



# Justice K. N. Wanchoo

## The Only Chief Justice of India Without a Law Degree

Not many know this, but India once had a Chief Justice of India who did not hold a law degree. Yet, he rose to the highest judicial office through sheer intellect, discipline, and an extraordinary public service career. Justice Kailas Nath Wanchoo, born in 1903 in Allahabad, studied at Muir Central College and Wadham College, Oxford, before joining the Indian Civil Service (ICS) in 1926. His deep administrative experience became the foundation of his judicial excellence. From Sessions Judge (1937) to Allahabad High Court Judge (1947), to Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court (1951), and finally Supreme Court Judge (1958), his journey was marked by integrity and quiet brilliance. On 24 April 1967, he became the Chief Justice of India, the only CJI in history without a formal LL.B. degree. His leadership extended beyond the courtroom: Chaired the U.P. Judicial Reforms Committee (1950) Led the Indore Firing Inquiry Commission (1954) Headed the Railway Accidents Inquiry Committee post-retirement Served as Chairman of the Board of Arbitration, Ministry of Labor Justice Wanchoo's life is a powerful reminder that degrees open doors, but dedication, clarity of thought, and public service build legacies. A story worth remembering, especially in today's world where passion and purpose often matter more than formal pathways.