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THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ON IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE
IN MALAYALAM.

(N.V.Krishna Warrior)

The impact of science and technology on imaginative literature in any Indian language is indeed slight. This is especially true as far as the imaginative literature in Malayalam is concerned.

The reasons for this are not far to seek. The impact of science and technology on our lives is still only peripheral. After twenty years of national independence and planned efforts for development and modernisation, we are still a traditional society.

Not that we are not taught elements of modern science in our schools, colleges and Universities. Our educational apparatus is becoming more and more science-conscious. Yet the content of education has no organic relation with our actual living conditions. The aim of the teaching of science in our schools and colleges is not the cultivation of an attitude in the minds of the students, but filling their memories with all kinds of disjointed facts, which they learn by rote, and regurgitate during the terminal examinations. Our science-teaching has so far eminently succeeded in extinguishing the feeble sparks of enquiry in the hearts of the younger generation.

It is the deadwood, and not the growing edges, of science that usually find a place in our school and college curricula. Moreover, the language through which the students have to mug up the stale stuff is English, an alien and difficult tongue. No wonder this teaching leaves them cold, and that science has failed to produce any perceptible impact on the thinking mechanism of the literate 20 or 30 per cent of our countrymen. The illiterate masses comprising the 70 or 80 per cent of our population are yet to emerge from mediaevalism of the intellect.

That much for science; now what about technology? Technology we got as import or foreign aid. It is still largely the preserve of foreign experts and their local associates who by training and outlook are more foreign than the foreign experts themselves. We have of course big steel complexes and oil refineries; we have even our atomic reactors. But the fact remains that modern industrial technology has miserably failed to make any serious impact on the way our people at large think and feel and live.

This is particularly true in the State of Kerala where we do not have big cities or giant industrial complexes. In Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala, we do not wake up hearing the sirens of factories. Our dawns are ushered in by the melodious VIENKATESASUPRABHATAM broadcast over a loudspeaker network from a nearby temple. In the surrounding rural areas the cock's shrill clarion still calls the sleepy folk to their ~~wake~~ daily chores. Life has by no means become mechanical. Time still hangs heavily on idle hands. There is no sense of urgency; no feeling of alienation; no compulsive awareness of the absurdity of it all. The men and women are not world-weary; they are not searching for the hidden meaning of life or ~~the~~ ^{the exploring} intricacies of human destiny. What they are after is the few lucrative jobs for which ~~there are~~ so many are competing, and the extra-ration of half a kilo of sugar, which may get exhausted unless they queue up quickly! The problem of the people is not technology, but the absence of it. Most homes in Kerala are already electrified, but technology has hardly crossed their thresholds. Far less has it crossed the thresholds of people's awareness.

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Still it may not be the whole truth if I say that science and technology have left our writers completely cold. In fact I can quote any number of lines from contemporary poets to show that they have had ample recourse to scientific imagery and scientific themes. I can keep them company while they explore the expanding Universe or extol brave tunnel-drillers and undaunted dam-builders. Very successful plays have been written and produced around specific projects. Malayalam fiction of today is justly famous for the cold psycho-analytical dissection of characters and objective sociological evaluation of situations. This, however, only shows that the western literature which has undergone a major revolution as a result of the powerful impact of science and technology has had considerable influence on the more perceptive of our writers. In sum, it is not science and technology, but the inverted reflection of science and technology in the western literature, that has been colouring and shaping our imaginative literature of the last two decades to a considerable extent. By and large, our scientism and technologism is ^{just} a mere posture!
