



# 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.

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## 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 [Montagu-Chelmsford reforms.](#)
    - 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 [Lord William Hunter](#) to examine the disturbances in Punjab.
  - **Critical of Gandhian Methods:** In his book '**Gandhi and Anarchy**', he spelt out his critique of [Gandhi's methods](#), 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](#)