

UGC advocates adoption of **khadi** for ceremonial dresses in varsities

STYLE UGC circular to universities says use of khadi and other handloom will give a sense of pride of being Indian

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NEW DELHI: The University Grants Commission (UGC), which has been extolling the virtues of khadi, has cited Prime Minister Narendra Modi and has asked universities and colleges to use the fabric for ceremonial dresses worn on special occasions.

"The honourable Prime Minister has advocated the use of khadi and also emphasized on the revival of handlooms. Mahatma Gandhi used khadi, a handspun and handloom cloth as a weapon during the struggle for Independence, and hence it is also known as 'Liveries of Freedom'...the use of khadi and other handloom will not only give a sense of pride of being Indian, but also be more comfortable in hot and humid weather," the UGC has said in a circular to all the universities in the country last week.

The circular encourages all the more than 50,000 universities and colleges to use khadi or



■ The UGC circular says that khadi is an integral part of Indian culture

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handloom textiles "for ceremonial dresses prescribed for special occasions like convocations".

The circular says that it is "requested" that universities and colleges consider use of this fabric, but it also seeks "appropriate action" for its adoption.

"I request you to kindly take appropriate action to adopt khadi and/or handloom fabric for ceremonial dresses to encourage the use of khadi..." said the circular by the education regulator.

"The language of the circular is very interesting. While it did

not use the word mandatory, it expects universities to take action. We are not against khadi or handloom but I believe universities and colleges need to be left alone to take a decision on what they wish to adopt," said a Delhi University professor who requested anonymity.

"It's an indirect directive to fall in line. It's symbolism, not Indian pride that the education regulator is trying to get us to believe," he said.

In the last couple of years, there has been a growing clamour around changing the convocation dress from the Western-style gown and square cap to a traditional one. Some institutions, including the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, IIT Bombay, the National Institute of Technology (NIT) in Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh, and Gujarati University, have already adopted khadi for their convocations.

The UGC circular signed by its secretary Rajnish Jain, says that khadi and handloom products are an integral part of Indian culture and heritage and are a source of livelihood for lakhs of rural people.

Modi has been a strong supporter of khadi and in September 2017 in one of his Mann Ki Baat radio programmes, asked people to adopt the fabric to help weavers.