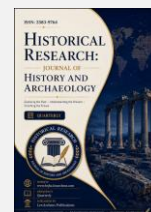




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Importance and historical development of sericulture in Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

In Jammu and Kashmir sericulture play a prominent role in industrial sector. In economic development of Jammu and Kashmir, it plays very prominent role for its people. It provides various opportunities to earn their livelihood and earn various jobs to live their lives. Raw silk is transformed into silk fibers and then costly products of silk fibers were produced. The evidence that comes from ancient Sanskrit literature that original home of silk is Kashmir, were it was manufactured for many decades. It is stated in a famous book titled "Tarikh -i-Rashidi" written by famous historian Mirza Mohammad Haider, that Kashmir started the trade of silk with Europe firstly. It is also revealed that in 1855 Kashmir supply 25000 oz seeds of silkworm to Europe. Silkworms which are reared by thousands of families produces silk cocoons. Which were then dried and sold in markets at a good quality rate. By which the condition of economy of the people changes and prosperity takes place. One of the important issues now is development of this sector, for its cultivation large tracts of land were used, mulberry plants that produce high quality leaves were planted into these tracts of land in order, to feed silkworms and then good quality products are produced. Also, good quality labour was implemented for its cultivation and also government financial assistance should be provided to this sector for its development.

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INTRODUCTION

Sericulture as an enterprise has been playing a vital role in sustaining Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) UT's economy. There is great deal of evidence in ancient Sanskrit literature that the original home of silk is Kashmir. Mirza Muhammad Haider in his book „Tarikh-i-Rashidi“ has a mention of mulberry trees (cultivated for their leaves for production of silk) as among the wonders of Kashmir. Official reports reveal that Europe was the first continent with which Kashmir had started its silk trade. The reports show that in the year 1855, Kashmir was in a position to supply 25000 oz of silkworm seeds to Europe. By exporting silkworm seeds to Europe, the silk industry of Kashmir gained a pivotal position on the silk route of Europe. About 33,000 farming families produce around 1022MT of cocoons worth Rs.5.50 crore. An increase to around 1,500 MT is planned in the next decade. Constraints faced and remedial measures suggested are discussed, beginning with the mono cropping pattern. Productivity and quality need to be improved through better packages of mulberry cultivation and silkworm rearing, and high yielding as well as superior quality silkworm breeds. Unmanaged mulberry plantations are to be revived with the required inputs. Lack of rearing space and start up tools for farmers are another factor. Low adoption of improved technologies was observed and hence stressed the dire need of awareness and training programmes.¹

Productivity of silkworm races is a concern, with sericulture being predominantly bivoltine and the majority of cocoon production coming from the spring crop. An autumn crop has been introduced but yield and quality was observed not good. In this connection, a few recommendations were made for mulberry leaf production, cocoon production, and post-cocoon management. Besides these, suggestions were made for overall improvements in the industry (Bhat, 2014). It is a known fact that the mulberry silkworm reared in the state of Jammu and Kashmir produces superior quality of cocoon in the continent Asia. It yields a very fine fiber that stands at par with the best in the world. In the state, mulberry trees exist even in the wild form of antiquity. In Kashmiri language, the silk-fibre is known as pote and the silkworm is the potikeom (insects). Kashmir, famous for its silk across the globe, currently produces 800 MT of cocoons besides generating employment of four lakh man-days annually. Approximately, 22, 000 farmers are engaged directly or indirectly with the industry presently. There are approximately, 0.38 lakh weavers in the state who are engaged in this industry under organized and unorganized sectors. Moreover, the handloom goods have great demand in the national and international markets.² There are 3741 handloom units in the state employing same number of persons producing loies, puttos, tweed, blankets, raffals, pashmina and dusotikhad. The Rajbagh silk factory is engaged in manufacturing of silk fabrics out of silk yarns which is being supplied by the two filatures of J&K at Srinagar and Jammu. It has been engaged for the last seventeen years in the manufacturing of high quality silk fabrics. There are mainly two types of silk products delivered by the factory, these are:

Twisted silk products

These include crap, chinon, chiffon and georgette. All these varieties are made up of 100% pure silk. The difference however lies in the weaving and weight of silk yarns used, giving a unique feature to each variety.

Un-twisted silk products

These include varieties like champion, habuti and satin. Here, all these varieties are given a simple weaving without any twist, giving them a natural shine. Like twisted silk products, these also differ in the weight of silk yarn used while weaving.

Review of Literature

The literature on sericulture in Jammu and Kashmir covers its historical development, production structure, technological practices and contribution to rural livelihoods. Sir Walter Roper Lawrence, in *The Valley of Kashmir* (1895), provides an early account of Kashmir's agriculture, industries, occupations and trade and records the development of silk-rearing practices and the importance of mulberry cultivation in the region. Sir Thomas Wardle's *Silk in Kashmir: History of Silk Industry in Kashmir* provides a more specific historical account of the Kashmir silk industry, including the organisation of sericulture, silk-rearing, cocoon production, the establishment of filatures and the involvement of government and European expertise in the development of the industry. At the empirical level, Kachroo and Kachroo (2006) examined the growth, instability and future projection of silk production in Jammu and Kashmir, while Ganie, Kamili and others (2012) examined the Indian sericulture industry with particular reference to Jammu and Kashmir. Qadri, Malik and others (2010) focused specifically on the adoption of improved sericultural practices among sericulturists in the border areas

of Kashmir, drawing attention to the importance of farmers' adoption of improved methods. The uploaded study also draws on Dhar, Farooq and Nisar (2011), who examined recent developments in bivoltine sericulture in Jammu and Kashmir, and on Bhat's work concerning constraints such as mono-cropping, inadequate rearing facilities, limited adoption of improved technology, mulberry management and the quality of silkworm breeds. Taken together, these studies establish that the literature has examined Kashmir sericulture from historical, production, technological and livelihood perspectives, but the uploaded study brings these strands together by examining the historical development of the industry alongside its economic contribution, employment generation, production trends and the institutional measures introduced for its development. Its discussion of the decline in cocoon production after 2015 and the problems associated with the Rajbagh Silk Weaving Factory further directs attention towards the gap between the historical importance of Kashmir's silk industry and its later production and institutional difficulties.

Objectives of the study

The present study is based on the two objectives: 1. Development of sericulture industry in Jammu and Kashmir. 2. Economic impact of sericulture industry on the life of its people and on their livelihood.

Methodology

The present study is based on secondary sources. Information has been collected from various official sources like Ministry of Tourism Government of India, Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation and Directorate of Tourism, Annual Economic survey of J&K, United Nations World Tourism Organisation, World Travel and Tourism

Council. In addition to this, data have also been collected from other reliable online sources like articles, journals and newspapers.

Development

It provides income and employment to the rural poor especially, farmers with small land-holding marginalized and weaker sections of the society. Kashmir is a non traditional sericulture state producing Mulberry and Tasar silk. The bivoltine sericulture development has been one of the priority sectors of Indian silk industry but its production is yet to meet the targets. Sericulture being one of the traditional industries in Kashmir is a land mark of our cultural heritage. There is no exact record as to how and when exactly this industry originated in Kashmir. However, there is mention of silk and mulberry tree in Rajtarangini-the oldest written chronicle of Kashmir. The reference in Mahabharata and Ramayana-the two great epics establish that sericulture was being practiced in Kashmir from times immemorial. There is evidence in ancient Sanskrit literature as, that the original home of silk is Kashmir.³

Sericulture assumes a special significance in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This is the only traditional Univoltine belt in India capable of producing silk comparable to the qualities of exquisite imported raw silk of standard quality in the international markets. Its climate is temperate and congenial for rearing both Univoltine and bivoltine silk worms' races. In view of the limited scope for pollution oriented heavy industries, sericulture has assumed added significance in the industrial planning of the state. Moreover the operation of this industry does not entail any import of raw material from outside the state at exorbitant transport costs. Sericulture is one of the oldest occupations in Kashmir.⁴ The industry provides part time employment to about entrepreneur 30,000 families by way of silk worms rearing, besides providing employment to 5,000 persons on regular basis in the public sector. Besides, silk industry generates employment to about 10,000 weavers on the full time basis, in about 2,000 units in the valley in private sector. Thus about 2.15 Lakh people are engaged on full time or part time in this industry. A deep thought was given to regain its lost glory. The industry was monopolised and ownership of plant was transferred to the farmers with the permission to sell surplus leaves and earn money.⁵

This helped from saving the industry from vanishing. Much care was taken by the farmers in preserving the trees which resulted in increased demand of the plant. Silk worms seed is supplied free of cost to the rears and cocoons are purchased by the government and private entrepreneurs. Rearing of silkworm requires scientific knowledge and technical skill. For the development of healthy silk, two basic seed stations have been established at Udhampur and Mirgund.⁶ Work on the Qazigund Nursery is also under progress. Presently there are about 7 lakh mulberry trees – 53 per cent (370,000) are in Jammu and 47 per cent in Kashmir. There are 2800 villages and 33000 households in which sericulture is generating an income of Rs



2026 lakh annually and 3.5 lakh man days activities are associated with this profession. Sericulture department now has 173 nurseries spread over an area of 963 acres, and 374 mulberry blocks over an area of 2215 acres across the UT. Out of these, 1500 villages are situated in Kashmir and the remaining 1300 villages in Jammu.⁷

Inadequacy of mulberry leaves and damage caused by insects and pests are the major problems in the development and expansion of sericulture. Now the Sericulture Development Department is laying stress on raising dwarf mulberry trees to supplement and replenish the traditional tall mulberry trees. As a result of these efforts, the dwarf varieties have increased substantially in the Jammu & Kashmir. The government of Jammu and Kashmir is committed to boost the sericulture industry for the benefit of cocoon growers and generate employment for the unemployed youths. Since Kashmiri cocoons are famous due to its purity, people from across the world prefer to purchase silk products from the valley.⁸ The government has already announced several small schemes, including free plant material and distributing a free rearing kits that growers are using during rearing process of Cocoons. Sericulture is an agro based industry and has been considered as an excellent sector for generation of employment both in Rural and Urban areas, through a series of activities like raising and planting of Mulberry plants, Silk Worm rearing, production of Silk Worm seed, reeling of Silk Cocoons, Making of Silk fabric, printing dying and finished product making and their marketing. Besides this raising of Mulberry Plantation is environmental friendly and serve the purpose of social forestry.⁹

The Jammu and Kashmir government few decades back has setup large filatures at Jammu and Srinagar to promote and develop sericulture activities in the state. Apart from the filatures, a weaving unit was also setup at Srinagar for the utilisation of yarn produced in these filatures. This unit is presently under the umbrella of Jammu and Kashmir Industries Ltd. (JKI) which has 180 other units in Jammu and Kashmir. The Silk Weaving Factory was established in the year 1921 in the premises of Govt. Filatures (Silk Factory Rambagh).¹⁰ However, in the year 1937 the factory was destroyed by fire. It was shifted to Rajbagh in 1938 where it is presently located. The site of the factory is an ideal one as it is situated on the bank of the river Jhelum. The plant is spread over an area of about 90 Kanals (489600 feet). This factory has main building consisting of three departments, viz. throwing section, warping section and weaving section. Besides there are two single storied showrooms, a single storied building for the management, two huts one is meant for dispensary and time keepers and the other one for workers union respectively.¹¹

There is no separate electrical installation for the factory. As a result, it has to suffer power failures, voltage breakdown off and on. The factory has glorious past. It has been engaged for the last seventeen years in the manufacturing of high - quality silk fabrics. The records revealed that the factory has played a vital role during the Second World War when parachute was manufactured in thousands of meters in the shifts and exported to U.K for the manufacture of parachutes used by British and American army in the war with German. The investigation entitled "Monetary Analysis of Govt.¹² Silk Weaving Factory Rajbagh Srinagar" has uncovered that the well - established production line is confronting annihilation. The yearly production has diminished considerably and the manufacturing plant is running under substantial misfortunes. There has been a fall of 69 percent in the production from 2010-2011 to 2015-2016. A comparative declining pattern is appeared by the yearly deals figures of the manufacturing plant. The business volume demonstrates a lessening of 66.27 percent from 2010-2011 to 2015-2016. The working of manufacturing plant exposes an important certainty that the state silk industry has appeared poor performance. The central point in charge of the decay of Kashmir silk Industry as a rule and Govt. Silk Weaving Factory specifically is the intense deficiency and substandard raw materials.¹³

Therefore, there has been a substantial lessening in the production of silk textures which has not enabled the fixed expense to spread completely, bringing about surprising expense of production. This has hampered the development of the unit. Further, the average expense per meter of silk texture created is high when contrasted with average selling cost, bringing about substantial misfortunes to the unit. The Jammu and Kashmir government must take steps to boost sericulture in the state and to engage more people to generate huge employment.¹⁴

Table 1: Trends in Cocoon Production, Income Generation, and Number of Silkworm Rearers in Jammu and Kashmir, 2010–2011 to 2016–2017

Year	Cocoon Production (MT)	Income generation (lac Rs)	Silkworm rearers

2010-2011	860	1100.00	25500
2011-2012	917	963.00	27000
2012-2013	901	1193.00	28000
2013-2014	1022	2026.00	29390
2014-2015	1032	1907.50	30894
2015-2016	944	2020.00	30894
2016-2017	973	2200.00	27115

Source: *J&K Govt Records*.

The above table shows that the production of cocoons increases upto 2015 but after that it decreases due to political atmosphere that was not favourable for its production by which its impacts were also seen on cultivation process. The other factors that also impacts its cultivation are the schemes that were put forward by govt. were not properly used by its employees in order to promote its development. Its income also increases up to a maximum limit but after 2015 the number of silk rearers decreases its income will also shrink in near future.¹⁵

Methods through which Development assistance of mulberry plantation takes place

1. Identification of Farmers: The Department of Sericulture identifies potential farmers, preferably those with access to water sources suitable for raising mulberry plantations. Selected farmers are required to possess passbooks or other documents establishing their identity as sericulture farmers.
2. Verification by Field Officers: The concerned Field Officer verifies the plantation work through visits before and after implementation. Farmers may also be required to give an undertaking that they will continue sericulture for at least ten years after receiving the subsidy.
3. Financial Assistance for Plantation: Financial assistance of Rs. 14,000 is provided for raising and maintaining up to 300 mulberry trees. The subsidy is calculated on a pro-rata basis according to the number of trees, subject to a minimum of 100 trees per beneficiary.
4. New and Improved Mulberry Varieties: Assistance is available for establishing new mulberry plantations and replacing old varieties with improved varieties. High-yielding mulberry varieties suitable for the local agro-climatic conditions are recommended for the production of bivoltine/ICB silk.
5. Gap Filling: Financial assistance is also available for filling gaps in existing mulberry plantations, with the assistance calculated on a pro-rata basis.
6. Convergence with Other Government Schemes: Plantation development may be linked with programmes implemented by other government departments, including RKVY and MGNREGS. Such convergence is intended to reduce the labour-cost burden associated with plantation development.
7. Maximum Area of Assistance: A beneficiary can normally receive assistance for up to one hectare. Depending on the farmer's silkworm-rearing capacity and availability of land, further assistance may be provided on a pro-rata basis to support large-scale farming and seri-business enterprises.
8. Monitoring of Leaf Productivity: The leaf productivity of beneficiaries receiving support must be recorded for a minimum period of five years.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the above discussion that sericulture is one of important economic sector of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir. It provides employment to thousands of its people and make them economically sound and lessens the employment burden of j&k government. It produces quality silk products that were famous all over the world for its quality material and product. The products which are produced from cocoons makes a huge economy to the UT. With the establish of this industry lot of people became independent and make their living easy and prosperous. This industry was developing tremendously up to 2015 after that a pause has been seen in its development. There were different problems which hindered its development. For that different provisions have been made by government for its smooth development. They promote different programs like

RKVY, MGNREGS etc to reduce the burden of labour wages that were involved in its plantation drives. But still the industry needs much more support from both government and cultivators in order to become the most economically sound industry.

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