

## Khadi: A Sustainable Fabric

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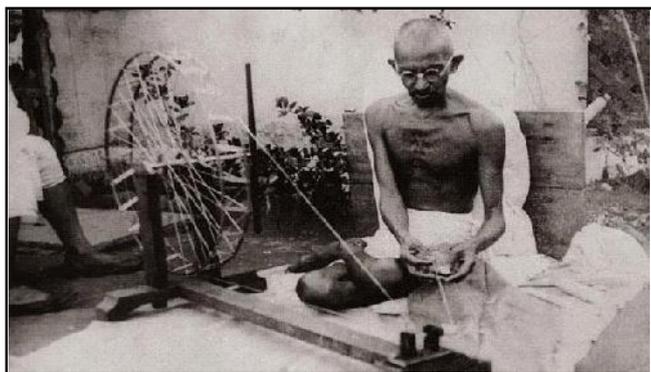
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### INTRODUCTION

#### Khadi :

A fabric which recognizes as need to protect Indian heritage and transmit it to future generation. It also embodies a world view of the past, present as well as of the future. Khadi is a symbolized as Indian textile heritage. It is alive fabric because it is manufactured by human energy, which transfer from body to fabric. It's whole process (spinning and weaving) is done by hand. In today's era hand spinning and weaving has become such a rare thing, but some designers are working with khadi.



**Fig. 1 :** M.K.Gandhi with his spinning wheel. Source: (<https://faridabadblog.wordpress.com/2015/10/01/gandhijis-dream-of-a-sustainable-city/>)

'Khadi' the word itself is derived from 'Khaddar' a term of hand spun fabric. It is manufactured into two steps: manufacturing of yarn using 'Charkha' (A spinning wheel) and manufacturing of fabric by yarn using loom (hand loom). It is a versatile fabric, cool in summer and

warm in winter. In order to improve the look, Khadi/khaddar is sometimes starched to give it a stiffer feel.

The first true Indian designer was Mahatma Gandhi when he urged the people of India to wear khadi garments. It was not only a call to create self reliance but a call to wear something that could prove the unity of our country. Khadi was given a more important status by Gandhi after his return from South Africa. While in search of the charkha Gandhi felt that for a nation to turn self-reliant, it had to return to indigenous manufactured goods. Therefore khadi became not only a symbol of revolution and resistance but part of an Indian identity.

At this time Khadi is the right solution about eco-friendly stuffs. Khadi is a solution to development issues where employment generation, capacity building, sustainability and resource- efficiency are the requirements. It is also an answer to a spiritual and sustainable way of life.

#### Khadi : As Eco friendly fabric :



**Fig. 2 :** Cotton Plants. Source:(<https://ethicallysustained.wordpress.com/2013/05/07/better-cotton-initiative/>)

Briefly speaking khadi is manufactured in steps:

1. **Farming** : Cotton Balls are picked from the Farms
2. **Cleaning** : Separation of the fibers from the cotton seeds is done using sharp com like objects oftenly known as Fish Jaws.
3. **Carding** : Through a process called 'Carding' the final traces of trash from fibers are removed completely and the carded material is collected as 'Silvers'.
4. **Spinning** : The Silvers are then spun into yarn on a spinning wheel 'Charkha' where they are thinned out and twisted at the same time to strengthen it.
5. **Reeling**: The spun yarns are then wound into reels making it easy to transport to the weavers.
6. **Weaving**: The reels are then hand woven into fabrics by skilled artisans As there is no nature harming process involved in making of Khadi it is a Sustainable Fabric.
7. **Dyeing** : The fabric is dyed with organic vegetables without the use of chemicals to keep the process natural and pollution free.
8. The finish fabric is now ready to be sold by registered Khadi Distributors.

India has some unique contributions to make towards the global effort to achieve the sustainable development goals. Khadi, or khaddar, is a hand-spun and hand-woven fabric that played an important role in India's struggle for freedom. It is a fabric that causes close to zero damage to the environment. Khadi is the most sustainable and eco friendly fiber which does not use any electrical support. It is the only textile activity which does not utilize fossil fuel .Production of one meter khadi fabric consumes three litres of water while a conventional textile mill would need fifty five liters.

The production of khadi does not generate any toxic waste products. It is produced by avoiding all chemicals in the process of farming of cotton, weaving and dyeing.

#### **Khadi in fashion :**

By the early 90s, khadi was started to be a fashion statement. In 1989, KVIC had organised the first khadi fashion show in Bombay, where over 80 styles of khadi were showcased. In 1990, the brilliant designer-entrepreneur Ritu Beri presented her first khadi collection at the prestigious Tree of Life show held at Delhi's craft museum, catapulting the fabric into the big league. Now

an advisor to KVIC, Beri is working to take khadi to the global arena.

In 2004 Bess Nielsen founded Khadi & Co, the Danish designer wished to convey the true spirit of khadi, and promote the remarkable skills of Indian weavers. Khadi stands for what's traditional, but every tradition has to undergo change to stay relevant. Khadi has seen a new wave of acceptance thanks to many fashion designers like Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Ritu Kumar and Rohit Bal, to name a few. Brands like Fab- India and Nature Alley have made their name with khadi products.

#### **Employment in Khadi sector :**

Khadi is sustainable not only because it doesn't harm the environment, but also it provides employment. Data recently provided by the ministry of micro, small and medium enterprises to the Lok Sabha shows that the number of people employed in the khadi sector approx 4.6 lakhs in 2016-17. Khadi has its potential as a tool to being self-reliant, independent and bringing village back to life. Mr. Alok Vardhan Chaturvedi, DGFT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry said that Khadi sector employs 80 lakh people and government assistance and promotions can provide once-in-a-while push, but the long-term sustainability requires inherent demand. He added that there is huge opportunity for Indian fashion industry in textile sector, both in domestic and international market, and Khadi needs to create demand.

#### **Versatility of Khadi :**

Local to Global' organized by FICCI, jointly with IIFT and khadi India, Mr. Prabhu said that the government aims to promote Khadi as a global fabric, and therefore, new designs, styles, promotion and adoption of Khadi are essential.

#### **Economic growth :**

District level development is key, which in turn will promote the economic growth. It was mentioned that 6 districts in 5 states have been identified and taken up as pilot project, adding, "imagine if all districts start growing at 3% more than normal, India's GDP will be more than 3% of what it is today. Khadi has the capacity to provide employment at a very low cost, adding that it is also an environment-friendly fabric. "Khadi is not a commercial tool. The objective of KVIC is to create employment through promoting khadi."

**Emerging Fashion trends in Khadi :**

Today, Khadi is not confined to dull colours. The fabric is available in bright colours, soft textures and is seen as classy. It is remarkable that Khadi keeps bouncing back and makes a grand entry time and again in the fashion world. Khadi has started getting its due, not only in India, but also from around the globe. The designers are keener than ever to use Khadi in their ensemble and the fabric has won applause for its comfort from the wearers. Leading designers in India, who are working internationally, and modern retail chains have given the traditional hand-spun fabric a modern and contemporary look. Khadi has also made an entry in Paris, New York etc. Danish textile designer Bess Nielsen has named his store in Paris after it. Khadi has been used in the Star Wars films. There are exclusive Khadi stores in Dubai. Khadi has been in the limelight for all the right reasons.

**Potential for exports :**

The Government is considering in agreements with various countries to promote Khadi overseas and plans to hold exhibitions abroad to showcase the indigenous fabric. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) under the MSME Ministry is also in talks with industry associations abroad to open franchise outlets, where Khadi products sourced from different parts of India would be on sale. Moreover, the government, through the KVIC, is also looking to facilitate the signing of MoUs (Memorandum of Understanding) between Indian exporters and overseas importers to boost the outward shipments of Khadi garments.

**Conclusion:**

*Khadi is more over than a fabric, it is a spirit.* Even Gandhi said “ If we have the khadi spirit in us, we would surround ourselves with simplicity in every walk of life.” The khadi spirit means infinite patience. For those who know anything about the production of khadi know how patiently the spinners and the weavers have to toil at their trade, and even so must we have patient while we are spinning the thread of Swaraj. The “khadi

spirit” means fellow-feeling with every human being on earth .It means a complete renunciation of everything that is likely to harm our fellow creatures and to cultivate that spirit amongst millions of our countrymen .Khadi should be more than a fabric ;it should be a way of life and symbol of going back to basics.

Khadi plays an important role in sustainable development. It is the most natural, organic fabric. Ideal for Indian weather conditions, it keeps the wearer cool in summers and warm in winters. As India stepped into the, 21<sup>st</sup> century, a new breed of Indian designer began experimenting with this versatile fabric, ensuring that khadi remained in vogue. While the eco friendly fabric was already known for its rugged texture and comfortable feel. Its new age reinterpretation as a modern yet quintessentially Indian textile has made it very appealing to millennial generation.

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