

SIR ALLADI AND THE LEGAL LUMINARIES OF MYLAPORE*

by *Dr. M. S. Rajajee, IAS*

I have fond memories of Mylapore. I spent quite a few years in Mylapore where we have our family house. I have spent many happy hours wandering around Mylapore and in particular walking up and down Luz Church Road. Luz can be called the hub of Mylapore though I am not precisely clear as to why it is called Luz. The well-known Santhome Church is at the other end of the road which goes in front of Luz. Therefore the road in Mylapore which takes off from Luz and goes to Alwarpet is called Luz Church Road. Quite possibly it got its name from the Church also.

Sir Alladi lived on Luz Church Road in a sprawling bungalow. There were many legal luminaries who were contemporaries or seniors to Sir Alladi but used to live on Luz Church road or in Mylapore. The Mylaporeans like to believe that they had contributed in the past several intellectual giants and this has perhaps something to do with the soil of Mylapore, the religiosity of Mylapore, and water in front of the tank of the Kapaleeswarar Temple in Mylapore. But sometime ago, the tank of the temple got dried up and perhaps that is the reason why Mylapore is not contributing intellectual giants as it did in the past! But then I must come back to the main theme.

Right on Luz Church Road there were the houses of Justice Patanjali Sastri (who adorned the Supreme Court), Sri Balasubramanya Aiyar, the well known advocate who helped start many educational institutions including the Vivekananda College, Sri Bhashyam Aiyangar, another legal luminary, who has his lovely old bungalow at the other end of Luz Church Road near the Alwarpet turning, Sir S. Varadachariar, who had his huge house next to the Buckingham Canal, Justice V. Krishnaswami Iyer, who adorned the bench of the Madras High Court with great dignity also had his house in Mylapore - the list goes on.

There is another reason that I am writing on Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer and other legal luminaries of Mylapore. Sir Alladi had three sons, the first of whom is Justice Alladi Kuppaswami who became the CJ of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, the second was Prof. Alladi Ramakrishnan, an outstanding scientist who founded the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, and the third was Alladi Prabhakar, Dean of the College of Engineering at Osmania University. I happened to be a student of Alladi Ramakrishnan and therefore I have visited the house of Sir Alladi on many occasions. That lovely bungalow "Ekamra Nivas" was, and is, a jewel on this road. At that time I really did not know why it was called Ekamra Nivas. Only recently have I come to know that Sir Alladi named the house after his father Sri Ekamra Sastri. I vaguely remember my father taking me to meet Sir Alladi towards the end of his legal career. I do not know how my father knew Sir Alladi. I also remember meeting Sir Alladi's brother-in-law Sri Umamaheswaram who was a Judge of the Andhra High Court.

*Appeared in the *New Swatantra Times*, Issue 17, in November 1996

Sir Alladi was born on 14th May, 1883 at Pudur near Naidupet in the Nellore District in a sub-community of the Brahmins. As these people originated from Pudur, they were known as Pudur Dravidas. They were all brahmins from the erstwhile Madras State and had migrated in search of livelihood to Pudur and so they were called Pudur Dravidas. They spread subsequently to Gudur, Kavali and other places. Subsequently, the Pudur Dravidas moved back to Madras and formed a distinct sub-community. The Pudur Dravidas have contributed many intellectual giants - apart from the family of Sir Alladi, one can refer to Sri A. Mahadeva Sastri, who won great acclaim as a Sanskritist by bringing out a large number of publications from Kalakshetra, Sri Vedam Venkataraya Sastri, a scholar and playwright. There are several children and grand children of these luminaries who have attained eminence in fields as varied from advocacy to the administrative services. Of course, the identity of the sub-community has disappeared over time because part of the sub-community moved to Madras and inter-married with the Tamilians and got accepted as Tamilians, while another section of this sub-community moved to different parts of Andhra Pradesh, got inter-married with the Telugus and have been accepted as Vaidikas of Andhra Pradesh.

Sir Alladi's father Sri Ekamra Sastri was not very well off. But early in the life of Sir Alladi, Ekamra Sastri realised that his son Krishnaswami deserved a better education than would be available in Pudur. The entire family migrated to Madras in 1891. Young Alladi was admitted into a Government school - Peddanayakanpet Middle School- as a free scholar because that was all that Ekamra Sastri could afford at that time. Young Alladi passed his school examinations with great credit and joined the Church of Scotland's Mission College. Alladi had to face severe privation at this point of time since his father died, and even the meagre income which was available to his family dried up. In 1901 he joined the Madras Christian College. In those days it was a premier college to which all aspiring graduates got admitted in the F.A. (as it was then known), and the B.A. The Christian College had such giants like Miller, Skinner, Russell, and Kellett. Those who are familiar with Madras city will recall that in the olden days, there was a well known high school called Kellett High School in Triplicane. The school is still there, but does not have the eminence it had earlier because a number of new schools have overtaken this old school. Young Alladi was a favourite student of Prof. Kellett because of his outstanding ability in History. Alladi passed the B.A Examination in History in First Class, which was quite a rarity because it was difficult to get a First Class in the Arts subjects. After graduation he was appointed as a Tutor in History in the same college, and what was unusual was that he was asked to take classes for the B.A students. It is said that he delivered his lectures with lucidity and eloquence far beyond his age.

While working as a tutor in the Christian College, Alladi attended the Law classes, and passed his B.L Examination in 1905. It must be remembered that in those days, the Christian College was not in Tambaram (25 km from Madras, City), but in the heart of George Town where the Law College was located. Hence it was possible for him to be a tutor and also attend Law classes. It is illustrative of young Alladi's courage and faith in himself that after he graduated in Law, he gave up his tutorship and plunged into the legal field, with virtually no backing as far as briefs and cases were concerned. He joined the chambers of Sri Sundara Iyer who was then one of the outstanding leaders of the Madras

Bar. Within a short time Alladi was able to prove his talents. All the other leaders of the Bar wanted the help and assistance of Alladi as a junior. This pre-eminent position was achieved by young Alladi because of his clarity of mind, lucidity of thinking, application, and what was most remarkable - a great facility for remembering Case Law. He was almost a walking encyclopedia and could master the various case laws on different intricate points of law. At the same time, because of his clarity of thinking and felicity of expression, he could produce an excellent brief of a case with arguable points to enable the senior advocate to present his case. All these gave young Alladi the self-confidence so necessary to succeed in life. In less than three years after enrolment, Alladi was appearing in many important cases as a Junior Counsel, and not infrequently handling the cases himself in the absence of the senior advocate. By 1910 he had started on the high road of success.

In 1911 Sri Sundara Iyer became a Judge of the High Court, and in a sense this was a blessing for young Alladi, because the entire practice of Sri Sundara Iyer devolved on him. The period 1910 -15 was an extremely busy time as his services were constantly requisitioned by an ever growing clientele wanting him to appear in the moffusil courts as also in the High Court.

By 1915, after the elevation of other senior advocates like Sri Srinivasa Iyengar and Sri Krishnaswami Iyer, Alladi became the acknowledged leader of the Madras Bar. In 1920 he was appointed Advocate General of Madras. Thus at a fairly young age, Alladi not only became the leader of the Bar, but he was selected to be the official head of the Bar being the Advocate General. He adorned this position for over 15 years, serving three different governments - the diarchic government, the Congress Government, and the Advisers Regime. This speaks volumes of his integrity and personality that three different governments should have retained him as the Advocate General. This contrasts with the situation we see these days, when with the change of every government, there is a new Advocate General.

Honors came to young Alladi in quick succession. He was awarded the *Kauser-i-Hind Medal* in appreciation of his philanthropic and social services. In 1932, 'Knighthood' was conferred on him in recognition of his great services to the State. The poor young Alladi had come a long way to become Sir Alladi by 1932. Even by that time, Sir Alladi was known not only for his knowledge of Law and for his extra-ordinary abilities as an Advocate, but as a person who gave willingly and generously to various causes. Simultaneously he set apart some time for the problems of higher education by being a Member of the Senate of the Madras University to which he made a handsome contribution. For over 25 years he was a member of the Court of The Benares Hindu University to which he made a handsome contribution.

Many people wrongly believe that Sir Alladi was outstanding only in Civil Law. The brilliance of his mind was such, that when required he could appear even in criminal cases. In the well known CK and Sons case, and the Karunguzhi Parcel Murder Case, he appeared and showed his masterly knowledge of criminal law and displayed an admirable sense of justice.

Sir Alladi will always be remembered as the leading force behind the drafting of the Constitution. It will not be an exaggeration to say that Sir Alladi lives through the Indian Constitution, which was virtually his handwork. Many foreign jurists have also admired

the felicity and workmanship of the legal language of the Constitution. This is in no small measure due to the penmanship of Sir Alladi. He was gifted with an exceptionally quick mind and an alert comprehension. His mind was exceedingly versatile and he could easily take to any branch of Law whether it was zamindari succession or intricate interpretations of the Hindu Law or complicated issues of land tenure, or even matters pertaining to canonical law. It is said that he had once to argue in Travancore in a difficult case involving the Syrian Christian Church. He showed such a mastery of the medieval theology and the evolution of the Syrian Christian Church, that it left all those who were present on that occasion, dumbfounded! If one were to sum up, Sir Alladi was an eminent jurist, a keen lover of books, a benefactor of all causes, good and righteous, a loyal and devoted friend, and above all a great humanist.

I propose to quote only a few tributes paid to him. Sir S. Radhakrishnan, another outstanding personality who was knighted by the British Government, was to write: "I heard of him first when I joined the Madras Christian College, as a brilliant student of history, and an able teacher of that subject. Very soon after joining the profession of Law, he worked his way up to the front rank in that very jealous profession. Even a layman can admire his nation-wide reputation for brilliant advocacy and subtlety of interpretation. To me he has always remained a simple, sincere, generous and warm hearted friend." To be great and yet to be humble, to be outstanding and yet to be simple, is very difficult. Sri C. Rajagopalachari, after praising the qualities of the advocacy of Sir Alladi, and paying a handsome tribute to his qualities in donating generously to all causes, writes: "Sir Alladi's simplicity of heart is even more bewitching than the superb qualities of head for which he is admired. I have known him for many years. There are not many lovable people in the world like him."

I did not have the good fortune to hear Sir Alladi arguing cases in the Court. But going through the great tributes paid to Sir Alladi by various persons, one is left in wonderment of the qualities of this great jurist. I can only say that I was blessed to stand in the corridors in which he must have walked and I breathed the very air that he breathed in Ekamra Nivas. It is said that if one goes to Oxford, that itself makes a person scholarly. In the same way, I would say that if one were to just enter Ekamra Nivas, one breathes the greatness of Sir Alladi!

As I said in the beginning of this article, I propose to touch briefly about the legal doyens of Mylapore of that period. Sir S. Bhashyam Aiyangar, whose house as I had mentioned was at the end of Luz Church Road, was another legal luminary. It is said that the advocacy of Sir Bhashyam was deliberative and slow and somewhat halting, but he made up for this by his close analysis, his penetrating intellect, his wonderful adaptability, and his power of divination and his insight into the working of the mind of the Judges before whom he presented his case. Sir Alladi, while speaking when Sir Bhashyam Iyengar was to lay down office (after he was elevated as a Judge), was to say: "His passion for the profession is such and his almost spiritual devotion to the pursuit of Law as a science has become a part of the heritage of the profession in this Presidency. The Law Reports which are illuminated by his masterly judgements, which form a special chapter on Indian jurisprudence, brings out his scholarly erudition, his insight and his legal acumen." Sir Alladi was to continue: "In my younger days at the Bar, if a member of the profession

wanted to master the intricacies of an Indian enactment or a particular branch of law, there was no better course open to the young student than to closely study the judgements of K. S. Bhashyam. Sir Bhashyam was a beacon light to all generations of the lawyers of the period.”

Sri V. Krishnaswami Iyer was another great lawyer of that period. He was an arresting personality. In forensic brilliance and eloquent presentation, there were not many who were his equals. Sir Alladi speaking about Sri V. Krishnaswami Iyer mentions:”His sparkling eyes, his erect demeanour, and his commanding personality, contributed as much to the powerful impression his arguments produced on the mind of the court even as the force and cogency of the arguments themselves. Even a Judge, prone to entertain no argument but that which appealed to pure reason, could not resist the magical influence of his inspiring opening address in a complicated case.”It must have been heavenly to have been present in the Court when such legal giants were presenting their cases.

I had already mentioned about Sri P. R. Sundara Iyer under whom young Alladi was a junior. Sri Sundara Iyer was known to be thorough in the presentation of his cases, and in dissecting every conceivable point of law. He had an orderly presentation of the facts, mentioning the right point and the right time. He had a sense of proportion and a due regard for the relevant importance of the various questions of fact and of law. Sri Sundara Iyer was elevated as a Judge and all his judgements were marked by erudition, research, and an exhaustive presentation.

Another notable advocate of that period was Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyar. There is a well known girl’s school named after Lady Sivaswami Aiyar, and the well-known P. S. High School named after him. Sivaswami Aiyar became a Member of the Executive Council. The statement “speech is the man”, applies appropriately to Sir Sivaswami Aiyar. Sir Alladi speaking about Sivaswami Aiyar states: “Every word of his is weighed; there is no exaggerated emphasis on any point, and there is no excursion in fields which have not been thoroughly explored. His apparently faltering manner on certain occasions is the best index of his most careful deliberation, and his anxiety to use the right word appropriate to the occasion.” Sir Sivaswami Aiyar was not just a great jurist. He was an outstanding Sankritist. He could quote with profusion from The Ramayana, The Mahabharatha, and the Upanishads.

Though not living on Luz Church Road, another Mylaporean who was an eminent jurist, and who became Judge, was Sir Vepa Ramesam. He used to live on what was then known as Edward Elliots Road in Mylapore. He was an outstanding contemporary of Sir Alladi and in many cases they were fielded against each other. The Mylavaram case and the Vadrev Zamindar case are two well known cases. There was no blustering or theatrical air about the advocacy of Sir Ramesam. It was marked by directness, terseness, and brevity. At a very young age of 45, he was appointed as a Judge of the Madras High Court. He was at home at every work of the court and he was well liked as a Judge because he always rested his conclusions on pre-eminent grounds of justice. It is said that good mathematicians become good lawyers because there is a rationality in these two subjects. Sir Vepa Ramesam was a mathematician and he was an outstanding jurist. Sir Alladi while paying tribute to Sir Vepa Ramesam when he was to lay down office as a Judge of the Madras High Court, said: “The trouble with you was not to remind you of a particular

thing, but how to make you forget things or incidents which might stand in the way of the arguments of the counsel. You are gifted with a memory which forgets nothing.”

Another outstanding advocate who preceded Sir Alladi and who occupied an equally eminent position, and also hailing from Mylapore, was Sir Srinivasa Varadachariar. Not always does a proficient Advocate make a distinguished Judge. In the case of Sir Varadachariar, his legal learning was supportive of his passion for justice, and therefore he excelled as a Judge. Alladi while paying tribute to Sir S. Varadachariar said: “By your learning and ability, your penetrating intellect, your mastery of the intricate details of every case, your suave manners, the reputation you earned for scrupulous and fair presentation of your clients cause, and your exposition of the legal principles involved in it, you attained a position at the bar which made some of your compeers occasionally feel a sense of handicap when appearing against you.”

So many eminent judges and advocates lived on Luz Church Road. But today it is very distressing to walk on the same Luz Church Road , as many old buildings have been brought down and new flats and apartments have taken their place. Perhaps even now there are some outstanding Advocates living in those apartments and making a mark in the Madras High Court. But then, the explosion in the number of Advocates has not made anyone to come up since it has become a severe cut-throat competition for success. The same fall in values which has overtaken other walks of life, has overtaken the profession of advocacy and the esteemed judiciary. But then for a person like me who fondly remembers the houses where the great Advocates and Judges lived, there is at least a memory to fall back on. There is still Ekamra Nivas which has withstood the onslaught of the flat builders. It is still there for me to think of Sir Alladi, the doyen among the leading advocates who were all Mylaporeans.

Dr. M. S. Rajajee, IAS, was Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh in Hyderabad. He was a student of Alladi Ramakrishnan in the MSc class at the Presidency College, Madras.
- Krishnaswami Alladi