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GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS REGIME IN INDIA: COMMITMENTS AND CONSEQUENCES

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INTRODUCTION:

After introducing the new market-centric economic policy in the early nineties in response to the shattered macroeconomic indicators, Indian policy makers made many significant changes to the policy, which were clubbed as the New Economic Policy. We were a member of GATT and hence agreed with Dunckel's draft, and we became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) by the mid-nineties. Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) was one of the main items that came under discussion, not favoring so much the developing (the largest producer of technology) and under-developed world, but truncating the emerging benefits in favour of technologically advanced nations. A Geographical Indication (GI) was made a part of the TRIPS as intellectual property marked with the archetypal production process tagged with geographical location. It is linked with place-based names (Barnette, 2012). Labeling goods associated with the names of places was a standard in "appellations of origins, indications of source, and designations of origin." Article 22 of the TRIPS Agreements defines Geographical Indication as "Geographical indications are, for the purposes of this Agreement, indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a Member, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin." (p.328, TRIPS). Consequently, after India joined as a member state of the TRIPS Agreement, sui-generis legislation for protecting geographical indication was enacted, culminating in the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999. Accordingly, Darjeeling tea is the first registered GI product as per the Act's provisions as of September 15, 2003. Section 2 (1) (e) of the said Act defines a GI as follows:

"geographical indication, about goods, means an indication which defines such goods as agricultural goods, natural goods or manufactured goods as originating or manufactured in the territory of a country, or a region or a locality in that territory, where a given quality,

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reputation or the other characteristic of such goods is essentially attributable to its geographical origin and in the case where such goods are manufactured goods one of the activities of either the production or of processing or preparation of the goods concerned takes place in such territory, region or locality, as the case may be."(Page 4 (e) GI Act 1999)

Objectives of the Study

Following this framework, we have set a few objectives for our present research study:

(i). To understand the growth of GIs in India from 2004 to 2024, as revealed through the registrant trends and their implications for the stakeholders.

(ii). To understand the key challenges faced by GI producers, including questions surrounding the identification of actual beneficiaries, the impact of climate change on production and quality, and

(iii). To bring forth the growing influence of religious capitalism in shaping market and value perceptions.

We have integrated qualitative and quantitative research using a triangulation methodology. Official GI registries, government papers, and academic literature provide secondary data to understand patterns in GI registrations across several product categories. The central part of the arguments in this paper deals with the case studies devoted to investigating nuances in the applications of GI, the data were gathered using structured interviews and questionnaires, including GI producers, regulatory bodies, and industry players, to evaluate important obstacles. Two case studies, Darjeeling tea and Pokkali rice, were chosen to thoroughly understand the different GI-related issues and their implications to the stakeholders.

To look into the application of GI about Darjeeling Tea, India's first GI product, for evaluating the longterm effects of climate change. With field studies in Kerala's Ernakulam area, Pokkali Rice was selected to investigate the producer against authorized user argument, especially the difficulties illiterate farmers confront in claiming their rights.While a comparable survey of Darjeeling tea growers from eight tea estates was undertaken to investigate the effect of climate change on output, a study of Pokkali farmers in Ernakulam district was done to explore their challenges. Secondary data analysis was conducted to examine the GI aspects of Tirupati Laddu, focusing on its registration process, economic impact, and regulatory framework through official records, government reports, and scholarly literature. The results were interpreted using descriptive statistics, then supplemented with a narrative technique to reflect the participants' viewpoints.

The paper is divided into two parts. The first part, entitled "Grouping, Relevance, and Sustainability," deals with the commitments of the Indian GI. This section examines how

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goods under GI are listed, classified, economically relevant, and sustainably maintained. The second section, entitled "Challenges and Complications," looks into the challenges faced by GI, namely the actual beneficiaries, climate change, and religious capitalism.

Grouping, Relevance and Sustainability

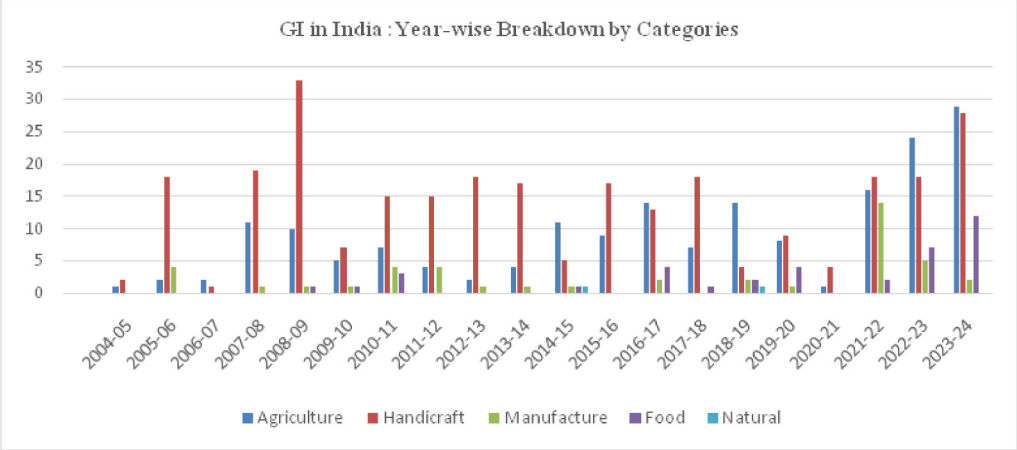
As of March 2024, 658 goods were protected under GI and categorized into different classes in India . There are thirty-four different class categorizations under this. A GI can be registered under multiple classes through a single application. For example, Kancheepuram silk is registered under classes 24 and 25 . The category-wise distribution of registered GI goods is shown in Table 1. Out of these, handicraft has the significant (51.09%) share, followed by agricultural goods (33.1%). (Refer figure 1)

Table 1: Category-wise distribution of Registered GIs

Sl No	Category	Percent of GI Registered
1	Handicrafts	55.6
2	Agricultural & Natural Goods	29.4
3	Manufactured Commodities	7.15
4	Food Articles	7.31
5	Other goods	0.48

(Source: https://search.ipindia.gov.in/IPOJournal/Journal/GIR)

Figure 2: GI Registrations from 2004-2024



Source: Compiled from registration details of GI application fromhttp://www.ipindia.nic.in/registered-gls.ht

Table 1 shows that maximum registrations is in the Agricultural Products and Natural Goods category, followed by the Handicrafts category. The labourers engaged in these three categories will be approximately the same level (85 %), in other words, almost 85 percent of the labourers become the stakeholders in these three categories. Across the

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years, we can see variations in the number of registrations. The year 2020-21 showed the highest number of GI registrations, followed by 2016-17 and 2007-08. Figure 2 shows that registered GIs have increased considerably, except in the initial years.Rising GI registrations in India indicate a vigorous drive towards market distinction, cultural preservation, and economic development. Though problems still exist, the increase in GI registrations, especially in 2020- 21, indicates growing awareness and policy support. GI registrations keep increasing; their economic significance in addressing market inefficiencies and enhancing consumer trust becomes even more evident.

Economic Implications of GI

GI is used as a strategy to identify the product and get the character of product differentiation in a market. There are different types of markets. In the case of a perfect market, there is assumed to be availability of ideal information for sellers and buyers. However, in reality, markets are not perfectly competitive because they are regulated by law and public policy. Asymmetric information (Ross, 2024) leads consumers to choose low-quality (cheap) goods, thus driving out high-quality goods. This situation in the market is often regulated by public policy intervention. Thus, as a public policy tool, GI can be crucial in abating information asymmetry. As GI indicates quality and authenticity-related attributes of a product through labelling,(Vinayan, 2017) it can help prevent consumers from information asymmetries.

GIs offer many advantages to producers, consumers, and public policy. GIs provide legal protection for producers, allowing a collective to obtain exclusive rights and function as club goods, diminishing customer information costs. This protection promotes product differentiation (Josling, 2006), strengthens producers' negotiating power, and facilitates sustainability. From a consumer standpoint, GIs facilitate the classification and distinction of products, streamline purchasing choices, and frequently result in a readiness to pay a premium for local items due to the perceived superior quality associated with the GI designation (Cummings, 1899; Van Intersem et al., 2003). Public policy is essential in reconciling these interests by developing regulations safeguarding consumers and producers while promoting entrepreneurial endeavours. GIs facilitate economic development, sustainability, and market efficiency through various The economics of GI goods works like this:

GIs are protected under various legal norms to ensure a product conforms to specific credentials such as quality, traditional production methods and/or the geographical specifications. As technological advancements in transportation and distribution have changed phenomenally, the market for GI products has increased globally, especially for agricultural goods. Agricultural producers in developing nations must bring out high-quality

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and differentiated products to stand out in the global competition. In this context, GI plays an important role in differentiating the product, assuring quality and ensuring a higher price in the market. Hence, it provides a platform for local goods to compete globally. Some crucial factors that assure a GI product's uniqueness are the terrier, technical methods and traditional knowledge. These factors help maintain sustainability through appropriate agricultural practices, giving more importance to the preservation of biodiversity, indigenous methods, and producers' welfare. Despite the enormous opportunities of GI, India has still not explored the GI arena. Though India has a sui generis law for GI, the practical aspects are far from what has been laid down. This section looks into challenges like Actual benefits to the Stakeholders; Climate Change and Indian GI goods; Religious Capitalism and profit squeezing by the intermediaries.

Issues Faced by the Beneficiaries

Benevente (2010) wrote that GI goods can be modeled as collective or club goods . Club goods are those characterizedby partial excludability and are non-rivalrous. As the producers should belong to a particular geographical origin and adhere to specific unique procedures of production to claim GI (Marie Vivien, 2010) GI excludes those who do not belong to the concerned geography and do not follow unique means of production. The use of GI by any one producer does not abate its use by another producer. This highlights the non-rivalrous nature of GI within a group of producers of a particular commodity. GI may also be considered a collective monopoly right that benefits the producers entitled to use GI and restricts others outside the geographic area.(Das, 2010).

However, it is submitted that the concepts of excludability and non-rivalry could be ambiguous in GI. The law permits registered proprietors to become authorised users by adhering to certain norms. As most registered proprietors are government agencies or societies, such bodies becoming authorized users can upset the canons of fair trade through biased decisions. In short, biased decisions regarding government agencies becoming authorised users can lead to partial inclusion and rivalry.

The GI Act envisages three players: authorized user, producer and registered proprietor. According to the Act, an authorised user of a geographical indication registered under Section 17 of the Act . The Act, in Section 17, further lays down who can register as an authorised user and how the same can be done. Any person claiming to be the producer of a good regarding which a GI has been registered can apply to register himself as an authorised user . Therefore, the next obvious question is who is a producer?

The Act defines a producer concerning goods in three aspects: i) in the case of agricultural goods, ii) in the case of natural goods, and iii) in the case of handicraft or industrial goods. Regarding agricultural goods, a producer means and includes any person

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who produces, processes and packs such goods . In respect of natural goods, producer means any person who exploits such goods and in respect of handicraft or industrial goods, producer means and includes any person who makes or manufactures such goods, trades or deals in its production, exploits it, etc . Concerning agricultural goods, focus shall be on the first category, i.e. producers concerning agricultural goods. The concern here is that the producer of an agricultural good includes the one who produces such goods, and those who process and pack such goods. Such an extended list of beneficiaries, including the ones who process and pack the goods within the definition of the term 'producer', means they are also eligible to get registered as an authorised user. Therefore, the extended list of beneficiaries might adversely affect the benefit due to the actual producers, i.e., those who produce such goods.

According to the Act, a registered proprietor means "any association of persons or producers or any organisation for the time being entered in the register as proprietor of the geographical indication." The definition clearly shows that the ambit of registered proprietor is broader than that of the term authorised user and producers, further extending the list of beneficiaries. The real intention of the Act must be to protect the actual producers of the goods in respect of which a GI is registered and not to dilute such protection by extending the beneficiary list to endless persons.

Currently, most registered proprietors are associations of Central or State government entities and a small minority of them are cooperative societies, associations, Trusts/NGOs and Universities. The question is whether these government bodies adequately address the interests of producers or authorised users? Above all, how do the gains get distributed among the stakeholders? These are the questions that seek answers through few cases, which are discussed below:

1: Case Study: Pokkali Rice and the Question of Actual Beneficiaries

The registration of Pokkali rice under the Geographical Indications (GI) Act in 2008 was expected to provide recognition and economic benefits to the traditional farmers cultivating this unique, saline-resistant rice variety in Kerala. However, a deeper look at the actual recipients exposes an apparent discrepancy between the stated goals of GI and its actual effects on farmers. Talking with farmers, traders, and agricultural specialists during field visits to the Pokkali farming areas of Ernakulam revealed important issues about the discrepancy between registered proprietors and authorised users inside the GI system.

Rather than an organisation of actual producers, the registered proprietor of the Pokkali GI is the government entity Kerala Agricultural University (KAU). Farmers voiced worries about how this administrative structure as it limits their authority over marketing decisions, pricing, and branding choices, rendering them dependent on institutional structures that do

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not reflect their interests. Very few of the nearby growers had registered themselves as authorised users, which are required for lawfully selling their rice under the GI designation, according to interviews with One Ezhikkara, Ernakulam farmer said, "We are the ones farming Pokkali for generations, yet we do not know how to become authorised users. Who is this GI helping?"That indicates those who own intellectual property rights (Here Ezhikkara) are kept out of the benefits generated through the GI tag.

More profound research of authorised users under the Pokkali GI revealed, oftena neo-capitalist who owns GI dominates this category. This disparity results from the Act's expansive definition of a "producer," which covers merchants, packers, processors, and farmers. Consequently, intermediaries and large-scale traders gain more from the GI designation (Anson & Pavithran, 2014) than the real growers, who have administrative difficulties getting their identification as authorised consumers. A rice mill owner admitted, "Farmers grow Pokkali but interact with the market less often. We handle the branding, processing, and sales." Therefore, finally, the GI tag helped the intermediaries and the capitalists earn in the name of the IPR of the farmers who grow Pokkali rice. This commercialization of GI begs questions regarding who controls the financial gains of the Pokkali GI.Government entities in charge of GI registrations often bring a structural bias to decision-making. KAU, a state institution, retains control over who can become an authorized user since it is the registered proprietor. Farmers voiced discontent in Vytilla, a significant Pokkali-growing area, saying bureaucratic delays and lack of awareness campaigns stop them from profiting from the GI. "GI was supposed to protect Pokkali farmers, but in reality, it is just another government seal that traders use it to make more money," one old farmer said.The GI designation has little effect on Pokkali farmers economically since the price premium linked with GI-labeled rice does not convert into higher profits for farmers. Instead, sellers and processors, intermediaries collect most of the gains. Many farmers said they were still selling their paddy at ordinary market prices without any clear benefit from the GI certification. A cooperative leader from Kadamakkudy pointed out that although GI protection once seemed to revitalise Pokkali farming, its actual application has done little to empower farmers directly.

The Pokkali case draws attention to flaws in the aggregate GI system, namely the isolation of actual producers from decision-making procedures and the widening of beneficiaries to non-cultivators. This is true about India in the case of the GI tag race, we are confronting now. The results of field contacts support the need of a farmer-centric approach to GI governance, whereby producer cooperatives or community-led organisations, instead of government agencies, are named registered proprietors. All could be the reasons why GI fails to become profitable for the producers in some cases. Therefore, the ambiguity

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in the term proprietor should be addressed, and such proprietorship should rest with the producers, considering that only the producers have the required know-how regarding the specified cultural practices.

Darjeeling Tea

Darjeeling tea dates back to the mid-nineteenth century, when tea cultivation began in the Darjeeling area of West Bengal, India. The British East India Company purchased the Darjeeling region from the Kingdom of Sikkim in 1835 (Akhtar & Wei, 2021). Recognizing the potential of the Darjeeling tea business, the British government gave exemptions and financial assistance to stimulate additional tea growth. This prompted British planters to develop multiple tea plantations, and by the late 1800s, Darjeeling tea had achieved prominence and a reputation for its distinct flavor and distinctive terrain (Akhtar & Wei, 2021). The Indian government recognised the potential of Darjeeling tea in 1856 and formed the Darjeeling Tea Industry. This offered assistance and encouragement to tea plantations, resulting in continued expansion and development. Darjeeling tea is now recognised as one of the finest teas in the world. Its particular flavor profile, influenced by the region's high altitude, cool environment, and distinct terroir, continues to enchant tea connoisseurs all over the world.

Darjeeling teas' flavour is muscatel or grape-like, with flowery and fruity overtones. This tea is known for its delicacy and complexity of flavour. The astringency is one of a kind, and the colour is a brilliant golden. The one-of-a-kind flavour profile of the tea can be attributed, in part, to the confluence of factors, including high altitude, a chilly environment, and unusual soil conditions. The designation of "Darjeeling tea" as a geographical indication means that only tea grown in the designated location can be labelled "Darjeeling tea." The geographical indication (GI) status protects the tea from being substituted for other teas by preserving its originality and quality.

The pilot study found that the Tea Research Association and the Darjeeling Tea Association served as vital points of contact and hub organisations for the tea industry through purposive random sampling. Darjeeling contains 87 tea gardens with GI markings. Most of the eight tea estates in Darjeeling's West were purposely selected to utilise the authorization. Respondents are selected using an expert sample technique based on their familiarity with the investigated subject.

The total number of female laborers is comparatively high compared to the male laborers. Here labourers mean plantation workers. As per the legislation known as the Plantation Labour Act (1951), which the Government of India promulgated, the term "Plantation worker" is delineated as an individual whom the management has engaged to carry out the responsibilities associated with the role of a "Plantation worker." This

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encompasses all forms of employment, irrespective of the level of skill required, encompassing both manual and technical tasks. Furthermore, it is stipulated that the individual's preceding monthly earnings should not have exceeded Rs. 750. Implementing a maximum threshold of Rs. 750 for earnings in the previous month ensures that the legislation encompasses a wide range of workers.

The market system in which Darjeeling tea functions can be classified as oligopolistic. This implies that the market is primarily controlled by a few prominent tea estates and producers. The tea industry in Darjeeling is distinguished by a limited number of dominant entities that have substantial influence over both the production process and pricing mechanisms. The supply chain for Darjeeling tea generally includes different stages. Tea farming involves the growth and harvesting of tea leaves, a responsibility undertaken by the tea estates in Darjeeling. Tea processing involves the post-harvest treatment of tea leaves to produce various flushes and grades. Auction houses (in Kolkata) serve as intermediaries in the global trade of Darjeeling tea, enabling the sale of this commodity to a diverse range of international purchasers. Exporters and wholesalers serve as intermediaries in the tea industry, acquiring tea through auction platforms and distributing it to domestic and international markets.

The primary beneficiaries of the Geographical Indication tag for Darjeeling tea are the tea estates and the region's reputation. The justification is that preserving the quality and authenticity of Darjeeling tea is of utmost importance as it significantly impacts the economic prosperity of producers and indirectly enhances the welfare of tea workers by ensuring stable employment, potentially more excellent salaries, and improved working conditions (Srivastava, 2005). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that tea workers' labor rights and working conditions are commonly handled through labor laws. The labour force in the Darjeeling tea gardens consists of Nepalese immigrants and their descendants(Sharma, 2018). Most of these individuals were originally from the highland regions of Nepal; however, as the tea industry grew, they relocated to this area. Nepal's most populous castes and communities are the Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Manger, Gurung, Newar, Sunwar, and Bhujel, which account for approximately 90 percent of the labour force. Approximately five percent of the labour force consists of members of ethnic groups such as the Bhutia, Lepcha, and Sherpa. In addition, between four and five percent of the workforce comprises individuals from the Indian plains and the Terai region of Nepal (Dash,1947). According to Dash's estimates, the total labour force that toiled on the tea plantations in the Darjeeling Hills in 1870 numbered 8,000, but by 1940, that number had increased to 44,279 people. The laborers' situation is pathetic, and there is no chance of improvement with the new GI tag.

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One head Clerk from a tea garden opined that;

"Industry is surviving because of female workers. They have a better sense of belonging. More family oriented and dedicated. The tasks performed at the plantation range from those performed in the tea factory, such as picking or pruning leaves, to those performed in the plantation, such as cleaning or spraying the tea bushes. In most cases, the task of transporting significant things or acting as the driver is delegated to men. Women primarily pick and prepare tea leaves. In addition, this tea industry is the only one where men and women receive the same minimum wage of Rs232/-.

This clearly indicates that the GI tag may benefit the operating intermediaries and the neo-capitalists who will take the products to the market, but it will have little trickle-down effect on the labourers.

Indian GI Crops and Climate Change?

Both case studies are related to agriculture, which is precariously dependent on the outcome of the climatic changes threatening the sector. Generally, climate changes affect agriculture. Agricultural producers adapt their production and post-harvest systems to changing climatic conditions (Kulshreshtha, 2011). Farmers who resort to scientific farming have adapted to technological changes (Clark & Kerr, 2017). However, farmers endowed with GI rights may not be able to adapt to climatic changes quickly, and such adaptation may not conform to GI specifications and conditions. As mentioned earlier, 30% of GI products in India are agricultural products. The soil's acidity, rainfall, temperature, etc., are some of the climatic factors affecting agricultural produce's quality and quantity. The relationship between GI and climate change is depicted in the table below:

Table 2: Classifying geographical indications based on the possibility of climate change impacts

Type	Broad categories	Influence of Natural factors	Geographically linked human factor	Examples	Assumed climate change impact
Agricultural product	1)Food	High	Average	Basmati rice, Pokkali rice	Strong
	2)Beverages	High	Average	Assam Tea, Nilgiri Tea	Strong
	3)Manufactured	Low	High	Feni, Hyderabad Haleem,	Low

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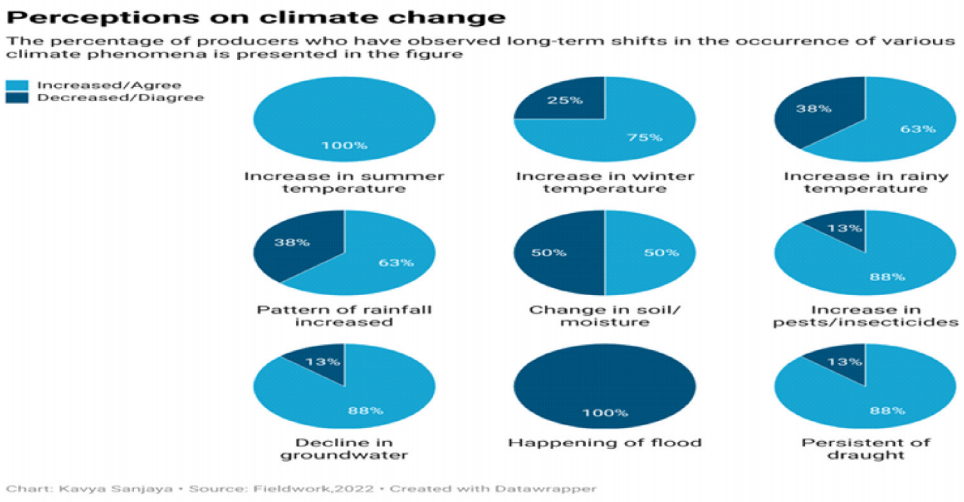
Non-Agricultural products	4)Handicrafts	Low	High	Pochampalyikat, Cheriyal paintings	Low

Source:https://ipindia.gov.in/writereaddata/Portal/Images/pdf/GI_Application_Register_10-09-2019.pdf

The GI items in categories 3 and 4 of the table are less vulnerable to the effects of climate change because natural forces do not directly impact them. On the other hand, GI items that are closely linked to their natural terroir fall under categories 1 and 2. These items are susceptible to climate variability and change because they rely significantly on climatic conditions to preserve their distinctive qualities and attributes.This difficulty is evident in Darjeeling tea, a GI-tagged agricultural product whose exceptional taste and character depend on specific climatic conditions. Darjeeling Tea, India's first GI-tagged product (2003), is highly sensitive to climate change due to its unique terroir. Grown across 17,820 hectares in the lower Himalayas, it requires 50-60 inches of annual rainfall and temperatures between 18°C and 30°C. However, between 1993 and 2012, the region saw a 0.51°C temperature rise, a 152.5 cm drop in rainfall, and a 16.07% decline in humidity, causing tea production to fall from 11.29 million kg (1994) to around 8-8.5 million kg. These climatic shifts threaten yields and the distinct flavour and quality that define Darjeeling Tea's GI status, posing long-term sustainability concerns. A primary survey conducted among Darjeeling tea producers in 8 tea estates listed the following observations on their perceptions. This was undertaken to understand whether they link climate change to Darjeeling tea production.

Figure 2: Perceptions on Climate Change



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It is observed that many,87.50% of tea growers said their observations and experiences have made them aware of climate change implications in the production of tea. 62.50% of farmers reported changes in the frequency and timing of rainfall; conversely, an identical number reported a rise in the rainfall intensity.Figure- 2shows that 87.50% of producers thought the frequency of droughts had gotten more severe, which directly influences the tea plant growth cycle. Producers observed that rainfall nowadays are erratic, which is bad for tea quality if it does not coincide with the necessary development periods.Notwithstanding these difficulties, 75% of producers said they did not significantly change their farming methods because of the tight GI standards limiting adaptation methods. Unlike non-GI farmers who might quickly welcome modern inputs, GI producers have to keep conventional farming techniques to retain the product's originality?

Regarding possible adaptation techniques, producers advised rejuvenating tea bushes, applying anti-erosion policies, and using drip irrigation for effective water management. However, only 70% of producers advocated irrigation-based adaptation; 15% thought increasing farming fields would assist in reducing production losses. According to the TRA chief scientist, "I was in Darjeeling seven years ago, and I just recently returned to this place. At this time, there is no rain. The humidity level has decreased, and the weather is dry, all of which affect the production." These climatic changes affect tea plant growth, yield, and quality, posing challenges for tea growers. Prolonged dry conditions may also increase vulnerability to pests and diseases, leading to higher production costs. "If these trends continue, Darjeeling tea's global market position and sustainability could be at risk, necessitating adaptive strategies such as irrigation and climate-resilient farming practices", says the manager of a tea estate.

These results expose a fundamental problem: although GI-tagged agricultural products are threatened by climate change, strict laws restrict producers' capacity to respond. Policy interventions that balance preserving the geographical distinctiveness of these products with guaranteeing climate resilience for sustainable agricultural output is therefore much needed.This calls into question whether GI methods and structures effectively preserve the production and quality of these goods in the face of climate change. Can GI frameworks be adjusted to guarantee constant quality and quantity despite shifting climatic conditions? These issues must be resolved for terroir-based GI goods like Darjeeling Tea to remain sustainable over the long run.

Religious Capitalism

GIs have become rather important commercially, which has resulted in a significant increase in registered products in India. Although GI protection aims to help the producers connected to these goods, several situations show disparities in the benefit distribution

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and the uncertainty in determining regional uniqueness. One important case that begs questions regarding the junction of religious influence, commercialization, and legal discrepancies in India's GI system is the GI registration of Tirupati Laddu. Applying for GI classification for Tirupati Laddu in 2008, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD), a trust running the Sri Venkateswara Temple in Andhra Pradesh,one of the wealthiest temples in the world with huge devotee offerings, hair auctions, and affiliated activities, requested for GI certification (Banerjee et al., 2010) on the basis of the following:

1) The special laddus' size and quality.
2) The uniqueness of preparation inside the temple kitchen guarantees a difference.
3) The laddus' spiritual purity, initially presented during temple ceremonies and subsequently shared among their believers.

Notwithstanding these assertions, Tirupati Laddu's GI registration creates various problems within the current legal system. First, the laddu's makers, workers or laborers, are not GI recipients, hence they get no direct benefit from its registration. This runs against the GI Act's collective benefit concept, which holds that GI recognition should benefit the producers. Instead, the TTD trust receives all the financial benefits from the GI registration.The concept of regional uniqueness presents still another difficulty. Unlike agricultural products, where terroir (environmental circumstances) defines uniqueness, Tirupati Laddu's geographical indication is limited to a temple kitchen, raising questions about whether this conforms to the fundamental GI registration criteria. The general question remains: How exactly is Tirupati Laddu different from other laddus? Critics contend that although the TTD argues that the spiritual purity of prasadam makes it unique, this usage of GI protection shows a commercialization of religious identity, commonly known as "devotional capitalism."

Moreover, the situation of Tirupati Laddu has established a precedent that drives other religious establishments to look for comparable GI rights for their products. Similar applications for Attukal Bhagavathy Shethram's prasadam in Kerala and Payyanur Pavithra Ring indicate that religious and cultural branding is starting to be a strategic instrument for market domination.These cases highlight more general difficulties in India's GI system, especially in harmonizing cultural legacy, business interests, and fair sharing of economic gains. Dealing with these issues would help to guarantee that GI protection stays a tool for enabling real producers rather than supporting institutional monopolies.

Conclusions

Though they are still relatively new, geographic indications in India have great potential to boost sectors such as agriculture, handicrafts, and others. Still, the main issue is whether enough focus is paid to spotting and endorsing possible items and beneficiaries.

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This study has exposed important issues, including the commercialization of faith, climate-related hazards, and the identification of proper beneficiaries. The following suggestions handle these issues:

1) Ensuring Equitable Benefits: A fair distributive strategy should be used, including representatives of authorized users in decisions on registered proprietors. Proper monitoring is essential to ensuring that producers, especially those directly engaged in production, get real advantages. Mechanisms like assured fixed earnings or direct income transfers should be investigated.

2) Dealing with Climate Challenges: Special clauses should be created for GIs primarily dependent on terror, ensuring their protection incorporates climate adaptation techniques. Within Indian and worldwide GI systems, the potential of changing registered GIs and including innovation in production procedures is yet primarily unrealized. Legal adjustments are required to handle these changing issues.

3) Grassroots awareness campaigns should be carried out, especially at the panchayat level, to inform producers, especially farmers and workers, on the market potential and financial benefits of GIs.

These steps would strengthen the GI environment and guarantee that it provides significant social and economic advantages to the areas it is supposed to safeguard.

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