

# Teaching Sericulture in Universities

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Sericulture is an agro based, rural oriented industry, where mulberry leaves are converted into fascinating fiber called silk, by biological machines — silkworm. Sericulture not only helps to overcome the unemployment in our country by providing gainful occupation to rural, semi urban and urban unskilled, semi skilled and skilled workers, but can also be a family occupation, where all members of the family can work in their own home places and earn their livelihood, thus, reverse the trend of migration of labourers from rural to urban areas.

There is controversy over the place of origin of silk. There is a mention of silk in great Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat* and history of Indian silk dates back to more than 2000 years, Indian scholars believe that silk originated in the foothills of Himalayas.

Today, India ranks number two in the world with regard to silk production and has the distinction of being known as the largest silk importer in the world. The reason for this is not only high internal demand for the salubrious fiber 'silk', but also the low quality of silk produced in our country. In spite of several times attempt to improve the quality of Indian silk, the exercise has turned out to be futile. For example, an ambitious plan of World Bank aided programme in the country, which was targeted to produce at least 1000 MT of quality bivoltine silk could not achieve even 100 tonnes at the end of the project period. The main cause seems to be the acute dearth of sericultural experts, who are having first hand training in sericulture. However, in spite of not having a proper university education/training in the field, a few personnels attached to sericulture industry have done extreme good to sericulture. There are a couple of institutions dedicated to sericulture, who are working at their best to help Indian sericulture. But the fact remains that they too find it difficult to continue their pursuit of excellence without having proper hands, with knowledge of sericulture.

It is at this juncture that universities can and should play a vital role to fulfil the gap of knowledge by providing undergraduate (UG) and post-

graduate (PG) courses in sericulture. Though there are a handful of universities such as Mysore University, Bangalore University, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, Padmavati University, Shivaji University etc, offering training in sericulture either by B.Sc., M.Sc. sericulture courses or by offering sericulture as a paper at UG or PG level.

Offering sericulture as a full course at UG or PG level has its own pros and cons.

There is a well known saying 'if you feed a man with fish, his hunger will vanish for a day; if you teach him fishing, his hunger will vanish forever'. Further, there is a well justified requirement and trend for providing job oriented courses to the students, which can make them self sufficient, which in turn will ease the pressure on presently prevailing unemployment problem in our country. Providing sericulture education to the students in general and rural/semi urban students in particular, can work a boon for these rural/semi-urban masses.

Even today, in most parts of our country, there is great dearth in number of personnel who can really provide technical knowhow, thus making those farmers follow the age old methods, by which they get less quantity of poor quality silk.

Selection of appropriate land for mulberry cultivation, landscaping, agronomy, pedology, taxonomy, mulberry cultivation, irrigation pattern, manuring schedule and various types of manuring, farm yard manure technology, plant breeding, plant genetics, silkworm races, silkworm breeding, silkworm genetics, silkworm rearing, pre-cocoon technology, post cocoon technology, reeling, acid seed technology, re-reeling, twisting, textile technology, weaving technology, dyeing, printing, finishing, marketing of cocoon, silk threads, finished goods, export-import knowledge are some of the versatile branches of sericulture industry. Further the knowledge on sericultural 'waste' utilization improves the economic conditions of the sericulturists.

In spite of the fact that India has produced a couple of Louis Pasture award winners (considered to be equivalent to Nobel Prize in sericulture), till very recently, there were hardly any institutions which could offer sericulture as a subject either at undergraduate or at postgraduate level. As a result,

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nomics, Business Communication, supported by Statistics, Commercial Mathematics and Accountancy in order to cultivate the intellectual equipment of logical thinking and reasoned approach. This has certainly helped commerce education to raise an impressive superstructure of academic substance. This has also helped the discipline to qualify itself as a Faculty with reference to man's first quest of inter-personal relationships.

### The Timeless Objectives and Commerce Education

It is my impression that a "Faculty" refers to a comprehensive, complex and epistemological concept having its moorings in the conviction that all knowledge inevitably aims at the ultimate good and total welfare of men and women; it liberates them not only from the worldly wants and woes but orients them to the awareness and realization of an inner elevation. This is what our *Shastras* declare: *Sa vidya ya vimuktaye* (knowledge liberates). Within the Indian frame of reference this transcendental view of "Faculty" is quite relevant because for us this precisely spells the "higher" element in higher education.

At this stage the question that becomes most pertinent is: What has been the response of commerce education to the objectives and ideals visualized by the tradition and by the Kothari Commission and insisted upon by the Policy Perspective? And also, how has commerce education reacted to the demands of the second and the third quests of man, namely, man's relationship with his inner universe and man's relationship with the spiritual universe?

I believe that no concept of a "Faculty" can really be complete except within the context of the traditional Indian world view of wisdom and knowledge. Is commerce education as a "Faculty" aware of this truth? Is it independent or irrespective of national ideals and perspectives? Or, is it because of its cold indifference to such ideals that its product is uniformly shallow, faceless and unimpressive and, naturally, unemployable? What, then, will be the plight of this product in the face of the cyclones called globalisation and privatization of the Indian market? The questions don't end here.

What, then, is the philosophic foundation of the superstructure of commerce education? Is it like an imposing *gopura* with rich inlays and carvings of syllabi and curricula but, alas, without a divine

image ensconced in the *sanctum sanctorum*? A supply of mere information, inculcation of a few skills and teaching of a few techniques hardly amounts to knowledge, far less to wisdom. The entire repertoire of commerce education may be summed up in T.S. Eliot's oft-quoted phrases:

*Where is the life  
we have lost in living?  
Where is the wisdom  
we have lost in knowledge?  
Where is the knowledge  
We have lost in information?*

### Summing Up

It is, as if, commerce education fosters a lopsided development by encouraging the analytical and intellectual functions of the left hemisphere of the human brain.

This may sound a little harsh and even cynical but it is well-intentioned and expects to break the ice for an important academic issue and initiate a creative dialogue. We know that it takes thousands of hands to haul the huge chariot of Lord "Juggernaut"; in the same way it takes many academic discipline to keep alive the dynamism of a developing people. That is a justification enough for having a healthy and dignified Faculty of Commerce on the academic map of our universities.

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whoever jumped into the bandwagon of sericulture in early 1980's or so, the time when World Bank launched a 500 crore project on sericulture, is the expert in the field of sericulture. As a result, most of the persons who have occupied the higher rungs of educational ladder today are basically from a non sericultural educational background. This has become one of the main detrimental factors to the real progress of sericulture in our country. Thus it is of utmost importance to generate real sericultural experts, who are taught, trained and are knowledgeable in the field of sericulture. This is at this juncture that the role of universities becomes very vital. The starting of courses in sericulture at graduate and postgraduate level is very much needed.

Sericulture is one of those subjects which has a shortage of reading material. Most of the universities in India refer to age old books written by Japanese authors as early as 1960's. If we go through the publishers' list, we hardly come across any new book on sericulture. As sericulture is taught in limited institutions, publisher are also not interested in bringing books on sericulture to the light of the day. Hence, an urgent need is there for generating sericultural literature in our country.

As sericulture is a field oriented subject, whichever institution wishes to start teaching sericulture, primarily should have adequate fertile land with good irrigation facilities for mulberry cultivation. Hence, starting sericultural studies is not advisable

for some of the universities, which are operating from a building or two. Neither is it feasible for the universities which have established themselves in centre metropolis. However, it is most suited for the traditional universities which are holding a large area under their control. Similarly, for the universities who are operating in somewhat semi urban areas, starting of sericulture course could be a boon for youth.

Research in sericulture can be basically of two types, viz. basic and applied research. As the infrastructure facilities are generally very much limited in universities, they may be encouraged to undertake research on subjects of academic interest. While institutions who are generally sound with finances may work in frontiers of sericulture research. A coordination between the research institutions and universities will certainly provide a much needed boost to Indian sericulture.

For inservice personnels, to update their knowledge and expose them to recent advances that had taken place in sericulture, universities could conduct at regular intervals some courses such as refresher courses, orientation courses, subject upgradation courses, etc of short and long duration from a week to 6 months depending on the need of the inservice personnel. Universities can also provide much needed computer training to these candidates so that they can improve their working efficiency.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Proposed Dates of the Event	Title	Objective	Name of the Organising Department	Name of the Organising Secretary/ Officer to be contacted
July 23-25, 1997	International Seminar on Researches in Teacher Empowerment and School Effectiveness at the Primary Stage	Theme : Teacher Empowerment and School Effectiveness	National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi	Dr. Ved Prakash Prof & Head, DPEPCRG, NCERT, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110 016
Nov. 12-14, 1997	World Conference on Education India : The Next Millennium	To discuss Developments in Education and their impact	Instit. of Edn, Rural Studies & Dev., All India Assoc. for Ednl. Tech. & Ednl. Tech. & Mgt. Academy	Dr. Madhu Parhar C/o AJAET, F-5/E DDA, Munirka, New Delhi-110067
Dec. 1997	XI IASLIC Conference	Theme: Information Superhighway : Its impact on Library & Information Services in India	Tamilnadu Library Association, Coimbatore	Sri Suberata Datta, Indian Association of Special Libraries & Information Centras, P-291 CIT Scheme No. 6M, Kankarbagh, Calcutta-700054.