

Introduction of Dr. Shashi Tharoor by Mr. Bharat Doshi on the occasion of the Sixteenth Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture on 6th August 2010

Good evening friends. It is my privilege and honour today to introduce Dr. Shashi Tharoor on this occasion of the Sixteenth Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture.

At the outset I would like to also welcome Dr. Shashi Tharoor's fiancée Ms. Sunanda Pushkar, who is present here amongst the audience. I have been advised that wedding bells will be ringing in the near future. My heartiest congratulations to both of you.

I face a challenge today – I do not want to read out Dr. Tharoor's biography – whether detailed one or an abridged or a shorter version, the shorter one is included in the invitation card, and yet I want to convey the flavour of the personality of this versatile, multifaceted intellectual. Which aspect of his personality do I emphasise? – Do I talk about him as a brilliant student, a critic commentator and columnist, a distinguished author, a diplomat and peacekeeper, a parliamentarian or as a speaker par excellence.

As a brilliant student, well, he completed his two Masters degrees and a Ph.D at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in U.S.A. at the age of 22. Commentator and columnist - we all remember his regular column 'Shashi on Sunday' in the Times of India. As an author, with acclaimed fiction and non fiction to his credit, but a less known fact is that he started writing at the age of 6 and his first story was published when he was just 10 years old. As a diplomat, a very key member of the United Nations team culminating in his contesting for the post of Secretary General and reaching the final round. As a politician and parliamentarian, in spite of tough opposition in his first contest and in spite of being described as an elite politician, kudos to him for winning Thiruvananthapuram Parliamentary seat with a margin of more than 100,000 votes.

Well, today Dr. Shashi Tharoor is the speaker of the day – we have with us an internationally renowned speaker who has over the years spoken on a wide range of subjects covering Globalisation, Freedom of the Press, Human Rights, Literacy, Indian Culture, and India's present and potential influence in world politics.

Sir, even the Rain Gods have paused today to listen to your lecture. In that context I thought it would be more appropriate to focus on that aspect of his

personality – Dr. Shashi Tharoor the Speaker – and to retrieve from my collection of memories and share with you my experience when I had the first opportunity of listening to Dr. Shashi Tharoor 11 years ago.

Sir, you may recollect that it was at the World Bank Annual meetings when you were speaking on Globalisation and its Impact on culture. There were parallel sessions and the participants were attending session of their choice. I chose your session as I had not heard you before. It was one of the most articulate and exhilarating speeches that I had ever heard. The language, the flow, the choice of words and the chain of thoughts – it was par excellence. When I came out of the auditorium I met a friend who had attended the session in the adjoining room and he asked me how was Shashi's lecture and I replied, still under the magical spell of your lecture, – “it was not prose, what I heard was sheer poetry”.

In the last 2½ years this is my third opportunity to be on the dais with you - On the previous two occasions I had proposed a vote of thanks after your speech. On this occasion, I got the opportunity to introduce you. With one more opportunity in the future to introduce you, I think I will be able to add a line in my CV - “An expert in introducing Dr. Shashi Tharoor”.

Before I conclude, Dr. Tharoor, I am taking the liberty to refer to an extract from your quote reported on the net. I quote “...I do want to make a difference, ... I would find it difficult to pursue something unless I felt that my pursuing it would make some difference to the world” Unquote. Rightly so, you chose today's topic as “Reshaping the World...” I am more than convinced that your lecture today will make a difference in our understanding of the subject when you speak on “Reshaping the World : Challenges for an India in Transformation”. We all look forward to your lecture later this evening.

Thank you.