

CONCLUSION

Sericulture industry with its agricultural part of mulberry cultivation, silkworm egg production and silkworm rearing as well as industrial sector of cocoon processing and reeling involves a long chain of highly skilled operations. The success is dependent at the integration of all the associated activities. A glance on the sericultural activities of Malda district reveals a sordid picture of all the components. The same old traditional practice continues to exist except a few who are adopting new technologies. The physical constraints and the poor financial status of sericulturists appear to be impediments in their efforts to change over to modern methods of mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing, reeling and weaving. The lack of efficiency in the sericulture managements in establishing a symbiotic relationship between the administrations of the support system is one of the basic maladies that have afflicted the growth of the industry.

The practices of mulberry cultivation have practically remained unchanged in Malda district for years. Many farmers are rather incapable of uprooting the existing mulberry variety to replace with the high yielding new varieties. Similarly, even though the farmers are aware of the inputs they are not in a position to provide the same. This is due to several constraints. Scarcity of the underground water and unpredictable rainfall has added new dimensions to the problem. As a result, the quantity and quality of mulberry leaves produced by the majority of the farmers in Malda district remains to be sub-standard. The prevailing favourable agro-climate in major part of Malda district encompasses vast scope for improvement of the yield and productivity in sericulture. This is possible through intensifying the farming practices which, however, can not be done through singular approaches such as introduction of high yielding varieties, or application of fertilizers, or irrigation or any other measure in isolation. Intensive farming in real sense could therefore encompass an integrated approach, through the integration of other aspects of soil health care with the application of bio fertilisers and organic matter, balanced nutrient management, crop canopy development and micro-climate management, and leaf quality improvement along with suitable measure for disease and pest management.

Similarly, silkworm rearing practices have not changed much in Malda district due to the absence of independent rearing houses with many farmers. In addition, the

quality of silkworm egg produced has not altered much since several years. The efforts to introduce high yielding varieties of mulberry and silkworm have met with little success. Besides, the cocoon processing and reeling technologies remains the same. In view of the static conditions of the above components, adoption of new technologies has become a matter of debate among the scientists and the administrators. Consequently, the organizational support system is concerned in spending time and money to maintain the status quo. The yield gap continues to be wider and sericulturists keep suffering as their profession continues to be a risky operation due to frequent crop failures. Considering the acreage of mulberry and the number of layings produced and brushed, the annual production figures of cocoons and the silk appears to be depressing compared to the established norms prevailing in China and Japan. In addition, the international agreements viz., GATT, WTO etc. will do have their impact on the domestic sericulture of Malda district also. In spite of the present buoyant sericulture environment the industry has attracted large number of private entrepreneurs and NGO's. This implies a significant expansion opportunities for sericulture development and sincere efforts are required to reorganise and restructure the support system on a rational basis.

In this context, it may not be out of place to mention here that the new technology developed in India should be considered as an outstanding achievement of very great economic value, not only to India but also to all sericultural countries of the world in the tropical zone since the same has been tested and found successful in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Bangladesh, etc. The new rearing technologies developed for tropical sericulture have opened up new vistas for tropical zones to go in for bivoltines to meet the requirement of quality raw silk by the weavers. There is an immense possibility for application of these new rearing technologies in Malda district

The success of rapid expansion programmes undertaken by the government agencies, the sustaining efforts of R&D establishment to upgrade the technology will certainly yield rich dividends in our goal to expand market and to penetrate new ones by establishing mutual interaction in the long chain of interdependent activities. Then it is possible for the sericulture industry of Malda district to shed its image of having a distinction of low unit production as well as the producer of indifferent grade of silk and changes over to high quality final products that can be accepted by the average consumer in the International community.