

Khadi in Popular Culture: From Swadeshi to Self Reliant India

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Even after 70 years of independence, India is still facing problems like poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. These issues were there in colonial India also. Gandhi knew the real cause of the miseries of Indian masses and also the way to get out of these problems. Khadi became a symbol of independence, self sufficiency and self respect during British colonial rule for Indian masses. Gandhi saw it not only as a source of livelihood for Millions of rural poor but also as a way to make India a self dependent economy. It became a symbol of national pride and Swadeshi during our freedom struggle movement.

In his own words, "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 patience while we are spinning the thread of Swaraj", Gandhi says in a famous quote.

The present paper wishes to explore the present opportunities and future possibilities if people adopt Khadi as a source of livelihood. What type of policy should be adopted by the Government to encourage the spread of Khadi among common people in India?

Khadi or khaddar is Handspun, Hand-woven natural fiber cloth, mainly made out of cotton. The cloth is usually woven from cotton but it may also include silk or wool, which are all spun into yarn on a spinning wheel called a charkha. It is an environment friendly and comfortable fabric, cool in summer and warm in winter. In order to improve the look, khādī/khaddar is sometimes starched to give it a stiffer feel. It is widely recognized in fashion circles. Khadi is being promoted in India by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Khadi started its journey by becoming Freedom fabric of India but now it has become a part of fashion Statement.

Khadi has a long history of being a popular fabric in India. It is reported by Greek historians that soldiers of Alexander started wearing cotton clothes that were far more comfortable in the heat than their traditional woolens. Nearchus, Alexander's admiral, recorded that "the cloth worn by Indians is made by cotton grown on trees". A few 5th century paintings in the Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra depict the process of separating cotton fibers from seeds (called ginning) as well as women spinning cotton yarn! (Sanchari pal) Kautalya's arthshastra also mentions the post of sutradhyaksha (superintendent of yarns) who used to get the clothes woven from artisans. The trade routes established by Alexander and his successors took Khadi to various parts of Asia and also to Europe. (Sanchari pal 2017)

By medieval era, Hand-woven Indian muslin was in great demand across the world for its fine translucent quality – every yarn of muslin has a thickness that is 1/10th of a strand of hair.

(Sanchari pal 2017)

When British rule started in India in 1757, the first thing they do was to destroy cotton and silk textile industry in Bengal and they made India a market for their machine woven clothes. (Shekhar Bandhopadhyay 2009) The British Raj was selling very high cost cloths to the Indians. The Indian Mill owners wanted to monopolies the Indian market themselves. The American Civil War caused a shortage of American cotton; Britain started buying cotton from India at cheap prices and uses the cotton to manufacture cloth. This tendency resulted in drain of wealth from India to England at a large scale. The Khadi Movement by Gandhi aimed at boycotting foreign cloth. Gandhi knew it very well that by manufacturing Khadi cloth in India; we may stop the drain of wealth from India to Britain to a large extent. Mahatma Gandhi began promoting the spinning of Khadi for rural self-employment and self-reliance (instead of using cloth manufactured industrially in Britain) in the 1920s in India, thus making Khadi an integral part and an icon of the Swadeshi Movement. (Cosgrove Ben)

In 1925, in the aftermath of the Non-Cooperation Movement, All India Spinners Association was established with the aim of promoting Khadi. For next two decades, the organization worked tirelessly to improve Khadi production techniques and provide employment to India's impoverished weavers. (Sanchari pal 2017)

Khadi was not just a cloth for Gandhi. It was something more than that. In his own words, "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 patience while we are spinning the thread of Swaraj", Gandhi says in a famous quote. During the British rule, India was facing problems like poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. Gandhi knew the real cause of the miseries of Indian masses and also the way to get out of these problems. Khadi became a symbol of independence, self sufficiency and self respect during British colonial rule for Indian masses. Gandhi saw it not only as a source of livelihood for Millions of rural poor but also as a way to make India a self dependent economy. By introducing Khadi, Gandhi wanted to make Indian villages a self sufficient in themselves as they were before the advent of the British. Thus, it was Gandhi and his Swadeshi Movement which popularized Khadi during the British period.

Promotion of Khadi after independence

After Independence, Indian Government took steps to promote Khadi. It established the All India Khadi and Village Industries Board which later became the Khadi, Village and Industries Commission (KVIC) in 1957. From its very beginning, KVIC has been carrying out the development of

Khadi industry in India. It works towards promoting research in production techniques, supplying raw material and tools to producers, quality control and marketing of Khadi products. (Sanchari pal 2017)

KVIC has been given Deemed Export Promotion Council status since December 2006. Khadi and Village Industries (KVI) Institutions are registered as its members. However, most of the exports are through merchant exporters and not directly by KVI units. 5% of the free On board (FOB) value or Rs.10 lakh, whichever is less, is provided as incentive for KVI units which undertake Direct Exports. In addition, KVIC encourages Khadi, Village Industries to participate in International Trade Fair/ Exhibitions through providing subsidy of 75% of the Air fare and 50% of stall rent to augment export of their products in general subject to maximum limit of Rs.1.25 lakh each. In case of Women entrepreneurs & institutions/ST/SC/NE States, air fare and stall rent extended to the extent of 100% subject to maximum limit of Rs.1.25 lakh for each (Ministry). due to the efforts of KVIC, the employment in Khadi sector is continuously growing. The following table shows this trend---

The State/UT wise details of 11.27 lakh workers are given as follows:

**Number of Khadi workers State/UTwise
(Figures in Lakhs)**

Sl. No.	State	No. of workers
1	Jammu & Kashmir	0.25
2	Himachal Pradesh	0.08
3	Punjab	0.45
4	UT Chandigarh	0
5	Haryana	0.52
6	Delhi	0.04
7	Rajasthan	0.86
8	Uttarakhand	0.41
9	Uttar Pradesh	4.17
10	Chhattisgarh	0.08
11	Madhya Pradesh	0.07
12	North-East (Assam-15956; Arunachal-87; Nagaland-2051; Manipur-370; Mizoram-0; Tripura-445; Meghalaya-91)	0.19
13	Bihar	1.1
14	West Bengal	1.06
15	Jharkhand	0.04
16	Odisha	0.04
17	Gujarat	0.4
18	Maharashtra	0.03
19	Goa	0
20	Andhra Pradesh / Telangana	0.33
21	Karnataka	0.41
22	Kerala	0.19
23	Tamil Nadu	0.55

24	Pondicherry	0
	Grand Total	11.27

Source: Ministry of Medium Small and Micro Enterprises

In 2017, a total of 460,000 people were employed in industries making Khadi products. [13] Production and sales rose by 31.6% and 33% in 2017 over the 2016 figures after the multi-spindle charkas were introduced to enhance the productivity by replacing the single-spindle charkas.[13] Various States have boards and/or cooperative societies for the Khadi production, promotion, sales and marketing, such as Haryana Khadi and Village Industries Board, Andhra Pradesh State Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society, Gujarat State Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd, Jharkhand Silk Textile and Handicraft Development Corporation and Tamil Nadu Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Society. Additionally, several institutes are involved in the research and training in this area, such as Indian Institute of Handloom Technology, Indian Institute of Handloom Technology, Champa and Institute of Handloom and Textile Technology. Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation of India is focused on popularizing Khadi overseas. NGOs involved in Khadi are Rehwa Society. (Ministry of MSME 2016)

Khadi had started becoming a fashion Statement since early 1990s. In 1989, KVIC had organized the first Khadi fashion show in Bombay, where over 80 styles of Khadi wear 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. Beri is now a days working to take Khadi to the global arena. (Sanchari pal 2017)

The relevance of Khadi lies in its simplicity and environment friendliness. The stores all over the world prefer simple designs so that they may be understood by relevance audiences. Today, Khadi is available not only in coarse fiber or rugged texture, but also in bright colours and soft textures. (Fiber 2 fashion .com)

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. Designer Christina Kim's haute label Dosa, in Los Angeles, the U.S.A. stocks it. There are exclusive Khadi stores in Dubai. Khadi has been in the limelight for all the right reasons. Vouching for this fact is a US-based fashion designer, who has started a fashion house in Jaipur, for exclusively catering to the rising demand for organic Khadi outfits. The fashion house has a wide range of clothes, all of which have been made from the organic fabric. As per the designer, people everywhere have started realizing the medicinal values of wearing organic Khadi. (Fiber 2 fashion .com)

Popular products being Khadi cloth for tailoring various dresses such as dhoti and kurta, Handloom sari such as Puttapaka Sari, Kotpad Handloom fabrics, Chamba Rumal, Tussar silk, etc. Gajam Anjaiah, an Indian master Handloom designer and recipient of Padma Shri honor, is known for his innovations and developments of tie-dye Handloom products along with Talia Rumal technique of weaving products based on Ikat process.[fiber 2 fashion .com)

After Independence, the Government reserved some types of textile production, e.g. towel manufacture for the Handloom sector, which resulted in a deskilling of traditional weavers and

a boost for the power Loom sector. Private Sector enterprises have been able to make Handloom weaving somewhat remunerative and the Government also continues to promote the use of Khadi through various measures.

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, asserted that Khadi cloth is a Movement to help the poor. [17] He further highlighted that the Khadi and Village Industries Commission is a statutory organization engaged in promoting and developing Khadi and village industries. [17] He lauded that Gujarat and Rajasthan are well known for Khadi poly, while Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir are known for the woolen Khadi. [Modi 2017]

Present challenges in the spread of Khadi

In spite of so many incentives by the State and so many efforts by the best designers in the world, Khadi has neither given employment to a lot of people nor it has reached to the common man of this country. In other words, despite so much rhetoric about Gandhian philosophy about Khadi or its organic and environmental friendly nature, Khadi has not become a part of popular culture in India.

Khadi workers are normal people and Khadi is manufactured under Government control. Unlike a private enterprise which is interested in making profit and gets a substantial share of market, Khadi industry is run in order to employ more and more people. The private company invests a lot of capital and introduces mechanization in order to boost production for making the cost less. This is not the case with a Government establishment. Government establishment sells Khadi products at a no profit no loss value. It is not interested in selling at a cheap price so that it could get a substantial share in market in a long run. Besides this, most of Government establishments are already running fiscal deficit due to their inefficiency in different spheres. (Arun Shankar 2014)

Khadi gramodyog or its top administrative members are not financial planners with definite goals to reach; they are just keeping the traditional spinning and weaving alive, and providing a source of income to those who do it. The other products that have come in, from them, is just a sort of 'image maintenance' or globalization we can say, that they have other 'new' products of this era, and are modernized too. Thus, there is clear lack of enterprise in this sector. (Arun Shankar 2014)

Khadi production is labour intensive and not capital intensive. The labour intensive production is more costly than capital intensive production when anything is manufactured in bulk. Since the cost of production is high so the selling price is also high. Same is the case with other Khadi products like soap, face wash and hair oil. (Arun Shankar 2014)

Khadi and Village Industries Commission show an increase in employment and sales. But, designer devieka bhojwani rejects Government's claim. According to her, Khadi sell has dwindled over the last few years. The reason for this decrease in production is the shrinking of demand. Not many people buy Khadi as it is becoming expensive. When the weaver find those hours of spinning does not give them much, they leave weaving and shift move to other occupations. As the production goes down prices automatically shoot up. In other words, we do not buy enough Khadi to give back enough employment. (Amita-amin-shinde 2009)

According to designer ritu kumar, the high maintenance cost of Khadi makes it less popular. "Earlier we didn't have mill-made fibers in India; Khadi was the only fabric available then. Then synthetic fabrics started being made. And you could buy a sari for Rs 200 and wash and use it for the next 10 years without much ado. A Khadi sari with border would cost Rs 400. Khadi doesn't drape well and you have to mostly dry clean it; those who could not afford that opted for synthetic materials," says the designer. She agrees that Khadi has a rustic appeal but says that the regular woman prefers synthetics because they are non-fuss fabrics. (Amita-amin-shinde 2009)

Designer Natasha tawadey blames middleman for making Khadi expensive. "Between the weaver and the retailer and buyer, there is a middleman who makes the whole cash. It is difficult to break the middleman's strong hold." The weavers are mostly uneducated and do not have good access to retailers in cities. At the same time, the impression that Khadi is not very fashionable also eats into its market value. (Amita-amin-shinde 2009)

Politicians all over the country use Khadi at public meetings for showing their love for Nationalism and simplicity. But, the Khadi which they use so quite costly and it is out of reach of a common man. The cloth worn by our politicians costs more than 1500 Rs. Per meter, more than the income of a middle class person. So what kind of Khadi attracts our favorite netas? "Silk Khadi is hot favorite. Available in various types like munga, tussar, matka and katia, it has definitely charmed politicians," says Ramesh, a Khadi seller near Kotwali. (Nidhi Sharma sahani 2012)

Workers of this industry are openly rebelling for being meted out step-motherly treatment by the Government. Several organizations involved in the production and marketing of Khadi ell edge that KVIC has not paid the 20% rebate on the production value of Khadi to several Khadi institutions for two years in a row. For Gujarat, the unpaid rebate amounts to Rs 40 crores, while it is Rs 600 crores for India. (Bharat yagnik 2013)

"Of the 20% rebate we receive, 5% is given to the weaver, 6% is spent on the further development of the sangh and 9% is given as discount to consumers. How are we supposed to work without our dues?" said Manubhai Mehta, president, Gujarat Rajya Khadi Gramodyog Sangh. Mehta added that they were being ill-treated by KVIC. "We are being treated as bonded labour. Our requests to get unpaid dues have not produced any result. It is sad to note that this rebate that had started during Nehru's governance is not being given to us now," he said. (Bharat yagnik 2013)

Apart from labour dissatisfaction and unrest, there are a number of problems and issues related to Khadi manufacturing. When Gandhi launched Khadi as a mark of National pride and self sufficiency during British rule, it was not just a means of livelihood for millions of poor villagers but also a way to get self satisfaction through manual labour which Gandhi calls bred labour. Gandhi often talked about the pleasure which one may get by working with Hands which cannot be attained by use of machinery. But, there are several instances when machine woven cloth has been sold in the market in the name of Khadi. Gandhi wanted to eliminate automatic machines not because he was against technology, but because he was against exploitation. It is well known that factory production and modern civilization involves

concentration of wealth in a few Hands. They also create elimination for the workers which was not there when man used to work with his Hands by using simple technology.

There have been a lot of cases where large corporations have tried to take control of iconic Indian items such as Basmati rice, neem or turmeric etc. same is true in some cases about Khadi also. On October 7, 1938, Mahatma Gandhi issued a Statement deploring how "cloth is sold under the name of Khadi which has its warp made of mill-spun yarn. Pure Khadi is that Khadi which is Hand-woven out of Handspun yarn... Similarly, in November 1978, J P Kriplani launched a drive against polyester Khadi which was a sort of hybrid product in which Khadi was mixed with polyester. It took 35 years for the Government to formalize brand control of Khadi. In 2013 it issued a notification that any textile sold as Khadi had to have KVIC's 'Khadi Mark' certification. The immediate provocation seems to have been reports of power Loom cloth being sold as Khadi. (Vikram doctor 2017)

Apart from all these problems, there are some typical issues with the organizations like KVIC. KVIC is a statutory Government body set up by an Act of Parliament in 1956 to "plan, promote, facilitate, organize and assist" rural and village industries. But, just like other public sector organizations, it is an inefficient and loss making Public sector organization.

In 1961, the times of India reported, "all the support given to KVIC is not producing much return. "The third Plan has allotted Rs92 crores for the development of Khadi and village industries as against Rs82 crores in the second Plan. And in spite of large unsold stocks it has fixed the target of Khadi production at 160 million yards as against the present output of 74 million yards." Was all this money just being spun down a black hole?"

Further, it has been found that Khadi enjoys high subsidy of cotton yarn but its products are still sixty percent expensive than normal cloth. The standard response to this was that this included the cost of fair returns to manual spinners and weavers, but the report pointed out that KVIC supported less than 3 lakh people and, "what is worse, the wages are so low those Khadi spinners and weavers can hardly make both ends meet". But, KVIC did not accept the criticism as for them Khadi is something which cannot be sold and purchased for profit motive. (Vikram doctor 2017)

In May 1982, scholar amrita rangasami described KVIC in times of India as Happy-Go-Lucky-Body. "The body may go for expansion without worrying about marketing. As for the workers whom the protection was guaranteed, in nearly 10 years they had received a wage increase of just 35-50 paise — or 15 paise if they used an old model charkha. This meant annual wages of just Rs 66 in places such as Orissa." (Vikram doctor 2017)

Not only this, sometimes, the workers were paid in the form of worthless cloth they produced. They would have enjoyed better remuneration had they been paid in food grain. KVIC has developed several strategies over the years. The first is to evoke Gandhi's legacy of Khadi. Second is to raise rural employment. and the third is a periodic revamp of style. At least once every decade well-known designers are roped in to do a collection with KVIC-approved Khadi, leading to fashion journalists writing about Khadi being revived and made relevant again. The efforts of KVIC to sell Khadi in international markets have also not produced good results. (Vikram doctor 2017)

The stores of KVIC sell other village-made products like honey and cosmetics, but the quality and service is so poor that the stocks remain unsold. On the other hand, Unlike KVIC who is getting all kind of subsidies from the State but still running loss, there are companies like FabIndia and Patanjali who have expanded their market quickly and who are giving profit to village based small producers without any State support. (Vikram doctor 2017)

The ways to promote Khadi

Despite so many odds, Government of India is making all efforts to promote Khadi in a big manner.

B J P chief Amit Shah has written to all the ministries to identify the use of Khadi in their establishments. Earlier also, the Government has declared the use of Khadi in railways, aviation and tourism departments. The Public Procurement Policy for Micro and Small Enterprises makes it mandatory for central Government, State Government and public sector undertakings to procure a minimum of 20 per cent of their annual value of goods from Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). (Rohini singh 2016)

PM Modi has spoken about promotion of Khadi on several forums including his public address of "Man Ki Baat". In the programme of January 2016, he has announced setting up Khadi Gramodyog network in villages across the country. (Rohini Singh 2016)

The commission has handed over a list of products manufactured by various units of the commission. The list includes home furnishings, toilet goods, food products, paper products and garments. KVIC has 5,000 registered institutions and over 7,075 retail sale outlets across the country. The KVIC also provides employment to more than 130 lakh people. Promotion of Khadi has been done by Government's Make in India and Skill India campaigns. (Rohini singh 2016)

The economic times reports that The MSME Minister, Giriraj Singh has declared in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha that Government is promoting use of Khadi through its departments like railways, air India and tourism. Orders worth of 77.67 Crores were received from Indian railways in 2015-16 while those received from air India are worth of Rs. 8.9 Lakhs. Besides, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has increased its sale from Rs 33,135.90 crores in 2014-15 to Rs 41,125.97 crores in 2015-16 (provisional), registering a growth of around 24 per cent. (Giriraj Singh 2018)

For promotion of Khadi, we must keeping mind two basic facts. The Hand woven Khadi is bound to be expensive but it is not for mass but for class. There is a big market at the international level for such an expensive products. The elite class all over the world prefers Hand made products as a mark of social status rather than using a machine made product. It would be a win-win situation for the worker and the businessman if we could tap that market of elite customers the National and international level. Not only this, if we continue with Hand woven Khadi, it would be our sincere effort to continue Gandhian legacy.

Secondly, Khadi can also be manufactured with the help of machines for masses. It would not be a breach of Gandhian ideology and philosophy. Gandhi himself said that there cannot be any philosophy like Gandhism. He honestly admitted that his ideas are subject to review and change with the passage of

time and changing circumstances. The masses may prefer machine made cloth in the name of Khadi as it is less expensive than Handmade Khadi. So, for a common man machine made Khadi would be a better option. It would also provide employment to millions of people working in factories along with the Hand Loom workers. We must devise an enterprise strategy where Handmade Khadi would be manufactured for the elite people and machine made Khadi would be manufactured for the masses.

Drastic reforms are needed in the KVIC. Government must make sincere efforts to make it more efficient and productive. It should be prepared to compete in the market rather than to become a white elephant which only enjoys Government subsidy. It must learn lessons of high productivity from the companies like Patanjali and FabIndia.

Khadi manufacturing should be linked with Skill India programme. India is today the youngest Nation in the world. Millions of youths who are not so educated but who are in need of employment may be given training in Khadi manufacturing. Khadi can still provide employment to Lakhs of rural poor. If they are provided employment in their native land, there would be a decrease in the migration from rural to urban areas. If Khadi is manufactured in large quantity, its prices would go down and it would be available to a common man. Use of Khadi for making cloth would also encourage our farmers to grow cotton at a large scale which would increase their income in the long run.

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Besides all these measures, there can be some other ways for the promotion of Khadi.

It can be made popular by selling it on line and publicizing it on social media like face book and so on. It should be weared with pride not only on 15 August or 2nd October but also on other social occasions. We must encourage youngsters to Read, write and talk about Khadi. Buying and gifting Khadi may also be a solution. We should encourage people to wear Khadi as it is an organic and environment friendly fabric. It is most suitable cloth for a tropical climate like India. Economic sustainability can be achieved by Earning through Khadi and being a component in its value chain. (Rikhil nagpal 2017)

Conclusion

Khadi is not only a cloth but it is a symbol of National pride, self sufficiency and the Gandhian philosophy of simple living and high thinking. It is an organic and environment friendly material which will not harm the natural eco system. It shows the scientific knowledge of our ancestors who were wise enough to use a cloth which is cool in summer and warm in winter. It can be a big source of employment for Hand Loom workers, factory laborers and the entrepreneurs. We must devise a strategy to popularize Khadi and make Khadi a part of popular culture which would lead to a self reliant India.