

## New Arrival

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### **A Simple Guide to Intellectual Property Rights, Biodiversity and Traditional Knowledge**

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This Guide to *Intellectual Property Rights, Biodiversity and Traditional Knowledge* forms part of the Biodiversity Information Pack produced by Kalpavriksh, GRAIN and International Institute for Environmental and Development (IIED). It presents user friendly information and mainstream debates on IPRs, biodiversity and traditional knowledge. Apte's book is one among the three components of the Biodiversity Information Pack that also includes *A Guide to the Biological Diversity Act 2002*, and *Understanding the Biological Diversity Act 2002: A Dossier*.

The present guide to IPR is an important source of basic information on patents, intellectual property rights, biodiversity and biodiversity related traditional knowledge in a question answer form. Initially, the handbook starts with a set of very specific basic questions pertaining to the layman's query regarding patents, Plant Breeder's Right (PBRs), Copyrights, Trademarks, Trade Secrets, Genetic Engineering, Traditional Knowledge and Biopiracy and what appear to be controversial issues in general.

The introductory chapter clearly reveals the need to understand these controversial issues for advocacy groups, policy makers, activists, academicians, bureaucrats, media persons as well as interested laypersons in order to take a stand in the protection of their interests. There are relatively a smaller number of people in India who are able to fully access and understand these controversial issues and debates around IPRs.

The next section which forms the core of the *Guide* starts by outlining the most basic information regarding biodiversity and its related fields and gradually progresses to more complex issues like bioprospecting and biopiracy. In an insightful way it tackles the prospective implications of these issues for an ordinary citizen while it also brings out the connection between IPRs and biological resources. That IPRs and private monopolies over biological resources and related traditional knowledge can have direct negative effects on India's food security, biological diversity, and on the protection of traditional knowledge is also highlighted. In dealing with these wide ranging complex issues, the handbook presents a store of interesting age old stories linked with the conserved wild areas that are dedicated to local deities, apart from traditional medicinal knowledge of forest products and progresses to modern world wide examples of biopiracy for the reader's understanding of what it involves.

Further, in its two Appendices, the handbook provides the text of various International Agreements and Negotiations relating to IPRs, biodiversity and traditional knowledge. These include for example: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992; TRIPS, 1994; International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, 2001 (ITPGR); Patent Cooperation Treaty (1970); and Patent Law Treaty (2000); and UPOV 1961 along with the latest revisions. The origins, goals and the main objectives of various international agreements and negotiations have been thoroughly discussed in detail in very clear and simple language. The present *Guide* also throws light on the general weaknesses inherent in these international agreements.

The *Guide* provides an ample list of references and the names of related website links consulted in preparing the handbook. These provide useful sources for advanced learning in this specific area. The Jargon Buster section breaks through the complicated language commonly used in IPR-related writing, that has a limited readership confinement to the biotech researchers and experts. By extending comprehension of this jargon, it is designed to be a handy reference for common people as it explains words and phrases that commonly occur in IPR-related writing and have been extensively used in this handbook.

On the whole, the Guide gives an in-depth account of the key concepts and debates around IPRs, biodiversity and traditional knowledge in the Indian and international context. For instance, the famous case of Basmati Rice has revealed that a patent was granted to RiceTec, a Texas based company, for new rice varieties derived from crossing semi-dwarf varieties with 22 traditional Basmati varieties from India and Pakistan. However, the patent was revoked after the CSIR, India, requested for re-examination of the patent. Subsequently, RiceTec was even forced to drop the title 'Basmati rice lines and grains'. This case study of Basmati rice is helpful in creating awareness of such issues in the developing countries. Various case studies of biopiracy have been presented in the special boxes to provide useful insights for concerned interested readers. Arguments against unjust IPR regimes, against biopiracy and against the private monopolization of biological resources and related local traditional knowledge are presented lucidly. In the whole, it is a useful guide.

— Beena Pandey