

Geographical Indication (Gi) as a Means of Protecting Traditional Right of Muga Silk (*Antheria Assamensis*) of Assam-India

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Abstract : 'Geographical indication' is a sign which is used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. Geographical Indication is primarily granted to agricultural, natural, manufactured, handicrafts originating from a definite geographical territory. It is defined in Article 22(1) of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) 1995 Agreement on 'Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)'. Assam is literally a 'Silk country' where silk culture is rooted in the rural life and culture of Assamese people. This is the only state in India and the world where Muga silk (*Antheraea assamensis*) is grown. Out of the total production of India's Muga silk, Assam has the credit of being the sole producer of this 100 percent output, and thus occupies a unique position in the sericulture map of the world. Muga production has been an effective means for generating gainful employment in rural Assam and it has enormous potential in the context of building the rural economy and generating livelihood of this region. Muga, the unique golden-yellow silk of Assam was granted the 'Geographical Indication (GI)' registration in 2007. It is the first item from the state of Assam to obtain the GI tag. Besides manufacturing of Muga Silk cloths, the industry is also giving employment to thousands of people, and the silk industry is playing a leading role in the economy of the state. As Brahmaputra Valley is also known for tourist destination, tourists are visiting the valley every year and now the Muga Silk has reached each corner of the country and also in the other parts of the world. This paper tries to emphasize how the Geographical Indication tag is protecting the traditional right of the Muga Silk of Assam as it has been practised by the Assamese people since times immemorial.

Keywords : Geographical Indication, environment, Muga silk, traditional right and livelihood

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