

A WORK OF ART

Among his younger friends, my father loved 'Seshu' as his own son and needed his company to enliven his spirits and enlighten his leisure. For, Seshachalapathi was a delightful companion, a master of chaste and elegant English, spiced with sparkling wit and winsome humour. I have never seen my father so happy and relaxed as when he was in Seshu's company, enjoying a delectable phrase or a delicious idiom in Oxford accent or a relative estimate of British and American brands of humour.

In turn, Seshu admired my father's genius and his dazzling rise to fame and even more, his candour and simplicity, his natural generosity and charity of mind. No wonder Seshu was the moving spirit behind the Sixtieth Birthday Souvenir in which he wrote an account of my father's life and career, a living sculpture in English prose which like a true work of art could only be an affair of the heart.

Like a Niyogi he wanted to stay anonymous as its author but it was impossible to conceal the artist behind the portrait.

I am including that article as an appendix to the Alladi Diary well aware that I cannot match the diction of one who wrote of my father: "He did not take the magic citadel by a slow, progressive siege, he took it by a storm."

One wonders what he would have written years later after my father's greatest achievement as one of the architects of India's Constitution.

Alladi Ramakrishnan

Editor's Note

Mr. M. Seshachalapathi was the son-in-law of Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the great scholar and statesman who rose to the position as the Second President of India. Radhakrishnan was Sir Alladi's contemporary. He and his entire family were close to the Alladi family, and Sir Alladi had a special bond with Seshachalapathi who was affectionately called 'Seshu'. This article by Seshachalapathi was written in 1943 for the 60th birthday of Sir Alladi, and published in the birthday souvenir brought by a Committee of very eminent citizens of Madras.

Seshachalapathi was a master on the English language and he rose to the position as the Judge of the Andhra Pradesh High Court (1958-63).

Krishnaswami Alladi

**SIR ALLADI KRISHNASWAMI AYYAR -
LIFE AND CAREER**

by *M. Seshachalapathi*

The world, worshipful always of success in any department of life, invests the career of a great advocate with a peculiar element of glamour. It admires his performances in forensic combats with the same enthusiasm with which it follows the exploits of a dashing cavalier. But what it does not so readily see is the long years of preparation, the laborious days of hungry vigil, the toil, the sweat and sometimes, even the tears that go into the making of the success, it so much admires. This is an aspect of the lives of men like Sir Alladi that has its many lessons for those who seek to win their spurs in the most taxing and competitive of the learned professions.

Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar was born on the 14th day of May, 1883, in the village of Pudur near Nayudupet in the district of Nellore. The name of the village is indicative of the Tamil origin. Over 400 years ago, a group of Tamil Brahmins from the south came over to the Telugu country where they found a ready welcome and in course of time came to be known as Pudur Dravidas. Though small in numbers, this community has nursed into distinction some scholars of outstanding eminence. To mention only a few, the late A. Mahadeva Sastry, one of the finest Sanskritists of his day and the late Vedam Venkataraya Sastry, scholar, critic and play-wright were, like Sir Alladi, Pudur Dravidas.

Sir Alladi's father, the late Ekamra Sastri, had his share of the traditional brahminical training and was content to pass his none too prosperous days in piety and peace. Even the cares of a large and growing family did not disturb his essential sangfroid. He however, had a strong presentiment that his son, young Alladi, would one day rise to fame and fortune. He was therefore anxious to give his boy the best possible education. Pudur was no place for young Alladi and he had to be taken to a town where he could be put into an English school. So, with a courage and spirit of enterprise rarely to be found in men of his training and disposition, he migrated with his entire family to Madras in 1891.

In Madras no time was lost in putting young Alladi to school. He was admitted into the Pudduunaickenpet Middle School as a free scholar. In due course he passed both the lower secondary and middle school examinations with credit and got himself admitted as a half free scholar in the Church of Scotland Mission College to prepare for his matriculation which he took in December 1899.

When Alladi was about 15 years old and attending the classes in the Church of Scotland Mission College, an unexpected disaster fell over the family. His father took ill suddenly and died. Thereafter the task of looking after the family and educating young Alladi fell upon his eldest brother, who with his meagre income supplemented by the assistance of kind friends saw his younger brother through the high school and the college.

There is no point in dwelling on the early privations of famous people except for the fact that their initial struggles afford a romantic background to the triumphs that come later and, but for which, they would make only a melancholy story.

From the Church of Scotland Mission College, young Alladi passed his F. A. examination in 1901 in the first class and then joined the Madras Christian College which was then in the hey-day of its fame and prosperity. Miller Skinner, Russell and Kellett were

then doing active work in the college which attracted to itself the flow of some of the best youthful talent in the presidency. It was while he was in the B. A. class that Alladi was brought into close contact with Professor Kellett, who was not merely a very accomplished scholar, but a very kindly and sympathetic friend of his pupils. Kellett formed an exceedingly high opinion of Alladi's ability and character. In 1903 Alladi appeared for the B. A. examination and obtained the second place in the first class in history. While at college, he was the recipient of the Thurso prize.

After graduation Alladi was appointed as tutor in history in Christian College. He taught Roman history for the F. A. and Indian history for the B. A. classes. His lectures in those two subjects were delivered with a lucidity and eloquence that made a powerful impression on his pupils. Especially were his lectures in Indian history memorable to those that heard them. Curiously enough, till a few years before then, the teaching of Indian history was not a part of the curriculum of historical studies in the university for advanced students, for the possible reason that the research into early Indian history did not make sufficient progress and so, it was not even infrequently thought that Indian history really began with the battle of Plassey. But all that was considerably changed by the time Alladi started taking classes in Indian history. Vincent Smith had published his book and the assiduity of scholars was bringing to light periods of remarkable life and achievement in the long past of India. The theme naturally appealed to a spirit so ardent and patriotic as Alladi's, and he put his soul into his lectures which made them very impressive. When he retired after two years of work in the college, his pupils presented him with a farewell address full of feeling which the formal address generally do not signify.

While serving as tutor, Alladi was also attending the law classes and he passed his B. L. examination in 1905. Thereupon, he decided to resign his tutorship in the college and take his chances at the bar. The decision is in several ways highly illustrative of Alladi's courage and faith in himself, for, while most men in his circumstances would have preferred the sanctuary of a quiet job and the security of a permanent income, he preferred to venture out into a profession where the prizes are few and the blanks many. He joined the chambers of the late Mr. P. R. Sundara Ayyar who was then one of the outstanding leaders of the Madras bar and by his assiduity and diligence caught his master's eye very early.

He was enrolled as an advocate in July 1907 and thus became a full-fledged member of the legal fraternity. Those were really the great days of the Madras bar. Sir V. Bashyam Aiyangar was still pleading. The late Messrs. V. Krishnaswami Ayyar and P. R. Sundara Ayyar were at the peak of their powers and practice. The late Sir K. Srinivasa Aiyangar and S. Srinivasa Aiyangar were forging ahead and were soon to occupy the first places in the profession. Into this world of glittering talent and tradition Alladi entered. His disadvantages were many and obvious. He had no money, no influential social connections, no helpful patron or friend to direct the flow of briefs. He had not even robust health. Yet these disabilities did not depress him. On the contrary, they served only as a challenge to a higher effort and a keener desire to succeed. Alladi spent laborious days and nights not merely in studying cases which he was asked to read, but in studying law as a science, reading carefully the law reports, English and Indian and storing his mind with that vast knowledge of case law upon which he was to draw later so often and with such telling effect.

He took to law and its infinite refinements as a duck takes to water. He revelled in its intricacies. Mastery, not mere competency, was his aim. His approach to the legal studies was not that of the pragmatist. There was in it an element of impersonal attachment that one notices in an artist for his art.

Alladi was determined to succeed, and that too, quickly. He did not want success when he was old and sagging. He wanted it while he was young, while he could still feel its thrills and enchantments. That was why he was in a hurry. He did not wait for opportunities to be served up to him on a salver. Like all resolute men who snatch the glittering prizes of life, he made his own chances. Right from the beginning he had his gaze fixed on the far shining summit and he strode towards it with a fixity of purpose and a concentration of aim that were really remarkable. Nothing else mattered; nothing else was allowed to matter. Ambition, alertness, self-confidence, necessary in every walk of life, are even more so for the men at the bar. Dilettantes, sniffing moralists and moony aesthetes oppressed with problems of social punctilio have no place in a profession where whole hearted application to work, wise and skillful use of opportunities and an alert and forward disposition alone lead one to sovereign power. These latter virtues Alladi had in abundance and the prospect was bright.

Alladi's keen legal acumen, his amazing grip of the case-law, his flair for striking a new point and suggesting a fresh line of approach amidst a maze of complicated facts and his capacity to deduce a legal principle from material apparently incapable of any such deduction, and his ability to support it with precedent and authority, impressed the late Mr. P. R. Sundara Aiyar very much, and in many important cases he called for young Alladi's aid. In an incredibly short time Alladi built up a reputation which few juniors, either before or since, have equalled. He came into contact with the late Mr. V. Krishnaswami Aiyar, a shrewd judge of talent, and who was not slow in predicting a most distinguished career for Alladi. It used to be said in those days that there was a keen competition amongst the leaders at the bar to secure the services of Alladi as a junior counsel in big cases. In less than three years after enrolment, Alladi was appearing in important cases as junior counsel and not infrequently doing the cases himself in the absence of his leader and sometimes even following his leader to make a telling point or two. Even by 1910, he was a marked man. He had already started on the high road of an ever widening opportunity.

In 1911, Mr. P. R. Sundara Aiyar became a judge of the (Madras) High Court. In many cases in which he was retained, Alladi held the junior briefs. In some of the heavy causes after Mr. P. R. Sundara Ayyar's elevation as judge, another leading counsel was engaged, but many of the cases were handled by Alladi himself. He was soon brought into close contact with the late Sir K. Srinivasa Aiyangar and thus began a happy and fruitful association which lasted till about 1915 when K. Srinivasa Aiyangar himself was elevated to the bench.

The period between 1910 and 1915 was an extremely busy time for Alladi. His services were constantly in requisition by a fast growing clientele, both in the High Court and in the mofussil.

The elevation of Sir K. Srinivasa Iyengar to the bench in 1915 was another important event in Alladi's life, for from thence onwards he emerged as a leading counsel in his

own right and in a series of heavy causes more than held his own against the leaders of established reputation. The period from 1915 to 1920 was in several ways the most crucial and formative period in Alladi's professional life. By the end of it, he was one of the acknowledged leaders of the Madras bar, a place of primacy which he has been holding ever since.

Sir John Power Wallis, who held the high office of the Chief Justice of Madras with such distinction and for such length of time and before whom Sir Alladi was constantly pleading, came to cherish a very high opinion of Alladi's ability as a lawyer and an advocate. Nor were other judges any the less appreciative.

In 1920, Alladi was not more than 37 years in age. Great success in the profession has come to others as well; but to few of them has it come so quickly and in such abundance. He did not take the magic citadel by a slow steady progressive siege; he took it by a storm.

Since his arrival at the top of his profession, he has been retained for one side or the other in almost all heavy appeals in the Madras High Court and important trial causes in the mofussil. He was retained twice by the Mysore Government in very important matters.

Even in his busiest days, Alladi kept some time for the problems of higher education. For nearly 12 years he was a member of the Senate of the University of Madras and for two terms was also a member of the Syndicate. For over twenty-five years he has been a member of the Court of the Banares Hindu University for which he had made also a handsome contribution.

In December 1928, Alladi was appointed as the Advocate General of Madras. He thus became the official head of the bar, of which, in fact, he was the acknowledged leader for over six or seven years before then. His appointment as Advocate-General was received with considerable satisfaction by the members of the bar in Madras and in the mofussil, who regarded it as a just tribute to a career of outstanding distinction.

Soon after his appointment as Advocate General, Alladi had to represent the Government of Madras in an arbitration presided over by Justice Page, then of the Calcutta High Court in the matter of a dispute between the Madras and the Mysore Governments in respect of the Cauvery waters.

Towards the later part of 1929, Alladi was made a member of the expert committee appointed by the Government of India in connection with the Indian Sale of Goods Bill and in 1930-31 he was a member of the expert committee in respect of the Partnership Bill. In both these committees he distinguished himself.

Honours were not slow in coming to him. In 1926 he was awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal in appreciation of his philanthropic and social services. In 1930 he was awarded the title of Dewan Bahadur and in 1932 the honour of Knighthood was conferred upon him in recognition of his great services to the state.

In the summer of 1933, Sir Alladi went to England, his first journey overseas, in connection with the Gollaprolle appeal, then pending before the Privy Council. He met there the leading figures in the legal world including the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney General, not to speak of his reviving his old friendship with Sir John Power Wallis, who introduced Sir Alladi to all the members of the Judicial Committee. When he visited the Old Bailey, he was treated with great deference by the presiding judge, Justice Charles, who also entertained him to a lunch. Sir Alladi visited Cambridge and Oxford and saw

some of the most distinguished academic lawyers, including Professor Holdsworth.

The inauguration of the Federal Court has given Sir Alladi's great talents a new opportunity. His interventions in the Federal Court on behalf of the Provincial Government have been marked by a hitherto undetected familiarity with the law of the constitutions and a wide knowledge of the law of similar federal constitutions like those of the United States of America and the two great British Dominions of Canada and Australia.

Any adequate reference to his work as a lawyer either in the Madras High Court or latterly in the Federal court must inevitably mean more than a mere passing reference to some of his outstanding performances and such a study is outside the scope of the present purpose. Besides, there is difficulty in writing about the work of a counsel, however distinguished. Advocacy is an art, depending for its excellence on the particular points involved in a case, the play of one mind on another, the mood and the manner of the main participants in the debate and the general atmosphere of the court. It does not bear analysis and description any more than the art of a great orator, or a musician or an actor.

But, none the less, a few governing traits of Sir Alladi's method and advocacy may be mentioned.

Sir Alladi has been gifted with an exceptionally quick and alert power of comprehension. He can get up a case involving complicated questions of fact and law in an incredibly short time. He is quickly and easily instructed. He can instinctively detect the defects in his own case as well as the weakness of his opponent. This is partly the result of great natural ability. But it is also the result of prolonged meditation on legal questions and the vast learning and experience that he has stored in his mind from the earlier days. Even when he seems to be improvising, he is really drawing upon the riches of his erudition. In working with his juniors, he has the rare faculty of knowing what assistance to take and from whom. The secret of efficiency, it is said, is the certain knowledge of what one can do oneself and what one can get done by another. Sir Alladi has the gift, not often times common, of making use of his juniors' labour and by some subtle and masterful touch making it authentically his own. It is this rare talent, that has not only rendered it possible for him to cope with the extraordinary volume of work that he has been doing but also explains the devotion, respect and affection of those that have had the privilege of working with him. For, nothing is more pleasing to a junior than the consciousness that his leader welcomes his collaboration and is not reluctant to appropriate his work and make it enter into the texture of his main argument.

His mind is exceedingly versatile and he can easily take to any branch of law as if to the manner born. In the High Court and in the mofussil courts he has appeared in heavy zamindari succession cases, big commercial causes, appeals and suits involving difficult questions of property law and the problems of Indian land tenure, cases involving knotty problems of Hindu Law and in matters involving difficult questions of interpretation of Indian enactments. In all these branches he has shown not merely familiarity but deep insight. He can master easily a subject wholly unknown to him at first. In 1923 he had to argue in Travancore a curiously difficult case involving questions of canonical law regarding the Syrian Christian Church. It was altogether a new field for one accustomed to the work in the High Court. He had to master a large mass of literature connected with the medieval theology and the evolution of the Syrian Christian Church, its doctrine as well as its

practice. Those that know of his work in this connection know also, how well he did it and what a profound impression he made on the court.

His arguments in court are always marked by a lucidity and natural orderliness of thought. He is an artist in legal argument. That is why he never crowds it. He knows that brevity is the soul of wit, no less in law than in letters. He is not of the laborious and the ponderous type of an advocate that goes on pressing in the hope that some one point may produce a favourable result at some time or other during the course of the hearing. He has the rare courage of rejecting points seemingly attractive to others, and concentrating all his attention on what he regards as the crucial questions in the case. He wins his causes on points he believes in, or not at all. He is capable of broad and sweeping generalisations. He is never entangled on the briars of detail. His comments on findings of fact are always illumined by a deep understanding into human motives and conduct. He has a remarkable imaginative power of reconstructing what should have happened in a particular transaction and making even the incidents and character take life for the moment.

Sir Alladi is gifted with an unfailing insight into the workings of the judicial mind. He is not one of those lawyers who do their cases on a previously set plan very much like a professor delivering a premeditated discourse. He can meet the situations as they arise and can effect the necessary changes in his intellectual strategy. He is never taken unawares. He has the resilience of mind to adapt his argument to suit the workings of a judge's mind and put his case in a way in which that judge would prefer it to be done. When a new point suddenly springs up, he can draw easily upon the wealth of his learning and experience, aided, of course, by a ready and resourceful memory.

"My profession", said Sir Edward Marshall Hall once "and that of an actor are somewhat akin, except that I have no scenes to help me, and no words are written for me to say. There is no back-cloth to increase the illusion. There is no curtain. But, out of the vivid, living dream of somebody else's life, I have to create an atmosphere - for that is advocacy". And like the actor's art, advocacy is also evanescent. Sir Alladi was nearer the poignant truth when he said "It cannot be gainsaid that there is a touch of sadness in the feeling that the fame of an advocate as compared with that of his compeer on the bench is ephemeral. Though the advocate might have contributed to the eminence of a judge to a great degree, the forensic triumphs of an advocate can only live in the traditions of the bar as an institution." If only he had chosen, it could not be that the opportunity of distinguishing himself as a judge was beyond his reach, though one cannot help feeling that the thrill of the legal battles, the engaging free-masonry of the bar have always had a greater attraction to a spirit, so live and mercurial as Sir Alladi's.

His moral and social qualities are no less considerable and Sir Alladi, the man, is as lovable as Sir Alladi, the lawyer is entitled to respect. His many friends and acquaintances have always admired his simplicity, his easy accessibility, his freedom from the mannerisms of the great, his devotion to friends, his innate sense of gratitude to those from whom he received kindnesses, however modest, and his large hearted sympathy for those in trouble. Seated on the upland's of life with the sun of prosperity shining brightly over his head, he has never once forgotten his journeys in the dark valleys below, nor does the thought of those still coursing through the shadows ever leave him. No poor student in quest of assistance has ever invoked his generosity in vain.

His benefactions to public institutions and causes are considerable. He has given in all a sum of Rs. 20,000 to the Ramakrishna Mission for the promotion of Education. He has endowed Rs. 10,000 for a lectureship under the auspices of the Andhra University. He is the founder of the Krishnaswami Ayyar and Sundara Ayyar lectures in the University of Madras and scholarships and medals in Meenakshi College, Chidambaram and the V. R. College, Nellore. Recently he has made an endowment in the name of his father in the Sanskrit College, Mylapore. Besides associations devoted to social service in the presidency and in the city such as the Sarada Vidyalaya, the National Girls School, the Harijana Seva Sangh, the South Indian Association, and a number of other institutions and causes have been recipients of his assistance in varying measure.

But more remarkable even than his generosity and readiness to help persons and causes with money, is the essential charity of his mind, that loathes to judge others harshly, and that forgives rather than condemns. In its positive aspect this charity of mind is responsible for his overlooking the faults of others and, if anything, slightly even over drawing their good points. Reluctant to be critical, he is generous in praise. Nothing delights him more than the opportunity of saying good things of others and, when he says them, he does so with all his heart.

He possesses in a high degree what is so aptly called 'the genius of friendship' and he is deeply interested in the prosperity and welfare of those who are dear to him. It has been no small delight to him to see some of the younger men who worked with him in the earlier days, occupying some of the highest judicial offices or making their names at the bar.

Sir Alladi is now sixty. His features do not reveal the passage of so many years. The youthful appearance, the outward expression of a mind that has refused to grow old. He has still the ardour, the enthusiasm, the fancy, and the spirit of adventure, which are unmistakably the traits of a mind that is young.

Long years of reflection have, however, mellowed his mind. It has today the autumnal touch. He has always had a metaphysical turn of mind, and a proneness to self analysis and introspection. It is this saving quality that has kept him away from the blight of self complacency and self-righteousness. As a student of the philosophy of law and legal institutions, the doubt sometimes comes creeping to his mind whether the legal institutions have really been the instruments of progress that they should be and which alone would justify their existence, and whether the legal mind with all its dialectical triumphs has really helped in such a progress. This is not due to the languor that comes of platitude or to any lessening of faith in law as an institution. But more than ever, he is now convinced that law and the lawyer should be viewed against the ever expanding sociological background of man. He feels that a new orientation, a new adjustment of the angle of approach and a new distribution of emphasis are necessary.

Quoting Lord Haldane's wise and tranquil words "We want a new type of lawyer.", with approval Sir Alladi said in an address of his at the Mayavaram Bar Association, "We have developed only the critical acumen. The constructive side is hardly developed. Hereafter, lawyers will have to take interest in the man in the street, in the poor, and in the economic regeneration and political salvation of the country. Otherwise, they will go to the wall. A new outlook has to be developed by the lawyer, a new outlook in respect

of property and recognition of the changes in society. The relationship between the sexes, between master and servant, and employer and employee, and conceptions of citizenship, are undergoing a metamorphosis. In all these changes the lawyer has to play a prominent part with a new vision, a new outlook.” This is as near a treatment of faith and philosophy that a great lawyer can vouchsafe.

An eminent jurist, a keen lover of books and of causes good and righteous, a loyal and devoted friend, a noted philanthropist, Sir Alladi can look back upon a past of singular distinction and achievement, and he can derive added satisfaction in the thought that like one of the most illustrious of the recent Lord Chancellors of England, he can say to himself “Faber Mea Fortune.”