

## Importance of the Geographical Indication of Traditional Handicraft with Reference to West Bengal, India

Gopal Halder<sup>1\*</sup>

**Abstract:** Handicraft activities occupy an important position in the economic structure of West Bengal. The West Bengal handicraft products have earned worldwide fame for their attractive designs, functional utility and high-quality craftsmanship. However, this sector has suffered a lot due to unorganized market, Lack of skilled workers, new technology and absence of brand image. So, in order to improve the production and branding of handicraft Geographical Indication is needed. Geographical Indication (GI) identifies a goods/product as originating in a particular region, where a particular quality of the good is attributable to its place of origin. GI will help West Bengal producers differentiate the uniqueness of the products from similar competing products, establish brand and goodwill of local products, make premium price for such products, and increase sales/export by protecting reputation of the products. The main objective of this research study is that importance of geographical Indication on the traditional handicraft products in West Bengal and also to provide awareness among the people on the importance of it in social upliftment for rural development. The study highlighted the present status of the GI registration in West Bengal and benefits from GI.

**Keywords:** *Geographic indication, Handicraft, unorganized, rural development and registration*

### INTRODUCTION:

West Bengal is a vast land of diverse landscape and people. West Bengal is also the state where beautiful hill station Darjeeling is situated, the holy river Ganga flows through this state and the UNESCO World Heritage site Sunderbans, the mangrove forest is also located here.

The state of West Bengal is famous throughout the world for its scenic beauty, healthy climate and craftsmanship skills. West Bengal, an eastern part of state in India, situated between the Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal, is the fourth most populous and thirteenth largest state. Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) is the Capital city of West Bengal retains architectural and cultural remnants of its past as East India Company's trading post and the capital of British Raj. Enhanced with flora and fauna, West Bengal's economy largely depends upon the agriculture and small and medium-sized enterprises. Currently, West Bengal has received 22 Geographical Indication (GI) Tags, latest being Madur kathi, the certificate of which was received on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2018. Textile is famous in West Bengal handicrafts along with Masks, Solapith, Dhokra craft, Terracotta craft, Rag dolls, Woodcarvings, Cane & bamboo crafts etc. West Bengal Crafts are beautiful and have created a niche for themselves in the handicraft market of India as well as international.

However, the handicraft sector has suffered due to its unorganized structure, informal, lack of skilled labour and lack of good education background, low capital, and poor exposure to new technologies, absence of market intelligence, poor infrastructure and institutional framework. So, it overcomes these problems Geographical indication can be a useful tool. GI will help West Bengal producers differentiate the uniqueness of the products from similar competing products, establish

---

<sup>1</sup> \*Assistant Professor in Economics, Burdwan Raj College, The University of Burdwan, Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal, India. Email Id: [gopal.halder1969@gmail.com](mailto:gopal.halder1969@gmail.com)

brand and goodwill of local products, fetch premium price for such products, and increase sales/export by protecting standing of the products. Geographical Indication (GI) identifies a good/product as originating in a particular region, where a particular quality of the good is attributable to its place of origin. The essence of GIs is that specific geographic locations yield product qualities that cannot be fake elsewhere. GI-registered product is produced using the GI technology (i.e., that the conditions of the area of production favour the attainment of quality). Some renowned GIs include Champagne, Tequila, Cognac, Pallar de Ica (Vegetable, Peru), Scotch whisky, Darjeeling tea, Cashmere wool, Havana cigar, Guacamayas (Handicrafts, Colombia). As these examples suggest, nearly all valuable GIs relate to agricultural products that many are European in origin. GI rights are granted to a community/country or to all producers within a designated production area who conform to the product specifications to meet unique product standards/quality. For example, Dhakai Jamdani is a traditional Bangladeshi origin product.

A study shows that Portuguese consumers are willing to pay up to a 30 per cent price premium for GI-labeled olive oil. GI offers the possibility to establish a niche market for GI products and they provide increased profits due to the recognition of GI products. The Tuscano olive oil producers in Italy commanded a 20 per cent premium price ever since its registration as a GI in 1998 (Origenandino, 2013). Producers of milk used for Comté cheese are paid 10 per cent over regular milk prices. In Mexico, the GI product Tequila increased the price of agaves and other domestic inputs, resulting in increased profits for Mexican producers (Babcock and Clemens, 2004). GI products could also identify or represent a country as a brand to the global market like "Tequila" or "Champagne," which identify Mexico and France respectively to the rest of the world.

### **Geographical Indications:**

Geographical Indications of Goods are defined as that aspect of industrial property, which refers to the geographical indication referring to a country or to a place situated therein as being the country or place of origin of that product. Under Articles 1 (2) and 10 of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, geographical indications are covered as an element of IPRs. Indeed, the GI tag bears an assurance of quality and uniqueness which is essentially attributable to the fact of its origin in that defined geographical locality, region or country. They are also covered under Articles 22 to 24 of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS), which was part of the Agreements concluding the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations. Promoters of Geographical indications regard them as strong tools for protecting their national property rights. However, consider GI tag as a barrier to trade.

### **GI Tag:**

A GI or Geographical Indication is a name or a sign given to certain products that relate to a specific geographical location or origins like a region, town or country. Using Geographical Indications may be viewed as a certification that the particular product is produced as per traditional methods, has certain specific qualities, or has a particular standing because of its geographical location or its origin.

### **Need of G I:**

G.I. is essential not only to save the particular product but the lots of people who are engaged in particular sector is benefited by the GI in different ways.

1. Saving Traditional Craft: GI helps in saving the traditional craft of our country. Its developments the particular products in the world in terms of quality and authenticity.
2. Providing livelihood opportunities: GI of a product helps livelihood opportunities to peoples who help of the minimising migration and getting good value of products.

3. To Increase Labor Intensive Workforce: Countries like India, China where population is more than 140 crores, the GI has a vital role by providing employment to masses of people of a particular sector especially handicraft and handlooms etc.
4. Accumulation of foreign capital or exchange, thus, to increase national income and G.D.P. of a country.

## **2. Review of Literature:**

Saqib & Sultan, (2013), in their study, they have mentioned that Geographical Indication (G.I) has emerged as one of the imperative instruments of intellectual property protection. Geographical Indication (G.I) is used worldwide as an instrument for marketing, branding and diversifying product portfolios. The paper aims to illustrate the prevailing practices of Jammu and Kashmir with respect to geographical indication. The paper also highlights on the potential of Geographical indications in Jammu & Kashmir. The paper concludes that most of these products are struggling with problems like absence of brand image. So, government needs to establish policies and mechanisms designed to identify products with potential for protection through geographical Indication registration, to raise awareness of society and to offer financial support for acquisition and exploration of new geographical Indications.

Albayrak, Mevhibe & Ozdemir, M. (2012), in their research paper, have explained that it is an important to aware the producers about the knowledge of geographical indication and also highlighted as it is an important tool of branding and protecting of handicraft of turkey.

Geographical Indication (G.I.) is a relatively novel but important instrument in intellectual property protection. The term “Geographical Indication” has been around for many decades, but it is actually since the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) entered into force in the mid-1990s, that it has come into widespread use.

According to the 1994 WTO Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement, Article 22, paragraph 1: Geographical indications are, for the purposes of this Agreement, indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a member, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation, or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin” (World Trade Organization, 1993).

## **Problems of the Research:**

1. Absence of brand image.
2. Growing competition from modern machine-made products.
3. Less capacity in domestic market and international market. If no serious attention is paid, it will result in total abolition of this sector in West Bengal.
4. The industry is facing an all-round assault from counterfeit products within and outside the state. Buyers fail to identify differentiate between the handmade and machine-made products and such fake products are being sold in the West Bengal as well as India.

## **Objectives of Study:**

1. To study the present status and importance of geographical indication in West Bengal of the handicraft product.
2. To study the impact of GI on branding of the Traditional Handicrafts.
3. To study the benefits from GI.

## **Methodology:**

The study is exploratory in nature and it mainly depends on the secondary data from different journals, articles newspaper, books and government records etc. The aim of this paper is to investigate the status of the Geographical Indication (G.I.) in the state of West Bengal as well as its prospect.

**Findings and discuss the results:**

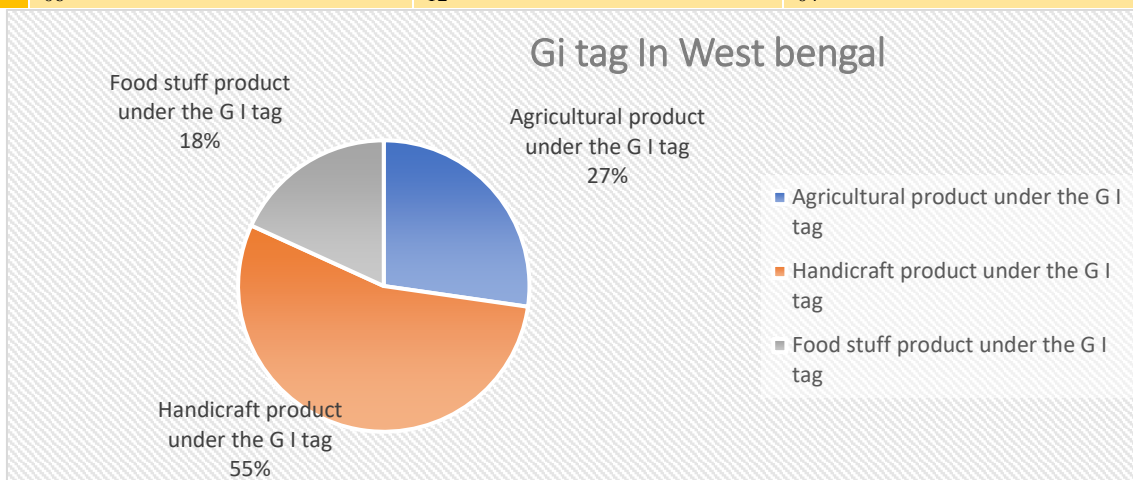
**Table-1: GI handicrafts in West Bengal**

SL NO.	GI Application and Date	Geographical Indication	Types of products
1	52 (2007-2008)	Nakshi Kantha	Handicraft
2	138 (2009-10)	Santpre Saree	Handicraft
3	173 (2011-12)	Balucari saree	Handicraft
4	176 (2011-12)	Dhaniak khali saree	Handicraft
5		Allagadda stone carving	Handicraft
6	453 (2017-2018)	Bankura Panchmura Terracotta	Handicraft
7	563 (2017-2018)	Bengal Dhokra	Handicraft
8	564 (2017-2018)	Bengal patachitra	Handicraft
9	567 (2017-2018)	Madur Khati	Handicraft
10	565 (2017-2018)	Purlia Chhow Mask	Handicraft
11	104 (2008-09)	Santiniketan Leather Goods	Handicraft
12	566(2017-2018)	Wooden Mask of Kushmandi	Handicraft

Source: Compiled from GI Registry Office, India

**Table-2 Number of GI in West Bengal Table**

SLNO.	Agricultural product under the G I tag	Handicraft product under the G I tag	Food stuff product under the G I tag	Total
1	06	12	04	22



GI products of West Bengal plants have a leading role concerning of the different GI registered goods. There are 22 different types of products of West Bengal were registered and received GI tag (Table 1) and majority of the products are from Handicraft goods (55%)

**Table-3: Distribution and raw materials of registered GI products of West Bengal**

Name of GI	Type of goods (As per Sec 2(f) of GI Act 1999)	Region/location	Plant-based Raw materials
Darjeeling Tea (word and logo)	Agricultural	Darjeeling and Kalimpong district	It is made from the leaves of the plant <i>Camellia sinensis</i> var. <i>sinensis</i> of the family Theaceae [9].
Laxman Bhog Mango	Agricultural	Malda district	It is a mango cultivar of the plant <i>Mangifera Indica</i> of the family Anacardiaceae cultivated in orchards In Malda
Khirsapati (Himsagar) Mango	Agricultural	Malda district	It is the most popular mango cultivar of the plant <i>Mangifera Indica</i> of the family Anacardiaceae
Malda Fazli Mango	Agricultural	Malda district	It is a late maturing, long fruit bearing mango cultivar of the plant <i>Mangifera indica</i> of the family Anacardiaceae.
Santipur Saree	Handicraft	Shantipur, Nadia distric	Traditional materials used in this Saree are cotton and silk.
Baluchari Saree	Handicraft	Bishnupur, Bankura district	<i>Morus indica</i> plant used for production of raw silk through cocoon of silkworm.
Dhaniakhali Saree	Handicraft	Dhaniakhali, Hooghly district	Raw material of this saree is cotton. It is a saree with 100 by 100 cotton thread count.
Joynagar Moa	Foodstuff	Jaynagar, South 24 Parganas	Raw materials are jaggery of date palm plant ( <i>Phoenix dactylifera</i> ), kanakchur khoi (an aromatic cultivar of <i>Oryza sativa</i> ), seeds of opium poppy ( <i>Papaver somniferum</i> ) and Cardamom spice made from seeds of the plant <i>Elettaria</i>

## Importance of the Geographical Indication of Traditional Handicraft with Reference to West Bengal, India

			cardamomum
<b>Bardhaman Sitabhog</b>	Foodstuff	Burdwan city, Purba Bardhaman district	It is a type of sweet made from cottage cheese (Chhana), rice flour and sugar.
<b>Bardhaman Mihidana</b>	Foodstuff	Burdwan city, Purba Bardhaman district	It is a type of sweet made from Powdered Kaminibhog, Gobindobhog and Basmati rice; Saffron, Ghee, sugar etc.
<b>Gobindobhog Rice</b>	Agricultural	Purba Bardhaman, Hooghly, Nadia and Birbhum district	It is a short-grained and scented aromatic variety of rice ( <i>Oryza sativa</i> ) popularly cultivated in various parts of West Bengal.
<b>Tulapanji Rice</b>	Agricultural	Raiganj subdivision of North Dinajpur district	It is also an aromatic variety of rice ( <i>Oryza sativa</i> ).
<b>Banglar Rasogolla</b>	Foodstuff	Kolkata and Other districts	The raw materials of rasogolla are chhana made from cow milk and sugar made from the plant <i>Saccharum officinarum</i> .
<b>Bankura Panchmura Terracotta Craft</b>	Handicraft	Bankura district	These terracotta crafts are coloured with the clay itself and burnt in kilns with the help of dry Eucalyptus tree leaves.
<b>Bengal Dokra</b>	Handicraft	Dariyapur of Ausgram-1 block in Purba Bardhaman district and Bikna in Bankura district	The lost-wax casting technique is used for making Dhokra handicraft. The outer structure is prepared by mixing wax, resin (Dhuno) extracted from Sal tree ( <i>Shorea robusta</i> ) and mustered oil extracted from plant genus <i>Brassica</i> ( <i>Brassicaceae</i> )
<b>Bengal Patachitra</b>	Handicraft	Birbhum, Jhargram (Nayagram of Pingla Block), Purba and Paschim Medinipur, Purba Bardhaman, Murshidabad and Kolkata (Kalighat) district	Different Plant sources are used to extract natural colours used in Bengal patachitra: Such as rhizome of turmeric plant ( <i>Curcuma longa</i> ) for yellow color, petals of <i>Clitoria ternatea</i> or indigo ( <i>Indigofera tinctoria</i> ) plant for blue; mature leaves and new leaves of teak plant ( <i>Tectona grandis</i> ) for Brown and Red color respectively.
<b>Purulia Chau Mask</b>	Handicraft	Purulia district	The wide eyed chhau masks are made of pulp, painted with indigenous colours and decorated with peacock feathers, gold and silver embroidery and Jute fibre from the plant <i>Corchorus capsularis</i> ( <i>Malvaceae</i> ) to make knitted eyebrows and thick hairs
<b>Wooden Mask of Kushmandi</b>	Haandicraft	Kushmandi block, South Dinajpur district	The Gamhar wood of the plant <i>Gmelina arborea</i> ( <i>Lamiaceae</i> ) is used for making this wooden mask for Gomira dance festival of Desi and Poli tribes of Rajbanshi community
<b>Madur kathi</b>	Handicraft	Purba Medinipur and Paschim Medinipur district	It is a floor mat made from the mat sedge plant <i>Cyperus tegetum</i> or <i>Cyperus tegetiformis</i> of the family <i>Cyperaceae</i> .
<b>Dalle Khursani</b>	Agricultural	Darjeeling district	It is round shaped, one of the hottest chilies in the world belonging to the plant genus <i>Capsicum</i> ( <i>Capsicum annum</i> and <i>Capsicum frutescens</i> ) .

**Source: Compiled from GI Registry Office, India**

Geographical Indication (G.I) Registrations in West Bengal has a rich history of ethnic cultural and regional products that has progressed over the centuries. The inheritance of West Bengal ethnic and regional products promises traditional characters, beauty, dignity, different forms to designs and styles etc. The magnetic application lies in its exclusivity and mystical value. The handicrafts industry occupies an important role to develop in the economy of West Bengal, especially rural economy. Traditional Handicrafts of West Bengal has described the legacy of the state which is notorious. The famous textiles of West Bengal have found a unique apartment in the world market with its Baluchari Sarees, Silk and Tasar Textile, Santpre Saree, Dhaniak khali saree etc. which are produced in districts like Murshidabad, Birbhum, Bankura, Hoogly and Nadia. Moreover, other crafts like jute crafts, wood and cane crafts, conch-shell crafts, brassware, Dokra art, Terracotta crafts, Masks crafts and folk dolls are also popular Traditional Handicrafts of West Bengal. Handicraft sectors also have provided to generate employment in the rural areas of the West Bengal. The handicraft products have gained worldwide demand for their sophisticated designs, craftsmanship and functional utility of its heritage and cultures.

This industry has a great potential economic value that has to be perceived with concern and with a precise understanding of its ethics. As it is an export-oriented sector, it has contributed considerably towards foreign exchange earnings worth crores of rupees annually in our country.

### **Role of GI in Rural Development:**

1. Geographical indications are mostly traditional products, produced by rural communities over generations that have gained prominence on the markets for their precise qualities.
2. The recognition and protection of the markets of these products allow the producers' community to devote and maintaining the precise qualities of the product on which the reputation is built. This might also allow them to invest together in promoting the reputation of the product.

### **Some of the observed rural development impacts of GI are:**

- The supply chain is structured around a common product status.
- Increased and stabilised prices for the GI product.
- Circulated through all the levels of the supply chain adds value.
- Natural resources can be preserved on which the product is based.
- Preservation of traditions and traditional knowledge.
- Tourism can be improved.

### **Geographical Indications Protection:**

Geographical indications are protected and preserved in various countries and regional systems through a wide array of approaches and often using a consolidation of two or more approaches.

1. Sui generis systems (i.e. special regimes of protection)
2. Using collective or certification marks
3. Techniques directed on business practices, including administrative product approval schemes

These methods have been developed in consonant rhyme with different legal practices and within a framework of individual past and economic conditions. The approaches to protect GI comprise differences with respect to critical questions like conditions for protection or the scope of protection. On the other hand, the two modes of protection mentioned above namely sui generis systems and collective or certification mark systems, share some common characteristics, such as the fact that they set up truths for collective use by those who comply with defined standards.

### **Economic Growth:**

The protection of geographical Indications provides to the overall economic success of the producers of the rural or semi urban areas. Moreover, the marketing and promotion of the products with the GI tags improve of the economic activities in the particular regions which are the boosts the regional economic development. So, the protection of geographical indications creates a positive role in the rural economy and status of the product in the minds of the consumers and rewards the producers with incentives

### **Expands Business:**

The main purpose of registering a geographical indication is to pursue protection for specific products produced in a particular geographical location or region which more encourages and motivates the artisans to expand their business at a global level. Besides, the protection of geographical indications boosts exports and helps the producers in earning well for themselves.

### **Increases Tourism:**

The protection of GI tags helps a global reputation for the products. People around the world notice various GI products from different regions and get motivated to visit those regions and use such products. Therefore, it helps in the growth of the tourism industry of that particular region.

### **Sustainable livelihoods and preservation of traditional knowledge:**

In the GI background particularly, the economic and commercial payments which grow due to branding can be instrumental in sustaining and improving the livelihoods of farmers, artisans,

weavers and other producers and also preserve traditional crafts and practices which could otherwise become extinct.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions:**

The state of West Bengal is blessed with many ethnic and geographically unique products. These products have a recognition and fame to the state. The magnetic appeal lies in its exclusivity and mystical value. However, most of these products are harassed with problems like absence of brand image, and the competition of fake products within and outside the state etc. Recently, the state Govt. of West Bengal has realized the benefits and importance of the geographical indication. The state has so far brought 21 of its traditional and region-specific products under geographical indication. All of these products belong to only one product category i.e. Handicrafts. The state has huge panorama of using geographical indication for its unique and famous ethnic and region-specific products. However, lack of knowledge about intellectual property rights is not giving proper value and recognition to the geographical indication in the state. Further, prejudiced orientation of Government and supporting agencies and bodies are not giving an appropriate impetus for getting other category of products registered under geographical indication. Due to which still a large number of ethnic and regional products of West Bengal are becoming target of spurious marketers who sell fake products on the label of “Made in West Bengal Made”. This is going to be very much harmful to ethnic and regional products of the state of West Bengal in the future. The West Bengal government should need to establish policies and mechanisms designed to identify products with potential for protection through geographical Indication registration, to increase of society and to proposal financial support for achievement and exploration of new geographical Indications.

### **REFERENCES:**

1. Banerjee A, Malakar B. 2020. Commercialization of a craft tradition: A study on Dokra artisans living in Dariapur region in West Bengal. *The Eastern Anthropologist* 73(3/4): 587-613
2. Agrawal S, Kumar P. 2016. Geographical Indication (GI) and the food stuffs – Indian perspective. *SSRN Electronic Journal* <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2836419>
3. Albayrak, Mevhibe, & Ozdemir, M. (2012). The role of Geographical indication in brand making of Turkish handicrafts. *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*, 11(3), 420-426.
4. Dash\*, M. (2011). Marketing of Orissa Handicrafts: A Study on Challenges & Opportunities. *Excel International Journal of Multidisciplinary Management Studies*, 1(2).
5. Fayaz Ahmad, & Nengroo, A. H. (2013). An Analysis of Handloom Sector of Jammu & Kashmir: A Case Study of District Budgam. *IJMBS*, 3(1).
6. Saqib, N., & Sultan, A. (2013). An Overview of Geographical Indication in Jammu & Kashmir. *Indian Journal of Applied research*, 3(4).
7. M. Ghouse, S. Indian Handicraft Industry: Problems and Strategies. *International Journal of Management Research and Review*, 2(7), 1183-1199. doi: [www.ijmrr.com](http://www.ijmrr.com)
8. Khan, W. A., & Amir, Z. (2013). Study of Handicraft Marketing Strategies of Artisans in Uttar Pradesh and Its Implications. *Research Journal of Management Sciences*, 2(2), 23-26.
9. Konde, (2011). Pre- and Post- Geographical Indications Registration Measures for Handicrafts in India. *Journal of Intellectual Property Rights*, 16, 463-469.
10. The Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act of 1999, No. 48, “the Gazette of India”, 30 December 1999, No. 61.
11. Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Rules of 2002 (1), pp.39-73, 2006
12. WIPO. 2004. Geographical Indication: An Introduction. WIPO Publication No. 489 (E). World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Geneva, Switzerland.
13. <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/mobi/news/business/kashmirexports-rs-213-cr-handicraft-items-in-q1/175315.html>