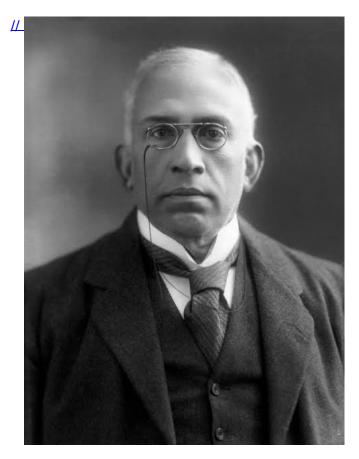


# Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair

## Why in News

A biopic on **Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair** will be produced.

 It will be based on the book, 'The case that shook the empire' written by Raghu Palat and Pushpa Palat in 2019.



## **Key Points**

- Brief Profile:
  - Born in the year 1857 in Mankara village of Malabar's Palakkad district.
  - Known for being a passionate advocate for social reforms and a firm believer in the self-determination of India.
  - He was an acclaimed lawyer and judge in the Madras High Court.
- Achievements:
  - **President of INC:** He was one of the early builders of the **Indian National Congress** (INC), formed in 1885.
    - In 1897, he became the **youngest president of the INC** in the history of the party

till then, and the only Malayali to hold the post ever.

- Member of the Raleigh University Commission: In 1902, Lord Curzon appointed him a member of the Raleigh University Commission.
- **Knighthood:** In 1904, he was appointed as Companion of the Indian Empire by the King-Emperor and in 1912 he was knighted.
- Judge in Madras High Court: He was appointed as a permanent judge in the Madras High Court in 1908.
- **Part of Viceroy Council:** In 1915, he became part of the Viceroy's Council, put in charge of the education portfolio.
- Role in Freedom Movement:
  - As a fervent freedom fighter, he firmly believed in India's **right for self-government.**
  - Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms: In 1919, as part of the Viceroy's Executive Council, he played an important role in the expansion of provisions in the <u>Montagu-Chelmsford</u> <u>reforms.</u>
    - It introduced a system of dyarchy in the provinces and increased participation of Indians in the administration.
  - **Resignation from the Viceroy's Council:** When the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh (13<sup>th</sup> April, 1919) happened, he resigned from the Viceroy's Council in protest.
    - His resignation shook the British government. In the immediate aftermath, **press** censorship in Punjab was lifted and martial law terminated.
    - Further, a committee was set up under <u>Lord William Hunter</u> to examine the disturbances in Punjab.
  - Critical of Gandhian Methods: In his book 'Gandhi and Anarchy', he spelt out his critique of <u>Gandhi's methods</u>, especially those of non-violence, civil disobedience and non-cooperation.
    - He believed that any of these movements was destined to lead to riots and bloodshed.
- Legal Battle against Michael O'Dwyer:
  - Defamation Trial: Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair accused Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer in his book, 'Gandhi and anarchy' for being responsible for the atrocities at the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.
    - For this he faced a defamation trial filed by Michael O'Dwyer in England.
  - **Impact of Trial:** Though Nair lost the case, the trial had a resounding impact on the British empire in India.
    - At a time when the nationalist movement was gaining momentum, Indians saw in the judgement a clear bias of the British government and an effort to shield those who committed atrocities against their own people.
    - The verdict was momentous in that it strengthened the determination of the nationalists to fight for self-government.

### Social Reforms:

- As a Madras High Court judge, his best-known judgments clearly indicate his commitment to social reforms.
- In **Budasna v Fatima (1914)**, he passed a radical judgement when he ruled that those who converted to Hinduism cannot be treated as outcastes.
- In a few other cases, he upheld inter-caste and inter-religious marriages.

### Source: IE

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