

India wins patent war on traditional medicine formula against global giants

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India scored an all-important win to protect its traditional knowledge by stalling leading UK-based laboratory **Pangaea's** move to patent a medicinal composition containing turmeric, pine bark and green tea for treating hair loss. In another similar success for India where it foiled attempt by US-based consumer good conglomerate **Colgate-Palmolive** from patenting a mouthwash formula containing herbal extracts.

The Indian defence was spearheaded by **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)** of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) by which India can protect its priceless traditional knowledge on medicines. The Council in its submission to the European Patent Office managed to prove that turmeric, pine bark and green tea were being used as a treatment for hair loss in Indian systems of medicine like Ayurveda and Unani since ancient times.

Pangaea Laboratories Limited had filed the patent application in February, 2011. The **CSIR-TKDL unit** had, however, objected to it and filed evidence on January 13, 2014 once the patent application got published in the European Patent Office website.

The Patent Office got convinced by the evidence submitted by India and the applicant was "deemed to be withdrawn" the application on June 29, 2015.

The back-to-back victories in thwarting the attempts of the two big foreign entities (**Colgate-Palmolive and Pangaea Laboratories Limited**) adds another feather to the cap of **TKDL's** which has tasted success now in about 200 such cases without incurring any cost to the public exchequer.

Recently, it had frustrated a move by **Colgate-Palmolive** to patent a mouthwash formula containing herb 'Jayaphal' (Nutmeg) extract.

"The **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research**, headed by senior scientist Archana Sharma, had submitted proof in the form of references from ancient books, which said the herb and its extracts of 'Myristica Fragrans' were used for oral diseases in Indian systems of medicine", said an official note.

The **TKDL** is a pioneering initiative to prevent misappropriation of country's traditional medicinal knowledge at international patent offices. It has structured and classified the Indian traditional medicine system in approximately 25,000 sub-groups for Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Yoga.

It is proving to be an effective deterrent against bio-piracy and is being recognized as a global leader in the area of traditional knowledge protection.