

B.Sc 1st Semester
SEC , Zoology
Sericulture
Salbari College , Baksa (BTR)
History of Sericulture

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Silk production has a long history. Silk was discovered by Xilingji (Hsiling-chi), wife of China's 3rd Emperor, Huangdi (Hoang-Ti), in 2640 B.C. While making tea, Xilingji accidentally dropped a silkworm cocoon into a cup of hot water and found that the silk fiber could be loosened and unwound. Fibers from several cocoons could be twisted together to make a thread that was strong enough to be woven into cloth. Thereafter, Hsiling chi discovered not only the means of raising silk worms, but also the manners of reeling silk and of employing it to make garments. Later sericulture spread throughout China, and silk became a precious commodity, highly sought after by other countries. Demand for this exotic fabric eventually created the lucrative trade route, the historically famous Silk Road or Silk Route named after its most important commodity. This road helped in taking silk westward and bringing gold, silver and wool to the East. With the mulberry silk moth native to China, the Chinese had a monopoly on the world's silk production. After 1200B.C. Chinese immigrants who had settled in Korea helped in the emergence of silk industry in Korea. During the third century B.C. Semiramus, a general of the army of Empress Singu-Kongo, invaded and conquered Korea. Among his prisoners were some Sericulturists whom he brought back to Japan. They helped in the establishment and growth of sericulture industry in Japan.

Another story is that a Chinese princess married an Indian prince. She carried silkworm eggs/mulberry cocoons in her elaborate head dress. She disclosed the secret of raising silkworms thus, silk production spread in India. In 550A.D. The technique of sericulture spread throughout the Mediterranean countries during the 7 th century AD and then to Africa, Spain and Sicily. During latter part of the 19th century, modern machinery, improved techniques and intensive research helped the growth of sericulture industry in Japan. At present, Japan, China, Korea, Italy, Soviet Union, France, Brazil and India are the chief silk producing countries in the World.