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# GUARDIANS OF HERITAGE, ENGINES OF TRADE: GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS AND INDIANS GLOBAL FOOTPRINT

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## I. ABSTRACT

*Geographical Indications (GIs) represent one of the most vibrant crossroads of trade, intellectual property, and cultural background in international law. They basically are that form of intellectual property that protects the reputation, qualities, and distinctive character of a product linked to a specific geographical origin. For India, which boasts a wealth of agricultural products and diverse craft traditions, Geographical Indications (GIs) serve as legal tools that connect intangible cultural heritage to markets, income opportunities, and international branding efforts. This paper explores the Indian GI framework, its relationship with the TRIPS agreements, and the worldwide recognition and enforcement of Indian GIs. Through a variety of Indian case studies, including Darjeeling Tea, Basmati Rice, Banarasi Saree, Alphonso Mango, Kanchipuram Silk, Mysore Sandalwood Oil, Feni, Pochampally Ikat, Blue Pottery of Jaipur, and others, the paper assesses legal protection strategies, commercial results, enforcement difficulties, and the policy measures necessary to enhance both domestic impacts and international acknowledgment. This research integrates statutory interpretation, contextual analysis of treaties, registry data, and current case law, along with trade developments, to provide actionable suggestions for legal and policy adjustments aimed at enhancing the global competitiveness and cultural protection of Indian GIs.*

## II. KEYWORDS

Geographical Indications, TRIPS, India, Intellectual Property, Darjeeling, Basmati, Banarasi, GI Policy

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## III. INTRODUCTION: GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS - WHERE CULTURE MEETS COMMERCE

Intellectual Property (IP) refers to the protection of creations resulting from human intellect to safeguard the interests of their creators. It is a highly globalized law area encompassing industrial property, copyright, and other intangible asset rights. Additionally, IPR establishes who has the right to use and control these assets and how and from whom permission can be obtained. While both Trademarks and Geographical Indications (GIs) serve as identifiers and differentiation tools, Trademarks signify the business origin of a product, whereas GIs indicate its geographical origin.[3] Geographical Indications (GIs) are one of the most discussed yet celebrated aspects of intellectual property rights (IPR). 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.[4]

Geographical Indications (GIs) are intellectual property rights that associate goods produced in a defined location with a reputation, given quality, and characteristics determinable to their geographical origin. Developing nations like India, GIs in fact play a double role (i) they preserve and also provide legal recognition to the artistic and traditional knowledge. (ii) They connect farmers and artisans to markets willing to pay more, improving how people in rural areas make a living. The protection of geographical indication is important not just for profit, but also for preserving a region's culture, heritage, and unique protection methods, which are directly tied to the local environment and community knowledge. The WTO TRIPS agreement has set a baseline standard for recognition of GIs for member states (Articles 22-24), while India legislated the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, which became functional in 2003. Ever since, India has become

[3]World Trade Organization, *"Geographical Indications under the TRIPS Agreement"*, available at: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/gi_e.htm (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025)
[4] World Trade Organization, *"Geographical Indications under the TRIPS Agreement"*, available at: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/gi_e.htm (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025)

one of the most proactive nations in the Asia Continent for registration of GIs with a wide array of products certified under multiple headings.

### A. DEFINITION & FRAMEWORK

| TERM | LEGAL DEFINITION | PRIMARY SOURCE |
|---|---|---|
| Geographical Indication (GI) | "Indication which identifies goods 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." | TRIPS Art. 22(1).[5] |
| GI (India) | "Indication which identifies goods as agricultural, natural or manufactured goods as originating… where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic is essentially attributable to its geographical origin." | Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999[6] |
| PDO/PGI (EU) | Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) distinguish full-origin products from those where one production stage occurs in the region. | EU Regulations on PDO/PGI[7] |

[5] World Trade Organization,*"Article "24.4: Suspension of concessions (TRIPS Agreement)", available at* https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/27-trips_04b_e.htm (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).
[6] *The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999,* Act No. 48 of 1999, *available* at https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1981/5/A1999-48.pdf?utm (last visited on 27 Sept. 2025).
[7] Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 1050/2011 of 20 October 2011, *entering a name in the register of protected designations of origin and protected geographical indications (Darjeeling (PGI)); available at* https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ%3AL%3A2011%3A276%3A0005%3A0012%3AEN%3APDF&utm (last visited on 27 September 2025)

## B. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The primary research problem revolves around the challenges India faces in securing and enforcing the protection of Geographical Indications (GIs) in both domestic and international markets. While GIs offer a means to protect cultural heritage and enhance economic opportunities, they also face numerous hurdles. These include legal conflicts over territorial scope (as seen with **Basmati Rice**), counterfeiting, the lack of awareness among producers, and enforcement issues at the global level. Furthermore, there is an ongoing challenge in balancing the economic benefits of GIs with their role in safeguarding traditional knowledge and rural communities, all while aligning with international intellectual property standards such as the TRIPS Agreement.

## C. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

**The objectives of this research are as follows:**

- To evaluate the legal framework surrounding Geographical Indications in India, particularly the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, and its effectiveness in protecting India's GIs on the global stage.
- To analyze the impact of India's GI recognition on rural economies, focusing on local communities, artisans, and farmers who rely on GI products for income.
- To assess the challenges India faces in the enforcement of GIs both domestically and internationally, including conflicts with other countries' legal systems (e.g., Basmati Rice).
- To compare India's approach to GI protection with international models, particularly those of the European Union (PDO/PGI system) and the United States.

## D. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**The research will address the following questions:**

- What are the key legal and commercial challenges in protecting and enforcing Indian Geographical Indications, especially in international markets?
- How does the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 in India compare to the international frameworks established by the TRIPS Agreement in terms of protection and enforcement?
- What are the socio-economic benefits and challenges associated with GI recognition for Indian rural communities, farmers, and artisans?
- How can India improve the global competitiveness of its GI products while ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage?

## E. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

**The following hypotheses will be tested as part of this study:**

- India's Geographical Indications (GI) Act, 1999 has significantly improved the legal protection and commercialization of Indian GIs, both domestically and internationally.
- Despite the GI protections offered by India's GI Act, challenges such as counterfeiting, lack of awareness among producers, and insufficient marketing infrastructure continue to hinder the full potential of GIs in global markets.
- International trade disputes, such as those surrounding Basmati Rice and Darjeeling Tea, have a negative impact on the global recognition and market competitiveness of Indian GIs.
- There exists a significant gap between India's legal framework for GIs and the international standards set by the TRIPS Agreement, specifically regarding the protection of non-agricultural GIs such as textiles and handicrafts.

- The socio-economic benefits of GI recognition in India are evident in rural development, but the benefits are unevenly distributed, and small producers face significant challenges in accessing global markets.

## F. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research will adopt a qualitative approach to explore the complexities of Geographical Indications (GIs) and their legal, cultural, and economic impacts in India. The study will primarily rely on case study analysis, focusing on significant Indian GIs such as Darjeeling Tea, Basmati Rice, and Banarasi Sarees. These cases will allow for a deep dive into the challenges faced by Indian GIs, particularly regarding legal disputes and market access.

The research will also utilize document analysis, reviewing statutory texts such as the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, and the TRIPS Agreement to understand the legal framework for GI protection in India and its alignment with international standards. Additionally, interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders, including legal experts, policymakers, GI producers, and members of GI protection organizations such as the Tea Board of India and APEDA.

These interviews will offer firsthand insights into the practical challenges of GI protection and enforcement. To complement this, the study will undertake a comparative analysis of India's GI framework with international systems, particularly those in the European Union and the United States, to identify best practices and potential improvements. Data gathered from case studies, interviews, and legal documents will be analyzed thematically to uncover patterns related to legal challenges, market access, and the socio-economic impacts of GI recognition in India.

## G. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on Geographical Indications (GIs) highlights their dual role in protecting both cultural heritage and economic interests. Scholars such as Ranjit Singh have emphasized the importance of GIs in preserving traditional knowledge

while also providing economic opportunities for rural communities (Singh, 2007). The TRIPS Agreement has been extensively studied in relation to its impact on GI protection worldwide, particularly Articles 22-24, which set the minimum standards for GI protection.

However, critics argue that TRIPS does not offer sufficient protection for non-agricultural GIs, which is a concern for countries like India, where GIs extend beyond agricultural products to include textiles and handicrafts. India's Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, while recognized as one of the most comprehensive GI frameworks in Asia, faces challenges in enforcement, market awareness, and international recognition.

Studies have pointed out the difficulties in achieving global recognition for Indian GIs due to issues such as counterfeiting, legal disputes (e.g., the Basmati Rice and Darjeeling Tea cases), and the lack of infrastructure for marketing and branding. The European Union's PDO/PGI system, which integrates legal protection with strong marketing mechanisms, has been a model often referenced in the literature.

Comparatively, the United States' reliance on trademark law for GIs is critiqued for offering weaker protections, particularly for foreign GIs. Furthermore, scholars have highlighted that while India has made significant strides in GI registration, the benefits are not always evenly distributed, with small producers often unable to capitalize fully on the protections due to enforcement issues and low levels of awareness. The literature calls for improved institutional support, better branding strategies, and enhanced global cooperation to elevate Indian GIs on the world stage.

## IV. UNPACKING THE LEGAL DNA OF GIS

The essence of Geographical Indication is the link between a product's characteristics and its place of origin, which is shaped by a unique combination of physical and human factors. This duality is what differentiates a GI from other forms of intellectual property.

### A. CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS

- **GI needs :**

- a link to a specific geographical origin;
- the special qualities or reputation a product has are because of where it comes from; and
- a system of collective entitlement rather than private monopoly. Unlike in the case of Trademarks that serve as a private badge, GI is a public and shared asset sustained by the communities and producer groups.[8]

### B. DUAL LEGAL CHARACTER

GIs bears a dual identity; they are binding as intellectual property, but they also at the same time function as cultural heritage safeguards. Scholars argue that the heritage dimension describes why GIs are closely linked with rural development, biodiversity protection, and cultural sustainability.[9]

### C. COMPARATIVE JURISPRUDENCE

- In the European Union, PDO/PGI laws associate "legal DNA" of GIs with consumer protection and distinction, ensuring secure the symbolic goods like the Champagne and Parma Ham retain their global recognition.[10]
- India covers a broader perspective under the GI Act,1999, by expanding its safeguard beyond handicrafts to agriculture and manufactured goods.
- In the United States, GIs are covered under their trademark and certification mark law, habitually de-emphasizing the heritage and community aspects of GIs.[11]

[8]Abhilasha Kumari, *"Geographical Indications in India: A Case Study of Traditional Knowledge and Rural Development"* 45 *Journal of the Indian Law Institute* 56 (2003).
[9]Ranjit Singh, *"The Basmati Rice Dispute: International Dimensions of Indian GI Protection"* 49 *Journal of the Indian Law Institute* 102 (2007).
[10] European Commission, PDO/PGI System Regulations (2010), available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/ (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).
[11]World Trade Organization, *"Geographical Indications (TRIPS)", available at* https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/gi_e.htm(last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).

### D. THE SOCIAL CONTRACT OF GIs

Unlike patents and copyright, with a motive of individual inventiveness, GIs are supposed to be on the social contract between communities and the market. By maintaining the authenticity of the product, the communities are therefore remunerated with premium pricing. This orientation thus makes GIs a legal tool and cultural pact.[12]

### E. WHY "LEGAL DNA " MATTERS

Understanding the 'legal DNA' of GIs is important because it explains why legal disputes like Basmati in the EU or Darjeeling tea in Japan and the US go beyond the trade law into issues of cultural identity and heritage diplomacy.[13]

## V. FROM TRIPS TO THE INDIAN GI ACT: MAPPING THE NORMATIVE THE TERRAIN

### A. THE TRIPS BASELINE

The TRIPS Agreement (1994), through Articles 22-24, established a basic, binding, and enforceable international framework for protecting Geographical Indications(GIs).

**It defines GIs, mandates the minimum standards of protection, and creates a dual structure of obligations:**

- General safeguard under Article 22 (unfair competition/ misleading use)[14]
- Strengthened protection under Article 23 ( wines and spirits, even absent confusion)[15]

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[12] *The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999*, Act No. 48 of 1999, *available at* https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1981/5/A1999-48.pdf (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).
[13] Economic Times, "*Darjeeling green, white teas get GI backing"* Oct. 2019, *available at* https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/commodities/news/darjeeling-green-white-teas-get-gi-backing/articleshow/72103877.cms (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).
[14] *The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), 1994,* art. 22, *available at* https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/27-trips_04b_e.htm (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).
[15] *The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), 1994,* art. 23, *available at* https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/27-trips_04b_e.htm (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).

- The unresolved issue is whether to extend higher protection for Geographical Indication (GI) beyond just wines and spirits, as allowed by Article 24 of the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

The TRIPS Agreement does not harmonize the entire GI system but sets a floor of protection and recognition, enabling members to craft national laws adapted to domestic policy goals. [16]

### B. INDIA'S RESPONSE UNDER GI ACT, 1999

India legislated the Geographical Indications of Goods ( Registration and Protection) Act 1999, functional since 2003, as a sui generis law.

**It altogether goes beyond the obligation laid under TRIPS in several aspects :**

- Expanded scope includes handicrafts, textiles, and manufactured goods.[17]
- Creation of a dedicated registry for GI in Chennai.[18]
- Accessibility of criminal remedies( imprisonment, fines) and civil rights ( injunctions, damages)
- Provision for the authorized users, ensuring individual producers can enforce rights.[19]

India has combined the pursuit of economic benefits, often through intellectual property like GI, with measures to protect and preserve its traditional knowledge and artisan communities from exploitation. This approach creates a dual objective: to

[16] *The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), 1994,* art. 24, *available at* https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/27-trips_04b_e.htm (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).
[17] *The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999,* Act No. 48 of 1999, s. 2(1)(e), *available at https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1981/5/A1999-48.pdf* (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).
[18] *The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999*, Act No. 48 of 1999, s. 3, *available at* https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1981/5/A1999-48.pdf (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).
[19] *The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999,* Act No. 48 of 1999, s. 17, *available at* https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1981/5/A1999-48.pdf (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).

gain economic exclusivity for indigenous products while simultaneously safeguarding cultural heritage from biopiracy and unauthorized commercialization.

### C. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

**The GI Act instituted a sturdy framework:**

- GI Registry under the Controller General of Patents, Designs, and Trademarks ( CGPDTM)
- Transparency in the filling process of the application (filling, examination, opposition, registration, renewal)
- Authorised users are recognized to ensure equitable benefit-sharing.
- Strong enforcement mechanisms, including criminal liability—far stricter than TRIPS requires.[20]

### D. NORMATIVE TENSIONS

India's model demonstrates tensions between the TRIPS trade-based framework and India's socio-cultural priorities.

- TRIPS broadens the minimum requirements to cover handicrafts ( eg, Kanchipuram Silk, Banarasi Saree)
- Safeguards the disenfranchised rural producers while participating in cross-border trade.
- **Legal battles exposing discord:**
    - Basmati rice debate before the European Commission and EUIPO.
    - Tea Board, India v. ITC Limited, CS No. 250 of 2010, Calcutta High Court (decided February 4, 2019)
    - Recognition of foreign GIs established in the case of Scotch Whisky Association v. Golden Bottling Ltd.(Delhi HC,2006)

[20] *The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999,* Act No. 48 of 1999, ss. 37–39, *available at* https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1981/5/A1999-48.pdf (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).

### E. IMPLICATIONS

**The GI Act of India has implications beyond compliance:**

- Internationally acknowledged as a model for growth-oriented GI protection.
- Lawsuits like the Basmati Rice and Darjeeling Tea exhibit how GIs work as a delicate instrument in trade conflicts.
- India's place in FTA talks of EU-India and ASEAN collaboration demonstrates the
- GI diplomacy is included in its soft power strategy.

## VI. REGISTRATION OF GI IN INDIA

### A. STATUTORY BASIS

The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection ) Act, 1999, governs the registration of Geographical Indications in India. The GI Act creates a Geographical Indication Registry in Chennai under the Controller General of Patents, Designs, and Trade Marks ( CGPDTM).[21]

### B. STEPS TOWARDS THE REGISTRATION OF THE GI

**The GI Act of India follows an organized route:**

- **Application Filling:** Product details, origin, and the link between product and origin should be shared by the applicant.
- **Examination:** A Registrar checks the application to make sure it follows all the necessary government rules and laws to be approved.
- **GI Journal Publication:** The application is submitted to invite obligation
- **Opposition Proceeding:** Any person or group of individuals may oppose GI within 3 months of publication.

[21] *The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999*, Act No. 48 of 1999, s. 3, *available at https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1981/5/A1999-48.pdf* (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025)

- **Registration and Certificate:** This is granted once all the opposition is resolved.
- **Renewal:** The GIs are basically valid for 10 years and are renewable endlessly.
- **Rights Provided:** Registration gives exclusive rights to authorised users and owners. These rights have the ability to prevent authorized use, limitation, or misleading use of GI.[22]

### C. ILLUSTRATIVE REGISTRATIONS

- Leading examples of GI registration in India are,
    - Darjeeling Tea ( the first India GI to get registered in 2004):-
    - Banaras Brocades and Sarees (registered in 2009)
    - Ratnagiri Alphonso Mango ( registered in 2018)

## VII. INDIA'S GI BLOOM: NUMBERS THAT TELL A STORY

| CATEGORY | APPROX. NUMBER OF GIs | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| Handicrafts & Textiles | 300+ | Banarasi Saree, Pochampally Ikat, Kanchipuram Silk |
| Agricultural Produce | 150+ | Darjeeling Tea, Basmati Rice, Alphonso Mango |
| Manufactured Goods | 20-50 | Mysore Sandalwood Oil, Aranmula Kannadi |

[22] *The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999,* Act No. 48 of 1999, ss. 11–18, *available at* https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1981/5/A1999-48.pdf (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).

India registered over 658 GIs in 2025, making it the leading country in Asia for GI registration.

### A. CASE STUDIES OF INDIAN GIS

| GI Product | Year of Registration | Region | Highlights |
|---|---|---|---|
| Darjeeling Tea | 2004 | West Bengal | First Indian GI; globally recognised; PGI in the EU |
| Basmati Rice | Pending in the EU | India & Pakistan | Cross-border dispute; EU recognition contested |
| Banarasi Saree | 2009 | Uttar Pradesh | Traditional weaving; enforcement challenges |
| Alphonso Mango | 2018 | Maharashtra | Premium exports; protected against counterfeiting |
| Kanchipuram Silk | 2005 | Tamil Naidu | Ceremonial textile; strong diaspora demand |

### B. DARJEELING TEA:-BREWING PRESTIGE IN A CUP

The first product from India to receive a GI Tag in 2004 was Darjeeling Tea. The Tea Board of India is always proactive in getting the international safeguards and standing against the misuse of the Darjeeling name in multi-jurisdictions. The product's distinct terroir, small–batch orthodox processing, and seasonal flush distinctions contribute to its global premium.[23]

Darjeeling Tea is protected under PGI-style protection in several jurisdictions. The Tea Board strictly enforces GI, initiating certification logos and also keeping a follow-up with the international cases against the misuse in Japan, France, and the United States. It has recognition in the EU under PGI status as " Champagne of Teas". In export markets, the GI has helped maintain brand integrity and attract premium prices; nevertheless, to avoid dilution, it must be continuously monitored and enforced by law.

### C. BASMATI RICE – THE GRAIN THAT CROSSED BORDERS

Basmati rice is a geographically-linked aromatic long-grain rice cultivated in the Indo-Gangetic plains of India and Pakistan. The product's distinctive aroma and elongation upon cooking generate high-end market pricing. [24]Foreign entities' attempts to trademark "basmati"-type names in other jurisdictions, as well as conflicts between India and Pakistan about the scope of geographic coverage, have elevated basmati to the level of diplomatic and trade policy. Recent developments have included rival claims and independent applications to EU authorities, generating sensitive political issues over territorial scope and market access. A Financial Times investigation in 2025 emphasized the EU's careful management of rival India-Pakistan claims, as well as the impact on trade discussions.[25]

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[23]European Commission, *Commission Implementing Regulation (EU)* No. 1050/2011 *of 20 October 2011, entering Darjeeling in the register of protected designations of origin and protected geographical indications* (PGI), OJ L 276/5 (2011), *available at* https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011R1050 (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).

[24] Ranjit Singh, *"The Basmati Rice Dispute: International Dimensions of Indian GI Protection"* 49 *Journal of the Indian Law Institute* 102 (2007).

[25] Financial Times, "India's push for EU trade deal hit by basmati rice dispute" Financial Times, Sept. 2025, available at https://www.ft.com/ (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).

Basmati's case demonstrates that GI protection in transboundary production zones necessitates diplomatic collaboration, shared standards (where applicable), and meticulous science-based delimitation of zones. Commercial stakes are high: good GI recognition can help companies maintain price differentials and market identity.

### D. BANARASI SAREE –WEAVING LAW INTO TRADITION

Banaras Brocades and Sarees received GI registration in the year 2009 to safeguard the traditional zari weaving of Varanasi. Despite the GI, Banarasi sarees are being replicated by powerloom goods marketed as Banarasi, as well as businesses producing low-cost mass-produced replicas. Anti-mislabelling efforts include certification, QR codes, and localized branding initiatives implemented by state-level agencies and cooperatives. Recent government actions include trademarking campaigns (e.g., 'Silk Banarasi') to supplement GI protection and provide obvious signals of authenticity to customers.[26] QR-code-based authentication and state-led branding initiatives are recent solutions.

### E. ALPHONSO MANGO-THE KING OF FRUITS WITH A ROYAL TAG

Alphonso Mangoes of Ratnagiri and Devgad received GI status in 2018, recognition intended at preventing mislabelling of export and domestic trade. GI protection backs up claims of distinct taste( sweetness and aroma), shelf-quality handling, and climate uniqueness.[27] Alphonso fetches high pricing in Gulf markets, as well as in European and North American specialized retail chains.

### F. ICONS OF DIVERSITY:- KANCHIPURAM SILK, MYSORE SANDALWOOD OIL, FENI, POCHAMPALLY IKAT & BLUE POTTERY

- **Kanchipuram Silk**: GI secures the "mark" of handweaving traditions in Tamil Nadu; its value in the bridal and ceremonial markets remains strong.

[26] "Silk Banarasi: A Guarantee of Quality and Authenticity", *The Times of India*, available at https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/silk-banarasi-a-guarantee-of-quality-and-authenticity/articleshow/121275807.cms (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).
[27] *Intellectual Property India*, "Application Details", available at: https://www.search.ipindia.gov.in/GIRPublic/Application/Details/497 (last visited on Sept. 27, 2025).

- **Mysore Sandalwood Oil**: Geographical indication protection safeguards an export-oriented fragrant product linked to a botanical resource; protection overlaps with restrictions on sandalwood harvest and trade.
- **Feni (Goa):** A cashew-based local spirit that, as a GI, has the potential to be premiumised in global spirits markets.
- **Pochampally Ikat & Blue Pottery (Jaipur):** Craft-based GIs that safeguard weaving/stitching and unique glazing/techniques

## VIII. THREE WORLDS, THREE MODELS: INDIA, EUROPE, AND THE US ON GI

The EU's PDO/PGI system combines legal protection with marketing and labeling regulations, creating globally recognized products like Champagne and Parma Ham. India's GI Act covers handicrafts and manufactured goods, but lacks comparable promotional mechanisms. The US uses trademark and certification mark law, which offers less comprehensive protection for foreign GIs. To elevate India's GIs to worldwide icons, better marketing integration and institutional support are required

### A. BETWEEN LAW AND MARKET ROADBLOCKS TO GLOBAL GI FRAMEWORK

- Border disputes (e.g., Basmati).
- Small producer groupings face costs associated with enforcement.
- Extensive copying within domestic markets.
- Inadequate marketing and branding infrastructure.
- Producer communities have low levels of awareness.

### B. FROM PROTECTION TO PRESTIGE: WHAT INDIA MUST DO

- For international enforcement, strengthen institutional advocates like the Tea Board and APEDA.
- Create branding campaigns and certification systems based on GI classification.

- Strike bilateral recognition deals, particularly for cross-border GIs.
- Raising producer awareness and providing training on GI governance.
- To provide multilayer protection, combine GI with trademarks and certification marks.
- Establish a government-supported enforcement fund for GI litigation abroad.

### C. GI AS INDIA'S CULTURAL DIPLOMACY TOOL FOR FUTURE

Geographical Indications are more than just intellectual property; they represent India's cultural history and serve as economic diplomacy. India has around 470 registered GIs, but achieving worldwide recognition requires strong enforcement, branding, and producer empowerment. Darjeeling, Basmati, Banarasi, and Alphonso teas present both opportunities and restrictions. To make GIs a durable source of rural development and global reputation, India should combine legal protection with international marketing and diplomatic involvement.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Geographical Indications (GIs) are integral to the preservation of India's rich cultural heritage and offer an essential avenue for rural development. India's legal framework for GI protection, established by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, has made significant strides in safeguarding products like Darjeeling Tea, Basmati Rice, and Banarasi Sarees, among others. However, challenges persist, particularly in the international enforcement of these GIs, due to legal disputes, counterfeiting, and insufficient marketing infrastructure.

The integration of GI protection into India's broader economic strategy provides not only legal safeguarding but also an opportunity to elevate rural economies by linking artisanal and agricultural goods to international markets. Yet, while India has made considerable progress in registering and protecting GIs, the lack of cohesive global recognition and the uneven distribution of benefits among small producers remain barriers to the full potential of GIs.

To further strengthen the global competitiveness and cultural preservation associated with GIs, India must focus on improving institutional support for enforcement, especially in international markets. This can be achieved by strengthening advocacy bodies like the Tea Board and APEDA, establishing government-supported enforcement funds for global GI litigation, and fostering international cooperation on GI standards. Additionally, better marketing campaigns and producer awareness programs are necessary to ensure the long-term success and authenticity of India's GIs.

Ultimately, GIs are more than just legal protections—they are instruments of cultural diplomacy and global recognition. By refining its strategies and overcoming current obstacles, India has the potential to transform its GIs into powerful symbols of both cultural pride and economic prosperity on the global stage.

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