

# Khadi: The Pride of India

Source: Textile Review

## **Khadi: The Pride of India**

**By: Shaleni Bajpai & Manisha Gahlot**

### **Future of Global Indian Fashion**

#### **Source: Textile Review**

*Gandhi wrote that Swaraj (self-rule) without swadeshi (country made goods) is a lifeless corpse and if Swadeshi is the soul of Swaraj, khadi is the spirit of swadeshi. Therefore khadi became not only a symbol of revolution and resistance but part of an Indian identity. Khadi has always been a fabric with attitude. It has now become a fashion statement. Its journey from its eventful birth as the fabric favoured by revolutionaries, to designer boutiques and elite consciousness. The handspun cotton, known as Khadi is of special significance to Indians. Gandhi elevated the brittle thread of cotton to a symbol of strength and self-sufficiency, and to provide employment for the millions during India's freedom struggle, and that symbolism of wearing cloth made by human hands has continued till this day.*

*The handmade quality of the khadi fabric with inherent defects is its real beauty and that is what the buyer wants at times. It is not a poor man's fabric although it provides employment to the poor man. Today khadi has many faces which are not just restricted to cotton. Khadi is quite competitive now depending on the style of the garment. Now many Indian fashion designers believe that Khadi is India's answer to Egyptian cotton and linen. It falls well and becomes second skin after two washes. It breathes, it has a self-texture. It has been blended with denim, wool, polyester and silk with good results. There is a need to re-educate the people about khadi. Khadi is very relevant to our times. It is an eco-friendly, non-synthetic, healthy fabric that makes good dressing sense.*

The hand spun and the hand woven cloth in India is called Khadi. The raw materials may be cotton, silk, or wool, which are spun into threads on a spinning wheel called a charkha. Khadi or khaddar simply means cotton, usually handspun. Khadi is a traditional fabric from India that was popularized by Mahatma Ghandiji before the independence. It was only worn by rural people and political leaders, and its manufacture was quite limited. Today, the population demands more khadi than the manufacturers can supply due to its increasing popularity as a worthy addition to one's wardrobe. Khadi has been made with cotton, silk, and wool, making it more comfortable. One of the most surprising aspects of Khadi fabric is its ability to keep the wearer cool during the summer and at the same time keeping him or her warm during the winter. This fabric is also enhanced by washing, not worn out by it, but starch has to be added to avoid wrinkling easily. Khadi is also normally embellished with designs and handwork. Men and women alike are involved in weaving this fabric in a pattern that allows air ventilation. Earlier, Khadi was dyed with earth tones, but today, different colors and prints are available on the market. The khadi even comes with embroidery and block prints with geometric patterns and flowery designs.

Mahatma Gandhi began promoting the spinning of khadi for rural self-employment in 1920s India. He also wanted to spread the message of not using foreign clothes. The freedom struggle revolved around the use of khadi fabrics and the dumping of foreign-made clothes. It symbolized the political ideas and independence itself, and to this day most politicians in India are seen only in khadi clothing. The flag of India is only allowed to be made from this material, although in practice many flag manufacturers, especially those outside of India, ignore this rule.

One can not claim originality borrowing other things and depending on foreign ideas, so khadi is the natural choice. If people get trendy, they will prefer good quality khadi products. Khadi serves both purposes - of satisfying the demand of fashion as well as making people proud of wearing local product. Over the last two decades, khadi goods have come a long way both in terms of quality and design. The popularity of khadi is increasing and wearing of these dresses has become a fashion among the younger generation following its healthy dressing option. Following points briefly explains as to why khadi is the real fabric of India:

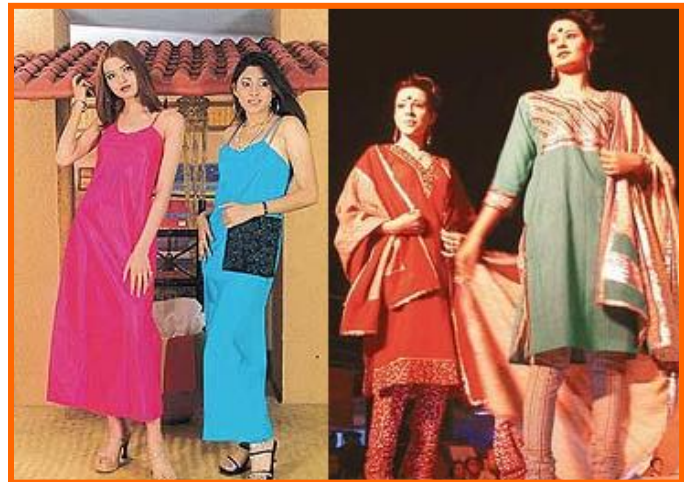
- Khadi the perfect answer to India's hot and humid summers but also provides adequate protection against winter chill.
- Its easy adaptability to a range of designs makes it agreeable to both formal and informal look.
- Khadi is our heritage, connected with our soil and lifestyle and it has lived on for hundreds of years across generations.



The range of khadi products is unlimited from garments to household linen to furnishings, Stores stack a range of dresses in khadi - jackets, skirts, kurtas, dupattas, sarees, cropped tops, capris, and trousers. The weaving of khadi is preceded by the spinning of the thread on the charkha after which it goes to the bobbin winder, warper, sizer and finally the weaver. Spinning is mostly done by the girls and women in the villages. The price of the khadi cloth when it reaches the shops is more than that of the mill or hand loom cloth.

#### **Kurta, Dupattas made from khadi**

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#### **New trend in designing of the Khadi fabric**

#### **Government Organization Engaged In Promotion of Khadi**

**Khadi Gramudyog Vikas Samiti:** It is a Government registered unit, functioning a great deal to enhance the traditional brilliance of art-craft in looms. They have been providing a channel to village artisans and fairly boosting the confidence level of the cottage industries. Their entire product range goes through a stringent flow of production process. They deal in total handmade collection of products. Their wide collection of textile

fabrics, upholstery fabrics, designer silk fabrics, cotton fabrics include - muslin, khadi, mul-mul, dosuti, lino, voiles and various other. Their vast collection of products includes - blankets, woollen (sweaters), blends, socks, uniform cloth, shirting, cloth pieces.

**Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC):** It works under the administrative control of the Ministry of Industry, Government of India under the Department of Small-Scale Industries and Agro and Rural Industries. The head quarters of KVIC is in Bombay and it has its state and regional offices in all the states.

**The Objectives of the KVIC:** The broad objectives for which the KVIC was established are:

- To promote and develop Khadi and Village Industries and produce Khadi and Village Industries products.
- The Social objective of providing employment.
- The wider objective of creating self-reliance amongst the people and building up of a strong rural community spirit.
- To provide opportunity to the rural population to undertake creative and productive activities which generates self employment and income.

**The Functions of KVIC :** The functions of the Commission is generally to plan, promote, organize and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural area in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary. Main functions of KVIC are:

- To plan and organize training of persons employed or desirous of seeking employment in khadi and village industries.
- To build up reserves of raw material and implements and supply them to persons engaged or likely to be engaged in the production of handspun yarn or khadi or village industries at such rates as the commission may decide.
- To encourage and assist in the creation of common service facilities for the processing of raw material or semi-finished goods and for otherwise facilitating production and marketing of khadi or products of village industries.

## **Organic Khadi**

Organic Khadi is totally devoid of any synthetic chemicals, fertilizers or insecticides, usually used while growing cotton. People have started realizing the medicinal values of wearing organic khadi. It is said to help fight skin infection and high blood pressure. This is why foreigners prefer such textiles as such a fabric is harmless to their skin.

Organic khadi is totally environment friendly. The problem with the production of organic khadi clothes is that the raw material is available only in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. This is because the majority of farmers are still unaware of the concept. Though the market for organic khadi is not too huge, it is expanding at a fast pace. The time is not far away, when majority of people will be wearing clothes/dresses made of the environment friendly fabric.

## **Khadi: Making Inroads in Global Fashion**

The first true Indian designer was Mahatma Gandhi when he urged the people of India to wear khadi garments. Khadi over the decades has moved from a freedom fighter's identity

fabric to a fashion garment. At one time it was scorned as fabric for the farmer and the rural wearer. Today there is such an increasing demand for cloth that despite the million workers all over the country involved in spinning it, they are unable to meet the demands of the market. Leading designers like Rohit Bal, Jatin Kochchar, Malini Ramani, and Bhavna Thareja and up market clothes brands like Fabindia and Anokhi have given to the traditional handspun fabric a modern and contemporary look. In 1990 designer Ritu Kumar of Delhi presented her first Khadi collection at the Crafts Museum. Eight collections were presented of which khadi was a very significant one. Once the sign of freedom, Khadi today holds it own on the fashion scene.



**Fashion show on khadi**

Fashion designers are confident that khadi has a huge potential. From masses to the elite, khadi is making a place for itself in wardrobes. The cost that ranges from Rs 30 a metre to Rs. 1000 a metre makes it really accessible and one of the most comfortable, convenient as well as stylish fabrics. The marketability of khadi will only increase once people start wearing khadi because then

they become addicted to it and it requires great efforts on part of the Indian designers to popularize khadi among masses.

## **Conclusion**

The fabric is considered to be one of India's finest, and it serves well as a symbol of national identity. khadi hand-spun is the rock layer fabric of India. The father of the nation turned coarse, hand-spun khadi into an icon of Indian identity, in his clarion call to embrace the swadeshi, Gandhi urged Indians to wear khadi, not only to promote self-reliance, but also to wrap them in a unique fabric of unity. Khadi is uniquely Indian and is affordable. It's a good forecast that people now have taken to wearing khadi, be it for pride or for fashion. They want to break the myth that Khadi is out of fashion. The main aim is to motivate the youth to wear Khadi and for this innovation are required on designers part. Khadi kurta may be designed in a new looks to be worn with jeans as fashion statement among youth. This fabric can bring in a positive revolution in the country and can also bridge the disparity in society.

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