

SILK THREADS- IS SILK MAKING A DYING ART?

Written by

Amrita Kundu

Hyderabad, India  
kundu.amrita@gmail.com

FADE IN:

Yellow coloured cocoons spread out in the open for drying.

MAIN TITLE: SILK THREADS

Is silk making a dying art?

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

The hands of an artisan can be seen separating the silk threads from cocoons dipped in hot water.

INT. SILK SAREE WEAVER'S HOUSE - DAY

A silk saree weaver is seen weaving a saree on a traditional handloom.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

An artisan is wounding the silk threads on a spinning wheel.

EXT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

A worker at the workshop is separating the cocoons to be weighed.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

An artisan is cleaning the silk threads freshly wound on a spinning wheel.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Have you ever wondered how silk is being made? Before the silk weavers turn the silk yarns into beautiful sarees, it's the silk makers who first prepare the silk threads for weaving. Let's go find out how it's done!

TITLE: The process of silk making

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The people we see working here in Sujapur in West Bengal are not the weavers. They are the silk makers-the artisans.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Artisans separating the silk threads from the cocoons and wounding them on spinning wheels.

EXT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Live cocoons moving on the palm of an artisan and processed cocoons being dried in the open in trays.

Sub-Title: Silk making is seasonal work.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Close up of silk threads that are getting separated.

Sub-Title: Silkworms are fed mulberry leaves in Aghran (November-December) and Chaitra (March and April).

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The silkworms are cultivated in the months of November-December and again in March and April. The silk is nothing but the hardened saliva of the worms.

EXT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

White coloured cocoons being dried in the sun.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

The cocoons are being dried in a drying chamber.

Sub-Title: Cocoons are dried at 100 degree celsius for 2 hours.

EXT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Trays of cocoons being dried in the open.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The cocoons are raw, so first they are dried in the drying chambers. If not dried, they will become butterflies. After that they are dried in the natural sunlight. Sunlight is very important for this process.

Sub-Title: 40 kg cocoons make 4.5 kg of silk threads.

EXT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

White coloured cocoons being dried in the sun.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

An artisan is holding light green coloured cocoons in his palms.

EXT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Workers are spreading yellow coloured cocoons for drying.

Sub-Title: 900 gm of silk threads make almost 2 sarees (11 metres length).

EXT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Final products of yellow coloured silk threads in bundles.

EXT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Workers are weighing the white coloured cocoons on weighing scale.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The most popular cocoons are the white, yellow and light green coloured ones. The yellow one is abundant here and it is more popularly known as Murshidabad silk. Many prefer to breed the white cocoons because they can be dyed into varied colours easily.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Artisans separating the silk threads from yellow coloured cocoons and wounding the silk threads on spinning wheels.

ARTISAN 1

The cocoons are first boiled in hot water and then the silk threads are separated.

(MORE)

ARTISAN 1 (CONT'D)

The hardened saliva of the cocoons would not come out if they are not dipped in hot water. 8-12 cocoons make one thread of silk.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

After separating the silk threads, the boiled cocoons are taken out of the hot water.

Sub-Title: The waste threads (jhut) are made into satin using paddle spinning wheels by the women of the village folk.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

An artisan is showing the waste threads and a general view of the workshop where artisans are seen working.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In the silk making process, absolutely nothing goes to waste. The boiled silkworms are fed to the domestic animals as fodder. The waste threads known as jhut are used to make satin that is later used to make shirts and ribbons.

EXT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Silk bundles and silk threads on spinning wheels are getting dried in the open.

INT. SILK SAREE SHOP - DAY

Shopkeepers are selling silk sarees.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Once the threads are spun around the spinning wheel, they are again left to dry and then made into bundles which are then sent to the handloom weavers in Bahrampur, Khagra and Murshidabad. The final silk products are then sent to various places throughout India for sale.

FADE OUT.

TITLE: Wait!

TITLE: Is there more to silk making than meets the eye?

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

An artisan is cleaning the silk threads wound on a spinning wheel and telling about how he makes his livelihood during off-season.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)  
Is it difficult to sustain during  
off-season?

ARTISAN 2  
Yes, that's why we work in mango  
orchards or tend to mulberry leaves  
for the silkworms.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Two artisans are working on separating the silk threads.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)  
Did you learn this work at home?

ARTISAN 3  
Yes, our fathers did the same work.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)  
Have you taught your children this  
craft?

ARTISAN 3  
No, they won't learn it.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)  
They won't learn it or you don't  
want to teach the work?

ARTISAN 4  
Our children won't learn it. We  
learnt it but nowadays the next  
generation does not want to learn  
this work.

TITLE: What is the future of silk making?

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

An artisan is separating the silk threads in the hot water and is talking about the future of silk making.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

What is the future of silk making if new people don't want to learn this work?

ARTISAN 3

It's difficult to say. The money is very less in this work. We work from 4 AM to 1 PM and get Rs 161 (\$2.2) per day. If there was more money, then people would have been interested in learning this work.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

An artisan is cleaning the silk threads while other artisans have gathered around him.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Are you happy doing this work?

ARTISAN 2

We are used to this work, we can't leave it now.

TITLE: Will silk making become a dying art?

EXT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Workers carrying tray of cocoons and putting it down for drying in the open.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Artisans separating the silk threads.

INT. SILK MAKING WORKSHOP - DAY

Empty workshop with no artisans around.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

With the silk makers, the artisans being paid much less than the minimum daily wage, it has prompted them to probably become the last of their generation to learn this craft.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Will silk making become a dying  
art? Perhaps only time will tell.

FADE OUT.

END CREDIT

A film by Amrita Kundu