Mahtma Gandhi, early name Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, was born at Porbandar in Gujrat on 2nd October, 1869. His father was Kaba Gandhi, a dewan of Rajkot state and mother was Putoli Bai, a pious housewife. After passing the entrance examination in 1887, he went to England and came back as a barrister. He started practice in South Africa. There he made struggle seeking justice for the Indian inhabitants and for the blacks. After placing them in rightful status; he returned India and started Satyagraha movement with the policy of non-violence. He was imprisoned by the British rulers for several times. At last, India got independence on 15th Aug. 1947. Gandhi was addressed as the father of nation after his unprecedented sacrifice for the nation. He was assassinated on 30th January, 1948.

The history of India is full of the names of bravemen and women who have sacrificed for the freedom of the country unconditionally. But Mahatma Gandhi is extra-ordinary who by the example of his life and by the policy of non-violence, gav India independence. Weaving deserved uncommon emphasis in the Gandhian Philosophy to boycott the British hegemony and later it has become a prime criterion to expose the indegenous textile of a particular community on the eve of their ethnic assertion.

"......Every woman of Assam is a born weaver. No Assamese girl who doesnot weave can expect to become a wife. And she weaves fairy tales in cloth. Some of the old patterns that our host, Mr. Phukan, showed me were of matchless beauty. And as I saw these beautiful patterns, I couldnot help shedding a silent tear over India’s past glory and her lost work.

........Assam has plenty of wood, sound and durable, just the kind for making spinning wheels. Let us hope that Assam will rise to its full height in the matter of Swadeshi"
A piece of statement, the first impression of Gandhi in his first article on the Assamese weavers published in his paper Young India: entitled LOVELY ASSAM.

In 1908, Gandhi expressed in the Hind Swaraj, "I described it as the panacea (universal medicine) for the growing pauperism of India." Gandhi established Sabarmati Ashram in Guwahati where all the members of the Ashram resolved to wear hand-woven cloth made from Indian yarn only. According to Gandhi, "We become impatient to be able to spin our own yarn."

In the initial phase, a Gujrati widow named as Gangabhin Majumdar helped Gandhi in the search of weaves and spinning wheel." She found out weavers to weave the yarn that was spun in Vijapur gained a name for itself. Gandhi in later years, learnt to spin yarn and weave khadi for himself. He created a revolution regarding the art of weaving, assimilated this with the ideology of freedom and folksongs invariably depict it. Some folksongs containing the image and ideology of Gandhi and the art of weaving in the folkmind of Assam have been illustrated below.

Phukanar nangalat Gandhi meeting kare
Bilet kapoor nila
Jayaddhani tuli Gandhir joy buli
Kaporate jui dila

[Gandhi held meeting at the gate of Phukan and the furious people added fire to the foreign clothes heralding the victory of Gandhi]

Acceptance of native or indigenous and defiance of foreign are propagated through this song.

The freedom movement took vigorous outlook in the Barak valley of undivided Assam. The song witnesses the exploitation experienced during the British domination.

Tora dekhasni bharatbasi chaiya
Achanak phiringi aiche
Desh nite lutiya
[The phiringis (the British) has entered India for plundering but the Indians are counting the stars]

How the ideology of Gandhi used to impact the Phiringi-exploited area is reflected in the song-

Gandhi raja ailo deshe  
Swadeshi mantra loiya  
Balya briddha juba-nari  
Chalre sab jana

[Gandhi has come to our land with the dream of independence. Let all male and female, young and old villagers proceed to join him]

Gandhi suta kato, gandhi suta katu,  
Shalakathi ar lagchi volonterok matu  
Gandhi suta katu

[Let us weave the threads of Gandhi. But the shalakathi is interwined. Hence call the volunteer]

The folkmind did not hesitate to enthrone the patriotic salts of the earth in the divine status. People started addressing Gandhi as 'Gandhi raja' (i.e. he can pass command according to his will) for his unprecedented sacrifice for the motherland.

People even believed that India's swaraj (independence) depends on Gandhi's will. They become so respectful to Gandhi that they even shed tears to hear the grievances of him

: Gandhi ole, miting karle, raije achil chai  
Voluntere phatek khate gandhio phatakok jai

**Salakathi**: A thin, long and round slip of bamboo or wood, an iron wire.
Raijsakale uthi bole eten habo ki?
Chapat kari gandhi raja swaraj kari di
Phatak gharor kase kase kalar poli bahe
Gandhirajar katha shuni chakhur pani ahe 7

[Gandhi appeared in the scene and held meetings crowded with laymen. Gandhi also faced imprisonment along with the volunteers. The crowd shouted,"What will happen now, King Gandhi? Let us free instantly". The plantain saplings grow surrounding the jail. Tears come out to hear the grief of Gandhi]

This song was very popular during the British rule in Assam. The boat "Gandhi" represents the ideology of non-violence. The folkminds acknowledged that the freedom of India was possible only if the citizens would absorbed in hardwork overwhelmed by the ideology of Gandhi and firmness of Jawaharlal Nehru

Gandhir namar naukakheni
Jahallar bautha
Swadhin lage jedi bhogni
Suta kati utha

[Gandhi is the boat and Jawaharlal is the oarsman. Complete your weaving as we have to assert independence]

mahatma gandhiye andolan chalale
dukhyar mukhaloi chai
raijok bujale raijok sikale
swaraj nalole jai
mohammad ali chaukat ali
gandhi tini bhai
kapah kati kapor lole
gandhiye swaraj pai

[Mahatma Gandhi carried on movements for the downtrodden, convinced then, taught them but did not suck the pleasure of freedom. Gandhi, Choukat Ali and Mohammad Ali, these three brothers wore clothes spinning by themselves and hence deserved freedom]
patar mugar bileti kapur
japat nathabi bhare
phukanak*2 uile di
nabinak*3 uile di
chālot jui di pure
patar mugar bileti kapur
bhalentare nila
gandhir aigat volentare
jui lagei dila
patar kapur bileti
mugar kapur bileti
chamje di nabin-dolek mati*0

*2[Do not put the foreign made silk, pat and muga, in the box. Give it to Phukan and Nabin to burn in the courtyard. The volunteers took the foreign made pat and muga and burnt in front of Gandhi. Submit those to Nabin Chandra Bardoloi]

Assam from unknown past has a glorious history of weaving. As the aborigines here are of Mongoloid origin, they carried this skill from China and maintained trade relations with the distant countries. It is believed that the art of sericulture was introduced into North-East India many centuries before the advents of the Vedic Aryans, by the forefathers of the Bodos. According to Sir George Watt, the practice of rearing mulberry silkworm was introduced into Assam and Bengal across the Chinese frontier.

According to the Arthashastra of Kautilya, Assam had produced a semi-wild silk of two varieties-muga and eri and spraded it throughout Northern India by the trade centre, Suvarnakudya (modern Sonkudiha). The Arthashastra mentions this fact also that the Bodos of Assam manufactured garments from

*2 Phukan:- Tarun Ram Phukan, a leader and freedom fighter of Assam.
*3 Nabin:- Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, a leader and freedom fighter of Assam.
grasses Khaupra and Virana. More over the Harsacharit of Banabhatta depicts the items of gift to Harsabardhana by the Kamarupa king Bhaskarvarman which reflect the extreme development of Assamese textile and artefacts.

As soon as Gandhi visited Assam with the ethics of self-dependence especially in the field of clothing and burning of foreign clothes, the revolutionary folkminds of Assam accepted it with rejoice as weaving is their identity, expression and specialization. Girls here are considered to be eligible for wedding if they excel in weaving, and the glamour goes to their mothers also.

Lots of folksongs were created regarding the art of weaving, and lovely Assam with heavenly beauty. This three have no parallel and used as metaphor in literature

\begin{verbatim}
Kapah katiba dhuniba tula
Nohowa thupari rupahi hola
Eri kapore epurush chaliba
Chalani kapore keidin jaba
Dhanya ei asom desh rachaki sundari besh
Khata khat chali jaok tat chirantam
\end{verbatim}

[You go on spinning the cotton thread. By doing this, you will be magnetic instead of a laughing stock. The endi cloth lasts for generations. What is the longevity of imported clothes? Thankful this beautiful piece of land (Assam) by practising looms traditionally]

\begin{verbatim}
gandhi kino swaraj kalli
itar dinor jtagilakok
murat kubei malli
\end{verbatim}

[Gandhi, what kind of freedom you have ushered! Girls have been killed by hammering on the head]
kapahi sutar seleng⁴ khani
boi diya sarubhani¹²

[Weave out a cheleng of cotton thread, oh youngest sister. I will not wrape a foreign cloth]

Luitor ghatote oh naoria
bandhili dingara tor
parat bhari di ebar chabihhi
sonar asom mor

Dekhibi banat keteki⁵ kusum
barit nanan phul
gabharur hatote makoti dekhibi
galot rangoli bol¹³

[Oh stranger boatman, take your boat to the shore and enjoy the scenic beauty of my golden Assam. You can have a look of keteki kusum⁹ in the forest and a varieties of flower in the garden. You will also see shuttles with the hands of girls, the pink beauty]

Mahatma Gandhi visited Assam for four times (19221, 1926, 1934and1946) and instigated burning foreign clothes at open places as a part of non-violence movrnent. He suggested the congress volunteers to fight against the use of opium. He convicted the indegenous Assamese people for their laziness and blamed for the illegal migration in the name of tea-industry

In 1926, Gandhi attended the conference of Indian National Congress held at Pandu of Guwahati in Assam. Having seen the heavy rainfall and abundance

*⁴ Seleng:- A thin cloth wrapped round the body or thrown over the shoulder.
*⁵ Keteki:- A fragrant flower (Pandanus odoratissimus), Kusum: flower, blossom.
of natural resources, he commented that there is no possibility of becoming insolvent if the Assamese proceed with valour and industry

When he arrived in 1934, Gandhi called for a war against untouchability in Assam. He warned the Satyagrahis not to violate the rules at any cost.

Lastly, Gandhi reached Assam on 9th August of 1946. He established the Kasturba Ashram this time at Guwahati and added in his inaugural speech that the women power is more important in his non-violent movement and the feminine power in Assam is more vigorous.

\[
\begin{align*}
Bol & \ bol \ bol \ bol \ o \ bol \\
Bahut & \ shakti \ dehat \ bhakti \\
Bol & \ aguwai \ bol \\
Gumori & \ ahise \ kaliya \ andhar \\
Bhoi & \ karibor \ nai \\
British & \ singha \ khediba \ lagiba \\
Jak & \ pati \ ah \ bhai \\
Guli & \ lathiloi \ kerep \ nakaro \\
Buku & \ pati \ lorn \ ami \\
Ahinga & \ juddhar \ ahban \ ahise \\
Mahatma & \ hoba \ sakshi
\end{align*}
\]

[March forward, march forward, with strength in shoulder and devotion in figure. Darkness comes roaring. Afraid not and come in a gang to drive away the British lion. We are not afraid of sticks and bullets but ready to embrace it. Call of non-violence is blowing where Mahatma stands as witness.]

\[
\begin{align*}
dalit & \ bharatar \ ashar \ pradip \\
joy & \ mahatma \ gandhi \\
mohan & \ rupere \ jagat \ muhila \\
ardhahari & \ krisak \ rupere \\
alap & \ bastrahari \\
shanta & \ soumya \ kshin \ dadhisi \\
kam & \ krodh \ lobh \ tyagi \\
sarba & \ dharmare \ artha \ bujila
\end{align*}
\]
prachari amrit bani
manabatar gathi mahan
sarha dharmake lovi

[Mahatma Gandhi, the triumphant, is the sole lamp of expectation for suppressed India. You bound together the universe by your magnetic personality. You look like a half fed half clad peasant. You are free from lust, anger and full of charities like the saint Dadhis. You understood the essence of all faiths, preached heart-melting speech and sewed a garland of humanism comprising all isms]

It is a historical fact that self-dependence assumed unprecedented importance during the movement for India's independence. As soon as Gandhi took the leadership of the freedom movement he wanted to stop importing foreign commodities and cultivated the practice of weaving among the freedom seekers to symbolize self dependence. Assamese were no exception to it.

Jatarate bhakti amar jatarate mukti amar
Jatarate gaon jaygan

[Our devotion and salvation merge in the spinning wheel. Our chorus of victory surrounds the spinning wheel]

The spinning wheel was considered as the lamp of Allauddin i.e. nothing is left undone by it. Some folkpoets even dared to compare it with the Sudarshan Chakra (a weapon always invincible) of Lord Krishna.

Jatar amar bhatar put
Jatar amar nati
Jatarar doulatat ami
Duwarat bandhong hati
Jatar amar tej mangsa
Jatar amar hiya
**Jatarar doulatat amar**

*Sat betar biya*¹⁷

[The spinning wheel is like our pretty dish and dearer as the grandson because we can even tame elephant with it. The spinning wheel is our flesh and blood, our heart, as we are in a position to celebrate the wedding of our seven sons with it]

Hard work and honest means of livelihood are the panacea for all types of suffocation—this very mantra was sown in the folkmind by the rapid circulation of the spinning wheel

The folksociety is so conscious that they stand as the conscience of the illiterate mass, sometimes as the teacher of the nation and sometimes as the newspaper. They decipher knowledge and latest information through the folksongs, dance and drama.

The performers of Oja-pali in Darrang district perform the activities of the freedom movement, Mahatma Gandhi, volunteers and the British government. The following songs are taken into the corpus of the performers.

**Diha:** swaraj lou bol bande mataram

**Pad:** koi bole congress committee thane thane

\[Khoi bole khaddar lowa swarajar karane\]

\[Gai bole gujratat Gandhi abatar...\]

\[....................\]

\[....................\]

\[Ahinsa mantra gowa hate kara kam\]

\[Bharat swadhin hobo bola ram ram\]¹⁸

(Refrain: take freedom, shout bande mataram.

Verse: ka tells that the congress committee is in all places

Kha tells to wear khaddar for independence

..............................................................

..............................................................
Recite the mantra of non-violence and activate the hands in work
Recite the holy name Ram, Ram to herald India’s freedom

GANDHIR GEET

(1)

Madan mohan malabya
Enraj jati asabhya
Lathi dangi juddha kare
Gandhire uparat
Kagaj acheni uttarat
Cithi lekho duparat
Nathurame guli kare
Gandhire oparat

(Savage is the British
Who keep Gandhi under the stick
The paper is in answer
We write at noon
Nathuram shoots
At Gandhi)

(2)

Chando lorei suruj lorei
Lori basumati ai ae
Charuta konae kapiba logiche
Gandhir baktita pai ae

(The moon moves, the sun moves
Movable is the mother earth
All corners shook
receiving Gandhi’s speech)

The ballads of Gandhi are sung in Diha nam or nagara nam, a folk performing
art. The following ballad is sung
Diha:  

oi ahare oi ahare joy joy Gandhi avatar  
Paradhin bharat karila uddhar  

(Refrain: -Gandhi incarnated in the month of Asar (Jun/July)  
Brought salvation to depended India)  

Pad:  

satyat harirup  tretat sriram  
Dwaparat Krishna avatar  
Kalit mahatma Gandhi  satyakami satyabadi  
Nararupi iswar sabar  

(Verse; -Hari in the Satya  
Sri Ram in the Treta  
Lord Krishna incarnated in dwapar  
In Kaliyuga, Mahatma,  
the truthful truth seeker  
Is the universal god in the guise of man)?  

Kalira prabhabe ghor  satya nasta bhailadur  
Manabaka manabe ghinai  
Jata ache naranari  samanya sobhita kari  
Kare prati daha maya nai  

(For deep influence of kali  
truth moves far away  
Hatred of man for man  
All men and womenfolk  
being avoid of fellow feelings  
Show no sympathy for others)  

(2)  

Diha:  

mahatmar abirbhab hol  
Dukhuni bharat matar ananda hol  
Mahatmar much chei harse bisode ai  
Muktir kamana pari roli  

(Refrain:-Mahatma appeared in the scene  
And joy prevails in the lips of mother India  
The urge for salvation has been postponed  
As Gandhi’s face mesmerized the lamented mother)
Pad:  
otharasa unsattar enraji chanat
Mahatmar janma hol porbandarat
Tera bachar bayasat kasturi bair sate
Biya hol mahatmar sisu kalate
Otharasa athasi enraji chanat
Prabesika pas kari jay bilatot 22
(Verse:-In 1869, the English year
Gandhi took birth at Porbandar
At the age of thirteen
Married Kasturibai
In 1887, the English year
Set out for London after matriculation)

(3)
dihā: mohan das bilatok gol
mad mangsa bidi churat
sakalo pari rol
(Refrain:-Mohandas left for foreign land
Cigarette, wine and meat
had been left here)

pad: pratigya karia jai matrir agat
Mad mangsa nakhao moi satya bilatot
Otharasa ekanna boi engraji chanat
Beristari pass kari ahe bharatar 23
(Verse: He promised in front of his mother
not to take wine and meat in abroad
In 1891, the English year
Landed in India as a lawyer.)

(4)
dihā: deshar abastha chai mahatmai bole hai oi
hari hari ki hōl mor deshar bilai
Janambhumik mor bideshi sason kare oi
(Refrain: Mahatma sighed having seen the status of the country
Oh god, what a pathetic downfall of my land
that foreigners dominate my motherland)

Pad: bilatar pora ahi ingraji jaban
Janmabhumi bharatak karaya mochan
Bharat basik kare asprisyata jnan
Tak dhekhi mahatmar mile apaman
Esaba durnit gusaibaka kari man
Africa deshaka Gandhi karila gaman
Africa deshat ache bharatiya bhai
Engraj sakale chui paniio nakhay
Tar hake satyagrah kari africat
Pulisar khunda khai saru ala dat

(verse:- The English people, from foreign land
enslaved mother India
They considered the Indians as untouchable
which disgraced Gandhi’s sentiment.
With an intention to rub this discrimination
Gandhi marched to Africa
Indian brothers are there
With whom water is also not shared
For that reason, he launched Satyagrah
And lost tooth by the big blows of police)

VOLUNTEERS' SONGS IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Bola bhai bola bhai bola bir darpe aguwai
Bola, bola bhai bola aguwai jananir joy gan gai
Souje maniram souje khudiram ache bimanote roi
Udgani disse jananir honte amak phasi loboloi
Napaharo ami hatyar kahini patharu ghatare oi
March forward, March forward, a heroic march
March forward singing the victorious chorus of the motherland
Maniram and Kshudiram are staring in the airplane
Instigate us to be hung for the motherland
We never forget the massacre of Patharughat
Where innocent masses were shot down by persuasion
The scene is too much heart rending that
Lala Lajpat Ray was beaten unto death by the rude government
The British soldiers killed hundreds of Punjabi brothers
This still pains us
Dearest is Phulaguri of our land
A place of lamentation for the immature death of the brothers)

(2)

sou je urise swaraj nichan
o bhai, unnat shire howa aguwan 26
(The flag of independence is flying
Hence march forward with high head)

(3)

hate hate dhari balla hindu muchalman
valanteer hoi ki kam kare
ali mure mure miting kare 27
(Hindu and Muslim, go hand in hand
What else the volunteers have done except commencing meeting at the road heads)
It has been noticed that folksongs encompassing weaving and Gandhi were nothing but a propaganda to disseminate the political happenings, proceeding and motivation of the Congress Party. Mahatma was thought to believe as an incarnation of god like Ram and Krishna. Insufficiency of media and a common thread to tie the entire mass ideologically, volunteers started generating folksongs canvassing Swadeshi movement. Gandhi and his volunteers were well aware of the credulous nature of the natives of Assam and also with Karlmarx's saying 'Religion is the opium of people'. Their campaigning accelerated twice for the feasibility and healing effect of folksongs.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2 Nabin Kath Hazarika, Gandhi Sahityar Sougandha (Tezpur: Pratibha Prakashan, 1993), 30

3 Jogesh Chandra Tamuli, Lokagiti Sangrah (Assam: Asom Sahitya Sabha, 1960), 123

4. Shashi Sharma, Asomar Lokasahitya (Guwahati: Students Stores, 1993), 343

5. ibid., 343


8. Shashi Sharma, op.cit., 131

9. Keshab Mahanta, op.cit., 60

10. ibid., 62

11. Benudhar Kalita, op.cit., 56


13 Benudhar-Kalita, op.cit., 42

14. ibid., 44
15 ibid, 56

16 Shashi Sharma op.cit., 130

17 ibid, 131

18 Kanak Chandra Saharia, *Darrangi Lokagit Sangrah* (Sipajhar: Asom Sahitya Sabha, 2005), 358

19 ibid, 359

20 ibid, 360

21 ibid, 360

22 ibid, 360

23 ibid, 361

24 ibid, 361

25 ibid, 363

26 ibid, 363

27 ibid, 363