

GOOD EARTH

## Miracles happen every day

HARSHAD KARANDIKAR

In astonishment, we watched a butterfly emerge from its pupa. It was truly a marvel of nature.



**BEAUTIFUL WINGS: Rising in the wind.**

"It's started! Come quickly!" I shouted to my friends. Soon, they were crowding around me. The pupa split, and the butterfly emerged. Its coiled proboscis, came first, followed by two large compound eyes, one on either side of it. It then extended its neatly folded feet, scrambling for a hold on the pupa shell. After a few unsuccessful attempts, it managed to grip it properly, and awkwardly propelled the rest of its body out of the shell. We watched in astonishment, speechless at the marvels of Nature.

### Beginnings

Butterflies start their lives in tiny eggs, about a millimetre in diameter. Within a week or so the eggs hatch, and tiny caterpillars, called larvae, emerge. These caterpillars feed on the leaves of the plant on which the eggs are laid. After growing at a stunning rate for a few days, they decide that they have had enough of all the gorging, and hang themselves on any suitable surface. They shed their skin, which drops off, neatly folded. The new skin now slightly hardens and forms a sort of a shell. It stays in this dormant stage for a week or so, developing

inside. On the day before it is ready to step outside as an adult butterfly, all its features can be clearly seen through the now-transparent pupa shell. The next morning, it will emerge as an adult butterfly.

The butterfly had now completely emerged from the pupa. Its wings hung on its body like wet cloth hung out to dry. With every passing moment, its body was increasing in length and decreasing in girth, as if some invisible force was pulling it from both ends. Within seconds, it transformed from a size two centimetres in length and one centimetre in diameter to a sleek one four centimetres long and a few millimetres in diameter. After it had decided that it was long and thin enough, it started working on its wings. Slowly, but surely, the wings started getting firmer. It was walking around all over the place, the wings trailing behind the body, like it desperately needed the exercise. Maybe it really did, after gorging itself for over a week, in the caterpillar stage, and then just hanging around for another as a pupa!

In a couple of hours, the wings straightened up. Our young fella, however, was in no mood to leave. He sat there, opening and closing its wings. And then, suddenly, it rose, rising in the wind, fluttering its beautiful wings, and flew off, leaving us mesmerized. Whoever said God is in the details sure knew what he was talking about.

*In collaboration with Kalpavriksh Action Group*