

KHADI TIMES – THEN, NOW AND FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

Khadi is known as freedom fabric, identified with India's freedom movement. Khadi has silently and relentlessly revolutionised India during independence. Khadi is Eco-friendly, sustainable industry hand spun hand woven, is still offering livelihood to millions of people. The Khadi agitation during India's independence was directed to disregard and reject foreign goods, to endorse and popularise Indian goods. The arrival of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, gave new direction of self-reliance and virtually becoming a powerful weapon of non-violence. This compelled the mighty colonial rule to exit after which India became independent.

Khadi fabric is woven with humble cotton, to exotic silk or wool yarns made by using spinning wheel or "The Charkha". Rough yet soft, fabric texture is achieved by weaving on the loom. But the beauty of this versatile, rustic fabric is that it can be woven into finest light weight to medium as well as heavy weight fabric, to design Indian as well as western apparel, shawls & furnishings etc. The focus is to show the upsurge of Khadi which stood the test of time from India's independence as fabric that gave freedom to now. This fabric worn mostly by Indian politicians has gone international. Khadi in magical hands of designers became luxurious; it has now come to limelight as a sustainable fabric. But it did not catch up with the times for masses, the youth due to the inherent shortfalls in design and fashion appeal.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the moods of Khadi in context to democratic, affluent and local perspectives.
- To analyse the awareness & promise of Khadi at 100 years post-independence.
- To analyse its scope for design expectations for the young professionals.

The research design is exploratory and descriptive; the source of data collection includes primary and secondary.

Key Words: Khadi - Eco-friendly, Democratic, Global, Designers, Fashioning Khadi.

INTRODUCTION

Khadi is a unique fabric. It has numerous local names dating back to more than 5000 years and has grown in stature with the human civilization. In India it is also known as freedom fabric because of its incredible role played during the freedom movement of India involving the departure of the colonial British rule of about 300 years. Indeed, it was a potent weapon designed and created by the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi. It also played a very commanding role during the Swadeshi movement conceptualised and implemented under the active leadership of Mahatma Gandhi as a part of rejection and burning of machine made cloth imported from outside and dumped in India at the cost of draining out of our valuable resources and creating unemployment for millions of artisans involved in making of Khadi fabric.

Khadi is a timeless classic fabric individualistic, creative and expressive to mention a few of its characters among a series of negative aspects.

What is the secret of Khadi and indeed what it means, how does it work, what is its eco-system and above all, how it has sustained so long inspite of massive industrial revolution and heavy onslaught of cheap machine fabrics with scientific and technological advancements. With this backdrop it is pertinent to discuss the theme of the paper – Khadi times- then, now and future.

PRODUCTION PERFORMANCE OF KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES IN INDIA
(Rs.in crore) **Table No. I**

Year	Khadi	Village Industries	Total
2001-02	411.00	7140.52	7551.52
2002-03	443.07	8126.30	8569.37
2003-04	482.23	12957.47	13439.7
2004-05	421.82	11348.25	11770.07
2005-06	364.43	12312.43	12676.86
2006-07	491.52	13527.19	14018.71
2007-08	543.39	16134.32	16677.71
2008-09	585.25	16753.62	17338.87
2009-10	484.45	11730.60	12215.05
2010-11	673.01	19198.85	19871.86
2011-12	716.98	21135.06	21852.04
2012-13	761.93	23262.31	24024.24
2013-14	811.08	25298.00	26109.08
2014-15	879.98	26689.39	27569.37
2015-16	1065.60	33424.62	34490.22

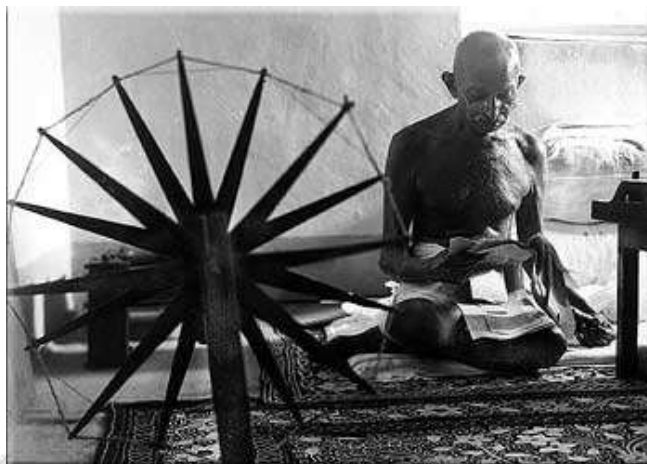
Source: Data compiled from Annual Reports of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises from 2001-02 to 2015-16.

The above table reveals that the khadi and village industries production was worth Rs.7551.52 crore in 2001-02 and Rs.134397 crore in 2003-04 which increased to Rs.26109.08 crores in 2013-14. Similarly, the total khadi and village industries production during 2015-16 estimated at Rs. 34,490.22 crores (Khadi Rs. 1065.60 crores and village industries Rs. 33,424.62 crores) as against Rs. 27,569.37 crore (Khadi Rs. 879.98 crore and village industries Rs. 26,689.39 crore) in 2014-15.

WHAT IS KHADI FABRIC

Khadi stands for exotic hand spun and hand woven fabric. Fabric is made with the interlacement of warp and weft yarn and then woven on a loom to make the cloth which is ultimately used by the consumer. In case of Khadi both the warp and weft yarn are spun by hand with the help of “Charkha” and then converted to fabric by using a handloom. Hence, Khadi is basically a hand spun and handwoven fabric. However, it has undergone sea change not only in its operation but also in the construction of the fabric with some technical inputs, design intervention, spinning, weaving and dyeing process.

The mesmerising tales of Khadi fabrics have been the subject of highly commendable documentaries involving artisans, their craftsmanship which remains an awesome example of the diversity and fluidity of Indian Khadi fabric with its culture and long tradition. In olden days then, the cotton was the main fibre, which also remains the same as on today in addition to mixing of fibres like pure silk, wool, artsilk, zari. The cotton bolls used to be picked from the field mostly from hilly and unirrigated barren lands, de-seeded, manually combed and removed impurities, then rolled to small rolls of fibre of about 8 to 10 inches and yarn was spun from the roll by using a small “Takli” a spindle rotated by hand to insert twist in the yarn, and wound the yarn on the “Takli”. This was the basic process very tedious, laborious and time consuming. This yarn from Takli is unwound and made to small hanks and kept aside till the required quantities are made. The yarn is then converted to warp and made to a sheet of yarn with sufficient length for one piece of the required fabric. All the fabrics used to be kora- raw unbleached and natural. The dyeing of yarn started very late with the use of natural ingredients sourced from nature in the form of fruits, leaves, barks, roots, flowers. Due process used to be followed for every set of raw material, washed and used in the form of dyed yarn and then converted to fabric. Some of the fabrics are still made in the process described above. One example being the dyed yarn obtained from Aal tree at the village of KOTPAD in the district of Koraput in Odisha state used for making Kotpad sarees, scarves and other handwoven utilities. That was the “then” status of Khadi long ago but survived only in very rare places like Kotpad.

Figure no. 1 Khadi - Gandhi's Quintessential Fabric

Further, with the global change in marketing of textiles and apparels an element of fashion has been added for increasing its marketability. Input from eminent fashion designers and young professionals have resulted in conducting fashion shows which were unheard in olden days. Agencies from central and state governments have also now actively involved in giving necessary financial, marketing and other developmental inputs to give a new dimension to the Khadi products. Hence, the present day Khadi fabric became market and consumer friendly with its new avatars.

Indian traditional Khadi industry has been evolving and reinventing over a long period. The slow but steady development in the sector since then has been phenomenal involving technological design and marketing segments. In short, there has been a sea change in this sector since the advent of Khadi in olden days, to the khadi sector as prevalent now.

The development leading to the present time in the technology sector has taken from single spindle "Takli", hand twisted to partly mechanized multi spindle time saving, less cumbersome high productive multi spindle "AMBER CHARKHA".

The selection of raw material cotton, from local natural sources from hilly and barren areas to the more stream lined process of procuring required staple length of cotton from the open market has given wide option for the industry with the option of going from coarser cotton yarn with short staple to finer cotton yarn with longer staple cotton freely available now.

This change of the fineness of the yarn revolutionised the production from coarser varieties of outdated fabrics to the finer varieties as per the market demand. This has also lead to widen its customer base going from serving only the lower middle class to the elite with value addition and consequently benefitting the artisans in better earning and therefore surviving the longevity of the craft and tradition.

For Khadi sector there is, indeed, an opportunity disguised as challenge. The future appears to be uncertain with the trend after globalization. Considering the present times as good and not evolving further, is too risky to be complacent. As per a report the number of artisans depending on Khadi has started coming down with the departure of skilled Khadi artisans to other more paying non Khadi sector.

Accordingly preventive steps need to be taken urgently to stop the migration of artisans to other sector as early as possible failing which the sector may crumble leading to degradation. Design intervention, product development and technological intervention should be done regularly by involving different agencies either government or private or NGO's.

The procurement of cotton, wool and silk now done from open market as it is not a controlled commodity. The dyes, chemicals, zari yarn, surface embellishments are also procured from open market. Khadi industry in India uses cotton yarn as cotton yarn fabric is used by masses, therefore cotton is often called King of Fibre and mulberry silk or the pure silk is called as the Queen of Fibre.

PROCESS INFLOW AND MACHINERY, TOOLS USED

As stated earlier the raw material cotton is purchased from the open market, cleaned and combed to remove impurities, straightened the fibres by combing process and the fibre is ready for use. It is rolled to small cylindrical bunches of about 8 to 10 inches of fibre usually called the sliver for making yarn by hand spinning with the use of Takli as in older times or by using country or cycle wheel high speed charkhas as in present days to spin the yarn continuously.

Figure no.2 Roving & Spinning



This spinning process produces uneven, full of thick and thin slubby yarn inviting criticism for bad quality. A special type of charkha called Ambar Charkha, invented by Mr. Ekambarnahan a Disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. The charkha has multiple spindles like spinning frames in Textile Mills resulting not only higher productivity but also uniform quality yarn. With easy operation, less fatigue, series of advantages. In this charkha the spinning of yarn takes place simultaneously in 8, 10 or 12 spindles of charkha also operated by hand like old ones.

Figure no.3 Spinning on Conventional Charkha



For Ambar Charkha the feed is cotton roving obtained from sliver. The roving through drafting system, on rotation produces yarn of a particular type finer or coarser depending upon the requirement and change of setting in Ambar Charkha. The outcome of yarn is automatically wound on changeable spindle, used in the

subsequent process of warping, sizing, beaming which is finally put on loom to weave. Different types of handlooms are in use in the textile industry. Mostly the pit loom or updated frame loom for making fabric. If coloured yarn is required it is dyed beforehand, washed, dried and used in the process for getting desired fabric.

Figure no.4 Pit Loom

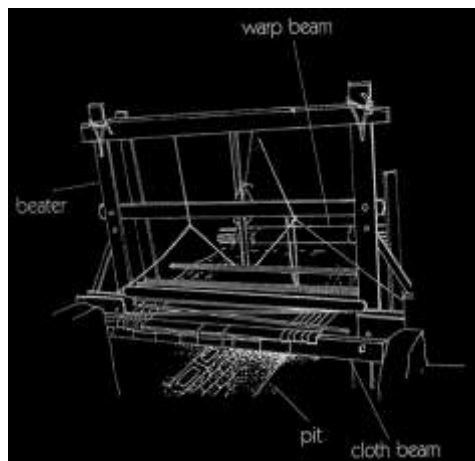


Figure no.5 Weaving on the Pit Loom



In ancient days, for colouring natural ingredients derived from trees, roots, barks, fruits or flowers were used which were very laborious and time consuming. With advent of synthetic chemical dyes, dyeing process has become easy, presently used from a variety of dyes and chemicals separately for different fibres.

The Khadi fashion times analysis then, now & future attempting to present khadi at global level as political wear showing patriotism, at other end designers have gone to create niche market, fashioning khadi as high fashion.

If we follow fashion communications online and offline, the trending buzz words are climate changes, sustainability, carbon footprint, Covid 19 followed by demand for slow fashion. Keeping these popular terms in view, brands like to use eco-friendly fabrics, and what could be better than khadi.

KHADI DEMOCRATIC SAGA

Khadi apparel in India has become over a period become dress code of politicians there by restricting its growth and confining to this segment. Humble Khadi worn by politicians prior to independence and post have gone international, the credit goes to the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru & the present Prime Minister Narendra Modi who also gave new look to Indian apparel made with khadi.

India's first political style icon was first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who popularised 'Sherwani'. The sherwani was known as Nehru jacket with international appeal. When we compare western suit to sherwani. The sherwani is compatibly as tailored as engineered western blazer, with crisp closed neckband, squared shoulder pads, fully lined, it is semi fitted, added length makes the attire look extremely graceful. Nehru made the look unexampled by wearing rose tucked into the buttonhole. Catalogued among the top global political fashion statements, the term Nehru collar & Nehru jacket are recorded in fashion dictionary. Nehru jacket is curated coat like garment from northern India known as Achkan with closed-neck, usually considered court dress for Indian nobility.

Although the jacket obtained this name only in the 1960s, the exemplary jacket has been known by Jawaharlal Nehru's name ever since. But this stylish jacket is not just a style statement in India. In fact, it has gained international fame, thanks to The Beatles and Time Magazine who gave the recognition.



Figurr no 6 PM Nehru in Khadi sherwani and Otto Grotewohl, Prime Minister of East Germany, 1959, WALTER HELBIG/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

About the same time after Jawaharlal Nehru's death, in February 1968, the popular British rock group, Beatles, travelled to Rishikesh in northern India to study meditation techniques by taking part in Transcendental Meditation training, and soon the group members began wearing Nehru jackets, setting new fashion trend. Other Nehru jacket followers were singer Sammy Davis, Junior, who claimed to have had over 200 Nehru jackets. Thus the charismatic Nehru jacket is conventional, tailored short coat with a closed-neck collar that evolved from a version often worn by the Indian politician, who led the country then from time of Independence in 1947 until Nehru's death in 1964. Over decades, it's become a wardrobe essential as ethnic wear for Indian men, frequently noticed in numerous fabrics and colours at festive occasions, special events and weddings.

Now, for the present day recognition and political celebrity status acclaimed by present Indian prime minister, the affirmation goes to Mr. Narendra Modi who is making fashion statements during his international tours. Inspired by the Swadeshi movement of 1905 Prime Minister, Modi has launched The National Handloom day. The Government of India declared the 7th August 2015 as National Handloom day throughout the country, which marked up the sales of khadi apparel and Handloom materials. The patronage accorded to the Indian look by Prime Minister Modi has given khadi an international stature too. By wearing the sleeveless long semi fitted waist coat, Indian classic kurta with short sleeves teamed with pyjama internationally, the Prime Minister's style of dressing is written about in international fashion magazine, mentioned in trend forecast too.

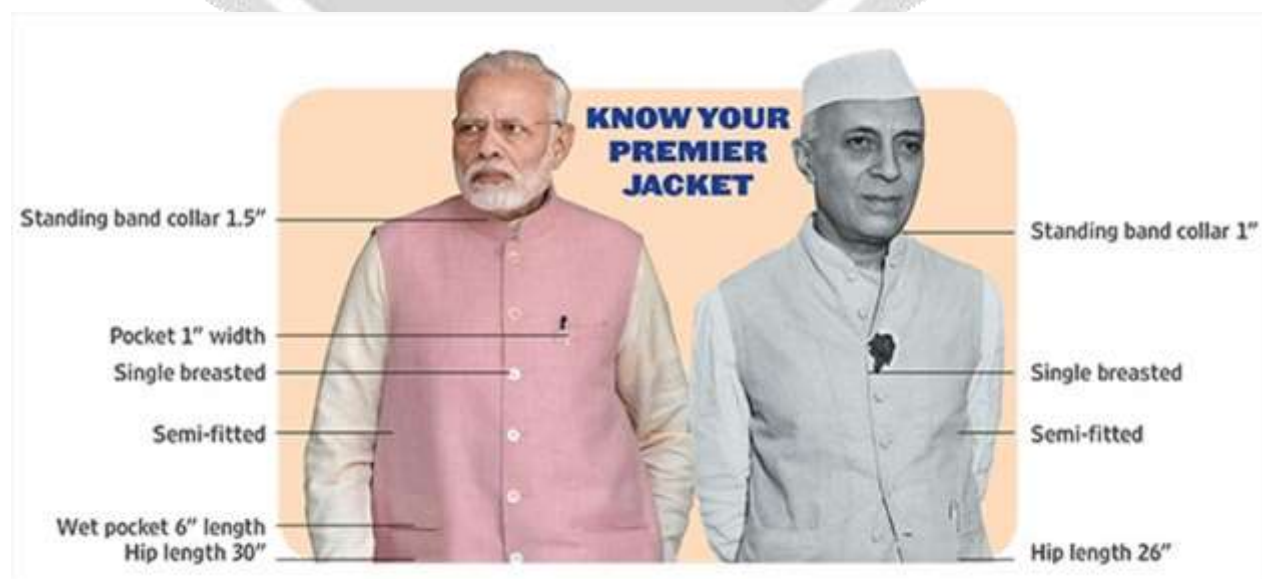


Figure no 7 The popular Khadi jacket: choice of Indian Prime Ministers <https://www.outlookindia.com/>

US media discovers in Narendra Modi a 'new fashion icon' "New Prime Minister is the Country's Latest Fashion Icon," says Time suggesting "With his shortened tunic, or 'Modi Kurta,' Narendra Modi is becoming celebrated for his style sense." After his stunning electoral triumph, three major US publications, Time, New York Times and The Washington Post -- have lauded the new Indian Prime Minister's dressing style from his "trademark Modi Kurta" to his tunic.

It says that even by India's standards where leaders have perhaps understood the use of clothing as a communication device better and longer than any of their international peers. Modi stands out "Literally and strategically." The fashion designer dressing up the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in an elegant, polished and fashionable way is a Mumbai-based menswear designer, Troy Costa can be credited. In 2014 when PMs talked about visit to the US he gave the PM sleek bandhgala suit.



Figure no 8: The Indian PM with POTUS at the National Martin Luther King Memorial on the National Mall in Washington. Photo: Reuters



Figure no 9: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Queen Elizabeth II in 2015 at Buckingham palace wearing long kurta pajama.



Figure no 10: PM Modi's Jacket debate & diplomacy

PM Modi introduced Indian national clothes for #BRICS leaders 2016. PM Modi himself tweeted a photograph of the five leaders from BRICS had gone viral. It shows the leaders of the BRICS countries - South African President Jacob Zuma, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Brazilian President Michel Temer along with PM Modi wearing white kurtas, teamed with colourful cotton 'Indian jackets' for dinner. With his impeccable dressing style Prime Ministe Modi projects an image of himself as a man of the people and an ordinary citizen. A lot have been written about his dressing style and analysed after his international tours. This has successively escalated the men's wear market in India with increase of sales of classic kurta, pajama and the jacket. It is here that we envisage a huge gap in the market that is on one hand, it is a politician's favoured attire prominent at the national and international front.

Designer's Affluent Artistry on Khadi:

As India trends into 21st century a new profession of fashion designers emerged and a trend for fashion boutiques. Designers popular then were Bhanu Athaiya, Ritu kumar, Bina Ramani, Hemanth Trivedi, Rohit Bal, Shahab Durazi, Rina Dhaka, Anju Modi became popular in different state. They initiated to explore with traditional Indian clothing, inspired with historic, regional and folk costumes of their states, khadi was one of the most sought after fabric for women's and men's ethnic garments.



Figure no 11: Kumar (left) with Anushka Sharma at the launch of Kumar's flagship store.



Figure 12: Anju Modi with her model, 1997.

With the global trends in fashion and clothing for sustainable, eco-friendly look Indian fashion designers were using khadi to promote their signature styles using this modest fabric, which takes all kinds of value addition, surface ornamentation, prints as well as exploring western silhouettes. With upsurge of khadi in designer luxury market, designers staged their garments arranging for fashion shows and tagged outfits with high prices created their niche market. Designers like Sabyasachi Mukhreeji, Abraham & Thakore, , Khanijo, Akaaro by Gaurav Jai Gupta, Péro by Aneeth Arora, Bodice by Ruchika Sachdeva, Anavila, Anju Modi, presented the rustic fabric with luxurious new look. It is right time for us to make use of this trend in the market to reach the masses, there by achieving the desired volumes as khadi is produced in many states of India. With the emergence of international brands, consumers too have become very conscious of their fashion choices, preferring sustainable fashion products.

Six known designer brands showcased their collection as a the joint runway show organized by Fashion Design Council of India x Lakmé Fashion Week on March 2022 as part of the FDCI Khadi Presentation. Garments were designed out of khadi cotton, silk & wool. Five Indian designers participated -- Abhishek Gupta, Anavila, Anju Modi, Charu Parashar and Rina Dhaka. , French designer Mossi Traore is making it global presence participated. "Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) Chairman Sunil Sethi, who is also the advisor to the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), encouraged Traoré to visit India and sample the various fabrics available at the Khadi Gram Udyog. "We want to promote khadi as a sustainable fabric, a new-age fibre that remains cool in summer and keeps you warm in winter," says Sethi."



Fig. no 13: Mossi's take on Khadi – FDCI,Facebook

Fig. no 14: Anju Modi's feminine take on Khadi - FDCI – Facebook



Figure no 15: Fashion show with khadi representation (Photo: Representative Image/ Designer Anju Modi)



Figure no 16: Anavila at the FDCI Khadi Presentation, 2022

THE PROMISE OF KHADI AT 100 YEARS POST-INDEPENDENCE

Expanding the colour palette, westernizing the cuts, and creating new trends, the Khadi fabric has transcended itself as a sustainable fabric of the future. Khadi with designers has become a truly stylish narrative that is now popularly embraced by designers. Thus khadi fabric has adapted to narrate every designers dream to make each garment style with a global appeal by refining the colour story, contemporising the cuts and exploring new surface textures and print techniques. Khadi is not so well accepted by the present day youth as they readily indulge in buying other Indian & western brands due to the inherent shortfalls in the design and fashion appeal.

Government is trying its best to encourage, endorse, popularise khadi to uplift and encourage the weavers to stay true to khadi weaving. At times it seems like few designers too are constantly compelled to promote khadi thru fashion shows and give interviews on social media & some designers seem to be genuinely keen to work with khadi. State government too encourages khadi and handloom exhibitions time and again, on 26th January i.e. the

Republic day, 15th August our Independence Day, & 2nd October being Mahatma Gandhi ji's birthday, 14th November being Jawaharlal Nehru birthday, to add to the list of patriotic days the 7th August for handloom day. On these days several people feel patriotic and end up wearing khadi garments for flag hoisting early morning and evening crowds are seen at restaurants with family and later these garments occupy the dark corners of one's wardrobe.

In spite of all the exposure and reclaim India gets thru Prime Minister Modi and thru designers creative ideas in khadi, the youth in India remains unaffected, most of them prefer to wear their branded ethnic garments. I foresee huge potential to develop this environmental friendly fabric with sincere cooperation from the government for mass manufacturing of khadi apparel.

To keep up with the pace of everyday sustainable dressing one can add variety of clothing styles in khadi. What would motivate and appeal the India's young generation from college going students and young professionals to bring khadi in the spotlight & to wear khadi throughout the year?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The response for the questionnaire was analysed. For the question what is khadi? It is observed that most of the participants know that Khadi is a cloth and about 6% of them thought khadi as a yarn. Over all there is awareness among the population about khadi in the form textile material.

Related to the history of the clothing there is different knowledge and opinion among the professionals. On asking how old is khadi cloth? 30.4% replied correctly as more than 5000 years old. 56.1% replied less than 200 years old, 11.7% replied as less than 75 years. Only the 30% candidates know the real history and the ancient past of the Indian cloth as a Khadi.

More than half of the professionals believes that the cloth came to existence 200 years back and 12% believes that the cloth is came to existence just less than 75 years before which was very disappointing There is good awareness related to the current existence of the Khadi related to the struggle of the craftsman.

It was interesting to note when asked khadi artisans are increasing or decreasing? 78.7% replied as artisans are decreasing and 21.3% answered as artisans are increasing. As most of the children of artisans have moved on to the cities and taking up jobs and some of them are studying, with the hope to promote the family business.

Regarding the survival of the khadi, many of the professionals believes that it will survive with lot of struggle and 40% of them have perception that it will survive on its own and continue. It is good to know that most of the professionals knows that the khadi is hand spun yarn and is a handwoven fabric, hence the awareness of hard work involved in making the fabric was appreciated.

In the second part the purchasing behaviour and the purchasing interest of the young professional towards khadi is analysed. On asking how often do you use khadi garments, It is surprising to know that the 35% never worn the garments made in Khadi and another 35% are used to wearing only at certain patriotic occasions. On other side around 25% of the young professionals are wearing Khadi at least once in the month which was very encouraging. Overall the young professionals do not prefer to wear khadi once a week. Only 25% are wearing every month because of the awareness of it as a craft.

Upon asking how many times in a year do you shop for khadi garments, the response was very surprising for the current shopping trend 54% of the professionals do not have idea about the purchase and 22% professionals, sad to know never shopped for Khadi textiles. Around 24% of the professionals used to buy the Khadi but that either yearly or biyearly.

Simultaneously on asking where do they shop for khadi garments, among the professional the main buying resource for more than 80% professionals is the Handloom exhibition and 35% shop at khadi stores and very few purchase online.

For question will you buy khadi garments if they are smart and trendy, the response was overwhelming for khadi artisans and the designers. It is good to know that 98% of the youth of India are ready to purchase khadi apparel if smart and trendy. This justifies as to what we are trying to achieve is possible.

For the future perspectives of khadi in 2047, young Indians do not want to see Khadi textiles limited to the politicians. Many of the professional around 46% want to see Khadi as a Home product and trendy apparel. Some of the professionals around 25% want to see more exploration of khadi as the life style and fashion

accessories and 25% want to see as ethnic wear. This gives wide scope for khadi to survive as a fabric not just for garments but to be used in home products.

CONCLUSION:

- Khadi had a glorious past but appears to be an uncertain future adversely affecting the industry as a whole and the artisans.
- Khadi had one of the identities as uneven fabric that was popular but not consumer friendly. Introduction of Ambar Charkha appears to be a welcome step not only for high productivity but also resulting good quality.
- More effective steps to be taken to make the younger generation aware about the important and diversity of Khadi for more popularising the products
- Most of the young Indian professionals know about Khadi and there is scattered opinion about the history of the cloth. Many of the professionals are aware about the struggle of the Khadi artisans and they are ready to support indirectly by purchasing and wearing khadi.
- To retain khadi in fashion, it is required to attract the professionals and the young Indian population by keeping garment styles smart and trendy. Young designers particularly fashion designers may be involved for product development and new design intervention.
- The designers and khadi weavers with guidance from Central and State government have to work together to increase the sale of garments by meeting the requirement of the youth of India, Thus, making khadi the most sought after sustainable fabric at 100 years of independent India. These are only few points but other pressing points are also to be taken care so as to give a dynamic impression of the khadi sector to bring back its past glory by involving all the stake holders in the process of development.

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