

Role of Geographical Indication in Maharashtra's Handicraft Industry: A Study of The Maharashtra's Handicraft Sector in Relevance To GI

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Abstract

This paper is a comprehensive analysis of Geographical Indications in the Maharashtra context, with particular reference to the handicraft sector. It discusses topics such as the rationale for Geographical Indications as IP (Intellectual Property); the state-based nature of Geographical Indications; popular handicrafts in Maharashtra and their Geographical Indication-derived information; the effectiveness of Geographical Indications; and Geographical Indication design for handicrafts. This paper sheds light on the Geographical Indication status of handicrafts in Maharashtra, which is a sector that represents the cultural heritage of the state and supports diverse livelihoods. This article provides policy measures undertaken for the revival, reconstruction and promotion of Geographical Indication-derived handicrafts in Maharashtra and will serve as a key intervention in the Indian law on Geographical Indications.

Maharashtra state is blessed with a tradition of handicrafts, out of which some handicrafts have been published on the world map according to this geographical indication, which include musical instruments of Miraj, Kolhapuri chappals of Kolhapur, Puneri turban of Pune district, Solapuri chadar of Solapur district, Warli painting of Thane district, Terre towel of Solapur district, Paithani saree of Aurangabad district etc. This research, which assesses the current law and policy on geographical indication protection through detailed case studies and empirical research on selected Indian handicrafts, will be useful for further research and public policy practitioners and researchers.

Introduction

Maharashtra has a rich traditional identity that is known for its Paithani sarees, Warli art, Kolhapuri chappals, Sawantwadi toys; musical instruments and various craft as per district & geographical location also. Many of these arts are also recognized as their intellectual property. Geographical indications in handicrafts are intellectual property systems that apply to goods that are identified by the place where they were created (collected, produced or manufactured). The concept of geographical indications in handicrafts takes into account socio-environmental, historical, and cultural characteristics. As a result of globalization, handicrafts in Maharashtra have been recognized globally by acquiring geographical indications, which is intended to preserve and promote some of the handicrafts that have received

geographical indications. In accordance with the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act of 1999, handicrafts (including handlooms) may be registered as geographic indications (GI), but this act came into effect in 2003 in India.

The first geographical indication for handicrafts in Maharashtra was started in 2005. More than 60 thousand artisans are associated with the handicraft sector in Maharashtra. Of these, more than 52% are women artisans and many artisans consider this business as their primary source of income and means of livelihood.

Meaning of GI-

“Article 22.1 of the TRIPS 1999 Agreement defines GI As, a geographical indication is a sign used for a product that have a specific geographical or area origin and possess qualities or reputation that are due to that origin¹”.

GI tag protects handicrafts under the act of TRIPS 1999 and gives them special rights for 10 years. After ten years, the said item or art has to be re-registered and has to be extended for the next ten years. In India, a total of more than 650 handicraft items has received GI tag. There are 149 Indian handicrafts and handloom products registered with Geographical Indication (GI) certificates in India as on April 2017. This list is published by the Development Commissioner (Handloom) and Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India. As per the provisions of the GI Act, artisans and weavers are registered as ‘authorised users’ of GI. GI products manufactured under the terms of the Certificate Act are permitted for sale and also presents geographical variety.

Need of GI

1. To preserve traditional and historical craft heritage through GI Act
2. To prevent any unauthorized person from using the indication for fake products produced in the indicated region.
3. Guaranteeing the quality of the handicraft product, as it is due to the geographical location of origin.
4. To protect against counterfeit products
5. To contribute the local economy and heritage conservation

Benefits of GI Registration:

1. GI registration provides economic benefits to producer Artisans by giving them exclusive rights to use the indication.
2. GI producer artisans can benefit from the market value associated with geographical origin, which increases demand for their products and increases prices.
3. As the registration of authorized users for GI-made products is secure for a period of 10 years, they can plan for long-term economic benefits.
4. GI tag acts as a marketing tool for artisans' crafts.

Objectives

1. To understand meaning of Geographical Indication, as per TRIPS -1999 Agreement.
2. To explore of GI-awarded crafts in Maharashtra state.
3. To explore data of craft artisans who have worked under GI craft.

Review of Literature -

Ms. Akshita Agrawal & Prof. (Dr). Bhawana Chanana (2021)² This research paper reviews studies on the revival of traditional textiles, handlooms and handicrafts and their availability to consumers. They reviewed publications strongly support the claim that although many artefacts have been revived and almost all textiles are being registered for GI, the traditional process of making handicrafts and handicrafts is dying. Their study also revealed that consumers are willing to buy handloom and handicraft products but do not have this knowledge whether they are spending money on an original or an imitation product. The study revealed that large-scale awareness campaigns are needed to ensure its sustainability. Digital streaming between buyers and manufacturers will improve a reliable connection between the artisans and the consumer community and this will help in providing better quality products.

Sunil Sudhakar Varnekar and Dr. Upankar Chutia (2023)³ - This article provides policy measures undertaken for the revival, restructuring and promotion of Indian handlooms and handicrafts, and will serve as an important intervention in Indian law on Geographical Indications. They depict a comprehensive analysis of Geographical Indications in the Indian context with particular reference to the handloom sector. The paper also highlights the status of Indian handlooms, a sector that represents the country's cultural heritage and supports a range of livelihoods. India's Geographical Indications protection system is been analysed with its diverse cultures and explore how Geographical Indications can help recognize, support and promote these products to bring socioeconomic benefits. He discusses themes such as the rationale of Geographical Indications as IP (Intellectual property) in his paper.

Rachel John Robinson (2022)⁴ - According to his paper GI is a value added to a product that is used to indicate its heritage and uniqueness, to differentiate it in the marketplace and to give it a competitive edge. GI is a subcategory of the Intellectual Property (IP) sector in global trade. It is governed by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Issues and disputes surrounding GI are a common occurrence, mostly among producers but rarely reaching consumers. For consumers, GI-guaranteed products provide quality, prestige and uniqueness so that they can buy with confidence. In current practice, GIs are widely used in agricultural-based products that require specific production skills and traditions. According to WIPO reports from 2018, 80% of GIs are for agricultural products and foodstuffs, while the remaining 20% are for non-agricultural products. This proposal will examine the potential problems of agri-based and non-agricultural producers in the regions and propose a common integrated approach to overcome strategically relevant state problems through the economic theory of the club.

Swati Sharma (April 2019)⁵ - The main purpose of this paper is to discuss the concept of geographical indication in India. As geographical indication is an emerging trend and helps us to identify particular goods having special quality, reputation or features originating from a geographical territory. It examines the legal framework for GIs, analyses their impact on rural and traditional industries, and evaluates the challenges and opportunities in utilizing GIs for cultural preservation, economic development, and sustainable tourism. The paper highlights an importance of striking a balance between intellectual property rights and the cultural heritage of a region to ensure inclusive growth and the equitable distribution of benefits.

Maharashtra's GI tag handicraft: An introductory overview

Through this research paper, a brief review of the 7 handicraft items with GI tag has been done here. The following handicrafts in Maharashtra state are using GI tag:

Puneri Pagadi -

Puneri Turban was introduced in the 19th century by social reformer Mahadev Govind Ranade. Many leaders including Tilak and Karandikar wore it, which has earned it a special place in society.



Puneri Turban is based on the turban worn by the Peshwas. Such Puneri Turban was given a geographical indication in 2009. Accordingly, only registered artisans can manufacture and sell this turban, and since it is produced in Pune district, it has been given the title 'Puneri Pagadi'. More than 1,200 artisans are associated with this craft. Puneri Pagdi Sangh has acquired this GI tag and Puneri Pagadi Sangh has got all the rights. They could use this geographical indication till 2019 and it could be renewed later. Puneri Turban is an integral part of Pune city, the cultural capital of Maharashtra. Puneri turban is a cloth of about 5 meters wide and 50 meters long, which is dyed in various colors or white. The turban decorated with gold zari is a symbol of the Maharashtrian turban culture in various corners of the country. Puneri turban, which is the honor of the city of Pune; a symbol of pride and prestige, has got a new identity outside the world due to its geographical indication.

Miraj Musical Instruments-

Sangli district got its name from Miraj taluka. The history of Tanpura in Miraj dates back to 300 years. The then Patwardhan government of Miraj institutions gave it a big boost. Musical instruments here have a 300-year-old tradition.



More than 1,500 artisans are involved in this business who are busy making other musical instruments like sitar and tanpura. The wood and gourd required for making instruments in Miraj are sourced from the local market. The inclusion of it in the list of Geographical Indications by the Government of India in 2014 has made it a sure place for music lovers to get the right goods. The artisans will get these rights by 2024. This GI tag has been given to sitar and tanpura from Miraj. The instruments made here are in great demand among artists. Since this product is made in a specific area, the artisans here have got a lot of scope for business growth. Farmers in Sangli district cultivate milk gourd, which is required for making sitar and tanpura, on the river banks. Overall, the artisans of Miraj mainly produce musical instruments. More than 500 artisans are undergoing training and various information gathering through the government's cluster scheme in Miraj, they are getting various services. The musical instrument production of Miraj attracts various artists, which is why customers come here to buy it. Sangli district is an agricultural district, so there is natural support for musical instrument production here.

Paithani saree-

The history of sarees is very old. More than 8,000 artisans are involved in this industry that emerged from handloom. Paithani sarees are a handicraft that emerged from Paithan taluka of Aurangabad district.



Paithani has a special place in Maharashtra. It is widely used in various ceremonies, which is why Paithani is also known as 'Mahavastra'. Paithani sarees got the GI assessment tag on 30 November 2009. Which includes Paithani sarees and fabrics. Since silk thread is used in Paithani weaving, Paithani sarees become a part of the attraction for the buyer. Through various embroidery and the characteristic paintings of Ajanta and Verul caves, Paithani sarees are described through embroidery. Paithani sarees are a wonderful gift to the state of Maharashtra, due to which the name of Maharashtra state has reached every corner of the country and region. Paithani sarees are made with a special skill; they also represent a special identity, due to which the artisans here have earned a special status for Paithani. Paithani sarees have succeeded in getting the Geographical Indication in 2010. This has been given the status from 2009 to 2019. Through this re-registration, Paithani sarees have been extended their status from 2019 to 2029 and the artisans can use the special rights for it.

Paithani sarees are known for their special designs of zari work, different colorful art embroidery. Paithani designs are inspired by Mughal art, with motifs of peacocks, lotuses, and mangoes often featuring nature. Since Paithani sarees are completely handmade, buyers can order them as per their wishes. Due to the varying orders from customers, many artisans look to handicrafts as their primary source of income. Another reason for this is that Paithani sarees can last for a hundred years.

Kolhapuri Chappal-

Today, there is no need to introduce Kolhapuri Chappal, the ancient and continuous handicraft of Maharashtra, is as alive as the human settlement on this planet. The history of Kolhapuri Chappal can be seen from the 12th century. Shahu I of Kolhapur in Maharashtra encouraged Kolhapuri and kept Kolhapuri alive.



Today, Kolhapuri Chappal received Geographical Indication in 2019 and its rights can be used by the artisans till 2029. Due to Geographical Indication, this right will protect patents, designs and trademarks. Kolhapuri Chappal came to life again during the work of Shahu Maharaj. During this period, 29 training centers were set up at that time, due to which the artisans got a boost in business.

Kolhapuri Chappal is made entirely from leather, so it lasts longer than other chappals. Originally made from buffalo hide and thread, the slippers are completely handmade. These slippers have provided employment to a large extent to the artisans of Kolhapur district and other parts of the country. More than 7,000 artisans work in this business. Out of the total six lakh pairs of Kolhapuri slippers produced every year, 30 percent of the pairs are exported abroad. Kolhapuri slippers are made through various processes such as leather, sewing, polishing, stitching, and decoration. Today, artisans are finding it easy to fulfill the needs of slippers as per the demand of the customers because it completely involves the skill of the artisans and small machinery, which makes it easy for the artisans to manufacture. One of them is still holding its own in today's various restrictions and market effects. Despite facing various problems, Kolhapuri slippers are maintaining their identity in the Indian and global markets. Thanks to the GI tag for Kolhapuri, the artisans there are making a living by identifying the needs of the designs that are in demand in the market and fulfilling them.

Warli Painting -

There are more than hundred art painting traditions in India, one of which is Warli painting in Maharashtra. This art emerged around the tenth century.



Thane district and Palghar district in Maharashtra are the main pioneers in this. Warli painting got its geographical designation in 2014. Later, they got the right to this geographical designation till 2021. Later, it has been renovated and renovated till 2031. Warli painting is a cultural art especially of the tribal community which has been given to them by tradition and they have preserved it even today. This painting is different from the paintings made by modern artists. This painting uses traditional elements (clay, cow dung, rice, brick etc.) There are more than 5,000 artisans in it and it is accompanied by the Warli tribe. Warli painting is based on the concept of nature, from which nature is depicted in it such as gods, rivers, animals, agriculture, trees, traditional professions etc. Warli artists use traditional clay for their art. Tribal communities paint Warli paintings on their walls and in their courtyards. In Maharashtra, Warli paintings are found in the northern Sahyadri mountain range. Tribal communities paint their images of mythological gods and goddesses during festivals and other ceremonies.

Warli painting is found in the tribal settlements of Dahanu; Jawhar village in Maharashtra. Due to this idea, in the year 2014, the Adivasi Yuva Seva Sangh took the initiative and obtained the status of geographical designation for Warli painting. Warli painting is mostly done for religious ceremonies, weddings, and home decoration. Warli painting is usually made with designs of curved and diagonal lines, dots, circles, and triangles, etc. Warli painting is a big craze among modern artisans, who use it extensively to paint pictures on government property. Due to this unique painting in Maharashtra, the tradition of Warli paintings has become a subject of research in the country and abroad. Today, some prominent artisans and some prominent tribal tribes are working to keep this art with an ancient background alive in Maharashtra. Traditional and modern artisans and tribes can be seen in the making of Warli paintings.

Solapuri Chadar-

Solapuri Chadar is the first product from Solapur in Maharashtra to be granted Geographical Indication status in 2005.



In the 1970s, industrial weaving in India, especially in Maharashtra, received a huge boost and this led to a huge change in local handloom weaving.

Since Solapur district has a high cotton production, there is a huge demand for Chadar. Solapur is known for its traditional blanket business. Solapuri Chadar is a sheet made from cotton in the city of Solapur in India and in the state of Maharashtra, this sheet is very popular in India. Most of it is made by handloom looms, which is why it has become very popular. More than 6,000 artisans are directly and indirectly engaged in this business. This traditional textile was granted Geographical Indication in the year 2005. The nomination period was given from 2004 to 2014. It has currently been extended till 2024. The current geographical designation of Solapuri Chadar is in the process of being renewed for 2034. Solapur district has a history of spinning mills. Every artisan had one or two power looms in his household, usually operated by the head of the family. Chadar is in great demand in various states of India such as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh; and outside India, large quantities of products are being supplied to America, South Africa, UK, Canada, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. The handloom weaving industry, which emerged during the Peshwa era, has today become the primary source of livelihood for many artisans in Solapur district. Solapuri Chadar is made with embroidery as per the expectations of the customers, and since it is woven on power looms, it takes less time and money. Due to this reason, many small handicraft industries in Solapur are getting encouragement to produce Solapuri Chadar. Solapuri chadar is sold in every corner of the country and has a place in online marketing, which is why Solapur district was known as the district with the largest spinning mill in Asia.

Solapur Terry Towel -

The Solapur terry towel is one of the modern identities of Maharashtra. The towel made from cotton yarn is sold with Solapuri chadar.



Terry towel has created a new identity for Solapur district; it has provided employment to greater than 5,500 artisans. This towel is a unique design handicraft through which people get traditional and high-quality goods. It has been included in the Geographical Indication Act of the Government of India and has been nominated in 2005. This nomination was valid till 2014 and then its term has been extended till

2024. Solapur district is the only place in India where the demand for terry towels is fulfilled by completing all the processes like packing, finishing, doubling, wrapping, winding and marketing. And since all these processes are in one place, it also saves a lot of time for the artisans. Since the Solapuri Terry Towel was approved, cluster schemes are being adopted. Various innovative training is provided through this cluster and modernity is added to contribute to the prosperity of production. A cluster has been launched at 'Akkalkot' through the Government of India.

Since Solapur's terry towel is in great demand in the global market, its production is also increasing day by day, due to which this demand is fulfilled through online demand, while most of the demand is fulfilled in the local market. Terry towel is one of the reasons why farmers in Solapur get great benefits from cotton production. Since this terry towel business is related to agriculture, artisans can also look at handicrafts as a complementary business. Many artisans in Solapur district benefit from government schemes and training.

Impact of GI on the 7 Handicraft

Generally, GI is known for the geographical designation of goods which indicates the origin and quality of the products. Kolhapuri chappals, Paithani sarees and many such products have acquired valuable reputation, which if not properly preserved can lead to misinformation or unfair commercial consequences. Therefore, misuse by parties holding GI rights cannot be detrimental to producers and legitimate consumers. Here, consumers are not misled into believing that they are getting the genuine product. The following highlights explain why GI is necessary.

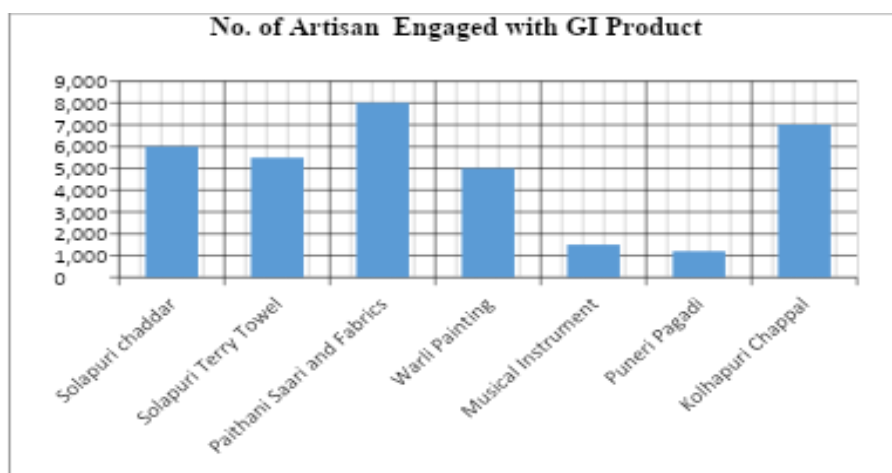
Recently, Italian luxury fashion brand “Prada” was noticed under the GI Act by the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce and Industry for allegedly copying Kolhapuri chappals after they displayed bare-toed leather sandals similar to Kolhapuri chappals at the “Milan Fashion Week” in June 2025. According to the petition, Kolhapuri chappals are protected by the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. On June 25, Prada unveiled its summer 2026 men's collection in which the toe ring sandals were said to be priced "more than Rs 1 lakh per pair." But it did not mention that the design was Indian-inspired. After it was revealed that "a luxury fashion label has infringed the design of Kolhapuri chappals without the knowledge or consent of the GI applicant or authorized users," Prada apologized for the incident and one of its teams acknowledged the rights of the Kolhapuri chappals under the GI.

Research Methodology–

This Research paper is a descriptive study and secondary data has been used for analysis. The following are table which shows the working no of artisan who engaged in registered GI crafts.

Sr. No	Product name	District	GI granted Year	No. of artisan engaged (>)
1	Solapuri chaddar	Solapur	2005	6,000
2	Solapuri terry towel	Solapur	2005	5,500
3	Paithanisaari and Fabrics	Aurangabad	2010	8,000
4	Warli painting	Thane	2014	5,000
5	Miraj-Musical Instrument	Sangali	2024	1,500
6	Puneri pagadi	Pune	2009	1,200
7	Kolhapuri chappal	Kolhapur	2019	7,000

Source- handicraft.nic.in/artisanData



The above data has been collected through both secondary research and primary field survey in the form of quantitative data analysis study. Primary data includes Geographical Indications Registration Office Information and Handicrafts Service Centre, Aurangabad. Secondary research includes literature survey and organization of secondary source information on various parameters. Data collection from secondary sources has been done through various journals, research papers, books, and legal studies.

Conclusion

Maharashtra is a land of diverse crafts. Maharashtra, along with other states, has contributed to the growing intellectual property of Geographical Indications. Geographical Indications (GIs) in Maharashtra have emerged to empower local communities, promote regional development, preserve cultural heritage and give new identity to crafts. This paper explores various aspects related to the analysis of GIs crafts in the state of Maharashtra. This paper outlines the concept of GIs and the GI tag obtained in the state of Maharashtra, highlights the importance of a clear definition, a streamlined registration process and effective enforcement mechanisms

This article emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage and its contribution to the exchange of Maharashtra, the need for legal mechanisms to protect and promote crafts. The total number of GIs in Maharashtra is increasing over the years. Currently, 7 GIs have been recognized and some are waiting to be recognized. GIs increase the profits of artisans and provide recognition for providing specific goods or services. The conclusion of this study is that it is an important study to reveal the facts regarding the total 7 GI tagged handicrafts received in the state of Maharashtra and the number of artisans working in them.

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