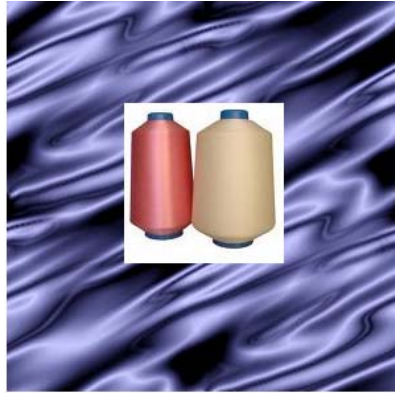


How is Silk Produced?



All of us are familiar with the soft and beautiful clothes made of silk. Silken cloth can be made so thin that a full bale of it can be passed through a small ring. Do you know how it is made?

You may be surprised to know that silk threads are made by small insects called silkworms. A silkworm makes a cocoon around itself which increases in size as the worm grows bigger. When the cocoon becomes big, it is heated in hot water. In this process the worm dies and silk is obtained from the cocoon, if this worm is allowed to grow it turns into butterfly.

The Chinese knew the art of making silk four thousand years ago. There is an interesting story in this regard. It is said that the Chinese Queen Si Ling-Shi once put a silkworm by mistake in a water pot which was meant for washing hands. The next day she saw silk threads coming out of the pot. Fascinated by it, she started keeping silkworms and used the silk prepared by them for wearing. For years, the Chinese kept the art of making silk a secret. The Japanese were the first to know this secret in the third century. Around A.D. 550, King Justinian of Byzantium sent two Persian monks to China as spies. On their return these two spies brought eggs of the silkworms in a bamboo tube. After this, art of obtaining silk from the silkworms slowly spread throughout the world.

Today, countries like China, Japan, India, France, Spain, Russia and Italy produce silk.

In the beginning of the summer season, the female worm lays about 500 eggs on the leaves of mulberry. In around ten days, larvae come out of these eggs. They are carefully examined and the diseased ones are separated and, destroyed. The silk worms are brought up on the leaves of the mulberry. Silk is made from the juice coming through

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a hole in the mouth of the silk worms. In about 25 days, they give out cocoons. One-fifth of the weight of a cocoon is silk. The silkworms are killed in hot water and silk is spun out. A cocoon has one long thread measuring from 500 to 1300 meters. It is almost as strong as a steel wire of the same thickness.

Silk blended with cotton as well as with other synthetic fibers too is produced and is very beautiful. For beauty and finesse, Italian silk is regarded as the best in the world today.

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