

CORRESPONDENCE

Impact factors

M. Vijayan's letter (*Curr. Sci.*, 1997, 73, 101) rightly points out a problem faced by many Indian scientists in getting their papers published in top-rated journals abroad, many a time due to the biased approach of foreign referees towards third world countries like India. Apart from this, the cost of publication also acts as a deterrent in seeking publication in some good journals published from the USA or UK, because these

journals charge processing charges to the tune of US \$100, in addition to page charges once the paper is accepted. While payment of page charges ensures publication, the initial processing charges will be a mere waste of money if the paper is rejected. The choice of a journal will, thus, also depend on the financial considerations, and, sometimes, this aspect may be a major factor in deciding against a journal. Therefore,

assessment of publications only on the basis of impact factors of the journals may be unfair on Indian scientists working in and publishing from India.

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NEWS

CSIR wins the battle on US patent on turmeric powder

US Patent No. 5401504 was granted for the use of turmeric powder as a wound healing agent on 28 March 1995. On 28 October 1996, CSIR challenged this patent and asked for the re-examination for the purpose of cancellation of the patent. Specifically it asked for the complete cancellation of all the six claims present in the patent, which involved the use of turmeric for wound healing both by oral and topical administrations. After protracted techno-legal arguments, the **US Patent and Trade Mark Office (US PTO) has unequivocally rejected all the six claims of this patent on 13 August 1997, ruling out finally that the invention is not patentable.**

This is a significant development of far-reaching consequences for the protection of the traditional Indian knowledgebase in the public domain, which has been an emotional issue for not only the people of India, but also for the other third world countries.

Some of the far-reaching consequences of this development are as follows:

1. This appears to be the **first case** where the use of traditional knowledgebase of a third world country, patented through a US patent has been **successfully challenged** with the US Patent and Trade Mark Office leading to complete cancellation. It may be recalled that earlier
2. This success story strongly sends signals that if patent cases are fought on well-argued and well-supported techno-legal grounds, then there is **nothing to fear** about protecting our traditional knowledgebase.
3. This case also demonstrates that CSIR and other Indian institutions are now **acquiring capabilities to fight the complex techno-legal issues of IPR**, both defensively and aggressively, to meet the challenges under the WTO regime.