

Report of the 7th National Science Fiction Conference

- Dr. Srinarahari

Number seven becomes significant when it is associated with colors, weekdays, Ursa Major (Saptharishi Mandal) and others. Bertolt Brecht in “Crutches” writes,

“Seven years I could not walk a step,
when I to the physician
...he asked me why the crutches.
I told him I am lame...”

The narrator in the poem traces that the use of ‘contraption’ is the root cause for lameness and suggests us to be independent. The outcome of the Seventh National Science Fiction Conference is that the association could stand on its own legs. The feedback has confirmed that it could serve as a model with its innovative ideas in organizing mega events.

In between the inaugural and valedictory functions, presentation of twenty-four papers was accommodated even though much of the time was consumed for a Herculean task of transporting 200 delegates, invitees, executive committee members, office bearers, media persons, and others to two different studios and accommodate them for an interactive session for a video conference held outside the venue to meet certain other requisites on the midday of the conference. The feedback also confirms that the video conferencing tops the sessions.

Most of the papers were made on Power Point Presentation for which there was a considerable amount of appreciation from the audience. Though they were both effective and consuming less time, most of the time the discussion followed by the presentations was generating laudable interaction among the participants for a period longer than stipulated.

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The inaugural session on 9th December 2005 began with an Indian traditional invocation song sung by Ms. Harini. The Director of Center for Information Science & Technology Prof. Vasudeva welcomed the gathering. Dr. Srinarahari read the Annual Report. The report highlighted the following events: The award ‘Srilanka Abhimanya’ to Arthur C Clarke is also an incentive for the promotion of SF worldwide. The efforts made by Institutions like Sahithya Akademi, Sahitya Bhandar, and Prasaranga, in popularizing SF in India. The serialization of an SF novel *Mahayudda* by SJ Mehandale in a prominent magazine, bringing out special issues on SF by *Taranga* and *Mayura* (weekly and monthly magazines respectively), In scholastic studies, Geetha an executive member of the association and SF scholar received the Bursary Award instituted by *SF Foundation* UK. The report also congratulated *Abdhut.com* for the successful

completion of two years. The year marked the publication of Jayant Narlikar *Tales of the Future—Ten Best Sci-Fi Stories* and Y.H. Deshpande's *Eshwaracha Janma*, Bhoosnurmath's *Naukaghatha*.

Inaugurating the conference by lighting a lamp in an Indian traditional way, an eminent science writer Mr. GT Narayana Rao defined science as the knowledge man acquires when his curious mind interacts with the natural phenomena in the cause-effect plane. Defining Science fiction, he said it is the literature created by fanciful flight of imagination, based solidly on proven scientific theories. He said, "A creative mind ignited by a scientific discovery can raise several seemingly absurd questions." While elaborating the idea, he linked to the idea of time travel concept. Further, in his speech GTN (as he is popularly known) quoted George Gamow to establish what would happen if one had traveled faster than light:

There was a young girl named Miss Bright
Who could travel much faster than light
She traveled one day
In an Einsteinian way
And arrived on the previous night!

Concluding his speech, he pointed out that a Science Fiction writer must possess a combination of three gifts namely a firm grip over scientific theories, masterly craftsmanship and unbounded enthusiasm for communication.

In his keynote address Panneer Selvam explained that information science is concerned with the gathering, manipulation, classification, storage, and retrieval of recorded knowledge. It also includes information processing and is related to database and software engineering. Tracing the history of printing back to the contribution of the Fifteenth century inventor Gutenberg, Steve Jobs of the mid 90s and of Paul Otlet (1868-1944) the father of bibliography to the field of information science, Panneer Selvam added that the vision of Otlet might have a great impact on the introduction of World Wide Web, hyperlinks, search engines, remote access and social networks. He had also pioneered in finding systems similar to the contemporary hypertext/ hypermedia systems. While elaborating the idea of hypertext, the note extends to the contribution of Xanadu Hypertext System by Ted Nelson also.

Later focusing on Information Technology, Panneer Selvam referred to the development, installation and implementation of computer systems and applications. In this regard he said, the discipline that analyzes information as an organizational resource covers the definition, uses, value and distribution of all data and information within an organization. Further the speaker linked to the everlasting contribution of the concept of www by Tim Berners-Lee.

Focusing on the most important objectives of Science Fiction he said that it is the study of the impact of new science and technology on human life. SF has to perform the duty of taking science and technology to people in an acceptable way and ward off the feared reactions: Frankenstein complex resistance to change and techno phobia. Looking at the various themes of SF and F, a movement from plausibility-possibility-living reality is clearly visible. The endeavor of every SF writer is to take science closer to people and vice versa. Fantasies of earlier days have become

realities of today. While concluding he speculated that information science & Technology and SF together would grow in the days to come.

The editor of the Local Mysore English daily newspaper “Star of Mysore” Mr.K.B. Ganapathy released the current issue of the *Indian Journal of Science Fiction Studies*. Dr.K.S. Purushothaman in his presidential address pointed out that as the association has brought together people of all walks of life under a single umbrella the number of delegates went up gradually year after year.

Further, Purushothaman speaking about the difference in the attitude of human and machines, he pointed out that the genre Science Fiction has highlighted that human beings who have exhibited inhuman qualities whereas on the contrary, machines which are created by man have been displaying human quality. Hence, the shift in future studies may be shifted to consider the technology under humanizing conditions and socializing science and technology. Science fiction has shown the contrast of the contemporary life of man with that of the men in the future.

Disclosing the efforts made by the association in popularizing SF he described in detail regarding a project in which Dr. Srinarahari and himself have been involved in selecting and editing an anthology of Science Fiction in English to be prescribed for the post graduate and undergraduate Indian university students. He thanked the contributors to this anthology, who have donated liberally their stories for the promotion of Science Fiction in India. He added that preparing SF texts and prescribing them for students of different levels would probably be the immediate goal of the association.

S.R. Krishnamurthy the Technical consultant of the association proposed the vote of thanks and the local secretary C. Naganna was the master of the ceremony.

Unlike in other cities, here the organizers moved heaven and earth to arrange for the Video Conference. Since certain essential equipments like poly cam and others were not available at the venue, all the 200 participants, delegates, special invitees, distinguished guests, media persons, ladies and gentlemen were to be divided into two groups. It was a Herculean task in dividing all of them into two groups, briefing the proceedings and explaining their functions, to keep up the time schedule, transporting them from different lodging houses and taking back to the conference venue. VC, which was a dream a century back, became a reality. For all of them Interactive Video Conference was their first experience in life.

Video Conferencing took place exactly for one hour. As all the two hundred people could not be accommodated in a single hall, some were active and others were passive during the interactive session. After the VC was switched on by Professor K.C Belliappa at the studio located at Kalidasa Road, he introduced his team. They were Purushothaman president of IASFS, Bhoosnurmath Vice President, Panneer Selvam Secretary for South India, Pitchai Joint Secretary and Vasudeva Director of CIST. Naganna the local secretary introduced his teammates at the studio, which is located at Deveraj Urs Road. They were introduced as Srinarahari General Secretary, Yeshwanth Deshpande Secretary for western India, Mehandale Secretary for Karnataka, Krishnamurthy technical consultant, and Niranjana Vanilla from the journalism department. AP Deshpande the Chairperson of National Centre for Science Communicators at the Mumbai studio introduced his team as Dr. Bal Phondke the Science & SF writer, Kumar Kelkar Group Editor “Lokasatta”, JB

Joshi Director of the University Institute of Chemical Engineering, and KJ Purohith a science writer. Each one of the members of the Mumbai team spoke for a period of 5-6 minutes. Immediately after each presentation the time was allotted for asking one or two questions. After the presentation of all the papers, a discussion went on till the end. The VC came to an end with the concluding remarks of Niranjana Vanalli.

Dr. Bal Phondke confining his speech to Indian Science Fiction said that Science Fiction irrespective of the country, deals with the impact of Science on human beings. It deals with human problems and possible human solutions. SF in India differs with world SF when the cultural ambience is taken into account. Dr. Phondke explained that one of the gifts of Science is 'surrogate motherhood'. The reaction in India to this Science idea is different from the rest of the world because, the emotional and ethical factors bar the Indians when they want to put into practice. He observes that the Indian SF works differ from each other depending upon the region (Indian states), language or whether the writer is belonging to urban to rural area. For validating his argument, he cited that he had the occasion to study the SF works, which he could gather from the nooks and corners of this country. His efforts were fruitful in editing an Indian SF anthology of nineteen short stories entitled *It Happened Tomorrow* (1993). He informed that of all the languages the 'Marathi' language (spoken in the state of Maharashtra) has a higher output of Science Fiction works. He complimented the contribution of Jayant V Narlikar who has been the guiding spirit for this missionary zeal of popularizing science fiction in India.

AP Deshpande explained the role played by Marathi Vidyan Parishad in the last four decades in popularizing science and science fiction. JB Joshi explained how Science has supplied different themes for the growth of Science Fiction. Mr. Kumar Kethkar hit hard on the media by highlighting the fact that in reality there is neither coverage of Science nor the science fiction in majority of print and electronic media in India. Most of them on the contrary have been bringing out regularly anti-science items like the yearly, monthly, weekly, daily and hourly forecasts and horoscopes. K G Purohith called for not to invent new superstitions hereafter. He added that anyone could be spiritual rather than religious. Science Fiction could provide a platform for propagating scientific temperament. A number of questions pertaining to the place of Indian myth in Science Fiction works, the reason for the sudden boom of Indian SF written works and scholarship from the year 1982, the progress done in the area of Marathi science fiction movies, the role of media for the propagation of Science fiction works in India. A deep concern was expressed for the thinness of Science facts in Science Fiction stories. The efforts made by different bodies for the sale of SF works, the impact of science fiction predictions in the field of Science and other relevant issues were discussed during the Video Conference.

During the Valedictory function a number of delegates expressed their happiness over the arrangements, organization, and the reactions during each presentation. Distinguished persons Mr. Bhoosnurmath, YH Deshpande, and others expressed their views. Valedictory address was given by Prof. Vasudeva the Director of CIST, Dr. Purushothaman presided over the function. Dr. Pitchai thanked the individuals and organizational men who were responsible for making the conference a great success. Mr. SR Krishnamurthy was the master of the ceremony.

Themes of the conference were Health Science, Popular Science, Science Fiction, Fantasy and Information Science and Technology. Following are the papers presented during the three-day conference:

Health Science

Chairperson: Dr.M.H. Srinarahari

1. N. Gopalakrishna “Popular Health Communication in Kannada.”

Popular Science

Chairperson: Dr. Panneer Selvam

1. G. Ramakrishna “Spinning Motion of Earth”
2. Ms. Nausheen Sadaf “Beware of the Tiny World- Nano Technology”
3. Dada Khalandar “Jatropha, the Fuel of the Next Generation”
4. H.S Ashrafulla” A Modified Technique for the Estimate of Chicory in Coffee –Chicory mixture”
5. Dr. C Amruthavalli “Fiction and Reality in Bio-informatics and Bio-technology”

Science Fiction:

I. Regional Language (Kannada) Section:

Chairperson: C. Naganna

1. Santhosh Kumar Mehandale – “An Analysis of Kannada Science Fiction”
2. Rajendra Baikadi “An Analysis of Kannada Science and Fiction Works”
3. Mallikarjunaiah “A study of the Liquid Barometer from a novel angle”

II English Section:

Chairperson: Dr. Yeshwanth H. Deshpande

- 4.Nellai Su Muthu “Space Science”
5. Rajashekar Bhoosnurmath “Futurology as Prophetic Science Fiction”
6. Ms. J.R. Sujatha “Frank Herbert and the Ecological Science Fiction: An Interpretation.”

7. Sr. Vinitha “Elements of Science Fiction in the Life of Pi”
8. Ms. Tenmozhi “Women in Science Fiction”

Fantasy

Chairperson: Dinkar Charak

1. Dr. Ratnakar D Bhelkar “JG Ballard’s Vision of Reality in his Apocalyptic SF work *Draught*.”
2. Ms. Reema Kansal “Terry Pratt’s Disc World and the Genre Fantastic”
3. Prashant Chandrasekhar “An Analysis of the SF film *Matrix* “.
4. Ms. Gayadri Devi “Virtual World: Fiction and Reality”

Information Technology

1. Ms. Kalaa Selvi “Fiction Becoming Fact in Information Technology”
2. N Dhana Bagyan “Object Oriented Principles in IT”
3. Ms. N Pankaj “Kamaroopa Vidya – Changing the shape to any desired form”.
4. Karthik Kulkarni “Fire Walls –Internal Security”
5. Prakash Jagdale “Rural Development: Decision Support System Using Data warehouse”

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You are cordially invited to take part in the ensuing 8th National Science Fiction Conference, which is scheduled to be held at Aurangabad (between the famous cave temples of Ellora and Ajantha) in Maharashtra during the second week of November 2006.

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