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SERICULTURE**

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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH TASAR SERICULTURE

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ABSTRACT

India has a rich & manifold history in the production of silk and silk trade way back to the 15th Century. The Sericulture industry employs approximately 8 million persons in rural and urban areas of India. Out of these, a considerable amount of workforces fall under the economically weaker section of society, comprising women too. In realism, Tasar sericulture is an occupation “by the women & for the women” because 80 % of the silk is consumed by women, and also women constitute over 60 % of those employed in downstream activities of sericulture.

INTRODUCTION

India enjoys the availability and practice of mulberry and non-mulberry sericulture like tasar, eri, muga and oak-tasar varieties. Among them, the tropical tasarculture is an important rural tribal occupation in the states of Jharkhand,

Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh of India mainly practiced by tribal women. Sericulture is the art and science of growing silkworm food plants, rearing silkworms and production of silk is an agro-industry and an economically rewarding enterprise consisting of several sets of activities and plays a predominant role in shaping the economic destiny of the rural people. The tasar silk industry has acquired a big role in improving tribal socio-economic conditions besides generating substantial rural employment. Tribal women are involved in the collection of various secondary forestry produce and sell them in local markets for their livelihoods. The tasar cocoons are also part of the forest products which they collect. As the tasar sericulture is advanced and now the activity is commercially taken up apart from the forest collection. The commercial tasar sericulture from nursery raising to plantation maintenance and grainage to rearing as well reeling to weaving every activity is taken up by women with ease and interest. Tasar sericulture practicing women have been uplifted their family standard of living.

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional term. When women empower personally, psychologically, culturally, socially, economically, politically it indicates development from in and out which helps in achieving not only gender equality for women, successful contribution towards their sector, but also integrated development with which they are associated resulting in nation-building. There are different sectors of women who are striving for their empowerment. One such sector is farm



women (Navya and Boppana, 2021). Farm women or women farmers can be empowered through tasar sericulture.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN TASAR SERICULTURE

Women play a major role in the advance of any country. Most of the Indian women are present in the rural areas. The backbone of the rural economy is the female population residing in the rural areas and also they are the chief drivers of the agricultural/sericulture sector. They also play an important role in sericulture. The capabilities necessary for the workforces in the farming & sericulture sectors are in-built in the Indian female populace. The abilities of hard work, attentiveness, courage, commitment and dedication are embedded in the womenfolk of India (Rubia Bukhari et al., 2019).

Women have been actively involved in several tasar sericulture activities viz., nursery raising and Host plant maintenance, transplanting of the sapling and their upkeep, conducting grainage operations, rearing of silkworms, reeling and weaving.

HOST PLANT NURSERY RAISING & MAINTENANCE

Group of women collect the ripened and mature tasar host plant (*Terminalia arjuna* & *Terminalia tomentosa*) seeds during April-May and prepare a nursery by following the protocol and protect the germinated seedlings from pests and diseases by adopting locally available materials. The seedlings are maintained for about 2-3 months later transplant to the main field. From seed collection to land selection and till transplanting every activity is carried by women by division of work among them. Once after transplanting they maintain the

host plants by frequent watering and application of manure and protect from grazing by cattle. In addition, they gain a handful amount by selling the saplings thus benefiting them.

REARING OF TASAR SILKWORMS

Women form different groups for different activities and distribute work among them. One set of batch look after the chawki rearing and the other batch look after the late age rearing including disinfection of fields and shifting of worms from one plant to other. Whereas, few women are exclusively meant for cocoon harvesting and marketing cocoons. Later, they sell the cocoons for a reasonable rate and earn the money. For example, if one cocoon is sold at Rs. 2.5 suppose if she sells 5000 cocoons she earns Rs.12,500 just in a span of one month. Thus the money earned from tasar culture can benefit the woman to look over her family.

Fig.1: Women in silkworm rearing field



Fig.2: Women harvesting cocoons



GRAINAGE:

Grainage operations and household activities can be carried side by side by the women. Grainage operations like disinfection of grainage house both in and out and sorting of cocoons for seed preparation, garlanding of cocoons, hanging of garlands and maintenance of temperature and relative humidity inside grainage house are carried out by women besides looking after household activities. Besides, they also take due care during moth coupling, wing clipping of female moths and during decoupling, preparation of egg laying devices, keeping moths for egg laying, collection of eggs, washing, drying of eggs and its packing for selling. By managing all grainage operations she will be able to achieve the good quality and quantity of DFLs. Suppose, if she sells the DFLs at Rs.12 per DFL she may earn around Rs. 26400 by selling 2200 DFLs.

REELING AND WEAVING

Women have an inbuilt idea of reeling and weaving. From ancient times women in more number are involved in these kinds of activities. Tasar technology development has reduced the pain and burden of women by reeling through traditional methods of reeling like thigh reeling as well as matka reeling. Now, motorized reeling machines have made a breakthrough in reeling where women can easily operate and reel the silk. Women have a great talent in designer weaving of sarees, stoles, shirts etc. The reeled silk will be sold and can earn a

penny and also weaved beautiful sarees fetch a higher price in the market because the design and quality of silk always attract everyone especially women.

In overall, women practicing any occupation either it might be rearing or grainage or any other activity has a great benefit from which she can raise her standard of living as well her family's socio-economic conditions.



Fig.3: Women reeling silk through motorized reeling machine

UPLIFTMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH VARIOUS TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The different need-based human resource development programmes like Capacity Building Training (CBT), Skill Enhancement Programmes/Hands on training and awareness programmes are organized specially for women by central silk board with the objective to improve the capacity or skill of the women leading to improvement in quality production. In addition, awareness workshops are organized to create awareness about the latest



Fig.4: Participation of women in awareness programme



technology among the women farmers and for effective interaction with the women farmers and to enable them adoption of improved technologies/practices. In most of the training programmes main focus is on women and their upliftment and empowerment.

BENEFITS TO WOMEN FROM SERICULTURE:

There are quite a lot of benefits to women from practicing tasar sericulture. Benefits can be divided into two parts viz., intrinsic benefit and spill-over benefit. A woman is gaining the benefit by joining with the family workforce with her own interest for sake of herself, apart from regular household activity. This raises her self-dignity and self-esteem. Whereas, in the spillover benefit involvement of women workers in sericulture help in the holistic development of the family where the standard of living including education level, nutritional level etc raises. Thus, the women, either way, get benefited from sericulture.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A VEHICLE FOR POVERTY ERADICATION:

Sericulture is such an activity where women can carry most of the activities on their own. Women have a remarkable role in sericulture. In those areas where it has been hit by drought and has no scope/less scope of non-agricultural employment, sericulture stood and proved to be an occupation that has a great potential in the eradication of poverty by creation of employment opportunities for women.

WOMEN ARE PROUD OF SILK INDUSTRY

No wonder womanhood is performing great in the sericulture industry. Women have inherent maternal qualities like love and care for the family evidenced to be very useful in the rearing of silkworms successfully. On a whole, the Sericulture industry has widely created phenomenal employment opportunities and helping women to a large extent. The lively

participation of females is very crucial for the victory of any community (Eswarappa Kasi, 2013). In India, women are mostly found as the major activist in sericulture. Presently, about 60% of the total working force contributing to sericulture as a worker in raising food plants, leaf collection, silkworm rearing, reeling/spinning, and weaving is women. In fact, sericulture is an occupation by the women and for the women. As a woman, has a dynamic role in the sericulture activities, it equally creates opportunities and makes them independent socially, economically, politically and otherwise.

CONCLUSION:

In India, women have played and remain to play a key role in the development of sericulture. Thus, it is possible to empower women through the development of the sericulture industry. The women participate at a higher rate in activities relating to silkworm rearing, cocoon harvesting, marketing and spinning of the spun yarn. Besides, their involvement is again higher against men in the marketing of pupae and cocoons. Sericulture is one of the high income generating industries, hence promoting women entrepreneurs in Sericulture will lead to economic development and empowerment of women.

“Women is empowered- Sericulture is empowered- the country is empowered”

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