In the year 1915, Gandhiji returned from South Africa to India with his successful experiments on 'Satyagraha'. He also made further experiments on Satyagraha at Champaran (1917), in the Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918) and against the Rowlatt Act (1919). His Satyagraha is based upon a cardinal principle of truth and non-violence. He advocates in his Young India, "Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute." His pragmatism made him to realise that it was too difficult to raise a war against a mighty power like English. But to energise the spirit among the people of India, he enthusiastically encouraged to carry out a peaceful resistance against the British rule in India. His political messages emboldened with philosophies electrified the nationalist sentiments of the people irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

The Jallianwall Bagh Massacre of 13th April, 1919 at Amritsar gave rise to Khilafat Movement and it paved the way for Hindu-Muslim unity in Lucknow Session of All India Congress Committee (AICC) meet. The combined efforts of Hindus and Muslims in the form of granting liberty to Swami Sraddhanand to preach from the pulpit of Jama Masjid and permitting Dr. Kitchlu to hold the key of Golden Temple at Amritsar could not break the audacity of the British authorities: the Rowlatt Act was not revoked; there was no sign of making any amends for the atrocities in the Punjab, or granting Swaraj to the nationalists. The Khilafat Non-Cooperation Movement was not a successful one.

In the special session held in September 1920 at Calcutta, Gandhi suggested to carry out a non-cooperation movement against the Government so long the latter would not redress the follies committed by her and also would promise to satisfy the nationalist urge for self-government. All the Congress leaders present there extended their enthusiastic support to Gandhiji. Once again, it was endorsed in the Annual Meet of AICC held in Nagpur in the month of December.
1920. Gandhiji instructed the Non-Cooperation programme to be launched in a peaceful manner with boycotting government educational institutions, organisations, offices, law courts, and legislatures, etc. Side by side, this programme was to be constructively oriented, i.e. to popularise the cult of Charkha and Khadi. This was, of course, a dynamic move and had brought dynamic changes in the attitudes and activities of the Congress leaders.

Gandhiji's charismatic appeal mobilised the people struggling for Swaraj in India. An urge was felt that Gandhi should make visits to different provinces in order to baptize the people with his political mission imbued with socio-economic development programmes. This would, of course, lead to gather momentum and to provide impetus among the people. Orissa was also infested with same impulses. It was Gopabandhu Das of village Suando of Puri district who, like Bhagiratha, persuaded Gandhiji to visit Orissa. And accordingly, Gandhiji paid his first visit to Orissa on 23rd March 1921. He reached at Cuttack on the same day and delivered his speech in different meetings. Then he went to Bhadrak from where he returned back to Satyabadi School on 27th to see its functioning. One thing appealed him here was that he noticed the spark of nationalism among the poor sections of the society who, ignoring their utter poverty, contributed paisa, pie and its fragmental units.

On the same day, Gandhiji with his followers like Kasturba, Rajendra Prasad, etc. proceeded to Puri where he received a hearty welcome from a large crowd from which a pretty number hailed from the remote areas. He addressed a large crowd-nearly 50,000 in number-in front of Simhadvara of the Great Temple. He also addressed the women in a special meeting "on the same day. Another notable event that deserves to be illustrated here is that Gandhiji raised his voice of protest against the use of foreign clothes in the temple of Lord Jagannath and also made it a general issue in the public meeting at Puri. As a result, the people of Puri put a pressure on the temple authorities to stop the use of such practices. Gopabandhu in his editorial in "The Samaja" on 18 June 1921, strongly advocated the old practice of the temple rituals in which no foreign element of any sort was used. As a result of this bold pressure, the chief priest of the temple made an appeal to the people of the country not to offer any kind of foreign clothes to the deities as they were pledged to use only Swadeshi articles for worship.

During his second visit to Orissa on 5th December 1927, Gandhiji spent 8th December at Banpur and from there he went to Bolagarh on 9th where he spent three days consecutively. On 11th, while he was busy in talking with Dinabandhu Andrews, he saw a bent old man holding a piece of straw in his mouth came to him. The man prostrated himself before Gandhiji. He learnt from the old man that as he was an untouchable; he did this only to show proper respect to Gandhiji. Furthermore, the old man told that the people of his caste were used to country liquor and also ate the flesh of dead animals. Gandhiji was really shocked at this information. The man again expressed his sad plight that it was not possible on his part to follow Gandhiji's advice because of the fear of being made outcast by his fellow-men. This time Gandhiji did not insist on him to contribute something for the national cause. But he pressurised the old man to practise three principles. They were: (i) he should not prostrate before anybody else; (ii) he should not be addicted to any kind of alcoholic drinks;
and (iii) he should not eat the flesh of the dead animals. Out of grief and remorse, Gandhiji wrote: "I have never seen in any place such kind of dead-peace."5

Gandhiji started his historic Padayatra from Puri on 9th May 1934. He attended the 'Gandhi Seba Sangha' Conference at Beraboi in Puri district in the year 1938 along with his wife Kasturba, Maulana Azad, Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Patel and others, but not Jawaharlal Nehru. In his address at Beraboi Conference, Gandhiji highlighted the Hindu-Muslim conflict and also suggested for the necessity of organisation of a peace-force (Santisena). He also clarified the aims and objectives of peace-force. Of course, the peace-force started its initiative programme from Puri.6

There is no need to evaluate the historic importance of Gandhiji's Puri visits or other visits to different parts of Orissa. He preached the doctrine of self-sacrifice, self-reliance and self-sustenance among the people of Orissa. We should accept that Gandhian touch revolutionised the people's mind in Orissa as a result of which they rose from their slumber and exhibited their potency in the freedom struggle for India.

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6. Ramadevi Choudhury, Jivan Pathe, Grantha Mandira, Binod Behari, Cuttack, 1984, p.120.

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Shri Debasis Nayak, Minister for Information & Public Relations, Sports and Youth Services inaugurating the Conference of Information & Public Relations Officers at Bhubaneswar on 16.10.2004. Dr. Subas Pani, Chief Secretary of Orissa is seen addressing the Conference. Shri Digamber Mohanty, Commissioner-cum-Secretary and Shri Baishnab Prasad Mohanty, Director, I & P.R are also present.