



## MALAYALEE LEGENDS OF 2025

### 1. Distinguished Son of Kerala

#### Dr. Sashi Tharoor



**Shashi Tharoor**, ( born 9 March 1956) is an Indian politician, writer, and former diplomat, who has been serving as Member of Parliament for Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, since 2009. He is currently the Chairman of Committee on External Affairs. He was formerly an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and unsuccessfully ran for the post of Secretary-General in 2006. Founder-Chairman of All India Professionals Congress, he formerly served as Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs and on Informational Technology. He has about two dozen titles to his credit and was awarded by World Economic Forum as "Global Leader of Tomorrow".

Born in London and raised in Mumbai, Tharoor graduated from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, in 1975 and culminated his studies in 1978 with a doctorate in International Relations and Affairs from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. At the age of 22, he was the youngest person at the time to receive such an honour from the Fletcher School. From 1978 to 2007, Tharoor was a career official at the United Nations, rising to the rank of Under-Secretary General for Communications and Public Information in 2001. He announced his retirement after finishing second in the 2006 selection for U.N. Secretary-General to Ban Ki-moon.

In 2009, Tharoor began his political career by joining the Indian National Congress and successfully represented the party from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala by winning in the Lok Sabha elections and becoming a member of parliament four times in 2009, 2014, 2019 and 2024. During the Congress-led UPA government, Tharoor served as Minister of State for External Affairs. A non-loyalist of the Gandhis, Tharoor was defeated by Mallikarjun Kharge to be elected as party president in 2022. He is currently a member of the Congress Working Committee, which is highest decision making body of the Indian National Congress.

A Sahitya Akademi Award winner, Tharoor has authored many works of fiction and non-fiction since 1981. Popular for his command of the English language, Tharoor was the most followed Indian on Twitter

## 2. Distinguished Pravasis/NRI Minister of India

### Shri. Vayalar Ravi



**Mr. Vayalar Ravi**, saw his assignment as minister for overseas Indian affairs as the culmination of a five-decade career in public life that began in 1957 when he helped found the Kerala Students Union, the student wing of the Congress party in the state.

When *Rediff India Abroad's* Sheela Bhatt met him on a cold December afternoon at his bungalow on Safadarjang Road in New Delhi, the minister was on the phone to a nurse in Saudi Arabia. 'What, no salary for six months?! Don't worry, sister, nothing to worry about. I will get it for you...', said Ravi, who took his role as the guardian of the interests of overseas Indians seriously enough to give his private cell phone number to anyone who asks for it.

He stated as follows when he took charge as Minister of Overseas India Affairs: *'I will convince our Diaspora that India cares' I have been spreading awareness amongst Indians abroad. We want Indians living abroad to be friends of India, to feel they are wanted. Sometimes, they say, what is there in India, no one cares for us. I tried to change that attitude and to show the overseas Indian that he is wanted. I have toured all over the world; I have visited some 30 to 40 countries and met Indians there, and I believe I have managed to convince our Diaspora that India cares.'*

His greatest achievement that still help millions of Indians and their children who took foreign citizenship is the amendment of Section 7A of the Citizenship Act of 1955 that grants Lifelong visa and permission to stay in India any long time enjoying all benefits of an NRI. By introducing OCI status for people of India origin, Govt. of India gets millions of dollar investment through tourism, resettlement of Pravasis after retirement abroad etc. Central and State governments of India should explore further how best they can work with US govt for mutual benefits.

**WE PRAVASIS ARE PROUD TO SALUTE HIM AND WISH TO HONOR HIM AS A 'LEGEND' FOR THE POSTERITY**

### 3. Distinguished Engineer & Space Technologist

#### Dr. Tessy Thomas



**Dr. Tessy Thomas** studied in St. Michael's Higher Secondary School and St. Joseph's College for Women, Alappuzha. She had a natural flair for mathematics and physics. She took an education loan of ₹100 per month from State Bank of India to study engineering from Government Engineering College, Thrissur. She also received a scholarship that covered her tuitions fees having been entered into the first ten students of the merit list during her admissions. The loan gave her the courage to live in a hostel while pursuing her B.Tech

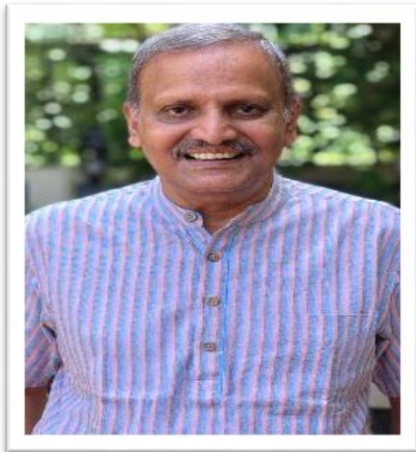
She obtained her BTech in Electrical Engineering from Calicut University in 1985 and ME in Guided Missiles from Institute of Armament Technology (now Defence Institute of Advanced Technology), Pune in 1986 and PhD in Missile Guidance from Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU), Hyderabad in 2014. She obtained MBA in Operations Management from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, in 2007.

Tessy Thomas Joined IAT, Pune as a faculty member in Guided Missiles in the year 1986. She joined Inertial Navigation group as Scientist 'B' in 1988 at Hyderabad. She has been associated with Agni Programme right from its developmental flights. She has designed the guidance scheme for long range missile systems which is used in all Agni missiles. An energy management guidance scheme was designed and developed for the first time in the country for an all – solid propelled long range systems for which she was conferred with Agni Self Reliance Award in the year 2001.

As Director, Advanced Systems Laboratory, DRDO, she held multi-dimensional roles and responsibilities and lead the development of strategic system. She led the Aeronautical Systems Cluster Laboratories as Director General.

## 4. Distinguished Scientist and Higher Education Specialist

### Dr. Sunny Luke



**Prof. Dr. Sunny Luke**, a graduate in Genetics & Plant Breeding from India and Medical Biotechnology from USA, is a naturalized US citizen and has worked as a Medical Scientist for 30 years in USA with various medical institutions in New York. These prestigious institutions include; Maimonides Medical Center, Brooklyn New York, Long Island College Hospital of State University of New York, Ortec International at Columbia University School of Medicine. He also served as an Adjunct Graduate Professor of Medical Genetics & Biotechnology at Adelphi University, Long Island New York. He is well known for his Medical Research in Molecular Medicine, Human Genetics, Cancer Biology, Stem Cell technology and Tissue Engineering. To his credit, he has more than 80 publications in international journals of repute.

Being the founder of IISAC (International Institute for Scientific & Academic Collaboration, [www.iisac.org](http://www.iisac.org)) he was responsible for developing the “Semester India Program” for US university students to spend a semester in India with Pondicherry University, University of Kerala, MG University and KIIT University, Odisha. He has also developed several faculty-led study programs for US universities in India in Tropical Agriculture, Horticulture, Aquaculture and Biodiversity.

To promote short-term study programs for US universities with Kerala, the organization IISAC has published a reference book titled Introduction to Kerala Studies to be used as a part of regional studies for their liberal arts curriculum and credit transfer. This unique book spans 1,400 pages across two volumes, featuring 87 academic chapters. Currently adopted as a textbook by selected U.S. universities to promote faculty-led programs in Kerala, focusing on tropical biodiversity, tropical health, comparative religions, and social issues.

## 5. Distinguished Educationist and Social Activist

### Dr. Indira Rajan



She has represented India on global platforms, delivering impactful presentations on education, heritage, and societal challenges, often in sessions chaired by luminaries

Dr. Indira Rajan is a distinguished educationist and social activist with over 35 years of experience in teaching and administration, contributing significantly to the qualitative growth of school education. Her visionary approach integrates traditional Indian values with modern educational advancements, blending the with the digital era.

As the CEO of Vikram Sarabhai Science Foundation, Chairman and Managing Director of Pragati Academy (A Group of Educational Institutions), and Secretary General of the National Council of CBSE Schools, Dr. Indira Rajan has been a driving force in promoting academic excellence, ensuring safe school environments, and fostering innovative educational practices.

Dr. Rajan has also served as the Global President of the World Malayalee Council's Women's Forum for two terms. During her tenure, she launched the pioneering project "Pariraksha" – The Mother and Child Care Project, which included the renovation of labor rooms in government hospitals—the first of its kind in Kerala. This initiative has been lauded for its transformative impact on maternal and child health care in the state.

A staunch advocate for women's rights, Dr. Rajan also led a courageous fight against the dowry system in Kerala. She filed a Special Leave Petition (SLP) in the High Court of Kerala, challenging the system, and emerged victorious—a landmark achievement that underscores her commitment to social justice and gender equality.

like Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. Dr. Rajan worked closely with Dr. Kalam, aligning her initiatives with his visionary project "PURA" (Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas) to bridge the urban-rural divide through education and empowerment.

Her notable projects, such as "Each One Teach One," "Student Police Cadet Project," and "Energy Independent Schools," were inspired by Dr. Kalam's vision of holistic rural development and societal transformation. These initiatives reflect her commitment to empowering students as change agents, fostering a generation equipped to contribute to a sustainable and inclusive future, in line with Dr. Kalam's dream of a self-reliant India.

Dr. Rajan has received numerous accolades for her contributions.

## 6. Distinguished Business Tycoon world-wide

### Shri. M A Yusuff Ali



**Mr. M A Yusuff Ali** , Chairman & Managing Director of LuLu Group ranks today among the top business personalities. The Group has diversified into many significant areas under his dynamic stewardship, retail being the most prominent of them.

His astute business vision and strategic mind have evolved ambitious growth plans for the Group and ensured their materialization through a team of people who share his drive and dynamism. Headquartered in Abu Dhabi, the capital city of United Arab Emirates, the Group is best known in the Gulf through a chain of popular Shopping Malls and Hypermarkets which serve the widest segments of multi-ethnic residents in the region.

Lulu Group, with its over 70,000 strong workforce from 46 different nations and operational bases extending over the U.A.E, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines, China, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Turkey, Spain, Italy, UK, USA and India is one of the most successful corporates of the times with a steadily ascending growth curve over the years. The Group has an annual turnover of US\$ 8 billion globally.

Apart from his busy business involvement, Yusuff Ali is equally active on the social front and is associated with various organizations.

As the former Second Vice Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ADCCI), he was also a member of the board of directors of ADCCI for a record four successive terms.

## 7. Distinguished Ship Designer & Builder

### Shri. Antony Prince



**Engineer Antony Prince**, otherwise Known as ‘Kappalukalude Rajakumaran”, hails from Aluva, Kochi. On his graduation from T K M College of Engineering, Quilon in 1968, embarked on his illustrious career as Marine Engineer with shipping corporation of india in 1968 and left in 1972 as second engineer.

In 1972 he joined Dockendale Shipping co. Nassau, Bahamas and rose to the position of Chief Engineer in 1975, Further moved to GTR Campbell Japan Ltd in 1977 and became its president in 1986. In 1990 Shri. Prince moved to Canada and launched his first design “Fantasy”, which became an instant success in 1994.

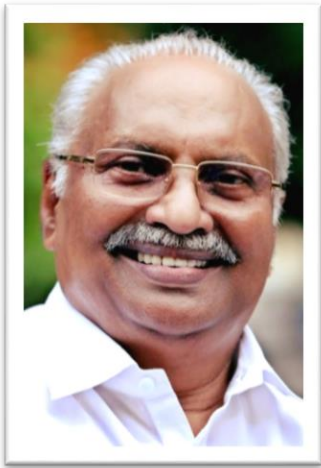
He played a pivotal role in elevating Cochin Shipyard to International level of reputation. Founded Smart Engineering and Design Solutions Ltd [SEDS] in 2007 in Kochi. At present SEDS is an internationally acclaimed ship design company competing with global giants.

Shri Prince received National Maritime Foundation Excellence Award in 2013 for his contributions to the growth of Ship design in India and abroad. He was honored by Cochin Shipyard Employees Union in 2007 for his exceptional contribution in bringing CSL capabilities to global standards in ship building.

Despite his demanding profession as a globetrotting ship designer he is active in various hobbies and community services such as helping local farmers to utilize uncultivated lands and mentoring young engineers in startup activities of Kerala.

## 8. Distinguished VISIONARY ENTREPRENEUR WITH A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

### **Sri. Gokulam Gopalan**



**Sri A.M. Gopalan**, popularly known as Gokulam Gopalan is a devout and faithful man who has achieved success through his hard work, dedication, and perseverance. He inherited the knowledge of chit fund business from his father at a young age and founded Sree Gokulam Chit and Finance Co. Pvt. Ltd. in 1968 in Mylapore, Chennai. He began the business with a small capital and a vision to offer financial support to the common people. And from a witty financial plan emerged Sree Gokulam Group, an empire which conquered indeed.

Currently, his chit fund and finance company, Sree Gokulam Chit Funds and Finance Private Limited, is around 55 years old. This Fifty Five Years old company started in Chennai, and has as many as 480 branches across the country. The company grew rapidly and expanded its operations across India and abroad. Today, it is one of the largest chit fund companies in India with a group turnover of more than 7000 crore rupees

He believes that honesty and integrity are the keys to success and has followed his principles for over six decades.

He has earned the reputation of running the best Chit Company in India in terms of promptness and customer satisfaction. His schemes have attracted a large number of customers and the company has more than One crore happy customers as its true asset. He has gained the trust and affection of the people.

From Chit Fund Company he gradually expanded his empire to include hotels, hospitals, educational institutions, cinemas, television channels and magazines.

He is also a generous philanthropist who has donated too many noble causes. He has initiated CSR programs that provide free medical care and food at medical colleges, education for low-income people, and other projects.

## 9. Distinguished Journalist and beloved of Visual Media

### Shri. R. Sreekandan Nair



**Mr. R Sreekandan Nair**, eminent journalist and Editor-in-Chief of 24 News Channel, has won this year's PRAVASI Award as a Malayalee LEGEND of the media. The award was instituted by the Pravasi Conclave Trust for the outstanding media activities nationally and internationally.

Sreekandan Nair was selected for the award by the committee for his comprehensive contribution to the field of journalism and his unique contribution to the modernization of television journalism.

Sreekandan Nair, who is also the Managing Director of Flowers TV, started his career as a teacher at Kerala Varma College. He then joined All India Radio as a radio broadcaster and served as station director for 18 years. He was a presenter on Doordarshan and later became the Vice President of Asianet. He later worked as a consultant for Mazhavil Manorama's Entertainment Television Operations.

## 10. Distinguished Diplomat of India

### Shri. TP Sreenivasan IFS



Sreenivasan was born in Kayamkulam as the son of K. Parameswaran Pillai, a school teacher and N. Chellamma. After school and studies at University College, part of the University of Kerala, in Thiruvananthapuram, he joined the Indian Foreign Service (IFS batch, 1967). He is alma Mater of Government Boys' Higher Secondary School, Kayamkulam.

He was secretary of legation third class in Tokyo and legation secretary first class in Thimphu, Bhutan. From 1975 to 1977, he was secretary of legation first class in Moscow. From 1986 to 1989, he was Indian High Commissioner in Suva, Fiji and responsible for seven other island nations in the South Pacific. From 1992 to 1995, he was the Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the UN in New York; from 1995 to 1997, he assumed the office of the Indian High Commissioner in Nairobi, Kenya<sup>[4]</sup> and served as Permanent Representative of the Government of India at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. From 1997 to 2000 he was Deputy Ambassador in Washington, D.C.

From 2000 to 2004, he was Indian Ambassador in Vienna for Austria and Slovenia, as well as Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna. He retired 30 June 2004.

Sreenivasan was the head of the Council for Higher Education of the State of Kerala and executive vice president with the rank of vice-chancellor.

He has continued as a columnist for a variety of newspapers and magazines, as is the nonfiction author of autobiographical works to his 37-year diplomatic career. He had been married to Lekha Sreenivasan, a Bharatanatyam dancer and teacher, from 1968 until January 2023, when she died. The couple had two sons.

## 11. Distinguished Oncologist and Social entrepreneur

### Dr. M.V. Pillai



**Dr. K. M. Vasudevan Pillai** (born 17 May 1946 in Kerala, India) is an Indian educationist, social entrepreneur, institution-builder, and philanthropist. He is the founder and CEO of the Mahatma Education Society, a not-for-profit trust that manages 48 educational institutions, from schools and colleges to institutions of architecture, management, engineering, vocational education, and teacher training. The institutions are spread over five locations (Chembur, Gorai, Panvel, New Panvel, and Rasayani) and serve over 30,000 students. The Mahatma Education Society<sup>[1]</sup> employs over 2000 teachers, many who have been trained in-house.

Pillai is one of six children. To acquire an urban education, he was sent to Mumbai in 1962, at the age of sixteen. After completing his post-graduation in English Literature, he worked for a year as a lecturer of English in Somaiya Polytechnic College, Mumbai. Later, he completed his doctoral thesis on the works of the renowned English poet, William Wordsworth, traveling through the length of the Lake District to track the poet's life and sources of inspiration. In 1970, Pillai established the Chembur English High School under the aegis of the Mahatma Education Society .