



## Socio-Economic Condition of Small-Scale Producers in Varanasi: A Case of Banaras Brocade and Saree

Meghna Chaudhary,<sup>1†</sup> Bhawna Agarwal<sup>1</sup> and Meena Bhatia<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Amity College of Commerce and Finance, Amity University, Noida – 201 313, Uttar Pradesh, India

<sup>2</sup>Birla Institute of Management Technologies (BIMTECH), Greater Noida - 201 306, Uttar Pradesh, India

Received: 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021; accepted: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Geographical indication is a designation or sign intended to protect certain products that are located in a geographical locality or origin. The vast diversity of handicrafts produced throughout India reflects India's rich cultural heritage and centuries of evolutionary tradition. One such prominent product under the category of Geographical Indication is “Banarasi Silk and Brocade”. Banarasi Silk products have a ready market at home and abroad but the industry has been experiencing a significant decline in recent years. In the present study, an effort has been made to determine the socio-economic condition of the small-scale producers and their awareness level towards GI. It will also highlight the challenges faced by the weavers of recognized GI product “Banaras Brocade and Saree” in Varanasi and also attempts to suggest solutions for improving the marketing and distribution system of the industry. Empirical data were gathered using in-depth semi-structured interviews. In total, 100 weavers from Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh from different handloom groups were questioned. It was found that the conditions of the weavers have worsened over the years. It is important for the Government to intervene so that the weavers are able to regain the lost charm of the handloom industry in Varanasi.

**Keywords:** Geographical Indication, Banarasi Silk, Brocades, Handloom Products, Small-Scale Producers, Weaving, TRIPS Agreement, GI certification, Goods Registration and Protection Act, 1999

A Geographical Indication (GI) is a name or a sign used on products that belong to a specific geographical location or origins like a town, region, or country. Article 22.1 of the TRIPS Agreement (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) defines Geographical Indications as “*An Indication which identifies a good as originating in the territory of a member, or a regional locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or another characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin*”. Geographical Indication (GI) is a sub-category of Intellectual Property that classifies definite properties whose explicit characteristics are linked to their geographical origin. An association of interested parties (for example, producers) typically submits to the appropriate authority a mutually negotiated Code of Practice that specifies the product's manufacturing process, distinctive qualities, and geographic boundaries of the production area.<sup>1</sup> There should be a direct connection between the product and the place of origin.<sup>2</sup> The certification and registration process

establish and affects market supremacy, and this exceptional credibility is essential to GI product manufacturers. The GI certification is vital in providing enormous opportunity and security to producers from a specific geographic area.<sup>3</sup> It is an exclusive community right, acknowledges the critical roles of place, environment, and human know-how in distinguishing goods based on their intrinsic characteristics.<sup>4</sup> The Law relating to Geographical Indication came into force on 15 September 2003 in India and was covered under the Goods Registration and Protection Act, 1999. Following that, nearly 370 items were registered under it.

The number of Geographical Indications is increasing year after year. Manufacturers, farmers, craftsmen, and others are very receptive to the idea of GI. The impact of the getting a GI tag includes legal protection, enhanced export, and improved product quality. It prohibits unauthorized use of the registered product. Many GIs have developed a valuable reputation over centuries that are not properly secured and could be misrepresented by fraudulent commercial operators. If there is no regulation, anybody may advertise a commodity as originating

<sup>†</sup>Corresponding author: Email: meghnachaudhary31@gmail.com