

TKDL in Five Languages will protect India's Traditional Knowledge

India being one of the biodiversity hot spots is rich in flora and fauna. Plants having medicinal properties form the substantial floral landscape and the knowledge about it is known from times immemorial. It has been passed on from generations orally or through scriptures constituting the traditional knowledge or indigenous knowledge in the parlance of the domain of Intellectual Property Rights. This traditional knowledge has increasingly been exploited to unravel the mysteries of nature. The research laboratories, corporations and individuals around the world have taken this indigenous knowledge for further research, develop and finally exclusively claim the medicinal properties of the nature's resource.

To ward-off this frenzied exploitation, a Traditional Knowledge Digital Library [TKDL] was designed to record the ancient science. It entails research in Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Yoga, Naturopathy and folklore medicine and is the first of its kind. It will go a long way towards protecting traditional knowledge as it can help establish prior art. If an invention has been described in the prior art it cannot be patented, therefore traditional knowledge also cannot be patented as they have been known and used in India for centuries. The TKDL is an important source of prior art, significant for the purposes of patenting inventions that are linked in some way to traditional knowledge.

The TKDL database is now in the process of being developed in five languages – English, German, French, Spanish and Japanese – to curb the menace of traditional knowledge misappropriation completely. Patent Offices around the world will have free access to the database.

This whole endeavour has given the traditional knowledge a firm footing. Whomsoever interested in gaining from such knowledge can enter into benefit-sharing arrangement with the traditional knowledge holders. The anti-fatigue properties of the plant *Arogyapacha* were known to Kani tribals of Kerala, scientists at the Tropical Botanical Garden Research Institute, Kerala used this traditional knowledge of the *Kani's* to produce a stress-busting drug called *JEEVANI* from the plant's leaves. Under the benefit sharing arrangement, half of the royalties and license fees from the sale of *JEEVANI* are paid to the *Kani* in recognition of their intellectual property.