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From GI Tag to Market Value: Geographical Indications, Value Addition and the Make in India Initiative

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Abstract
Geographical Indications (GIs) associate a product's quality or reputation with its geographical origin. India has registered over 822 GIs under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, including 251 agricultural products, while current policy promotes GIs as instruments of Make in India, Vocal for Local and One District One Product (ODOP). Using a doctrinal approach supported by secondary data, this paper investigates whether GI registration alone generates value for farmers. It analyses the GI Act, the TRIPS Agreement, EU Regulation 2024/1143, leading Indian and European judgments, and case studies involving Basmati, Darjeeling tea and Kashmir saffron. The findings indicate that price premiums arise only when registration is supported by authorized-user enrollment, quality control, traceability and export linkages. Punjab, with only two GIs—both shared with other states—demonstrates this gap. The paper puts forward a "GI-plus" framework that connects GI law to Make in India outcomes.

Keywords: Geographical Indications; Value Addition; Make in India; Punjab Agriculture; Basmati; TRIPS Agreement; Authorised Users

1. Introduction

The commercial logic of a geographical indication is simple. Consumers pay more for goods whose origin or originality of the product is authenticated: Darjeeling tea, Basmati rice, Banarasi silk sarees, Alphonso mangoes. The producers of those goods collectively hold a reputation that took generations to build, and that reputation is vulnerable to free-riding by outsiders. Intellectual property law responds by giving the community of producers an exclusive right to use the name.

India's first registered GI tag was Darjeeling tea, in 2004-05, soon after the 1999 Act took effect on 15 September 2003.[1] Registrations have since accelerated. Recent reports put the number of registered Indian GIs at 822 at the end of March 2026, after 125 registrations in the 2025-26 financial year alone, while total

[1]The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (Act 48 of 1999).

applications have crossed 2,000[2] and the Government has spoken of an ambition of 10,000 GIs by 2030[3] (see Section 8 for sources and caveats on these figures). By any count the registry is growing fast.

The policy question is therefore How market value play significance role for the producer?. The question matters because GIs are justified in public policy not as ends in themselves but as instruments of rural development, cultural preservation, consumer protection and economic growth. This paper asks how a GI tag becomes market value, and what role the Make in India initiative, with its emphasis on manufacturing, value addition and exports, can play in closing the gap between registration and returns.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 sets out the international and domestic legal framework. Section 3 reviews the economic theory of GIs. Section 4 examines value addition as the bridge between a tag and a price premium. Section 5 links GIs to Make in India and allied schemes. Section 6 analyses case studies. Section 7 identifies challenges. Section 8 discusses data limitations. Section 9 proposes reforms, and Section 10 concludes.

2. Background and Legal framework

Section 2(1)(e) of the Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 defines a GI as an indication identifying agricultural, natural or manufactured goods as originating in a territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic is essentially attributable to that origin.[4] Unlike a trademark, which belongs to one business, a GI is collective: every qualifying producer in the area may use it, and it cannot be assigned or licensed. Before 1999 India protected place names only through passing off; in Scotch Whisky Association v. Golden Bottling Ltd.[5], the Delhi High Court recognised "Scotch" as a GI but, as it was unregistered in India, granted relief only for passing off.[6] The 1999 Act responded both to TRIPS and to misappropriation such as the RiceTec Basmati patent in the United States.

2.1 International standards

The TRIPS Agreement (1994) defines GIs in Article 22(1) as indications that identify a good as originating in a territory, region or locality where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.[7] Article 22 requires all WTO members to provide legal means to prevent misleading use and unfair competition. Article 23 gives a higher level of protection to wines and spirits, prohibiting use of the indication even where the true origin is stated or the term is used in translation or with expressions such as "kind" or "type". Article 24 contains exceptions, including for generic terms and prior good-faith use.[8]

This two-tier structure is the source of a long-running dispute. India and many developing countries, together with the EU and others, have argued for extending Article 23-level protection to all products and

[2] KNN India, "India's GI Applications Cross 2,000 Mark as Centre Pushes 2030 Target" (Apr. 6, 2026), available at: https://knnindia.co.in/news/newsdetails/economy/indias-gi-applications-cross-2000-mark-as-centre-pushes-2030-target (last visited Nov. 12, 2026).

[3] Down To Earth, "As the 'GI & Beyond 2.0 Summit' starts in Delhi, India needs to reflect on hurdles in harnessing potential of GIs for agricultural commodities" (2026), available at: https://www.downtoearth.org.in/agriculture/as-the-gi-beyond-20-summit-starts-in-delhi-india-needs-to-reflect-on-hurdles-in-harnessing-potential-of-gis-for-agricultural-commodities (last visited Nov. 12, 2026).

[4] Supra note 1, s. 2(1)(e).

[5] 129 (2006) DLT 423

[6] Scotch Whisky Association v. Golden Bottling Ltd., 129 (2006) DLT 423.

[7] Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, 1994, Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, Annex 1C, 1869 U.N.T.S. 299, art. 22(1).

[8] TRIPS, arts. 22-24.

for a multilateral register, while some New World producers have resisted.[9] For India, whose GI portfolio is dominated by non-wine products such as tea, rice, textiles and handicrafts, the Article 22 baseline leaves its most valuable names exposed abroad unless they are separately registered or protected through bilateral agreements.

2.2 The Indian statute

India's GI regime is contained in the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 and the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Rules, 2002,[10] administered by the GI Registry at Chennai under the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks. The main features are:

- **Definition (s. 2(1)(e)).** A GI is an indication that identifies goods as agricultural goods, natural goods or manufactured goods originating in a territory, region or locality, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic is essentially attributable to its geographical origin. For manufactured goods, one of the activities of production, processing or preparation must take place in that territory.[11]
- **Who may apply (section 11 Application for registration)** An association of persons, producers, organisations or authority established by or under law, representing the interest of the producers. Individual producers cannot apply on their own.[12]
- **Registered proprietor and authorised users (ss. 16-17).** The association holds the registration as proprietor, while individual producers must register as authorised users to be entitled to use the GI.[13] This is central to the market-value question discussed below.
- **Rights and infringement (ss. 21-22).** Registration gives the authorised users the exclusive right to use the GI and the right to obtain relief for infringement, including use that misleads the public or constitutes unfair competition. Section 22 addresses unauthorised use that suggests the goods originate elsewhere than the true place of origin.[14]
- **Term, unregistered GIs and enhanced protection.** Registration is valid for ten years and renewable indefinitely. Infringement actions are available only for registered GIs, although passing off remains available at common law. Additional protection is given to notified goods, in a manner modelled on Article 23 of TRIPS.[15]

The 2020 amendments to the GI Rules reportedly simplified registration of authorized users by removing the requirement for a joint application with the registered proprietor, but uptake remains low (Section 7).[16]

2.3 Judicial treatment

Indian courts have so far read GI protection as confined to goods. In Tea Board, India v. ITC Ltd., the Tea Board sued ITC for naming a lounge at its Kolkata hotel "Darjeeling Lounge", alleging infringement of the Darjeeling GI and certification mark, passing off and dilution. The Calcutta High Court refused interim

[9] Dev S. Gangjee, Relocating the Law of Geographical Indications (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012) (on the debates over extending enhanced protection and a multilateral register).
[10]The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Rules, 2002 [hereinafter GI Rules].
[11]The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (Act 48 of 1999)., s. 2(1)(e).
[12]The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (Act 48 of 1999)., s. 11(1).
[13]The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (Act 48 of 1999)., ss. 16-17.
[14]The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (Act 48 of 1999)., ss. 21-22.
[15]The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (Act 48 of 1999), ss. 18, 20 and 22(2)-(3).
[16]The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Amendment Rules, 2020; Down To Earth, supra note 2.

relief in April 2011,[17] and the Division Bench upheld that refusal in August 2011.[18] Commentators read the decisions as holding that the GI Act protects the name in relation to goods and does not give the proprietor exclusive rights over the word in unrelated services. The suit itself was finally decided in 2019.[19] The case shows that registration does not confer a monopoly over a place name in every context, and reported GI litigation remains sparse relative to the number of registrations.

3. Economic theory: why a GI might create value

The economics of GIs rests on information asymmetry and collective reputation. Many agri-food and craft products are credence goods: buyers cannot verify quality or origin before or even after purchase. An origin signal substitutes for direct verification. Where producers share a collective reputation, a GI prevents a "tragedy of the commons" in which individual cheating erodes the group's name.

The literature identifies several channels through which GIs can raise returns:

- **Price premium-** Consumers pay more for authenticated origin products.
- **Market access-** A GI provides a basis for entry into premium retail, export and tourism markets.
- **Reduced free-riding-** Exclusion of imitators protects the premium.
- **Collective organisation-** The process of defining a code of practice can strengthen producer coordination, bargaining power and quality.
- **Spillovers-** Tourism, gastronomy, local employment and landscape conservation may benefit.

The empirical evidence is mixed. Studies compiled by international organizations, including work associated with the International Trade Centre and WIPO, find that GI benefits depend heavily on how well the producer group is organized, how strong consumer recognition is, and whether the legal protection is enforced.[20] Rangnekar's work for UNCTAD-ICTSD emphasizes that GIs do not automatically deliver gains and that distributional questions are critical.[21] Barham's work on terroir stresses that GI success rests on a combination of product specificity, social organization and market demand.[22] Gangjee argues that the concept of origin in GI law is itself constructed and contested, which affects who is included in or excluded from the benefits.[23]

The central lesson is that a GI is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a premium. The tag creates an enforceable right and a credible signal, but turning it into higher income requires investments in quality, differentiation and marketing that the legal title does not itself provide.

[17]Tea Board, India v. ITC Ltd., GA No. 3137 of 2010 in CS No. 250 of 2010 (Cal HC, Apr. 20, 2011) (Sanjib Banerjee J.); see also "'Darjeeling' Tea for All", Nishith Desai Associates, IP Hotline (May 24, 2011), available at: https://www.nishithdesai.com/default.aspx?id=5812 (last visited Nov. 12, 2026).

[18]Tea Board v. ITC Ltd., (2011) 48 PTC 169 (Cal) (DB).

[19]Tea Board, India v. ITC Ltd., CS No. 250 of 2010 (Cal HC, Feb. 4, 2019), MANU/WB/0277/2019.

[20]Daniele Giovannucci et al., Guide to Geographical Indications: Linking Products and Their Origins (International Trade Centre, Geneva, 2009); Charles Bramley, Estelle Biénabe and Johann Kirsten, "The Economics of Geographical Indications: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Geographical Indication Research in Developing Countries", in The Economics of Intellectual Property (WIPO, Geneva, 2009).

[21]Dwijen Rangnekar, The Socio-Economics of Geographical Indications (UNCTAD-ICTSD, Geneva, 2004).

[22]Elizabeth Barham, "Translating Terroir: The Global Challenge of French AOC Labeling", 19 Journal of Rural Studies 127 (2003).

[23]Gangjee, supra note 9.

4. Value addition: the bridge from tag to price

Value addition refers to everything that raises the worth of a product between the farm gate or workshop and the final consumer: grading, processing, packaging, branding, certification, storage, logistics and storytelling. For GI products it has three functions.

Quality assurance and traceability. A GI promises a link between origin and quality. To honour it, producers need a codified specification, internal inspection mechanisms and, increasingly, digital traceability. Without these, the label is only as credible as the weakest producer in the group.

Differentiation and branding. The GI name must be turned into a brand that consumers recognize and trust. Packaging, labelling, the use of the GI logo and the "GI tag" mark, storytelling about producers and place, and e-commerce presence all contribute. Italian and French GI systems illustrate how consortium-led promotion, such as the Parmigiano Reggiano and Champagne bodies, converts legal protection into sustained demand.

Processing and product diversification. Moving from raw commodity sales to processed, packaged and ready-to-use forms captures a larger share of the final price. Examples include packaged and branded GI rice instead of loose paddy, ready-to-eat regional foods, finished garments and home textiles from GI fabrics, and processed fruit products from GI fruit. Value capture shifts from traders and middlemen to producers and local enterprises when processing capacity is located in the GI region.

The Indian Act's own design makes this point sharper. For manufactured goods, at least one step of production, processing or preparation must occur in the territory. This gives a legal hook for keeping value-adding activity local, and links the GI to the manufacturing logic of Make in India.

5. GIs and the Make in India initiative

Make in India, launched on 25 September 2014,[24] aims to promote manufacturing, investment and innovation in India, and to build brand India in global markets. It sits within a cluster of related policies, including Atmanirbhar Bharat, Vocal for Local, the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme and export-promotion programs. GIs connect to these in several ways.

- **Brand India through origin.** Make in India seeks to make Indian goods recognisable in global markets for quality. GIs are ready-made origin brands with centuries of reputation. A GI-based export strategy allows India to compete on distinctiveness rather than only on cost.
- **Rural and MSME manufacturing.** Many GI products are made by artisans, weavers, farmers and micro and small enterprises. Linking GI producers to the manufacturing and MSME support ecosystem, through credit, common facility centres, design support and quality labs, aligns with Make in India's job-creation objective.
- **ODOP and cluster development.** One District One Product identifies a signature product for each district. Where that product is also a GI, the two policies reinforce one another: ODOP supplies infrastructure and market linkages, while the GI supplies legal protection and authenticity.
- **Export promotion.** GI-tagged products such as Basmati rice, Darjeeling tea and handloom textiles are among India's recognised export items. Government efforts to support GI exports, including through agencies such as APEDA for agricultural goods and handloom promotion programmes, represent an attempt to make the tag commercially productive. Official sources report, for example,

[24]Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Government of India, make in India initiative (launched Sept. 25, 2014).

that over a hundred GI-registered handloom products had been supported under marketing assistance components of the National Handloom Development Programme as of mid-2026.[25]

- **Institutional push.** The reported target of 10,000 GIs by 2030 and the sharp increase in applications show a deliberate state strategy to expand coverage.[26] The risk is that registration targets crowd out the harder work of building producer organisations and markets.

A fair assessment is that the policy architecture is broadly aligned, but the link between GI registration and manufacturing-side support is still more rhetorical than operational. There is no systematic mechanism that automatically connects a newly registered GI to processing infrastructure, branding support, quality certification and export facilitation.

6. Punjab: Under-utilisation of the GI System

Table 1: Punjab's GI Portfolio (November 2026)

Product	Status	Remarks
Basmati	Registered (shared; APEDA proprietor)	Shared with six other States/UTs
Phulkari	Registered (shared)	Handicraft, not agricultural
Punjabi Jutti	Appl. No. 414 abandoned (2017)	Could be revived
Amritsari Kulcha	Pre-filing stage	PSCST and GNDU support
Pathankot Litchi	Proposed; no application found	Export clusters exist
Kinnow (Abohar–Fazilka)	No Punjab application	Haryana's "Sirsa Kinnow" registered

Punjab's under-use stems from a wheat–paddy commodity mindset, the absence of producer bodies capable of applying under section 11, the dilution of a shared Basmati GI, and the loss of first-mover advantage to Haryana.[27] Yet the State has strong institutions, including the Punjab State Council for Science and Technology, which has begun the Amritsari Kulcha process,[28] Punjab Agricultural University and established litchi export clusters.

7. Case studies

7.1 Darjeeling tea

Darjeeling tea is India's first and best-known GI. Its strengths include a strong international reputation, a long-standing certification mark and logo managed by the Tea Board, and early litigation that tested the

[25]Drishti IAS, "Geographical Indications in India" (Aug. 6, 2026) (summarising a PIB release), available at: https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/geographical-indications-in-india/print_manually (last visited Nov. 12, 2026); see also Press Information Bureau, "GI Tags: Scaling Traditional Wealth into Global Brands" (Aug. 4, 2026), available at: https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2026/aug/doc202684942501.pdf (last visited Nov. 12, 2026).

[26]KNN India, supra note 2.

[27] *supra notes* 18

[28] The Tribune, "Punjab initiates process for Geographical Indication tag for Amritsari Kulcha" (2025), available at: https://www.tribuneindia.com (last visited on Nov. 13, 2026).

limits of the GI's reach. Its difficulties are instructive: persistent concerns about blending and mislabelling of non-Darjeeling tea sold under the name, declining production in some periods, and labour and cost pressures on estates. The Darjeeling experience shows that even a very strong GI requires continuous certification, enforcement and investment to preserve the premium.[29]

7.2 Basmati rice

Basmati is a high-value export commodity and was granted a GI covering specified districts across several northern states. It illustrates a larger problem of scale and governance: a GI that spans many states and millions of farmers is hard to administer through a single association, and reports suggest that registered authorized users remain very few relatives to the number of producers.[30] Basmati has also been the subject of international disputes over naming and registration with competitor producers, which demonstrate that domestic registration does not guarantee protection abroad. The case highlights the importance of purity standards, residue compliance for export markets and international registration strategies.

7.3 Handloom and handicraft GIs

Handicrafts and textiles make up the majority of Indian GI registrations, at roughly half or more of the total in recent reporting.[31] Banarasi sarees, Kanchipuram silk, Pochampally ikat and Pashmina illustrate the combination of heritage value and counterfeit risk: power-loom imitations sold under the traditional names are a persistent problem. For these products, value addition lies in design, authenticity certification (such as tags and QR-based verification), and access to premium retail and e-commerce channels. The central difficulty is the position of the weaver: unless the weaver is the authorized user and has bargaining power, premium margins may be captured by master weavers, traders or retailers.

7.4 Regional and agri-food GIs

Regional food and fruit GIs, such as Alphonso mango, Nagpur orange or regional sweets, show how processing and storage extend market reach. Where cold chains, grading and packaging are available, the GI can support distant and export markets. Where they are absent, producers sell raw produce into undifferentiated markets and the tag has little effect on price.

8. Challenges in converting GI registration into market value

8.1 Low uptake of authorized users. Reporting from policy circles indicates that most registered GIs have very few or no registered authorized users.[32] Since only authorized users may lawfully use the GI, this means a large share of registered GIs are not used by those entitled to benefit from them. Causes include cost and procedural burden, lack of awareness, reluctance to accept quality control, and lack of visible market benefit.

8.2 Weak and fragmented ownership. Proprietors are often associations, cooperatives or government-linked bodies with limited commercial capacity. Disputes over control, representation and benefit-sharing can paralyze use of the GI.

8.3 Quality control and credibility. Where codes of practice exist only on paper and inspection is weak, the premium cannot be sustained. Consumer trust, once lost to adulteration, is hard to rebuild.

[29] Tea Board v. ITC Ltd. *supra notes* 18; Drishti IAS, supra note 21 (Darjeeling tea as India's first registered GI).

[30] *supra note* 3.

[31] Adda247, "Eastern India Leads GI Registrations, Madhya Pradesh Tops India in 2025-26", available at: https://currentaffairs.adda247.com/eastern-india-leads-gi-registrations-madhya-pradesh-tops-india-in-2025-26/ (last visited Nov. 12, 2026).

[32] *supra note* 3.

8.4 Enforcement. Enforcement relies on private action by the proprietor or authorized users, who typically lack the resources to litigate. Online marketplaces make counterfeits easy to sell and hard to trace. Public enforcement and platform cooperation are limited.

8.5 Limited international protection. GI protection is territorial. A name registered in India is not automatically protected in the EU, US or elsewhere, and the cost of foreign registration is high for small producer groups. The US relies on a trademark-based approach including certification and collective marks, while the EU operates a dedicated sui generis system. India has pursued GI recognition in trade negotiations, but the benefits depend on the final text and implementation.

8.6 Value chain capture. Even where a premium exists, a large share may be captured by intermediaries, exporters and retailers. Without bargaining power, branding capability or direct market access, primary producers may see little improvement in income.

8.7 Infrastructure gaps. Processing, cold storage, testing laboratories, packaging and logistics are uneven across GI regions, particularly in remote or economically weaker areas.

8.8 Registration-led policy risk. Targeting a large number of registrations may encourage low-quality applications or registrations without any plan for use. A registry with hundreds of dormant GIs weakens the signaling value of the system.

8.9 Tension between heritage and manufacturing logic. Make in India's emphasis on scale and mechanization can sit uneasily with the handcrafted character that defines many GIs. If mechanization or relocation of production dilutes the characteristics for which the GI was granted, the legal and commercial value of the tag is put at risk. Product specifications must clearly identify which processes may be mechanized without breaching the GI link.

9. Data and measurement notes

Published statistics on Indian GIs vary by source and date. Recent reporting cites 822 registered GIs as of March 2026, including 125 registered in 2025-26, with handicrafts forming roughly half of the total and agricultural products roughly a third.[33] Other sources cited in the same period give lower counts, such as 658 or 724, reflecting different reference dates or outdated figures.[34] Reports also cite more than 2,000 total applications as of April 2026 and a policy ambition of 10,000 GIs by 2030. For international comparison, WIPO figures for 2023 cited in policy commentary put the global number of registered GIs at about 58,600 across 86 countries, with China and Germany leading.[35]

10. Conclusion

A GI tag is a legal right that creates the possibility of market value; it does not create the value by itself. India has made notable progress in building its registry, and the policy environment, including Make in India, ODOP and Vocal for Local, is broadly supportive. The binding constraints lie downstream: producer organisation, quality assurance, processing and branding capacity, enforcement and international protection. Unless these are addressed, registrations risk becoming symbolic. The most useful reorientation of policy is from counting tags to measuring what producers earn, and from registration to

[33]Adda247, supra note 31; TNPSC Thervupettagam, "125 New Geographical Indications (GI) in 2025-26" (July 9, 2026), available at: https://www.tnpscthervupettagam.com//currentaffairs-detail/125-new-geographical-indications-gi-in-2025-26 (last visited Nov. 12, 2026).

[34]KNN India, supra note 2 (724 registered GIs as of April 2026); Down To Earth, supra note 3 (822 as of March 2026).

[35]Down To Earth, supra note 3 (citing WIPO statistics for 2023).

value chain development. Future research should test these propositions with producer-level data, comparing GI and non-GI products and tracing how premiums are distributed along the chain.

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