

“Eri the Millennium Silk”



India's wild silks or Vanya silks have for years inspired designers to create distinct fashion statements in clothing and home textiles. These Vanya silks are of three types, each with its own distinct characteristics: Tasar, Muga and the lesser known Eri, which is now creating ripples in the business of fashion.



Known as Endi or Errandi, Eri silk is produced by the Eri silkworm and can be spun evenly or unevenly in coarse or very fine counts. This versatile fibre amplifies the elegance of silk, comfort of cotton and warmth of wool. Fineness, density, strength, cross-sectional shape and surface properties are unique to Eri.

Ironically, Eri production in India has been slow to catch up vis a vis its more popular cousin, mulberry silk. Which is surprising because “Eri silkworm rearing is easier than mulberry silkworm rearing as it is less disease ridden, requires less land area and as the Eri silkworm feeds on the leaves of Castor, Tapioca (Cassava) and Kesseru plants, which are very easy to cultivate and can be grown anywhere in the country. These plants can even be cultivated alongside other crops.”



To capitalize on this vast potential and widen the horizon of 'Eri' culture, rearing of eri and production could bring more alternative livelihood amongst the tribal inhabitants of Bodoland Territorial Council, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh particularly. NEDAN FOUNDATION firmly believes that "Civil Society Organisations can play a big role in promoting Eri production because silkworm cultivation can provide direct employment to weaker sections of society and that too without much land or capital investment needed.

Another development can be explore in Eri production was the spinning of the yarn. Traditionally, Eri cocoons were spun by pulling the fibre and simultaneously imparting a twist to it to form the yarn. However, the Central Silk Technological Research Institute (CSTRI) has introduced, spinning of fine counts in Eri and traditional spinning of cocoon is vanishing today.



The Eri silkworm seed scheme under the Central Silk Board has started to buys back any Eri silkworms available to create an awareness that there is a huge market for Eri silk."

Eri silk's thermal properties, high durability and flexibility to blend with other natural fibres like cotton, wool, jute and tasar or mulberry silk mean exciting new product development in terms of textures, surface effects, colour combinations and hand-feel.

Eri's matt finish with natural sheen makes it unique in appearance. Designers and merchandisers are sourcing Eri silk and intelligently using it to their advantage, creating innovative home furnishings and made-ups, as well as in fashion collections. Premium and luxurious thin quilts and fur-cloth from Eri fibres embellished with motifs, embroidery and traditional Indian art, are just some of the immense possibilities for value addition in applications across the home textile product basket. The 'Eri the 'millennium silk' as we feel that it will be the silk variety of the future.

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