

included a keynote address on 'Mycology at the turn of the century' by C. V. Subramanian and the MSI Presidential address 'A mycologist looks around' by H. C. Dube. Dr M. J. Thirumalachar Merit Award was instituted during this meeting. Awards were given to two oral presentations, 'Internal mycobiota of some conifers from Nilgiris' by K. Narayanan, Raja Huzefa, R. Rajesh and T. S. Suryanarayanan

and 'Salt stress-mediated regulation of P-ATPase and chitinase from *Aspergillus repens* ATCC 90531' by R. J. Vaidya, M. Bhatt and H. S. Chhatapar. The two best poster presentations, restricted to those below 35 years of age, were 'Alkaline protease secretion by *Basidiobolus* (NCL 97-1-1): Effect of cultural conditions and preliminary characterization of the enzyme' by Sujaya S. Ingale and Meenakshi V. Rele,

and 'Dynamics of extracellular enzymes during solid state fermentation of banana waste by two *Pleurotus* species (*P. ostreatus* and *P. sajorcaju*)' by Karamjit Singh, Prashant Kunjadia, G. V. Reddy and I. L. Kothari

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## From the archives



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### Examinations and education

One of the reasons why examinations have acquired a vicious influence and undue importance in some of the Indian universities is that they constitute the only avenue for preferment in government service and more recently other employing agencies also have begun to appreciate the value of higher education in their servants. This intimate association of a purely academic function with the economic and service problems must necessarily produce a baleful effect upon both. The vision of an educated young man is restricted by the four walls of the office room and he devotes all his energies to pass his examination for the realization of his modest ambitions. Government should have at their disposal means other than the university examinations for discovering those qualities in their employees for the proper and efficient performance of administrative duties but the touching confidence they have all along reposed in the universal efficacy of these tests is a credit to the honesty of the whole transaction. This relationship has unfortunately exposed the system of educa-

tion and examination to the unmerited criticism that they are a cause of the evil of unemployment among the educated young men. In India failure in an examination amounts almost to forfeiture of one's social status and the young men whom the universities reject annually have no alternative except to pass through life like a perpetual blister. The remedy seems to be to throw open those services for their absorption, which are at present treated as close preserves and to encourage settlement on the land, to promote cottage and minor industries and to facilitate emigration...

The influence that examinations now exercise on the destiny of education will relax the moment the government and other employing agencies cease to look upon them as a *sine qua non* for employment in their services. It is true that a specialized knowledge of any narrow field of science such as an Honours graduate possesses may not be of direct use in the discharge of the administrative duties, but what is invaluable in him is the disciplined training, the mental alertness and the power of applying scientific knowledge to the problems of government and those of the practical affairs of the people. Admirable as these qualities are, they are not enough in an administrator who needs wisdom, foresight, driving power, ability to command men, to organize and consolidate the forces of civic life and finally the power to take quick and correct decisions and most important of all a natural sweetness of temper. The competitive examinations which are only duplicates of university examinations are, when applied to discover these

traits of character, undoubtedly a bad test. Examinations on prescribed books or on definite fields of knowledge can be easily and successfully met by resorting to the aids provided by the ingenuity of commentators and annotators. What the competitive examinations really test is not the knowledge or intelligence, much less any of the personal qualities of the candidate but the amount of cunning with which he can anticipate the questions and provide the examiner with information crammed from 'tips'. There can possibly be nothing better than a wise education for the making of public servants but little can be said in extenuation of an employing agency which requires the best public service and applies the wrong tests for securing it. Is it impossible for the Government to devise a scheme other than competitive examinations for the purpose of selecting competent and wise public servants? The merit of a competitive examination is not the logic or the fairness of it but its power to fulfil the purpose for which it is instituted. Ostensibly the university examinations are intended to test the power to think on the part of the candidates but, generally speaking, the question papers succeed in finding out how much of literary and scientific lumber is stored in the mind and is capable of being unpacked. The Public Services Commission attempt nothing better: We cannot go back to the system of nomination which is attended by fear and distrust, but probably a scheme in which the co-operation of the university professors is enlisted may be found more satisfactory.