



# Centenary of the Chauri Chaura Incident

## Why in News

On the occasion of the centenary of the **Chauri Chaura** incident, a **postage stamp was released** by the Prime Minister.

- Chauri Chaura is a **town in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh**.
- On **4<sup>th</sup> February, 1922**, this town witnessed a violent incident - a large crowd of peasants set on fire a police station that killed 22 policemen. Due to this incident **Mahatma Gandhi** called off the **Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22)**.

## Key Points

### ▪ Background (Launch of the Non-Cooperation Movement):

- On 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1920, Gandhi had launched the Non-Cooperation Movement against the government.
  - It involved using **swadeshi** and **boycott of foreign goods**, especially machine made cloth, and legal, educational and administrative institutions, "**refusing to assist a ruler who misrules**".
- In the winter of **1921-22, volunteers of the Congress and the Khilafat Movement** were organised into a **national volunteer corps**.
  - **Khilafat Movement** was a **pan-Islamic force in India that arose in 1919** in an effort **to salvage the Ottoman caliph as a symbol of unity among the Muslim community in India** during the British raj.
  - The **Congress supported the movement** and Mahatma Gandhi sought to conjoin it to the Non-Cooperation Movement.

### ▪ Details of the Chauri Chaura Incident:

- On 4<sup>th</sup> February, volunteers congregated in the town, and after the meeting, proceeded in a procession to the local police station, and to picket the nearby Mundera bazaar.
  - The police fired into the crowd killing some people and injuring many volunteers.
  - In retaliation, the crowd proceeded to set the police station on fire.
  - Some of the policemen who tried to escape were caught and battered to death. A lot of police property, including weapons, was destroyed.

### ▪ Reaction of the British:

- The British Raj **prosecuted the accused aggressively**. A sessions court quickly sentenced 172 of the 225 accused to death. However, ultimately, only 19 of those convicted were hanged.

### ▪ Reaction of Mahatma Gandhi:

- He condemned the crime of the policemen's killing. The volunteer groups in nearby villages were disbanded, and a **Chauri Chaura Support Fund** was set up to demonstrate

"genuine sympathy" and seek atonement.

- Gandhi **decided to stop the Non-Cooperation Movement**, which he saw as having been tainted by unforgivable violence. He bent the Congress Working Committee to his will, and **on 12<sup>th</sup> February, 1922, the satyagraha (movement) was formally suspended.**

▪ **Reaction of Other National Leaders:**

- **Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders** leading the Non-Cooperation movement **were shocked that Gandhiji had stopped the struggle** when the civil resistance had consolidated their position in the freedom movement.
- Other leaders like Motilal Nehru and CR Das recorded their dismay at Gandhi's decision and decided to establish the **Swaraj Party.**

▪ **Justification for the Suspension of the Movement:**

- **Gandhi** on his part, justified himself on grounds of his unshakeable **faith in non-violence.**
- Historians such as Bipan Chandra have argued that **Gandhian strategy of non-violence was based on the premise that the use of repressive force against non-violent protesters would expose the real character of the colonial state** and ultimately put moral pressure on them, but incidents such as Chauri Chaura defeated that strategy.
- Besides, Bipin chandra opines that **withdrawal or shift to a phase of non-confrontation** is an inherent part of a strategy of political action that is based on the masses.

▪ **Immediate Result:**

- The disillusionment resulting from the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement nudged **many of the younger Indian nationalists towards the conclusion that India would not be able to throw off colonial rule through non-violence.**
- It was from the ranks of these impatient patriots that some of India's most of the revolutionaries came into picture like Jogesh Chatterjee, Ramprasad Bismil, Sachin Sanyal, Ashfaquulla Khan, Jatin Das, **Bhagat Singh**, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Masterda Surya Sen, and many others.
- Besides, sudden termination of the Non-Cooperation Movement **disillusioned the Khilafat movement leaders** that created a rift between Congress and the muslim leaders.

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