

### A comparative study on the present challenges and solutions of the silk industries in Bangladesh.

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**Abstract**

Bangladesh is known to the world due to its position in the Ready-made garment industry. For the geographical abundance and suitable environment, Bangladesh produces traditional fabrics such as muslin and Jamdani since ancient times. During the Pakistan period, Bangladesh has started silk production in 1947. Silk manufacturers have been closing down since 2002 owing to a variety of issues, and their survival is now in jeopardy. But the demand for silk is much higher globally; from which different countries are earning billions of dollars, where Bangladesh is lagging behind day by day despite having a suitable environment for silk. This paper aims to emphasize the current state of this valuable silk, as well as the issues with silk manufacturing, as well as possible answers and improvements. The purpose of the study is to determine the factors that influence the production and growth of the silk industry in our nation. Excessive time required for silk manufacturing, a lack of sufficient knowledge, Mulberry toxicity, and other issues are some of the issues in silk production. To solve these problems of silk authorities should educate the farmers properly about the benefits of silk production, come forward to the big factories, make new value-added items, etc. A survey of people's desire for silk-made items found that 93.4 percent of respondents would want to see more silk-based RMG products on the market.

**Keywords:** Sericulture, silk, Mulberry, Muga, Tassar, Value-added product, Market.

**1. Introduction**

Silk is a kind of animal fiber known as the "Queen of Fibers." The cocoons produced by the Mulberry silkworm larvae are the major source of this material. Silk was invented in China at least 5000 years ago, according to historical data. Silk production was a closely held secret for many countries, but covert knowledge of sericulture eventually moved eastward to Japan, Korea, Persia, Europe, and America. The production of silk was started in Rajshahi during the British period. After 1947 the most of the production of silk was exported to India. After the Liberation War, in 1978 the silk production was handed over to the Bangladesh Sericulture Development Board. Because of a great loss, On 30 November 2002, the Development Board was closed down (Banglapedia, 2015). However, it is not regarded as a well-established industry for a variety of socioeconomic reasons, and its long-term viability is in doubt. Certainly, this business is now fighting to stay afloat. Access to financing, infrastructure, inconsistencies in government policy and bureaucracy, environmental issues, various taxes and levies, access to current technology, unfair competition, marketing challenges, and non-availability of raw materials locally, to name a few, are all aspects to consider (Rashid, Faroque, & Chowdhury, 2014). Sericulture, like the RMG industry, is seen as a promising income area in Bangladesh. This industry has the potential to provide significant employment while also reducing poverty for the majority of the country's population, particularly in rural regions. With effective help and adequate support from the government and NGOs, Bangladesh has a critical opportunity to expand this industry to a higher level. Besides, it is not regarded as a well-established industry for a variety of socioeconomic reasons, and its long-term viability is in doubt. Sericulture in Bangladesh is governed by Bangladesh Silk Board (BSB), Bangladesh Silk Foundation

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(BSF) and some NGOs. Bangladesh Sericulture Research and Training Institute (BSRTI) is now the only research and training institute in Bangladesh which is located in the Rajshahi. It gives necessary technical support and supportive aid to the organizations and technological advice to the silk industries. Though Bangladesh can guide the sericulture projects it has not been able to work as effectively as it was needed. As a result, the mulberry plantation has fallen to about half during the last decades. The major cause for this might be due to governmental authorities' incompetence, appropriate implementation of plans, a lack of advertising, and yarn imports from other nations. The demand-supply imbalance is currently widening as a result of these factors. Governmental responses are insufficient to close the demand-supply imbalance. As a result, it is critical to perform research on the sericulture sector to assess the efficiency of such facilities.

"The plight of the Bangladeshi silk industry: An empirical investigation" published by Asif Ishtiaque, Fouzia Haider focused on the reasons which create underdevelopment of the silk industry in Bangla. The report also shows us the barrier of the production of the mulberry and also shows us the prospect of the silk exertion by the performance of BSB (Ishtiaque, et al., 2013). "The Optimization of Silk Fabric Production Process" published by Asif Shahriar discussed the production process of silk fabric, production process flow chart, annual production, comparison about the production of our country and other countries, and lastly the development of the production of silk and the sericulture department. (Shahriar, 2019). "Drawbacks, Necessary Development and Future Prospect of Silk in Bangladesh" published by Md. Sanaullah Murad, Md. Ebrahim Shaikh, Nazmul Islam, S.M. Tufazzal Haider talked about the present status of mulberry trees and also discussed the Future Prospect of Silk in Bangladesh (Murad, Shaikh, Islam, & Haider, 2018). "Bangladesh Sericulture Industry: Problems and Solutions of Silk Fabrication" Which is a recommendation conference and a discussion, attended by all owners of different organizations. They focused on the major problems like Technology, raw materials, uncertain market, improper coordination among firms, etc (Rashid, Faroque, & Chowdhury, 2014). "Silk industry flourishes in the hills" published by Saikat Dewan and Andrew Eagle talked about that there are several types of people of the Chittagong Hill tracts who are trying to raise silkworms to produce silk thread (Dewan & Eagle, 2018). "Problems and prospect of Silk Industry in Bangladesh" published by Md. Nazrul Islam, Shamem Ara Mili, S.M. Nazmul Hasan draws some of the possible areas of prospering the silk industry in Bangladesh as well as the lacks and barriers of past silk production (Islam, Mili, & Hasan, 2010). "Sericulture Industry in Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects" published by Md. Abdul Rashid, Omar baroque, Anwarul Kamal Chowdhury in 2014 showed the current scenario and status of sericulture as well as the silk industry of Bangladesh (Rashid, Faroque, & Chowdhury, 2014).

In several papers, there are just mentioned some specific topics regarding silk production but this research has mentioned the total scenario including problems, present situation of silk, possible solutions of silk production problems, and future of silk production in Bangladesh as well. Only government is not responsible for the current scenario of the silk industry. However, this paper aims to uncover the facts behind this claim, demonstrating that the lack of silk production is due to a variety of factors other than the government. For example, public awareness, farmers' interest in silk production, lack of proper training on silk production, lack of proper research, lengthy process of silk production. These are the key facts for the silk production problem.

**2. Objectives**

- To point out the whole business environment & present status of silk industries in Bangladesh.
- To recommend some possible solutions for developing the sericulture industry in Bangladesh.
- To find out about the major barriers of silk production.
- To bring out the strengths and possible prospects of the silk industry in Bangladesh.

**3. Methodology**

This paper is based on different types of statistics and the current scenario of silk in Bangladesh. Our study is more descriptive and specific. Data were collected from the Export Promotion Bureau of Bangladesh (EPB) and through a questionnaire survey of 100 individuals from different well-known institutions related

to textile education, agriculture, and sericulture sector. The survey was a combination of various questions including multiple-choice, open-end, and closed-end. Different real-life calculations and data were collected through discussion with farmers. We find a lot of positive responses on sericulture from Bangladeshi people.

**4. Findings & Discussion**

**4.1 Current status of silk**

The silk industry has been on the verge of extinction for some years. Though silk has an important part in the creation of jobs, it is mostly for rural people. Silk has a smaller allocation than other industrial sectors such as RMG and accessories. About 18 commercial firms and 21 government entities in Bangla, but the industry. Currently, the number of governmental bodies participating at the national level are around ten, but the number of private organizations, both national and worldwide, is around seventeen. Sericulture schemes are being implemented by more than 400 various types of organizations at the rural level, with more than 38 sericulture producer cooperatives scattered across the silk-producing areas. A total of roughly 21 silk businesses were selected at random. According to surveys and data analysis, roughly 55 percent of silk businesses have fewer than 44 decimal acres of land, while just 19 percent have more than 100 decimal acres (Ishtiaque, et al., 2013). Many barriers to the growth of the silk business in Bangladesh are discovered by the proprietors, including limited infrastructure and government difficulties. Moreover, the enterprises provided very limited facilities for their workers and mostly depended on imported raw materials which come from different countries including China and India. Here China and India are the major importers.

From a government website, "As the strength of sericulture, Govt. has established Bangladesh Sericulture Development Board, Bangladesh Sericulture Research and Training Institute, 10 nurseries with rearing facilities, 07 mini-farms and 26 chawki research center and wide extension network in the country. Besides the government sector, private sectors and NGOs are also working in sericulture. An annual report showed that cocoon production is 418 MT and raw silk production is 41.60 MT. Employment generation through a fragment of sericulture is 0.65 million, out of which 75% are women. Annual Import is 393.73 Ton and export is 133,884 US\$." (International Sericulture Commission, 2014)

**Table 1:** The cocoon & raw silk production during 2009-2014 is summarized as follows,

Fiscal year	Cocoon Production (MT)	Raw Silk Production (MT)
2009-2010	400.00	40.00
2010-2011	390.00	38.00
2011-2012	430.00	42.00
2012-2013	430.00	43.00
2013-2014	448.00	44.00
Average	418.00	41.00

(Hakim, Statistics: International Sericulture Commission, 2014)

Several investigations in the past have revealed that the silk industry has high expectations in terms of employment and income. Many landless farmers rely on this sector for their livelihood, yet because they lack land, they confront significant inequity. Although a huge number of urban residents are involved in the silk reeling system. The most essential truth is that money is moving indirectly from the wealthiest members of society to the poor. Because the expense of silk manufacture is exorbitant, it is only utilized by the wealthy. That is why the silk sector is important in our nation, which has a significant level of wealth disparity.

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