



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Geographical Indication Products In India: Recent Trends With Special Reference To North- Eastern States

**Dr. Nupur Kalita**

Assistant Professor, Department of Accountancy  
Nalbari Commerce College  
Nalbari, Assam

### Abstract:

Geographical Indication Tag serves as a form of intellectual property that protects the unique qualities and reputation of products associated with specific regions, ensuring authenticity and preserving cultural heritage. Geographical Indication (GI) can be a powerful tool, not just to protect this treasure but to unlock their economic potential. By recognizing and identifying this distinctive product, GI tagging presents a unique opportunity to create brand identity, command premium prices, empower local communities, ultimately contributing to a stronger and more vibrant Indian economy. The North Eastern States of India, despite their rich cultural heritage in traditional art and crafts, unique agricultural and natural products have a least number of GI Tag registered products in comparisons to other states of India. Besides that, some states like Tripura and Nagaland got GI Tag so lately even though government implements GI Tag in the year 2005. Therefore, the researcher tries to investigate the reasons why North Eastern States lagging behind in GI Tag registration in comparisons to other states of India. By bridging this gap between inherent potential and current GI registration, North Eastern India can not only elevate the economic prospects of the region but also ensure global recognition for its remarkable products. This in turn, fosters a more sustainable and equitable future for its talented artisans, producers and region vibrant cultural heritage and unique agricultural product.

Key words: GI Tag, challenges, economic prospects, global market.

### Introduction:

Geographical Indications Tag or Sign used on Natural, agricultural or manufactured products which originates from a specific geographical location and possesses higher qualities or recognition due to place of origin. India's rich cultural heritage and local wisdom offer a unique product that possesses immense economic potential. To protect our unique qualities and reputation of products associated with specific regions, ensuring authenticity and preserving cultural heritage geographical Inductions Tags serves as a form of intellectual property. GI Tags play a crucial role in safeguarding India's rich heritage of products, promoting sustainable economic development and empowering both producers and customers

Meaning of Geographical Indications: Sec 2 (1) (E) of the Geographical Indications of goods (registered and Protection act 1999) provides a definition for a Geographical Indications as “a sign used on products that identifies such goods as agricultural, natural or manufactured goods originating or manufactured in a specific geographical territory, region or locality where a given quality, reputation or other characteristics of such goods is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.

This act establishes a legal framework for GI registration and protection, prevents unauthorized use of GI and promote Indian GI products in export Market.

It is governed and directed by WTO agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). The tag conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness of which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin. This agreement establish in 1995, mandated member state to provide legal protection for Geographical Indications in relation to goods means an indications which identifies goods such as Agricultural goods , natural goods or manufactured goods as originating or manufactured in the territory of county or a region or locality in that territory where a given quality or reputation or other characteristics of such goods essentially attributable to its geographical origin and place where such goods are manufactured goods one of the activities either the production or of processing or of preparation of the goods Geographical Indications. To comply with the TRIPS agreement India enacted the GI of goods Registration and Protection Act in 1999. These acts serve as the primary legal framework for GI registration and protection in India which came into force on September 15, 2003.

### **Research Methodology:**

The research study is descriptive and qualitative in nature which is based on secondary sources of data collected from various research journals, newspapers and web resources published by government of India.

### **Review of Literature:**

Bowen and Zapata (2000) conducted a case study on tequila city which was recognized by Mexican Government in 1974 states that local farmers continue to face economic instability even after establishment of Geographical Indications. He suggests that more inclusive and ecologically sensitive approaches are necessary to retain the full benefit of Geographical Indications for communities and environment.

Calveto et al. (2021) review offers valuable insights into how GIs can influence markets , consumer behavior and rural development. The review explores how GIs contribute to factors like job creation, income generations and infrastructure development in rural areas.

Swati Sarma (2019) in her paper “Geographical Indications of India: Current Scenario and their product distribution explain the various GI Tag Products and their growth in India”. Maximum number of GI tag product registered in the year 2008-09 and the Karnataka has highest number of GI tag product.

From the existing literature it is found that there are several research studies which primarily focus on growth and development of GI tag product with limited attention paid to the specific challenges faced by consumers and producers in North- Eastern states.

Therefore, the researcher tries to investigate the reasons why North Eastern States lagging behind in GI Tag registration in comparisons to other states of India. By bridging this gap this research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of GI landscape in North Eastern States and inform strategies for promoting GI registration across the country.

### **Geographical Indications (GI) Registered Products In India:**

In India, the geographical Indication of goods (registration and protection) Act of 1999 governs the registration and protection of GI Tag. Under this act Department of Industry promotion of Internal Trade (DIPIT) is a registry division which is responsible for issuing GI Tag and further safeguarding this unique

product. These Tags play a crucial role in protecting and promoting the distinctive products and cultural heritage of various region of India. The GI Registrar Office is located at Chennai which processes and register GI applications. The Tag was first given to Darjeeling tea.

Till December, 2023 only 643 products have been registered as per the GI Registry as against 1167 application received against the Intellectual Property Rights. During 2023-24 total 160 products were granted GI Tag as against 65 products in 2022-23 which is more than 400%.

India's Geographical Indications (GI) landscape is flourishing, boasting over 643 registered products as of December, 2023. Uttar Pradesh leads with 75 GI tags followed by Tamilnadu (61), Karnataka (50), Maharashtra (47), Andhra Pradesh (41), Kerala (39), West Bengal (39), Gujrat (38), Odisha (33), Assam (31) as against this some states like Sikkim (1), Tripura (4), Manipur (7), Mizoram (7) and Meghalaya have least number of GI tag registration. Within the state, Varanasi stands out for having the highest number of GI products from a single location, totalling 30. According to the Controller General of Patents, Designs, and Trademarks (CGPDTM), as of December, 2023, 635 Indian items have been awarded GI tags as against 1158 applications were submitted last 20 years.

#### **Classification of total number of goods receiving GI tag up to December, 2023**

Classification of goods	Total number of GI Tag	Percentage of Gi Tag
handicraft	343	53.334
Agricultural goods	200	31.90
Manufacturing goods	50	7.77
Food and Stuff	44	6.84
Natural Goods	3	0.4
Total	643	100

**Source:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Government of India)

Till December, 2023 total 643 numbers of Goods receiving GI Tag In India where agricultural goods and handicraft product received highest GI Tag. Recently On December, 2023, patent office awarded GI tags to 160 products, in which Uttarpradesh (69) and Tamil Nadu (58) is the leading States. Tamil Nadu was the state with the highest number of GI tag registrations last year. The Patent Office reports that on December, 2023, record 63 GI tags were issued in a single day. The greatest quantity of goods eligible for GI tags came from Assam: Nineteen items, Gujarat (5), Maharashtra (16), Uttar Pradesh (16), Meghalaya (4), and Tripura (2).

#### **Geographical Indications (GI) Registered Products In North Eastern States:**

A review of Geographical Indications Tag Products reveals a discrepancy between north eastern states and other established region. North Eastern states have significant number of GI Tag products in comparison to other states of India. This disparity may steam from historical emphasis on preserving traditional practices within the region or potentially limited awareness and resources for pursuing formal GI registration. The North Eastern Regional Agricultural marketing corporations (NERAMAC) is actively promoting GI registration and a significant increase in GI Tagged product from North East In 2023. The Patent Office reports that on December, 2023, record 63 GI tags were issued in a single day out of which the greatest quantity of goods eligible for GI tags came from Assam: (19) items, Meghalaya (4), and Tripura (2) from North Eastern States and rest are from other states like Gujarat (5), Maharashtra (16), Uttar Pradesh (16). This trend not only validates the unique qualities of North East India's agricultural offerings but also paves the way for their rightful place of prominence on national GI landscape.

The North Eastern States of India are renowned for their rich cultural heritage reflected in their traditional art and crafts and indigenous agricultural practices. The region is famous for its exquisite bamboo and cane work, intricate silk weaving and vibrant textiles with each state offering unique contributions like Assam Muga Silk, Manipur bleeh pottery and Nagaland tribal shawls. Handicrafts such as bell metal and brass metal item of Assam, wood carving in Arunachal Pradesh and Kaucha crafts in Manipur showcases the artisan's skill. Besides that, some agricultural goods like Naga Mircha, Tripura

Pine apple, assam kajeer, neem and majic rice has tremendous scope for exporting the goods at premium prices.

The following table shows product wise classification of GI Tag in North Eastern states:

Classification of goods	Assam	Arunachal Pradesh	Manipur	Meghalaya	Tripura	Nagaland	Mizoram
Handicraft	19	9	3	2	2		5
Agricultural goods	12	4	4	1	1	4	2
Manufacturing Goods	-	4	-	1	1		
Food and Stuff	-	1	-	1	-		
Natural goods	-	-	-	1	-		
Total	31	20	7	6	4	4	7

**Source:** Data Compiled from Geographical Indications Registry Publications up to 2023.

### **Economic Prospects of Geographical Indication Tag Product in North -East India:**

The significance of GI tags lies in their ability to promote rural development by empowering regional producers and enhancing the value of their products. GIs can establish premium brand prices, boosting local employment opportunities and facilitating the promotion of these products from the domestic market to the international market.

### **Legal Protection to Products from Specific Region:**

Geographical Indications (GI) tags offer legal safeguards against the unauthorized exploitation of traditional knowledge and the misuse of registered names, thereby ensuring the protection of products originating from specific regions and help in eliminating counterfeiting.

### **Preservation of Rich Cultural Heritage:**

Geographical Indications (GI) tags play a crucial role in the preservation of cultural heritage by providing legal recognition and protection to products that have specific geographical origins and possess qualities or reputation are inherently linked to that location. India is well known for its rich culture and heritage which can be established with the help of GI Tag and safeguarding products inherently tied to their geographical origins.

### **Enhancing Agricultural Prosperity:**

Agriculture stands as the backbone of India's economy, with various regions specializing in the cultivation of unique crops, each possessing distinctive characteristics. Geographical Indications provide a platform for farmers to showcase and protect their produce, leading to enhanced marketability and augmenting their income.

### **Opening Avenues for Rural Entrepreneurship:**

Geographical Indications within Indian communities act as catalyst for rural entrepreneurship by safeguarding unique products. This protection fosters opportunities for entrepreneurs to engage in value addition, niche marketing, and the development of associated industries. As a result, this leads to job creation, the establishment of small-scale enterprises, and the expansion of economic activities in rural areas.



### **Economic Benefits by Providing Quality Assurance:**

The GI label serves as a guarantee of quality for consumers, who can trust that they are purchasing a product with distinctive attribute linked to its geographic origin. It assures consumer that the products originate from a specific region and possess the unique qualities associated with that place which can lead to consumer trust and confidence.

Recognition of Geographical Indications enables producers to command higher prices for their products because of the perceived quality and authenticity linked to them. This can lead to increased demand and prices which benefited local producer communities for better market access both domestically and internationally.

### **Promotes Sustainable Rural Development:**

By expanding the market for region-specific products, GI tags improve the livelihoods of rural artisans and farmers. They protect and promote unique products and traditional knowledge, driving rural development. Sustainable rural development is a significant benefit of GIs in Indian communities, as their recognition and protection create economic opportunities that help prevent migration to urban areas. The economic activities linked to GI products, such as agriculture, handicrafts, and traditional industries, become central to local development, fostering sustainable growth in rural regions.

### **International Recognition and Global Market Access:**

Geographical Indications (GIs) enable products to gain international recognition, opening up new markets and enhancing their global competitiveness. GIs provide global market access by highlighting products as unique and authentic to their regions. This recognition increases the export potential of these products, boosting the country's foreign exchange earnings.

### **Challenges for GI Tag Registration in North-East India:**

**Lack of Awareness:** Majority of producers and consumers especially in rural areas unaware of the benefit and process of obtaining GI tag. As per government registered record most of the registrations are against the government authorities name instead of producers and artists. It clearly indicates that majority people don't know how to file an application, where to file and how to prevent infringement activities if going on. Due to lack of awareness total numbers of individual proprietorship GI tag registration is very less all over India.

**Legal Challenges:** To comply with the TRIPS agreement India enacted the GI of goods Registration and Protection Act in 1999. This act serves as the primary legal framework for GI registration and protection in India which came into force on September 15, 2003. This act mainly introduced for effective enforcement of GI Products which promises to provide

1. Adequate protection to the producing GI Goods
2. Protection of consumers and producers from unauthorized use of GI Tag
3. Promotion of goods bearing GI on international market.

But in reality there is no any agency available to monitor post GI mechanism in India. It doesn't lay much emphasis in inspection and mechanism for GI protection. Due to which competitors try to free ride over its reputation.

**Complex application process:** Obtaining a geographical indication tag is a complex process and time consuming process that involves multiple stages and adherence to strict criteria. From the flowchart of GI tag registration process in India anyone can understand the lengthiness due to the time lag involved in the process of registration. First an application must be submitted to the GI registry, providing detailed information about the product including its unique characteristics and geographical origin. This application undergoes through examination by the registry, including public scrutiny, to ensure there are no objections. This is followed by expert evaluation to confirm that product indeed has qualities or

reputation attributable to its geographical origin. In India most of the applications are pending in registration process which discourages producers

**Maintaining quality control and standard:** GI tagging product validity is only for 10 years. After completion of validity it may again renewed if someone maintain consistent level of quality and specific attributes associated with the product. In some cases, variation in product quality can occur basically on agriculture sector due to factors like changes in temperature, rainfall pattern, soil condition and farming practices. Achieving and maintain consistency possess a significant role. In reality local farmers still face lot of problems even after getting GI Tag. It standardized their quality that matches with GI Tag specifications.

**Distance from GI registration office:** The centralization of the geographical indication registered office in Chennai can create significant challenges for other state which are far apart from Chennai. Decentralizing the process or establishing regional offices could alleviate these issues and make the benefits of GI registration more accessible to all eligible producers across the country.

**Marinating cost:** Producers with a GI tag might need to maintain detailed record of their production process and undergo regular inspections. This adds administrative burden and potential cost.

**Technical challenges:** Due to advancement of technology lots of sophisticated tools have been developed in the market where one can copy an item in such a way that it is impossible to differentiate the common people between the original one and duplicate one. This is not only thread for the authorized producers of the product but also for consumers because on the one hand where the authorized producers get deprived from the benefits of the products which on the other hand consumers also get cheated.

**Geographical challenges:** A lot of ambiguities arise related with the special location to be considered as a region place for specific products as it create lot of problem. In our country seven states GI Tag like Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi regions have been considered as the basmati rice growing region but now Madhya Pradesh within the country and Pakistan outside the countries also claiming for it.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions:**

Undoubtedly a great disparity is there between states in India regarding GI registration. On the one hand there are some states like Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu who are performing so well while on the other hand there are states like Jharkhand, having no GI, and Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura having only significant numbers of GI registered products. So major steps are required to be taken in order to correct it so that potential of GI can be utilized effectively for fastening the pace of growth and development of the country and the government can play an important role in it.

- To solve the technical difficulties in monitoring the instances of infringement, introduction of strong GI mechanism is the need of an hour at domestic and international level. A robust enforcement mechanism is required in both domestic and international to prevent unauthorised use of GI Tag
- There is only one GI Registration office at Chennai for which it is difficult to communicate some states which are far apart from Chennai. Establishing regional offices could alleviate these issues and make the benefits of GI registration more accessible to all eligible producers across the country.
- Consumers and producers basically in rural areas are not aware about the benefit of GI tag product. In order to overcome from the social challenge, it is a need of hour to take the expedite measure for spreading GI awareness through organising workshop and training program for upgrading the skills of weaver and manufacturers from rural area.
- Provide export subsidies to poor producers and artisans. To address the costs associated with marketing and monitoring, the government should provide export subsidies to poor producers and artisans. This support would help them remain competitive in the international market, protect their Geographical Indications (GIs), and manage economic expenses.

**References:**

1. Aggarwal R., Singh H. and Prasher S (2014) “Branding of Geographical Indications of India, A paradigm to sustain its premium value” International Journal of Law and Management. Vol. 56 No. 6 PP 431-442
2. Bowen, S., & Zapata, A. V. (2009). Geographical Indications, Terroir and Socio-economic and Ecological Sustainability: The Case of Tequila. Journal of Rural Studies, 25(1), 108-119
3. Calvao M., Narciso G and Lafuente E (2021) Understanding the Real World Impact on Geographical Indications: A Critical Review of the Empirical Economic Literature (WIPO)
4. Das K. (2010) Prospects and Challenges of geographical Indications of India. The journal of world Intellectual Property. Vol. 13 p 148-201
5. Sarma S. (2019) “Geographical Indications of India: Current Scenario and their Product Distribution.” International Journal of Social Sciences and Economic Research. ISSN 2455-8834. Vol 4
6. Vats N. K. (2016) “Geographical Indications the factors of rural development and Strengthening Economy, Journal of Intellectual Property Rights. P 347-354
7. Youkta K. and Nupur S (2020) “Issues and challenges of Geographical Indications of India: Opportunities and Challenges”. EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research vol 6, issue 10. DOI: <https://doi.org/1036713/epra>

