



# INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN SERICULTURE IN THE AREA: MURSHIDABAD, WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

For thousands of years, silk—known as the "Queen of Textiles"—has been an integral element of Indian culture and customs. The cultivation and production of silk through the rearing of silkworms, not only plays a crucial role in promoting regional economic development, but also holds immense potential for empowering women. By providing employment opportunities in the sericulture industry, women can gain financial independence and contribute to their household income. Additionally, sericulture offers women the chance to develop valuable skills in silk production and management, allowing them to take on leadership roles within the industry. This not only boosts their self-esteem and confidence but also promotes gender equality and women's empowerment. Furthermore, sericulture is particularly beneficial for rural women, as it offers them a sustainable and regular source of income without any discrimination based on caste, creed, gender, or religion. In West Bengal, Murshidabad is one of the districts that produces the most silk. Our present study was mainly conducted on 2 villages of Nabagram Block (Nagar & Balaspur) and 2 villages of Berhampore Block (Balarampur & krishnamati) as well. It is frequently seen that they are bearing the financial and familial burdens simultaneously, making it extremely challenging for women to work outside the home. They should engage in sericulture because most of the labor is done indoors. The study reveals that more than 60% of woman are engaged in various work of sericulture from planting to reeling & printing. It is found that women are doing their works successfully in every sector.

**KEYWORDS:** silk, empowering women, finance, sector.

## INTRODUCTION:

Sericulture is the cultivation of silk through rearing of silkworm. It is an agro based industry. It involves the raising of food plants for silkworm, rearing of silkworm for production of cocoons, reeling and spinning of cocoon for production of yarn etc. For value added benefits such as processing and weaving. A Chinese tale of the discovery of the silkworm's silk was by an ancient empress Lei Zu, the wife of the Emperor of China. She was drinking tea under a tree when a silk cocoon fell into her tea and the hot tea loosened the long strand of silk. As she picked it out and started to wrap the silk thread around her finger, she slowly felt a warm sensation. When the silk ran out, she saw a small larvae. She realized that this caterpillar larva was the source of the silk. She taught this to the people and it became widespread.

Murshidabad, a district in West Bengal, has a rich legacy in silk production. The region's sericulture has been a traditional occupation, and it has played a significant role in the economic development of the area. Women in Murshidabad have been actively involved in sericulture for generations. They contribute to various stages of silk production, from rearing silkworms to weaving the final fabric. Engaging in sericulture has provided women with financial independence and the opportunity to contribute to their family's income. This has led to improved living standards and economic stability for many households. Despite the opportunities, women in sericulture also face challenges such as unequal pay, limited access to resources, and workplace safety concerns. Addressing these issues is crucial for sustainable empowerment. Investing in training and skill development for women in sericulture is essential for enhancing their productivity and market competitiveness. It also contributes to their personal growth and empowerment. The involvement of women in sericulture has not only empowered them individually but has also led to the socio-economic development of the entire community in Murshidabad. Their contributions are integral to the region's prosperity.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURES:

Around the world, sericulture is a household industry that heavily relies on women's labour. Family women or hired women make up about 60% of the workforce in both the pre- and post-cocoon sectors. During 2018–19, 91.78 lakh people in India were working in sericulture, growing mulberries on 23.5 lakh hectares of land (CSB, online). Therefore, it can be estimated that about 55 lakh of the people working in sericulture in 2018–19 are women. According to a study, there are 12.7 crore working women in India, 90% of whom are employed in unorganized industries. (Goswami and Bhattacharya, 2013). Due to their limited mobility, lack of individual status, illiteracy, and inadequate skill, these women workers are primarily found in marginal and casual employment (Chari, 1983). According to a different study, the majority of unpaid labour performed by women in India is in the agro-based household sectors, which include handloom, sericulture, dairying, fisheries, small animal husbandry, and handicrafts (Mehta and Sethi, 1977). 52,360 villages (8.2%) out of 6.39 lakh villages in India practise sericulture, which provides a living for about 9.48 lakh families (Savithri et.al., 2013). According to Barman (2001), social and cultural restrictions limit women's mobility and their participation in income-earning activities abroad. In their homestead areas, women are primarily responsible for unpaid housework, crop production, and livestock rearing. In India, sociology and social anthropology

have come to focus heavily on sericulture as a crop enterprise, both in terms of theoretical and methodological understanding. Through the application of science and technology suitable for the socioeconomic conditions of rural areas, rural women must become economically independent. Programmes that are appropriate should be chosen so that women can work productively in addition to their other family responsibilities. And in this regard, sericulture has shown to be a fantastic career choice for the advancement of India's rural areas. In roughly 45,000 of India's 575,700 villages, sericulture is practiced. This leads to the employment of 5.15 million people, of which roughly half are women. Approximately 28,000 metric tonnes of raw silk are produced in India. Sericulture is a household industry that is widely acknowledged as a significant rural industry in India and other countries. It is a labor-intensive cottage industry focused on exports that produces a lot of jobs and revenue per acre of land. A hectare of mulberry land can employ thirteen people annually. In this field, women have made significant contributions. Women alone perform nearly 60% of the work in this industry (Sekhar and Kumar, 1988; Prakash Kumar, 1986).

### **AIMS & OBJECTIVES:**

1. To guarantee women's equality, empower them, and allow them to freely live their lives with dignity and self-respect.
2. Motivating the farmers to plant high yielding mulberry varieties to increase income and productivity.
3. Generation of employment for rural women through different activities of sericulture.
4. Share the workload carried out by woman in different activities of sericulture.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the involvement of rural women in the fields of sericulture in the Murshidabad District's Nabagram Block and Berhampore Block. To examine how rural women engage with sericulture, critical research is performed on subjects such as how rural women participate in various sericulture activities, what percentage of the workload is carried out by women in various sericulture activities, and how different sericulture activities generate employment opportunities for rural women. In West Bengal, Murshidabad is one of the districts that produces the most silk. One of the main places in Murshidabad where sericulture is carried out extensively is Nabagram.

**Study Area:** Murshidabad District of West Bengal is a large agriculture-based district having 26 blocks with 1937 villages. Murshidabad lies to the north of the state and is situated between 24° 50'N - 23°43' N latitudes and 88°46' E - 87°49' E longitudes and covers a total of 5341 sq. kms.

The study was conducted 2 villages of Berhampore block and two villages of Nabagram block of Murshidabad district, West Bengal, India. Villages of BERHAMPORE BLOCK includes Balarampur & Krishnamati and Villages of NABAGRAM BLOCK includes NAGAR and BALASPUR.

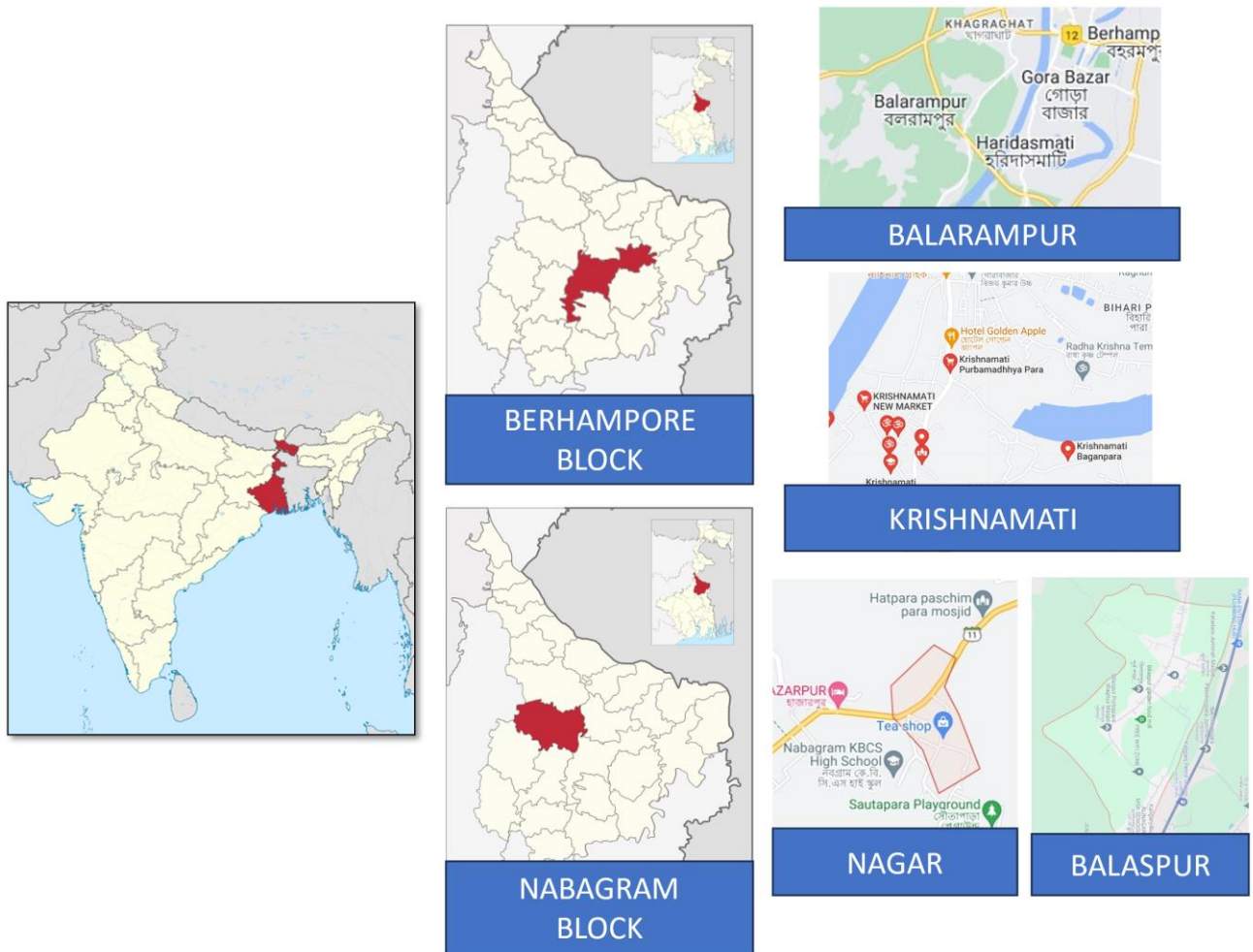


Figure 1 STUDY AREA (CREDIT: GOOGLE MAPS)

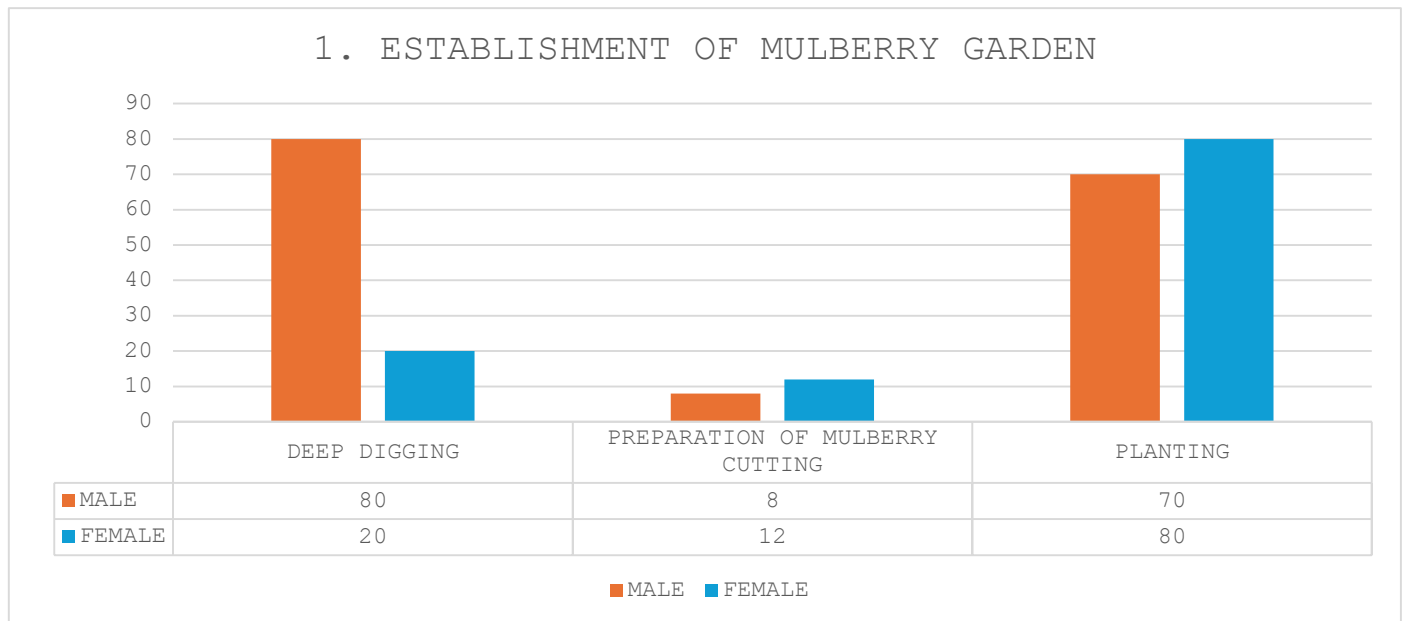
## METHODS

1. Field Visit and Collection Of Data.
2. Analysis The Data and Prepare The Bar & Pai Diagrams To Make It Properly Explainable.
3. Display Both The Light And Darkness Of Sericulture Industry.

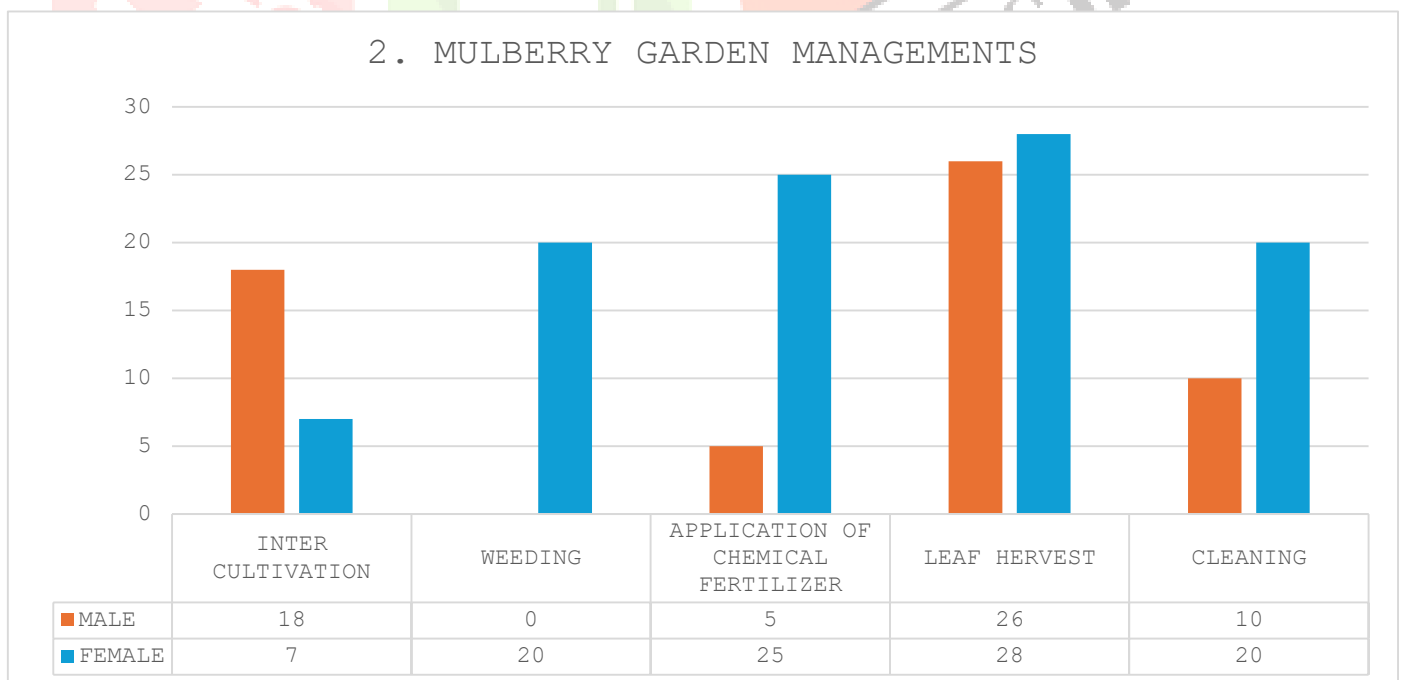
## OBSERVATIONS, RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS:

There are five major working sectors in Sericulture: establishment of mulberry garden, mulberry garden managements, silkworm rearing, post cocoon process and reeling appliance sectors. In every Sectors working scenario was noted and statistically analyzed.

- 1. ESTABLISHMENT OF MULBERRY GARDEN:** This includes deep digging, preparation of mulberry cutting and planting

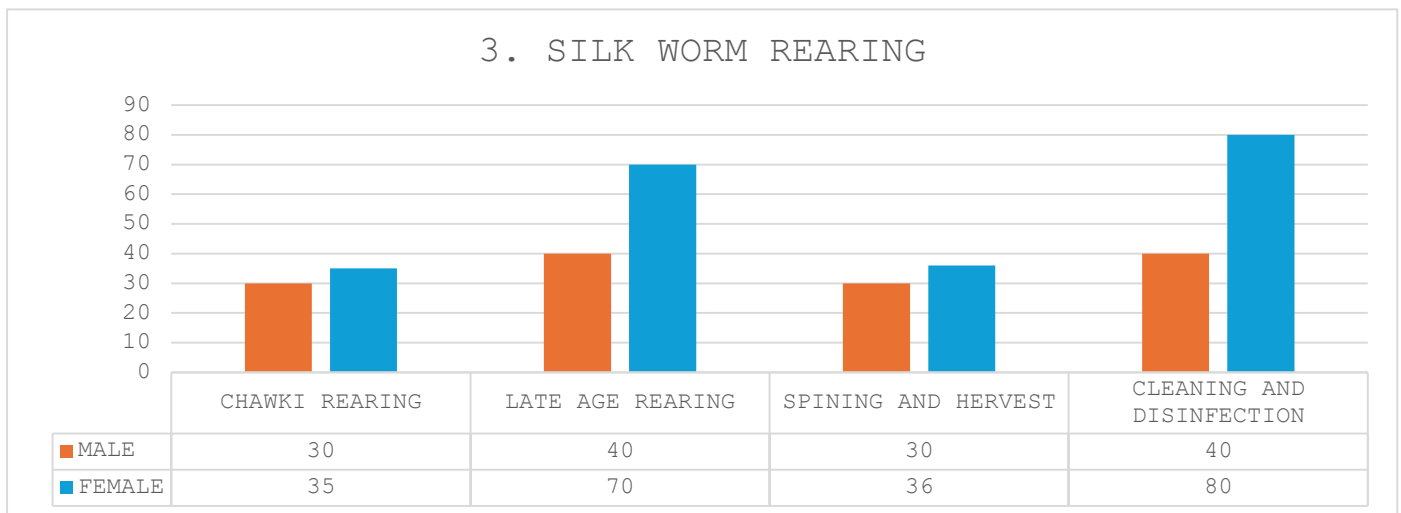


- 2. MULBERRY GARDEN MANagements:** This sector includes inter cultivation, weeding, application of chemical fertilizers, leaf harvest and cleaning



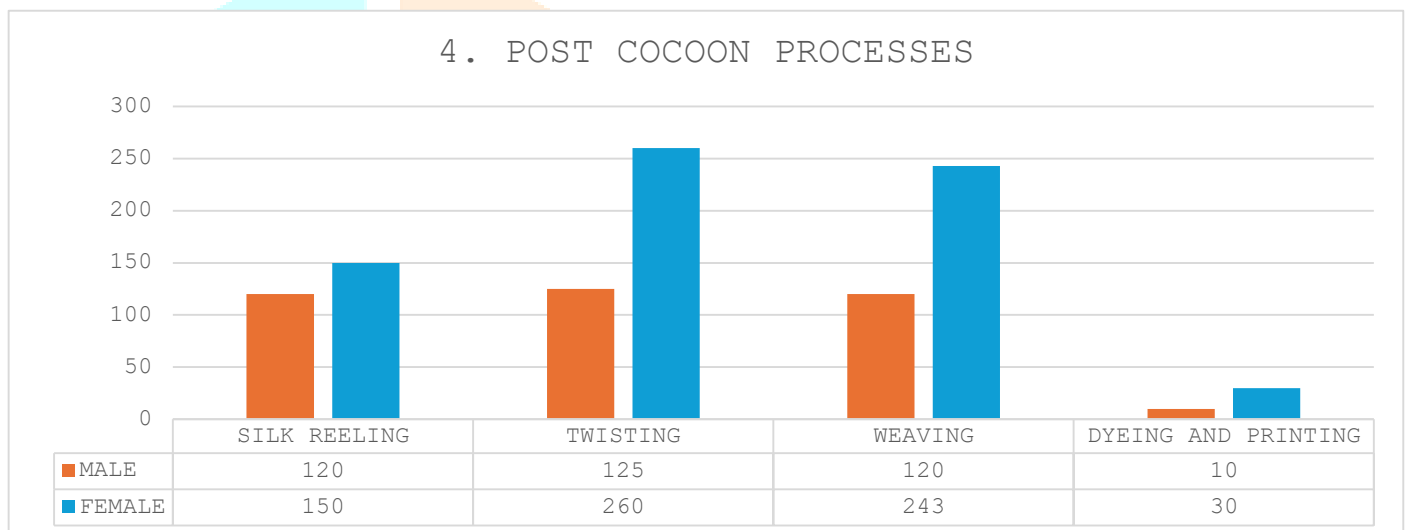
Here, in this sector 59% female works. While male percentage is about 41%

**3. SILKWORM REARING:** This includes chawki rearing, late age rearing, spinning & hervest, cleaning and disinfection



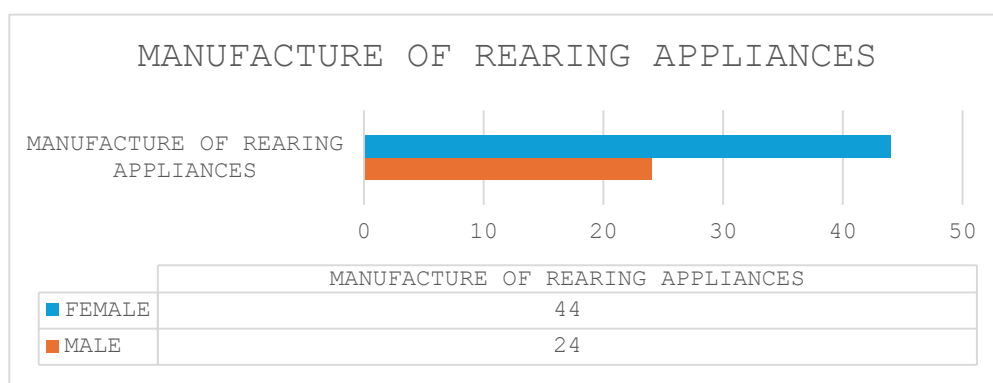
Here, in this sector 61% female works. While male percentage is about 39%

**4. POST COCOON PROCESS:** This includes silk reeling, twisting, weaving, dyeing and printing

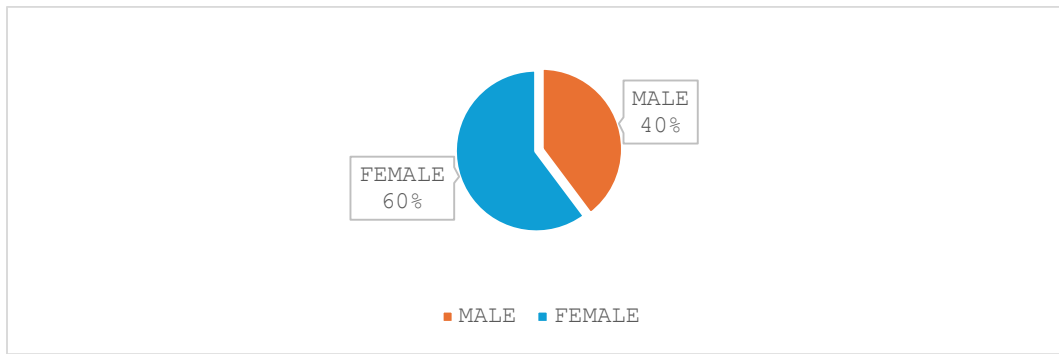


Here, in this sector 65% female works. While male percentage is about 35%

**5. REELING APPLIANCE SECTOR:** This includes manufacture of rearing appliances







## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

This includes:

1. **Market Access:** Women face challenges in accessing markets and fair prices for their silk products.
2. **Training and Development:** Opportunities for training and skill development can enhance the quality and value of silk products.
3. **Environmental Sustainability:** Women in sericulture can play a crucial role in promoting sustainable and eco-friendly silk production practices.
4. **Social Inclusion:** Sericulture can be a tool for social inclusion, empowering women from marginalized communities.
5. **Global Market Potential:** Exploring global market opportunities can further enhance the economic and social impact of women in sericulture.

## FUTURE PROSPECTS:

The future prospect of this study includes:

1. **Diversification of Products:** Exploring new silk products and designs can open up diverse market opportunities for women.
2. **International Collaboration:** Collaborating with international partners can expand market reach and promote global recognition of Murshidabad silk.
3. **Youth Engagement:** Involving the youth in sericulture can ensure the continuity and sustainability of the industry.

## CONCLUSIONS:

In any discourse, it is clearly found that women can generally be trusted to perform their duties with utmost care and attention. There is more so in the case of agriculture and allied activities.

No wonder women are playing a very important role in sericulture industry. Their qualities like maternal instincts and loving care of those under their charge proved to be very helpful in the successful breeding of silkworms.

The sericulture sector has greatly increased employment opportunities and given women a voice in decision-making, both within the home and in the community at large. For any community development initiative to be successful, women's active participation is crucial.

Throughout the world, this has been demonstrated numerous times, but particularly in developing nations. In general, women's efforts aimed at providing for their families are not given enough consideration.

Their actual financial contributions as family employees are not taken into consideration separately. The incorrect design of developmental programs is the outcome of this failure to acknowledge the role of women in development.

Sericulture is providing stable income to many rural agricultural families and women are given their 110% to produce economic strength. Unless these are displayed over, their social status cannot get justice.

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