

SHASHI THAROOR

Biographical note



Author, United Nations peace-keeper, refugee worker, human rights activist, Minister of State for Human Resources Development, an elected member of the Indian Parliament from the Thiruvananthapuram constituency in Kerala and a former Minister of State for External Affairs, Dr. Shashi Tharoor straddles several worlds of experience.

Dr. Tharoor's United Nations (UN) career began in 1978, when he joined the staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva, and included key responsibilities in peace-keeping after the Cold War and as a senior adviser to the Secretary-General, as well as the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. Dr. Tharoor left the UN on 31 March 2007.

Dr. Tharoor is also the award-winning author of fourteen books, as well as hundreds of articles, op-eds and book reviews in a wide range of publications, including *the New York Times*, *the Washington Post*, *the Los Angeles Times*, *the International Herald Tribune*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and *The Times of India*. He has served for two years as a Contributing Editor and occasional columnist for *Newsweek International*. In 2010 he began a fortnightly column in *The Asian Age/Deccan Chronicle* and in 2012 in *Mail Today*; he also writes an internationally-syndicated monthly column for Project Syndicate. He has authored regular columns for the *Indian Express* (1991-93 and 1996-2001), *The Hindu* (2001-2008) and *The Times of India* (2007-2009).

His eight non-fiction books are: *Reasons of State* (1981), a study of Indian foreign-policy making; *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (1997), which was cited by President Clinton in his address to the Indian Parliament; *Kerala: God's Own Country* (2002), with text by Shashi Tharoor and paintings by the renowned M.F. Husain; *Nehru: The Invention of India* (2003), a biography of India's first Prime Minister; a collection of literary essays, *Bookless in Baghdad* (2005); an essay collection about contemporary India, *The Elephant, the Tiger and the Cellphone: Reflections on India in the 21st Century* (2007); a survey of India-Pakistan cricket, co-authored with Shaharyar Khan, *Shadows Across the Playing Field* (2009); and most recently *Pax Indica: India & the World of the 21st Century* (2012), a study of India's foreign relations and global strategy. His three novels are the classic *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) which is required reading in several courses on post-colonial literature; *Riot* (2001), a searing examination of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India; and *Show Business* (1992) which received a front-page accolade in the *New York Times Book Review* and has since been made into a motion picture, "*Bollywood*". He has also authored a collection of short stories, *The Five-Dollar Smile* (1990) and the text of a coffee-table book with the photographer Ferrante Ferranti, *India* (2008). Shashi Tharoor's books have been translated into French, German, Italian, Malayalam, Marathi, Polish, Romanian, Russian and Spanish.

Dr. Tharoor is an internationally known speaker on India's recent transformation and future prospects, globalisation, freedom of the press, human rights, literacy, Indian culture, and India's present and potential influence in world politics.

Born in London in 1956, Dr. Tharoor was educated in India and the United States, completing a PhD in 1978 at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, where he received the Robert B. Stewart Prize for Best Student. At Fletcher, Shashi Tharoor helped found and was the first Editor of the *Fletcher Forum of International Affairs*, a journal now in its 35th year. Dr. Tharoor was also awarded an honorary D.Litt. by the University of Puget Sound and a Doctorate *Honoris Causa* in History by the University of Bucharest. A compelling and effective speaker, he is fluent in English and French as well as in Malayalam and Hindi.

In January 1998, Dr. Tharoor was named a "Global Leader of Tomorrow" by the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. He is the recipient of several awards, including a Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and was named to India's highest honour for Overseas Indians, the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman, in 2004. Amongst his many awards, Dr. Tharoor has also received the Pride of India Award from the Zakir Husain Memorial Foundation, the Hakim Khan Sur Award for National Integration, GQ's Inspiration of the Year Award, NDTV's "New Age Politician of the Year" Award, and IILM's "Distinguished Global Thinker Award". In 2010 he was named Digital Person of the Year at the first-ever Indian Digital Media Awards. In October 2012, he was awarded the Encomienda de la Real Orden Espanola de Carlos III by the King of Spain.

In Parliament, Dr. Tharoor is the Member-Convener of the Parliamentary Forum on Disaster Management, and a member of the Standing Committee on External Affairs, the Consultative Committee on Defence, the Public Accounts Committee and the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Telecoms. He has participated prominently in many of the most important debates during his tenure, including on the Lokpal Bill, the motion of thanks on the President's Address, the demand for grants of the Ministry of External Affairs, the demand for grants of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, black money, copyright rules and the commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of Parliament.

Prior to embarking on his political career, Shashi Tharoor also served on the Board of Overseers of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, the Board of Trustees of the Aspen Institute, and the Advisory Boards of the Indo-American Arts Council, the American India Foundation, the World Policy Journal, the Virtue Foundation and the human rights organization Breakthrough. Dr. Tharoor had been appointed an International Adviser to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva for the period 2008-2011. He was also a Fellow of the New York Institute of the Humanities and the Patron of the Dubai Modern School, and on the Advisory Council of the Hague Institute for International Justice.

Shashi's wife Sunanda P Tharoor (formerly Sunanda Pushkar) is a businesswoman and philanthropist. He is the father of twin sons Ishaan and Kanishk, while Sunanda has one son, Shiv. Dr. and Mrs. Tharoor reside in Thiruvananthapuram and New Delhi, India.