

Status and Evolution of Geographical Indications in Himachal Pradesh: A Case Study of Kinnauri Shawl

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ABSTRACT

Geographical Indications (GIs) have become an important means of protecting products that owe their character to a particular place. They guard traditional producers against imitation, help them earn a fair return for distinctive goods, and keep alive the knowledge and skills on which those goods depend. For remote mountain regions with few other competitive advantages, a GI can also link local livelihoods to wider markets. India gave legal force to this form of protection through the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, and 697 GIs have been registered in the country by 2025.

Himachal Pradesh holds 11 registered GIs, including Basmati, which it shares with other northern states, covering handicrafts, agricultural produce and a manufactured good from five districts. This study traces the evolution of GI recognition in the state. It examines the Kinnauri Shawl as a detailed case study. Using a descriptive-analytical approach based on GI Registry records, government gazetteers and field observation, it explores how the high altitude, rain-shadow aridity, long winters and isolation of Kinnaur have shaped the materials, production calendar and design of the shawl, and how indigenous knowledge, high-altitude pastoralism and Buddhist-Hindu symbolism have given it a distinct cultural identity.

The results show that GI registration has given formal recognition to the geographical and cultural distinctiveness of products from across the state. In the case of the Kinnauri Shawl, it has strengthened legal protection, but its benefits for weavers depend on wider producer participation, effective quality control, a secure supply of local wool and better access to markets. The paper concludes by proposing policy interventions in these areas to help GI protection support heritage conservation and rural livelihoods in Himalayan regions.

Keywords: *Geographical Indications, Kinnauri Shawl, Traditional Knowledge, Himachal Pradesh, Intellectual Property, Cultural Heritage, High-Altitude Pastoralism, Climate,*

1. INTRODUCTION

In a market increasingly dominated by standardised goods, products that carry the identity of a particular place have acquired new value. Geographical Indications (GIs) allow such products to be recognised and protected. They conserve traditional and indigenous knowledge, safeguard intangible cultural heritage, prevent the imitation and misuse of products, raise market value and strengthen rural economies built on distinctive regional production systems (Bérard & Marchenay, 2006; Rangnekar, 2004). For producers in remote and marginal regions, a GI is often one of the few instruments that can turn local distinctiveness into a lasting economic advantage.

A GI is a form of Intellectual Property that links the quality, reputation or other attributes of a product to the place where it originates (Bhattacharya, 2022). Its international legal basis lies in the TRIPS Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which came into force in January 1995. Article 22.1 of TRIPS describes GIs as signs that identify a good as originating in a territory, region or locality where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin (Blakeney, 2014; WTO, 1995).

India met its TRIPS obligations by enacting the Geographical Indications Act 1999, which came into force in September 2003. Before the Act, GIs in India could be protected only through the common law action of passing off (Panda, 2016). The Act provides sui generis protection for agricultural products, natural goods, handicrafts, manufactured goods and foodstuffs (Ghosh et al., 2025), and registrations are administered by the GI Registry in Chennai under the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks

(CGPDTM). Since Darjeeling Tea became India's first GI in 2004, registrations have risen steadily (Das, 2010). India's diverse physiography, spanning plains, highlands, arid zones and humid tropics, has produced a wide range of region-specific goods, and handicrafts and agricultural products account for the majority of registrations (CGPDTM, 2025). Handicrafts make up more than half of all registrations in the country, followed by agricultural products (Figure 1).

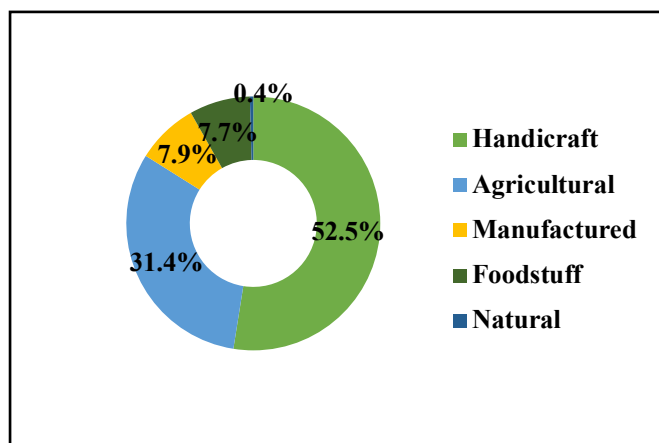


Figure 1: Distribution of registered GIs in India by category

Source: Compiled from CGPDTM (2025).

Altitude in Himachal Pradesh, in the western Himalaya, ranges from about 350 m in the subtropical foothills to over 6,000 m in the Greater Himalayan peaks. This altitudinal range produces a succession of microclimates, from temperate forests to glaciated alpine zones. The principal river systems are the Satluj, Beas, Ravi, Chenab and Yamuna, whose fertile terraces support the cultivation of apples, apricots, plums and walnuts, a mainstay of the rural economy. The region is also rich in biodiversity, sustaining endemic flora and fauna such as the snow leopard and Himalayan pheasants, and local livelihoods remain closely bound to the environment.

Of the 12 administrative districts of Himachal Pradesh, Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti are the major strongholds of tribal culture, with their physical remoteness and distinct socio-cultural identities. Kinnaur lies in the north-east of the state on the border with Tibet, and its terrain rises from less than 1,500 m in the lower Satluj valley to 6,816 m at Reo Purgyil, the highest peak in Himachal Pradesh. Much of the district is dry because it lies in the rain shadow of the main Himalayan range. Its vegetation changes from stands of Chilgoza pine to alpine scrub and bare cold desert, and irrigation depends on the Baspa, the Spiti and many smaller streams. Livelihoods combine farming at high altitude, chiefly apples, other stone fruit and buckwheat, with the seasonal herding of sheep, goats

and yaks. Wool from these flocks supplies the household looms on which shawls and patti, a local tweed, are woven (Suttie & Reynolds, 2003).

The Kinnauri Shawl holds particular importance as the only GI-registered product associated exclusively with Kinnaur. It is handwoven on traditional looms from locally procured wool and is distinguished by elaborate geometric designs, vivid borders and symbolic motifs drawn from Buddhist and Hindu traditions. Its qualities depend on the climate of the territory, the availability of raw materials and the transmission of weaving skills across generations. Its GI registration, applied for in 2008 and certified in 2010, marks a transition from informal, community-based authenticity, sustained by local norms and regional reputation, to formal legal protection and collective intellectual property rights for producer communities (Das, 2010).

This study examines the emergence of GI recognition in Kinnaur, treating the Kinnauri Shawl as a case of the institutionalisation of indigenous craft knowledge. It situates the GI trajectory of the shawl within the wider GI landscape of Himachal Pradesh and explores the relationship between physical geography, ecology, traditional knowledge and legal frameworks in the production and protection of region-specific products.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study follows a descriptive-analytical design and draws on secondary data supplemented by primary data collected through fieldwork. The principal institutional source is the official database of the Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks (CGPDTM), Government of India, which records registered and pending GI goods from Himachal Pradesh by category, application number and year of registration. Topographical, historical and socio-cultural context was obtained from government publications, particularly the District Gazetteer: Kinnaur. The development of the GI system in Himachal Pradesh, and the institutional history of the Kinnauri Shawl in particular, were traced through journal articles, edited volumes, policy documents and official GI application records, including GI Application No. 149 (Kinnauri Shawl).

Primary data were collected through field observation and semi-structured interviews with local weavers, members of artisan cooperatives and other stakeholders involved in the production of the Kinnauri Shawl. These interactions yielded information on traditional weaving techniques, the sourcing of raw materials, design vocabulary and the transmission of craft knowledge. The data were collated, classified by product

category and district, and analysed descriptively to trace the evolution and spatial distribution of GI products in the state.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 GI Registration Procedure

All applications under the GI Act, 1999 are filed with the GI Registry, Chennai, in Form GI-1 together with a filing fee of ₹5,000. Applications may be submitted by producer organisations, cooperatives or other recognised bodies. Applicants must specify the class of goods under the Nice Classification, define the geographical boundaries of the production area with cartographic evidence, establish origin through historical records or production data, describe the distinctive characteristics of the product that derive from its geographical origin (such as the influence of terroir and traditional production methods), and furnish evidence of the product's established reputation, such as sales records or other documentation (CGPDTM, 2025).

The Registrar normally examines an application within three to six months and may issue a show-cause notice where deficiencies are found. Laboratory testing may also be

required where scientific validation is necessary. Once accepted, the application is advertised in the bi-monthly Geographical Indications Journal, published on the fourth Friday of the relevant month, which opens a four-month period for public opposition. During this period any party may file an objection. If no opposition is sustained, a GI certificate is issued, valid for ten years and renewable for further periods of ten years. In addition, producers operating within the registered geographical area may apply to be recognised as authorised users of the GI (CGPDTM, 2025).

3.2 Present Status of Registered GI in Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh has 11 registered GIs, including Basmati rice, which is shared with other northern Indian states (CGPDTM, 2025). Seven are handicrafts, three are agricultural goods and one is a manufactured product. The years given in Table 1 are years of filing, since under the Act a registered GI takes effect from the date of its application. This distribution reflects the dual character of the state as both an artisanal and an agro-ecological region. Table 1 lists all registered GI goods from Himachal Pradesh. Registrations in the state began with the Kullu Shawl in 2004 and have grown steadily since, with the latest added in 2019 (Figure 2).

Table 1: Registered GIs of Himachal Pradesh

S. No.	Application No.	Geographical Indication	Goods Category	District	Year of Filing
1	19	Kullu Shawl	Handicraft	Kullu	2004
2	25	Kangra Tea	Agricultural	Kangra	2005
3	79	Chamba Rumal	Handicraft	Chamba	2007
4	145	Basmati*	Agricultural	Multi-state	2008
5	149	Kinnauri Shawl	Handicraft	Kinnaur	2008
6	383	Kullu Shawl (Logo)	Handicraft	Kullu	2012
7	381 & 413	Kangra Paintings	Handicraft	Kangra	2012
8	432	Himachali Kala Zeera	Agricultural	Kinnaur	2013
9	468	Himachali Chulli Oil	Manufactured	Kinnaur	2014
10	614	Chamba Chappal	Handicraft	Chamba	2018
11	647	Lahauli Knitted Socks & Gloves	Handicraft	Lahaul & Spiti	2019

Source: Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, Government of India (CGPDTM, 2025).

*Basmati rice is jointly registered by multiple northern Indian states, including Himachal Pradesh.

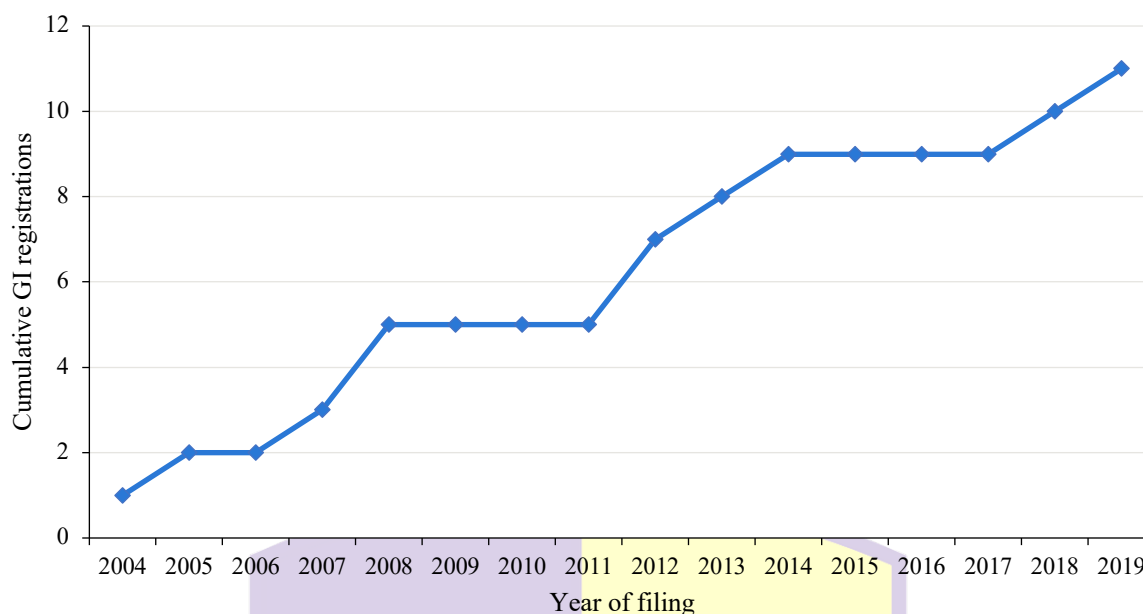


Figure 2: Growth of GI registrations in Himachal Pradesh by year of filing, 2004–2019

Source: Compiled from CGPDTM (2025).

3.2.1 Kullu District

The Kullu Shawl was registered as a handicraft in 2004, making Kullu the first district of Himachal Pradesh to obtain a GI registration. These handwoven woollen shawls are produced in the Kullu valley and are characterised by bright borders, simple geometric patterns and fine workmanship. They are woven on handlooms from local or regional Himalayan wool and reflect the agro-pastoral economy and cold climate of the valley. Early production was limited to simple patterns in natural colours, whereas contemporary Kullu Shawls frequently carry more elaborate designs inspired by local nature and tribal art traditions. The Kullu Shawl logo was registered as a separate GI in 2012 to prevent counterfeiting.

In Kullu, the Beas valley has cold winters and heavy snow in its upper reaches, so woollen clothing has always been in demand. Sheep are grazed on the alpine meadows above the valley in summer, which gives weavers a local source of wool. Kullu also lay on the old route from the plains to Lahaul and Ladakh. Traders and migrants moving along it brought Kullu weavers into contact with other hill traditions, Kinnaur among them, and the Kullu Shawl carries traces of both this climate and this contact.

3.2.2 Kangra District

Kangra district received its first GI registration in 2005 for Kangra Tea, an agricultural product grown in the Kangra valley. The moderate altitude, fertile alluvial soils, well-

drained slopes and mild climate of the valley favour tea cultivation, and the particular combination of rainfall, temperature and hilly terrain gives Kangra Tea its light liquor, delicate aroma and subtle flavour, which have earned it recognition in domestic and international markets. Kangra Paintings were registered in 2012 as the district's second GI. This school of Pahari miniature painting, which emerged in the Kangra valley in the eighteenth century, is characterised by soft colours, fine line work and naturalistic depictions of landscape and flora, with themes drawn from texts such as the Bhagavata Purana and the Gita Govinda (CGPDTM, 2025).

Kangra Tea depends on the position of the valley below the Dhauladhar. Monsoon winds are forced up against the range and release heavy rain over the valley, and the sloping land lets the water drain away before it can collect around the roots. In winter the bushes stop growing, and the new leaves picked in spring give the tea its light, delicate flavour. Kangra Paintings show a different kind of link to place. The style grew up at the court of the Katogh rulers, above all Raja Sansar Chand in the late eighteenth century, and the painters took their rivers, hills, trees and villages from the Kangra landscape around them.

3.2.3 Chamba District

Chamba district holds two GI registrations. The Chamba Rupal, registered in 2007, is a traditional embroidered textile distinguished by *dorukha* (double satin) stitch, which produces an identical image on both sides of the fabric. Its motifs, drawn from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the

Radha-Krishna devotional tradition, express the rich cultural and religious heritage of the region and the natural beauty of its hill setting. The Chamba Chappal is a handmade leather sandal noted for its craftsmanship, durability and fine silk-thread embroidery. It is made from locally processed leather and is suited to the mountainous terrain and climatic conditions of the Chamba region (CGPDTM, 2025).

Chamba sits in the upper Ravi valley, hemmed in by the Dhauladhar and the Pir Panjal. Cut off to a large degree from the plains, and supported for centuries by its own court, Chamba kept the Pahari style of painting alive and carried it over into the embroidery of the Chamba Rumal. The Chamba Chappal answers a more practical need. Hill paths here are steep and often wet, and local leather workers learned to make sandals that are strong and grip well on such ground.

3.2.4 Kinnaur District

Among the tribal districts of Himachal Pradesh, Kinnaur has the largest number of GI registrations, with three registered products in three different categories. The first of these, the Kinnauri Shawl, is a woollen handicraft that grew out of the district's cold climate and herding economy. Himachali Kala Zeera is *Bunium persicum*, a high-value spice raised or gathered at high elevations in Kinnaur and in neighbouring Chamba, Kullu and Lahaul-Spiti. Compared with common cumin, its seed is finer, darker and more strongly scented, qualities attributed to the cold growing season and free-draining upland soils. Himachali Chulli Oil is obtained by customary methods from the kernels of the wild apricot, a tree called *chulli* in the local dialect. The oil is valued for its medicinal, cosmetic and nutritional properties and is used in cooking, skin care and massage and for the relief of joint pain. It remains an important source of livelihood for rural communities in Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti (CGPDTM, 2025).

The three Kinnaur GIs all come from a cold, high and partly dry environment. Kala Zeera belongs to the dry temperate belt, and because its seed needs prolonged chilling before it sprouts, the crop cannot be raised in the warmer valleys

below. The wild apricot behind Chulli Oil suits the same setting, tolerating both scant rain and severe frost in the valleys of Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti. Where bought cooking oil was hard to obtain, households relied on its kernels for edible and medicinal fat.

3.2.5 Lahaul and Spiti District

Lahaul and Spiti district has one GI registration in the handicraft category: Lahauli Knitted Socks and Gloves, registered in 2019. These traditional hand-knitted woollen goods are made from local sheep wool to withstand the intense cold and long winters of the region, and their colourful geometric motifs express the tribal cultural identity of Lahaul (CGPDTM, 2025).

Lahaul is a high cold desert on the far side of the Pir Panjal. Before the Atal Tunnel opened in 2020, the Rohtang Pass was closed by snow for several months every year and the valley had no road link with the rest of the state. People had to keep warm through long winters with what they could make themselves. Local sheep gave the wool, the snowbound months gave the time, and hand-knitted socks and gloves became part of daily life. The craft grew directly out of the climate and isolation of the district.

3.3 Under Examination GI Applications from Himachal Pradesh

In addition to the registered goods, twelve GI applications from Himachal Pradesh were at various stages of examination and had not received final registration as of 2025 (CGPDTM, 2025). These applications are listed in Table 2. Kinnaur and Kullu account for the largest number of pending applications (four each), followed by Chamba and Mandi (two each) and Lahaul and Spiti (one). The applications cover textiles, agricultural products, handicrafts, foodstuffs and manufactured goods, reflecting ongoing efforts to bring the cultural and agro-ecological heritage of the state under the GI regime.

Table 2: Under-examination GI Applications

S. No.	Application No.	Geographical Indication	Goods Category	District
1	684	Spiti Chharma (Seabuckthorn)	Agricultural	Lahaul & Spiti
2	744	Salooni Safed Makka	Agricultural	Chamba
3	862	Chamba Metal Art	Handicraft	Chamba
4	985	Himachali Cap	Textiles	Kullu & Kinnaur
5	1029	Sepu Vadi of Mandi	Food Stuffs	Mandi
6	1074	Kinnauri Apple	Agricultural	Kinnaur

7	1075	Kinnauri Jewellery	Manufactured Goods	Kinnaur
8	1418	Himachal Gudma	Textiles	Kullu
9	1419	Himachal Lingchay	Textiles	Kinnaur
10	1513	Himachal Ransingha (Musical Instrument)	Handicraft	Kullu
11	1514	Himachal Wood Carving Craft	Handicraft	Mandi
12	1520	Himachal Handmade Galicha (Carpet)	Textile	Kullu

Source: Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, Government of India (CGPDTM, 2025).

3.4 The Kinnauri Shawl: A Case Study

Filed under GI Application No. 149, certified on 4 August 2010, the Kinnauri Shawl is a hand-loomed woollen textile made in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh. It is the only GI-registered product associated exclusively with Kinnaur and is the most significant expression of the district's craft heritage within the national intellectual property system. The shawl is woven from the wool of sheep and goats reared on high-altitude pastures, using traditional pit looms and handlooms. Its GI status rests on its dense texture, intricate geometric borders, including the *gyatongor* (hexagon) and *palpe* (square) patterns, and its Buddhist and Hindu iconography.

3.4.1 Characteristics and Uniqueness

Locally the shawl is called *Chhali*. It is a rectangular wrap of roughly 42 × 96 inches, with small differences in size between pieces made for men and for women. Women generally wear a more ornate variant known as *Chhali Toproo*, whereas men prefer a plainer design. It is customarily worn with the *Thepang*, the Kinnauri cap, which is cut from the same woollen cloth and finished with a green velvet band (*Patika*) and floral work (*Chaumoka*).

The ground colours of the shawl are predominantly white, black, grey and brown, while the motifs are worked in red, yellow, green, blue and pink. In Buddhist thought, five of these colours stand for the elements of nature, with white representing water, yellow earth, red fire, green air and blue ether. On the basis of the extent of ornamental bordering, the shawls produced in the study area fall into three main types. In the plainest form, known as Single Border, the patterning is confined to the two short ends. A Single Export shawl is bordered on every edge and needs about a month on the loom. The Full Export, or Three Patti, is the richest and most expensive type; every side is heavily patterned, and a single piece occupies a weaver for between 45 and 60 days.

Shawls produced for the market are now woven largely on frame looms. Those intended for household use, however, are still woven on the traditional pit loom in two narrow strips,

which are subsequently joined by decorative hand-stitching. In addition to shawls, Kinnauri weavers produce a range of other woollen textiles, including *Pattu*, *Dohru*, *Chaddar*, *Patti* (local tweed) and Lingchay.

3.4.2 Historical Significance

The history of the Kinnauri Shawl is closely tied to the physical landscape, social organisation and commercial links of the district. Because winters in Kinnaur are long and severe, warm clothing was needed from early times, and households therefore kept sheep and goats and spun their own wool. Weaving was initially a subsistence activity carried out within the household, producing plain shawls on traditional pit looms from locally spun wool.

The growth of trans-Himalayan trade networks, especially along the historic Hindustan-Tibet Road, kept Kinnaur in constant touch with Tibetan and Indian plains cultures. This cross-cultural contact influenced the shawl's aesthetic and symbolic language to a significant extent, as evidenced by the employment of complex geometric borders, rich colour palettes and Buddhist-Hindu religious motifs. Historical accounts describe a flourishing wool trade between western Tibet and the Bushahr State, centred on the annual Lavi fair at Rampur, in which Kinnaura traders played a leading role (Handa, 2017). Access to finer Tibetan wool improved local weaving and allowed modest commercial production beyond household needs.

Improved road connectivity and market integration in the twentieth century led to the large-scale commercialisation of the craft. Pit looms continued in household use, but frame looms became widespread in commercial production. Despite these technical changes, traditional weaving techniques, geometric design forms and symbolic motifs have remained central to the identity of the shawl. This continuity received formal recognition through GI registration, which legally established the link between the quality and reputation of the shawl and the distinctive geography and traditional knowledge of Kinnaur.

3.4.3 Raw Materials

Several types of wool, differing in their fibre properties, are used in the manufacture of the Kinnauri Shawl. The most important is local wool from sheep of Himachal Pradesh, which migrate annually with Gaddi shepherds between high-altitude summer pastures and lower valleys in winter and are shorn twice a year between April and September. Three grades of local wool are recognised: *Bayangi*, a high-quality wool from Kinnaur with a staple length of 5 to 6 inches; *Deshkad*, a coarser wool from Kullu district; and *Imboo*, the soft wool of the first shearing of lambs, with a staple length of 2 to 4 inches. Cross-bred wool (Desi × Merino), which is finer and longer than local desi wool, is used mainly in commercial shawl production.

Several other fibres are also used. The most valued of these is pashmina, the downy undercoat of goats herded on the Tibetan plateau, which combines very low weight with great warmth. Angora, a silky rabbit fibre, is usually mixed with Merino because on its own it is difficult to weave. Synthetic acrylic yarn, sold locally as *Cashmelon*, has also come into use, mostly in borders and motifs, because it is cheap and holds bright colours well.

3.4.4 Manufacturing Process

Two types of looms are used in weaving the Kinnauri Shawl. The traditional pit loom, or ground loom, is used for shawls intended for household use and produces narrow cloth in two pieces, which are then joined by decorative hand-stitching. Commercial weavers prefer the fly-shuttle frame loom, which works faster and can produce the full width of a shawl in one piece. Both types of loom require considerable skill and traditional knowledge.

Production proceeds through four successive stages: designing, yarn and warp preparation, weaving, and finishing. It begins with designing, in which the patterns, particularly those of the borders, are drawn on graph paper, each square representing one unit of the design. Weavers call the vertical units of a design *notti* (warp ends), and the horizontal units *leccha* (weft picks), and drawings are usually made at double scale so that the pattern stays balanced and legible. Traditionally, the wool is carded and spun on a *takli* (drop spindle) and dyed either with synthetic acid and Neolan dyes or with natural vegetable dyes, the latter yielding softer and earthier shades. The spun yarn is wound onto bobbins, and the warp threads are prepared by hand on peg stands for pit looms, or on warping machines for frame looms, before being passed through the healds and reed in a process known as drafting and denting. The correct warp tension must be set before weaving can begin.

During weaving, the weaver operates foot treadles to open a shed, the space between the raised and lowered warp threads, through which the weft-carrying shuttle is passed, and the reed then beats the weft into place. The ground is a 2/2 twill, recognisable by its diagonal ribs, and the borders are built up in coloured yarn by tapestry or dovetailing. In the final stage, the finished shawl is hand-milled before use.

3.4.5 Cultural Significance

The Kinnauri Shawl differs from other Himalayan shawl traditions, particularly the Kullu Shawl, in the complexity of its woven borders and the density of its symbolic motifs. Kullu Shawls carry plain horizontal bands at the ends, whereas Kinnauri Shawls, in their most elaborate form, bear ornate symbolic borders on all edges. The principal motifs, including *chhabehin*, *dorje* (thunderbolt), *gau*, *palpe* (square) and *gyatongor* (hexagon), derive from Buddhist iconographic traditions. They are worked in the five cosmologically significant colours, white, yellow, red, green and blue, with red, yellow and blue generally predominating.

The regional distinctiveness of the shawl is reinforced by its reliance on wool from sheep and goats reared on the high-altitude pastures of Kinnaur, where low temperatures produce fibres of particular density and warmth. Local raw materials, traditional production techniques and a culturally distinctive design vocabulary together satisfy the criterion of GI registration, establishing the shawl as a product anchored in both the geography and the culture of the district.

3.4.6 Geographical Significance

The physical geography of Kinnaur explains much about the Kinnauri Shawl. Covering about 6,401 sq km, the district spans more than 5,000 m of relief between the Satluj gorges and its highest summit (Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), 2013). Rain falls mostly in the monsoon and becomes scarcer towards the east, and the Pooh sub-division lies in the rain shadow of the Great Himalaya, within the Indian cold desert. Over most of the district winter lasts from October to May, and between December and March heavy snow often cuts off the upper villages (CGWB, 2013). In such conditions, warm clothing was never optional. The thick, tightly woven 2/2 twill of the shawl is a direct answer to the cold.

The climate also decides what the shawl is made of and when it is made. Rampur Bushair sheep, the local breed, have a dense fleece that is mostly white with patches of brown, black or tan (Acharya, 1982). These are, notably, the same white, black, grey and brown shades used for the ground of the shawl. Pashmina, used in the finest pieces, is the soft undercoat that goats grow each year as winter approaches

(McDonald et al., 1987). Flocks go up to the alpine pastures when the snow melts in spring and come down in autumn, and shearing is timed around these moves. Farming is possible for only about six months of the year, so the long winter is when households have time to spin and weave.

The location of Kinnaur is equally important. The Satluj valley has served for centuries as a route between the Indian plains and western Tibet, and the mix of Buddhist and Hindu motifs on the shawl reflects Kinnaur's place on this route (Handa, 2017). Natural conditions and local skill have worked together here in the way the concept of terroir describes (Barham, 2003), and this is what gives the GI its geographical basis. The same dependence on climate is also a weakness. If temperatures rise and snowfall changes, the pastoral system that supplies the wool may not stay as it is.

4. POLICY INTERVENTIONS

Registration gives the Kinnauri Shawl legal protection, but it does not by itself bring benefits to weavers. Those depend on how the GI is used, monitored and promoted once it is granted (Vandecandelaere et al., 2010). The following measures are suggested for the Kinnauri Shawl, and many of them apply equally to other GI products of Himachal Pradesh.

More weavers need to be brought into the GI system. Legal ownership of the GI rests with the state's Patent Information Centre as registered proprietor, yet the right to sell goods under the Kinnauri Shawl name, or to act against its misuse, belongs only to producers enrolled as authorised users. Registration camps held in the villages, simpler paperwork and help with fees, arranged jointly by the district administration and the Patent Information Centre, would make it easier for weavers to register. Many producers know little about the GI Act, which limits the use they can make of it (Panda, 2016). Weavers would also gain a voice in managing the GI if their cooperatives and self-help groups were better organised.

A GI is only as credible as the checks behind it. A code of practice is needed that states which fibres may be used, requires the shawl to be handwoven and lists the design features that define it. Genuine shawls could then be told apart from powerloom and machine-made copies. Inspection, together with authentication tags, holograms or QR-coded labels linking each shawl to its weaver, would protect buyers and producers alike. Markets in tourist towns should be checked regularly for imitations sold under the Kinnauri name. The Act already provides strong penalties, with falsification of a GI punishable by imprisonment of six months to three years and a fine of ₹50,000 to ₹2,00,000

(Panda, 2016), but these provisions are of little use unless they are enforced.

The supply of wool also needs attention. Support for local sheep and goat rearing, better management of high pastures and access to good wool at fair prices would keep raw material available. Small carding and spinning units near the weaving villages would cut costs and reduce reliance on distant suppliers. They would also help keep local wool in the shawl, which is part of what the GI protects.

The knowledge held by weavers should be recorded before it is lost. A design archive of motifs, colour conventions and weaving methods would serve as a record of the craft and as evidence in infringement cases. Training under existing handloom schemes, apprenticeships with master weavers and public recognition of skilled artisans would give young people a reason to take up weaving.

Weavers also need better routes to market. A common brand built on the GI, wider use of state emporia and cooperative outlets, stalls at national crafts fairs and online sales would all widen the market for the shawl. The Lavi fair at Rampur and the growing number of tourists visiting Kinnaur offer chances for weavers to sell directly to buyers and keep a larger share of the price.

Producer groups seeking new GIs need help with the application process. A GI facilitation cell at the state level could assist with documentation, help applicants reply to examination reports and follow the pending applications in Table 2 through to registration. Producers should also be made aware of the IP India e-filing and public search facilities, which allow applications to be filed and tracked online.

Lastly, the effects of climate change on the craft should be watched over the long term. Changes in snowfall, temperature and pasture condition need to be monitored for their effect on herd movements and wool supply, and pastoral livelihoods in Kinnaur should be covered in the state's climate adaptation plans. Continued research on what GIs in Himachal Pradesh achieve after registration would show which of these measures work.

5. CONCLUSION

The spread of GI protection in Himachal Pradesh shows that government and producers increasingly recognise how geography, environment and history shape regional products. The wide range of altitude and climate within the state has produced goods as different as Kangra Tea, the Chamba Rumal, the Kullu Shawl and Himachali Kala Zeera, each tied to its own setting. The steady increase in registrations suggests that producers, government agencies and civil

society now see real economic and cultural value in protecting such place-based products.

The Kinnauri Shawl shows this trend especially clearly. It is made in a high and remote district, from the wool of locally reared animals, with geometric designs drawn from Buddhist and Hindu symbolism and weaving skills passed down within families. Its GI registration, gave it legal protection against copying, introduced quality standards and made it easier for buyers to recognise a handwoven Kinnauri Shawl and tell it apart from machine-made copies. These protections support the incomes of local weavers and artisan groups.

This analysis also shows that the shawl is tied to Kinnaur by environment as much as by culture. Long winters, high pastures and the dry rain-shadow climate decided what wool the shawl is made from, when it is woven and why it is worn. This strengthens the geographical case for the GI. At the same time, it is a source of risk, because shifts in temperature and snowfall could unsettle the herding system on which the craft rests.

More generally, the case of Himachal Pradesh, and of Kinnaur in particular, suggests that GIs can help protect intangible heritage and indigenous knowledge while supporting rural livelihoods in remote mountain regions. Further research is needed on what happens after registration, on how GIs affect the incomes and lives of producers, and on which other products from the state could qualify for protection.

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