Khadi: Indian Hand Spinning and Weaving, from the Charkha to the Khadi Mark

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In one paragraph

Khadi is cloth woven by hand from yarn that was spun by hand. The law puts it precisely: under section 2(d) of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, 1956, khadi means any cloth woven on handlooms in India from cotton, silk or woollen yarn handspun in India, or from a mixture of those yarns. The yarn is spun on a charkha, the single-spindle traditional wheel or a multi-spindle one such as the New Model Charkha (NMC), and the cloth is woven on a pit loom or frame loom, usually with a fly shuttle. Since the Khadi Mark Regulations of 2013 (G.S.R. 498(E), 19 July 2013), nothing may be sold as khadi in India without the Khadi Mark tag or label that the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) issues after an on-site check of the hand spinning and hand weaving and laboratory tests of the fabric. KVIC reports khadi cloth production of Rs 3,783.36 crore and sales of Rs 7,145.61 crore in 2024-25, from about 5 lakh khadi artisans, 80% of them women. Below: the legal test in a table, the process step by step, the charkha types with their output, a khadi count converted in the site’s calculator, khadi against handloom and mill cloth, and a dated history from the Swadeshi meeting of 1905 to the Khadi Mark.

At a glance

Khadi at a glance

Question	Answer	Source
What is khadi?	Cloth woven on a handloom in India from cotton, silk or wool yarn hand-spun in India, or a mixture of those yarns	KVIC Act 1956, s. 2(d)
What is a handloom?	Any loom other than a power loom, which is a loom worked by power as defined in the Factories Act 1948	Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act 1985, s. 2
Who certifies it?	KVIC, through its Directorate of Khadi Certification; the Textiles Committee of the Ministry of Textiles does the on-site verification and the lab tests	KVIC khadi quality assurance guideline
What proves it?	The Khadi Mark tag or woven label on the product, mandatory since the Khadi Mark Regulations 2013	Gazette G.S.R. 498(E), 19 July 2013
What spins the yarn?	A charkha: the single-spindle traditional wheel, or the 6- or 8-spindle New Model Charkha, which works on the ring-spinning principle	KVIC and IIT Delhi, Manual on Quality Assurance for Khadi, ch. 6 and table 2.20
How is yarn measured?	In hanks of 1,000 m, and in metric count (Nm): coarse up to 28, medium 30 to 55, fine 60 to 100, muslin above 100	Manual, table 2.5 and section 6.2.1.2
How much is made?	Khadi cloth production Rs 3,783.36 crore and sales Rs 7,145.61 crore in 2024-25; Rs 3,974 crore and Rs 7,869 crore in 2025-26 (provisional)	PIB, 22 April 2025 and 26 May 2026
What is a spinner paid?	Rs 15 per hank from 1 April 2025, up from Rs 4 in 2013-14	PIB, 28 March 2025 and 26 May 2026

What counts as khadi: the legal definition and the Khadi Mark test

Condition	What the rule says	Who checks it, and how	Source
Fibre	Cotton, silk or wool, or a mixture of any two or all three. A hand-spun, hand-woven polyester-cotton blend (67% polyester, 33% cotton) is called polyvastra; the Khadi Mark tag is not issued for it	Textiles Committee laboratory: fibre composition test on samples drawn at the production centre	KVIC Act s. 2(d); KVIC quality guideline, section A and testing schedule
Spinning	The yarn must be hand-spun in India. Everything before spinning (ginning, carding, drawing, roving) may be mechanised; KVIC runs Central Sliver Plants that supply sliver to NMC units	On-site verification of the hand-spinning process by the Textiles Committee; count of warp and weft yarn tested in the lab	KVIC Act s. 2(d); Manual ch. 6.1 and 6.2.1.1; PIB, 28 March 2022
Twist	Since 1965 the khadi sector has spun with S (left-hand) twist, the reverse of mill yarn, so that mill yarn cannot be passed off as hand-spun	Lab test of twist direction and twists per inch in warp and weft	Manual ch. 6.2.1.2; KVIC quality guideline testing schedule
Weaving	Woven on a handloom in India; a handloom is any loom other than a power loom	On-site verification of the hand-weaving process; ends and picks per inch tested in the lab	KVIC Act s. 2(d); Handlooms Act 1985 s. 2(b) and 2(d)
Certificate	No textile may be sold or traded as khadi without bearing a Khadi Mark tag or label issued under the regulations, and no seller may procure khadi without one	KVIC Directorate of Khadi Certification registers the institution and issues its tag entitlement; 2,077 institutions held Khadi Mark registration at the date of the KVIC page	Khadi Mark Regulations 2013; KVIC certification page
The mark	The Khadi Mark logo is a registered certification mark in all 45 trademark classes; the word Khadi is KVIC's registered word mark in 43 classes	KVIC trade mark register, 5 July 2024	KVIC trade mark registration details

Formulas and diagrams

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A medium khadi yarn of Nm 40 has a linear density of 1000 ÷ 40 = 25 tex, which is 590.5 ÷ 25 = 23.6 Ne and 25 × 9 = 225 denier.
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Winding yarn from cones onto a reel. Photo: Pixabay.



Warping: hundreds of ends are drawn from numbered creels and wound onto the warping frame in sections. Photo: Pixabay.

Revision questions

The questions readers ask most, with the article's own answer.

What is khadi, in the Government of India definition?

Section 2(d) of the KVIC Act 1956: any cloth woven on handlooms in India from cotton, silk or woollen yarn handspun in India, or from a mixture of any two or all of such yarns. Hand-spun and hand-woven are both required; everything before spinning may be done by machine.

How is khadi made?

Cotton is ginned, opened, carded into sliver and drawn into roving, usually at a KVIC Central Sliver Plant or on the institution's own machines. A spinner drafts and twists the roving on a charkha and the bobbins are reeled into 1,000 m hanks.

What is a khadi machine?

The charkha. Today it is mostly the New Model Charkha, a hand-cranked frame of 6, 8 or 12 ring spindles with drafting rollers, producing about 25 hanks of Nm 35 yarn per 8 hours on 8 spindles; the single-spindle traditional charkha and the 7-spindle muslin charkha are the other two in use.

What is the difference between khadi and handloom?

Both are woven on handlooms. Khadi's yarn is also hand-spun; handloom cloth is normally woven from mill-spun yarn.

Suggest any two measures to promote hand-spun khadi in India

Pick from measures that exist and can be dated: mandatory certification through the Khadi Mark (2013), which stops mill cloth being sold as khadi; raising the spinner's wage per hank, which KVIC took from Rs 4 in 2013-14 to Rs 15 in 2025; Modified Market Development Assistance paid to institutions on production (Rs 215 crore in 2024-25); and drudgery-reducing equipment such as the solar charkha clusters of 2018.

What count is khadi yarn, and how do I convert it?

Khadi counts are metric (Nm): coarse up to 28, medium 30 to 55, fine 60 to 100, muslin above 100. Tex is 1000 ÷ Nm and Ne is 590.5 ÷ tex, so Nm 40 is 25 tex and 23.6 Ne; the site's count converter does the arithmetic for any value.

Test yourself

Ten questions on this topic. Answer them without looking, then check on the last page.

1. Which three fibres may khadi be made from under the KVIC Act?
2. What is polyvastra, and is it issued the Khadi Mark tag?
3. Why has the khadi sector spun with S twist since 1965?
4. Of the five stages of cotton khadi production in the KVIC and IIT Delhi manual, which must be done by hand?
5. How long is a khadi hank, and how is it tied off?
6. Why are khadi warp hanks soaked overnight in water with 1 to 2% washing soda?
7. How does the New Model Charkha draft, twist and wind the yarn?
8. What count range is classed as medium khadi yarn in the KVIC and IIT Delhi manual?
9. What is the linear density in tex of a medium khadi yarn of Nm 40?

10. What did the Swadeshi movement meeting in Calcutta Town Hall protest against, and what is its date now observed as?

Answers

Each answer is stated in the article; the section to read again is named after it.

1. **Cotton, silk or wool, or a mixture of any two or all three.**
   See: What counts as khadi: the legal definition and the Khadi Mark test
2. **A hand-spun, hand-woven polyester-cotton blend (67% polyester, 33% cotton); the Khadi Mark tag is not issued for it.**
   See: What counts as khadi: the legal definition and the Khadi Mark test
3. **S twist is the reverse of mill yarn, so mill yarn cannot be passed off as hand-spun.**
   See: What counts as khadi: the legal definition and the Khadi Mark test
4. **Spinning and weaving (the second and fourth stages).**
   See: How khadi is made: the khadi making process from cotton to cloth
5. **1,000 m, tied off in sections of 200 rounds of one metre.**
   See: How khadi is made: the khadi making process from cotton to cloth
6. **To remove the cotton wax.**
   See: How khadi is made: the khadi making process from cotton to cloth
7. **Drafting rollers draft it, a ring and traveller insert the twist, and the yarn winds on a bobbin.**
   See: How khadi is made: the khadi making process from cotton to cloth
8. **Nm 30 to 55.**
   See: Khadi yarn counts and grades, with a worked conversion
9. **25 tex (1000 ÷ 40).**
   See: Khadi yarn counts and grades, with a worked conversion
10. **The partition of Bengal; the date is now National Handloom Day.**
    See: History: Swadeshi, Gandhi and the charkha

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