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# JHARKHAND'S FORGOTTEN TREASURES THE NEED FOR MORE GI RECOGNITION

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**ABSTRACT** DOI No: 10.36713/epra20100 Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra20100

***Geographical Indication (GI) tags are essential for identifying and safeguarding goods with distinctive characteristics associated with geographical areas. They promote local economies, highlight cultural heritage, and aid in the preservation of traditional customs. Since there is just one GI-tagged product in Jharkhand the 'Sohrai-Khovar painting' this research paper focuses on the state of GI tags in Jharkhand. Even with its abundant natural and cultural diversity, Jharkhand struggles to get GI recognition for its other distinctive products, such as Mandar and Deoghar Peda. The study investigates the advantages of GI tags, Jharkhand's opportunities, the causes of the low level of recognition, and possible GI-eligible products. Additionally, it offers ways to get beyond these obstacles and emphasises how crucial it is to use GI tags to support the state's cultural and economic development.***

**KEYWORDS:** ***Geographical Indications, GI Tag, Jharkhand, Sohrai-Khovar Painting, Intellectual Property, Traditional Products, Cultural Heritage, Economic Impact, Rural Development.***

## INTRODUCTION

Although Jharkhand has bounteous natural resources and a rich cultural legacy, it has not yet benefited completely from Geographical Indication (GI) tags. Such tags protect regional products and enhance their value in the market and provide legal protection. However, there are concerns regarding the recognition aspects since Jharkhand has only one GI tag-the Sohrai-Khovar painting (2020)-despite having a wide variety of traditional products.

The 1999 Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act carves a way through which unique products may be protected.

Jharkhand thus falls behind the other states who are clamouring for GI recognition actively. Union Minister Piyush Goyal set the target of getting 10,000 GI tags by 2030 and emphasized that Jharkhand should step up its efforts. This paper looks at Jharkhand's GI status, the factors that contribute to its lack of acknowledgement, and the potential of goods like Mandar and Deoghar Peda. To help Jharkhand use GI tags for cultural and economic advancement, it identifies obstacles and makes suggestions.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study follows a secondary data approach, utilising official reports and academic research papers.

### Key Sources

1. Geographical Indications Registry of India – Data on registered and pending GI applications.
2. Ministry of Commerce and Industry – Policies and reports on GI recognition.
3. Intellectual Property India – Legal framework and status of GI-tagged products.
4. Academic research papers and newspaper articles – Insights into cultural heritage, economic impact, and policy challenges in Jharkhand.

### What is a GI Tag and Its Benefits

A Geographical Indication (GI) tag is a certification given to goods that are distinctively linked to a particular geographic area and represent the reputation, legacy, or quality of that region. This intellectual property right, which is protected by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, guarantees authenticity, guards

against unauthorised use of the product name, and preserves traditional knowledge.

India's responsibilities under international trade agreements, including the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), include GI tags.

As a signatory, India must give GI-tagged items legal protection to stop unfair competition and advance international trade.

GI tags serve as a worldwide recognition of a community's expertise, surroundings, and resources that contribute to a product's distinctiveness in addition to being a source of pride for the area. Some well-known Indian goods with GI tags include Darjeeling tea, Mysore silk, and Sohrai-Khovar paintings. Producers can guarantee that their products have a distinctive market positioning and provide global, cultural, and economic advantages by obtaining GI recognition.

**The advantages of GI tags**

**Economic Benefits**

GI – Geographical Indication is a label for a product that is produced in a specific geographical location unique to that product. GI tags enhance the product's marketability and value, thus offer better revenue opportunities to local producers, farmers, and artists.

**Preservation of Heritage**

They safeguard traditional crafts, artistic styles, and agricultural practices, which are often under threat of extinction due to mass-production and modernisation.

**Branding and Authenticity**

GI tags provide fair benefits for local producers by certifying authenticity, enhancing branding, and safeguarding regional heritage.

**Boosting the Rural Economy**

GI tags help boost rural livelihoods and create jobs by recognising and promoting regional specialities, especially in underprivileged regions.

**Global Recognition**

Since GI-tagged goods act as ambassadors of local culture and economy, they catch the eye of everyone around the world which adds to the export and tourism.

**Legal Protection**

GI certification provides legal rights to its producers from a specific region, safeguarding them from the misuse or imitation of their products.

**Tourism Development**

GI tagged products often attract tourists who want to experience the cultural heritage of the area, thereby benefiting the local economy too.

In the case of Jharkhand, the step can play a significant role in putting the name of the state on the international map and can further highlight the rich heritage of cultural identity, traditional folk arts, and indigenous agricultural products of the state. However, as elaborated upon in the paper, such opportunities are largely underutilized, demonstrating a potential role for purposeful intervention.

**GI Tag in Jharkhand**

Jharkhand's abundant biodiversity, unique traditional customs, and vibrant tribal culture provide a wide range of potential materials for GI identification. However, the state only formally recognises one GI-tagged item, the Sohrai-Khovar Painting from the Hazaribagh area. The state does not fully utilise its GI designation to promote its legacy and provide economic opportunities for its citizens, even though it has many distinctive products.

**Sohrai-Khovar Painting**

In 2020, Sohrai Khovar painting, a traditional tribal art form from Jharkhand, was designated a GI due to its cultural significance. It is done during festivals and rituals and employs natural pigments to make geometric patterns, animal and plant-i that represent harmony and fertility. Through programs such as the Tribal Women Artists' Cooperative, environmentalist Bulu Imam was instrumental in bringing this art back to the modern world.



***Fig :1 Sohrai Khovar Painting***

The Jharkhand government has pushed it at rail stations and G20 meetings. International attention was drawn to the Sohrai artwork that Russian President Vladimir Putin received from Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the 2024 BRICS conference.

**Cultural Importance**

**Sohrai Painting**

This picture was created to praise nature, fertility, and wealth during the Sohrai harvest festival using patterns of plants and animals.

The intricate patterns of Khovar paintings, which are produced during marriage ceremonies, stand for the unity and love of a married couple.

**Art Style**
The art style uses natural pigments (ochre, charcoal, and white clay) to create freehand designs and motifs on mud walls, including geometric patterns, animals, and flowers.

**Resources and Methods**
Clay and cow dung are used to create mud walls; natural pigments are applied, with lighter hues laid beneath darker ones to create contrast.

**Cultural and Economic Significance**
The GI tag has increased international attention, emancipated indigenous women, and maintained the art. It offers livelihood possibilities and showcases Jharkhand's heritage as part of India's ODOP initiative.

**Why Only One GI Tag in Jharkhand?**
Even though Jharkhand has a rich cultural legacy and a wide variety of unique objects, the Sohrai-Khovar painting is the only GI designation the state has received to date. A few things contribute to this limited recognition:

**Lack of Awareness**
Since many producers, craftsmen, and other stakeholders are unaware of the concept of GI tags and their benefits, there are not many applications for certification in Jharkhand.

**Limited Institutional Support**
To help find, document, and promote items for GI certification, the state does not have any specialised organisations or institutions.

**Bureaucratic Delays**
Getting a GI tag is a difficult process that calls for a lot of paperwork, historical proof, and legal follow-ups. Several goods that have already applied for GI recognition have experienced delays as a result of this.

**Inadequate Research and Documentation**
A successful GI application requires adequate historical and cultural documentation, which is lacking in many Jharkhand traditional items.

**Lack of Marketing and Advocacy**
Even when a product is acknowledged, there are rarely any marketing initiatives to support it, which deters other manufacturers from applying for GI certification.

**Financial Limits**
Small-scale producers and artisans frequently lack the funds necessary to hire legal counsel or pay for the application process for GI registration.

**Expected Products for GI Tag in Jharkhand**
More than 4,000 products in India qualify for GI registration (Niroshaa & Mansingh, 2024), yet Jharkhand has only one. Recognizing its unique products like: -

**Maandar (Traditional Musical Drum)**
Maandar drum will now be considered among the important elements in tribal culture of Jharkhand and will soon receive its Geographical Indication (GI). The proposal in this regard was submitted by the Mandar Producer Company of Jarjatta village highlighted the unique workı cultural value. Both officials and artisans showcased the distinctive heritage of the drum during last GI hearing in December 2024. For several years, artisans have been mixing leather with red clay for making the Maandar. Karn Satyarthi Deputy Commissioner was emphatic on the uniqueness by pointing out that there are no replicas. The Maandar will then be getting its GI as the final phase of the process closes, thereby preserving its legacy and boosting local artisans' incomes.



*Fig 2: Maandar Drum*

**Deoghar Peda**
Deoghar Peda is a sweet treat linked to the holy town of Deoghar, a well-known pilgrimage destination, and is renowned for its distinct flavour and texture. Traditionally, khoya (reduced milk) and sugar are used to make peda. Incomplete documentation and procedural difficulties are the main causes of the delay in its GI certification.



*Fig 3: Deoghar Peda*

**Paitkar Paintings**
The Paitkar community practices one of the oldest tribal art traditions, called Paitkar. These scroll paintings use natural dyes and simple motifs to tell myths and folktales. By giving the artists financial support, GI certification might aid in the revival of this dwindling art form.

**Dokra Craft**
Dokra is an age-old lost-wax metal casting method that is used by Jharkhand's tribal groups. This artwork is a strong contender for GI recognition because of its elaborate patterns and cultural allusions.

**Tasar Silk**
Jharkhand produces some of the greatest Tasar silk, which is known for its outstanding quality and organic texture. Tribal women contribute significantly to its

production, which benefits the state both culturally and economically.

**Sohrai and Khovar-Style Pottery**
Jharkhand's craft industry can be strengthened by looking at GI certification for pottery with similar motifs and designs, which are inspired by the Sohrai-Khovar painting tradition.

**Kusum Lac**
The Kusum tree is the source of Jharkhand's Kusum Lac, which is renowned for its superior quality. It has a great chance of becoming well-known throughout the world and is frequently used to create bangles and other goods.

**Handcrafted Bamboo Products**
Tribal craftspeople in Jharkhand are skilled in producing environmentally friendly bamboo furniture, mats, and baskets. Due of their regional uniqueness, these items stand to gain a great deal from GI certification.

**Some other Products from Jharkhand**
Other goods from Jharkhand, such as traditional foods like Dhuska, Arsa, and Khukdi and drinks like Mahua Daru and Handia (rice beer), have the potential to be certified as Geographical Indications (GIs). These goods reflect the agrarian economy and rich tribal heritage of the state.

**Addressing Challenges for Future Products**
These items must overcome several obstacles to receive GI certification:

**Focused Research and Documentation:** It is crucial to do thorough research to record the origins, history, and distinctiveness of these products.

**Simplifying Bureaucratic Procedures:** Improving workflow and cutting down on application approval delays.

**Government Support**: Government bodies should empower local communities by backing them as applicants, thus making them better informed (Kapila & Kaur, 2020).

**Awareness campaigns:** Teaching producers and craftspeople the advantages of GI tags and the application process.

**Marketing and branding:** To optimise these items' economic potential, they should be promoted both domestically and abroad**.**
For successful marketing of GI based brand, there is a need to revamp core product offerings along with adoption of measures for branding and distribution demand (Verma & Mishra, 2018)

**Recommendations for Promoting GI Tags in Jharkhand**

- To determine the possible products and extend financial and technical support to artisans during the application process, a special Geographical Indication (GI) Promotion Cell must be set up by the government.
- To simplify and make the GI application process more accessible, it must be streamlined, including the setting up of one-stop centers to ease documentation and legal processes.
- To ensure strong applications and record the history and distinctiveness of products, cooperation with specialists—such as academic institutions, non-governmental organisations, and cultural organizations—is crucial.
- To encourage increased participation in the certification process, public awareness campaigns should be started to inform producers and artisans about the advantages of GI tags.
- Subsidies and grants must be given to cover application costs, which include legal fees, documentation, and research.
- The marketing and GI registration of distinctive district-specific products should be given priority using the "One District One Product" (ODOP) program.
- G.I holders must rethink and work on their strategies to get the desired success and further development (Bhushan & Anand, 2022).
- Government-sponsored campaigns, the creation of e-commerce platforms, and product displays at national and international exhibits are all essential components of marketing and export promotion initiatives.
- To speed up the approval of outstanding petitions like Mandar and Deoghar Peda, the state should concentrate on addressing procedural bottlenecks.

## CONCLUSION

These factors create such beautiful things in Jharkhand. Despite having a rich historical treasure, the state is yet to have a GI tag, which indicates a great need for better marketing of this unique product. The popularization of Sohrai-Khovar paintings shows how GI tags can achieve growth in both culture and economy. However, factors like lack of awareness, delays, and poor support need to be removed.

Among the positive steps taken are awareness programs and the ODOP scheme issued by the government. Yet, there is no end to work still needed in that regard for improving the procedures and the entire economy of Jharkhand with international marketing of the products. Continuous effort shall be able to empower artisans of Jharkhand and render

them a strong base for earning at the same time reduce, recognize, and celebrate the heritage of the state on a global platform.

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