



WEAVING PROSPERITY: PROBLEMS OF HANDLOOM WORKERS IN KARNATAKA AND LEVERAGING GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS TO ENHANCE THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION

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Abstract

This study examines the socio-economic circumstances of handloom workers in Karnataka, a state renowned for its rich cultural legacy and economic environment. It investigates the historical development, economic influence, present condition and problems of the handloom industry, emphasising the widespread existence of informal employment arrangements, insufficient remuneration, and restricted availability of social security benefits. It also examines the current social security systems provided to handloom workers, including restricted health insurance and pension plans, and identifies their deficiencies and inadequacies. This research focusses on analysing the Registered Handloom Geographical Indications (GIs) of Karnataka, such as Ilkal Sarees, and explores the role of GIs in safeguarding and promoting traditional handloom goods. It assesses the influence of geographical indications (GIs) on employment prospects, educational and training assistance, brand worth and product distinctiveness, export possibilities and revenue generation, skill enhancement and innovation, community advancement, women's empowerment, and the improvement of social security through GIs. Furthermore, it finds inadequacies in current legislations that impact the handloom industry, emphasising the need for changes to more effectively

assist handloom workers and use Geographical Indications (GIs).

Keywords: Karnataka's Unorganised Sector, Handloom Sector, Employment Conditions, Social Security, Geographical Indications.

Introduction

Karnataka employs more than eight thousand individuals in the textile industries, which contributes to almost 20% of the nation's readymade garment manufacturing. Silk constitutes 65% of the primary product categories, wool accounts for 12%, and cotton represents 3.5%.² The state has more than 120,000 powerlooms and 42,000 handloom textiles.³ Nevertheless, traditional sarees such as Bhagyanagar cotton sarees, Molakalmuru and Ilkal silk sarees, Gajendragad and Belagavi sarees, and others are currently experiencing a critical situation characterized by insufficient marketing and publicity, challenges in obtaining loans from banks, rising raw material expenses, scarcity of skilled workers, and inadequate infrastructure and market connectivity. The administration has shown apathy towards both commercial producers and government entities, resulting in the demolition of facilities operated by the Karnataka Handloom Development Corporation. One such plant, located in Bhagyanagar, employed over 200

1. Research Scholar, Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Punjab.
2. Pavan Kumar H, *Years of Neglect Leave Karnataka's Weaving Industry on Its Last Legs*, DECCAN HERALD (Jul. 18, 2023), <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/years-of-neglect-leave-karnatakas-weaving-industry-on-its-last-legs-1238389.html>.
3. Id.

Saumya Verma

weavers who produced 110 items.⁴ However, the current workforce consists of barely 10 weavers, and out of the 40 handlooms, 25 are no longer operational. Officials attest that past administrations' careless approach towards handlooms may have contributed to the unit's deteriorating state.⁵

Not long ago, the handloom weaving facility at Kalluru, located near Gubbi in Tumkur district, ceased to exist as a result of widespread neglect.⁶ The facility was one of the KHDC's flagship centers, employing more than 200 weavers and staff to manufacture high-quality silk sarees. The current official count of weavers in Karnataka, categorized by job status, is 27175 as per fourth handloom census 2019-20.⁷ The decrease in numerical figures and the ongoing downward trajectory indicate the indifference of consecutive administrations. Historically, handloom weaving was considered a prestigious occupation, allowing proficient weavers to demand a fair remuneration for their expertise. However, the British imposed mechanized looms and powerlooms on the weaving communities, severely disrupting the intricate structure of the mutually beneficial rural economy.⁸ Mechanization allowed massive, centralized companies to purchase uniform cotton from farmers and process it for automated looms, thereby eliminating human interaction between farming and weaving communities.^{9,10} Despite several attempts by the Union and state gov-

ernments to rejuvenate the handloom industry, the increasing disparity between policies and their execution, along with inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of decisive purpose, has exacerbated the situation on the pitch.¹¹

The KHDC, a government-operated handloom institution in Karnataka, has had a significant downturn in the last ten years as a result of mismanagement, unscrupulous personnel, inadequate marketing strategy, and unfavorable handloom regulations.¹² The corporation has reduced its workforce to less than 4,000, leaving thousands of handloom weavers in a state of profound poverty. Government-operated Priyadarshini stores sold the silk sarees manufactured at Kalluru at favorable prices, ensuring a consistent revenue stream for the weavers. However, the younger generation prefers operating powerlooms, as they seem to be more convenient than sitting in a pitloom and engaging in laborious work.¹³ Intense competition from more affordable powerloom sarees rendered the handloom weavers unable to sustain themselves.

Despite the Handloom Reservation Act of 1985 designating about 11 items exclusively for handloom production, its ineffective enforcement and subsequent revisions have eroded its effectiveness over time, raising questions about the authenticity of handloom goods.¹⁴ Inadequate market access, inadequate early invest-

4. Sharada Ganesh, *A Looming Crisis: The Uncertain Future of Handloom Weaving in Karnataka*, The Wire (Aug. 7, 2024), <https://thewire.in/economy/a-looming-crisis-the-uncertain-future-of-handloom-weaving-in-karnataka>.
5. Id.
6. Id.
7. Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, *Handloom Weavers*, PIB Delhi (Dec. 13, 2019), <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1596372>.
8. Annapurna Mamidipudi & Wiebe E. Bijker, *Innovation in Indian Handloom Weaving*, 59(3) Technology and Culture 509 (2018).
9. Tirthankar Roy, *Development or Distortion? "Powerlooms" in India, 1950-1997*, 33(16) ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY 897 (1998).
10. Tirthankar Roy, *Growth and Recession in Small-Scale Industry: A Study of Tamil Nadu Powerlooms*, 34(44) ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY 3137 (1999).
11. Ashish Kumar Meher, *Plight of the Handloom Industry*, 57(30) ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY (2024). <https://www.epw.in/journal/2022/30/letters/plight-handloom-industry.html> (last visited Sep 3, 2024).
12. Sharath S. Srivatsa, *Starved of Funds, Karnataka's Handloom Corporation Is on the Brink*, THE HINDU (Aug. 7, 2018), <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/starved-of-funds-karnatakas-handloom-corporation-is-on-the-brink/article24627122.ece>.
13. *Evaluation Study of The Karnataka Handloom Development Corporation*, Technical Consultancy Services Organization of Karnataka (TECSOK) (2014).
14. M. Soundarapandian, *Growth and Prospects of Handloom Sector in India*, (2002), <https://www.nabard.org/demo/auth/writereaddata/File/OC%2022.pdf> (last visited Aug 26, 2023).

ments in design and working capital, low salaries, and a loss of dignity have led to expert weavers abandoning their native occupation and seeking other employment to sustain their livelihood.¹⁵ Amidst declining opportunities and indifference from consecutive state administrations, the few surviving handloom weavers in Karnataka are on the verge of extinction. Adequate remuneration and market accessibility are necessary to attract the younger generation to this profession.

This study investigates the handloom business in Karnataka, specifically analyzing its job circumstances, social security legislation, and the influence of geographical indications (GIs) on the sector. The paper emphasizes the significance of GIs in offering job prospects, educational possibilities, training assistance, brand value, product distinctiveness, and export potential. The paper also examines the domains of skill development, innovation, community development, women's empowerment, and the potential of GIs to augment social security for artisans. Furthermore, it pinpoints deficiencies in existing legislation and regulations that impede the progress of the industry and provides suggestions for future developments.

The Handloom Sector in Karnataka: An Overview

Karnataka has the largest count of GI tags in the handloom industry nationwide, generating a daily revenue of only INR 200.¹⁶ Weavers of handloom textiles across the state are seasoned threaders and weavers who labor for around 6–8 hours daily for a meager wage that disregards their expertise and experience.¹⁷

Handloom weaving is physically rigorous labor that requires prolonged periods of sitting on a wooden or metal seat in dimly lit chambers, characterized by a lack of fresh air. Laborers endure the persistent rattling noise produced by the looms and are exposed to fine fiber dust, which can cause respiratory illnesses and a variety of musculoskeletal problems. Their little income plunges them into extreme poverty, forcing them to live and work in cramped dwellings.¹⁸ Without any space for savings, individuals endure their illnesses with limited or nonexistent healthcare accessibility.¹⁹ Without access to any kind of health and family insurance or social security benefits, the lack of financial resources to cover healthcare costs and other expenditures perpetuates their status of poverty. Opportunities for individuals to enhance their skills or access loans in order to live a life of dignity are unattainable since these facilities are not readily accessible to them. The handloom industry requires comprehensive attention at all levels, including investments, skill enhancement, capacity development, improved infrastructure, healthcare benefits, insurance coverage, loan accessibility, and targeted measures to motivate and rejuvenate the sector. This is especially noteworthy considering that the handloom industry is entirely carbon-neutral, a status it achieved far in advance of the widespread adoption of the concept of a zero-carbon economy.²⁰

Key issues confronting the handloom industry in Karnataka include the transition to power looms, inertia, low product demand, and inadequate governmental assistance.²¹ Within the state, there are 33,677 weaving families and 33,539 handlooms. Of these, 50,574

15. Yaaminey Mubayi, *Policy Gaps Study on the Crafts Sector in India*, All India Artisans and Craftswokers Welfare Association (2018).
16. Manjunatha N K, *Status of Geographical Indications in India, Especially Karnataka*, 30 THIRD CONCEPT 32 (2016).
17. Bhargavi S. Rao, *Silver Lining to Distress: Opportunities for Karnataka's Handloom Sector*, ENVIRONMENT SUPPORT GROUP (Jul. 12, 2023), <https://esgindia.org/new/esg-opinion/silver-lining-to-distress-opportunities-for-karnatakas-handloom-sector/> (last visited Sep 3, 2024).
18. Srinivasa Rao Dodmani, *A Socio-Economic Conditions of Handloom Weaving in Yadgir District of Karnataka*, 4(5) GLOBAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH ANALYSIS 106 (2015).
19. M. G. Bangari, *Socio Economic Conditions of Workers in Handloom Industries in Karnataka A Case Study of Ilkal Saree Industry* (Doctoral Thesis Karnatak Univeristy, Dharwad) 2015.
20. Vice President of India Inaugurates the 10th National Handloom Day Celebrations, PIB Delhi (Aug. 7, 2024), <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2042766>.
21. Pratikhya Badanayak & Sadhana D Kulloli, *Power-Loom Weaving in Northern Karnataka: Problems and Prospects*, JOURNAL OF PHARMACOGNOSY AND PHYTOCHEMISTRY 958 (2018).

Saumya Verma

weavers handle 29,377, while 4,162 remain inactive.²² The younger cohorts have left the craft and relocated to urban areas in search of better means of subsistence, while the implementation of GST and the COVID epidemic have converged to bring about the industry's demise.²³

According to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramiah, three significant interventions have been proposed in the 2023-24 Budget: 1) Creating a dedicated unit named 'Mahatma Gandhi Vastrodyama' within the textiles department to unite designers, weavers, yarn producers, and related workers on a shared platform to implement suitable measures to revive the deteriorating handloom industry in the state; 2) prioritizing strategic initiatives under the Textile and Garment policy to attract increased investments in the North Karnataka region and create job prospects for local residents; and 3) offering complimentary electricity for looms and pre-loom, with a maximum monthly consumption limit of 250 units.^{24, 25}

These initiatives provide a positive aspect to the gloomy situation confronting the state's handloom industry and have the potential to establish respectable means of living for hundreds of thousands of households. Nevertheless, this cannot be a fragmented strategy or universally applicable answer. For many decades, the sector has been neglected, and every manufacturing stream, such as cotton, wool, silk, jute, and other handlooms reliant on natural fibres, has unique difficulties. Resto-

ration of the robust connection between the agro-pastoral economy and the handloom industry is of utmost significance.²⁶

Interplay Between Handloom Sector and Geographical Indications

Registered Handloom GIs of Karnataka

Karnataka, a state celebrated for its rich cultural legacy, is well acknowledged for its fine traditional handwoven textiles. Some 20 handwoven products have received a GI to denote their unique origin and exceptional quality.²⁷ These GIs seek to safeguard traditional weaving methods and guarantee that only items really originating from a certain area are eligible to wear the GI label. Mysore Silk, Ilkal Sarees, Rangoli Sarees, Navalgund Durries, Kannada Bronze Ware, Molakalmuru Sarees, Sandur Lambani Embroidery, Kolhapuri Chappal, Gulegudd Khana, Udupi, and G Sarey Kardines are among the Key Handloom Registered GI of Karnataka.^{28,29} GI certification has bolstered the standing of handlooms like Mysore Silk and Ilkal sarees, making them more widely recognised in both local and international markets.³⁰ Consequently, there was a surge in demand, which proved advantageous for the indigenous weavers and bolstered the silk sector in Karnataka. Furthermore, the GI designation safeguarded traditional weaving methodology and conferred a competitive edge in the market, enhanced financial pros-

22. Anusha Ravi Sood, *Small Units Pack up, Weavers Prefer to Be Guards: How Covid Ruined Karnataka Garment Industry*, THE PRINT (Oct. 14, 2021), <https://theprint.in/economy/small-units-pack-up-weavers-prefer-to-be-guards-how-covid-ruined-karnataka-garment-industry/750135/>.
23. Sharath S. Srivatsa, *Handlooms across Karnataka Are Now Weaving a Sad Tale*, THE HINDU (Oct. 5, 2020), <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/handlooms-across-karnataka-are-now-weaving-a-sad-tale/article32768115.ece>. (last visited Sep 3, 2024).
24. *Mahatma Gandhi Vastrodyama Weaving Insights on Handloom Day*, BANGALORE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE (Aug. 3, 2024), <https://bangaloreinternationalcentre.org/event/mahatma-gandhi-vastrodyama/>.
25. *Budget 2023-24 (Presented by Sri Siddharamaiah)*, GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA (Jul. 7, 2023), [https://cm.karnataka.gov.in/uploads/BudgetSpeechJULY2023-24\(Eng\).pdf](https://cm.karnataka.gov.in/uploads/BudgetSpeechJULY2023-24(Eng).pdf).
26. Shruti Mishra & Arka Kumar Das Mohapatra, *A Study on The Present Condition of The Weavers of Handloom Industry: A Review*, 7(2) INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND INNOVATIONS 325 (2019).
27. *Registered Geographical Indications*, DEPT. OF HANDLOOMS & TEXTILES, GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA, [https://vtpc.karnataka.gov.in/info-4/Geographical+Indications+\(GI\)/1-+Registered+Geographical+Indications/en](https://vtpc.karnataka.gov.in/info-4/Geographical+Indications+(GI)/1-+Registered+Geographical+Indications/en) (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).
28. *Id.*
29. Manjunatha. N.K., *Analysis of Geographic Distribution of Registered GIs in Karnataka*, 7(1) ZEICHEN JOURNAL 158 (2021).
30. Manjunatha N K, SUPRA note 15.

pects for weavers, and facilitated the growth of local craft businesses.^{31, 32}

GI labelling is crucial for handloom weavers due to the following underlying factors:^{33, 34}

i. Market Access and Fair Trade

In the setting of market access and fair trade, the Geographical Indication certification enhances the significance and marketability of handcrafted products, therefore ensuring increased earnings and better living circumstances.³⁵ Particularly in the handloom and artisan industries, GI certification helps handcrafted goods have fair trade and market access. It links handcrafted goods with a particular geographical area and their traditional techniques, therefore separating them from mass-produced or generic items. The appeal to consumers looking for authenticity and cultural value stems from this distinctive character.³⁶ GI-tagged goods are sometimes seen as premium, unique, and superior, which helps artists to demand more money. GI accreditation lets artists engage in trade fairs and shows, therefore opening new markets. It directly helps producers, defends against exploitation, and advances fair trade values. GI certification raises income and livelihood security, therefore improving living conditions, education, and financial stability as well as living standards. By giving customers confidence in the source, authenticity, and ethical manufacturing of items, it also

empowers artists, promotes social awareness, and ethical behaviour.

ii. Preserving traditional practices:

The registration of handwoven goods as GIs serves to maintain traditional weaving protocols, therefore preserving cultural heritage and facilitating the intergenerational transfer of these abilities.³⁷ GIs protect the distinctive cultural legacy of these fabrics. This approach guarantees legal protection and motivates the passing on of traditional weaving techniques across many generations. GI registration legitimizes traditional methods from informal community knowledge to officially protected intellectual property by acknowledging the distinctive weaving techniques, themes, and cultural relevance linked with a certain area. It also calls for recognition of the traditional processes, tools, and materials used, therefore producing a useful record available for next generations. Because of their authenticity and legacy significance, GI-tagged goods generally fetch higher prices, which encourages weavers to keep honing their traditional crafts. GI status promotes cultural continuity; hence younger generations are more likely to pick up and carry on these abilities.³⁸ Its vast socio-cultural influence also supports local customs, cultural tourism, and community empowerment.

iii. Training and Skill Development:

The rising market access and need for trained craftsmen frequently result in the establishment of training programs and initiatives aimed at enhancing the skills

31. Kavita Singh & Divya Rani Singh, *Handicraft Sector in India: An Instrument for Rural Economic Growth and Women Empowerment*, 24 *ADVANCES IN RESEARCH* 238 (2023).

32. M. G. Bangari, *supra* note 18.

33. Lisa P Lukose, *Rationale and Prospects of the Protection of Geographical Indication: An Inquiry*, *JOURNAL OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS* 212 to 223 (2007).

34. Baseem Awad & Marsha S. Cadogan, *History of and Rationale for the Protection of GIs, CETA and the Future of Geographical Indications Protection in Canada*, *CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE INNOVATION* 3 (2017).

35. Ruppel W Sharma & Shraddha Kulhari, *Marketing of GI Products: Unlocking Their Commercial Potential*, (2015).

36. Amit Basole, *Authenticity, Innovation, and the Geographical Indication in an Artisanal Industry: The Case of the Banarasi Sari*, 18(3-4) *THE JOURNAL OF WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY* 127 (2015).

37. Molly Torsen & Jane Anderson, *Intellectual Property and The Safeguarding of Traditional Cultures Legal Issues and Practical Options for Museums, Libraries and Archives*, (2010), https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/tk/1023/wipo_pub_1023.pdf.

38. Ai Tashiro, Yuta Uchiyama & Ryo Kohsaka, *Impact of Geographical Indication Schemes on Traditional Knowledge in Changing Agricultural Landscapes: An Empirical Analysis from Japan*, 68 *JOURNAL OF RURAL STUDIES* 46 (2019).

Saumya Verma

of weavers.³⁹ The demand for handloom goods and the necessity of experienced craftspeople have driven the creation of extensive training courses and skill development projects for weavers all around India. These initiatives are essential for maintaining traditional methods as well as for helping artists to change with the needs of the market. Training courses centre on teaching sophisticated weaving techniques including the use of Jacquard, Jalla, and Dobby looms as well as tie-and-dye and environmentally friendly dying. These technical abilities let weavers create value-added goods and complex designs fit for modern markets. Trained in creating fresh designs and patterns, weavers combine modern aesthetics with traditional motifs. Along with helping to preserve cultural legacy, this draws younger consumers and international buyers looking for distinctive, handcrafted textiles.

Training covers digital literacy, product photography, cataloguing, and online marketing as digital platforms grow in importance.⁴⁰ Many artists have seen higher sales and better incomes as weavers learn to use social media and e-commerce sites to reach more audiences, handle orders, and archive their work. Beyond technical instruction, courses in entrepreneurship, business management, and financial literacy abound. This helps weavers to run their own businesses, get credit, and become self-dependent, so improving their economic possibilities. Training often covers familiarising oneself with current market trends, colour fastness, and consumer preferences. This guarantees that weavers can produce market-oriented goods fulfilling consumer expectations and quality standards. Government and non-governmental projects including those by the Directorate of Handloom & Textiles in Assam and CSIR-NEIST run dedicated training centres and mobile programs in rural

areas, so ensuring that even underprivileged and remote communities gain from skill development.⁴¹

iv. Protection against Counterfeiting and Imitation:

GI tags provide legal safeguards against imitation and unauthorized use of the product name, therefore guaranteeing customers the receipt of genuine items and preserving the reputation of traditional handloom textiles.⁴² GI tags are a strong legal tool used to guard traditional handloom textiles from imitation and illegal use, so guaranteeing that only authentic products from a given area may be promoted under their well-known names. This system offers consumers as well as producers several layers of security and advantages.

Under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999 GI tags are identified under which authorized users in a given area have exclusive rights to use the registered product name and associated attributes.⁴³ This legal protection keeps outsiders from misusing or falsely claiming the name, so lessening the availability of inferior or counterfeit goods on the market. Legal action can be taken against the infringers if a product sold under a GI-tagged name fails origin and quality criteria, so safeguarding the reputation of the original craft and its producers. GI tags provide buyers with a guarantee of authenticity, so assuring them that the handloom textile they are buying is really created in its traditional area using time-honoured techniques. This guides wise buying choices and helps consumers avoid false copycat behaviour. Blockchain-based traceability systems and QR codes are among the technologies increasingly used to let consumers confirm the authenticity and source of GI-tagged textiles, so lowering the risk of forgery

39. Sreekanth Nair Thekkumkara, Aarti Jagannathan, & Thanapal Sivakumar, *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY): Implications for Skills Training and Employment of Persons with Mental Illness*, 44(2) INDIAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MEDICINE 173 (2021).
40. Christine Ithurbide & Monish Khetrinayum, *Digital Platforms and Craft Workers in India in the Time of COVID*, 29(29) SOUTH ASIA MULTIDISCIPLINARY ACADEMIC JOURNAL (2022).
41. *Weaving- the Skill Development Activities of CSIR NEIST*, MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION, https://neist.res.in/stiner/jacquard_weaving.php (last visited May 29, 2025).
42. N. Lalitha & Soumya Vinayan, *Infringements in GI Protected Products: How Do We Protect the Producers and the Consumers?*, (2019), <https://gidr.ac.in/pdf/wp-256-3248.pdf>.
43. V.K. Ahuja, *PROTECTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE*, 46(2) JOURNAL OF THE INDIAN LAW INSTITUTE 269 (2004).

and strengthening confidence.⁴⁴ GI tags guarantee that only products satisfying particular regional and quality criteria can carry the prestigious name, so helping to preserve the reputation of traditional handloom textiles. This preserves the historical and cultural worth ingrained in these often passed down crafts.

The GI tag improves the value of products in both domestic and international markets, so motivating artists to keep their customs alive.⁴⁵ This usually results in more demand and better prices. GI tags improve the commercial value and recognition of regional textiles by safeguarding their distinctive character, so helping local artists and weavers by means of more income and market access. GI status's exclusivity discourages mass-produced imitations, which might otherwise undermine the market for real handloom goods and jeopardise the livelihoods of honest craftspeople.⁴⁶ GI tags' efficacy may be compromised despite these protections by factors including ignorance, inadequate enforcement, and intermediary exploitation. To fully appreciate GI protection, legal systems must be strengthened and consumer and producer knowledge raised. The economic ramifications for Karnataka are substantial, since GI designation amplifies the value of handloom items, resulting in augmented income and job prospects in rural regions.⁴⁷ Handloom items with a GI designation often attract visitors and enhance cultural heritage,

boosting local tourism and other industries. Finally, ensuring the preservation of traditional handloom techniques is in line with wider objectives of environmental sustainability and rural development.⁴⁸

Enhancing Employment Opportunities and Social Security Through GIs

The 'Vocal for Local' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives implemented by the Prime Minister of India have significantly enhanced the industrial and manufacturing sector of the nation.⁴⁹ The bustling markets of Dilli Haat and Dastkar Bazar in the capital are renowned for their handwoven merchandise.⁵⁰ Additionally, India-handmade.com, the government's official e-marketing platform, provides a direct online platform for more than 1000 legally registered handloom craftsmen.⁵¹ These vendors have transformed into contemporary businesses and are using technology to safeguard India's traditional handloom history, building on these pieces of evidence.

Entrepreneurial ventures include the Punarjeevana Trust, established in 2015, which seeks to resurrect India's vanishing textile traditions by actively searching the state for individuals who maintain these traditions both in tangible form and in their collective memory.⁵² The individuals encountered a devadasi lady who had

44. Shivani Tripathi, *Blockchain and GI Tags: For Enhanced Authenticity of Products*, SPYDRA (Jun. 6, 2023), <https://www.spydra.app/blog/from-banarasi-paan-to-pashmina-shawls-blockchain-gi-tags>.
45. Daniele Giovannucci et al., *Guide to Geographical Indications- Linking Products and Their Origins*, (2009), https://www.researchgate.net/profile/May-Yeung/publication/260001725_Guide_to_Geographical_Indications_-_Linking_Products_and_Their_Origins/links/00b7d52eff5b9cee4a000000/Guide-to-Geographical-Indications-Linking-Products-and-Their-Origins.pdf.
46. Gauri Kathju, *Geographical Indication and Its Impact on The Livelihoods of the Crafts Sector* (2018) (IIS University, Jaipur).
47. Sunil Sudhakar Varnekar & Upankar Chutia, *Critical Analysis on the Implementing of the Geographical Indications Act in Handloom Sector*, 2(1) INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW, JUSTICE AND JURISPRUDENCE 107 (2022).
48. Divya Das & M. R. Dileep, *Geographical Indication and Tourism: A Study on the Awareness, Factors Influence, and the Scope of GI Tagging in Kerala as a Rural Tourism Development Tool*, 16(4) INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM SYSTEMS 25 (2023).
49. Sakshi Aggarwal, Debashish Chakraborty, & Ranajoy Bhattacharyya, *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan: A Smooth Drive to Self-Reliance?*, 58(16) ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY (2023).
50. Sunalini Mathew & Vangmayi Parakala, *When in Delhi: Dastkar or Dilli Haat?*, THE HINDU (Apr. 13, 2019), <https://www.thehindu.com/society/when-in-delhi-dastkar-or-dilli-haat/article26827763.ece>.
51. Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, *E-Commerce Portal Dedicated to Handloom & Handicraft Aims at Making Artisans & Weavers Self-Reliant*, PIB DELHI (Apr. 24, 2023), <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1919216>.
52. Krystelle D'Souza, *Entrepreneur Revives Karnataka's Forgotten Weaves with Sarees That Sell Across the World*, THE BETTER INDIA (Jun. 5, 2023), <https://thebetterindia.com/319900/textile-expert-revives-rare-ancient-handloom-weaves-in-karnataka/>.

Saumya Verma

a saree crafted employing the Patteda Anchu method, a weaving style that originated 250 years ago. The practice originated in the 10th century and gained popularity in local communities such as Gajendragarh, Belgaum, Raichur, Kodal, Bidar, Bellary, Gulbarga, and Dharwad. The local goddess Yellamma Saundatti received the saree offering in a mustard, maroon, pink, and green color scheme. The trust has expanded its membership to include 55 weavers, 20 dyers, spinners, and hundreds of others affiliated with the enterprise. Punarjeevana uses 20 traditional weave types and strives to be an environmentally friendly company, using natural dyes and minimizing enzyme usage.⁵³ They ship domestically in India and beyond to the United States, United Kingdom, and United Arab Emirates. The weaving technique is complex and takes many days to finish every saree.

Amidst the COVID-19 lockdown, Minakshi Prabhu founded Tvami with the goal of providing assistance to Indian craftsmen and their crafts. The Tvami platform facilitates the connection between customers and traditional arts and crafts, raising awareness about their inherent beauty and worth and thus having a beneficial influence on their lives.^{54, 55} Tvami's primary operational strategy is to collaborate with tiny and underprivileged craftspeople in Ilkal clusters to facilitate their entry into markets that were previously unattainable for them and enable them to receive increased compensation for their diligent efforts. Through its support of Ilkal saree craftsmen and their skills, Tvami seeks to provide a sustainable means of living for artisans in India.⁵⁶

Another study of Channapattana Toys indicates that 50% of producers have acquired the company from their forefathers because of its familial character and primary sources of revenue. Nevertheless, more than 50% of individuals are unaware of GI tags or IPR because of their limited knowledge.⁵⁷ GI labels, when authenticated in the global market, can enhance export sales, according to 40% of businesses. According to this study, only 20% of respondents acknowledged that brand image and the strong emotional attachment to Desi items boost sales after the use of GI tags. Heightened demand may or may not lead to a rise in price levels. 30% of manufacturers feel that government regulations are ineffective because of inadequate communication from authorities.⁵⁸

The aforementioned case studies demonstrate that the GIs have the capacity to support weavers' economic growth. However, these studies also highlight that achieving the benefits of a GI tag requires efficient promotion and safeguarding these items from unauthorized imitation. Successful marketing and protection initiatives necessitate the implementation of quality assurance, brand development, and other customer relationship management processes.^{59, 60} Simultaneously, we need an effective state legal system to tackle the violation of geographical indications through counterfeit products.

Case Study of Ilkal Sarees: Problems and Prospects

The Ilkal saree industry in Karnataka, which operated 11,111 handlooms in Bagalkot District as per the survey

53. Id.

54. Neelesh Kohli & Vandana V. Trar, *Use of Social Media in Uplifting Traditional Craft*, 34 in RESEARCH TRENDS IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH (R. Jayakumar & Dr. Raja Reddy. Duvvuru eds., 2022).

55. Vishnusai KS, Tvami - *E Commerce Website for Handicraft and Art Forms*, DRIBBLE, <https://dribbble.com/shots/21115157-Tvami-E-commerce-website-for-handicraft-and-art-forms> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

56. Id.

57. Sowmya.D.N & P Paramashivaiah, *Influence of GI Tag on Development of Channapatna Toys* (2020), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3652017.

58. Id.

59. Dharmojirao TY & TS Devaraja, *Geographical Indications as a Brand Strategy: A Literal Review*, 6(1) INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN MARKETING MANAGEMENT AND SALES 33 (2024).

60. *supra* note 34. <https://wtocentre.iift.ac.in/Papers/Marketing%20of%20GI%20Products%20Unlocking%20their%20Commercial%20Potential.pdf> (last visited Sep 3, 2024).

of 1988, makes a significant economic contribution to the state.^{61, 62} The industry's primary asset is in its tie-and-dye craftsmanship, which has popularity both inside the country and on a global scale.⁶³ The industry's rural foundation, minimal capital investment, and high employment rate contribute to the sustenance of rural craftsmen and deter the migration of workers to metropolitan regions. Moreover, it serves as an environmentally sustainable solution, preventing the emergence of informal economic activities in impoverished areas and squatter settlements due to poverty. The Ilkal Saree industry has obstacles to international competitiveness as a result of disparate infrastructure, inflexible labor regulations, and obsolete technology.⁶⁴ The poor productivity in India may be attributed to its rural foundation, unorganized economy, and reliance on old technologies. The increased labor component of handloom textiles also impacts their economic feasibility.

Insufficient collaboration among stakeholders and inadequate implementation of legal and civil sanctions against offenders are the main factors contributing to the decline in job prospects for handloom weavers in Karnataka caused by counterfeit GI-branded handlooms. Nevertheless, the challenges encountered by the handloom sector in Karnataka may be overcome by implementing more severe sanctions on offenders, using efficient marketing strategies both inside the country and internationally, and actively encouraging e-commerce.⁶⁵

Considering the challenges faced by handloom workers in Karnataka, the GI designation has the potential to enhance their market entry, bring about more income stability, promote skill development, and fortify artis-

nal communities. The increased visibility has the potential to result in more sales and improved economic prospects for craftsmen, thereby facilitating their investment in superior equipment and materials.⁶⁶ Additionally, it may facilitate the elimination of intermediate exploitation, allowing craftsmen to directly sell their sarees to purchasers or through cooperatives.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the GI promotes the establishment of weaving cooperatives, which serve as a forum for craftsmen to cooperate and exchange resources.⁶⁸ This approach allows for the development of more effective social support networks for craftsmen and their families, including healthcare and educational advantages. The lone requirement is to enhance the distribution and advertising of handwoven products with GI labels in order to upsurge the demand for such items. Consequently, this practice may enhance the local economy by generating job prospects for weavers, dyers, designers, and dealers.

Conclusion

Geographical Indications for handloom goods may strengthen the market presence, expand job prospects, and provide superior social safeguards for weavers. GI tags may not only distinguish Karnataka's handlooms in the international market but may also acknowledge the artistry and distinctive characteristics linked to these items, resulting in greater demand and higher pricing for Karnataka's handloom products.

An improved marketing strategy for handloom products with GI-tagged handloom goods may enhance social security for weavers by establishing a stable income and ensuring a more secure way of living. The combination of increased product pricing and steady demand allows

61. Manjunatha. N.K., *supra* note 28.

62. M. S. Ramachandra, *Handicraft Survey Report: Ilkal Sarees*, CENSUS OF INDIA (1988).

63. Arunima Pal, *Weaving the Withered Way: Ilkal's Handlooms Struggle to Survive*, THE SOFT COPY (Apr. 29, 2024), <https://thesoftcopy.in/2024/04/29/weaving-the-withered-way-ilkals-handlooms-struggle-to-survive/>.

64. M. G. Bangari, *supra* note 19.

65. Pushpam Singh, Madhuri Yadav, & Sukanta Kumar Baral, *Role of E-Commerce in Socio-Economic Development of Handloom Weavers in India*, 9(1) INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT RESEARCH 43 (2023).

66. Sambhabi Patnaik & Amrit Anupam, *Cultural Treasures as Economic Assets: Harnessing the Global Potential of Odisha's Geographical Indications*, 1(2) IPR JOURNAL OF MAHARASHTRA NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY, NAGPUR 100 (2023).

67. Yashna Walia & Shreya Kumar, *The Success and Failure of GI Tag in India: A Critical Analysis of The Working of Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999*, 1 E- JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC INNOVATION AND RESEARCH IN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ASSETS 232 (2020).

68. Kasturi Das, *Socioeconomic Implications of Protecting Geographical Indications in India*, (2009), https://wtocentre.iift.ac.in/Papers/GI_Paper_CWS_August%2009_Revised.pdf.

Saumya Verma

weavers to achieve enhanced financial stability, thereby facilitating their capacity to allocate resources towards their health, education, and other societal requirements.

The rural foundation, comparatively modest capital investment, and employment-intensive character of production not only sustain a significant portion of the rural non-farm economy but also enhance its viability in the era of computerized weaving technology.^{69,70} Mitigating economic disparities in India is a crucial goal of strategic planning, and the saree business may contribute to this by offering prospects for the underprivileged. This may lead to a substantial and more extensively dispersed allocation of the productive function, thereby guaranteeing a fair distribution of national financial resources. The handloom business is ecologi-

cally friendly being devoid of power and carbon emissions, thereby conserving energy and fuel.

Considering the advantages of GI for handlooms and its position as a crucial sector in rural Karnataka, incorporation of GIs may greatly enhance the appeal of the Karnataka handloom market. By providing brand recognition, ensuring quality, promoting cultural heritage, expanding market reach, enabling higher price levels, encouraging sustainable practices, and supporting local economies, we achieve this.⁷¹ GIs may facilitate the association of certain attributes and artistry with goods, therefore appealing to discerning customers and solidifying their psychological connection with the items. In addition, GI may provide access to untapped areas, enabling weavers to command premium pricing.

69. Supra note 19.

70. Priyanka U., Strategies for Digitalisation and Marketing of Select Geographical Indication (GI) Tagged Products (2023) (Ph.D. dissertation, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women).

71. Supra note 34.