CORRESPONDENCE

ment of his progress and to invite suggestions from the faculty and research scholars for any improvement.

(5) After the work seemingly is complete, the candidate submits a miniature thesis of about 20–25 pages consisting of experimental gist of the results and a short discussion without any introduction and references, and this must be sent to two examiners.

(6) There would be a viva voce examination after a month of submission of the miniature thesis, in which one of the examiners would be present. In case there are any suggestions from this examiner or from the other in his report for some additional work, it has to be carried out by the candidate and the results brought to the notice of the examiner who made the suggestions. (In the present system of examination for Ph.D, the viva voce test held after the approval of the thesis is almost meaningless and serves no purpose from the viewpoint of the examination. One is not aware of any candidate who has been required to re-appear for this test or is rejected, once the thesis has been approved.)

(7) It is only after the oral test that the full thesis has to be written and sent to the two examiners for approval. There would be no more oral test after submitting the thesis, but the thesis may be required to be revised, if the examiners are not satisfied. There cannot be any rejection at this stage.

Therefore, to eliminate the abuse of Ph.D course as far as possible and to make it more credible, there has to be an open admission policy and more objective system of examination. It would be better if we have a uniform and common policy for the two in the whole country, to enable one to make a possible comparative assessment of Ph.Ds from different universities.

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Coverage of Indian life sciences/S&T journals in major global alerting services

There are an estimated half a million serials which qualify as journals or serials published in English and other languages. The current figure in the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) Register of the ISSN International Centre, Paris, France is 1,035,130 (ref. 1). Most of these contain articles with some original research published in non-English periodicals, although of variable quality. Admittedly, many of them do not qualify for inclusion in the highly competitive secondary information services, which demand stringent criteria of quality and standard. Not surprisingly, many journals do not figure in a majority of reputed secondary international databases of periodicals or even in lists of scholarly periodicals brought out by various publishers/agencies. The Ulrich’s International Periodicals Directory 1999, the premier serials reference source, for example, provides information on 157,173 serials published throughout the world, arranged under 973 subject headings — information gathered from over 80,000 publishers all over the world2. The Directory of Periodicals Published in India 2000 lists bibliographic information on about 12,000 serials, including 681 newspapers3. The Directory of Indian Scientific Periodicals 1992, brought out by the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre, New Delhi, lists only 1991 journal titles, including about 120 secondary publications4. Despite the impressive number of journals published from India, their coverage in international databases is quite poor. In the five major databases analysed, viz. EMBASE (1998), Index Medicus (2001), BIOSIS (2000), Science Citation Index (SCI) (2001) and Journal Citation Reports (JCR)/SCI (2001), the coverage of Indian journals varied from 0.27% (10 journals) in the SCI to 1.92% (98 journals) in BIOSIS; the total number of unique journals being 157. Among these unique journals, only three figured in all the five databases analysed (Indian Journal of Medical Research, Journal of Biosciences and National Medical Journal of India), one journal (Journal of Environmental Biology) in four databases, eight journals in three databases, 26 in two and a whopping 119 (75.80%) in only one of the five databases analysed. It is high time that the fortnightly, multidisciplinary journal of research from India, Current Science, is indexed selectively for articles relating to the field of biomedicine in the Index Medicus database of the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, USA. This suggestion for consideration is quite reasonable. Besides publishing quite a few articles in the field of biomedicine on a regular basis, Current Science has also brought out a number of special issues in the field of biomedicine in the past one decade or so5.

The coverage of Indian journals in the ISI (http://www.isinet.com) databases, viz. SCI and JCR, easily the most difficult and most sought-after global secondary information source, is rather poor, because the journal selection process in the ISI databases is extremely rigorous6. Therefore, the picture from India is depressing as in 2001, the SCI and its companion publication, the JCR covered 10 and 45 journals or a mere 0.27 and 0.78% respectively7. The impact factor (IF) of Indian journals covered in the JCR during 2001 varied between 0.000 and 0.657.

With this backdrop, the most practical solution for the low coverage of Indian journals in major global current awareness and alerting services is to initiate some indigenous efforts. For example, the ICMR–NIC Centre for Biomedical
The sanctity of *Pedicularis bicornuta* Kl. ex Kl. & Garcke (Scrophulariaceae) in the Indian cold deserts of Lahaul-Spiti

On a survey and field trip for study and collection of botanically curious *Pedicularis* species\(^1\) to the tough and sometimes inaccessible areas of the Himalayan cold deserts, during 1–9 August 2002, the authors, while on their way from Rohtang to Kaza, after crossing the Kunzum Pass, came across an eye-catching, beautiful, bright yellow flowered population of *Pedicularis* in Losar town situated in the Spiti valley of Himachal Pradesh at an altitude of 4000 m. The species was later identified as *Pedicularis bicornuta* Kl. ex Kl. & Garcke (Figure 1).

The climatic conditions of the Losar area in the Spiti valley were drastic for flowering plants. There were continuous, fast blowing cold winds interrupted by frequent cold storms which were often strong enough to desiccate the flowers and even sometimes uproot delicate herbs. Hence the adverse environmental conditions of this area permitted portable growth of thorny herbs such as *Astragalus* spp. and others, and was primarily occupied by these. Amidst these and in association with many legumes such as *Trifolium repens*, *T. pratens* and *Medicago* spp. grew the beautiful *P. bicornuta* in abundance, under the shade of *Salix* trees, withstanding the stochastic perturbations. The plants were tough and sturdy and the corolla of these flowers was closed in a ball-like fashion to cover the delicate vital parts such as stamens and stigma from the outside pressures.

**Figure 1.** Flowers of *Pedicularis bicornuta* Kl. ex Kl. & Garcke.

**Figure 2.** Tibetan woman carrying a bunch of floral spikes towards the temple of Goddess Kali situated at Kunzum Pass.