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It is with great pleasure, we introduce the latest Special issue of JEB on Sericulture-the most popular and developed agro-based cottage industry in India. This Special Issue is a collection of research papers presented in the National Symposium on **"Vanya Sericulture: Opportunities Galore"** organized by the Central Tsar Research and Training Institute, Central Silk Board, Ranchi. The research papers published in this issue provides a deep insight into current research activities conducted in different sericulture research institutes across India.

Central Silk Board is a pioneer R&D organization that functions under the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India. Established in the year 1948 with the aim to develop the sericulture sector in India, Central Silk Board has intensely worked for the last 75 years in this field and made remarkable progress by adopting scientific practices. Central Silk Board forms the backbone of silk industry. Various Research and Training Institutes established by the Central Silk Board across India have enormously developed into premier centers of excellence. The scientists and researchers of these institutes have made commendable scientific advancements in silk rearing, silk technology, and production making India the second largest producer of natural silk, next to China, in the world.

This Special Issue on sericulture reminds me of the chapters on the life cycle of mulberry silkworms and silk route read in school textbooks. According to Chinese legend, silk was accidentally discovered by the Chinese Empress Leizu, who later studied the life cycle of silkworms and learned the art of raising silkworms. For a very long time, the Chinese kept sericulture a secret from the world and maintained their monopoly over silk production. Later when the famous historic trade route - "Silk Route" was opened which connected China with the Indian subcontinent, the traders introduced Chinese silk to India. Silk also known as the "Queen of Textiles" was initially popular with the royals and aristocrats, but over the period of time it became a part of our culture. Silk is considered auspicious and during special occasions and celebrations, people love to flaunt in silk-made garments, especially women who adore wrapping themselves in lustrous, exquisite silk sarees which gives them elegance and a royal look.

Mother Earth has endowed our country with immense natural resources and biodiversity. This rural agro-based cottage industry has bloomed and flourished in India due to favorable climatic and environmental conditions prevailing in the regions for practicing sericulture. Sericulture in India is not confined to a particular region, it is practiced in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, etc. Silk produced from each region has special features, unique designs, and patterns weaved from silk yarns produced by varied species of silkworms. We take pride in being the only country in the world to produce four different varieties of natural silk-Mulberry, Tasar, Muga, and Eri. Mulberry silk is produced from mulberry silkworms while Tasar, Muga and Eri, collectively called Vanya silk, are wild silks produced from non-mulberry silkworms.

For a long time, Vanya sericulture remained unknown and confined to the tribal zones of Central and North-eastern India. However, now it has gained recognition and is in great demand in national and international markets. Vanya sericulture has immense growth and huge employment potential in India as it provides sustainable livelihood to the rural population, especially to women and tribal communities of Jharkhand and North-east states of India as sericulture involves a series of activities.

Central Silk Board is a boon to silk industry. It receives funds from various ministries like Ministry of Textile and Ministry of Rural Development. Likewise, the government has implemented various schemes such as Silk Samagra and MGNREGA with the support of Central Silk Board for escalating the overall growth and development of silk industry, and also promoting silk in global markets. Central Silk Board has launched web portals, organizes training programs, and Krishi Melas to update sericulture farmers with the latest technological advancements to upscale their skills. The fine quality of silk produced in India is in great demand throughout the world. India exports silk and silk products and generates large amount of foreign exchange.

Under the guidance of Central Silk Board and in collaboration with government and non-government organizations, several projects have been implemented for restoration of degraded lands by planting common forest trees along with host trees like *Terminalia* spp., Arjun and Sal trees for rearing silkworms to promote sericulture. This practice serves two purposes: first large-scale plantation of tree species will not only restore degraded lands but also expand the forest area; second promoting forest-based activities like rearing of silkworms will create a livelihood for local communities and generate economic returns to improve their standard of living and also employment opportunities for youth.

Due to reckless exploitation of natural resources, the earth has lost large part of forest area, and several species of plants and animals have become extinct or are on the verge of extinction. Loss of biodiversity and natural habitat has resulted in climate change, which is a red alert and also a wake-up call for humans, as for survival we need healthy earth. So there's no other way but to halt further destruction and exploitation of natural resources, and act meticulously on the conservation, restoration, and expansion of green cover. We owe a lot to Mother Earth. Promoting sericulture-based agroforestry will solve many problems related to the environment.

Extensive research and development activities conducted in various sericulture research and training institute across India and plethora of plans and schemes implemented by the Government of India and Central Silk Board has given new dimensions to sericulture industry in India.

Publication of this Special Issue gives an excellent opportunity for the readers to gain knowledge on the allied sectors and activities of sericulture. On behalf of JEB team, I extend my sincere thanks to Dr. K. Sathyanarayana, Organizing Secretary of the National Conference on "Vanya Sericulture: Opportunities Galore", Director, CTRTI, Ranchi for collaborating with *Journal of Environmental Biology* for the publication of Special Issue and giving us an opportunity to participate in this academic endeavor. We duly acknowledge the sincere efforts of Dr. K. Jena, Scientist-D, CTRTI, Ranchi, for curating this Issue. His cooperation and support at all the stages of publication is laudable. Dr. Jena has a long association with JEB, we thank him for his patronage.

We would like to thank all the authors for contributing their research work in this Special Issue and appreciate their efforts for critical compliance of reviewers' comments and also fulfilling all the requirements of the journal. We deeply thank all the reviewers for the meticulous review of research papers within the stipulated time, and also the Editorial Board Members and R&D Division for the critical evaluation of final published papers for quality and scientific merit.

Lastly, the entire unit of *Journal of Environmental Biology* is eternally grateful to our Editor-in-chief, Late Dr. R.C. Dalela for accepting the proposal of publishing this Special Issue from CTRTI, Ranchi, and entrusting the responsibility of publishing this Special Issue.

The entire publication process of this Special Issue was a valuable learning experience, and we look forward for more opportunities.

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