

## CORRESPONDENCE

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Did Mani himself make the photograms using insect materials such as the wings of Lepidoptera? Unfortunately, he has not included a sample autophotograph in his note<sup>1</sup> and this complicates matters. Nevertheless, the note by Mani<sup>1</sup> illustrates that a set of photograms ('autophotographs') of insect materials was on public display somewhere in India. This provoked my curiosity, which turned mysterious, because Luke Gartlan suggested that I consult Chéroux<sup>6</sup>, since in the late 19th century an occult belief prevailed that bodies emanated rays that could be transferred onto photographic plates. Indeed Mani's note refers to a

vague radiation from the 'photographed' wings of Lepidoptera.

1. Mani, M. S., *Indian J. Entomol.*, 1939, **1**, 111.
2. Gill, A., *Hist. Photogr.*, 1978, **2**, 134.
3. Denison, H., *A Treatise on Photogravure in Intaglio by the Talbot-Klič Process*, Ilife & Son, London, UK, 1895, p. 140.
4. Talbot, W. H. F., *A Pencil of Nature*, Longman, Brown, Green & Longman, London, UK, 1844, p. 48.
5. Naumann, F., *Conversion to Modernism: The Early Work of Man Ray*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2003, p. 261.

6. Chéroux, C., *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2005, p. 288.

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## Quality of Ph D degree holders in India

The editorial by Dalal<sup>1</sup> 'on the quality of Ph D students in India' is thought-provoking. I fully agree that students mostly rely on rote learning rather than problem-solving. They get readymade notes and depend on the internet for solving problems. This system has contributed students who have not learnt to think for themselves, which is a problem if you want to take up a research career. We need to change our system of instruction, which needs to be thought-provoking. For example, each student in the beginning is taught 'A for apple', so thinking is restricted to apple alone. However, if an option is given to the students to write 10 names beginning with A, they will be forced to explore other options and apply their minds. The effort needs to begin with teaching the teachers, way starting from the primary-school level to ensure that we provide the coming generations with the best possible education.

I fully agree with Dalal<sup>1</sup> that we do not get the best students in Ph D programmes.

Due to financial crunch in most of the educational institutions, self-sustaining programmes are conducted and the intake capacity of students has increased. Thus teacher has to guide more number of students, while the students are asked to do a particular set of predefined experiments with little chance to explore new areas of research. Thus they have no chance to make mistakes and learn from them. Most of the universities have NRI quota where merit has no meaning.

The examination system is poor. The names of thesis examiners are suggested by the guide of the student and sometimes the external examiners get the thesis evaluated by their own students. The examiners must be selected from a pool of 10–15 persons, and there must be evaluation by at least one foreign expert to improve the quality of the thesis.

Earlier, students had to do a lot of literature survey during the course of their Ph D programme<sup>2</sup>. This helped them to learn and remember well. Also, students

had to write their thesis a number of times till it was finally approved. Now cut-and-paste system due to internet has further deteriorated the learning process and resulted in very low-quality thesis. As of the universities have no plagiarism software, it has further aggravated the problem.

1. Dalal, S. N., *Curr. Sci.*, 2018, **115**(7), 1231–1232.
2. Abrol, D. P., *Curr. Sci.*, 2014, **107**(6), 940.

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