

A Passionate Institution Builder and Scholar

Tributes to Dr Raju K. Thadikaran



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It was Martin Luther King, Jr. who famously said that “the function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.” This surely holds tremendous significance in higher education academia insofar as it entails larger issues of national and international life. A person who is so immersed in such explorations in critical thinking could certainly be an institutional/intellectual asset. The academic lifeworld of Dr. Raju K. Thadikkaran—an International Relations scholar of Kerala—was an embodiment of that asset. It is precisely for this reason that his demise is disturbing to many—at a time when critical thinking itself is seen as a bane.



Raju K. Thadikkaran

On Friday, rich tributes were paid to the departed IR scholar, Dr Raju Thadikkaran, by his colleagues, disciples and friends from India and abroad. Dr. Thadikkaran, former Director, School of International

Relations and Politics (SIRP), founder-Director, Institute of Contemporary China Studies (ICCS) and Honorary Director, University Centre for International Cooperation (UCIC), Mahatma Gandhi University (MGU) had passed away in the early hours of 18 January 2022.

Paying homages to him, Dr. R. Bindu, Minister for Higher Education said that “Dr Thadikkaran had played a significant role in developing SIRP a globally known institution. His academic life is an exemplar of diversity in scholarly activities as well as profound commitment to a research mission that fosters knowledge expansion in its entirety. His loss is painful and it has come at a time when an academician like him was very much in demand for great contributions in our universities,” the Minister said.



Prof Sabu Thomas, Vice Chancellor

Prof Sabu Thomas, Vice Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi University said that “Dr Raju Thadikkaran was a brilliant scholar of International

Relations and Political Science, but equally important to his identity was his great role in taking the School (SIRP) to high academic levels. He organized many high profile national and international conferences, workshops and symposia. In some of the conferences we were very much associated. Some faculty development programme workshops for the teachers were run jointly by us.” The Vice Chancellor noted that “Dr Thadikkaran’s organizational capability was exceptional. He could bring many national and international scholars to the School and made a huge network. He could also attract many students from different part of the world to the SIRP which became really cosmopolitan in terms of the diversity of students. Under his leadership we started an Institute for Contemporary Chinese Studies (ICCS) and the University Centre for International Co-operation (UCIC). Vice Chancellor also said that “he was a great teacher and was always friendly with students.” He noted that Dr Thadikkaran “was always a strong follower of the left movements in the country and campaigned for a broad range of social issues.”

Prof Sabu recollects: “I met Dr. Thadikkaran for the first time in 1987 as soon as I joined MGU. He became my good friend and gave me a lot of direction and advice since he was with MGU before me. He often used to tell me all the stories of JNU where he had his studies and I used to share my experience in IIT Kharagpur. I vividly remember his visit to my house for the first time in 1989 and we had lunch together with my wife. In fact, he came to wish me a good journey to Canada where I was heading for a post doc for a couple of years. I remember our travel to Thiruvananthapuram many times when he was our Teachers’ Association leader. He was friendly, loving and very supportive. The news of his sudden death was a shock and cause of deep sadness to many who benefitted from his personal kindness, his intellectual stimulation and his mentorship. He made tremendous contributions to the upliftment of SIRP and finally I would like to add

that he will be remembered fondly by our students, colleagues and friends forever,” Vice Chancellor added.



Prof VN Rajasekharan Pillai

Conveying condolences to Dr. Raju Thadikkaran’s family, Prof V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Vice-Chancellor of Somaiya Vidyavihar University, said that his “untimely demise was an extremely shocking news” for him. Prof Pillai, former Vice Chairman/Chairman, University Grants Commission and former Vice Chancellor, MGU as well as IGNOU, said that he “vividly remembers his joining the MG university in the 1980s in its infant stages, and working passionately for building up a new School of International Relations. As a teacher colleague, I always cherished the personal and professional interactions with him at the university for almost twelve years.” He said, “Raju’s contributions in the areas of Politics and International Relations will be remembered by all.”

Ambassador KP Fabian, who spent two terms in SIRP as Diplomat-in-Residence under the K.P.S. Menon Chair for Diplomatic Studies, said he had the privilege of knowing Dr. Thadikkaran closely. He said, “Dr Thadikkaran’s “intellectual alertness, deep scholarship and ability to lead a discussion on IR impressed me deeply. He always kept an open mind and was invariably courteous. Dr Thadikkaran knew how to disagree without being disagreeable,” Ambassador Fabian added.



Ambassador K.P. Fabian

According to Ambassador Venu Rajamony, currently Professor at Jindal Global Law School of the O.P. Jindal Global University, Dr Thadikkaran “played a major role in establishing a stellar reputation for the SIRP in MG University in the field of International Relations (IR).” He said Dr. Thadikkaran “was passionate about his work and full of ideas on new areas of research the School could undertake. He was a model teacher and the dedication with which he taught was truly impressive. He was also an exceptional human being who lavished love on his students and, in return, reaped their affection. He had a deep social commitment and earnestly strived to change realities around him for the better.”

Venu Rajamony said Dr. Thadikkaran was his “dear friend of around forty years. I met Raju for the first time when I joined Jawaharlal Nehru University in 1981. He was a year senior to me and a popular figure on campus by virtue of his warmth and friendship towards all. He welcomed me into the campus and was of enormous support in my settling down. He also had a great sense of humour and was full of mischief, making him a fun person to be around. Thadikkaran continued in JNU for his MPhil-PhD while I returned to Kerala after my MA and we would meet during my visits to Delhi. In the meantime, I briefly taught his later to be wife, Shirley, who had joined the second batch of the newly established School of IR in MGU.”



Ambassador Venu Rajamony

Venu Rajamony recalls: “My joining the foreign service in 1986 more or less coincided with his return to Kerala and joining Kottayam IR School. As one of the founding faculties, he along with other colleagues, put in great effort in developing the IR School. I visited Kerala from my various diplomatic assignments. He would not hesitate to pull me up if I pleaded lack of time, reminding me that as a diplomat and a Malayali, it was my duty to support the School.” Venu Rajamony

continued: “On my many visits, I got to see first hand how Raju matured to become an outstanding scholar capable of deep insights into his area of study. Raju was leftist in his thinking and pro-people as well as pro-poor. He had a deep social commitment and earnestly strived to change realities around him for the better. Raju’s interests were wide-ranging and whenever we met, our conversations would cover not just issues of international politics but also everything of importance that concerned Kerala and India. Each visit was also for us an opportunity to go back and recollect our wonderful days of youth in JNU.”

Ambassador Rajamony concluded: “My wife Saroj and I heard of Raju not keeping good health when we returned to India in end 2020. We visited Raju, Shirley and their son, Manu last January at their home. We found him cheerful. Ill-health had not dulled his sense of humour even a little bit. We enjoyed the little time we spent together, laughing and reminiscing a lot. The world is a lesser place without Raju around. Farewell dear friend. You leave behind a great legacy as a scholar and institution builder as well as beautiful memories that your friends will always cherish.”



Muraleedharan Nair

Former Diplomat Muraleedharan Nair, currently a Distinguished Senior Fellow with Defence Research and Studies, and Senior Fellow with Centre for Public Policy Research, who had earlier served as the Indian Consul in China (Shanghai & Guangzhou), Hong Kong and Singapore writes: “I distinctly remember Prof. Thadikkaran literally holding me by the hand and leading me through the corridors of Kottayam IR School to different classrooms to address postgraduate and doctoral scholars on China-related subjects.”

Muraleedharan Nair recalls: “It was at the prestigious Jinan University in Guangzhou, China, that I met Prof. Raju Thadikkaran for the first time, in 2008. I had just moved in from Hong Kong to take over as the Consul looking after Culture, Information, Education, among other subjects, at our newly established Consulate General there. Prof. Thadikkaran and Prof. KM Seethi were there to sign an MoU with Jinan University for cooperation in the pursuit of academic excellence. It was at a dinner we hosted to honour him and Prof. KM Seethi at my official residence in Guangzhou that he asked me to join MGU as an honorary visiting fellow at the newly established an Institute for Contemporary Chinese Studies.” “Later on, though my visits to the MG University became rather infrequent for various reasons, our friendship with the faculty and the student community, and particularly with the good professor and his most kind wife continued till Prof. Thadikkaran’s health started deteriorating and I temporarily moved back to Delhi. It is sad that his vision to build a world class centre for contemporary China studies at MGU remains largely unrealised for reasons I am unaware of.”

Muraleedharan concludes: “At a personal level, I owe the credit for my subsequent academic pursuits at various academic institutions and think tanks across the country entirely to the confidence he instilled in me in his inimitable style. God must have been in dire need of a truly great scholar to discuss political developments and international affairs.

Otherwise, I can't imagine of another good reason for calling back my good friend so early.”

Dr. Jia Haitao, Professor of International Relations and Director of Chindian Studies at the Jinan University, Guangzhou, China commented: “I am deeply saddened to learn of the untimely passing of Prof. Raju Thadikkaran. He is a respectable and lovely elder brother of mine and an old friend of the Chinese people. For many, his passing was a huge loss. He has been a great help to me during his lifetime, and he was my guide to study India and understand Indian society. Through him I felt the greatness of the Indian people and the charm of Indian culture. He has a wonderful personality, with extensive knowledge, progressive thinking, broad-mindedness, and generosity. He likes to help others and has made friends all over the world. He is an outstanding representative of the Indian people.”



Prof Haitao

Dr. Haitao, who also served as Erudite Scholar in SIRP, said: “I cherish my friendship with him for 20 years! I am very fortunate to be able to have associated with Mahatma Gandhi University on my first visit to

India and settle in Kerala, which has a deep historical relationship with China and is known as the God's own country, and got to know Professor Raju and his excellent colleagues. Over the years, I have returned to Mahatma Gandhi University many times to attend conferences or give lectures. Every time I go back to Kerala, I feel like home. Every time I see the teachers and students of Mahatma Gandhi University, I also have the feeling of seeing relatives. Every time I see Prof. Raju, I find that he is in high spirits, alive and well, and in good health. I didn't expect him to suddenly bid farewell to this world. May his soul return to heaven with God. May Prof. Raju rest in in peace.”

Dr. Haitao concludes, “I was supposed to fly to Kottayam for his funeral. But unfortunately, due to the isolation caused by the pandemic, I cannot go there. I hope I can visit Mahatma Gandhi University again after the pandemic is over to pay tribute to Prof. Raju. On behalf of my family and the Institute for China-India Comparative Studies, Jinan University, I would like to extend our deepest condolences to Shirly and Manu, as well as the rest of Prof. Raju's family.



Prof TV Paul

Dr. T.V. Paul, James McGill Professor of International Relations in the Department of Political Science at McGill University, Canada, who also served as Erudite Scholar-in-Residence and KPS Menon Chair in SIRP, said that Dr Raju Thadikkarán had “brought global IR to Kottayam through his cultivation of scholars from different parts of the world.” Dr Paul noted that “through his efforts he brought back Kottayam’s glorious days as a centre of South India’s knowledge centre.” Dr Paul also remembers fondly the time he had spent with him and his colleagues as a visiting scholar on different occasions.



Stanly Johny

Dr. Stanly Johny, International Affairs Editor, *The Hindu*, recalls: “Quite an unassuming professor, Dr Raju Thadikkarán was witty and detailed at the same time in the classroom. Some of the early lessons I learnt on China, which continue to guide my understanding of the PRC, were from him.” Dr. Stanly said that Dr Thadikkarán “was one of the guiding lights of the SIRP, the School that made many of us what we are today.” “Raju sir, as we called him, had a feather-touch approach. He wouldn't force you into anything, but he would guide

you to learn more. I had never seen him without that characteristic smile. He saw us as equals. He was always approachable, either in the department, or in the evenings at Roy's tea shop. Great teachers never depart us. They live through their students. I was lucky to have such teachers in my life," he added.

Dr Shahul Hameed, Chief Executive-South China, India-China Economic and Cultural Council, Shenzhen-China, remembers Dr Raju Thadikkaran as a "great institution builder and a noble human being." He wrote that Dr Thadikkaran was instrumental in inculcating the values and importance of studying a neighbouring country in students, which is sadly not understood correctly by us due to the enormous amount of misinformation spread on a daily basis by vested interests." Therefore, Dr Shahul says, "besides being a pillar to SIRP, his vision to take initiative to start an Institute for Contemporary China Studies (ICCS) needs to be reckoned with. Dr Shahul called him a 'Guru' in literal terms, because he was much above as a teacher. He recollects, Dr Thadikkaran was "always a happy and excited person on his disciples' success. He was a person who always tried his best to extend any possible help/assistance to them. There is one great regret in my life and that always haunts me. When Dr Thadikkaran and Dr Seethi came to China, together from Korea, I could not meet them for some unavoidable reason."



Raju Thadikkaran with Dr Shahul

“Days of living together with teachers in Asquith hostel in CMS College are fond memories. When we all went to JNU in the mid-1980s, as part of dissertation work under the leadership of Dr Thadikkaran, it became a milestone in life, and that, in fact, motivated to study in JNU which made me reach China.” Dr Shahul remembers: “As my teacher, he was strict in assessing academic ability irrespective of friendship. Our personal relationship never influenced his academic assessments in class. When I went to JNU alone, he informed Satyanathan, PJ Antony and Vijayakrishnan (Dhillu) and Pious to arrange a guest room for me at JNU till I get hostel. That was his care for the students. It was all a great a privilege for us to take care of him, a few days in China and Hongkong, after a conference he attended way back in 2009.”



Happymon Jacob

Dr. Happymon Jacob, a New Delhi-based academic, columnist, and commentator and faculty at the Diplomacy and Disarmament Division, Jawaharlal Nehru University writes: “When someone you have known for a very long time passes away, it forces you to take a break and reflect about him/her, life in general, and the small things

that matter in life. I received the news of Dr. Raju Thadikkarán's untimely demise with shock and sadness. His warmth and caring personality will continue to live in the hearts of people who have known him."

Dr. Happymon recollects: "Dr Thadikkarán was my teacher when I was a Masters' student at SIRP during 1998-2001. His friendly attitude and pleasant demeanor made a big difference to those of us who were new to the discipline, and to the Kottayam town. Interacting with him was a great pleasure for young students like myself – he would put us at ease and encourage us to speak our minds. For a 'high-ranger' like myself, it meant a lot." Dr Happymon writes: "Sometimes people don't realise how much a friendly, helpful and encouraging teacher can nurture the spirit of a young student trying to navigate unfamiliar intellectual and social territories. Words of encouragement matter. "You should go to JNU, don't stay back here. You would be better off there" – were his words to me in one of our first interactions. I took his advice. Another important thing we often overlook in the academia is the importance of network of people working in one's field; in fact, it is often looked down upon. Dr Thadikkarán would not only put us in touch with important people in our field but tirelessly encouraged us write, talk and reach out to them. It instilled a sense of confidence in young students like me, and enhanced our social capital. Today, this is something I insist upon with my students." He sums up: "Dr Thadikkarán was a huge source of inspiration to me. His memories – in particular the helpfulness and loud laughter - will continue to inspire me."

C.N. Sathyanathan, former Director, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Parliament of India writes: "Hard to believe that Raju is not with us anymore. A very happy go lucky person I have never seen him tense or worried about anything; always smiling with a stock of jokes ready for any occasions. He even could laugh at himself and be a part of that

joke, a very rare quality found in people these days.” “His frequent trips to Delhi and his smiling caring and humorous personality are forever in our memories. During the initial years of his stint at MGU, he used to lead a batch of students to Delhi. No idea as to how many such trips he had made to Delhi and he really knew the value of such trips for the students and I felt that it was worth the trouble as, according to him, it really served a larger purpose for his students. In fact, only he could undertake such a task and be responsible for the students for a month in Delhi. He used all his personal and friendly links to make such visits as comfortable as possible for the students. It was not an easy task to arrange accommodation in hostels and academic institution guest houses those days as it was the days without internet or mobile phones. All arrangements like accommodation, visit to libraries in batches, visit to other various national institutions etc were well planned and arranged. In addition, he used to find time for them for local sightseeing, including a trip to Agra etc. All these were made with such meticulous planning. On the last day of the visit, he used to invite many of us who are in Delhi to meet the students over a dinner and introduce all of us to the students as a way of saying ‘Thank you’ for our help during such visits. we also would look forward to these annual sojourn of Raju as he used to visit all friends in the evenings one by one over a dinner.”

“I understand that though he faced some resistance from the university about the visits, as no other dept used to undertake such visits. But he was able to convince the university administration that a month’s visit to Delhi would be worth more than any academic activities or reading they do in the campus as the visit exposed the students to a new world of learning and people and places. In hindsight I feel Raju was more than 100 per cent right and just, because of inspiration from such visits many students joined JNU and other reputed universities after their course in MGU and it opened up their vistas for future learning and

professions. And the students have done proud to their institutions and to their teachers.”



C.N. Sathyanathan

Sathyanathan said: “Those who had worked with him shared that he played a major role in establishing the IR School in MGU. He used all his academic and other connections to make the School well known even outside the academic circles. Getting eminent scholars and diplomats to speak to the students and organising international seminars and other major academic events, signing MoUs with other known universities and academic institutions etc were his sterling contribution to the university. He used to prepare a template for many events and was able to set a high bench mark for the future generations to follow. Thadikkaran had a passion for doing that and he enjoyed it very much,” he said.

Dr. B.S. Thirumeni, IAS(Rtd), former Collector, Kottayam recalls: “Dr. Raju Thadikkaran was a good teacher who always provoked us for new ideas and fresh thinking. He was the leader of the young four

faculties who joined the IR School when we were in the third semester in 1984. All of them stayed with us in the same building where the IR School also functioned. All of them maintained warm relations with us, especially with the hostellers like myself, PT Chacko and Shahul.” Dr. Thirumeni says: Actually, our relations flourished once we commenced the get together of the first few batches from 2012 onwards. He tried his best to attend our gatherings and enjoyed as one among us. Later we anchored at his home for our meetings. Whenever Dr. Shahul or someone from faraway places returned to Kottayam we made it a point to get the hospitality of Shirley and Thadikkaran at their home. He also came to my residence at Kottayam when I worked there, Dr Thirumeni noted.



B.S. Thirumeni

PT Chacko, senior journalist and former Press Secretary, Chief Minister of Kerala writes: I joined for the MA IR programme in the newly commenced School in 1983. Being a new institution, there was chaos. In the middle of the programme, four young teachers including Dr. Raju Thadikkaran joined the faculty. Over the next months, challenges were addressed to some extent.” Chacko says that Dr Thadikkaran “was a fresh academician from JNU and had specialized

in technology transfer and Intellectual Property Rights. He insisted that one of the five from our batch should do a dissertation on an economic issue and I was chosen for the same. He drove us to JNU to research and put in more work than I did for my dissertation on New International Economic Order.”



P.T. Chacko

Chacko also commented: “Dr Thadikkaran’s legacy continued to influence my life when I became a journalist and, later, Press Secretary to CM twice. He broadened my outlook and sharpened my insights. I took the risk of writing on ‘Globalization and its impact on Kerala agriculture,’ which was done with the award of KK Birla Foundation Fellowship. I dared to study ‘Global Climate Change and its impact on Kerala.’ I walked into places I would not have stepped in myself had Dr Thadikkaran not groomed me. Sherly, his wife, and our beloved friend have been the kindest host to us as we gathered in their home many times. We are going to miss the laughter and fun. An amazing professor, a great friend, and much more, we are missing him sadly.”

Dr. Binitha Thampi, Faculty at Chennai IIT writes: Dr. Raju Thadikkaran was a valuable source of insight and inspiration as my dissertation supervisor for the IR programme in SIRP. The title of my

dissertation was “Dunkel proposals and GATT agreement,” and I once mistakenly wrote it as ‘Drunken’ proposals. We both laughed at this, and he said ‘who knows whether it was a real mistake!’ In his interactions with students, he always had a feather-like presence and generated lighter moments. As a teacher, I now realise how valuable this approach is for easing unequal teacher-student exchanges. I was unhappy with the quality of my dissertation as I drafted in a very short time without digging too deeply into the subject. In spite of my apprehension and lack of confidence, he encouraged me to continue my studies and assured me that it was only the beginning.” Dr. Binitha said that “at a time when academics created a narrative of their own success and made others believe in it, he was an exception who was unbothered about these images.



Binitha Thampi

While he maintained professionalism in his teaching and research work, he tried to protect himself from academia’s darker black holes.” Dr Binitha remembers: “A year or two ago, I met him at the Apollo hospital in Chennai with his wife Shirley and son Manu. I went for my regular check-up and he wanted medical advice on his condition. He

looked tired and I didn't know what to say. We had some empty conversations imbued with the fear about the finality of life. My heart ached then, because the person I knew with the distinctive smile was gone. Dr. Thadikkaran will be remembered for his affectionate, loving, and kind gestures as a teacher, Dr. Binitha said.



T.G. Suresh

Dr. TG Suresh, currently an Associate Professor in the Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University writes: “It was my good fortune in the late 1980s to be able to join the Kottayam IR School as an MA student. Until then the idea of a liberal academic life was unknown to me. Dr Thadikkaran was part of that dynamic group of teachers in IR who offered to students like me both academic lessons as well as friendships. Dr Thadikkaran never hesitated to share his academic views and also about his own JNU student life experience with us. I learned from him how unencumbered and frank conversations is possible between students and teachers. For him, intellectual world has no meaning if it is devoid of personal and

by extension the social world of ideas and actions. Therefore, he always instilled in us a drive to make new associations in life. He always introduced us to scholars and friends across a wide spectrum. I didn't realise that he was easily widening the world that I knew. Dr Thadikkaran always held a warm and generous friendship. He used to surprise students with his inexhaustible energies in organizing and conducting academic events. It was his warm disposition, leadership and institutional vision that helped the IR School to develop extensive academic network that panned all over India. Dr Thadikkaran was indeed the most effective of scholars in the IR School to have made lasting contributions to developing Chinese studies in South India. His passing has left me with a deep personal void and grief," Dr Suresh added.



K.S. Jangpangi

K.S. Jangpangi, IPS (Rtd), former Director General of Police, Kerala commented: "I had known Dr Raju from mid-1980s and became thick friends over the years. I also came to know most of the faculties of the IR School through him. He was truly an institution builder and visionary with tremendous organisational qualities. To me he had

become part of my life in many ways. We shared many things in life. We often argued and discussed almost every issue affecting human life and as usual politics and societal concerns were staple of our discussion. We agreed and disagreed but always remained steadfast friends. Dr Thadikkaran was gem of a person with huge humanitarian concern and values. He was above every notion of pettiness in life. He was totally above every form of bigotry and was endowed with great values of social equity and human kindness. He is gone too early leaving us bereft of a good friend.”

Dr. Salvin Paul, faculty at the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies and Management, Sikkim University writes: Dr. Raju Thadikkaran was a “visionary who lived ahead of his time. His demise is an irreparable loss to the academia especially to the students and the scholars of Politics and International Relations. His tireless efforts to give a new orientation to the realm of IR with an emphasis on praxis in teaching, by blending both theory and practice, received mixed response from colleagues and students. His teaching and research was primarily focused on China and transfer of technology.” He was of the opinion that “one of the major drivers of international relations is Science and Technology and its advancement, which maintains hegemonic supremacy in international politics that is sustained through innovations and political construct of Intellectual Property Rights.

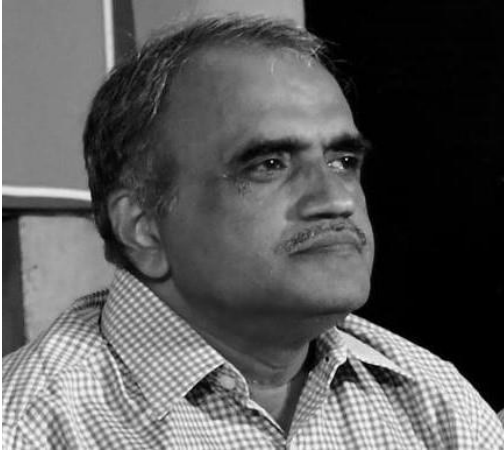
In addition to conducting and organising various academic outreach activities such as study tours, field visits, conferences, seminars etc., he had introduced and offered courses on ‘Republic of China,’ ‘Science and Technology in International Relations,’ and ‘Politics of Intellectual Property Rights and Developing countries’ to provide a holistic flavour of IR Studies to students and scholars.” In continuation of this effort, Dr Thadikkaran had motivated students to take up research with interdisciplinary perspectives at Masters, MPhil and PhD

levels on various dimensions of Science and Technology and Intellectual Property Rights.



Salvin Paul

Dr Thadikkaran earnestly cherished the development of a world class infrastructure for the IR School. He always believed in blending academia, society and governance in teaching and research. Besides, his research studies, funded by nationally reputed institutions, tried to connect and converge ideas and debates of local, national, regional and international levels. His studies also focused on how to channelise the benefit sharing mechanism to stakeholders at the local level so as to maintain the mosaic of cultural diversity. His wife, Mrs. Shirley Thadikkaran and his son, Manu Thadikkaran are always our fellow companions in discussions, debates and travels. To me, Dr Thadikkaran was a mentor, guide and friend and, above all, a genuine human being,” he said.



KN Harilal

Dr. KN Harilal, Professor, Centre for Development Studies (CDS) recalls: “Dr. Raju impressed me the most as a good friend. He was the nucleus around which we used to gather together. He made every such meeting memorable. He was a good leader and a commendably efficient organiser. This had helped the SIRP in a big way. We could organise many academic events that attracted national and international attention. He could easily bring together students, faculty and the University authorities to make SIRP programmes successful. He was also quite good in initiating serious discussions on academic issues even in informal gatherings. I benefitted immensely from my friendship with Raju. I and my family owe a lot to Raju, Sherley and Manu, “Dr. Harilal noted.

Dr. A.M. Thomas, former Professor in the IR School and Dean of Social Sciences recalls: “What I like to remember about Raju Thadikkar was that he was a great human being and an excellent organiser. I met him for the first time in 1984 when we all came together to the School of International Relations and Politics as teachers. In the quest of building up the institution, Raju was in the forefront. His experience with regard to each requirement of a new

institution helped us a lot. I remember that he was instrumental in procuring the back volumes of many prestigious journals which gave students a firsthand knowledge of what was happening in their discipline throughout the world. He was also open to ideas and encouraged others to sail in uncharted waters.”



A.M. Thomas

Dr. Thomas said that “Raju brought a human touch to the School through his interactions with his colleagues and students. The annual trips to New Delhi which he was instrumental in organizing opened new vistas to students. Few would have taken the trouble of gathering a large number of students and looking after their needs for a month away from home. Students came back with renewed vigour and new ideas after being mentored in this manner. Raju was interested in each individual. He saw to it that a person got all he or she deserved and spent all his energies towards that end. At the same time he had no hassles in calling a spade a spade!” Dr Thomas also said that “he was a family man not just interested in his own but all around him. He encouraged children of his friends and colleagues in their vocations and kept track of their career throughout. Children, for the same reason were naturally attached to him.” He sums up: “I regret that his life was

cut short before he could see to fruition many of his dreams in academic matters particularly with regard to the Mahatma Gandhi University where he served. He was both a visionary and an organiser par excellence.”



MA Ittyachen

Prof MA Ittyachen, former Professor and Head, School of Pure and Applied Physics, MGU writes: Dr Raju Thadikkaran was “good friend of mine. I was the first academic person who was appointed in the MG university and Dr. Thadikkaran was giving all respect to me. At the same time, he was very open to express his opinion without looking at the face.” “Though I had retired from MGU twenty years back, he used to contact with me till recently. His professional activities in the MGU Teachers Association were laudable. I have all admiration for him. His demise at his early age is a great loss to academic community and teachers in general,” Prof Ittyachen noted.

Abraham M. Eapen, who retired from the state government service, reminisced Dr Thadikkaran’s “affection and commitment” to his students. He said that Dr. Thadikkaran was quite different from the

teachers who used to indulge in all kinds of gratifications and success stories of their disciples. He was one who identified himself with the aches of unsuccessful lot by infusing confidence for them to face up to. He symbolised an overflowing river of love and compassion.” Mrs. Mariamma Paul, Principal, Pallikoodam, remembers Dr. Thadikkaran as “a warm genuine person who cared deeply for his students though there was no public display of his affection.”



Mathew Joseph C.

Dr. Mathew Joseph C., Professor, MMAJ Academy of International Relations, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi recollects his intimate association with Prof Thadikkaran. Mathew says, “Dr. Thadikkaran was a pleasant character, with a smiling face of courage and confidence. He had tremendous organisational ability and a passion for innovative thinking. I started my interaction with him and other faculties much before I joined the IR School, after I participated in an elocution competition organised by the School. In fact, my interest in Ghazal began to get a new uplift with a lot of help and encouragement provided by Dr. Thadikkaran who had a passion for it. It was amazing to see his liking for light music and his mono tape recorder used to be the prime mover of my emerging interest in the Ghazals of Pankaj

Udhas and others.” He said Dr. Thadikkaran always believed that “there was no problem in the world without a solution.” He “knew how to run an institution like the IR School and played a major role in expanding the profile of the School across the world. He was quite successful in maintaining a good camaraderie within the School and with others in MGU,” Dr Mathew said.



Sreerekha Sathi

Dr. Sreerekha Sathi, who teaches Gender and Political Economy at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), Erasmus University, Netherlands, remembers Dr. Thadikkaran as “a person with considerable warmth and care for others. We used to look upon him as a teacher with a lot of institutional commitments and we had greatly benefitted from his enjoyable and engaged classes.” Dr. Sreerekha said that she “had a different sort of experience with him, after several years, when she came back to MGU. Both of us sat together and recollected several episodes of life in the university. I cannot think about a Kottayam without Dr Thadikkaran,” she painfully noted.



Vinu J. George

Dr. Vinu J. George, currently teaching Political Science in KE College under Mahatma Gandhi University, says that Dr Thadikkaran was “his mentor, guide and dearest teacher.” He recollects: “I still remember the first day I met him in his chamber in the SIRP way back in 2009. It was the beginning of a new sojourn in my academic career where I started my doctoral studies. It was Dr. Thadikkaran who introduced me to the frontier area of research in Intellectual Property Rights and IR instilling confidence in me to carry forward some very fond ideas he had been working on for a long time.” He was a person of profound academic clarity. His novel thoughts and interventions during the course of my thesis work were truly the confidence building steps for me. I used to get amused watching him correcting my manuscripts, at times literally reframing the entire concept with sheer brilliance.” “It was during the final stages of my PhD work that he fell ill with some health problems and got hospitalised for a few weeks’ time. I had earlier given him the final chapter for valuation and he knew there were strict time frames for us to submit the work. I can't forget that moment when I went to meet him in the hospital one day where I saw him valuing my chapter in the hospital bed while he was undergoing a very important medical treatment. Much more than a research supervisor, he was a great human being of fine values and wisdom,” Dr. Vinu added. Even as tributes and condolences continued to flow, memories

of Thadikkaran as a human being and his academic accomplishments remain with all.

Many of his students, friends and colleagues still share their grief with thoughtful moments with him.

Thadikkaran's fame Pankaj Udhas sings the lyrics of Qaisar-Ul-Jafri,

*Dard chamka rahi hai teri yaad
Noor barsa rahi hai teri yaad
Dil ki waadi mein chaandni ki tarah
Phailti ja rahi hai teri yaad*

Heartache keeps sparkling, in your memory
Glams of light keeps showering, in your memory
In the valley of my heart, like the full moon
Spreads the radiance, of your memory....

