INTRODUCTION
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Linen is an excellent fibre obtained from the stem of flax plant, botanically known as Linum usitatissimum L. The flax plant is a member of the family Linaceae. This family consists of number of genera and some 150 species, and they are widely distributed in the temperate and subtropical areas of the World (Kirby, 1963). *L. usitatissimum* is the most useful species of the relevant genera having a unique and immense commercial importance as it produces fine bast fibre for textile derived from stem and oil derived from seed. In view of such double purpose use of this species, two plant types complexes suiting to these above mentioned purpose have been evolved. When cultivated for fibre, it is known as flax, possessing tall, smooth laterally unbranched flexible straw with a poor yield of seed, whereas when grown for oil purpose, it is known as linseed, characterised with short statured plant with flower and fruit bearing lateral branches yielding higher quantity of seed yielding oil. Thus from commercial point of view this species is subdivided, in accordance with purpose for which it is grown, into flax and linseed types.

The earliest reference of linen textile woven by flax fibre can be traced to the primary books of the Bible in which it was praised as a symbol of purity and excellence.

Flax has a wide number of uses. Fabrics produced from flax are numerous, and the yarns are frequently blended with other fabrics, where strength and lightness are required, the fine long flax fibres are spun into yarns for linen cloth, shoe sewing threads, fish nets, dress and decorative linens. The flax fibre is also used for quality papermaking.
Flax is grown in a number of countries, important among them are Ireland, Scotland, Russia, North America, China, Japan, Egypt, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, The Netherlands and Holland. According to Vavilov (1926) though the centre of origin of the species was considered to be the South Western region of Asia, its cultivation extended to diverse agro-ecological areas, such as tropical and subtropical regions of India, Argentina, Brazil, Afghanistan and Asiatic parts of U.S.S.R. and parts of U.S.A. where it is mostly grown for oil and temperate regions including Germany, U.S.A. and the European regions of U.S.S.R., where it is grown as a fibre crop.

India needs flax fibre for its urgent and essential domestic purposes. Such a demand is fulfilled exclusively through import of raw flax fibre from Belgium and Holland. Nearly 790 metric tones of flax fibre and tow is imported annually (FAO trade year book, 1979-1988). India has to spend valuable foreign currency equivalent to 300-400 million Indian Rupees for importing flax fibre and tow annually for its need of textile industries (Rao and Rao, 1989). In contrast to this situation related to flax, India incidentally grows linseed in area of 1.4 million hectares out of total world area of 5.0 million hectares which incidentally happens to be the largest area any single country grows linseed. This is indeed a paradoxical situation that while India grows linseed in a vast area, the cultivation of flax inspite of its need, India does not grow flax substantially.

In the past hundred years attempts had been made sporadically to grow flax for fibre purpose from imported seed but such attempts unfortunately were not successful for various reasons. Attempts to extract fibre from the linseed types grown in India did not appear to be any way a viable proposition. In view of the need and urgency attempts have been
made to evolve a dual purpose type of linseed which would be able to produce fibre like flax and seed like linseed. Recently two such dual purpose varieties of linseed have been claimed to have been identified (Proceedings, XXXIII Annual Rabi Oilseed Workshop). Whether such dual purpose varieties of linseed would at all serve both the purpose or not is yet to be confirmed through extensive cultivation of this type in India. The major anticipated drawback of such dual types is that one has to allow the seed to mature by which time the stem from which fibre will be extracted will also get over matured and dried causing difficulties in extraction of quality fibre. However, it can not be denied that such a dual purpose type would certainly be a practical proposition as a mid term utility.

Hence as a long term solution to meet the demand of the quality fibre of flax, ideal flax type has to be evolved for cultivation in India. This is more necessary in view of the fact that the plant type of flax requires to be as far as possible without lateral branching and faster growth of stem in terms of elongation without an early interruption of growth due to initiation of flowering. As opposed to the above requirements for flax, linseed types ideally should not attain too much of height, should initiate flowering early and prolong flowering for considerable time with more and more initiation and development of flower bearing lateral branches to get the highest seed yield. The morphological determinants for ideal flax and ideal linseed types are so opposite, ultimately breeders will have to go for distinct plant types for flax and linseed towards maximisation of fibre yield or linseed oil yield without sacrificing part of fibre yield or seed yield as required in a dual purpose.
Before translating such an objective into a viable proposition breeders require to know the nature of inheritance of yield and its contributing factors in both types of this species towards exercising selection during evolution of either of these types separately or assembling the character or set off characters for evolving a dual type in Indian perspective.

In view of the above objectives, attempts have been made to elucidate the nature of inheritance of fibre yield and its contributing characters of flax with an additional attempt to understand the nature of inheritance of the same characters in linseed so as to develop a consolidated insight of the nature of inheritance in both the types towards developing a logical breeding strategy either for evolving flax or a dual type.