. Thus, there is a strong opinion prevailing now a days that India will become self-reliant or Aatmanirbhar in silk production and government aims to provide employment to over one crore rural women exclusively in the silk segment.

However, the earlier research studies carried out in different parts of our country did not emphasis much on women potentiality in sericulture sector in Telangana State. Hence, a modest attempt has been made in this study to find out the above issues in the selected areas of newly formed Telangana State.

Objectives of the Study:

Keeping into consideration of the significance of sericulture in creating employment opportunities and helping for their economic empowerment, certain objectives are formulated in this study which are as follows:

- i. To find out female labour force required in the various activities of sericulture;
- ii. To assess the participation of female labour in the establishment and maintenance of mulberry gardens;
- iii. To analyse the female labour requirements in silk worm rearing; and
- iv. To know the requirement of women in the post-cocoon processes

Hypothesis Formulated:

In order to verify the above objectives, the following hypothesis have been formulated.

- i. Sericulture is a labour-intensive industry and requires more female labour force.
- ii. Share of work load carried out by women differ in various activities of sericulture.

Research Methodology Adopted:

The work carried out is based on empirical investigations. Primary data had been collected from the selected respondents who are involved in sericulture cultivation. Data consists of the particulars related to the number of female labourers required in the establishment and management of Mulberry gardens, silk worm rearing and the post-cocoon process.

With an appropriate interview schedule (which had been pre-tested in few selected respondents), information has been gathered on the number of female labourers put to use at the time of deep digging, preparation of pit systems and digging pits and planting of mulberry. Further, data had been collected on the labour force required at the time of weeding, applications of fertilizers and farm yard manure, irrigation, leaf harvesting and pluning activities.

Similarly primary data from the selected respondents had been gathered on women force in silk worm rearing activities such as Chawki rearing, spinning and harvesting, cleaning, disinfection and preparation for next rearing. Beside this, the number of female required in postcocoon process has been collected.

Primary data had been collected from 100 sample respondents -50 from each selected village from the two village's i.e, Kondaparthi and Rasulapathi villages of Hanumakonda district of Telangana State.

The data have been collected during the crucial period in the year 2021, where the impact of Covid-19 pandemic was visible in the study areas. The random sample technique has been adopted for selecting the respondents who are engaged in sericulture cultivation and getting their income and helping to their livelihood.

Result and Discussion:

After collecting data on the employment required for one acre of irrigated mulberry, it has been processed and presented.

Sericulture is conducted by the lightest labour. Infact, a number of research studies carried out earlier also revealed that 90 per cent of the sericulture activities, except strenuous and hard jobs like land digging and ploughing, women carry on almost all works in mulberry cultivation, silk worm rearing, silk reeling, weaving, printing etc, Raising of mulberry nursery, planting and establishment of mulberry also involve more women.

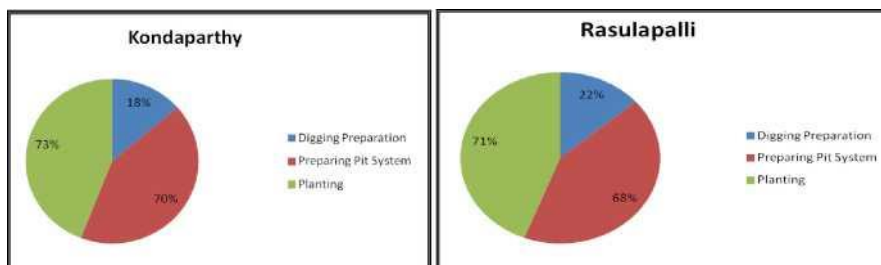
Table-1 shows the activities involved in establishment of mulberry gardens and the percentage of women force employed in the study areas of Kondaparthi and Rasulapalli villages of Hanumakonda district of Telangana State. It is interesting note that for preparing pit system and planting of mulberry requires more than 70 per cent women in Kondaparthi village, whereas their share in Rasulapalli village is 68 per cent in preparing pits and 71 per cent in planting.

Table-1: Activities Involved in Establishment of Mulberry Gardens Vis-a-Vis Female Employment

Study Villages	Activities in Mulberry Gardens (Percentage-wise)		
	Digging Preparation	Preparing Pit System	Planting
Kondaparthi	18	70	73
Rasulapalli	22	68	71

Source: Researcher's Field data.

Figure-1: Activities Involved in Establishment of Mulberry Gardens Vis-a-Vis Female Employment



In other words, the study carried out in Telangana is almost similar with that our other parts of the country.

Similarly women position in the various activities of management mulberry garden has been analysed and presented in the Table-2. It is amazing to observe that weeding operations required 95 per cent female labour force in Rasulapalli village and 90 per cent in Kondaparthi village. It is also sheer coincidence that in the case of leaf harvesting operations, almost the same percentage of female force were required to that of weeding operation i.e., 90 and 95 per cent respectively in Kondaparthi and Rasulapalli village.

Even we look at the composition of female percentage for applying fertilizers, provision of irrigation facilities for management of mulberry, their share is 75 per cent and 70 per cent respectively in Kondaparthi village and 63 and 65 per cent in Rasulapalli village in that order. In the case of pruning also, in Rasulapalli village 70 per cent work force are female and their representation is 60 per cent in Kondaparthi village. Thus, major chunk of labour force required for managing mulberry are female.

Table-2: Women Position in Management of Mulberry Garden

Study Villages	Women and Employment (Percentage-wise)				
	Weeding	Applying Fertilizers	Provision of Irrigation	Leaf Harvesting	Pruning
Kondaparthi	90	75	70	90	60
Rasulapalli	95	63	65	95	70

Source: Researcher's Field data.

Figure -2: Women Position in Management of Mulberry Garden

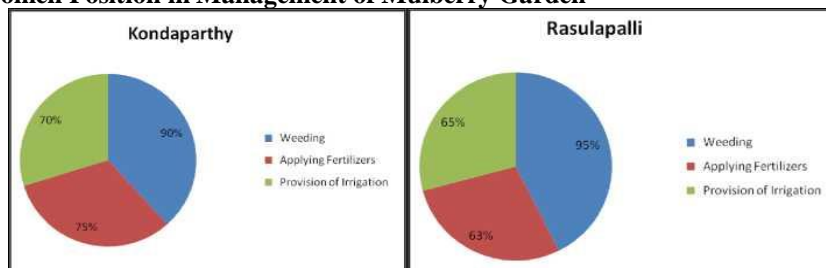
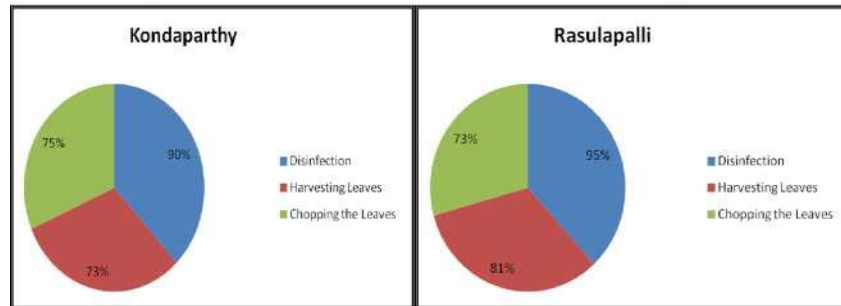


Table-3 throws light on the use of female labour force (percentage-wise) in silk worm rearing activities in the study areas. It is surprising to know that disinfection activity requires 95 per cent women force in Rasulapalli village and in Kondaparthi to the extent of 90 per cent. Bed cleaning activity occupied second position i.e., 88 per cent labour force in Rasulapalli village and 85 per cent in Kondaparthi village are female. Even feeding activity in silk rearing involves 83 per cent female in Rasulapalli village and 81 per cent in Kondaparthi village. Quite number of female force is required for harvesting leaves and chopping the leaves also. For example in Kondaparthi village, 75 per cent labour engaged at the time of chopping of leaves are females and their percentage in Rasulapalli village is 73. And at the time of harvesting of leaves, 81 per cent labour force in Rasulapalli village are female and their share in Kondaparthi village is 73 per cent. Even at mounting operation also, more than 60 per cent labour force visible are female only. Thus, participation of women in major activities involved in silk worm rearing is appreciable and it has become a source of permanent employment to the rural women in the study areas.

Table-3: Use of Female Labour in Silkworm Rearing

Study Villages	Women and Employment (Percentage-wise)					
	Disinfection	Harvesting Leaves	Chopping the Leaves	Feeding	Bed Cleaning	Mounting
Kondaparthly	90	73	75	81	85	60
Rasulapalli	95	81	73	83	88	63

Source: Researcher's Field data.

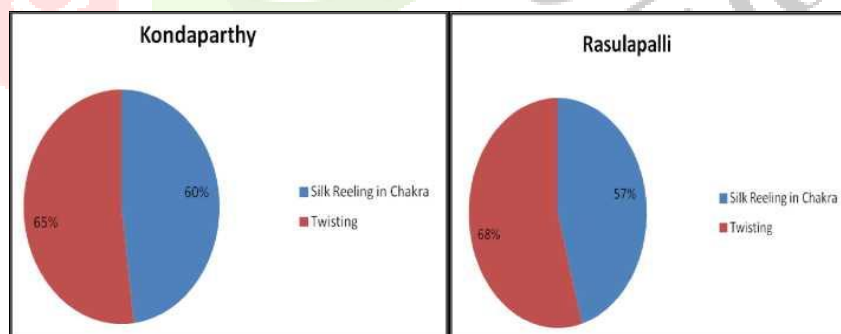
Figure -3: Use of Female Labour in Silkworm Rearing

Finally, an attempt is more to find out women participation share in major activities of post-cocoon such as silk rearing in chakra, twisting, weaving, printing and dyeing etc. Table-4 depicts that more than 70 per cent work force required at the time of weaving are female i.e, 72 per cent in Rasulapalli village and 70 per cent in Kondaparthly village. After weaving operation, twisting (65 per cent), silk rearing chakra (60 per cent), printing/dyeing (50 per cent) required female labour force in that order in the Kondaparthly village. Whereas in Rasulapalli village, female percentage is found to be 68 in twisting, 57 in silk rearing chakra and 52 in printing/dyeing that order. Thus, the study has revealed that post-cocoon activities are also labour intensive one and employment of female labour is quite high.

Table-4: Women Participation in Major Post-Cocoon Activities

Study Villages	Women Participation			
	Silk Reeling in Chakra	Twisting	Weaving	Printing/Dyeing
Kondaparthly	60	65	70	50
Rasulapalli	57	68	72	52

Source: Researcher's Field data.

Figure -4: Women Participation in Major Post-Cocoon Activities

Conclusion:

Sericulture plays a significant role in the creation of employment opportunities and to increase the income level of the rural women in our country. In most of the activities involved in raising mulberry and rearing silk worms requires female labour only. It means the economic empowerment of female in rural areas is possible by sericulture - which is a highly labour intensive. On the other, in agriculture and allied activities which happen to be the main means of livelihood in our rural areas are unable to create sufficient employment opportunities to women folk. Most of the activities prefer male labourers.

Hence, if government policies and programmes are effectively implemented either by Control Silk Board or other organisation to improve sericulture industry, it would generate more employment opportunities and ultimate analysis helps to achieve the economic empowerment of rural women.

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