

**GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MADHUBANI PAINTINGS, CHANNAPATNA
TOYS, POCHAMPALLY IKAT, AND KASHMIR PASHMINA SHAWLS**

by

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ABSTRACT

Although the “Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999” does not specifically address women, who perform a significant portion of the labour in the crafts it protects, GIs are advocated in India as a tool for rural artisans engaged in manufacture of traditional artcrafts. In order to determine if registration has resulted in economic empowerment for women and advancement toward Sustainable Development Goals 5, 8, and 12, this research examines Madhubani Paintings, Channapatna Toys, Pochampally Ikat, and Kashmir Pashmina Shawls through lens of women worker participation, their contribution to the overall product, their economic benefit, if any received by women artisans directly attributable to the GI and the economic effect of honouring women exceling in their area of GI goods production by awards. . It compares official data and open access studies with the Act, the Rules, TRIPS, the Geneva Act, and the European Union's 2023 proposed GI rule using a doctrinal and comparative approach. The four GIs are held or administered by state bodies or cooperatives. With authorised user registration remaining scarce and the evident concentration of women in low-margin stages of production the article attempts to throw light into the economic realities of women engaged in handicraft production due to non-recognition of their contribution and inaccessibility to the markets an area dominated by their male counterparts. Furthermore, the article provides suggestions to overcome the gender gap within the GI goods landscape.

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Keywords: Geographical Indications; women's economic empowerment; sustainable development; handicrafts and handlooms; TRIPS

I. Introduction

“Geographical Indication” is a specific sign used on goods where a given quality, reputation or characteristic are linked to its geographical origin. The official GI register had 822 entries by March 2026,² and handicrafts are the largest group, with 445 products and 27 logos by December 2025.³ The Government cites a “Ministry of Textiles estimate” that GI can raise rural artisans’ incomes by 20 to 30 per cent.⁴ Women carry much of this work: 25,46,285 of the 35,22,512 handloom workers in the Fourth Handloom Census, or 72.29 per cent, are women.⁵ The “Geographical of Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 Act” is gender neutral and collectively owned. Women do a large share of the work in these crafts, but they seldom appear as applicants, proprietors or registered users. The right is enjoyed by institutions, traders especially intermediaries, predominantly men who exercise more control in the business making women’s economic empowerment and sustainable development a far-fetched goal. Therefore, the question that arises is whether a collective, producer-based right gives them ownership, income and voice, or only protects a name.

II. Constitutional and Statutory Framework

The Constitution frames the problem before the GI Act does. It permits special provision for women,⁶ requires the state to direct its policy towards adequate livelihood and equal pay for men and women,⁷ and also to promote cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis.⁸ Judicial decisions also held right to livelihood a facet of right to life under Article 21.⁹ A GI regime that leaves women artisans without ownership sits uneasily with these directives.

² Geographical Indications Registry, *Registration Details of Geographical Indications* (Register, Apr. 2004–Mar. 2026), Intell. Prop. India, <https://ipindia.gov.in/storage/uploads/docs-operator/aa9ef4c8-ae0e-4717-9181-52b6a9479b82.pdf> (last visited Sept. 21, 2026).

³ Press Info. Bureau, Gov’t of India, *GI Tags: Scaling Traditional Wealth into Global Brands* (Aug. 4, 2026) (backgrounder), <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2294126> (last visited Sept. 21, 2026).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Press Release, Press Info. Bureau, Ministry of Textiles, Gov’t of India, *25,46,285 Women Working in Handloom Sector of Textiles Industry* (Mar. 16, 2022), <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1806546> (last visited Sept. 25, 2026).

⁶ India Const. art. 15, cl. 3.

⁷ India Const. art. 39, cls. (a), (d).

⁸ India Const. art. 43.

⁹ *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Mun. Corp.*, (1985) 3 S.C.C. 545 (India).

“The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999” defines a GI as “an indication identifying goods by a quality, reputation or characteristic essentially attributable to geographical origin, and for manufactured goods requires that production, processing or preparation take place in the territory”.¹⁰ Only an association of persons or producers, or an organisation or authority established by law, may apply.¹¹ A producer can apply as an authorised user,¹² the exclusive right of use is granted only to authorised users.¹³ Infringement includes misleading indications and unfair competition by the use of a GI,¹⁴ and the Central Government can notify goods for higher protection, where even the words “kind”, “style” or “imitation” infringe.¹⁵ Assignment, licensing, pledge or mortgage of GI is barred which keeps the right collective but stops it being offered as security for credit.¹⁶ Punishment for false application of a GI and sale is imprisonment of six months to three years and a fine of ₹50,000 to ₹2 lakh, and section 66 places civil suits before the district court. Since the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021 abolished the Appellate Board, appeals against an order or decision of the registrar lie to the High Court.¹⁷

The Rules add procedure. Rule 32 requires a statement of case and rule 33 provides for a consultative group of experts to check it. Rule 56, as substituted in 2020, lets a producer apply directly as an authorised user, with a copy going to the proprietor.¹⁸ In 2025 the filing fee was cut by 80 per cent and the renewal fee fell from ₹3,000 to ₹500, and authorised users are reported to have grown from 365 to 29,000 in ten years.¹⁹ Nothing in the Act or Rules mentions gender, so women count only if they register as producers or the proprietor body admits them.

¹⁰ Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, No. 48, Acts of Parliament, 1999 (India), §§ 2(1)(e), <https://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text/128105> (last visited Sept. 22, 2026) [hereinafter GI Act].

¹¹ *Id.* § 11(1).

¹² *Id.* § 17.

¹³ *Id.* § 21.

¹⁴ *Id.* § 22.

¹⁵ *Id.* § 22(2)-(3).

¹⁶ *Id.* § 24.

¹⁷ Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021, No. 33, Acts of Parliament, 2021, § 22 (India) (amending GI Act, *supra* note 9, § 31), https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/acts_parliament/2021/The%20Tribunals%20Reforms%20Act,%202021.pdf (last visited Sept. 25, 2026).

¹⁸ Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Rules, 2002, rr. 32, 33 (India), <https://www.dpiit.gov.in/static/uploads/2025/06/e88e8efcd4b963d723e0ff2302dec4ce.pdf> [hereinafter GI Rules]; Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) (Amendment) Rules, 2020, r. 2 (Aug. 26, 2020) (India) (substituting rule 56), <https://ipindia.gov.in/storage/uploads/docs-operator/2bb1fbd8-327e-4ed1-9d7c-94fbaeb846ed.pdf> (last visited Sept. 23, 2026).

¹⁹ Press Info. Bureau, *GI Tags*, *supra* note 2.

III. International Conventions and Recent Developments

India's GI law implements Part II, Section 3 of the TRIPS Agreement. Article 22 sets the floor for all goods, requiring means to stop misleading indications and unfair competition under Article 10bis of the Paris Convention, while Article 23 gives wines and spirits a higher standard that applies even when the true origin of the goods is indicated.²⁰ Handicrafts remain on the lower tier, and the request to extend Article 23 to other products is unresolved due to differences among members in interpreting Doha Ministerial Declaration of 2001.²¹ "The Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement (2015)", in force since 26 February 2020, allows international registration of GIs if it is already protected in the contracting party of origin. The European Union is a party but India is not, so Indian craft GIs depend on registration country by country or on trade agreements.²²

Two developments since December 2025 matter here. Regulation (EU) 2023/2411 became applicable on 1 December 2025 and created an EU-wide GI for craft and industrial products, including textiles and woodwork, open also to producers outside the Union.²³ India and the European Union concluded free trade agreement negotiations on 27 January 2026, but a separate GI agreement is still under negotiation, according to the Commission's own page.²⁴ These openings are highly beneficial for GIs with current specifications and active authorised users.

The gender obligations in Article 14(2) of CEDAW which requires States to ensure that rural women can organise into self-help groups and cooperatives and have access to credit, marketing facilities and appropriate technology.²⁵ In "Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan (1997)" the Supreme Court used CEDAW to give content to the fundamental rights of

²⁰ Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights arts. 22–23, Apr. 15, 1994, Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, Annex 1C, 1869 U.N.T.S. 299, https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/27-trips_04b_e.htm (last visited Sept. 23, 2026); Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property art. 10bis, Mar. 20, 1883, as revised at Stockholm, July 14, 1967, 21 U.S.T. 1583, 828 U.N.T.S. 305.

²¹ World Trade Org., *Geographical Indications: Background and the Current Situation*, https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/gi_background_e.htm (last visited Sept. 21, 2026).

²² Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications and Regulations Under the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement arts. 5–8, May 20, 2015, WIPO Doc. LI/DC/19; L. Nair, *Should India Join the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement, 2015?*, SpicyIP (Mar. 12, 2020), <https://spicyip.com/2020/03/should-india-join-the-geneva-act-of-the-lisbon-agreement-2015.html> (last visited Sept. 25, 2026).

²³ Eur. Comm'n, *Geographical Indications for Craft and Industrial Products*, https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/industry/strategy/intellectual-property/geographical-indications-craft-and-industrial-products_en (last visited Sept. 22, 2026); Eur. Union Intell. Prop. Off., *GI Protection for Craft and Industrial Products*, <https://www.euipo.europa.eu/en/gi-hub/ci-regulation> (last visited Sept. 21, 2026).

²⁴ Eur. Comm'n, *The EU-India Trade Agreement*, https://commission.europa.eu/topics/trade/eu-india-trade-agreement_en (last visited Sept. 21, 2026); Press Release, Eur. Comm'n, *EU and India Conclude Landmark Free Trade Agreement*, IP/26/184 (Jan. 27, 2026), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip_26_184/IP_26_184_EN.pdf (last visited Sept. 21, 2026).

equality and dignity.²⁶ Sustainable Development Goal 5.a calls for equal rights for women to economic resources, Goal 8.3 for support to entrepreneurship and small enterprises, Goal 11.4 for safeguarding cultural heritage and Goal 12.b for tools that promote local culture and products.²⁷

IV. Judicial Approach and Case Law

In “Tea Board India vs ITC Ltd (2011)”, the Calcutta High Court, through a single judge on 20 April 2011 and a Division Bench on 24 August 2011, refused to restrain a hotel from calling a lounge “Darjeeling Lounge”. The registration covered tea, no prima facie case of infringement or passing off was shown, and the GI Act protects goods and not services.²⁸ Thus a boutique or restaurant that trades on “Kanchipuram” or “Madhubani” for services stays outside section 22.

A lawsuit was initiated in 2005 for the infringement and passing off powerloom sarees which were manufactured and sold under the brand name “HYCO Pochampally”. The word “HYCO Pochampally” was argued to be visually and phonetically similar to the registered GI “Pochampally”. The court granted temporary injunction holding the adoption of the mark “HYCO Pochampally” was blatantly dishonest and malafide attempt to derive unfair advantage from the registered geographical indication and temporary injunction. However, the matter was allowed to be settled out of the court as the defendants pleaded guilty to the charge of infringement and claimed to have destroyed all the infringing sarees.²⁹

Chakhesang Women Welfare Society v Ritu Beri & TRIFED³⁰ is an ongoing case relating to the infringement of registered geographical indications in two Chakhesang Shawls as they were allegedly misrepresented in a fashion show organised by “Ritu Beri and the Tribal Co-Operative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED) Ministry

²⁵ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women art. 14(2), Dec. 18, 1979, 1249 U.N.T.S. 13, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women> (last visited Sept. 25, 2026).

²⁶ *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*, (1997) 6 S.C.C. 241 (India).

²⁷ G.A. Res. 70/1, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, U.N. Doc. A/RES/70/1, targets 5.a, 8.3, 11.4, 12.b (Sept. 25, 2015), <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> (last visited Sept. 25, 2026).

²⁸ *Tea Bd., India v. ITC Ltd.*, C.S. No. 250 of 2010, slip op. at para 38 (Calcutta H.C. Feb. 4, 2019) (India), <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/160420581/> (last visited Sept. 22, 2026).

²⁹ K. Das, *Prospects and Challenges of Geographical Indications in India*, 13 J. World Intell. Prop. 148, 161 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-1796.2009.00363.x> (last visited Sept. 25, 2026).

³⁰ *Civil Suit Against Designer Ritu Beri, TRIFED over Misuse of ‘Naga’ Shawls*, KRC Times ([April 23, 2024], <https://www.krctimes.com/news/civil-suit-against-designer-ritu-beri-trifed-over-misuse-of-naga-shawls> (last visited Sept. 21, 2026).

of Tribal Affairs”, Government of India. CWSS claims that two gender specific shawls, “the Rira” and “the Rura” have been misused and misrepresented which hurts the sentiments of the Naga Community. CWSS has about 60,000 women associated with its activities with weaving forming an important part of its work.³¹

V. The Four GIs Compared

V.A. Madhubani Paintings (Bihar)

The Geographical Indication for Madhubani Paintings was granted in application no. 37 with certificate of registration dated 16.05.2007.³² The applicant was the Director of Industries, Government of Bihar and not an artists’ association. Further, only 53 authorised users are listed on the registry site although hundreds of households in Jitwarpur alone paint.³³ The GI records are frozen at 2007 while artists now print motifs on sarees, mugs and diaries. New themes, contemporary issues, and non-traditional colour schemes have entered the canvas and yet middlemen still control customers and information.³⁴ However, a collectivisation initiative under JEEViKA³⁵ through its artisan platform, the Shilpgram Mahila Producer Company run collectively by more than 500 skilled women artisans,³⁶ earned about ₹8 Crores in the last 5 years.³⁷

V.B. Channapatna Toys (Karnataka)

The Channapatna Toys and Dolls were given Geographical Indication in application no. 23 with certificate of registration dated 30.01.2006.³⁸ Men cut and carve the wood, women polish and paint it, and women earn about half of what men earn, according to

³¹ P. Mazumdar, *Weaving Dreams, Stitching the Future*, New Indian Express (Mar. 22, 2026), <https://www.newindianexpress.com/amp/story/thesundaystandard/2026/Mar/22/weaving-dreams-stitching-the-future> (last visited Sept. 24, 2026).

³² Geographical Indications Registry, *supra* note 1, at 4.

³³ M. Sharma, *Authenticity in Question: Why Madhubani Art Deserves Better Protection*, Down to Earth (Nov. 27, 2025), <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/governance/authenticity-in-question-why-madhubani-art-deserves-better-protection> (last visited Sept. 21, 2026).

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Soc’y, *JEEViKA: An Initiative of Government of Bihar for Poverty Alleviation*, <https://brlps.in/Ihome> (last visited Sept. 21, 2026).

³⁶ Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Soc’y, *About Shilpgram*, Shilpgram, <https://shop.brlps.in/about-us> (Sept. 22, 2026).

³⁷ Dep’t of Admin. Reforms & Pub. Grievances, Ministry of Pers., Pub. Grievances & Pensions, Gov’t of India, *Fostering Transformation in Rural Bihar*, at 14 (2025), <https://www.darpg.gov.in/static/uploads/2025/10/83874e52a55c48c2cc9b1aaff795796a.pdf> (last visited Sept. 25, 2026).

³⁸ Geographical Indications Registry, *supra* note 1, at 3.

a field account which adds that the gains from the GI have not reached artisans in full.³⁹ It is reported that 40 women who earlier rolled beedis for ₹4,000 to ₹5,000 a month now earn a regular ₹10,500 in an organised enterprise Maya Organics engaged in making toys.⁴⁰ This income rise indicates how formal training and structured employment improves the economic condition of women. However, activities such as wood-turning, design, marketing and export are handled by men and women's contribution was limited to low-margin activities even with GI prominence. Thus Channapatna highlights GI benefits cannot empower women without high value roles in design, branding, marketing and export.

V.C. Pochampally Ikat (Telangana)

Pochampally Ikat is Geographical Indication No. 4 and one of the first three products in the register, granted certificate of registration on 31.12.2004; a logo followed in 2017-18 as application no. 562.⁴¹ It is reported to stand in the names of the "Pochampally Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society Ltd." and the "Pochampally Handloom Tie and Dye Silk Sarees Manufacturers Association".⁴² Recent studies in Bhoodan Pochampally, indicate low authorised user registration, weak enforcement of GIs, less participation of weavers in cooperative, benefit concentration within cooperatives, falling wages and intermediaries capturing substantial share of the profits.⁴³ The Handloom Census records that only 39.4 per cent of female weavers work full time against 75.6 per cent of male weavers⁴⁴ Telangana counted 23,245 women handloom workers and only 5699 of them are weavers and the remaining majority are allied workers.⁴⁵

V.D. Kashmir Pashmina Shall

"Kashmir Pashmina" is Geographical Indication No. 46, granted certificate of registration on 12.09.2008 to TAHAFUZ Society with the Craft Development Institute,

³⁹ D. Bhaskar & R. Samudiyatha, *The Indian Story That Needs Revival*, Down to Earth (Nov. 29, 2019), <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/economy/the-indian-story-that-needs-revival-68019> (last visited Sept. 21, 2026).

⁴⁰ T. Patel, *K'Taka Org Revives 200-YO Dying Toymaking Craft, Doubles Income of Women Artisans!*, Better India (July 5, 2019), <https://thebetterindia.com/culture/indian-folk-art-artists-bhil-warli-gond-madhubani-india-tradition-evolution-11748140> (last visited Sept. 22, 2026).

⁴¹ Geographical Indications Registry, *supra* note 1, at 1, at 57.

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ K.D. Raju, *Indian Ikats and the Handloom Sector at a Crossroads: A Case Study of the Pochampally Ikat Weavers in Telangana (India)*, 24 *Textile* 529, 541, 544, 545 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14759756.2025.2588864> (last visited Sept. 25, 2026).

⁴⁴ Office of the Dev. Comm'r for Handlooms, Ministry of Textiles, Gov't of India, *Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019–2020*, at 37 (2019), *summary available at* People's Archive of Rural India, <https://ruralindiaonline.org/en/library/resource/fourth-all-india-handloom-census-2019-2020/> (last visited Sept. 25, 2026).

⁴⁵ Press Release, *supra* note 4.

Srinagar providing technical assistance by evaluating the raw materials and affixing tamper-proof labels.⁴⁶ A study in Baramulla shows that women spin the yarn, a delicate and time-consuming part of the process while men-controlled tools, raw materials, selling and other transactions. It was also found that over 90 per cent of households wove pashmina while few women's names appeared in cooperative records, since home-based work is treated as family labour rather than paid work.⁴⁷ This inaccessibility keeps women out of income and outside GI authorised user lists. Some change is visible. In June 2026 the Pashmina Artisan Awards for 2026 were proposed to be dedicated exclusively to women artisans, in recognition of their role in spinning, weaving and embroidery.⁴⁸ Women led cooperative models' resource pooling, manufacturing and selling the pashmina goods straight to visitors ensured market accessibility with the profits being paid directly to the artisans cutting out middlemen.⁴⁹ Yet women-led cooperatives remain few and, in most instances, not recognise women. This shows although GI recognition has increased the demand for raw Pashmina Yarn, the economic benefits has not trickled down to women spinners stuck in patriarchal setups.

VI. Findings

First, there is a lack of awareness about Geographical Indication rights, its certification benefits and of enforcement mechanisms particularly among women artisans. This leads to intermediaries capturing much of the economic benefit from traditional crafts leaving little for women to benefit from the GI branding.

Second, although women make up a majority of artisans (64–71% in handloom and handicraft categories)⁵⁰ and GI certification has increased artisan recognition, women weavers and artisans often do not hold cooperative leadership positions or participate in sales negotiations, which takes a toll on their profits and individual development.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Craft Dev. Inst., Srinagar, *Quality Manual for Enforcement of Kashmir Pashmina GI 2*, 7–14 (n.d.), <https://cdiptqccgi.com/documents/Quality%20Manual%20Kashmir%20Pashmina%20Updated%202023.pdf> (last visited Sept. 23, 2026).

⁴⁷ K. Bano, *How Women Can Reclaim Kashmir's Oldest Craft*, Kashmir Observer (Nov. 13, 2025), <https://kashmirobserver.net/2025/11/13/how-women-can-reclaim-kashmirs-oldest-craft/> (last visited Sept. 21, 2026).

⁴⁸ PEMA Seeks New Measures to Strengthen Kashmir Pashmina's Global Footprint, Greater Kashmir (June 6, 2026), <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/business/pema-seeks-new-measures-to-strengthen-kashmir-pashminas-global-footprint-12006619> (last visited Sept. 22, 2026).

⁴⁹ *The Pashmina Shawl and Precarious Future of Artisans*, IP Press (June 12, 2025), <https://www.theippress.com/2025/06/12/the-pashmina-shawl-and-precarious-future-of-artisans/> (last visited Sept. 21, 2026).

⁵⁰ Press Info. Bureau, Gov't of India, *Handicrafts at the Heart of India's Rural Economy* (Dec. 9, 2025), <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?ModuleId=3&NoteId=156396&id=156396&lang=1®=3> (last visited Sept. 25, 2026).

⁵¹ Photofrem, *Role of Women in Handicrafts in India* (July 20, 2025), <https://photofrem.com/role-of-women-in-handicrafts-in-india/> (last visited Sept. 23, 2026).

Third, authorised user registration still falls far short of the actual workforce. Madhubani lists 53 users against hundreds of painting households in Jitwarpur alone, and Pochampally has only 4, with recent fieldwork in Bhoodan Pochampally reporting low registration, weak enforcement and weavers thinly represented within their own cooperatives. A GI whose benefits are legally confined to registered users offers little to producers who never make it onto that list.

Fourth, across all four crafts, women do the delicate, time-consuming, low-margin work at the start of the chain, spinning in Kashmir, polishing and painting in Channapatna, while men hold the tools, the raw material, the pricing, the selling and the export work. In Channapatna, even where the GI has raised the value of the toy, that value has settled with the male master artisan and not the woman who painted it.

Fifth, organisation changes outcomes but only where it exists. The Shilpgram Mahila Producer Company, now run by more than 500 women and earning about ₹8 crore over five years, and the Maya Organics women who moved from rolling beedis for ₹4,000-5,000 a month to a steady ₹10,500, show what collective structure can achieve. Kashmir's women-led cooperatives, which sell directly to visitors and pass profits straight to the artisan, work the same way. But these remain small, scattered efforts set against a much larger informal workforce, and none of them has scaled into the mainstream of the GI's authorised user base.

Sixth, a good part of women's labour simply does not get counted. In Baramulla, over 90 per cent of household's spin pashmina, yet very few women's names appear in cooperative records because home-based work is treated as family labour rather than paid work. If the record does not include women contribution, the GI framework built on that record cannot uplift them either.

—Seventh, recognition is beginning to move ahead of structure. The 2026 Pashmina Artisan Awards, proposed exclusively for women, and the new colours and themes entering Madhubani painting, show a craft adapting and a women's contribution finally being named. Studies indicate women reporting their income doubling or tripling after receiving honours of an award⁵² proving recognition rewarding women producers.

GI	Register entry	Applicant or holder	Women's position	Main gap
Madhubani Paintings	No. 37	Director of Industries, Bihar	Majority of painters; producer company model	51 users; Updations with respect to adaptations

⁵² *Id.*

VII. Conclusion

The GI Act gives a craft a legal name, but it gives the women who make most of the product no rights unless they register as authorised users or the proprietor body admits them, and the evidence does not favour women. Though women engage in patient and most demanding part of the work, GI rarely reaches them as owners, authorised users or even as names in a record. However, where women have organised into producer companies or cooperatives, there are visible improvements in incomes and dignity, yet these are small pockets against a much larger unaccounted workforce where whose labour is underpaid and unnoticed. It requires more than a GI tag that is inclusion of women in registration, records and importantly the recognition of their work. Only then real economic empowerment through legal protection such as GI can be ensured, the sustainable development goals 8.3, 11.4, 12.b be realised and the free trade agreement with developed countries as is the case with EU can made use of to the fullest extent to promote cultural diversity.

VIII. Suggestions

It is suggested that the Rule 32⁵³ be amended under section 87⁵⁴ so that statement of particulars required includes information as to gender demographics of the producers involved in the manufacture of the goods. An applicant that is not a producer body, such as a state department, should show plans to make women producers, if found to be a major workforce in production, as authorised users within a fixed period and plans in their pipeline to boost women participation in the production of goods.

Further, section 24⁵⁵ should carry a proviso allowing a GI held by a public authority to pass to a producer company or cooperative with seats for women's collectives if utilisation and working of the GI is found to be ineffective by the registrar in areas where women participation is the highest. Otherwise, state-held GIs such as Madhubani and Kashmir Pashmina stay with the department that applied for them despite the lack of efforts on their part to improve state of registered users particularly women. Madhubani's specification, frozen at 2007, should also be reviewed through the amendment procedure open to the proprietor.⁵⁶

⁵³ GI Rules, *supra* note 17, r. 32 (Content of application).

⁵⁴ GI Act, *supra* note 9, § 87 (Power to make rules).

⁵⁵ GI Act, *supra* note 9, § 24 (Prohibition of Assignment or Transmission, etc.).

⁵⁶ Sharma, *supra* note 32.

The Central Government should use section 22(2)⁵⁷ to notify handloom and handicraft GIs for the higher protection in section 22(3),⁵⁸ so that “style” and “inspired by” labels infringe, and Parliament should consider extending the Act atleast to issues of infringement by services of registered GIs, which would answer the gap left by Tea Board.

The reimbursement of up to ₹2 lakh for registration and the support of up to ₹1.5 lakh for enforcement could fund a legal aid cell with the objective of promoting GI awareness and offering protection in case of infringement, in each GI cluster, with priority for women’s groups, so that registration drives and notices to online sellers do not depend on individual weavers.⁵⁹ “The Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985”, which reserves specified articles for handlooms, could be enforced through the same cells.⁶⁰

Each GI product should carry a QR-coded tag naming the producer group, aligned with the Handloom Mark. Also, section 79⁶¹ already requires an annual report on the Act to be placed before Parliament, and it should carry gender-disaggregated data on authorised users, cluster incomes and women’s leadership in proprietor bodies. The Handloom Census and artisan registration should record GI cluster and user status.

Initiatives for Digital upskilling of women has to be undertaken. It would enable the rural women artisans to find buyers across the world thus cutting out the middlemen.

Low-collateral credit should be offered to women who are registered authorised users, since section 24⁶² keeps the GI itself from being pledge and women producers should be educated about the vast untapped digital markets which would prove particularly useful for individual woman artisans.

⁵⁷ GI Act, *supra* note 9, § 22(2).

⁵⁸ *Id.* § 22(3).

⁵⁹ Press Info. Bureau, *GI Tags*, *supra* note 2.

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ GI Act, *supra* note 9, § 79 (Reports of Registrar to be placed before Parliament).

⁶² *Id.* § 24 (Prohibition of Assignment or Transmission, etc.).