

## Tracing the Journey from Fibre to Fabric

**Image no:** 1

**Caption:** Detail, *Knit Fabric*, Photograph, Pxfuel.

**Link:** <https://www.pxfuel.com/en/free-photo-jmgwm>

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**Image no:** 2

**Caption:** Detail, *Luxury Material*, Photograph, Pxfuel.

**Link:** <https://www.pxfuel.com/en/free-photo-jmttx>

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**Image no:** 3

**Caption:** Detail, *Denim Jean Fabric*, Photograph, Pxfuel

**Link:** <https://www.pxfuel.com/en/free-photo-oeqkpp>

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**Image no:** 4

**Caption:** *White and Brown Rope on White Textile*, 2021, Photograph, Unsplash.

**Link:** <https://unsplash.com/photos/zcyQEeFVu2M>

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**Image no:** 5

**Caption:** *Pragadeesh Marimuthu, Nitumoni Taye picking out designs by hand on a maati xhaal loom, Akajan Bengali, Dhemaji Dist, Assam*, 2021, Film footage. © MAP Academy.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no: 6**

**Caption:** Detail, *Decorative Band with Soof Embroidery*, Mid 20th Century, Cotton fabric, cotton thread, silver thread, wool, glass mirror pieces, 11 x 153 cm, 2011.01.72, Weavers Studio Resource Centre, Kolkata.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no: 7**

**Caption:** Bishnu Sarangi, *Cotton Cultivation Karnataka*, 2013, Photograph, Pixabay.

**Link:** <https://pixabay.com/photos/cotton-cultivation-karnataka-plants-223736/>

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**Image no: 8**

**Caption:** Quang Nguyen Vinh, *White Silk Cocoons and Larvae of Bombyx Mori Worms*, Photograph, Pexels.

**Link:**

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/white-silk-cocoons-and-larvae-of-bombyx-mori-worms-4543910/>

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**Image no: 9**

**Caption:** Cstaffa, *Blade Shearing demonstration at the New York Sheep & Wool Fair*, 2007, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).

**Link:** <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BladeShearing.jpg>

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**Image no: 10**

**Caption:** Natrij, *Hemp stalk*, 2002, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons.

**Link:** <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hanfstengel.jpg>

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**Image no:** 11

**Caption:** Vijayanarasimha, *Cotton Crop Tree Plant*, 2014, Photograph, Pixabay.

**Link:** <https://pixabay.com/photos/cotton-crop-cotton-tree-plant-265312/>

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**Image no:** 12

**Caption:** Adam Cohn, *Men On Loaded Cotton Truck*, 2015, Photograph, Flickr, [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/).

**Link:** <https://flic.kr/p/z24U7z>

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**Image no:** 13

**Caption:** Marina Ermakova, *Bobbins with Yarn*, 2020, Photograph, Unsplash.

**Link:** <https://unsplash.com/photos/IUNqVgaryf0>

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**Image no:** 14

**Caption:** Jim Black, *Cotton Field*, 2019, Photograph, Pixabay.

**Link:** <https://pixabay.com/photos/cotton-cotton-field-white-farming-4649804/>

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**Image no:** 15

**Caption:** Teona Swift, *A Person Putting Cotton Balls on a Flat Surface*, Photograph, Pexels.

**Link:** <https://www.pexels.com/video/a-person-putting-cotton-balls-on-a-flat-surface-6843829/>

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**Image no:** 16

**Caption:** Biswarup Ganguly, *Muhammad Ainul from Chapra district of Bihar*, 2011, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY 3.0](#).

**Link:**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Muhammad\\_Ainul\\_-\\_Howrah\\_2011-12-11\\_00912.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Muhammad_Ainul_-_Howrah_2011-12-11_00912.jpg)

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**Image no:** 17

**Caption:** Marie Anna Lee, *Cotton Threads Drying on Poles*, 2010, Photograph, 915, Scholarly Commons, University of the Pacific, [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#).

**Link:** <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/kam-photos/915/>

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**Image no:** 18

**Caption:** Pramati Anand, *Spinning Stories*, Barot, Himachal Pradesh, 2017, Film Footage.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 19

**Caption:** STeona Swift, *Clean Fabric Drying on Clothesline on Sunny Day*, Photograph, Pexels.

**Link:** <https://www.pexels.com/photo/clean-fabric-drying-on-clothesline-on-sunny-day-6850575/>

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**Image no:** 20

**Caption:** Detail, *Embroidered Textile*, 19th-20th century, Multicolored pieced cotton and silk plain weaves with multicolored silk embroidery in chain, buttonhole and running stitches; glass mirrors; green silk and gold metallic twill edge binding, 149.9 x 128.3 cm, 2012-1-2, Philadelphia Museum

of Art, Pennsylvania. Gift of Ann E. and Donald W. McPhail, 2012.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/320577>

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**Image no:** 21

**Caption:** Detail, *Ashavali Sari*, 19th century, Silk plain weave with continuous and discontinuous gold metallic and cotton supplementary wefts, 424.8 × 118.7 cm, 2002-62-1, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania. Purchased with the Stella Kramrisch Fund, 2002.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/150843>

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**Image no:** 22

**Caption:** Detail, *Beadwork Bolster Cover*, 20th century, Multicolored glass seed beads, multicolored silk/cotton and gold gilt brocade, orange and black silk plain weave, black cotton plain weave, 86.4 x 25.4 cm), 2012-1-21, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania. Gift of Ann E. and Donald W. McPhail, 2012.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/320718>

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**Image no:** 23

**Caption:** Detail, *Bridal Headcovering or Sari (Gharchola)*, 19th - 20th century, Dark red, gold gilt, yellow and green tie-dyed (bandhani) silk plain weave, gold gilt supplementary weft, 495.3 × 108 cm, 2012-1-46, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania. Gift of Ann E. and Donald W. McPhail, 2012.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/320745>

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**Image no:** 24

**Caption:** Detail, *Cover*, Second quarter of 20th century, Cotton plain weave with cotton appliqué and cotton embroidery in running stitch, 67.9 x 113.0 cm, 1965-200-7, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania. Purchased with Museum funds, 1965.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/108360>

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**Image no:** 25

**Caption:** Detail, *Embroidered Hanging*, Late 19th century, Cotton plain weave with silk embroidery in buttonhole, chain, couched stitches, 193 × 115 cm, 1939-1-5, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania. Gift of Mrs. George W. Childs Drexel, 1939.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/186402>

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**Image no:** 26

**Caption:** *Cotton Ball*, Photograph, Pxfuel.

**Link:** <https://www.pxfuel.com/en/free-photo-xnfzb>

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**Image no:** 27

**Caption:** William Swinton, *Routes of Ancient Commerce*, Page 88 of "Outlines of the world's history, ancient, mediæval, and modern, with special relation to the history of civilization and the progress of mankind 1870," Internet Archive Book Images. Wikimedia Commons.

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Routes\\_of\\_ancient\\_commerce\\_\(14803030753\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Routes_of_ancient_commerce_(14803030753).jpg)

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**Image no:** 28

**Caption:** Abraham Cresques, *Caravan on the Silk Road*, 1375, From Sheet 10 - Atlas Catalan, Wikimedia Commons.

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Katalanischer\\_Atlas\\_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Katalanischer_Atlas_01.jpg)

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**IMAGE CREDITS**

**Image no:** 29

**Caption:** Quang Nguyen Vinh, *Heap of Silkworms Eating Mulberry Leaves*, Photograph, Pexels.

**Link:** <https://www.pexels.com/photo/heap-of-silkworms-eating-mulberry-leaves-4543907/>

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**Image no:** 30

**Caption:** Pragadeesh Marimuthu, *A warp of Muga Silk, with nylon thread looped in a way that separates each thread*, Dhakuakhana, Lakhimpur Dist, Assam, 2021, Photograph. © MAP Academy.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 31

**Caption:** *Women collecting leaves from mulberry plants to feed to silkworms*, 1800s, Watercolour Illustration, Art and Architecture Collection, New York Public Library Archives, New York City.

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Collecting\\_leaves\\_from\\_mulberry\\_plants.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Collecting_leaves_from_mulberry_plants.jpg)

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**Image no:** 32

**Caption:** *Baskets of Moths for Producing Silk Worms*, 1800s, Watercolour Illustration, Art and Architecture Collection, New York Public Library Archives, New York City.

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baskets\\_of\\_moths.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baskets_of_moths.jpg)

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**Image no:** 33

**Caption:** Pragadeesh Marimuthu, *A wooden maku or a throw shuttle, fitted with a bobbin carrying pure muga silk*, Dhakuakhana, Lakhimpur Dist, Assam, 2021, Photograph. © MAP Academy.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 34

**Caption:** Gail Hampshire, *Tussar Silk Moth Caterpillar - Antheraea Mylitta*, 2012, Photograph, Flickr, [CC BY 2.0](#).

**Link:** [https://www.flickr.com/photos/gails\\_pictures/8240520369](https://www.flickr.com/photos/gails_pictures/8240520369)

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**Image no:** 35

**Caption:** Bikash Dihingia, *The Muga Silk Worm*, 2020, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Muga\\_Silk\\_Worm.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Muga_Silk_Worm.jpg)

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**Image no:** 36

**Caption:** Lilly M (Małgorzata Miłaszewska), *Bombyx Mori*, 2007, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons.

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bombyx\\_mori\\_001.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bombyx_mori_001.JPG)

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**Image no:** 37

**Caption:** Bikash Dihingia, *The Eri Silk Worm*, 2020, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Eri\\_Silk\\_Worm.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Eri_Silk_Worm.jpg)

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**Image no:** 38

**Caption:** GLady, *Cocoon Silkworm*, 2013, Photograph, Pixabay.

**Link:** <https://pixabay.com/photos/cocoon-silkworm-silk-sliced-white-722618/>

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**Image no:** 39

**Caption:** *Boiling Silkworm Cocoons CU*, Video Footage, Videvo.

**Link:** <https://www.videvo.net/video/boiling-silkworm-cocoons-cu/458036/>

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**Image no:** 40

**Caption:** *Silk Production from Silkworms CU*, Video Footage, Videvo.

**Link:** <https://www.videvo.net/video/silk-production-from-silkworms-cu/458073/>

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**Image no:** 41

**Caption:** Quang Nguyen Vinh, *White Silk Cocoons and Larvae of Bombyx Mori Worms*, Photograph, Pexels.

**Link:**  
<https://www.pexels.com/photo/white-silk-cocoons-and-larvae-of-bombyx-mori-worms-4543910/>

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**Image no:** 42

**Caption:** C.V. Riley, *Bombyx Mori - China*, "Lepidoptera," Encyclopædia Britannica (11th ed.), v. 16, 1911, p. 475, Fig. 48. 1911, Wikimedia Commons.

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EB1911\\_Lepidoptera\\_-\\_Bombyx\\_mori.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EB1911_Lepidoptera_-_Bombyx_mori.jpg)

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**Image no:** 43

**Caption:** Briana Blasko, *Weaver settling the Muga silk yarn onto the handloom frame*, Boko, Assam, April 2010, Photograph, Courtesy of the Artist.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 44

**Caption:** Detail, *Patola*, late 20th century – early 21st century, silk, gilt metal, 218 x 105 cm, TXT.01398, Museum of Art and Photography, Bengaluru.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 45

**Caption:** Detail, *Brocaded Book Cover*, 1800s, Brocade; silk and metal, 14 x 27.9 cm, 1925.504, Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund, Wikimedia Commons, [CC0 1.0](#).

**Link:**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:India,\\_19th\\_century\\_-\\_Brocaded\\_Book\\_Cover\\_-\\_1925.504\\_-\\_Cleveland\\_Museum\\_of\\_Art.tif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:India,_19th_century_-_Brocaded_Book_Cover_-_1925.504_-_Cleveland_Museum_of_Art.tif)

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**Image no:** 46

**Caption:** Detail, Fragment, 1700s - 1800s, Embroidery; silk on linen, 48.9 x 19.7 cm, 1925.470, Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund, Wikimedia Commons, [CC0 1.0](#).

**Link:**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:India,\\_18th-19th\\_century\\_-\\_Fragment\\_-\\_1925.470\\_-\\_Cleveland\\_Museum\\_of\\_Art.tif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:India,_18th-19th_century_-_Fragment_-_1925.470_-_Cleveland_Museum_of_Art.tif)

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**Image no:** 47

**Caption:** Thomas Hickey, *Purniya, Chief Minister of Mysore*, c. 1801, Oil on canvas, 127 x 100.3 cm, B1973.1.22, Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.

**Link:** <https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/tms:124>

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**Image no:** 48

**Caption:** Tilly Kettle, *Dancing Girl*, 1772, Oil on canvas, 193 x 119.4 cm, B1981.25.385, Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.

**Link:** <https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/tms:872>

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**Image no:** 49

**Caption:** Tilly Kettle, *Shuja-ud-Daula, Nawab of Oudh*, 1772, Oil on canvas, B1976.7.48, Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.

**Link:** <https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/tms:283>

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**Image no:** 50

**Caption:** Peter Steward, *Mysore, Nature Conservation Foundation, NCF - Spiti Women's Knitting and Crochet Workshop*, 2014, Photograph, Flickr, [CC BY-NC 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/).

**Link:** <https://flic.kr/p/nzhKjt>

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**Image no:** 51

**Caption:** NickyPe, *Sheep Animal Wool*, 2019, Photograph, Pixabay.

**Link:** <https://pixabay.com/photos/sheep-animal-wool-wildlife-4124366/>

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**Image no:** 52

**Caption:** Klimkin, *Goat Eating Grass*, 2016, Photograph, Pixabay.

**Link:** <https://pixabay.com/photos/goat-grass-livestock-grazing-1596880/>

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**Image no:** 53

**Caption:** *Glorious Himalaya Trekking Pvt Ltd, Himalayan Yak*, 2019, Photograph, Pixabay.

**Link:** <https://pixabay.com/photos/himalayan-yak-mountains-animal-4690021/>

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**Image no:** 54

**Caption:** Uwe Walker, *Angora Wool*, 2011, Photograph, Pixabay.

**Link:** <https://pixabay.com/photos/angora-wool-fluffy-cat-s-cradle-440161/>

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**Image no:** 55

**Caption:** Cstaffa, *Blade Shearing demonstration at the New York Sheep & Wool Fair*, 2007, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).

**Link:** <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BladeShearing.jpg>

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**Image no:** 56

**Caption:** Dynamosquito, *Wool washing*, 2007, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/).

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wool\\_washing\\_\(2377496505\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wool_washing_(2377496505).jpg)

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**Image no:** 57

**Caption:** *Raw Wool*, Photograph, Pxfuel.

**Link:** <https://www.pxfuel.com/en/free-photo-jgwev>

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**Image no:** 58

**Caption:** Thelmadatter, *Juana Gutierrez submerging wool yarn in a bucket of indigo dye at the Porfirio Gutierrez family workshop in Teotitlan del Valle, Oaxaca, Mexico, 2016*, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

**Link:** <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GutierrezWorkshopTeotitlan084.jpg>

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**Image no:** 59

**Caption:** Saharadesertfox, *Dyed Wool*, 2005, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dyed\\_wool.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dyed_wool.jpg)

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**Image no:** 60

**Caption:** Ekabhishek, *Hand made woollen items from North-East India, at Dilli Haat*, Delhi, 2011, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hand\\_made\\_woollen\\_items\\_from\\_North-East\\_India,\\_at\\_Dilli\\_Haat.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hand_made_woollen_items_from_North-East_India,_at_Dilli_Haat.jpg)

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**Image no:** 61

**Caption:** *A Man and a Woman Making Cotton, between 1800 and 1899*, Watercolour with pencil and pen, 22.4 x 19.6 cm, 576236i, Wellcome Collection, London.

**Link:** <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/drqxfnbn/items>

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**IMAGE CREDITS**

**Image no:** 62

**Caption:** *Wool Processing Carding Machine in Action*, Video Footage, Envato Elements.

**Link:** <https://elements.envato.com/wool-processing-carding-machine-in-action-PILGBHX>

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**Image no:** 63

**Caption:** Emma Louise Comerford, *Color and Texture of Cord and Rope for Sale*, 2018, Photograph, Unsplash.

**Link:** <https://unsplash.com/photos/OOr3clipPrU>

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**Image no:** 64

**Caption:** Pragadeesh Marimuthu, *How a single Endi or Eri silk thread is reeled from the cocoon by hand*, Dhakuakhana, Lakhimpur Dist, Assam, 2021, Film footage. © MAP Academy.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 65

**Caption:** Detail, *Woven Textile*, 18th century, Silk compound twill with silk core metal wrapped thread continuous supplementary weft patterning, 15 × 25.3 cm, 1928-29-9b, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania. Purchased with the Keehmle Fund, 1928.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/124782>

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**Image no:** 66

**Caption:** Detail, *Shawl*, Late 19th century, Wool tapestry twill, 180.3 × 177.8 cm, 1961-98-7, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania, Gift of the estate of Mrs. Edward Ingersoll, 1961.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/184059>

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**Image no: 67**

**Caption:** Detail, *Phulkari*, Mid-to late 19th century, Brown cotton plain weave with blue cotton embroidery in buttonhole stitch, golden yellow silk embroidery in running and darning stitches; glass mirrors, 211.5 × 141.6 cm, 2012-1-34, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania, Gift of Ann E. and Donald W. McPhail, 2012.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/320732>

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**Image no: 68**

**Caption:** Detail, *Printed Textile*, 1825-1850, Printed cotton plain weave, 43 x 49.5 cm, 1928-29-40, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania, Purchased with the Keehmle Fund, 1928.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/124940>

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**Image no: 69**

**Caption:** Detail, *Woven Textile*, 18th century, Silk and cotton plain weave with supplementary weft patterning, 47.4 x 40 cm, 1928-29-14b, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania, Purchased with the Keehmle Fund, 1928.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/124808>

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**Image no: 70**

**Caption:** Detail, *Man's Waistcloth*, Late 19th century, Green and red resist-dyed, painted, and mordant-dyed cotton plain weave, 172.7 × 111.8 cm, 2009-153-3, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania, Gift of Titi Halle, 2009.

**Link:** <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/310467>

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**Image no:** 71

**Caption:** Pragadeesh Marimuthu, *Preparing a warp for a back-strap loom*, Rani, East Siang Dist, Arunachal Pradesh, 2021, Film footage. © MAP Academy.

**Link:** N/A

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Textiles exhibit varying degrees of softness, sheen and sheerness, depending on the nature of their fibres. These gently breathe life into fabrics, and have even inspired metaphors in visual and literary culture that link them to the creation of the universe. Traditional Indian textiles are primarily made of seed fibres, cocoon fibres, animal hair fibres and bark fibres. Of these, cotton, silk and wool are most prominently used in India. Let's examine how they are used to make cloth.

### **Cotton**

Widely grown across the central and northern regions of the country, the cotton plant flourishes in warm and humid climates. The white, fluffy fibres that you see in this image are used to create thread or yarn that is then woven into textiles. The process of making yarn from cotton fibres consists of four distinct steps:

1. The first step involves separating cotton fibres and seeds from the boll, or protective case, in which they grow. This process is called ginning.
2. The next step, carding, involves separating and untangling the fibres from each other.
3. These are then combed and arranged on the basis of their length.
4. Finally, in the spinning stage, the combed fibres are spun into yarn on a spinning wheel or a spindle.

Cotton fabrics are typically absorbent, lightweight and breathable. They are used for a variety of functions including clothing, home furnishings and accessories. Since ancient times, the desire for soft Indian cotton linked the subcontinent to a global network of exchange. While you might be familiar with the silk road through which Chinese silk travelled the world, historians argue that the movement of cotton along the same routes was so prominent that it could even be considered a 'cotton road.'

### **Silk**

Sericulture, or the cultivation of silkworms for textile production, has been prevalent in India for thousands of years. Indian silk textiles use indigenous varieties such as Tussar from eastern regions of the country; Eri, Muga and Pat

from the Northeast; as well as Mulberry silk that was initially introduced from China through the Silk Road. Although Mulberry silk is most widely used across India, the indigenous varieties are believed to produce threads that are three times stronger than any other silk in the world. While processes vary depending on the type of silkworms, let's look at how silk fibres are typically obtained:

1. The first step in silk cultivation involves the rearing of silkworms. This is done by ensuring they have the right habitat and diet needed to produce silk filaments for spinning cocoons.
2. The cocoons are then harvested. During this step, they are steamed to kill the pupae inside.
3. The next step is degumming, which involves placing the cocoon in boiling water in order to soften the natural glue that holds its fibres together.
4. Finally, at the unwinding stage, the silk fibres of the cocoon are gently removed and separated from each other.

Although most silk production methods involve killing the silkworm, an exception to this is Eri silk, also known as Ahimsa Silk. Its non-violent process allows the silkworm to complete its metamorphosis into a moth, after which it naturally pierces through its cocoon leaving behind the fibres needed for silk production.

Silk threads typically have a lustrous appearance, and are used to create luxurious garments as well as embellishments on fabrics. These textiles have historically served as markers of wealth and status.

## **Wool**

Commonly used in regions with cooler climates, woollen fibres are obtained from native breeds of sheep, goats and yaks. The process of wool production involves transforming the delicate coats of these animals into yarns that are exceptionally soft and lush.

1. The first step in this process is shearing, which involves shaving off the animal's coat.

2. This is followed by the scouring process, where the fibres are washed and cleaned to remove impurities.
3. The cleaned fibres are then sorted according to length and texture, after which they are dyed in different colours.
4. Finally, they are dried, rolled, combed and spun into yarns.

Woollen fibres are known for their ability to retain heat, and are primarily used for insulation in the form of sweaters, shawls, carpets and blankets.

Although natural fibres were traditionally cultivated and processed manually, many of the steps we've discussed are now mechanised. In recent times, most natural materials are often used in combination with synthetic and chemically treated fibres, such as nylon, polyester, viscose and rayon, that have lower costs of production and are easier to use.

In fact it is quite rare today to find textiles made entirely out of natural fibres. Perhaps the next time you purchase a textile, whether an item of clothing or household accessory, you could pay closer attention to the materials it is composed of and where they come from.

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