



# Evolution of Khadi and the Growth of Khadi Industry in India

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## Abstract

Khadi fabric is indigenously Indian, adorning a significant position in the textile scenario of the nation. The Indian textile history showcases numerous instances of handspun and natural fibre fabrics dating back to the pre-independence eras. The Swadeshi movement, spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi prior to India's liberation from British rule, rekindled the significance of Khadi and elevated this humble fabric as a means to achieve autonomy by boycotting foreign goods and promoting self-reliance. However, its prominence faded after independence in spite of governmental efforts to revitalize the industry. Khadi returned to the limelight in the 1990s when designers increasingly began choosing this fabric, sparking its resurgence and modifications to cater to contemporary clientele. This study aims to analyze the progressive transformation of Khadi across time, delving into vital catalysts propelling the growth of this sector.

**Keywords:** Khadi, production, employment.

## INTRODUCTION

Khadi that also goes by the name of Khaddar constitutes a pivotal facet of India's textile sector. Khadi has its origins in the eastern expanse of the Indian sub-continent, especially Eastern India, North-eastern India and Bangladesh. Currently, the hand-woven fabric fashioned from natural fibres is widely used across India and Pakistan. Khadi is meticulously crafted handspun and hand-woven yarns of cotton, silk, wool of a fusion of these materials. Although rugged in consistency, the fabric is surprisingly comfortable to wear and is endowed with the dual aptitude to provide coolness in summers and warmth in winters. Khadi exemplifies artisanal self-texture that makes each fabric unique. Khadi's promotion in India is being headed by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission in conjunction with the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. The purpose of this study is to chronicle the evolution of Khadi across temporal dimensions and to identify significant determinants fueling its contemporary resurrection. This is a conceptual paper exclusively based on

review of literature. Extant literature select theses, research findings, scholarly publications and relevant journalistic contributions were evaluated to coalesce into a comprehensive conceptual framework.

## EVOLUTION OF KHADI

Antiquity of Khadi - Khadi fabric traces its origins to the ancient civilization at Mohenjo-Daro, as per historians who allude to the existence of hand-woven textiles resembling the characteristic texture of Khadi. The fabric enjoyed distinct recognition and popularity during the Mauryan era. References to Khadi are also present in Chanakya's 'Arthashastra' with details of proficient artists engaged in the production of cotton cloth, a vital role in the economy. The imagery of Khadi further manifests in the Ajanta Caves. Throughout ancient Indian history, mentions of Khadi and similar fabrics abound, confirming its stature as an indication of the evolution of India's prosperous textile heritage across centuries.

Khadi as a tool for independence - The Khadi movement, initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1918, transformed into a relief program for impoverished rural masses (What is Khadi, n.d.). This movement was designed to boycott foreign goods and instead embrace indigenous products. Hand-spinning and handloom weaving were elevated to iconic symbols of self-reliance and thereby self-governance. Gandhi envisioned Khadi as an effective means to end the dependence on machine-made foreign materials, thus imparting a profound lesson in independence. Khadi arose as a transformative tool for rural communities and became irrevocably entwined with India's struggle for freedom while simultaneously emerging as a source of pride for every Indian. In its earliest form, Khadi was notable for its simplicity with its predominantly plain white hue and coarse texture (Historical Development of Khadi, n.d.).

Decline of Khadi in the post-independence era – In the decades following independence, the government implemented steps to institutionalize the Khadi industry by launching the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) in 1957. Established through an Act of Parliament, this initiative aimed to empower poor rural populations with employment opportunities by fostering the production of marketable goods. Since its advent, KVIC has focused on providing raw materials, supporting research in production techniques, maintaining quality control of Khadi products and bolstering the marketing and sale of these products. Unfortunately, the image of Khadi underwent radical shifts during this period. It was associated with politicians and rampant corruption. (Historical Development of Khadi, n.d.). Notably, Khadi also failed to captivate fashion designers until the 1990s. But the situation took a turn for the better when fashion pioneers like Devika Bhojwani and Ritu Kumar showcased high-end Khadi collections, consequently bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary fashion.

Devika Bhojwani in association with the KVIC presented the first sophisticated Khadi fashion show in Mumbai in 1989. Ritu Kumar took the trend a step forward by presenting her first Khadi collection at the Crafts Museum in 1990 (Historical Development of Khadi, n.d.). More importantly, the production of Polyvastra received a boost with the aim to endow Khadi with features such as durability and crease retention. Polyvastra is identical to Khadi in its characteristics although it features both natural and man-made fibres. Khadi and Polyvastra have evolved as an effective means

to ensure sufficient income for artisans in rural areas, especially women.

Designer Khadi in current times – The turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century ushered in an exciting phase during which Khadi metamorphosed into a formidable fashion statement. A generation of emerging Indian designers enthusiastically forayed into experiments to rejuvenate this versatile fabric and present it as high-fashion apparel. Although contemporary Khadi products do not exactly cater to the masses owing to their high price tags and limited supply, Khadi products are steadily gaining traction among artists, celebrities, public figures and politicians. In recent years, the government has scaled up its efforts to promote Khadi as an Indian brand, resulting in Khadi going global and considerably contributing to the nation's economy.

Changing consumer behavior has also accelerated the demand for Khadi fabric. Today's customers tend to prioritize sustainable fashion choices and Khadi is a perfect choice. With its low carbon footprint, Khadi is an eco-friendly option in the global fashion landscape. The irresistible combination of Khadi with contemporary designs in sustainable ways aligns with the preferences of discerning consumers in the current age. The evolutionary trajectory of Khadi from an unassuming fabric associated with rural masses to a sought after material embraced by the affluent and privileged is illustrative of its enduring transformation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is established under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, 1956. It is a Statutory Organization under the aegis of the Ministry of MSME, engaged in promoting and developing Khadi and Village Industries for providing employment opportunities in the rural areas. KVIC has been identified as one of the major organizations in the decentralized sector for generating sustainable non-farm employment opportunities in rural areas at a low per capita investment. The aims of KVIC are providing employment in rural areas, producing saleable articles, and creating self-reliance amongst people and building up a strong rural community spirit.

Khadi and Village Industries activities are the key source of livelihood for rural and urban people who largely include Spinners, Weavers and other Artisans spread across the Country. The Ministry of (MSME) provides funds to KVIC for undertaking its various activities. In spite of the potential support by the central government as well as KVIC, the KVI sector has performing significantly in production and sales. The purpose of the study is to identify the recent performance of Khadi and Village Industrial Sector in terms of production, sales and employment generation. The problem is stated as Evolution of Khadi and the growth of Khadi Industry in India.

## Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study:-

1. To know the performance of Khadi and Village Industries Sector performance in terms of production and sales.
2. To know the employment generation by the Khadi and Village Industrial sector.

## Review of literature

**A. Imran et al., 2019** offers an insight into the burgeoning growth of the fashion and retail industry presents a promising landscape for potential opportunities. Employing over 300 million individuals worldwide and with a global market value of 1.3 trillion dollars (BOF & McKinsey, 2019), the fashion sector plays an integral role in the global economy, significantly contributing to the GDP (BCG, 2019). Remarkably, India is gaining a strong foothold within this industry due to its expanding middle class and robust manufacturing sector.

**Sumner, 2019**, proposed that sustainability is rapidly emerging as one of the vital concerns within the fashion industry. As one of the world's foremost pollution- contributing sectors, the predicted pollution statistics of the industry presents a grim picture. The fashion industry is expected to escalate its water consumption by 50 percent to 118 billion cubic metres (or 31.17 trillion gallons), its carbon footprints will touch 2791 million tons and it will create 148 million tons of waste by 2020 .

**Z. Kutsenkova, 2017**, The accelerating environmental impact of the industry has prompted a global self-reflection on sustainability. As a result, fashion businesses are compelled to consider their ecological and social footprint along with prioritizing profits. The concept of sustainable fashion, that aims to minimize waste and promote ethical practices, has gained momentum. Its objective is to establish a more sustainable industry by slowing down production and consumption, thereby mitigating environmental degradation.

## Research Methodology

This paper is purely based on descriptive nature and is an analytical study. The data has been collected from the secondary sources such as previous literature, journals, annual reports of concern ministry, and annual reports of concern board etc. The data have been collected for ten years period from 2017-2018 to 2021-2022. The collected data have been analyzed and presented in the tables with the help of the statistical tools like percentages.

## Analysis of Data

The data analysis gives the clear information about the performance of KVIC sector in terms of the production, sales, employment during the years 2017-2018 to 2021- 2022 to Khadi sector by the government. The data have been collected for five years period. The collected data have been analyzed and presented in the following tables and interpretation has been given along with the tables.

**Table No. 01 – Production and Sale of Khadi Sector**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Production(In Crore)</b>	<b>Sales (In Crore)</b>
2017-18	1626.66	2510.21
2018-19	1963.30	3215.13
2019-20	2324.24	4211.26
2020-21	1904.49	3527.71
2021-22	2558.31	5051.72

**Source: Annual report of KVIC and MSME**

Production and sale of Khadi sector during last 5 years are shown in the table 01. Khadi sector production and sales have increased during previous years. The value of production of Khadi in the year 2017-18 was Rs. 1626.66 crore which was increased to Rs.1963.30 crore in 2018-19. Though the production showed a decrease in the year 2020-21 due to covid, the production grew to Rs. 2558.31 in 2021-22.

The value of sale of Khadi in the year 2017-18 was Rs. 2510.21 crore which was increased to Rs.3215.13 crore in 2018-19. Though the sales value showed a decrease in the year 2020-21 due to covid, the sales grew to Rs. 5051.72 in 2021-22.

### **Role of Khadi Sector in Employment Generation**

Table No- 02 shows the .Khadi sector's employment during last 5 years.

**Table No .02- Employment Generation by Khadi Sector**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Employment (In Lakh Persons)</b>
2017-18	4.65
2018-19	4.96
2019-20	4.97
2020-21	4.97
2021-22	4.97

Source: Annual report of KVIC and MSME

The table shows that the employment generated by Khadi sector has increased in 2018-19 as compared to 2017-18. But after 2018-19 it is showing a constant growth in employment generation.

## Conclusion

In recent times, there has been an incredible surge in the popularity of Khadi, attributed to numerous contributing factors. This resurgence in the Khadi textile segment has in turn accelerated an expansion in its scope and influence. The burgeoning Fashion Industry in India, which is undergoing continuous growth, has apparently unlocked new, promising avenues for the Khadi sector. As a result, it has emerged as a potential tool for generating sustainable livelihoods, particularly for rural artisans and women. Additionally, it is unmatched when it comes to catering to the preferences of contemporary consumers who are increasingly inclined towards conscious and mindful purchasing behaviors, thereby fostering a sustainable future. Several governmental initiatives are actively fostering this development.

In light of the growing prominence of sustainability within the fashion industry, the role of the Khadi sector becomes even relevant in realizing the sustainability objectives of businesses. Despite the progress made till date, the Khadi sector is yet to harness its untapped potential by strategically capitalizing on novel opportunities through enhancements in quality, design innovation and diversification of its product offerings.

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