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Sustainable Entrepreneurship- A Study Based on Silk Industry In Assam

* Jakir Hussain Choudhury

Abstract- Although sericulture especially ericulture has been an occupation of many rural Assamese people for long time, it is still at the subsistence level due to various economic and non economic factors like Shortage of eri feeds. The main cause of shortage of feeds and mulberry or lesser growth of area under plantation is due to the pressure of increasing population on wasteland for food crop cultivation, erosion of rivers, lack of protective measures from the government to preserve naturally grown food plants etc. In this context, a look through the lens of sustainability reveals opportunities to improve our natural environment, people's quality of life, while at the same time creating economic value. The paper focused on the concept of sustainability and the relevance of sustainable entrepreneurship today, addressing what sustainable business ideas are. The paper is an attempt to outline different elements of sustainable entrepreneurship and its challenges and to identify and evaluate sustainability-related opportunities in the study area. The study has been conducted in Silk Industry in Assam with the help of both primary and secondary data.

Key words: Sustainable, Entrepreneurship, Silk, Industry, Assam, Ericulture.

Introduction: Entrepreneurship is vibrant assertion of the facts that individual can be developed, then outlook can be changed and their ideas can be converted into action though on organized and systematic program for entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship plays an important role in the economic growth and development of nation. It is a purposeful activity includes in initiation, promotion and distribution of wealth and service. According to A Schumpeter "The entrepreneurship is essentially a creative activity or it is an innovative function"

Sericulture is an important labour-intensive and agro-based cottage industry, providing gainful occupation to around 7.25 million persons in rural and semi-urban areas in India. Sericulture is a major cottage Industry in Assam, comprising of both Mulberry and Non-Mulberry silk worm culture and production of its natural silk. Non mulberry silk in general Muga and Eri silk in particular have closely associated with the rituals and traditions of Assam,

and thus silk production and its uses has been an important household activities leading to economic development of a large section of rural people. It is practised in more than 10532 villages and provides self employment to 2.60 lakh of families approx. Amongst these, Muga, the non-mulberry silk worm rearing and its silk production stand a unique position not only in Assam but also in the global map of sericulture. 94 % Muga silk and 62 % of Eri silk is produced in Assam for and placed in 3rd position in silk production in the country. Assam alone produces 2012.70 MT of eri silk and 118.04 MT of Muga silk and 23.40 MT Mulberry silk during the year 2013-14.. The total different types of silk worm food plantation available in the state are 1453.02 hactre Som (Muga), 825.25 hactre in Eri and 720.00 hactre in Mulberry, and abounded wild Oak plantation for Tassar in Karbi Anglong and Dima Haso districts. The yield production of leaf (Silk worm's food), in these plantation are at 16-18 MT in Som, 20-30 MT in Keseru and 6-9 MT in Mulberry per hactre.

Definitions of Sustainable Entrepreneurship:

WBSCD (World Business Council for Sustainable Development) defines sustainable entrepreneurship as the "continuing commitment of business to behave in an ethical way and contribute towards economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families, and the local and global community, as well as future generations". According to **Gerlach**, in a narrow sense, sustainable entrepreneurship can be defined as innovative behaviour of single actors or organisations operating in the private business sector that are seeing environmental or social issues as a core objective and competitive advantage. However, in a broader sense, it can be viewed as innovative behaviour of actors in the context of sustainability, including actors from governmental and non-governmental, profit and non-profit organisations

Motomura defines sustainable entrepreneurship as 'making things happen in a way that takes into consideration the short, medium and long-term'. It can be contrasted to "selfish entrepreneurship", in which people seek advantages only for themselves, as well as to "unconscious entrepreneurship", in which a non-sustainable way of life is produced that generates imbalances of all kinds.

Sustainable entrepreneurship is typically associated with the triple bottom line comprising three Ps, namely, people, planet, and profit. 'People' refers to an enterprise's treatment of its workforce; 'planet' refers to the impact of the company on natural resources and the environment; and 'profit' relates not just to the financial returns of the enterprise, but also to the allocation of the financial returns between investments and distribution of the gains.

Dean and McMullen defined it as "the process of discovering, evaluating and exploiting economic opportunities that are present in market failures which detract from sustainability, including those that are

environmentally relevant.”

Literature review:

SE can be considered as an emerging and new field in entrepreneurship study (Gibbs, 2009; Hall et al., 2010; Hockerts and Wüstenhagen, 2010). Specifically, it links the objective of sustainable development to wealth accumulation among entrepreneurs (Tilley and Young, 2009) and has changed the ways entrepreneurs perceived on environmental resources issue (Graham, 2010). Sustainable entrepreneurship combines the goals of entrepreneurship and sustainable development (Thompson et al., 2011, Dean & McCullen, 2007; Cohen & Winn, 2007; Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). The triple bottom line focuses on economic prosperity (profit), environmental quality (planet) and social justice (people – the aspect which was overlooked before by previous research) (Elkington, 1999). In the same line, the aim of sustainable entrepreneurship is to balance the triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit (Thompson et al., 2011). Dean and McCullen (2007) indicate that opportunities “are present in market failures” and Hockerts and Wüstenhagen (2010) point out that they come from market disequilibria. Cohen and Winn (2007) and Dean and McCullen (2007), market failures provide opportunities for sustainable entrepreneurs who are about to resolve them and can achieve profitability while reducing environmentally degrading economic behaviors at the same time. Sustainable entrepreneurship is much more complicated and more confusing compared to the others, because a holistically and equally contributions to economic, social and environment is required (Tilley and Young, 2009; O’Neill et al., 2009). SE as “sustainable entrepreneurship”, in which he further explains that it is concept emphasizing on three dimensions: (i) Seeking, finding and/or creating innovations to solve sustainability related problems; (ii) Get solutions to the market through creative organizing and; (iii) Adding sustainability value with respect for life support systems.

If timely measures are not taken the Muga (*Antheria assamensis*) heritage of Assam may face extinction in the next three decades or within 2040. Muga worms have been dying for last two decades due to air pollution from brick factory, coke industry, cement factory and oil refineries also. Muga worm feeds on leaves of these trees. After the desertification and being affected by stagnant flood water Som and Soalo trees die within few months. This has been happening for years and most of Muga rearing areas are now almost free of this cultivation. At least 1500 farmers of Dhemaji districts have lost average 100 som trees due to such desertification and stagnant water.

Objectives of the study:

- To identify the various aspects of sustainable entrepreneurship and its challenges in the silk industry in Assam.
- To observe the conditions preventing sustainable entrepreneurship opportunities in the silk industry in Assam.

Scope of the study:

- **Topical Scope:** Sustainable entrepreneurship in the silk industry.
- **Geographical Scope:** Assam within North East India.

Research questions: Based on literature review and objectives of the study, the researcher has framed the following research question:

What impact sustainable entrepreneurship can leave in the study area?

Research methodology:

Research Design: The study is descriptive and empirical in nature.

Sampling Size: The study has been carried out with 34 entrepreneurs from silk industry.

Sampling Technique: The researcher has adopted convenient sampling method.

Data Collection Method: Data has been collected by applying both secondary and primary method of data collection. Secondary data has been utilized to find out the theoretical information and consists of books, published journals and the internet.

Primary data has been collected by using structured questionnaire, Personal observation and in-depth interview from 34 entrepreneurs involved in silk industry in Assam.

Limitations / future scope of the study:

- The study has been concentrated on silk industry in Assam. So in future similar study can be done based on nationwide.
- A comparative study can be done considering two different states' silk industries and sustainable entrepreneurship.

Findings:

Based on 1st Objective: Various aspects of sustainable entrepreneurship and its challenges in the silk industry in Assam.

- The researcher has identified four aspects associated with sustainable entrepreneurship, say- Economic, Social, Cultural and Ecological in the study area.

Challenges Facing in each Aspect in the silk industry in Assam:

Economic Challenges: Decreasing feeders of silkworm → Decreasing silkworm production → Decreasing Silk Production → Losing Profit.

Social Challenges: Entrepreneurs' contribution towards social and environmental surrounding and fulfilling the needs of the society.

Cultural Challenges: Providing natural silk product instead of adulterated silk.

Ecological Challenges: Saving the silkworm from climate change, pollution to sustain silk industry.

Based on 2nd Objective: To observe the conditions preventing sustainable entrepreneurship opportunities in the silk industry in Assam.

- Nearly 78% of the respondents have opined poor condition of silkworm feeders as the condition for preventing sustainable entrepreneurship in the study area.

- Maximum (94%) of the respondents viewed the impact of adulterated silk as the condition that prevent them to think for sustainable entrepreneurship.
- Nearly 82% of the respondents have agreed the cost factor as against sustainable entrepreneurship.
- Proper ethical training is again another factor that hinders them to think on such line reported by 50% respondents.
- Nearly 70% of the respondents blamed market competition which hinders them to maintain sustainable entrepreneurship.

Suggestions:

- Entrepreneurs should not resort in providing the adulterated silk instead of natural silk.
- The decline of Som and Soalo plantation areas in government sericulture farms have pushed Muga silk towards the verge of extinction. So the effort must be there to protect such plantation by the government as well as by the growers.
- Entrepreneurs must follow ethical norms so that they can show the pride of Assam in front of others by using actual silk and should not compromise with the culture for the sake of earning profit.
- The entrepreneurs should involve in finding and creating innovations to solve sustainability related problems.
- Entrepreneurs in this line should add sustainability value with respect for life support systems.
- For sustainable entrepreneurship, Stakeholder engagement must be there.
- For sustainable entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs must think for the impact of their enterprise on the natural resources.
- They should concentrate on short, medium and long run benefit including all the stakeholders.

Conclusions:

Sustainable entrepreneurs need awareness of the negative effects of pollution, energy dependence, and climate change than ever before in the study area. These environmental challenges can be opportunities for them which need to be capitalised through innovative business solutions that benefit the environment, create jobs, and generate wealth. In this regard the entrepreneurs need to combat the challenges of four aspects say, cultural, social, economic and ecological shown in the study to maintain sustainability in the silk industry in Assam.

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