



PROMOTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS: A CATALYST FOR RURAL ECONOMIC GROWTH IN INDIA

Prof. Md. Rahmatullah

Professor, Department of Law, AMU, Aligarh

rahmataligarh@gmail.com

Mohammad Tabish

Research Scholar, Department of Law, AMU, Aligarh

mtabish93@gmail.com

Paper Received On: 20 July 2024

Peer Reviewed On: 24 August 2024

Published On: 01 September 2024

Abstract

Geographical indications are products of a special kind, which are known for their uniqueness, reputation, and properties that are inherent to them just because of the geographical place they come from. In India, the promotion of GIs has emerged as a vital strategy for driving rural economic growth, leveraging the distinctive attributes of regional products to enhance their value and competitiveness. Firstly, one way GI promotion can address this is by encouraging the preservation of traditional knowledge which will thereby make it possible to reward preserving ancient practices handed over through generations in rural areas. These traditional practices when recognized and protected by GIs sustain rural livelihoods and cultural heritage. Secondly, focusing on distinctiveness in characteristics and origin of GI products ensures improved value addition giving room for higher prices that enable farmers to earn more income. By increasing value added not only do individual producers gain but it also triggers general economic expansion in rural areas.

Moreover, pursuing GI status implies investing in infrastructure plus technology improvements that would lead to an overall improvement in rural infrastructures which is sustainable too. Thus, this paper examines how GIs are used within India and also in International markets, how the government is doing their branding, and how they can be proved to be catalysts for the enhancement of the rural economy. The aim is also to create awareness of why GIs matter for rural development through marketing, illustrating how these can support local communities while preserving their cultural heritage.

Keywords: *Intellectual Property, Geographical Indications, Rural Economic Growth, Sustainable development, Promotion of GI, International Trade.*

Introduction:

Geographical Indications (GIs) are special signs that identify products as coming from a particular place and possessing some unique qualities, reputation, or other features attributable to that place. Consider famous examples such as Darjeeling tea, Coorg Orange of Karnataka, Mysore betel Leaf, Malabar Paper, Allahbadi Surkha Guava, Naga Chilli, and Fazli Mango of West Bengal. GIs are valuable because they help in the identification of quality, localization, and cultural heritage. For rural areas, GIs are of great significance since they make it possible for local producers to come up with products that stand out in the market and therefore can fetch higher prices. In general, consumers tend to pay more for traditional products bearing a GI label since they trust in their quality and authenticity.

In the national and global marketplace, products of Geographical Indications serve as a symbol of its territory's identity which tells stories of abilities, past, and eminence. They are more significant in international markets since they lead to an increase in export growth and control over the markets of the country. Consequently, this positive trend is also felt outside cities hence enhancing rural-based economies.

Objectives of the Study:

The purpose of this research is to explore the significance of GIs in fostering rural economic development in India and their influence on international markets. In particular, the study plans to investigate how GI promotion can contribute to safeguarding indigenous knowledge, ensuring a sustainable development pattern for grassroots societies, and protecting traditional identities. It also intends to establish if unique features of products with GIs permit high-value add-ons as well as increased farmer incomes hence catalyzing rural growth at large. The other aim is to examine the Indian government's branding strategies for GI products with respect to how they enhance rural economies.

Ultimately, through these objectives, the researchers expect that their findings will help policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders involved in regional product marketing and rural development understand better how GIs could be used as a stimulus for enhancing India's rural economy.

Literature Review:

The research tries to unveil the multifaceted benefits of protecting GIs, elucidating their profound impact on rural development and social, economic, and environmental facets. While acknowledging certain short-term interventions and methodological shortcomings, prior

investigations collectively underscore the pivotal role of GIs in guiding future research and practices.

The establishment of the Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act in India in 1999, enforced from September 15th, 2003, signifies a significant step towards safeguarding these GI Products.

Thomas (2013) delves into the economic competitiveness fostered by GIs, highlighting marketing, distribution, branding, and promotion as indispensable tools for recognizing the profitable potential of Indian GI products in the global market.

Ojha (2017) highlights the nexus between GIs and rural development, particularly focusing on the economic impact of protecting fruit crops in India. The study emphasizes the heightened contribution of protected GI products towards the development of designated regions, emphasizing the superior quality and profitability enjoyed by GI producers compared to their non-GI counterparts.

Bardhi et al. (2017) extend the discourse to Northern Albania, demonstrating how the protection of GIs nurtures sustainable rural development. Their study reveals how GIs serve as catalysts for economic activities and settlement in rural areas, elevating the livelihoods of inhabitants. By communicating the origin and quality of products directly to consumers, GIs obviate the need for substantial investments in technology and advertising, thus offering a cost-effective avenue for rural development.

In sum, the literature highlights the active role of GIs in enhancing rural economic development, underscoring their potential to increase socio-economic well-being, environmental sustainability, and consumer confidence. These insights serve as guiding ideals for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners alike, as they understand the importance of promoting and protecting geographical indications for the prosperity of rural communities.

Research Methodology:

In order to approach the above-stated objectives of the study, a combination of doctrinal plus comparative legal research techniques, a review of existing laws, and bilateral and multilateral agreements have been adopted, while an extensive literature review has been done on the subject. The doctrinal method involves a descriptive and analytical study of how India applies its GI law across borders; whereas, comparative law in this study looks at the transnational application of Ugandan, African, and European Union GI Law for which relevant materials have been collected from various primary as well as secondary sources. The primary sources are, relevant national as well as international legislative instruments like, the *Geographical*

Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999; The Competition Act, 2002; Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) Agreement; India- European Union Agreement on Geographical Indications; National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy, 2016; Other Bilateral, Multilateral, and Free Trade Agreements, etc. Secondary sources of the work include various books, journals, magazines, Articles, newspapers, and websites. The researcher has also visited various GI fairs organized by the government and stakeholders for the promotion of Indian GI products pertaining to the research study.

Importance of Geographical Indications (GIs) in Ensuring Rural Development in India:

Prevention of Migration: Geographical Indications (GIs) could be a valuable instrument for promoting rural development in India. Research shows that properly employed, GIs can dramatically improve rural economies. This presents an opportunity for regional producers on how their goods can be distinguished from others for the betterment of the whole society. Most often these additional values result in premium prices of GI products, hence, contributing to job creation and preventing migration of people from rural areas to towns.

Enhancement in Tourism Sector: There are other advantages coming along with GIs apart from mere economic considerations. GI products often pull along with them other things like tourism and gastronomy, which help to bring out the overall culture and social setting of a given region. By making visible local origin and traditional foodstuffs, GIs enhance territorial identity that makes people feel they belong somewhere.

In India's case, GIs are an extremely promising approach towards rural development. Consequently, diverse groups within society such as producers and consumers can benefit from protection given to geographical indications. While these GIs assist in keeping alive traditional craftsmanship and creating opportunities for economic growth at bottom level. The subject of Geographical Indicators (GIs) has great potential in terms of rural development when it comes to India because they provide possibilities for diversification and activities aimed at various population groups ranging from producers all through consumers. The existence of product names such as 'Kanchivaram Silk' or 'Muga Silk' sarees which stand for Tamil Nadu or Assam respectively underlines this fact not only preserving traditional crafts but opening paths for economic growth from below country's areas towards empowerment.

Nevertheless, realizing the full potential of GIs in India requires collective commitment from different stakeholders. To facilitate registration and protection of GIs effective institutional frameworks are necessary that include legal regulations and support mechanisms. Furthermore, there should be capacity building initiatives as well as awareness campaigns aimed at educating

producers and consumers on the importance of GIs so as to create a culture of appreciation for local traditions and craftsmanship.

Significance, Essentiality, and Reasoning Behind Branding for GI Products:

However, a brand is not clearly defined in the GI products of India's agricultural sector even though it is one of the most important concepts. By definition, some have narrowly interpreted a brand to mean a name, words, mark or design that distinguishes a product and the maker from others. On the other hand, some authors describe it more broadly as any aspect that differentiates one product from another. Therefore, branding guarantees quality and consistency while meeting customer needs.

Creating an origin-based brand is crucial for manufacturers and exporters to ensure profitability of their products through Geographical Indication (GI). This term helps buyers identify their favorite things including attributes, place of production or origin as well as usage. In addition to acting as quality assurance and guaranteeing authenticity to consumers; brands help in combating counterfeiting activities which are unfair competition practices. More purchases result due to increased confidence brought about by superior branded items meaning customers prefer such sellers more than others.

Like what happens worldwide, Indian agricultural settings have a custom of branding when marketing their products. Some local and international well-liked brands include Basmati rice, Alphonso mangoes, Darjeeling tea, Nagpur Oranges and Allahabadi Surkha Guava among others. Nevertheless, unlike African countries which face similar challenges; lack of brand strategy has at times undermined the potential benefits of such unique agricultural products. For instance the Ugandan vanilla example is comparable to that of India. India is known for producing top quality spices like vanilla but the stakeholders in the supply chain often get limited premium price for their distinctive produce in the global market. Consequently, it is pivotal to address this problem from an Indian perspective so as to maximize its agricultural products.

There are several reasons why branding is important for Indian agricultural products. Brands capitalize on the unique product's goodwill and reputation as consumers are ready to pay premiums for such brand names. It has been known through research that consumers can pay higher prices for distinctive goods sold under branded merchandise, including geographical indications or origin brands. For instance, a study conducted by the European Commission estimated an increase of 12% in the global sales value of products registered under geographical indications only within European Union reaching €54.3 billion.

Efficient branding in order to enhance farmers' incomes triggers a domino effect on the development of rural India by mitigating poverty levels and restraining people flow from rural areas to urban centres as well as propelling farmers to save natural resources around them. Again, the harmonization of branding and marketing strategies with various other development policies, strategies and programs that are prevalent in India make up a bigger picture for sustainable agriculture practices on top of economic growth.

Recent Branding and Promoting Initiatives in India:

This is aligned with the policy goals and objectives of 2016 National Intellectual Property Rights Policy, which focused on promoting GIs throughout India. To implement the objectives of the policy, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) established Cell for Intellectual Property and Management (CIPAM). As a result, it completely focuses on IPRs issues including GI's. CIPAM runs sensitization programs about IPRs that include GIs in schools, colleges and universities as well as industry. Moreover, CIPAM organizes training and sensitization activities directed at enforcement agencies or judiciary to ensure a better understanding and enforcement of IPR rights. For example, it plays a coordinating role within the department by ensuring effective IPR enforcement strategies as well as identifying best practices for improving commercialization in India in knowledge-based industries.

In addition to the above, in the IPR Policy Management Scheme which covers FY 2022-23 to 2024-25, the Government has made Rs 75 crores available for three years. These funds are specifically earmarked for various programs and events that will create awareness regarding importance of GIs, promote Indian GIs registered, identify potential GIs, and encourage stakeholders to apply for registration. It is against this background that such monetary commitment demonstrates government's seriousness in creating an atmosphere conducive for development of Geographical Indications protection and promotion within its territory.

The country has successfully implemented branding and marketing strategies towards their globalization. Some of these unique GI tagged items have been promoted by India with special emphasis on their economic development impact, cultural conservation as well as international recognition.

1. India Geographical Indications Fair 2022:

The India GI Fair which took place in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh is a composite GIs holder's intellectual heritage and GI-tagged products. The event that happened between August 26th - 28th, 2022 aimed at providing international markets to these invaluable local items aimed at quality-conscious customers. This year's fair had over three hundred ninety GI-tagged products

showcased from thirty-one states including union territories. These included B2B opportunities, retail sales, and many product segments during the India GI Fair. There were several theme areas at the exhibition that focused on the clusters and hubs for GIs; live demonstrations of making processes of GIs; fashion parades with current products made under Geographical Indications (GIs) label; educational seminars covering all aspects of human knowledge, cultural entertainment events by different regions in India, instant quiz competitions and presentation of awards to winners. This holistic approach was aimed at enhancing consumer awareness as well as trade facilitation for unique Indian GIs.

2. India Geographical Indications Fair 2023:

GI fair India was scheduled from July 20 to July 24, 2023, it provided all GI-tagged products in one place. Here was a unique chance of seeing and buying things from various parts of the country including very far away borders and deep hinterlands. For instance, this comprehensive show exhibits different Indian GIs starting with Assam's Tea and Muga Silk up to Maharashtra's Oranges and Wines.

3. Geographical Indications Fair India 2023 Pavilion at India International Trade Fair:

The venue for the largest Geographical Indication Pavilion in the world for the year 2023 was India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida which hosted the 42nd edition of India International Trade Fair (IITF) 2023. Through this move, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India showed the nation's adherence to its policy on support for GI products. At least two hundred other GIs were displayed by more than six hundred artisans representing twenty-eight different Indian states and UTs at the pavilion during this exhibition which had over two thousand GIs. This demonstrated that many ranges such as food and agriculture to handlooms or handicrafts could be found in the fair thus reflecting rich traditional heritage soul of India.

4. Geographical Indication Handicrafts Festival at Delhi Haat, INA:

In the month of September 2019, the festival of geographical indication handicrafts took place in Delhi haat which highlighted the cultural relevance of GIs. The show concentrated mainly on some select GI crafts and textiles; it failed to exhibit other varieties of certified GI foods products. However, it was a good beginning in sensitizing consumers on importance of GI products; supporting artisans and preserving genuineness of Indian traditional handloom and handicraft.

5. Bangalore GI Tagged Product Festival:

The GI Tagged Product Festival was held in Bangalore from 30th October to 1st November 2021 with the aim of giving consumers an experience of over 150 GI-tagged products ranging from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. The festival sought to underscore the myriad of products that have obtained the status of GIs apart from providing a forum for interaction between producers, consumers and other stakeholders.

National IPR Policy 2016 and Rural Economic Development through GI Protection:

India's efforts in promoting innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship while safeguarding and promoting intellectual property rights are highly commendable hence the National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy 2016 is a significant milestone. The policy is aimed at aligning the Indian IPR framework with global norms for addressing diverse challenges and taking advantage of opportunities available in IP.

Acknowledging Geographical Indications (GIs) as an essential part of intellectual property rights, the National IPR Policy 2016 underscores the social, economic, and cultural significance of GIs, recognizing their potential to drive sustainable agriculture, rural development, and tourism. Additionally, it recognizes that there is a need to develop strong legal frameworks for GIs, create administrative structures, and deliver awareness programs around them. It also emphasizes the role of stakeholder collaboration involving government agencies, industry associations, and community organizations in empowering the GI ecosystem to ensure the sustainable development of rural areas.

Benefits of the Protection and Promotion of GI in Rural Development:

Through the Geographical Indications Protection the society will be benefitted in several ways as explained below:

Economical	The GI protection will help in local production and become profitable from a business perspective which will increase its demand.
Employment	Naturally with an increase in more demand for production there will be a necessity for more production calling for more personnel resulting into more jobs and less rural labour emigration.
Governance	This means there will be more involvement of government officials and regulatory bodies as far as geographical indications are concerned. Local population should be supported to participate in governance. The continued preservation of geographical indications would lead to increased regional cooperation and empowered local institutions.
Environmental	In addition to this it also helps towards the conservation of biodiversity; preservation of the environment and common resources within the region.

Cultural	More GI protection is a way of preserving quality, and traditional know-how on processing, and production within the locality. Opening up space for additional products related to geography, climatic conditions etc.
Educational	It will also enhance heritage awareness and value for nature and mind, thus encouraging belongingness spreading and making education friendly.
Societal	Protection of geographical indications unquestionably uplifts the living standard, per capita income and educated society.

Issues and Challenges:

Geographical Indications (GIs) are significant contributors to the economic upliftment of rural areas, more so in a country as varied and culturally rich such as India. On the contrary, there are various challenges and problems that hinder their full potential in enhancing rural development.

1. Legal Complexities and Protection: The legal environment surrounding GIs is labyrinthine particularly when it comes to registration and enforcement both at home and abroad. Foreign registration poses a big hurdle to GIs due to different legal structures that may entail substantial financial investments. In this respect, Indian GI products face unfair competition domestically as well as passing off situations elsewhere thus undermining market integrity. It is important to ensure strong legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms that can protect GIs and support rural economic development.

2. Enforcement and Market Access: Despite endeavours by such organizations as Tea Board of India, GI enforcement remains a persistent obstacle. Nevertheless, there are counterfeits and infringements threatening the genuineness of items like Darjeeling tea and Banarasi sarees thereby impacting negatively on rural producers. Nonetheless, overseas enforcement are particularly made difficult by the need for substantial funds. For this reason, it is necessary to strengthen international cooperation and improve monitoring mechanisms to effectively address these difficulties.

3. Brand-building and Marketing: A strong brand image creation as well as effective marketing strategies are crucial in ensuring successful commercialization of geographical indications products however, they come with high resource investment costs and take long periods to be realized. The presence of inconsistencies in terms of quality control systems also may worsen marketing challenges thus decreasing customer confidence as well as premium pricing ability. As a result, tailored marketing approaches coupled with strict quality checks are necessary to boost the competitiveness of geographical indications (GIs) both locally and globally.

4. Unfair Competition and Passing Off: Geographical indications have come under threat from deceitful businesspeople who undermine buyer reliance in misusing these indicators for their own profits, thereby putting at risk rural producers' capacity to create wealth. Therefore, there is an urgent need to educate the public and tighten up on those who manufacture such products.

5. Cross-Border Cooperation and Harmonization: The growing world interdependence also calls for cross-border cooperation as well as harmonization of standards of GI protection. These challenges are further compounded by variations in legal systems and enforcement mechanisms across jurisdictions that result in difficulties faced by GI producers. Consequently, ensuring transparency within supply chains through certification schemes could help curb such market distortions, thus enhancing sustained growth prospects for rural enterprises, especially in this global era of unfair competition practices.

Conclusion and Suggestions:

The role of Geographical Indications (GIs) in India's rural economic growth is an ongoing investigation that highlights their importance as a means of preserving cultural heritage, achieving economic development, and promoting environmental sustainability. Showing its increased interest in GI products on the international market, India has taken various initiatives to promote them through branding as well as marketing. Such events like the India GI Fair have immensely contributed to economic development while conserving cultural heritage by showcasing a wide variety of GI-tagged products. Moreover, the integration of GIs into the National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy 2016 demonstrates India's commitment to safeguarding indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity.

Nevertheless, challenges remain including registration and enforcement problems both at home and abroad as well as making substantial investments in branding and marketing. In order to overcome these challenges and expand further promotion of GI products, several recommendations are made:

- **The Need for International Collaborations:** India should consider working with other countries and global institutions so that foreign registration and enforcement of GIs can be streamlined to enhance the global protection of these products.
- **Increased Awareness and Capacity Building:** There must be a continuous process of capacity building and raising awareness about Geographical Indications (GIs) targeted at producers, traders, and consumers to boost recognition and understanding.

- **Improved Mechanisms for Enforcement:** In order to effectively fight counterfeiting as well as infringement on GI products, India should institute dedicated law enforcement agencies; come up with stringent penalties against offenders; and improve cooperation among the stakeholders.
- **Individualized Marketing Approaches:** Maximizing the commercial potential of such products will entail developing customized marketing strategies focusing on their distinctiveness, and heritage through digital platforms, storytelling, and experiential marketing.
- **Quality Checks and Certification Services:** For G.I products to maintain premium prices in the market there is a need for consistent quality control mechanisms together with certification programs that shall help build consumer confidence in them.
- **Inclusive Development Policies:** The combining of wider policies in development with growth in GI sales strategies, would lead to an inclusive and empowering rural areas development as well as safeguarding socio-cultural heritage.

These challenges should be dealt with and the recommended actions implemented if India is to keep up the pace of promoting its GI products globally and tapping into her cultural heritage potential. This will involve collaboration, enhanced enforcement mechanisms, and specific marketing initiatives that can strengthen India's position as a global leader in GI while promoting economic growth and sustaining cultural integrity.

References

- Ahuja, V. K. (2004). *PROTECTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE*. *Journal of the Indian Law Institute*, 46(2), 269–287. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43951907>
- Awad, B., & Cadogan, M. S. (2017). *The Development of Legal Protection for GIs around the World. In CETA and the Future of Geographical Indications Protection in Canada (pp. 4–7)*. Centre for International Governance Innovation. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep15528.9>
- Bilge Dogan & Ummuhan Gokovali. (2012). *Geographical Indications: The Aspects of Rural Development and Marketing Through the Traditional Products*.
- Bilge Dogan & Ummuhan Gokovali. (2012). *Geographical Indications: The Aspects of Rural Development and Marketing Through the Traditional Products*.
- BOSE, C. (2015). *AUTHENTICATING THE CRAFT: Geographical Indication as the New History of the Telangana Scroll*. *India International Centre Quarterly*, 42(1), 109–122. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26316666>
- C. Niranjan Rao. (2005). *Geographical Indications in Indian Context: A Case Study of Darjeeling Tea*. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(42), 4545–4550. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4417300>
- Dani, K. (2014). *Geographical Indications. In Community Collective Marks: Status, Scope and Rivals in the European Signs Landscape (1st ed., pp. 32–49)*. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv941rjv.8>

- Dr. Ruppel W Sharma, & Shraddha Kulhari. (2015) *Marketing of GI Products: Unlocking Their Commercial Potential*.
- DUTFIELD, G. (2011). *GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS AND THEIR FEASIBILITY. In INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY TOOLS FOR PRODUCTS BASED ON BIOCULTURAL HERITAGE: A legal review of geographical indications, trademarks and protection from unfair competition* (pp. 14–21). International Institute for Environment and Development. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep01380.7>
- Gervais, D. (2012). *Traditional Innovation and the Ongoing Debate on the Protection of Geographical Indications. In P. Drahos & S. Frankel (Eds.), Indigenous Peoples' Innovation: Intellectual Property Pathways to Development* (pp. 121–146). ANU Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt24hfgx.12>
- Getachew Mengistie Alemu. (2019). *Strategic Use of Branding for Competitiveness: The Rationale for Branding and Marketing Agricultural Products of African Countries. Journal of Fair Trade*.
- Government of India. (2016) *The National Intellectual Property Rights Policy*. Ministry of Commerce & Industry, GOI.
- Mohamad Ayub Dar, & Megha Ojha. (2023). *Destination imaging, compatibilities with intellectual property rights-based tourism industry. The Journal of World Intellectual Property*.
- Moir, H. (2017). *Geographical Indications: An Assessment of EU Treaty Demands. In A. Elijah, D. Kenyon, K. Hussey, & P. van der Eng (Eds.), Australia, the European Union and the New Trade Agenda* (pp. 121–138). ANU Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1sq5ttx.12>
- Naresh Kumar Vats. (2016). *Geographical Indication-The Factors of Rural Development and Strengthening Economy. Journal of the Intellectual Property Rights*.
- Sunder, M. (2007). *The Invention of Traditional Knowledge. Law and Contemporary Problems*, 70(2), 97–124. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27592181>