



Khadi as a Driver of Sustainable Agriculture

Khadi, rooted in Gandhian ideals of *Swadeshi* and *Gram Swaraj*, connects rural livelihoods with sustainable production and self-reliance. Its farm-to-fabric value chain supports farmers, women, and artisans through employment, skill preservation, and income diversification. Government schemes and KVIC initiatives strengthen Khadi's role in rural development and the growth of a green economy. Modernisation, digital platforms, and market expansion enhance its relevance. Overall, Khadi drives inclusive, eco-friendly, and resilient rural economic transformation.

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Khadi, more than hand-spun fabric, embodies India's spirit of self-reliance and socio-economic resilience. Rooted in Mahatma Gandhi's vision, it symbolises resistance against colonial exploitation and rural empowerment. Gandhi believed Khadi to be an instrumental tool for making India strong and self-reliant, encouraging the *Swadeshi* movement to support Indian-made goods. His concept of *Gram*

Swaraj emphasised village self-sufficiency, where spinning and wearing Khadi enabled communities to earn livelihoods.

Today, Khadi's revival is strategic, offering employment, preserving traditional skills, and fostering inclusive growth. It provides rural jobs, particularly for hand-spinners and weavers, enabling families to earn without migration. Its eco-friendly production using natural fibres and simple tools reduces pollution. Importantly,

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cotton for Khadi comes directly from local farms, creating vital linkages between agriculture and cottage industries. Recent government campaigns like *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* and *Vocal for Local* have repositioned Khadi as both historical symbol and modern choice supporting rural workers, small businesses, and sustainable living.

Historical evolution: From Freedom Symbol to Economic Instrument

This historical foundation laid the groundwork for Khadi's institutionalisation. After independence, the government established the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) in 1957 to promote traditional crafts through training, tools, and financial support. KVIC transformed Khadi from a freedom movement symbol into a structured rural development instrument, systematically connecting it with agricultural livelihoods.

Raw materials like cotton, silk, wool, and jute come directly from farming and animal rearing. Farmers grow cotton, rear silkworms, and raise sheep, which artisans then spin and weave. This agricultural-textile linkage creates employment across both sectors, enabling rural families to maximise local resource utilisation. Over time, this symbiotic relationship has evolved Khadi into a comprehensive rural economic system providing jobs, supporting local businesses, and preserving traditional skills.

Khadi and Agriculture Link: A Symbiotic Rural Partnership

Building on this foundation, Khadi-Agriculture partnership operates through multiple channels. The

sector depends entirely on farm-based raw materials like cotton from fields, wool from sheep, silk from silkworms, and jute plants. This dependency creates a cycle where farming and cloth-making mutually reinforce each other, stabilising rural communities.

Critically, Khadi provides off-season employment when agricultural work is unavailable. For small and marginal farmers, Khadi enables income diversification beyond limited farm revenues. During adverse weather or low yields, Khadi-related activities provide financial support. This diversification enhances livelihood security and reduces vulnerability.

Rural women particularly benefit from home-based Khadi work. Spinning and weaving require no large machinery, making village-based setups feasible. This employment builds women's confidence and independence as household income contributors, creating dignified work opportunities.

Khadi and Rural Economy: Present Economic Relevance

These individual benefits aggregate into substantial economic impact. In FY 2024-25, Khadi and Village Industries recorded Rs. 1.70 lakh crore turnover, employing approximately 1.94 crore people up from 1.30 crore in 2013-14. This growth provides stable rural incomes and reduces urban migration, significantly contributing to GDP and building self-reliant rural economies. KVIC achieved record performance in FY 2023-24, with turnover crossing Rs. 1.55 lakh crore, a 400% sales increase and 315% production rise compared to 2013-14. KVIC created over 10.17 lakh new rural jobs, showing 81% employment growth over the decade.

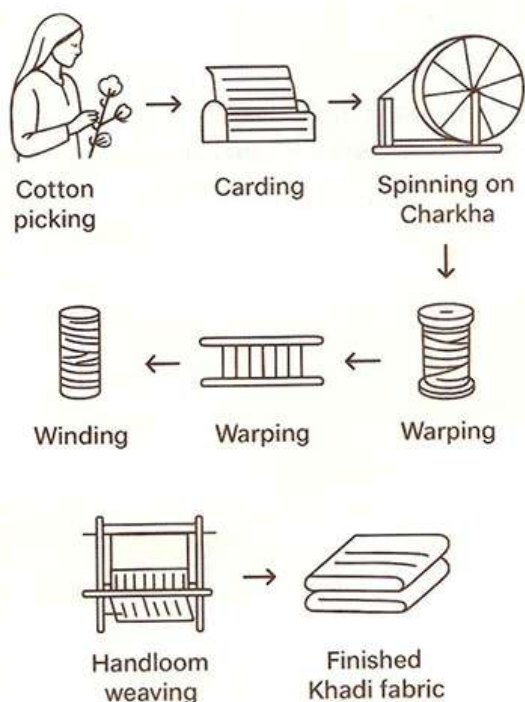
This economic engine drives inclusive growth by employing villagers, especially women and small farmers, while supporting rural industrialisation through small-scale industries using local materials and skills. By reducing urban migration and building village economies, Khadi advances the 'Doubling Farmers' Income Mission'. Linking farming with cloth-making provides farmers additional revenue from cotton, silk, wool, and jute, improving rural living standards through agriculture-cottage industry integration.

Government Policies and Institutional Support

Recognising this potential, KVIC, the Ministry of MSME, and State Khadi Boards implement flagship schemes integrating Khadi with rural livelihoods. The



JOURNEY OF KHADI



Honey Mission trains farmers in beekeeping for extra income and improved crop yields through pollination. The *Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana* supports rural potters with electric wheels and training for efficient clay utilisation. The Leather and Agro-based Industries scheme encourages farm produce, while SFURTI scheme (Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries) strengthens Khadi clusters through infrastructure, marketing, and skill development improvements.

These initiatives align Khadi with national development frameworks including *Aatmanirbhar Bharat*, *Make in India*, and rural industrialisation. These policies promote local products and village employment. Khadi's Rs. 1.70 lakh crore turnover in 2024-25 demonstrates how traditional crafts can power modern economic growth, linking farming, cottage industries, and entrepreneurship toward inclusive, self-sufficient development.

Sustainability and Green Economy: Khadi's Ecological Role

Beyond economic contributions, Khadi plays a vital role in environmental sustainability. It supports sustainable agriculture through organic cotton and natural fibers grown without harmful chemicals.

Organic cultivation employs crop rotation, composting, and rainwater utilisation, maintaining soil health and reducing pollution while saving water. Khadi producers increasingly collaborate with organic farmers, improving incomes while protecting the environment.

Production methods are eco-friendly, using natural dyes and avoiding harmful chemicals, thereby reducing water pollution. Hand-spinning and hand-weaving eliminate dependence on heavy machinery, lowering carbon emissions.

This aligns with India's climate goals through low-carbon, circular economy models. Minimal electricity use, recycling of natural materials, and reduced emissions support India's Net Zero 2070 target. Khadi demonstrates how traditional industries can enable climate action and green development while generating employment.

Furthermore, Khadi is being integrated with the Millet Mission (*Shree Anna*) to promote eco-friendly livelihoods. Millets are climate-smart crops requiring less water, suitable for dry regions. Khadi institutions and self-help groups help farmers in creating millet-based products, supporting sustainable farming, better nutrition, and environmental protection while increasing rural incomes.

Innovation, Modernisation, and Market Linkages

To remain relevant, Khadi is embracing modernisation. The e-Khadi platform enables online sales, expanding artisan reach and income. Design intervention introduces contemporary styles, attracting youth and urban markets. The Solar *Charkha* Mission, launched by the Ministry of MSME, uses solar-powered spinning wheels, reducing manual effort while increasing production in an eco-friendly manner. These innovations enhance efficiency, sustainability, and market readiness.

Strong branding through 'Khadi India' and 'Vocal for Local' campaigns promotes Khadi, among youth. KVIC's online platforms like khadiindia.gov.in facilitate direct artisan-customer sales. Events like Khadi Mahotsav and media campaigns boost awareness and sales, establishing Khadi as a symbol of self-reliance and modern lifestyle choice.

Digital platforms and export initiatives promote Khadi as a sustainable textile globally. International eco-friendly fashion interest showcases Khadi at global

events. Designers incorporating Khadi in modern styles attract young, global buyers, positioning India's ethical textile industry internationally. Youth and start-ups are also building careers in rural areas through agro-based Khadi industries.

Challenges

Despite progress, challenges persist. The supply of raw material faces issues like cotton farming struggles with pest attacks, low productivity, and rain dependency, affecting quality and availability. Silk production has limited high-quality supply and rising costs, causing irregular supply and higher prices for Khadi producers.

Skill gaps and limited technology access restrict rural units. Traditional artisans often lack training in modern tools, digital platforms, and updated methods, hindering quality improvement and market competitiveness. The government has launched new skill development schemes under *Khadi Vikas Yojana* to address these gaps through training in design, marketing, and digital tools. Addressing these challenges requires integrating Khadi with agricultural value chains and agri-based clusters. Textile hubs within agro clusters foster employment, resource efficiency, and sustainable practices.

Revitalisation also needs private sector participation, design innovation, and youth engagement. Collaborations with fashion, retail, and technology enterprises can improve marketing, supply chains, and product appeal. Design schools can reimagine Khadi for contemporary tastes while entrepreneurship programmes inspire young artisans.

Positioning Khadi as India's sustainable economy flagship expands global reach. Rising international

demand for eco-friendly textiles creates opportunities. Strategic branding, global trade fair participation, and e-commerce platforms can reach conscious consumers worldwide, supported by export incentives and quality certification.

Strengthening KVIC collaboration with rural skill development initiatives like Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) will train new artisans, upgrade skills, and foster entrepreneurship, achieving coordinated capacity building and rural industrialisation.

Khadi as the Soul of Rural India

Khadi continues to embody Gandhian ethos of simplicity, labor dignity, and economic independence. Its relevance has evolved to represent sustainable living and local empowerment in India's inclusive growth journey, testifying to indigenous industries' value in fostering self-reliance and cultural preservation.

Deeply intertwined with agriculture, Khadi offers a vital farm-to-fabric linkage. Sourcing raw materials locally and employing traditional techniques supports agrarian communities while generating rural employment, strengthening villages' socio-economic fabric and building rural resilience.

As decentralised, labor-intensive industry, Khadi fosters inclusive growth by engaging marginalised communities especially women and artisans in productive activities. Eco-friendly production aligns with sustainable development goals, minimising environmental impact while maximising social benefit. By promoting local entrepreneurship and reducing external market dependence, Khadi builds self-reliant, equitable rural economies.

Toward India@2047, Khadi can play transformative role in realising *Amrit Kaal's* vision of progress and prosperity. Through integration with green technologies, sustainable farming, and rural innovation, Khadi can become flagship of India's climate resilience and inclusive development commitment. Empowering village economies through Khadi preserves traditional knowledge while positioning India as global leader in ethical, environmentally conscious production. □

