

Title:

What Is Silk?

Word Count:

550

Summary:

Just as pashmina can come in different forms and colors, so do lovers of pashmina come with all kinds of preferences. Some customers prefer "pure" pashmina, which is 100% pashmina, with no silk blended in. There's also 70% pashmina and 30% silk which is referred to as pashmina wool. Some pashminas even have 50% pashmina and 50% wool. Some customers prefer the pure pashmina, some find it too rough or course. These varying kinds of pashmina have their own advantages and disadva...

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Just as pashmina can come in different forms and colors, so do lovers of pashmina come with all kinds of preferences. Some customers prefer "pure" pashmina, which is 100% pashmina, with no silk blended in. There's also 70% pashmina and 30% silk which is referred to as pashmina wool. Some pashminas even have 50% pashmina and 50% wool. Some customers prefer the pure pashmina, some find it too rough or course. These varying kinds of pashmina have their own advantages and disadvantages.

Usually, the best-selling ones aren't even the pure kind, they're made of 70% wool and 30% silk. While, the true 100% pashmina is lighter, softer and definitely more luxurious. This type is not as strong and durable as the 70% pashmina and 30% silk blend. They also lack the elegance, the sheen and the feel of the drape of the silk which other people prefer.

Silk is filament fiber formed from silkworms, or the Bombyx mori. These worms are not actually worms; they are caterpillars. For thousands of years, humans have mastered the art and science of silk production, which originated in China. Silk is highly valued for its softness, its strength and its insulating properties. Silk is expensive because it is a natural animal product, and producing silk requires an intensive labor process that involves monitoring and feeding the silkworms constantly. Quite a great deal of effort is needed to produce just a small amount of thread.

The Chinese have managed to keep the secret of making silk for centuries, which enabled them to export the rare textile to Europe and dominate the trade routes. Over time, the silkworm eggs were smuggled out. Western production of silk began in Italy in the 13th century. Although the Western world was now involved in silk production, this did not bring the cost down, as the amount of work needed to make silk remained just about the same. It takes about thirty thousand eggs to produce just 12 pounds of silk!

Once raw silk is produced, it can finally be wound into wheels and spun in different type of thread, depending on the use. The crepe is made using multiple strands of silk together in different directions. The tram, on the other hand, uses just one to two threads. Organzine is formed using multiple threads stranded in different directions.

Silk aficionados are familiar with all forms of silk thread. Single threads are used for sheer and fine fabrics while the crepe is used for wrinkly and textured silks. Organzine is used for weaving warp threads and the tram creates the filling, or what's called the weft. Silk can also be used in knit garments.

Silk is dyed rather easily, and can be used in a variety of garments such as sweaters, scarves and underwear. Even today, thousands of years after the Chinese discovered the beauty of silk, many people still clamor this fabric for its comfort, style and feel. Silk should be taken cared of properly. Dry cleaning is usually best for silk. Never soak, boil or bleach your silk garment. Also, if a silk item should get wet, it should be rolled lightly in a towel. When ironing silk, use a cool iron. This iron should be used more for applying gentle pressure to ease out the creases rather than as means to heat the textile.