

A study of Muga culture in North East India, As special reference to the Art and Weaving in Assam.

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Introduction:

Muga culture is one of the greatest tradition as well as custom of Assamese people. Sericulture has its vast potential for creating jobs among the rural areas unemployed poor people .By uses of large scale Muga silkmoth Industry in Assam, sericulture can play a vital role in poverty elevation . The key aim of this paper is to increase the employment generation potential among the weavers mainly in Sualkuchi region in Lower Assam .

Origin and History : Sericulture is an industry which is an ancient culture in Assam really having no timeframe. Assam Silk denotes three major types of indigenous wild silks produced in Assam-golden muga silkmoth, white pat,and warmer silk. The first achieves of Muga silk production coming into the spotlight was during the Ahom Dynasty (1228-1826).This culture socially became an integral part of economic lives to the local. Muga silk has been given GI (Geographical Indication) since 2007.

Typically, to cultivate, a silk farmer requires at least an acre of land and 400 grams of Muga silk at a go. Furthermore, 1000 cocoons can generate about 125 grams of Silk but a single saree requires at least 1000 grams of Silk. The time taken by weavers to complete one Muga Silk Saree is roughly two months.

The process of weaving : Mainly Muga silkmoth is produced by the Garo community of Assam . This type of Silkworm feed on the leaves of Som and Soalu plants and the silk produced from them is known for its durability and glossy texture .

The fabrics made of the best quality muga silkmoth i.e, when muga silkworms are fed on Mejankari or Adakuri trees (called Majengkari silk). Sericulture , particularly Eri and Muga silkworm in NE region has been involving the indigenous people . The women folks of various tribal communities as well as economically backward families have been practicing Muga silkmoth and Eri culture. No doubt Muga Silk is a classic item that every woman desires to own as the culture associated with traditions and customs of Assamese people. Assam enjoys a place of pride for its rich heritage of artistic handloom products.

Present position of Muga silk culture in assam.

Production of Muga silkmoth Silk : primarily the state confined to the hilly places as the Muga silkmoth seed growing areas . Some of tribal people of lower Assam collects Muga silkmoth from the Garo hills , and in upper Assam the rearers collect the seed cocoons from Dibrugarh, Sibsagar ,Karbi Anglong and from different part of lower Assam. As learnt the traditional rearers are very particular about the quality of seed cocoons. The characteristic which are to be considered as the ideal for good seed cocoons production.

- ❖ New born larvae which eat the shell and also the exuviae after moulting are considered healthy.
- ❖ Vigorous and uniform coloured worm stare feeding from the top of the tree and gradually come down finishing all the leaves.
- ❖ Worm with black spots are gradually rejected .
- ❖ The shape Of the litter plays a great role in the determination the qualities of the worms. The rearers differentiate the litter shape as Dgulia, Khulia, and Mridongia. worms with Dhulia type of litter with 6-7 longitudinal marks are to be healthy.
- ❖ Availability of dead worms in the field indicates poor quality of brood. Seed cocoons are gradually carried along with Jali during night hours. A certain section of the rearers also prefer to carry the ripe worms when the destination is not far.

Sericultrue – the silk village of Assam : Sericulture is a traditional cottage industry in the life of Assamese people and the culture of Assam. Handloom weaving is an age –old

cottage industry in Assam. Sericulture has great cultural relevance besides its economic importance. There are three types of establishment generally we see in the sphere of weaving in Assam (a) Those who produce clothes to meet the requirements of his family members only. (Amateur Weavers). In Muga silkmoth growing areas maximum weavers are engaged in this type of weaving activities and produce cloth for their family requirements. The districts of Upper Assam are areas of such type of weavers. (b) Those who carry out weaving more or less on commercial basis. This type of weavers sells their surplus products besides fulfilling family requirements. This type of weavers is mostly part time weavers. Mostly female weavers weave clothes in this category. (c) Weavers who are purely commercial and all are full time workers. In this type of weavers, they work individually or collectively under cooperative societies or factories. Sualkuchi is such type of commercial weaving is taking an important place in Kamrup District, Lower Assam.

Sualkuchi – the silk village of Assam :

Sualkuchi is a name that is situated on the bank of the river Brahmaputra, about 35 Kms from Guwahati, a block of Kamrup District with population around 52,679 with 90 sq.km. There are 8 G.P. in Sualkuchi Block out of which weaving is the topmost occupation. Sualkuchi is known as the “Manchester” of the East. To provide self-employment to the rural masses, especially women.

During 8 May 1987 Govt. of India Ministry of Home Affairs implemented the scheme of IPP for weavers of Sualkuchi. The scheme is being implemented by Deputy Commissioner, Kamrup and Project Director DRDA, Kamrup District Assam with the objectives —

- To provide self-employment to the rural masses, especially women.
- To organize poor weavers into self Help Group's for their empowerment and sustenance.
- To provide managerial and technical skill to the weaver.
- To build a team of resources persons who can update the knowledge and skill of the weavers.
- To increase the no.s of skilled weavers and upgrade their existing skills through proper training.
- To facilitate the gainful utilization of Muga silkmoth, Eri yarn product through the yarn Bank.

- To produce superior quantity of furnished product through strict quality control mechanism.

Even Gandhi ,was also highly surprised about the art and culture of weaving of the Assamese women when he visited an exhibition of Eri and Khadi clothes in Sualkuchi on the 9 th January 1946 .

Objectives of research study— — —

- 1) *To high light Muga culture as the topmost Assamese traditional as well as the art of weaving by Assamese people .*
- 2) *To provide self employment among the rural areas people through the process Of Muga weaving culture.*
- 3) *To compare the rate of production of variety of silkworm viz.Mulberry ,Eri & Muga as their year-wise production from 2015-2018 selected randomly .*
- 4) *To study about the process of Muga weaving culture among the Assamese weavers mainly in Sualkuchi region, a Silk village in Assam.*

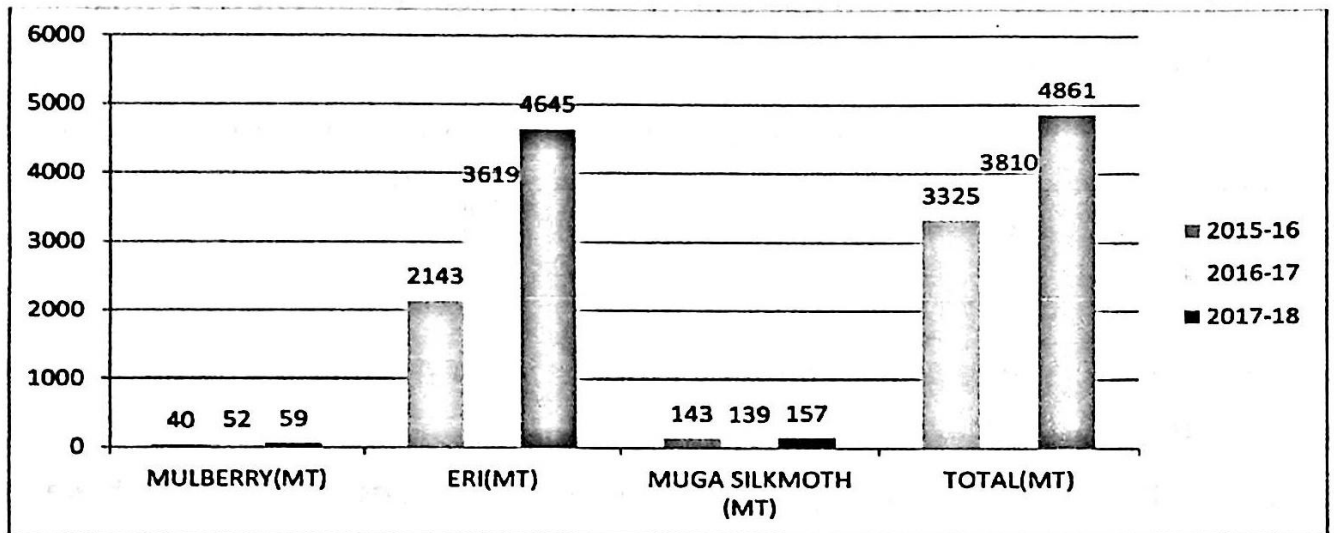
Methodology — Investigator prepare no field survey method for collecting primary data . Just she collects some secondary data through library work to complete the full paper.

Analysis—Production in Assam

Assam is the third largest silk producing state in the country, having potential for production of 3 varieties of silk (Mulberry , Eri.&Muga silkworm) sharing around 15% of country's total raw silk production Muga silkworm Of Assam is the unique golden yellow silk produced only in India .The variety-wise production of silk in Assam during last 3 years is as under :

Table 1

YEAR	MULBERRY(MT)	ERI(MT)	MUGA SILKMOTH (MT)	TOTAL(MT)
2015-16	40	2143	143	3325
2016-17	52	3619	139	3810
2017-18	59	4645	157	4861

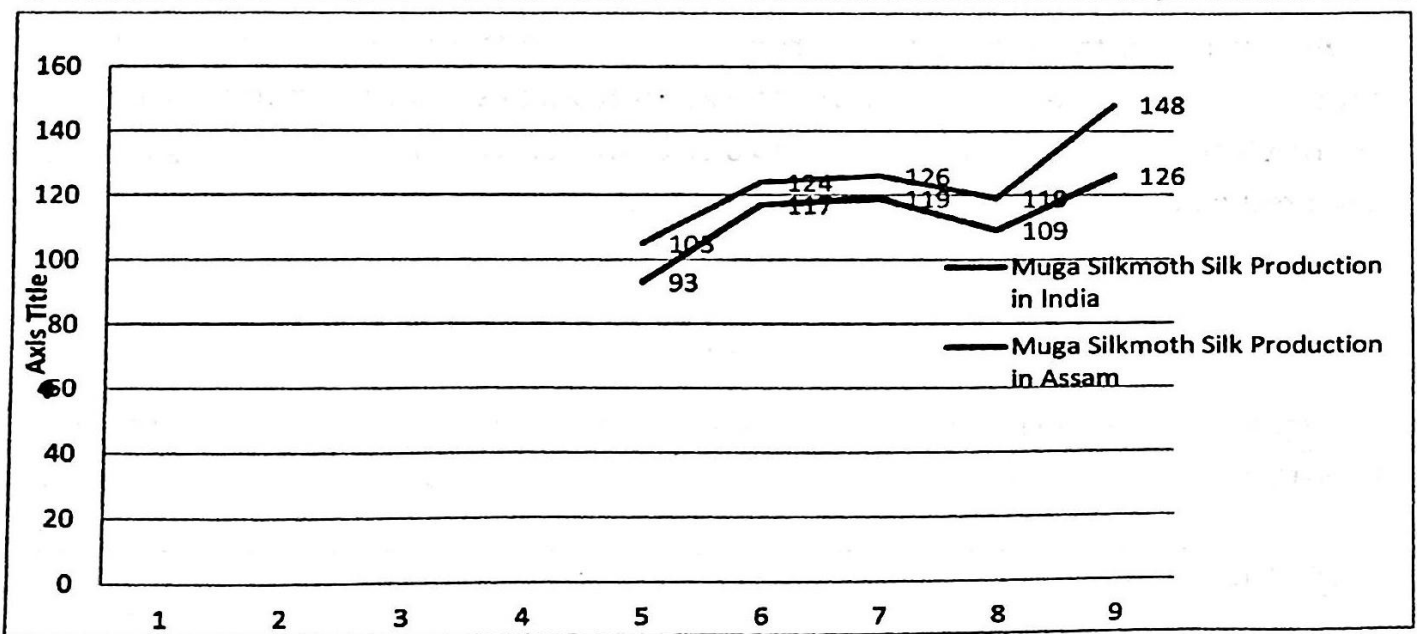


Press Information Bureau Govt. of India Ministry of Textiles ,Ajay Tamata. Table indicates that during last 3 years , in each year Eri production is almost very high range in comparison with Mulberry and Muga silkmoth products. The rate of percentage of Mulberry also Muga silkmoth products are 1.2% ,1.4% &1.4% in each year 3 years respectively . Also Muga silkmoth produces 4.3% ,3.7% & 3.67% producing Eri products rate of percentages are 94.5% ,94.9% &95.6% of total production .

Table 2

Comparison of Muga Silk Production in Assam as well as in India (2010-2015)

Muga Silkmoth Silk Production in India	105	124	126	119	148
Muga Silkmoth Silk Production in Assam	93	117	119	109	126

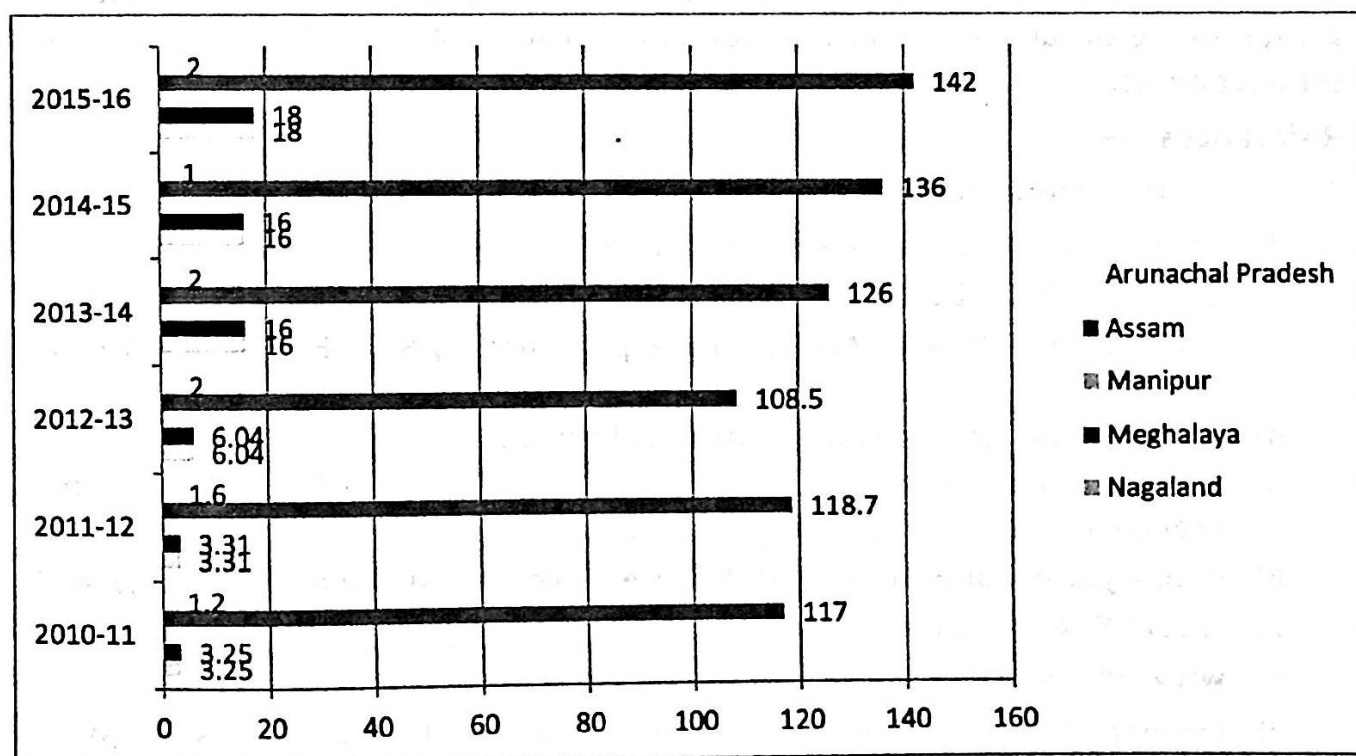


Assam is a state in northeastern India situated south of the eastern Himalayas along the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys. Assam covers an area of 78,438 Km squares (30,284 sq.m). The state is bordered by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh to the North; Nagaland, Manipur to the east; Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and Bangladesh to the South; and West Bengal to the West. (Wikipedia, Assam Silk)

Table 3

Muga silkmoth production of five States in North East India during last 2010-11 to 2015-16.

States	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Nagaland	3.25	3.31	6.04	16	16	18
Meghalaya	3.25	3.31	6.04	16	16	18
Manipur	0.5	0.5	0.64	1	1	1
Assam	117	118.7	108.5	126	136	142
Arunachal Pradesh	1.2	1.6	2	2	1	2



Sericulture has its vast potential for creating jobs among the rural areas unemployed poor people .By uses of Muga silkmoth industry in Assam ,Sericulture can play a vital role in poverty elevation . The key aim of this paper is to increase the employment generation potential using Muga silkmoth culture in Assam.

Muga silkmoth as I visited several days ago I observed so many coloured mekhela chadar like red printed , blue printed ,green printed ,purple as well as white pat silk .

Sericulture is one of the best weaving centre in Assam.This region is famous for producing high quality Pat silk along with Eri Silk &Endi cloth from 17 th century & therefor is known as weaving village in Assam.

Conclusion :- Serisilkworm ,a super productive handloom products need Som tree for cultivation of MugaSilk , a welknown culture in NE India .The main food of silkworm is Mulberry leave , at least one Som can carry minimum 150 numbers of silkworms and one Som tree garden can cultivate 6000-7000 silkworms from which min. 4 Kg Muga silkmoth fibre is produced . Minimum 4-5 Mekhela chadars can be made from 1 Kg of Muga silkmoth. It means one sumni (Som garden)can make 16-17 Muga silkmoth within 15-20 days of duration. From secondary data collection investigator find that Muga silkmoth culture no doubt a topmost not only in traditional sense but also a current heritage for all Assamese people. Muga culture, its utility and significance is developed in present day situation . Although nowadays number of silkworm are decreasing in several region but generally the latest quality and designing is going forward as developed technology increases .Lastly in fashion designing and modern scenario of Muga fabric culture occupy a wide range of facility facility and personal carrier enhancing by proper uses of Muga product items.

References :—

The reference books related to my study in sericulture are

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