

## A PERFECT PORTRAIT

*N. Rajagopal Ayyangar was perhaps one of the closest to my father among his professional associates. His perfect portrait of his Guru for the High Court Centenary Volume is a masterpiece of biographical essay which could only be a product of sincerity, emotion, gratitude, admiration and logical analysis. I read it often with undiminished pleasure, sometimes with a tinge of envy that, he was able to appreciate my father's legal genius with a keener sense and wiser understanding than I could as a younger son who had strayed away from the legal profession, albeit to pursue a scientific career.*

*NR's article is reproduced with the kind permission of the publishers, the MLJ and the author who has a great affection for me. What a touching gesture that he should start with projecting my father's giant stature in law against the background of his feeble health! This is similar in style and spirit to the Right Hon'ble Sastri's silver tongued estimate of the great Kasturiranga Iyengar, the father of The Hindu.*

ALLADI RAMAKRISHNAN

### Editor's Note

N. Rajagopala Ayyangar began his legal training in 1926 under T. R. Venkatarama Sastriar and Sir Alladi. He practised as a lawyer in the Madras High Court where he rose to the position of Judge in 1953. From 1960 to 64 he served as a Justice of the Supreme Court. This article was written in 1962 for the Centenary of the Madras High Court when he was a Supreme Court Justice. MLJ above refers to the Madras Law Journal (Press) which brought out the Centenary Volume where this article appeared.

In his article, Rajagopala Ayyangar puts emphasis on how Sir Alladi prepared for his cases and how he trained his juniors.

*Krishnaswami Alladi*

## SIR ALLADI KRISHNASWAMI AYYAR

by *Hon'ble Justice Mr. N. RAJAGOPALA AYYANGAR*

Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, short in stature and of thin build, was nevertheless, a giant of legal learning, who put the Madras Bar on a high pedestal. His health was far from robust and there were several nights during which he hardly slept, being kept awake by headache or pain in the body. It is when his unparalleled achievements at the Bar are viewed in the background of this handicap of poor health, that one obtains a true measure of his greatness and is left wondering what he would have achieved had he been gifted with robust health.

At the start of his life, Sir Alladi had to struggle against poverty and it had left an indelible impress on his character. Gratitude for any kindness shown to him when he was not well off, was an essential part of his nature and the persons whom he treated with the greatest affection all through his life were those who had been of help to him in his early days. He was generous and he could not bear to see misery arising from poverty, and his charity was particularly directed to affording assistance to hundreds of poor students to go through and complete their studies.

Sir Alladi's rise in the profession was meteoric for within a few years of his joining the bar, he had with no adventitious aid, and without the backing of wealth or influence, made his mark, his name being on everyone's lips. When hardly seven years old at the Bar, he had become a leader, and ascended to the very top, a position which he held for over thirty years.

He had profound knowledge of almost all branches of law, born of intense study of every reported decision, English and Indian. He has told me that during the period he was an apprentice under the late P. R. Sundara Ayyar, as well as during the first few years at the Bar, he would be going to his master's house in Mylapore from his then residence in Krishnappa Naicken Agraharam in George Town by tram and that he would be utilising the time taken by the journey, in studying volume after volume of Moore's Indian Appeals and the Law Reports - Indian Appeals. He had a remarkably retentive and accurate memory for everything he read, so much so, that even after a single reading, he would quote from memory, well expressed passages from the decisions in which the principles underlying them are stated. His intellect was razor-like in keenness and was analytical, for everything he read was stored, each in its place. What was therefore remarkable about his memory was its selectiveness. For example, in relation to reported decisions, he remembered just the essential facts including every detail thereof necessary for appreciating the principles enunciated. His grip of first principles was so firm that he could with unerring precision, draw subtle distinctions between case and case dealing with the same point.

After acquainting himself with the general nature of the fact, he would go through the documents not entirely in chronological order, but as he went on, would try to evolve some theory as to the probabilities and proceed to find out if the record supported it. In the end he would have read every page of the record. The attempt would be to get what he considered the central or vital point in the case on which the success or failure would turn and the details would be so arranged as to focus on that point. As he went on reading, he would underline with a pencil what he considered of importance, making also vertical

marking in the margin, and by the time he had finished his study, very many of the lines in entire record would have been marked, but he could still remember the passages he required for establishing any particular fact or any particular feature of the case.

He would make notes in large characters often aslant about 10 to 12 lines on a page, so that his notes occupied quite a number of pages. His writing was not without elegance, but more indicative of force. He would just look through these notes merely to fix up the salient points in his mind but seldom consulted them during the arguments, nor were they used to fix the order in which the arguments were to be presented.

His method of preparing the legal points was somewhat unique. He would get his juniors - whether briefed in the case or not - to work on the several points involved and gather all the decisions bearing on each one of them. He would discuss with his juniors every step in his reasoning threadbare inviting their criticism as regards each point involved as well as constructive suggestions as to any preferable line of approach in the argument. He would participate in the discussion on equal terms with his juniors and would generously acknowledge any suggestion of value which was offered by anyone. This method of study had two results - for himself the elimination practically of surprises being sprung on him either by the opposing counsel or from the Bench during the course of the arguments in court, and for his juniors it meant an education of an unparalleled character in the basic legal principles, in the method of ratiocination and in the subtleties of the law.

His address to the Court was masterly and extremely persuasive. He could never be dull and even to the most dry-as-dust facts, he could impart an interest which would be sustained. There would be a central theme around which the details would be made to fit in and make one wonder if there could be any other answer to the submissions made by him. His memory for case-law was so prodigious that he could, unaided by recent reading, trace the historical development of several principles of law stating off-hand the relevant citation, both English and Indian. His voice was far from soft, but quite loud as to be distinct, not melodious but compelling attraction. He would modulate it as to impart emphasis and when he decided to drive home a point. But this however was done effortlessly. When he was at pains to make a point or trying hard to establish a proposition of law he was propounding, his thoughts would run much faster than his words, and he would have some sentences incomplete and go on to the next. This incompleteness was never noticeable and in fact served to hammer home his point by adding emphasis to his style. His style was not ornate but direct and forcible, and he spoke the language of the law for he had made passages from leading cases laying down basic propositions in the several branches of legal learning part of his vocabulary.

Possibly nothing could illustrate better the effect that Sir Alladi produced on the court than the following incident. Sir Alladi was in Delhi arguing a case in the Federal Court before a Bench headed by Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of India. Sir Alladi had finished his speech by lunch. Sir John Simon had come to Delhi and was expected to visit the Court during its sitting in the afternoon. During the luncheon interval, Sir Maurice Gwyer sent for Sir Alladi and requested him to continue his arguments during the afternoon also as he desired that Sir John Simon should have an opportunity of listening to him. The same thing occurred in Madras. Sir Lionel Leach requested Sir Alladi to commence arguments in a case in which he appeared was lower down in the cause list

when Sir John Simon visited Madras during the same trip to India.

Sir Alladi was a voracious reader of books on politics and political philosophy and biography, besides those on legal topics in every branch of law, including public International Law. In later years, particularly after the Government of India Act of 1935 came into force, and the Federal Court was set up, he specialised in the study of Constitutional Law of the Dominions and of the U. S. A. and acquired a deep and accurate knowledge which he utilised in the service of his country as a member of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly. Sir Alladi was the Advocate-General of Madras for a fairly long 17 years. More than once in the Twenties of this century, a place on the High Court Bench was offered to him but he declined the offer since, apart from other considerations, he felt that his talents were more suited to the Bar than to the Bench. I believe, I am not disclosing any secret when I say that when the Federal Court was established, he was inclined to accept a Judgeship of that Court and he felt some little disappointment that though his name was mentioned as a probable choice even by English legal journalists, the offer was not made.

In private life he was simple as a child and capable of the warmest friendship. He was generous with his money for every good cause and for relieving the needs of his friends and was most hospitable. I have seldom known a person with a more lovable disposition or one on whom the high reputed and great position at the Bar sat so lightly. His was a harmonious blend of genius, exceptional ability and overflowing goodness.