CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Sericulture is a highly remunerative agro-based enterprise. In recent years due to its employment potential and entrepreneurship opportunities leading to stable and higher income (Manimegalai, 2009). It is practiced in the states of Karnataka, Andra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir and also in non-traditional areas. On account of its economic importance and employment generation potential, special emphasis had been given for the development of sericulture industry (Umesh, 2001).

India is the unique in the world as it produces all the four types of silkworms such as mulberry silkworm (B. mori), the eri silkworm (Philosamia ricini), the muga silkworm (Antheraea assama), and the tasar silkworm (Antheraea mylitta) (Murugesh et al., 2004). Sericulture in India is practiced in about 53,814 villages providing employment to about 6 million people in various activities of sericulture (business.gov.in). India has an area of 280,000 hectares (blogspot.com) under mulberry cultivation and produces 19,690 MT (Malhotra, 2011) of raw silk and ranks second in global silk scenario next only to China (1,02,560 MT). Though India is the second largest producer there exists a wide gap in terms of quality, quantity and productivity per unit area of raw silk when compared to China. This wide gap