# Assam's Handloom

*Every Thread Woven with Heritage, Skill and Pride*

RIPA

# *Art, Artist and Assam*

Assam Handlooms represent a rich and living tradition rooted in the cultural identity of Assam. Handloom weaving in the state is largely a household activity, traditionally practiced by women, where skills are passed down through generations. More than a means of livelihood, handloom is closely tied to everyday life, rituals, and festivals, reflecting the region's deep respect for craftsmanship and self-reliance.

# *History of Handlooms in Assam*

The history of Assam's handloom is deeply woven into the cultural life of Assam, dating back to ancient times. References to Assamese textiles appear in early Sanskrit texts and in accounts of travelers like Hiuen Tsang, who praised the region's fine silk fabrics. Weaving in Assam traditionally took place within households, where women played a central role, passing skills from one generation to the next.

During the Ahom dynasty, royal patronage helped the handloom tradition flourish, with fine fabrics used in court attire and ceremonial gifts. Despite challenges during colonial rule and industrialization, Assam's handloom survived through community resilience. Today, it stands as a living heritage, blending tradition with contemporary design, representing the skill, pride, and cultural continuity of the Assamese people.

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# *What Makes Assam's Handloom Tradition Unique*

- Major role of Women
- Part of Every Assamese Household
- Cultural-social embedding
- Close relationship with nature

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# GI Treasures of Assam's Handloom Heritage

## Gamosa of Assam

The Gamosa is the most iconic textile of Assam, symbolizing respect, pride, and cultural identity. Traditionally handwoven in white cotton with distinctive red motifs, it is offered during ceremonies, worn in festivals, and presented to guests as a mark of honor. More than just a cloth, the Gamosa reflects Assamese values of hospitality and dignity.

## Eri Silk

Eri silk, also known as Ahimsa silk, is one of Assam's most sustainable and ethical handloom fabrics. The silkworm completes its life cycle before the silk is processed, making it cruelty-free. Eri silk is soft, warm, breathable, and perfect for shawls, stoles, and garments worn throughout the year. It plays an important role in supporting rural livelihoods, especially women weavers.

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# GI Treasures of Assam's Handloom Heritage

## Muga Silk

Muga silk is Assam’s golden treasure and the only silk in the world with a natural golden shine. Produced from silkworms native to the Brahmaputra Valley, it is known for its strength, durability, and luxurious glow that deepens with time. Muga silk is traditionally worn in royal and ceremonial garments like mekhela chadors and sarees.

## Bodo Aronoi

Bodo Aronai is a traditional handwoven scarf made by the Bodo community of Assam. It is typically woven in white, red, and black colors, featuring bold geometric motifs that reflect Bodo identity, strength, and harmony with nature. Aronai is offered during ceremonies, festivals, and important social occasions, making it a symbol of respect and pride.

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# GI Treasures of Assam's Handloom Heritage

## Assam Mising Handloom Products

Ribi Gaseng

Mising handloom products are woven by the Mising tribal community of Assam using traditional back-strap looms. These textiles include garments, shawls, and decorative fabrics known for their bold colors, stripes, and geometric patterns.

Gero

Key Mising Handloom Products:

**Ribi Gaseng:** A brightly colored wrap worn by women, believed to ward off evil spirits, used during rituals.
**Gero:** A traditional woven piece, often featuring striking patterns.
**Latum:** A rough, durable fabric used as a towel.
**Shawls & Blankets:** Known for their warmth, intricate designs, and use of indigenous materials.
**Scarves & Stoles:** Versatile accessories showcasing Mising artistry.

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# *Protection & Preservation: GI Recognition and What It Means*

As traditional crafts face the forces of modernization, mass production, and changing lifestyles, preserving them, both culturally and economically, becomes challenging. That is where legal and institutional mechanisms play a crucial role.

One such mechanism is the Geographical Indication (GI) Tag. A GI tag signifies that a product originates from a specific region and possesses qualities, reputation or characteristics essentially attributable to that origin.

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*Assam has a long list of GI crafts and products, and among them are many of the crafts showcased above. As of 2025, there are over 30 registered GI-tag products from Assam, covering handicrafts, handlooms, agricultural products, and more.*

GI recognition offers multiple benefits:

- Authenticity guarantee: It certifies that the craft genuinely originates from Assam, using traditional methods.
- Legal protection: It helps prevent unauthorized or mass-produced imitations that can undercut genuine artisans.
- Market value and visibility: GI-tagged products often command premium in domestic and international markets, attracting buyers who value heritage and quality.
- Empowerment of artisan communities: By safeguarding their traditional knowledge and craft identity, GI helps ensure artisans benefit economically and socially from their heritage.

Yet the challenge remains: modernisation, changing consumer tastes, urban migration, loss of traditional knowledge, these pose threats. Continued support, awareness, and responsible promotion are crucial to ensure these crafts survive and thrive for future generations.

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## *About RIPA*

RIPA (Reinforce Intellectual Property Association) is a dedicated not-for-profit organization focused on the promotion and advancement of indigenous Intellectual Property (IP) in India, with outreach that extends to the international stage.

Our mission centers on addressing both current and future needs for the growth and development of indigenous IP, actively supporting the country's unique innovation landscape through local research and development initiatives. RIPA's commitment to the IP community spans every stage of the IP lifecycle—from idea generation to the successful commercialization of inventions.

## *Join Us*

## *To supports indigenous crafts across the country.*

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