

C. R. AND ALLADI - UNISON IN CONTRAST

Preface

In 1971, my distinguished friend T. Sadasivam of Kalki invited me to write an article for the souvenir to mark the ninety-third birthday of India's oldest and most honoured living statesman, C. Rajagopalachari. I could think of C. R. only in association with my great father since my admiration and veneration for him started in my boyhood when he used to visit Ekamra Nivas so often to consult my father. This article is written in the 'spirit of the thirties' when exalted men contended with an exalted Empire inspired by exalted ideals.

I am thankful to Sadasivam for his kind permission to include this article in the Alladi Diary as an appendix.

Alladi Ramakrishnan

Editor's Note

Chakravarti Rajagopachari (1878-1972), a great statesman, scholar and writer of twentieth century India, was popularly known as C. R. or Rajaji. He and Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer were close friends and had mutual admiration for their expertise in their professions. Just as C. R. was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, Mr. T. Sadasivam was a follower of C. R. and Gandhi. Sadasivam was the Co-Founder (along with Kalki Krishnamuthy) of the *Kalki*, a Tamil magazine founded in 1941 and published weekly. The magazine was named after Kalki Krishnamurthy, but Sadasivam also played such a prominent role in it, that he was often referred to as "Kalki" Sadasivam. Mr. Sadasivam's wife, M. S. Subbulakshmi (famously known as M. S.), was one of the greatest vocalists in Carnatic Music in the twentieth century. In addition to his work at Kalki, Sadasivam also played the role as Manager for M. S. in arranging her numerous concerts in India and around the world.

Alladi Ramakrishnan was passionately interested in carnatic music, and loved the music of M. S. So he and Mr. Sadasivam became good friends. Indeed when M. S. was invited to sing at the United Nations in 1966 on her first concert tour to America, Sadasivam approached Alladi Ramakrishnan (among others) to provide some contacts in the USA. Since Mr. Sadasivam was well aware of Alladi Ramakrishnan's contact with C. R., he invited Ramakrishnan to write this article for a souvenir that Kalki brought out for the 93rd birthday of C. R.

Alladi Ramakrishnan's spoken and written English were of a Churchillian class. Just as his speech "The Miracle has happened" that he gave for the inauguration of MATSCIENCE (Appendix...), is a supreme example of his oratory, this article is a fine illustration of his superb writing style.

Krishnaswami Alladi

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Alladi Ramakrishnan

What can I write about a man whose adult life spans the age of this century, who has influenced in a direct and effective manner the social, economic, moral, ethical, political, intellectual, spiritual and religious aspects of our national life as lawyer, politician, agitator, prisoner, Chief Minister, Governor-General, critic, leader, writer, journalist, orator, saint, savant and philosopher? During the three score and ten years of this century, the world and India in particular have passed through many transitions and transmutations. Empires have fallen. Kings, thrones, dictators and armies have disappeared without a trace. New nations have emerged from the womb of the dark continent. Revolutions, bloody and silent, have liberated billions of people and brought forth new systems of social and economic thought and introduced new ways of life. The world has pulled through two cataclysms the like of which it may not survive if it were smitten again. Human life on this earth has been transformed beyond belief as methods of the transportation changed from horsedrawn carriages to flying mansions of the air, terrestrial exploration was superseded by interplanetary travel and the incredible prospect of unlimited power from nuclear sources unfolded before mankind.

Young C. R. entered life as a lawyer at the beginning of this century when the prestige and glory of the British Crown was at its highest, when the cardinal faith was ingrained in all colonial peoples that the sun could never set on its global empire. India was assumed to bask under that imperial sunshine in grateful contentment. The civil service then prided itself as the steel-frame of this stable structure. It was trained to assist in the slow, adiabatic evolution of self-government which suited the leisured pace of the prosperous and intellectual sections of the society of that complacent era. Poverty was taken for granted and colonialism accepted as the only way of life for Asiatic and African peoples. It was the slumberous peace of a dull summer afternoon in the well-kept gardens of an English country house.

Just at that time there appeared on the scene a frail half-naked saint who became the Messiah of resurgent India aspiring for a new freedom, unknown and unheard of for centuries. Gandhi came like a breath of fresh air and quickened a nation of half a billion people to vibrant life. Rajaji joined this man of God in a mission and a struggle which turned out to be the most peaceful revolution in human history. Under the magic wand of Gandhi's leadership the proud British Empire yielded unwillingly but wisely, making concessions which led to the famous Government of India Act of 1935 which gave our country the first taste of self-government. That period was considered as the golden era of the legal profession in India. My great father had reached the height of his fame and his name had gained domestic currency throughout the country! He was a lawyer and jurist in the best sense of the terms and he kept aloof from the changing gusts of political struggle. It was at once strange and natural that he should have come into close contact with Rajaji who was right in the heat of political struggle against the British Government. No two persons could have been more alike in innate human qualities and more unlike in outward temperament. Both were endowed with powerful intellects, logical and incisive, almost Euclidean in temper. Any problem that confronted them was broken and analysed

into component parts and studied with mathematical precision.

While C. R. was conscious of the shortcomings of the opponents, my father was wary of their strength and that was why as a lawyer he was so successful in winning his client's causes. To C. R. law was an instrument for benevolent administration. To my father, law was an intellectual exercise and his clients' case offered a challenge even as an unsolved problem made demands on a creative scientist.

In dress and in physical appearance, both were simple and unostentatious to an incredible degree. While Rajaji was clad in spotless 'khaddar jibba and veshti' in traditional style, my father was oblivious of his dress, whether in western, traditional or informal style. Simplicity to my father was a part of his nature as was the gift of legal analysis. For Rajaji it was a way of life with a mission and purpose which he spread into his administration to the point of Draconian rigour. Both were insensitive to the attractions of affluence. It is impossible to imagine either of them scrutinising income tax forms and claiming deductions, for permissible expenses! C. R. loved to wield power for he considered himself a trustee for the well being of unlearned masses. To my father, executive and legislative power were legal attributes of a Government brought into being by constitutional means. C. R. wanted legislation to be approved by the Court since the Executive had to be invested with such legal authority. To my father such a procedure was just part of the rules of the legal game to be strictly observed, and victory to be won by logical arguments. Rajaji followed Gandhi because he aspired to play a leading role in self-governing India. My father admired Gandhi as a saviour-saint who redeemed India from age-old bondage. C. R. was severely impartial to an extent that many times it was a disadvantage to be his friend or his supporter! My father was benevolent to his associates to an extent that he overlooked their faults and supported them under all circumstances. Rajaji used similes and analogies with shattering power unprecedented except in great literature. My father never needed them: he made his point as a mathematician set about the proof of a theorem. Rajaji added a flavour of humour to his speech which, being apparently cynical, concealed a truly sympathetic heart. It looked to me that he was making a deliberate effort to appreciate the intellectual aspects of great works of literature but in reality his emotional fervour was as great, though consciously suppressed. I have often wondered at the possible differences in reaction if Othello were read by C. R. and my father. Rajaji would enter into a discussion whether Iago's malignity was motiveless or motivated. My father would be visibly moved by Desdemona's plea against unkindness which defeated her life but failed to taint her love. Likewise in reading the Ramayana, Rajaji would have discussed whether Rama had an alternative to the destruction of Vali. My father would become react with emotion at the touching reference by Vali to his son Angada. Both Rajaji and my father were vegetarians by conscience and by habit. But Rajaji may perhaps explain that vegetarianism is an elegant way of living, while my father would confess to recoiling at the sight of blood. Both were equally emotional and intellectual but Rajaji would disguise his soft feelings within a cold shell of reason.

These two men, frail in physical stature, titanic in intellectual prowess, alike in ideals and unlike in temperament, met on the arena of the new Indian Constitution. This gave them full opportunity for using their rare endowments for exalted purposes and noble causes. C. R. was keen in working the Constitution Act of 1935 to demonstrate the

competence of Indian talent for self-government and also in wrecking it from within for the larger purpose of realising the Gandhian ideal of 'Purna Swaraj'. My father, on his part, made available his massive knowledge and deep understanding of the federal constitutions of the world.

I was then a boy of fourteen at the P. S. High School when the greatest excitement for me was to wait in the verandah of my spacious family house for Rajaji to arrive after dinner for consultations with my father on many legal matters. I would now and then steal into the room with the ostensible purpose of serving fruit given by my mother but mainly to watch the gleam in the smile beneath his dark glasses. One day, with a boy's courage, I invited Rajaji to address a meeting at my school under the auspices of the Mylapore Students Union, an all too modest organisation whose modest purpose was to study political and economic problems without getting involved in them! Rajaji's advice, told in chaste Tamil prose, rings in my ears to this day. He rebuked us for our morbid love of supervisory jobs. Everyone aspired to be a 'maistry' (supervisor) to another maistry, but no one wanted to do the work himself! The salvation of our country lies in perfering example to precept and in doing things ourselves here and now. How true this seems to be as we are confronted today with economic failures due to our fatal propensity for depending so much on foreign aid and assistance. While such aid is necessary and should be acknowledged, we must learn to take care of ourselves and utilise our scientific and technological talents to useful ends.

I do not like to think of Rajaji except as a Chief Minister or Head of State. His genius could flower only in an atmosphere of peace where law and order are part of a civilised way of life. I would like to have seen him in such exalted positions for three or four decades affording full amplitude for the use of his administrative and intellectual powers. He should have presided over societies of art and music and literature, led delegations to the United Nations, addressed convocations at 'Redbrick and Ivy League' centres of learning, awarded Nobel prizes and medals of honour and inaugurated man's journey to neighbouring planets. Not for him the role of an agitator, much less that of a prisoner or a critic. Rajaji can brook no opposition - so he cannot devise methods to surmount them. His intellect is too constructive to be frittered away against sterile opposition or obdurate mediocrity. What a tragedy it would be for an Einstein to be the adviser of the University Grants Commission on the three-language formula or for a Thyagaraja to become a scribe for flattering a born miser. I have not enough tears to shed as I think of Rajaji in the dark days of 1942 raising his lone voice against the tidal wave of Gandhi's 'quit India' movement. Those were momentous years for Britain when Winston Churchill's orations redeemed his armies from the disasters of Dunkirk and sustained them till their triumphant march into Berlin. But Rajaji's oratory had a different timbre and quality from that of Churchill who spoke of blood, toil, tears and sweat and saluted the honoured few to whom so many owed so much in the preservation of human freedom. Rajaji is too astute to be capable of iron indignation, to raise a world in arms, to break the might and craft of dictators holding nations in deadly grip. War was illogical to Rajaji and peace, a natural state of affairs. He wished to solve a problem by reasoned arguments and incisive logic and therefore offered the division of India as the only solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem. He was therefore unprepared to face the tragedy of senseless slaughter and carnage that

followed the division of the Indian continent. So he was disillusioned when freedom came so suddenly, as he thought, through the magnanimity of the British. He shuddered and recoiled at the scramble for power and the hasty abandonment of Gandhian ideals before the lure of office.

On the other hand my father interpreted these events as signs of life and outbursts of legitimate ambitions long concealed and suppressed. The task of writing the Indian Constitution was an opportunity for which my father had waited so long. It looked as if his entire life as a lawyer was a preparation for the great task of building the legal foundations of the world's most populous democratic republic. I had the privilege of watching him at work for two eventful years as the new republican constitution of this ancient nation took shape, syllable by syllable, term by term, sentence by sentence, section by section, and chapter by chapter. It was the greatest gift he could offer to Gandhi's natural heir and India's uncrowned king - Jawaharlal Nehru. Destiny decided to take my father away from us on the completion of this stupendous task and Rajaji away from the scene of active politics.

Looking back over the span of seventy years of the twentieth century, it looks as if the first half was a period of great men and small events and the second half of great men and great events. The rest augurs to be greater both in men and in events for the world has to meet the challenge of the incredible achievements of science. Mankind is faced with the realisation that the pace of human life has changed without an increase in its span. Will this bring us more happiness or greater strain? Only the future can tell. Rajaji had spent the morning light of his life in a hard, long-drawn struggle against the British Empire. The afternoon was spent in helping the nation to adjust itself to a new won freedom and consequent responsibilities. His is now a long and glorious sunset of many splendours and myriad hues with a spiritual glow which we hope and pray will stretch into the dawn of the twentyfirst century.