

»Silkworm Rearing in India«

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Silkworm rearing in India is an agro-industry which means combining agriculture and industry with the final product being silk.

It is a labor intensive activity and it provides direct and indirect employment to a large number of people. India has a unique distinction of producing all the four varieties of silk namely Mulberry, Tasar, Eri and Muga. About 14% of the global raw silk is produced in India. Besides meeting the ever growing domestic needs, silk in its various form is also exported and this sector is one of the important foreign exchange earners for the country.

Types of Silkworms

There are many species of silk moths which produce commerce silk but only a few have been exploited by man for the said purpose.

The four types are secreted by different species of silkworms. Mulberry silk is secreted by *bombyx mori* caterpillars, Tasar silk is secreted by caterpillars of *antharaea mylitta* and *paphia*, Eri is secreted by *samia ricini* and Muga is obtained from *Antharaea Assamensis*.

Rearing

95% of the worlds silk production is Mulberry. This silk comes from the silkworms of the moth *Bombyx* that feed on the leaves of mulberry plants.

Mulberry plants are perennial bushes with wide spreading branches . They are specially cultivated, manured and cared for to provide food for the silkworms. Mulberry silkworm rearing needs space, the right temperature and stable humidity conditions therefore stable rearing houses are key.

Life cycle

The life cycle of a silk moth starts when a female silk moth lays eggs. The caterpillar or larvae are hatched from the eggs

of the silk moth.

The silkworms feed on mulberry leaves or other plants and give rise to pupa. In the pupa stage, a weave is knitted around by the silkworm to hold itself. After that, it swings its head spinning a fiber made of protein and becomes a silk fiber.