



A Review

Economics of silk industry : An overview

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The history of silk is as long as that of cultivation itself. Silk is named in legend, fable and folklore. Silk belongs to the group of animal fibres as it is produced by the silkworm, of which two general groups, these being the domesticated type of which the mulberry or pat (*Bombyx mori*) is the most important the wild type, of which there are numerous widely distributed varieties. Besides mulberry, India produces Eri (*Philosamia ricini*), Muga (*Antheraea assama*) and tasar (*Antheraea mylitta*) of wild varieties.

Qualities of silk:

Silk is considered as “queen” of textiles for its varying qualities. The important qualities are –

– It is the only natural filament that man does not have to spin before it can be used for textiles fabrics, for it is only necessary to twist the long continuous strands that the caterpillar has prepared for man's comfort and pleasure.

– Silk fibre is fine and long- the width is less than 10 micron and the length is more than hundred times of the width (1 micron = 1/1000 mm).

– The fibre has suitable strength and characteristic elasticity for which it is an excellent textile fibre. Its breaking strength is about 4 g/denier and elongation about 20%.

– Silk fibre is excellent in luster and hardness which are very essential for commercial purpose as they are important characteristics for clothing fibres.

– Natural colour of silk is very appealing – white, cream, yellow, brown, golden brown, blackish brown etc. which are common natural colour of silk.

– The superiority of silk as a textile fibre has been recognized from time immemorial, the luxurious look, sleek feel and rich luster of it are unquestionably inimitable.

– The silk fabric keeps warmth well, absorbs or releases moisture moderately. It is also easy for sewing, light in weight and not easily crumpled like cotton.

– The silk fibre has affinity to dyestuff, so it can be dyed beautifully.

Weakness in silk :

– The yellowing, less resistance to rubbing, knots and lousiness are weak points of the silk fibre which are to be improved to meet the demand of market.

Lot of researches have already been completed on mulberry silk and some in depth studies are still going on. But, the other three silk industries are not yet fully developed and have great potentiality and scope to improve their quality