

SERICULTURE

The rearing of silkworms for the production of raw silk is known as sericulture. Silk is the protein secreted by the larvae of certain Lepidopteran moths. It is fibrous in nature, and widely used for the manufacture of art clothes. The silk is derived from silk moths mainly belonging to Bombycidae and Saturnidae families of lepidoptera. The origin of silk industry is a controversial topic. According to one source the origin is from India during 200 B.C. (Himalayan region). Whereas another view holds that it originated from China. The knowledge of silk production spread far and wide by the passage of time. Today many Western nations along with Japan, Russia, and Persia. Africa and India are practicing the culture and production of silk. Sericulture is the art of rearing silk worms under artificial or domesticated conditions and extraction of the silk fiber from their cocoon. The moths belonging to two major families, Bombycidae and Saturnidae of Lepidoptera group of insects produce commercial silk in India. Based on the quality and lustre of the silk fibers 4 types of silk are produced by the different forms of silk secreting moths. The main species of silk secreting moths are *Bombyx* sp. *Attacus* sp. and *Antraxea* sps.

