

# **IS WOMEN'S ROLE IN SERICULTURE MATTERS FOR THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY FROM SOUTH INDIAN VILLAGE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In this paper an attempt has been made to explain the role of women in the success of SHG movement in Andhra Pradesh, which is related to other activities to sustain their livelihoods. The paper also discusses about the role of women in sericulture. This includes the concept of work, division of labour, segregation of occupations, dimension of labour and household activities, and role of DWCRA in relation to sericulture, etc. This paper also discusses perception of women towards silkworm, feeding, etc., and the role of children in sericultural activities.

## **WOMEN'S ROLE IN SELF HELP GROUPS:**

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has taken up the theme of women's empowerment as one of the strategies to tackle the socio-economic poverty. Self Help movement through savings has been taken up as a mass movement by women—a path chosen by them to shape their destiny for better. Development Agenda of the State in the last few years placing the people, especially women in the fore—front has enabled formation of a large number of Self Help Groups (SHGs) throughout the State and majority of women are saving one rupee a day. The State government is consciously making an effort to assist SHGs by providing Revolving Fund/Matching grant under various programmes.

## **SHGS MOVEMENT IN ANDHRA PRADESH**

There are about 4.65 lakhs women SHGs in Andhra Pradesh covering nearly 61.70 lakhs poor women. Andhra Pradesh alone has about half of SHGs organized in the Country. The SHGs are also popularly called DWCRA Groups, and this name after the DWCRA programme (Development of Women and

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Children in Rural Areas) through which women's groups were assisted initially. The SHGs are not only resorting to thrift but also are taking small loans out of the corpus available with the group. The group corpus consists of savings, government assistance and also bank loan. Members use the loan out of group corpus for their personal needs initially. However, in the long run such loans are utilised for income generation activities. Since inception an amount of Rs.1556.90 crores is mobilized as corpus by these groups.

### **MICRO CREDIT TO SHGS**

Micro credit summit conducted in 1997 in Washington resolved to reach 100 million poor women by 2005 all over the world. In Andhra Pradesh alone, 61.70 lakh women were covered under micro credit with a saving of one rupee per day and the financial institutions extending loans upto 4 times to the amount of group savings. From the year 1997 to January 2003, Banks extended a loan of Rs.1345 crores to SHG and the recovery of loans is more than 95%. Recently commercial banks have reduced interest rate on the loans extended to SHGs from 12% to 9%.

### **BUILDING INSTITUTIONS FOR SHGS**

Women's savings movement started in 1993 as an off shoot of total literacy campaigns successfully conducted by the pro-active government initiatives in the southern part of Andhra Pradesh, poor women agitated against sale of arrack, organized themselves into 'Thrift and Credit groups' with one rupee saving in a day had now turned into a mass movement in which 61.70 lakh members saved more than Rs.887.47 crores which is rotated internally and lent amongst the members twice in a year as per the interest rates fixed by the groups. Such amounts are used for their daily consumption needs and also for production of goods for sales to earn incomes.

### **GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD**

All the villages in the state have at least one SHG and 75% of the villages have 15- 20 groups in each. Government felt the necessity of building institutions for SHG at the village and mandal level ('Mandal' is an administrative unit equivalent to 1/3 size of a block). Village organisations and mandal federations are formed and the latter are registered under the mutually aided Co-operative Societies Act 1995. Such federations take up functions like pensions to old people, insurance services to members, procurement of raw materials and marketing of finished products, accessing community infrastructure facilities, providing market information and other services to the members.

### **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF SHGs**

60% of the women take up economic activities related to agriculture and allied

activities. Land lease for growing agricultural crop is a common practice in the 9 Telangana districts. Vegetable and flower cultivation, food crops and pulses, oil seeds cultivation are taken up on leased lands. Similarly, rearing of calves, ram lamb, chicks, piggery and duckery, dairy, value addition to milk and milk products are preferred by women agricultural labourers. Illiterate and unskilled women engage in small business activities. Nearly 20% of the SHG members are artisans and engaged in making handicrafts and handloom products.

Public private partnership method is adopted in promoting economic opportunities to SHG members by appointing them as dealers for the sale of products manufactured by companies like Hindustan Levers Limited, TVS, TTK-Prestige, Colgate-Palmolive, Philips etc. Companies in return train SHGs in finance management, enterprise development, packaging, branding and pricing of products. This partnership is a win-win model. Andhra Pradesh is now engaged in intense pursuit of development programmes utilizing information technology (IT) and to strategize as to how the benefits of IT could be taken to rural areas.

SHGs are encouraged to get PCs and software for accessing information and developing their business. Their products are photographed, scanned and displayed on websites. These are put on the portals of e-commerce companies. Handicrafts, herbal medicines and cosmetics, hand woven and embroidered curtains, toys, paintings etc., are thus finding national and international markets. This would not have been possible, but for the internet. The members are enabled to take a mobile telephone and use it not only for the sales but as a public telephone.

#### **IMPACT OF SHGs MOVEMENT:**

Various organisations evaluated SHGs. NGOs, universities, National Bank for Agricultural & Rural Development (NABARD) and ORG-Marg. Some of the salient features are:

- 98% of the members make savings regularly as the norms prescribed by the groups.
- All the groups meet at least once in a month to discuss various social issues related to their day to day life.
- 98% of eligible members adopt small family norms.
- 100% children of SHG members are able to access immunization services against the 6 diseases.
- 30% of the members have access to safe cooking fuels (LPG) under the Government promoted scheme popularly known as "DEEPAM".
- 80% of the total SHGs have accessed financial assistance from banks and repayment is 98%.
- 10,000 SHG members were elected to the local bodies (3 term Panchayat

Raj Institutions) in 1997 November elections.

- Members are engaged in 450 varieties of income generating activities.
- Additional family incomes to member range from Rs.1000-3000 per annum depending on the income generating activities.
- Increase in self confidence and self esteem
- Increase in awareness levels about the society and community. Voluntary participation in community activities like laying roads, planting trees conserving environment, construction of water harvesting structures, donations to the victims of natural calamities, helping to reduce crime against girls & women, campaign against eradication of social evils like dowry, child marriages, untouchability, AIDS, rescue and rehabilitation of orphaned children, counseling adolescent girls, support to widows and destitutes are a few to mention.

SHG members learning from the past experiences are walking through the present are marching ahead for a bright future. Government of Andhra Pradesh has rightly realized that the involvement of the rural poor women in development will speed up attainment of Swarnandhra Pradesh and realising the Vision indeed!

In the Third World countries much of the work on gender has been influenced by socialist and liberal feminists who are dominant in the 1970s. Sarker (2006) further quotes Waylen's (1996) idea that the Socialist feminist believes that societies are fundamentally structured around patriarchy and profound inequalities in gender relations. Besides the economic class structure, they attack all forms of male oppression. Liberal feminism is the most diverse strand. Liberal feminists are less concerned with finding structural explanation for women's subordination than socialist feminists. Instead, they find the socialization of men and women into different roles reinforced by discrimination, prejudice and irrationality as responsible for women's unequal position in society. The solutions to inequality are changes which will give women a better deal in the existing system, such as, legal changes and the promotion of equal opportunities allowing women access to things on the same terms as men. Liberal feminism has been criticized for its overtly individualistic approach and its lack of a coherent analysis of women's oppression (Sarker 2006:63-4).

Boserup (1970) has observed that new technology in farming actually lowered women's status by reducing their access to productive work. As each crop production and wage jobs were only made available to men, women were increasingly relegated to the subsistence economy during and after the colonial period.

Development planners ignored women's productive activities, partly because their national accounting systems ignored much of women's work within the household and subsistence economy, assuming women to be only housewives (Rogers 1980).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper is based on the data collected from Kotha Indlu village of Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh during the year 1999-2000. This study is a qualitative micro-level study of a sericulture village. The primary data was collected through a structured household schedule, informal interviews using detailed checklists, key informant interviews, case studies and observation from all respondents in the village. Quantitative information with regard to the technological development, land holding, demographic aspects, cropping patterns, irrigation systems were collected by using household schedules and District statistical hand book. Secondary data and information are collected from the annual reports of the Department of Sericulture, Andhra Pradesh, the studies and reports brought out by the Central Silk Board, Bangalore, Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, and Central Sericulture Research and Training Institute, Mysore.

## **VILLAGE PROFILE**

Kotha Indlu is situated in the Kotha Indlu Panchayat of Kuppam Mandal in Chittoor district, about 15 kilometres from Kuppam, the mandal head quarters. It is a multi caste village inhabited by Balija, Vanniar, Scheduled Castes and washer men castes. The Balija, are the dominant castes in this village. They are dominant politically, economically, educationally and also numerically. While the Balija occupy the highest position in the local caste hierarchy, Vanniar, Chakali and the SCs occupy the subsequent positions in that order. Vanniar, who are a backward caste, competing with the Balija Caste economically and educationally, though they are weak numerically and politically. Next to Balija, the Scheduled Castes are numerically higher than Vanniar and Chakali. The total population is 274 formed by 50 families. On the basis of land holdings, the residents of Kotha Indlu are classified into marginal, small, medium and large farmers, and the landless. In Kotha Indlu the number of small farmers forms the majority. The next bigger group is the medium farmers. The numbers of large and marginal farmers are quite few, while the landless are almost insignificant. The crops cultivated are Paddy and Ragi, which are the staple crops and they constitute the staple diet of all communities. Commercial crops like flowers and groundnuts are also grown in the village. Floriculture is specially found among the Balija farmers, while all the castes raise groundnut crop in their lands. Though sericulture occupies the second position after agriculture, it is the major source of income for the farmers in the village. Cattle, goat, sheep, buffaloes and donkeys are the major livestock in the area. Several varieties of grass along with stocked paddy straw; maize stalk, groundnut and bhoosa are used as fodder. Poultry is widely prevalent in the village and only the SCs practise piggery. The village is very well connected by road and it has good transport facilities. Except Scheduled Caste sericulturists, the remaining sericulture farmers of the village use the tillers, tractors and bullock carts to transport their produce to the towns. The village has telephone as well as postal facilities. The village has

an upper primary school and a high school. It also has a ration shop under the public distribution system to supply the necessary commodities to the people who comes under below poverty line (BPL) at concessional rates. In Kotha Indlu village people give more importance to rituals. Rituals are associated with all their activities. The president of the Gram Panchayat is from the Scheduled caste community. In fact, this (Panchayat) seat was reserved for the Scheduled Castes in the last elections held for the local bodies on rotatory basis. There is a farmers' club in the village, which takes care of their problems both in the society and outside.

### **ARE WOMEN'S ROLE MATTERS FOR DEVELOPMENT?**

Sericulture is an extremely labour intensive industry and occupies an enviable position for providing employment and additional income to weaker sections. In this context, the transformation of sericulture industry from subsistence type of operation to a modern scientific system requires the attention of the policy makers, administrators and personnel working in the industry. Here the word personnel, mainly refers to women labourers who are the full time workers and who look after silkworm rearing and management and whose contribution is more than that of men in rearing silkworms. It is reported that women contribute about 50 and 60 per cent of labour to mulberry cultivation and silkworm rearing, respectively (Ranganayaka and Sidderamaiah, 1995: 25).

It is rightly observed by Inbanathan and Vijayalakshmi that, "Economic development has been one of the main objectives of many governments of countries around the world. And, improving the socio-economic condition of women has also been an important aim in their development programs. In this context, and in India, sericulture has been found to be very helpful in meeting the development objectives of the Government. This is because it is labour intensive, and provides employment and income to many people, both in rural and urban areas. As such, it is of particular significance in anti-poverty programs. Sericulture is not one occupation but includes several activities, from planting and growing mulberry plants, rearing of silkworms to reeling of silk yarn from cocoons. In much of these activities, the labour contribution of women is significant" (1997: 37-8).

From time immemorial, women are involved in different sectors of silk industry. A legend says that the discovery of the silkworm and cocoon is by a woman, a beautiful Chinese Princess. But for her foresight and imagination, perhaps, the silk industry would not have been what it is today. The industry is well established in the traditional countries like Japan, China and Korea. The progress is equally rapid in the developed and under developed countries. In India sericulture is practiced as an agro-husbandry based subsidiary occupation. From the household, women are employed in sericulture operations. As mentioned earlier, about 51 per cent of women are assisting men in this lucrative industry to produce the queen of textiles (Kannan, 1987).

Women are mostly favored because of their delicate nature, patience and hard work. They are employed in a mulberry garden or silkworm rearing or in a grainage or in weaving or in a garment-making factory, etc. By and large, sericulture offers a vast scope to augment the family income. Women are actively engaged in the mulberry fields for the removal of weeds and in leaf plucking. The leaf plucking is a skilled and delicate operation. They must have full knowledge about which leaves should be plucked that suit different ages of silkworms. Women go to the fields in the morning for plucking the mulberry leaves and return to the rearing house before noon.

In the rearing house it is not uncommon to find women folk assisting men in feeding the silkworms. Feeding is an art very aptly done by the fair sex, though men do chopping of leaves. Women assist in bed changing and they do this with utmost tenderness so as not to hurt the delicate worms. Women have become experts in Chawki rearing, which is a highly delicate operation and will have to be done with care and patience. Good harvests depend on good Chawki rearing. When the silkworm matures and is ready for spinning the cocoons, it is again women who are employed for picking the ripe worms and putting them on the chandrikas (bamboo mountages on which silkworms are placed when they are just about to spin their cocoons). Any over crowding will lead to an increase in the spinning of double cocoons, which are unfit for the production of high-grade raw silk. When the cocoons are ready for harvesting, it is mostly women who sort out the flimsy, stained, double and deformed cocoons from the chandrikas.

Coming to the post cocoon technology, the involvement of women is greater, commencing from silk reeling, weaving and garment manufacturing industry. Whether it be a charkha, cottage basin, steam filature or automatic or semi-automatic reeling, women are preferred due to the dexterity of their fingers in getting the fine filaments from the cocoons, casting of the ends and they possess the patience to work in hot water and seam for long hours. It is really a pitiable sight to see women sitting near the boiling water all day long, reeling the crude charkha silk. Women's greater involvement in reeling industry is seen not only in India but also in all silk producing countries. In the post reeling, the ultimate success depends much on good winding, that is, yarn without breaks. There should be continuity in the yarn, otherwise there will be too many knots which hinder good weaving, be it on a handloom or a power loom.

However, their work has not always been recognized or rewarded. Cultural factors have complicated the proper evaluation of the quantum and quality of women's contribution. It includes elements such as the structure of work in each society, segregation of women and men in specific occupations, and the division of labour.

### **WORK AND DIVISION OF LABOUR**

Inbanathan and Vijayalakshmi rightly stated that, "Work is regarded in many

ways in different societies, and, the conception of work has also varied from time to time. The transition from simple hunting and gathering communities to agrarian technology entailed a major shift in gender relations... The primary responsibility of women was considered as attending to the needs of children and their husbands, and in the patriarchal culture this was seen to follow naturally from their role in biological reproduction.... The sociology of gender and to some extent sociology of work has attempted to explain the work of women by relating it to two realms prevalent in society. The “separate spheres” for men and women have been variously referred to as “inside/outside” or “private/public” and have been extensively used by anthropologists to explain the cross-cultural phenomenon of women’s lower status vis-à-vis men. It has been argued that women’s involvement with child rearing and domestic work was responsible for their exclusion from the public sphere” (ibid: 38-9).

Further, Inbanathan and Vijayalakshmi continue that, “Certain occupations were reserved exclusively for men and certain occupations were considered as women’s work. Though much of the conceptualizing of these separate spheres is based on biological reductionism, empirical evidence shows that the dichotomy is related more to the social than to the economic sphere. However, it was the intellectual potential of women, which was portrayed as their weak point, and provided a doubtful rationale to confine them to work which did not involve substantial mental ability. There is no scientific support for such an impression, but the answers lie within culture rather than in biological factors. For instance, people assume or even believe that certain activities associated with silkworm rearing such as *Chawki rearing* (involving very young silkworms) require extremely high skill which only men can provide. As we saw during our field visits, when the situation demanded, women could and did carry out such work, with no noticeable harm to silkworms or to sericulture productivity” (ibid.: 39).

It is amply demonstrated that though women participated in both spheres of work, they are still confined to ‘home base’ jobs than ‘outside home’ jobs or tasks. Even in cases where they do both jobs, these are to be done under the guidance or supervision of men. These home base jobs are not even considered as productive work and in the same vein all home base jobs done by women, including silkworm rearing, are relegated to lower status and are virtually considered insignificant and unskilled. This also has a bearing on their decision-making power vis-à-vis men (Inbanathan and Vijayalakshmi, 1997).

## **DIVISION OF LABOUR**

The division of labour in Kotha Indlu shows a typical gender divide in various activities that the women and girls do as compared to men and boys. All the household chores, tending children, looking after the needs of their husbands and other members of the family are all women’s tasks.

Besides, workings on agricultural lands as well as looking after sericultural tasks, which are usually branded as ‘feminine’ tasks, are not recognized as



productive jobs. They include a wide variety of tasks like domestic chores, agricultural and sericultural tasks like sowing, weeding, cutting or plucking leaves, etc., are as a matter of fact more arduous and back-breaking. The above two tables amply demonstrate this (Table 1 and 2).

**Table 1**  
**Division of Household Activities (in %)**

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Others*</i>
Washing/cleaning utensils, clothes	—	98	2
Taking care of children	—	84	16
Supervision of children	—	67	33
Collecting drinking water	—	54	46
Bringing Firewood	18	63	19
Bringing grass	23	67	10
Rearing Cows / goats	34	64	2
Milking the cows	14	86	—
Washing the cattle	21	71	8

\*Mostly women, either hired or related to the family

**Table 2**  
**Division of Labour in Establishing Mulberry Gardens (in %)**

<i>S. Activities</i> <i>No.</i>	<i>Family</i>		<i>Hired</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
1 Ploughing	94	—	6	—
2 Levelling	92	—	8	—
3 Harrowing	92	—	8	—
4 Irrigation	64	36	—	—
5 FYM application	49	51	—	—
6 Fertilizer application	72	28	—	—
7 Weeding	—	86	—	14
8 Planting	46	54	—	—

People in Kotha Indlu believe that men are considered more skilled and knowledgeable in the application of fertilizers and wherever women are involved they work under the supervision of men. A division of labour is also seen in the activities pertaining to maintenance of mulberry gardens. Both men and women participate in FYM application and irrigation. Thus, men are mainly held responsible for activities like pruning, ploughing and fertilizer application, and women for weeding. Maintenance and upkeep of mulberry garden is the male realm and any 'skilled work', be it in raising and maintenance of mulberry garden or silkworm rearing and marketing of cocoons, is a male domain and if women are involved in these tasks they have to 'consult' and work under the 'guidance' of men. Men do not engage themselves in 'less skilled'; 'unskilled' or 'no skilled' jobs (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
**Division of Labour in Mulberry Garden Maintenance (in %)**

<i>S. Activities No.</i>	<i>Family</i>		<i>Hired</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
1 Pruning	91	—	9	—
2 Ploughing	94	—	6	—
3 FYM application	46	54	—	—
4 Fertilizer application	79	21	—	—
5 Weeding	—	84	—	16
6 Irrigation	54	32	14	—

Even in silkworm rearing, the sharing of tasks follows the same logic of 'skilled' and 'unskilled' jobs in mulberry cultivation. Thus, except for chawki rearing and harvesting of cocoons, which are 'skilled' jobs and hence are done mostly by men, women in Kotha Indlu perform all the other tasks. Bed cleaning and disinfecting the trays are considered a "women's Job" and 92.5 per cent of Women are involved in it. However, both men and women perform disinfecting of the rearing house (Table 4). Hiring of labour is not a practice commonly found in Kotha Indlu. Still there is the prevalence of exchange labour, which stresses on the traditional linkages. When the workload is more and when more hands are required they take the help of their kinsmen and friends.

Marketing of cocoons is considered a predominantly male activity. Similarly purchasing of disinfectants, trays and nets was considered a male domain. Women are more involved in renting of the chandrikas because a majority of the households rent chandrikas from the DWCRA groups in Kotha Indlu or from the neighbouring villages. In the study village there are 7 DWCRA groups, each group consisting of 10-15 members, and each group has its own (different) name. In every group there is a first leader and second leader, who convene and coordinates the meetings. For all the groups, there is one accountant, called cluster associate, who looks after the money transactions and accounts.

Udayalaxmi, aged 28, whose husband practices floriculture, has three children and all of them are put in school (convent and Montessori) in Kuppam. Her husband studied up to 5<sup>th</sup> class, while she studied up to 9<sup>th</sup> class. After joining as a member in the DWCRA group, "Bhagylakshmi", she became a little bold. Slowly she became a leader and now she is cluster associate to 15 DWCRA groups, which are functioning in the Kotha Indlu Gram Panchayat. Out of these 15 DWCRA groups, 9 are in Kotha Indlu only. She is also an accountant to all these nine groups. Without Udaylakshmi, they cannot conduct meetings. She is a cluster associate in "DAN" Foundation, which is an N.G.O., whose headquarter is at Madhurai in Tamil Nadu.

"DAN" society has been conducting training classes to women in Andhra Pradesh, especially in Chittoor district, where number of Dwrcra groups and Thrift groups are located in Tirupati and Chittoor regions. According to 'DAN' estimates, there are 350 Dwrcra groups in Kuppam mandal only. They are

conducting women awareness camps, 10 days in Tirupati and 3 days in Kuppam. They are also participating in the Akshara Tapashman programmes, vaccination programmes Janmabhoomi, V.S.S., Shramadanam and other awareness kind of programmes which are voluntary in nature.

Udaylakshmi says that before joining the group she was very short tempered and was getting very angry even for small incidents. But after joining the group she became more tempered, patient and bold, and confidence in her has improved. Now she does not think about caste distinction, but more concerned about one's effective participation in DWCRA. She said that earlier she had lot of caste bias, some kind of bias against lower caste women / men. She is now very much interested in educating woman.

She gave one example of a problem, which was sorted out through her intervention in the village. There is a problem of stomachache to one woman. Her husband is a drunkard and does not take care of his wife. Because of her pressure, the Project Director wrote a letter to the Government General Hospital for checking and scanning. They found that she has *kanithi (gadda)*. For operating they asked Rs. 10,000/-. Because of Udaylakshmi's pressure, Government gave her money for operation. Now she is all right. This is just small example of her role in the village is a member of DAN foundation in general, cluster associate in DWCRA in particular. This amply demonstrates the emergence of some leadership among women.

#### **ACTIVITIES OF DWCRA IN RELATION TO SERICULTURE:**

DWCRA arranges meetings with sericulture officials to learn about new methods of technology / crops / seeds. It coordinates the members training programmes. It conducts awareness programmes (about the) in relation to the cleanliness of the rearing house and trays and chandrikas and acts as a mediator between sericulturists and Department of Sericulture. It enquires and advises the members on issues related to their personal health. DWCRA provides chandrikas to the rearers on rent and it also constructs the shed to keep chandrikas and trays. It provides loan to members to buy silkworm seed (Matti).

Whenever women were associated in marketing, it was always with the help of a male member of the household since it is considered a "male activity" and a relatively difficult task to perform. This is mainly because it involved going out of the village, interacting with strangers, and money transactions. The dominant culture of the village does not encourage women to undertake activities where they have to travel away from home. In this situation, marketing is a male preserve, and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. However, this principle was not always strictly followed, and according to the class/caste, and economic circumstances, women may need to take up marketing and also wage labour, and their families would condone this act through force of necessity. Marketing under these circumstances i.e., whenever women had to travel relatively long distances away from the village, is usually in the company of

male escorts.

In the households, which are engaged in both agriculture and sericulture, women are usually more active in sericulture, which involved staying back at home. However, they are more often restricted to 'less skilled' occupations, as perceived by the sericulturists. While agriculture has a relatively clear-cut division of labour, sericulture in Kotha Indlu also has divisions based on gender. Agriculture is still the major activity for the people of Kotha Indlu. The approximate contribution of men and women in certain agricultural activities showed that women are engaged also in agricultural work, apart from sericulture and other activities.

### **WOMEN AND SILKWORM REARING:**

Women in Kotha Indlu village feel that worms are very sensitive in nature. For them tending the worms is like tending the children. While feeding worms, women take utmost care. Sometimes they feel that, they do not take that much care of their children also. Women consider bed cleaning and litter cleaning as a natural thing that they do in case of children, and it requires utmost patience. Here girls are mostly involved in all of these activities. Most of the sericulture households in Kotha Indlu, girls' participation in sericulture activity is higher than boys. There is couple of exceptions to this general rule. This is evident in the case of Tulasibabu.

Tulasibabu, aged 15, is studying 10<sup>th</sup> class, and is the eldest son of the family. He can do all work relating to sericulture. Even though he is in the 10<sup>th</sup> standard he can concentrate sericulture as well. The officials, right from Assistant Director to lower staff, came to the village and gave guidance to him. He is the third man to grow Swarnandhra in this village.

He is very intelligent and hard working, according to the Convenor of Farmers Club. He had learnt about sericulture from his father and other persons in the village through observation and experiences. He says that because of sericulture their life style has changed and their living conditions improved very much. They have modern gadgets like T.V. and Tape Recorder, etc. He said that though he is still a 'child', he should be bit careful about his future too. After joining the 10<sup>th</sup> class, he has spent around Rs.1, 000/- for books and other materials.

He is studying 10<sup>th</sup> class, but somebody will be there to see all the works in the house. If he gets the chance to study, he will go for college and enjoy the college life. He has great desire to pursue higher studies and after that he wants to become 'Chief Minister' of Andhra Pradesh.

Regarding health he does not have any complaints. Very rarely he may get cold and fever, which is not because of sericulture. There is no complaint about any disease with this crop.

He did not feel sorry for doing sericulture along with his education. Though his father is there, he is very busy with politics and other meetings of the Telugu

Desam Party and that he is the president of Education (Vidya) volunteers committee and electricity committee. His teachers and friends have been encouraging him to do both works. Most of the teachers know him doing both works reasonably well.

### **POLLUTION AND PURITY**

They are practicing pollution and purity very sincerely. During pollution time, they do not allow the polluted people into rearing house. Purity was very much important to get good yield. Everyday, they apply the bleaching powder to surroundings to control the other smells and to maintain the purity. They also apply "*samrani*" with the belief that after offering samrani worms eat more leaves.

During the Chawki period, they will have a puja and put Lord Ganesh's photo and observe it for one-day with coconut and distribute the sweets, and when they get good yield. Officials gave them small training like in the beginning, because this crop was a bivoltine (Swarnandhra). They also offer potato and coconut to officers after getting good yield.

Old people play an important role in sericulturists' households. Their role can be seen from third molt stage onwards, where labour requirement is more and at the same time they look after their grandchildren. To look after the worms in chandrikas, children's role is unforgettable.

Generally, in most areas where sericulture is practiced, women have a relatively poorer access to productive resources such as land, credit and extension (government provided support of technical services and sericulture materials). While the quality of extension services may vary from place to place, it is almost uniformly found that land is not a resource that is within the reach of women. In most cases, land was in the name of male member of the family. Only in very rare cases could one find that women have land in their names. This has directly affected the credit opportunities for women, when banks consider them as less than credit worthy since they do not fulfil collateral requirements for taking loans. In rural areas, land provides the most visible and tangible collateral for loans.

### **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, women play a significant role in sericulture activity of Kotha Indlu. In some spheres her role may be limited, but women do majority of sericultural work. This indicates her role in the development of community and also able to manage their house in her husbands absence. Here, I quote Kabeer (1996) to conclude my argument in favour of rights and social justice perspective. She says, Women's issues of development theory came to be criticized from different quarters. Since the early 1960s, UN has marked each official 'decade of development' with a declaration summarizing the lessons learnt from past experience and its priorities for the coming ten years.

Between 1960s and 1970s, the feminist movement gained momentum, and

the research done by women scholars pointed out that the so-called modernisation theory of development promoted by the development agencies had not benefited women and, in some cases, had adverse effect on women in the Third World. Women had not been given access to new productive opportunities; technology had not liberated them from domestic drudgery; gender-neutral outcomes had not been led by market forces; and, in spite of the forces of modernisation, prejudice and preconceptions about women persisted in society. But, it is true that UN declaration of women's century and international meetings on women issues are paved the way for the recognition of their rights, acts and activities in the families which are not recognised or noticed prominently earlier. It is in this context that this paper addressed the women's role in the community development. This can be probed further to achieve the millennium development goals under gender equality and rights based perspectives on women.

**Table 4**  
**Division of labour in silkworm rearing (In %)**

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Brushing	74	26
Harvesting leaves	11	89
Chopping the leaves	17	83
Feeding	12	88
Bed cleaning	7	93
Molt setting	53	47
Mounting	39	61
Disinfecting	8	92

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