

"Science Fiction" Speech by TPS for the Inauguration of the Third International Conference on Popularizing Science Writing and Celebrating Science Fiction @ St. Teresa's College,Ernakulam on 14th Feb 2014.

Distinguished Delegates,

I hope that you will forgive me if I read my speech from my latest acquisition, an I Phone 5S, just released by Apple. One feature that this I Phone has is the ability to transcribe your thoughts into a readable text. I merely thought about what I should say at this Conference during my walk this morning and by the time I returned home, my speech was ready in readable form. But I still have to read the text from my I Phone. By the time the I Phone 5S is unveiled next year, we will be able to read the text from the air or our own palms as Pranav Mistry predicted in his TED talk more than 50 years ago. The real world and the virtual world would be totally merged and we would be able to move from one to the other at that time.

I am a little disoriented today as I landed at the Nedumbassery "spacedrome" only yesterday, after my three-day trip to the moon by Chandrayan 54. Though the journey itself was only for three hours, the traffic was so heavy that we had to go three times around the earth before we could land. The Teresa "peoplesmobile" was there and its pilot brought me to the Holiday Inn in two minutes, but the system was down at the hotel and hundreds of people were waiting. These are occasions when we feel nostalgic about the old ledgers and pens, which were used for registration of guests at hotels. They never failed. Today, we save time in travel, but spend it in long queues!

But what a joy it was when I finally reached my room and had access to the supernet and I was able to sign into my superskype, which enabled me to see my near and dear ones in different parts of the world in three dimensions and reach out and touch them. All of them appeared to walk out of the monitor like the originals, but since they were busy, I could not spend more time with them. As soon as I said "hi" they were ready to say "bye." It seemed the blurred pictures of the old skype were better. They spent more time trying to connect and I felt that they were making an effort to connect with me. Now they walk in and out of the monitor in a desperate rush. The world has become even faster in 2064.

I am most delighted to be at the Teresas College at this 53rd International Conference on Science Fiction. When I was here at the 3rd Conference in 2014, this hall was a dull place with standard furniture and decoration, though it was well kept even then. But look at what nanotechnology has done to it. It has glittering colours and magnificent shapes, which can be changed every day, if you so wish. The invisible public address system is

perfect and the acoustics are excellent. As for the audience, all of you looked older with grey hair and even no hair and with paunches of different sizes and shapes on that occasion. But today, though you are older by 50 years, all of you are trim, thanks to the medical technology available today. No more treatments, no more surgeries, but mere replacement of vital organs at frequent intervals. You can order your complexion, the colour and style of your hair and the size and shape of your whole body. That explains the spring in the air, the sparkling in your eyes and the style in your strides. We are in the days of ageless body and timeless mind, as the super guru, Deepak Chopra promised us 50 years ago. I believe he has migrated to the moon, with frequent trips to the Mars by the ISRO Mangalyan Express.

I shall conclude with a little bit about my latest moon journey. I went to participate in the annual celebrations of the Moon Malayalee Association. The usual suspects were all there, including The Minister of Cosmic Indian Affairs. Dancers and singers were brought by a special spacecraft all the way from Kerala. We stayed at the Super Duper Nair Cosmic Hotel, which was a mere teashop run by the same Nair when Armstrong set foot on the moon. Now, with daily flights to the moon, we could get the best Kerala cuisine every day.

On my moon journey this time, I discovered the new Knowledge Infusion Machine fitted on the Moon Shuttle. You merely connect the gadget with a band around your head and the book you select out of the millions on offer will be infused directly into your brain. I chose the books I began reading several years ago, but could not finish. Tolstoy's War and Peace, Milton's Paradise lost and Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy are now in my head forever. Once this machine is commercially available, we shall all be scholars without having to find time to read and without ruining our eyesight.

Friends,

As you may have guessed, the speech I just delivered is ahead of its time by fifty years. I do not know whether you will call it flight of fancy, fantasy or science fiction. I thought I should present my own science fiction, rather than explain what science fiction is all about. Someone has said that science fiction is like pornography: you cannot define it, but when you see it, you know it. If science fiction is a genre of fiction dealing with [imaginative](#) content such as [futuristic](#) settings, futuristic [science](#) and [technology](#), [space travel](#), [time travel](#), [parallel universes](#) and [extraterrestrial life](#), my vision of the world of 2064 is science fiction. None of the innovations I envisaged is far beyond the frontiers of science, as we know them today.

Imagination is boundless, while science has its limitations. Science fiction shows the way, science follows. Today's science fiction is tomorrow's innovation. Our myths and pre-historic fiction had anticipated intercontinental flying (Pushpakaviman) and weapons of mass destruction (Agneyastra). Narada Muni had the capacity to move around the whole universe, carrying tales. Hanuman could leap across the oceans and turn a city into ashes. Lord Krishna could be with 16008 women simultaneously, probably cloning himself with an ancient version of the 3D printer. None of these feats are unthinkable for man today. In fact, today, facts are stranger than fiction.

Finally, I must congratulate the literature fraternity for striking back at the scientific community by celebrating science fiction. Scientists are strutting around the globe showcasing astounding scientific inventions and innovations in every field. Innovate or perish, they say. This conference will show that the origin of these innovations is the brains of men of letters, people like Jonathan Swift, Mary Shelley, Jules Verne, H.G.Wells, Isaac Asimov, Carl Sagan and Arthur Clarke, who had visions of a brave new world long, long before the scientists created it. Science fiction is indeed a harmonious blend of imagination and science, which helps the frontiers of science to expand beyond the wildest imagination of scientists.

Thank you.