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Protection of handicrafts under the regime of geographical indications with reference to Karnataka: A critical analysis

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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to present a comprehensive analysis of Geographical Indications (GI) in the context of India, with a particular emphasis on the protection of handicrafts in the state of Karnataka. It explores the origins of GIs, their international protection under the TRIPS Agreement, their economic value, and India's domestic legislative framework through the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999. Karnataka, being one of the leading states with a diverse heritage of handicrafts, has several GI-recognized products such as Channapatna toys, Mysore silk, sandalwood carvings, and Mysore paintings. Through doctrinal analysis of statutes, case law, and international conventions, coupled with empirical findings from surveys of artisans, the paper evaluates the effectiveness of the GI regime. The study reveals that while GI recognition safeguards heritage and offers global branding, economic benefits remain uneven due to intermediaries, lack of enforcement, and artisans' limited awareness. The paper concludes that strengthening awareness, enforcement mechanisms, and market linkages is essential for equitable benefit distribution.

Keywords: Handicraft, geographical indications, Karnataka, trips agreement, intellectual property, cultural heritage

1. Introduction

Hindicrafts also show Indian art and is one of the safest modes of that is the knowledge that is inexplicable and preserving the Indian culture ^[1]. The kingdoms of Vijayanagar and Mysore have long had their own craft traditions, including Channapatna toys, Mysore silk, sandalwood carving, Mysore paintings, ivory craft and banana fiber weaving. These arts utilize local craft skills, local resources, and local government rules. They also contribute to the living of rural people through household enterprises and artisanal groups, along with their heritage value. Though, they are being narrowed down by globalization, mass production and look-alike goods and being injured by their impact on the price premiums and on the transfer of capabilities across generations ^[2].

Geographical Indications (GIs) provide a legal framework that links unique quality of the product and image with its origin in a way that prevents product abuse by both the producers and the consumers. Article 22 of the TRIPS Agreement ^[3] defines a GI as that which makes it virtually attributable to the land where the specified quality, reputation, or feature has been created that the specified attribute, reputation, or feature was created and created in that land. Articles 23-24 add graded protections and enforcement requirements.

TRIPS is implemented in the Geographical Indications of goods (Registration and protection) Act, 1999 of India via a *sui generis* regime that explicitly addresses manufactured Goods (including handicrafts produced through human skill and traditional knowledge) ^[4]. This judicial openness to GI protection may be observed in the manner in which Indian courts have applied authenticity and origin-link logic in GI cases, including in protecting the name Darjeeling against dilution, and in restricting that Scotch is only whisky that qualifies as of origin ^[5]. The GI-registered handicrafts of Karnataka, such as Channapatna toys, Mysore silk, Mysore rosewood inlay, and Mysore paintings, are examples in this legal context of how place reputation can be invoked as an instrument of rural development, product branding at the export frontier, and cultural protection. However, adequacy of doctrine is not a benign promise of just beneficence. Empirical studies show that the GI law is poorly known by artisans that profits are funnelled in the middle and that authorised users

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are not evenly registered. These problems are darkening the developmental outlook of GIs unless they are reinforced by enforcement mechanisms, cluster-wide certification, and selective marketing.

2. Review of Literature

The new emerging literature has re-conceptualized geographical indications (GIs) not only as a form of intellectual property but also as rural developmental and cultural protection measures. The World Intellectual Property Organization (2024)^[6] provides a list of more than 58,000 GI that are in force in 2023 across the world, and Asian countries are registering a high rate of growth. Handicrafts represent a comparatively very minor share of the global GI protection compared with agri-food and spirits but are essential in other countries including India where they are used to sustain traditional clusters and rural industry. In the literature, it is emphasized that GI registration can continue to play a role in preserving intangible heritage as well as assisting artisans in domestic and international markets to accrue price benefits.

In India, GI protection of agricultural products has been established under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 which extends the coverage of the GI protection to handicrafts as well as agricultural products. The biggest single group of 274 handicrafts is now covered by over 530 registered GIs in India (WIPO, 2024)^[7]. Karnataka has a good artisanal base, and a high proportion of registered products, including Mysore Silk, Bidriware, Channapatna Toys, Mysore Rosewood Inlay, Ilkal Sarees and Kasuti Embroidery (Intellectual Property India, 2024)^[8]. However, despite strong legislative support, researchers consider that there is a disproportionate enforcement of the law and distribution of benefits, and artisans are typically not aware of the legislation (Tripathi, 2024)^[9].

Recent field data indicate the socio-economic effect of GI protection in Karnataka. Using Channapatna Toys, also known as the toy town, it is shown that the quality and authenticity of craftsmanship are significant determinants of tourist demand, and the fact that is why GIs can be used to reinforce the strategies within experiential tourism (Mukunda, 2022)^[10]. According to News on Mysore Silk, the GI tag has increased consumer confidence and export demand but the production capacity and high prices are the constraints to expand (The Print, 2024). Similarly, design and cultural studies document the revival of Bidriware through innovation under the GI brand name and the preservation of Kasuti embroidery designs, in addition to proposing that GIs can trigger market differentiation and cultural pride (Madhok, 2024)^[11].

Newer literature also discusses the problems of enforcement and technology in the preservation of handicraft GI. Only researcher alerts that online stores represent the risk of authenticity as they extend their influence, and that a system of certification must be introduced to ensure that consumers feel safe (IJIRT, 2024). Policy reports state that marketing, export support, and cooperative structures are needed to establish a just allocation of benefits among artisans (EPCH, 2024)^[12]. There are also new studies that look at blockchain-based GI authentication of Channapatna Toys, delivering digital traceability of artisan to consumer, which could improve enforcement and visibility in the handicraft sector (Meghasree *et al.*, 2025)^[13].

2.1 Research Objectives

The research objectives are

- To analyze legal framework of GI protection in international and Indian law.
- To examine the effects of GI registration on the handicrafts in Karnataka.
- To evaluate the extent to which artisans are aware of GI protection and its socioeconomic advantages, in an empirical manner.
- To critically assess issues of implementation and fair benefit-sharing.

2.2 Research Hypotheses

The research hypothesis is-

Though the legal framework of Geographical Indications (GIs) in India serves a positive purpose in conserving and enhancing the international appreciation of Karnataka handicrafts, the effectiveness of the so-called protection is negated by a lack of awareness of the targeted population and unfair distribution of revenues, which benefits the mediators more than the producers do.

3. Research Methodology

The doctrinal analysis of this paper is based on the international and national legislation on Geographical Indications (GI). The international level is informed by Articles 22 to 24 of the TRIPS Agreement that treats GI as a signifier to denote goods that possess qualities or reputations that are fundamentally attributed to their origin geographically and which imposes on WTO member states an obligation to ban their misuse or misrepresentation. India has codified these promises in the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 and in the Geographical Indications Rules, 2002 which, jointly, has been described as a *sui generis* protection framework, in respect not only of agricultural products, but also of handicrafts and manufactured goods, built up by human labour. Besides this conceptualization, the empirical analysis also examines the ways the GIs work on the ground among the Karnataka artisans. A sample of 500 artisans was surveyed to ensure the sample population is representative of all the age groups, gender, and craft industry, using stratified simple random sampling. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data in terms of four major dimensions, i.e., intergenerational learning, income dependence, profit distribution, and awareness of GI law. In that sense, therefore, this method enabled the study to not only focus on the cultural elements of the craft transmission process in the family, but also the economic situation of the artisans who practically rely solely on handicraft to earn their living. It also determined the issue of whether or not artisans fairly distribute the financial gains accrued by GI recognition or whether or not the value chains are monopolized by distributors. Lastly, the survey evaluated legal literacy, i.e. legal knowledge of GI protection and authorized-user registration, as these measurements directly affect whether artisans will enjoy the fruits of the statutory rights that the GI regime provides. Together, these empirical results offer an evidence-based perspective on how to assess how far doctrinal commitments pursuant to TRIPS and the GI Act is in practice empowering the artisans on the ground.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Doctrinal Analysis

The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (“GI Act”)^[14] is the statutory model of protection of goods whose particularities are associated with geographical origin. The definition of geographical indication (2(1)(e)) is very inclusive as it is known that India appreciates the value of preserving not only geographical-based agricultural products but also the wider range of traditional crafts that constitutes its cultural economy.

Section 11^[15] of the Act provides a registration procedure in which associations of persons, producers or any organization or authority representing interests of producers can request GI registration to keep it a community right and not a personal monopoly. Registration is further split into Part A (registration of the GI itself) and Part B (registration of authorized users), thus forming a dual system to provide protection to the indication and to further grant recognition to the individual craftsman or group of producers entitled to use the registration.

In Section 21 and 2^[16] 2, the mechanism of enforcement of the Act has its foundation. Section 21 provides remedies in the face of infringement and section 22 expands on this by specifically forbidding misrepresentation of products as having origin in a registered GI region and protecting against other acts that cause confusion as to origin, quality or reputation. Notably section 21 provides protection much higher than what is set out in Articles 22- 24^[17] of the TRIPS Agreement which only provides extra protection to wines and spirits. The Indian GI Act, by comparison, offers additional protection to any type of good, including handicrafts and manufactured goods, in part due to a conscious policy decision which aimed to preserve the rich cultural and artisan heritage of India.

This broad approach has great implications on states like Karnataka that have registered handicrafts like Channapatna Toys, Mysore Silk, and Bidriware under the GI framework. Part A and Part B registration of these communities together allows these communities to have a collective right over their heritage and allows individual artisans access to the benefits of statutory remedies and market standing^[18]. India, commentators observe, has thus developed a unique form of cultural-economic protection under its GI Act that is neither obedience to TRIPS nor to the national imperative of maintaining traditional knowledge systems^[19].

4.2 Case Law Analysis

1. A case of Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd. v. State of Karnataka and Ors.

Facts: Channapatna toys are wooden handicrafts (lacquerware) produced in Ramanagara district, which receive GI designation in 2006. Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation (KSHDC) filed a petition against the sale of plastic and machine-made imitations that were being sold under the name Channapatna Toys. The petitioners argued that such malpractices deceptively misled the consumers, undermined the good name of the GI, and deprived the craftsmen of decent earnings, and hence breached Section 21 and 22 of the GI Act, 1999^[20].

Judgment & Legal Reasoning

The Karnataka High Court supported the exclusive rights of licensed GI users and maintained that imitation products that were not in line with traditional processes and materials were infringed under the GI Act. It instructed the State to enforce its enforcement by seizing counterfeits and imposed more stringent controls over online businesses. As pointed out by the Court, the GI value of a handicraft rests on its authenticity and cultural continuity and, hence, must be actively preserved by the State.

2. Shri Raghavendra Silk Traders v. Karnataka Silk Industries Corporation Ltd^[21]

Facts: In 2005 Mysore Silk, a leading silk product made only of pure mulberry silk with gold zari, was registered as GI. In 2012, the registered owner Karnataka Silk Industries Corporation (KSIC) initiated a suit against Shri Raghavendra Silk Traders on passing off and infringement of the name Mysore Silk on lower quality blended silk sarees. KSIC reasoned that misrepresentation was harmful to the reputation of Mysore Silk and contravened Section 22 of the GI Act, which outlaws misleading misuse of registered GIs.

Judgment & Legal Reasoning

The defendant was granted an injunction by the Civil Court (Bengaluru) who decided that sarees marketed under the GI “Mysore Silk” could only be marketed by KSIC and its authorized users. The Court found that consumer dependence on GI tags furnishes a presumption of genuineness and provenance and that a fraudulent use constitutes unfair rivalry. The ruling solidified the fact that GI tags are no longer tokens but enforceable rights before the law especially in handicrafts and textiles where consumer confidence reigns supreme.

3. Bidri Crafts Artisans Welfare Association vs. Union of India^[22]

Facts: A metal inlay craft practiced in Bidar, Karnataka, bidriware was given GI status in 2006. Mass-produced electroplated imitations were being sold in tourist spots and export markets as Bidriware, a charge the Bidri Crafts Artisans Welfare Association made against the traditional craft. The Association criticized the lack of response on the part of the enforcement agencies arguing that the inability to prevent such misuse contravened the GI Act, 1999 and denied artisans the protection provided by law.

Judgment & Legal Reasoning

The Delhi High Court noted that such an unauthorized sale of imitations under the name of Bidriware was a misrepresentation under Section 22 of the GI Act. Although the Court recognized the gap in enforcement the government of India and the Karnataka government must enforce a stricter control over the market as identified through market raid and consumer awareness program. Notably, the Court observed that handicraft GIs are especially susceptible because of the divided producer bases and demanded active intervention by the state that would

guarantee the direct benefits of the artisans under the GI protection.

The examples of the Channapatna Toys, Mysore Silk, and Bidriware, directly support the goal of this study as they demonstrate the practical implementation of the GI Act in protecting the handicrafts in Karnataka, as well as the problems with the system of enforcement, awareness, and shared benefits. Both judgments confirm the first one: GI protection plays a positive role in the conservation and recognition of crafts worldwide because of the exclusivity of the traditional forms of work and genuine materials. Simultaneously, the litigations reveal the second aim that the integrity of protection is harmed when artisans are not

aware of what they have to protect or when the enforcement authorities do not take the necessary action in time, thus permitting imitations to grow. Lastly, findings in both Mysore Silk and Bidriware specifically highlight the third goal, which is that despite the presence of GI rights enforced by the courts, intermediaries and counterfeit manufacturers often reap unequally and leave the artisans disenfranchised. A cumulative collection of these cases offers both empirical and legal doctrinal grounds that though GIs are useful legal instruments, their full developmental potentials in the handicrafts of Karnataka depend on greater enforcement, engagement of the artisans, and policy backing.

4.3 Comparative analysis

Table 1: Comparative analysis for Legal instrument and scope

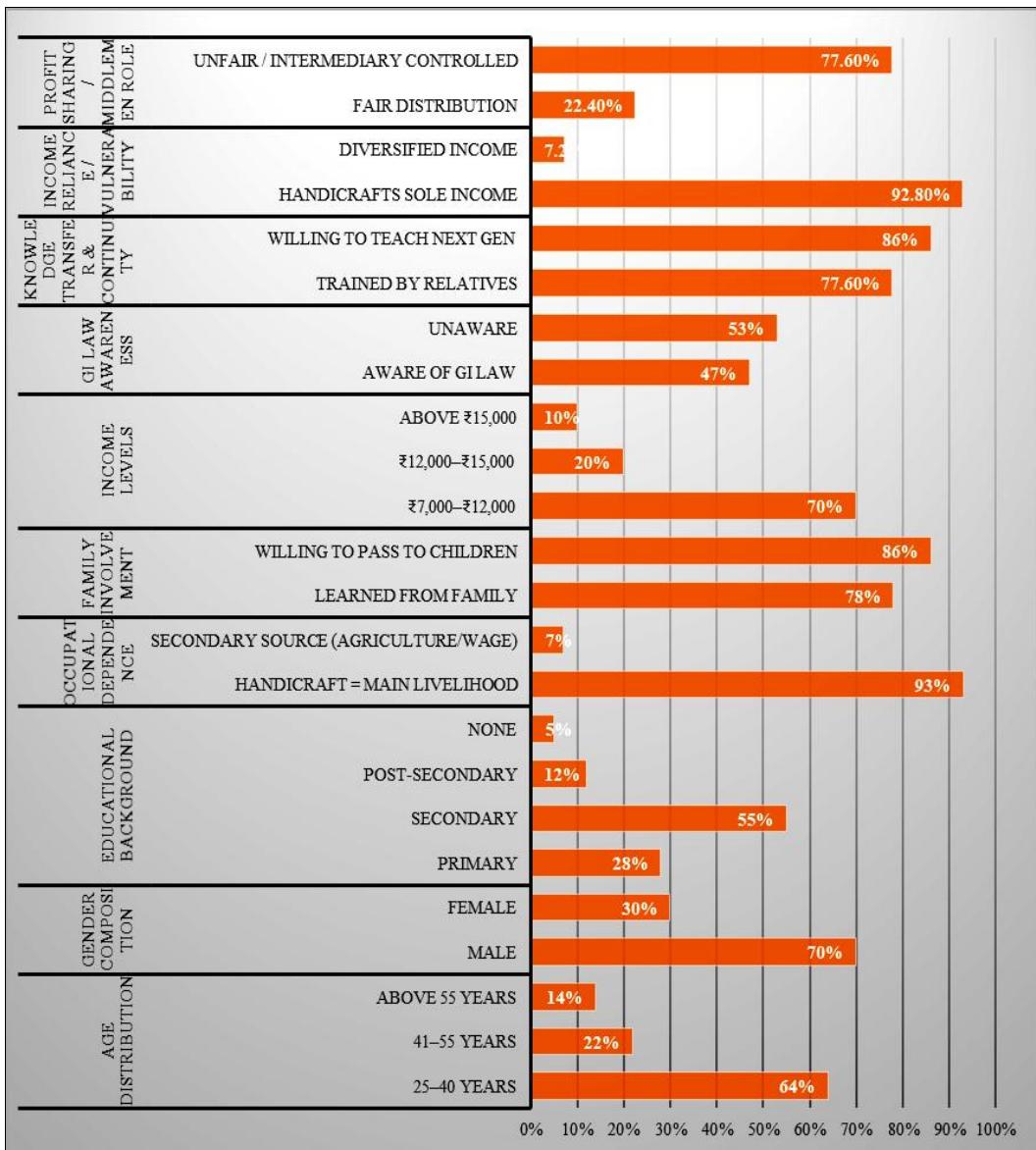
| Jurisdiction | Legal Instrument & Scope | Summary |
|----------------|--|---|
| European Union | Regulation (EU) 2023/2411 on Geographical Indications for Craft and Industrial Products (in force Dec. 2025) ^[23] | Extends GI protection beyond food, wines, and spirits to handicrafts like Murano glass and Donegal tweed. EU-wide registration and enforcement through EUIPO strengthen global branding, consumer trust, and producer group governance. |
| Thailand | Geographical Indications Protection Act B.E. 2546 (2003), with rules and GI logo system ^[24] | Protects agricultural goods and handicrafts such as Praewa Kalasin silk. Government-led control plans, logos, and awareness campaigns enhance recognition, but small weavers often struggle to fully capture GI benefits without stronger institutional support. |
| Mexico | Denominación de Origen (DO) system under IMPI; complemented by standards (NOM) ^[25] | Protects handicrafts like Talavera pottery (also UNESCO heritage). Certification councils monitor compliance and authenticity, improving global reputation. However, counterfeit markets and unequal value distribution continue to pose challenges for smaller artisans. |
| Peru | Denominación de Origen framework under INDECOPI; member of Lisbon–Geneva Act (2022) ^[26] | Protects handicrafts such as Chulucanas ceramics. The state authorizes artisan associations to use DOs, boosting preservation and exports. Awareness and compliance gaps remain in rural clusters, limiting widespread benefits. |
| Turkey | National GI system aligned with EU rules (Craft GIs registered since 1996) ^[27] | Protects products like Hereke silk carpets. GI registration has enhanced authenticity and brand equity, but imitation products persist. Without strong governance, intermediaries often capture more profits than traditional weavers. |

As the comparative analysis of the European Union, Thailand, Mexico, Peru and Turkey demonstrates, the different jurisdictions differ in their institutional form, *yet all* the systems demonstrate how GIs can contribute to the furtherance of the aims of preservation, awareness, and equitable allocation of gains to handicraft. The new EU regulation of craft and industrial GIs provides greater recognition and protection at the international level by creating a unified protection of products like Murano glass and Donegal tweed within a single market. The Thai structure, both the GI logo and the control plans underline the need to have state-based awareness and capacity building in order to enable producers, in particular rural weavers to access GI systems. The case of Mexico and Peru Talavera and Chulucanas ceramics show how GIs can globalize reputation through certification and UNESCO recognition, and how failures in artisan sensitization and inequitable benefits and sharing with traders who gain

disproportionately can manifest. The Hereke carpets of Turkey demonstrate that even established craft GIs require strong producer governance to be certain that intermediaries will not attempt to take advantage of value chains. All this experience demonstrates that the handicrafts of Karnataka, despite the benefits of GI registration, still require more orientation to awareness creation and cooperative governance in such a way that the artisans will be the principal beneficiaries of GI protection instead of intermediaries.

4.4 Empirical Analysis

This artisan community that practises GI-approved handicrafts in Karnataka is a heterogeneous socio-economic and cultural population. According to the survey conducted on 500 people across crafts like Channapatna Toys, Mysore Silk, Bidriware, Mysore Paintings and Kasuti Embroidery, we found the following demographic trends

**Fig 1:** Representation of Empirical data

Age Distribution

The age structure of the artisan society shows that there is a large young and economically active working population. The age range that constitutes majority of the respondents is the 25 years to 40 years bracket at 64 with 22 years to 40 years coming second at 22, with only 14 years taking 14 years and above. This trend implies that GI-approved handicrafts in Karnataka still remain popular among the younger generation as a means of conducting business. Yet, the decreasing percentage of older craftsmen is indicative of potential work burnout, health-related retirement, or the lack of economic stability to continue to practice their craft on a long-term basis.

Gender Composition

The distribution in terms of gender is very imbalanced where men form 70 percent of the artisan population and women only 30 percent. Women are important in various GI crafts, especially in embroidery, preparation of painting, as well as finishing, but they are only underrepresented and in an informal manner. This inequality is an expression of gendered restriction like restricted movement, inequality of

market accessibility, training services and institutional acknowledgement instead of ineptitude or input.

Educational Background

Educational profile indicates that most of the artisans have basic school education with 55 percent having acquired secondary education and 28 percent having primary education only. There is post-secondary education of approximately 12 percent and 5 percent of no formal education. Even though rudimentary education enables the acquisition of skills and learning in workshops, there is a limited educative experience in higher education, which restrains the ability of artisans to interact with legal systems, digital tools, branding, and documentation procedures to exploit GI protection to its full advantages.

Occupational Dependence

The survey shows that there is excessive reliance on handicrafts as the main source of livelihood with 93 per cent of the surveyed depending on craftwork as their main career and only 7 per cent primary sources of income are agriculture or wage labor. This reliance is a bolster of the economic centrality of GI craft in the lives of artisans but

also leaves them more vulnerable, with a change in demand, raw material prices or market shocks being a direct threat to stability of the household.

Family and Intergenerational Engagement

Family based learning remains the most popular form of acquiring skills, with 78 percent of the artisans saying that they were taught the craft by their family members. Besides, 86 percent indicated that they were open to transfer their skills to their children. Such close intergenerational interaction shows the cultural embeddedness of GI crafts and the way they allow maintaining collective identity. It is however becoming dependent on economic viability in the long run since young people might switch off once returns are not satisfactory.

Income Levels

The earning of the artisans is also low with 70 percent of the earning being between 7,000 and 12,000 a month. The other 20 percent are between 12,000 and 15,000, the other 10 percent report higher monthly incomes more than 15,000. These statistics suggest that, although GI products are marketed at a high price and have a high level of cultural and geographical values, most of the artisans work at subsistence or close to subsistence incomes, which demonstrate that there is a gap between the market and the payment to producers.

Awareness of GI Law

The Geographical Indications law is not well known in the society. Although 47% of the artisans said they knew about GI Act, a bigger proportion, 53% said they were not aware of the provisions and protection under the GI Act. Such ignorance grossly discourages the capacity of artisans to protect their intellectual property as a community, counterfeit items, or enforce their GI criteria in the market.

Knowledge sharing and Knowledge persistence between generations

At GI crafts there is a strong sense of knowledge continuity with 77.6% of the respondents having been trained by their relatives and 86% of the respondents indicating that they are willing to teach the next generation. Although this model maintains traditional methodology and authenticity, there is the risk of the loss of skills, low innovation, and poor quality control between generations due to the lack of systematic training systems and institutional records.

Economic Susceptibility and Income Reliance

The survey also indicates that 92.8 percent of the artisans are entirely relying on handicrafts as a source of income and only 7.2 percent have diversified sources of income. This reliance on high income increases vulnerability to economic crises, and the artisans are especially susceptible to these situations, like pandemics, market shutdowns, or disruption of the supply chain. Financial insecurity is further exacerbated by the absence of other means of livelihood and restricts resilience.

Profit Sharing and Intermediaries Roles

There is also a high level of skewness in the way profit is distributed in GI craft value chain as 77.6% willingly

reported that profit was distributed unfairly or at the will of intermediaries, as opposed to 22.4% who said profit distribution was fair. It means that middlemen, traders, and retailers earn a disproportionate value whereas artisans have to be price-takers. Scarcity of direct access to the market and poor collective bargaining further consolidate this lopsidedness.

GI Law and Legal Literacy Lapses

The low awareness of the law and the utilization of intermediaries in large numbers is a critical gap in the legal and institutional framework. Artisans are frequently not aware and have a lack of confidence to claim GI rights, check on abuse and seek legal redress. As a result, registration of GI is mostly ceremonial among most practitioners providing recognition without financial or legal empowerment.

Gendered Inequality in Artisan Partaking

The fact that only 30% of the artisans surveyed are women shows that the industry has a deep-rooted gender disparity in the craft industry. The work of women is often at home where it is unpaid or is either classified as a helper, but not a professional. Restriction of ownership rights, cooperatives, financial services and training makes the women artisans even more marginalized although they are very fundamental in the maintenance of craft traditions and transfer of knowledge to the new generation.

Overall Interpretation

In general, the GI-approved artisan community in Karnataka exhibits a high level of cultural continuum and intergenerational commitment but is limited by low incomes, lack of legal literacy, gender imbalance and intermediate domination. Although the GI status is symbolic and heritage, its potential as an economic empowerment instrument is yet to be exploited. These structural issues can be met by ensuring that GI crafts and the community that supports them are long-term sustainable by means of specific legal literacy, gender-inclusive policies, market access reform, and institutional support.

Discussion

The doctrinal and empirical analysis produces findings that even with all the desirable impacts of the formal protection enjoyed by the Karnataka handicrafts by the GI Act, 1999, the socioeconomic impact of legal protection has been skewed. The courts have upheld the principle that the handicraft GIs must not lie and at the same time it must be authentic; this can be seen in the case of Channapatna Toys, Mysore Silk and Bidriware. But the artisan state of reality is disjoined with law and practice. The fact that GI law is not known to almost half of the artisans makes them unqualified in the list of people authorized to use the law and to demand a better price in the market. Moreover, the unfairness in the sharing of profits among the middlemen, which continues to exist, disenfranchises the artisans (especially the women), even after GI registration. These architectural issues are indicative of the GIS paradox of being a symbolic guardian of heritage even when they themselves have failed to offer fair livelihoods or a viable craft economy.

Recommendations

These are issues which require multi-pronged resolution. First, there is the need to seek cluster level awareness and capacity-building, whereby the artisans are made aware of the importance of GI rights, registration policy and enforcement policies. Second, the system of cooperative organization and association of producers should be enhanced to obtain additional space between the producers and the middlemen and enable artisans to receive more justifiable portion of profits. This may be anchored on positive governance experience of Thai GI logos and Mexican regulatory councils. Third, the market connection and branding, including electronic tracking system like blockchain-based certification may be used to boost the confidence of consumers even without eliminating counterfeiting. And lastly, gender disparities in participation should be resolved through gender-friendly policies (e.g. skill trainings and grants to women artisans and female heads of cooperatives). All these would balance GI protection and preservation, awareness and equitable sharing of benefits so that the handicrafts of Karnataka flourish in the national and international markets.

Conclusion

The Indian *sui generis* GI regime may be perceived as both an opportunity, and a constraint to protection of handicraft under the regime of Geographical Indications in Karnataka. On one hand, the protection of handicrafts in the context of intensified TRIPS, i.e. the GI Act, 1999, has contributed to guarantee authenticity, preventive misrepresentation besides ensuring cultural identity of the community. The fact that the courts have heard and decided cases involving Channapatna Toys, Mysore Silk and Bidriware shows that they have recognized the importance of enforcing GI rights in protecting traditional knowledge and artisan livelihood. However, the facts show that there is always something off: handicraft is still poor because artisans rely only on it to earn their living, the chain of profits is twisted in their favor and about half of them do not know about GI protection that can help them.

Combined, the results of this paper affirm the belief that GIS is a potent yet not fully deployed rural development and cultural conservation instrument. The legal system needs to be complemented with more enforcement, awareness, inclusiveness and participatory governance to see to it that the full potential of Karnataka crafts is realized and that the voices of the craftsmen (and especially the women) are accorded the due attention. The case of the European Union, Thailand, Mexico, Peru and Turkey indicates that in those countries where well-organized producer associations are present, consumer trust systems and fair value-chain governance, GIs can generate cultural prestige, not to mention economic justice. Therefore, it is not only in enhanced GI recognition that the future of Karnataka handicrafts lie, but also in adopting GI as a symbolic emblem of heritage as a working tool to maintain livelihoods and to develop inclusive growth.

Author statement

All authors contributed equally to this work.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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