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**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT
AND ALLIED SCIENCES (IJBMAS)**
A Peer Reviewed International Research Journal

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY: PROTECTION AND ENFORCEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Intellectual property, often known as IP, allows people to own their creativity and innovation in the same way that they can own physical property. The owner of IP can control and be rewarded for its use, and this encourages further innovation and creativity to the benefit of us all.

In some cases IP gives rise to protection for ideas but in other areas there will have to be more elaboration of an idea protection can arise. It will often not be possible to protect IP and gain IP rights (or IPRs) unless they have been applied for and granted, but some IP protection such as copyright arises automatically, without any registration, as soon as there is a record in some form of what has been created.

The importance of intellectual property in india is well established at all levels- statutory, administrative and judicial. India ratified the agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This Agreement, inter-alia, contains an Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) which came into force from 1st January 1995. The obligations under thr TRIPS Agreement relate to provision of minimum standard of protection within the member countries legal systems and practices.

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Article Info:

Article Received on:17/03/2015

Article Revised on:26/03/2015

Article Accepted on:31/03/2015

Intellectual property rights are the rights given to person over the creations of their minds. Creators can be given the right to prevent others from using their inventions, designs or other creations. Intellectual property rights take a number of forms. For example books, paintings and films come under copyright. Prarid names and product logos can be registered as trademarks and so on. Governments and parliaments have given creators these rights as incentive to produce ideas that will benefit society as a whole. They usually give the creator an exclusive right over the use of his/her creation for a certain period of time. The WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), negotiated in the 1986-94 Uruguay Round, introduced intellectual property rules into the multilateral trading system for the first time.

Ideas and knowledge are an increasingly important part of trade. Most of the value of new medicines and other high technology products lies in the amount of invention, innovation, research, design and testing

involved. Films, music recordings, books, computer software and on-line services are bought and sold because of the information and creativity they contain, not usually because of the plastic, metal or paper used to make them. Many products that used to be traded as low-technology goods or commodities now contain a higher proportion of invention and design in their value - for example brand named clothing or new varieties of plants.

The extent of protection and enforcement of these rights varied widely around the world; and as intellectual property became more important in trade, these differences became a source of tension in international economic relations. New internationally-agreed trade rules for intellectual property rights were seen as a way to introduce more order and predictability, and for disputes to be settled more systematically.

The Uruguay Round achieved that, the WTO's TRIPS Agreement is an attempt to narrow the gaps in the way these rights are protected around the world, and to bring them under common international rules. It establishes minimum levels of protection that each government has to give to the intellectual property of fellow WTO members. In doing so, it strikes a balance between the long term benefits and possible short term costs to society. Society benefits in the long term when intellectual property protection encourages creation and invention, especially when the period of protection expires and the creations and inventions enter the public domain.

The TRIPS Agreement has an additional important principle: intellectual property protection should contribute to technical innovation and the transfer of technology. Both producers and users should benefit, and economic and social welfare should be enhanced, the agreement says. The second part of the TRIPS agreement looks at different kinds of intellectual property rights and how to protect them. The purpose is to ensure that adequate standards of protection exist in all member countries. Here the starting point is the obligations of the main international agreements of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) that already existed before the WTO viz:-

1. The Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property (patents, industrial designs, etc)
2. The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (copyright).

Some areas are not covered by these conventions. In some cases, the standards of protection prescribed were thought inadequate. So the TRIPS agreement adds a significant number of new or higher standards. The TRIPS agreement ensures that computer programs will be protected as literary works under the Berne Convention and outlines how databases should be protected.

The areas covered by the TRIPS Agreement are:

1. Copyright and related rights
2. Trademark. Inflicting service marks
3. Geographical indications
4. Industrial designs
5. Patents
6. Undisclosed information, including trade secrets

1. Copy rights: It also expands international copyright rules to cover rental rights. Authors of computer programs and producers of sound recordings must have the right to prohibit the commercial rental of their works to the public. A similar exclusive right applies to films where commercial rental has led to widespread copying, affecting copyright-owners' potential earnings from their films. The agreement says performers must also have the right to prevent unauthorized recording, reproduction and broadcast of live performances (bootlegging) for no less than 50 years. Producers of sound recordings must have the right to prevent the unauthorized reproduction of recordings for a period of 50 years.
2. Trademarks: The agreement defines what types of signs must be eligible for protection as trademarks, and what the minimum rights conferred on their owners must be. It says that service marks must be protected in the same way as trademarks used for goods. Marks that have become well-known in a particular country enjoy additional protection.
3. Geographical indications: A place name is sometimes used to identify a product. This "geographical indication" does not only say where the product was made. More importantly, it identifies the product's special characteristics, which are the result of the product's origins. Well-known examples include "Champagne", "Scotch", "Tequila", and "Roquefort" cheese. Wine and spirits makers are particularly concerned about the use of place-names to identify products, and the TRIPS Agreement contains special provisions for these products. But the issue is also important for other types of goods. Using the place name when the product was made elsewhere or when it does not have the usual characteristics

can mislead consumers, and it can lead to unfair competition. The TRIPS Agreement says countries have to prevent this misuse of place names. For wines and spirits, the agreement provides higher levels of protection, i.e. even where there is no danger of the public being misled.

4. Industrial designs: - Under the TRIPS Agreement, industrial designs must be protected for at least 10 years. Owners of protected designs must be able to prevent the manufacture, sale or importation of articles bearing or embodying a design which is a copy of the protected design

5. Patents: - The agreement says patent protection must be available for inventions for at least 20 years. Patent protection must be available for both products and processes, in almost all fields of technology. Governments can refuse to issue a patent for an invention if its commercial exploitation is prohibited for reasons of public order or morality. They can also exclude diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical methods, plants and animals (other than microorganisms), and biological processes for the production of plants or animals (other than microbiological processes). Plant varieties, however, must be protectable by patents or by a special system (such as the breeder's rights provided in the conventions of UPOV - the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants).

The agreement describes the minimum rights that a patent owner must enjoy. But it also allows certain exceptions. A patent owner could abuse his rights, for example by failing to supply the product on the market. To deal with that possibility, the agreement says governments can issue "compulsory licenses", allowing a competitor to produce the product or use the process under license. But this can only be 'done under certain conditions aimed at safeguarding the legitimate interests of the patent-holder.

If a patent is issued for a production process, then the rights must extend to the product directly obtained from the process. Under certain conditions alleged infringers may be ordered by a court to prove that they have not used the patented process. An issue that has arisen recently is how to ensure patent protection for pharmaceutical products does not prevent people in poor countries from having access to medicines - while at the same time maintaining the patent system's role in providing incentives for research and development into new medicines. Flexibilities such as compulsory licensing are written into the TRIPS Agreement, but some governments were unsure of how these would be interpreted, and how far their right to use them would be respected.

A large part of this was settled when WTO ministers issued a special declaration at the Doha Ministerial Conference in November 2001. They agreed that the TRIPS Agreement does not and should not prevent members from taking measures to protect public health. They underscored countries' ability to use the flexibilities that are built into the TRIPS Agreement. And they agreed to extend exemptions on pharmaceutical patent protection for least-developed countries until 2016. On one remaining question, they assigned further work to the TRIPS Council —to sort out how to provide extra flexibility, so that countries unable to produce pharmaceuticals domestically can import patented drugs made under compulsory licensing. A waiver providing this flexibility was agreed on 30 August 2003

6. Undisclosed information and trade secrets: - Trade secrets and other types of "undisclosed information" which have commercial value must be protected against breach of confidence and other acts contrary to honest commercial practices. But reasonable steps must have been taken to keep the information secret. Test data submitted to governments in order to obtain marketing approval for new pharmaceutical or agricultural chemicals must also be protected against unfair commercial use.

The owner of a copyright, patent or other form of intellectual property right can issue a license for someone else to produce or copy the protected trademark, work, invention, design, etc. The agreement recognizes that the terms of a licensing contract could restrict competition or impede technology transfer. It says that under certain conditions, governments have the right to take action to prevent anti-competitive licensing that abuses intellectual property rights. It also says governments must be prepared to consult each other on controlling anti-competitive licensing.

In this context I intend to suggest the following:-

- i. Having intellectual property laws is not enough. They have to be enforced. This is covered in Part 3 of TRIPS. The agreement says governments have to ensure that intellectual property rights can be enforced under their laws, and that the penalties for infringement are tough enough to deter further violations.

- ii. The procedures must be fair and equitable, and not unnecessarily complicated or costly.
- iii. They should not entail unreasonable time-limits or unwarranted delays.
- iv. People involved should be able to ask a court to review an administrative decision or to appeal a lower court's ruling.
- v. The agreement should include rules for obtaining evidence, provisional measures, injunctions, damages and other penalties.
- vi. Wilful trademark counterfeiting or copyright piracy on a commercial scale should be criminal offences.
- vii. Governments should make sure that intellectual property rights owners can receive the assistance of customs authorities to prevent imports of counterfeit and pirated goods.

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