

## SEMINAR ON SILK

FOR the first time in the history of Sericulture in India, a Seminar on Silk covering every aspect of the industry, was organised by Janab Shamsuddin Khan, the energetic Director of Sericulture in Mysore, under the inspiring and enlightened patronage of the Government of Mysore, who have taken a keen and active interest in the development of the industry in the State. The Seminar was held in the serene and picturesque environs of the Nandi Hills and lasted for five days (14th to 18th June). Delegates from the neighbouring silk-producing States, Madras and Bombay, representing Sericulture and Industry, participated in the proceedings of the Seminar. An instructive exhibition which was organised specially for the Seminar, served to highlight and pinpoint in a vivid and striking manner the pressing problems of the Silk Industry awaiting solution.

It is particularly appropriate that the first Seminar on Silk should be held in the State of Mysore which is responsible for 60-70 per cent. of the India's production of silk. Her silk is distinguished for its higher tensile strength, superior lustre and durability. During World War II, Mysore Silk, on account of its tensile strength, was chosen for the manufacture of parachute fabrics. There has been a harmonious and balanced development of the industry in all its sectors in Mysore. Mysore has led the rest of India in the development of sericulture. The pre-eminent position which Mysore holds to-day in the field of silk, is largely due to the pioneering work carried out by *Rajasevaprakashta* Sri. Navaratna Rama Rao, Retired Director of Industries and Commerce and Vice-Chairman of the Central Silk Board, who may be considered the Patriarch of the Modern Silk Industry in India. It has been a matter of great satisfaction that the Director of the Seminar, Janab Shamsuddin Khan, was able to secure the inspiring presence of Sri. N. Rama Rao during the Seminar and induce him to guide the deliberations of one of the important groups.

The discussions of the Seminar were held under five groups:—*Group I: Moriculture—Sericulture and Seed Supply* under the Chairmanship of Sri. N. Rama Rao; *Group II: Silk Reeling—Charka and Filatures—Silk Conditioning and Testing, Spun Silk Manufacture and Utilisation of Bye-Products*, under the Chairmanship of Sri. M. A. Srinivasan; *Group III: Silk Throwing (Handloom and Powerloom)—Dyeing, De-Gumming and Silk Weaving*, under the guidance of Sri. P. Subbarama Chetty;

*Group IV: Research and Education*, under the Chairmanship of Prof. M. S. Thacker; and *Group V: Finance, Marketing and Co-operation*, under the guidance of *Rajamantrapravina* Sri. A. V. Ramanathan.

The Indian Silk Industry is, in many respects, comparable to that of Lac. Both occupy a vital position in the agricultural and rural economy of our country. Both have been affected by the uncertainty of crops, the consequent violent fluctuations in the market and in recent years, competition from synthetic substitutes. These vicissitudes have been responsible for the economic instability which characterises these two of her important industries. In the case of silk, Japan has, for years, been our successful competitor. Price of Japanese silk imported into India is only half the cost at which our silk could be sold in our markets. Japanese silk, in some respects, is of a superior quality.

To-day, India produces only a quarter of her requirements; to attain a state of peace-time self-sufficiency, it has been estimated that the country will have to produce ten million pounds of silk valued at 30 crores of rupees. An industry of this economic magnitude and vital importance, is naturally entitled to the active and sympathetic support of the Government, if it should attain the same state of economic efficiency and technological supremacy which characterise the Japanese silk industry to-day.

In the course of the discussions held in the several groups of the Seminar, there has been an encouraging unanimity of opinion, that the remedy to the longstanding and almost chronic disabilities of the industry, lies in planned scientific research, both fundamental and applied. Sri. Navarathna Rama Rao declared that for improving and stabilising the silk industry, India must produce the necessary knowledge in her own laboratories, and added that it offends our self-respect as a free nation to be conscious that we have to depend upon other nations for such knowledge. So far as the interests of Lac are concerned, the Indian Lac Research Institute which was started in 1930, has been trying to create new knowledge which has gone a long way in stabilising this industry. Other commodities like cotton, cocoanut, coffee, tea, etc., are having their own laboratories. Silk, it is hoped, will soon have a Central Research Institute, whose early creation will help to solve the many fascinating and urgent problems and thereby establish a stable and prosperous silk industry in India.

M. S.