Q 1 In Kekroth fruits, tubers and stems with leaves have medicinal uses. The present study emphasizes fruits only. Clarification is required about the other parts and also about the composites.

A i) It is true that all parts of Kekroth - Bitterless Bitter gourd (*Momordica dioica*) possess medicinal properties. The thesis has rightly highlighted the same (pages 14-16). As far as the present study is concerned, the primary focus is on the screening of antimicrobial properties of Kekroth. Therefore attempts were made to evaluate the antimicrobial properties of almost all parts of this plant: roots, stem with leaves, fruits and seeds using different solvents and the extracts were tested on the test microbes, both bacteria and fungi under in vitro conditions just to screen their potentialities as antimicrobial agents. Therefore the present work mainly focused on this particular aspect and based on the observations only the results and conclusions were made.

So equal emphasis was given to all parts of this experimental plant with regard to antimicrobial screening. This has been stated very clearly in the chapter materials and methods (page 46, 5 2 2 ) and also in the results and discussion (page 81 onwards – table 3 to 11 and fig 1 to 10 and also page 96 onwards, table 12 to 15 and fig 11 to 20). So all parts of this plant were studied equally and from the observations, it has been inferred that among the various parts of the plant tested, only one part was found to possess significant antimicrobial properties than the other parts.

Therefore investigations have been carried out equally to all parts of this plant. But the results indicate that only one part among the others possess significant antimicrobial property. The medicinal uses of other parts of this plant as validated by other researchers have also been cited in page 15 & 16.

ii) Composites of various parts of this plant have not been studied since this was outside the objective laid down for the thesis. The objective of the thesis was only to identify those parts of the plant possessing antimicrobial properties and the chemical compounds present therein exhibiting antimicrobial action. Therefore for isolation and identification of pure compounds using spectroscopic studies, only simple forms are preferred rather than the composites. So in order to achieve the goal, composite studies were not taken up, and this was not the scope of the thesis.
Q 2. The precise medicinal properties in Kekroth grown under forest conditions need to be compared with plants grown under cultivation.

A) Kekroth plants are found growing mostly in forest areas. Under cultivation especially in plains, the plant fails to grow. Several attempts were made during the course of this study to cultivate the plant through seeds (sexual method of propagation) and also using the underground tuberous roots (vegetative method of propagation) in the field (garden) as well as in pots. But neither germination of seeds nor sprouting of tubers were observed even after several months. Germination of seeds was found to be very difficult or impossible even after various treatments to break the dormancy if any (scarification, chemical treatments, subjecting to low temperature etc.). The failure in seed germination may be due to the presence of hard seed coat.

Moreover to our surprise, the seedlings raised through micropropagation also showed very slow growth in the garden but when shifted to Ayyalur reserve forest (its native land-from where the study materials were collected) the growth of the seedling as well as the other observable parameters were found normal. Therefore as far as Kekroth is concerned the edaphic and Climatic factors might be playing a role on its growth.

Therefore cultivating the Kekroth in field (plains) is difficult or even unsuccessful. The plants grow well in their natural habitats namely in forests rather than in cultivation. Therefore because of this difficulty, comparative study with regard to medicinal properties of field grown Kekroth with the forest grown could not be carried out. However a few comparative studies among few cultivars of Kekroth has been made with regard to yield, nutritional value and keeping quality (page 16) by some researchers and that too, not on the medicinal properties of cultivars and wild grown.

Q 3. In Ayurveda importance is given to a group of plants rather than a single plant. Kekroth is association with other plant extracts need to be studied.

A) This suggestion quoted by the examiner will be very well taken care of for future studies.