# History of Sericulture

## 1. Origin in China (Around 2700 BCE)

- Sericulture began in **ancient China** nearly **5,000 years ago**.
- According to legend, **Empress Xi Ling Shi** (wife of the Yellow Emperor) discovered silk when a silkworm cocoon fell into her tea. She found she could unwind the fine threads and weave them into cloth.
- China kept the method of producing silk **a closely guarded secret** for thousands of years. It was a royal monopoly.

## 2. Spread to Other Countries

- Around **300 CE**, sericulture techniques reached **Korea** through Chinese immigrants.
- Later, it spread to **Japan**, which developed its own silk weaving traditions.
- By **4th century CE**, traders carried silk through the famous **Silk Road**, linking China to India, Persia (Iran), and Europe.

## 3. Introduction to India

- Sericulture was introduced to India from China through trade and migration.
- Ancient India's silk industry developed especially in **Assam, Bengal, and Karnataka**.
- Indian varieties like **Muga silk, Eri silk, and Mulberry silk** became famous.
- Silk was worn by kings and used for religious purposes, wedding dresses, and temple decorations.

## 4. Arrival in Europe

- In **6th century CE**, two monks smuggled silkworm eggs from China to **Byzantine Empire** (modern-day Turkey), starting European silk production.
- Italy and France later became famous for fine silk fabrics during the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

## 5. Modern Sericulture

- Today, sericulture is practiced in **over 60 countries**, but **China and India** are the largest producers.
- India is unique because it produces **all four major types of silk** — Mulberry, Tasar, Eri, and Muga.
- Modern technology has improved cocoon rearing, disease control, and silk processing, but the traditional care of silkworms is still important.

## Quick Timeline

| Year/Period | Event |
| --- | --- |
| ~2700 BCE | Sericulture starts in China |
| 300 CE | Spreads to Korea |
| 4th century CE | Reaches India via trade |
| 6th century CE | Enters Europe (Byzantine Empire) |
| Middle Ages | Italy & France become silk hubs |
| Present | China & India lead production |