



AMLOR

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It was June 2001. It had been nearly six months since I had resigned the coveted Government job succumbing to the fatal attraction of becoming an advocate. Days rolled into months but there was not a glimpse of any light even at a distant sight. Hope was fast slipping through the despair drainpipe.

Mr. P.K. Kasthuriraj, who was a Superintendent of Central Excise then and now a retired Deputy Commissioner. My mentor and Godfather in the department. A large hearted soul filled with divine grace, who taught me transparency and credibility. He knew my situation very well and had been trying to flash my name wherever he could. On a sunny afternoon, I got a call from him and his voice was full of enthusiasm. He said that he had recommended a case and the client had agreed to engage me!!!

When I went there, I understood that the client did not want an advocate to argue the case but only wanted to seek an adjournment as his regular advocate was out of country on the scheduled date of

hearing. Though it was heartbreak for a minute, I recovered fast. After all, it was a god given opportunity to enter the courtroom, for which I had been yearning for all these days. The client said that he would pay Rs. 500/- and I instantly agreed.

The client handed over the case files to me. The papers were in real shambles. I had to literally carry all of them in a gunny bag. The case was a highly complicated one about alleged clandestine manufacture and clearance of excisable goods without payment of central excise duty. The demand of duty was in seven digits and the case was nearly 13 years old. An advocate of very high reputation had been handling the case.

I took a break from all my routine and was solely engrossed in the preparation. It was like a sabbath. First I made the bunch of rags into a proper paper book, indexed, numbered and bound. I read the case file again and again, like a devout Christian reading the Holy Bible. The case was about to come up in a week. I had already started going to the Tribunal everyday, sat at the last chair, keenly following the proceedings, the way the advocates stood, spoke and behaved. All for this adjournment tamasha!

On the D-day, I entered the courtroom armored in the newly bought robes and collar, caught in a bizarre mixture of reality and fantasy. When every case before mine was called, there were a swarm of butterflies fluttering in my stomach. And when finally the court master called my case, it took all my energies to get up from the chair. My legs were trembling and I walked the longest mile of my life.

I went to the arguing deck and placed the paper book on the desk. There were two Members in the Bench. One was a Judicial Member

and the other one was a Technical Member. The Judicial Member Dr. S.L. Peeran was presiding the Bench, as he was the senior.

Though I had rehearsed the dialogue over 100 times, when I stood there, a lump got struck across my throat. Somehow I summoned all my inner strengths and managed to say, *"My Lords, may I seek an adjournment in this case for two weeks as the arguing counsel is out of country?"*

The Member assessed me for a moment and asked, *"Who are you? I haven't seen you before"* and I replied in a feeble voice, *"My Lords, This is my first case and my first appearance"*. The Member then started going through the file for a while and looked back at me and said, *"This case is pending for more than 13 years and has been adjourned many times. I am not giving any further adjournments. Either you argue the case or I am dismissing it"*.

I pleaded to consider my request but the Member was firm in his decision. The client was also not there to seek any instructions as he had already left to Cochin for his other work. It was a complete shock and I was dumbstruck. Neither did I expect this nor was I prepared for it. I really didn't know what to do. Everything around me loomed large and scary. My head started spinning and the world was slipping under my feet.

That was the most crucial and defining moment. I just closed my eyes for a moment and got out of all senses. I forgot the enormity of the case, magnitude of the demand, consequence of any adversity, penal and prosecution liability, and on top of all, my virginity in advocacy. I only thought of my mother and then said to the Bench, *"My Lords, I will argue"*.

To confess, till date, I didn't know what happened the next two and a half hours except the verdict that the appeal was allowed with the consequential relief. It was an absolute transcendence and even after coming out of the courtroom, I stood mesmerized for a long time, thoroughly captivated in surreality.

When I called the client, Mr. Shabu over phone, he asked me, "*When is the next date?*" and I replied, "*The bench refused to give a date*". He was a bit perturbed and asked, "*Then what happened?*" When I replied, "*I had to argue and we won the case*", he couldn't believe it. Holding me on one line, he called the Tribunal on the other line and when he got the confirmation, he exclaimed to me in utter disbelief, "*Hey man. You are an*" Though a bit slang, I revere that as the best appreciation till date! He rushed back from Cochin in a hurry, hugged me like a bear, paid me a handsome fees, referred to every person he knew, gave another huge case of his firm and thus sparked off the dream-come-true journey of Swamy Associates.

A Momentary Lapse Of Reason had given birth to A Moderate Lawyer Of Repertoire. One AMLOR to another!!!

When the case got over, the Honorable Member Dr. S.L. Peeran smiled at me and quipped, "*Had you opted for dismissal instead of arguing I would have given you an adjournment!*"