

## Man and Machine- A Literary Study

**Jennifer G Joseph\*, Padmaragam, Rajitha. R,**

Dept of English, AVIT, Chennai, Tamilnadu, India.

VIT, Chennai, Tamilnadu, India.

**\*Corresponding author: E-Mail: jenny\_violet@yahoo.com**

### ABSTRACT

The relationship between man and machine has been a symbiotic one. The existence of machine has contributed to the evolution of sophisticated life style of the human kind. And on the other hand man has been always striving to create the ultimate machine. Literature has been a fore runner for some of the ideas on which inventions have found have platform. In this paper the authors have tried to correlate literature with machines and technology. For this a study of technology in science fiction especially hard science fiction and also soft science fiction has been done.

**KEY WORDS:** mankind, machines, technology, innovations, inspirations, literature, science fiction, Star Trek

### 1. INTRODUCTION

From the advent of industrialisation man has had a close co-existence with machines and technology. In today's world one cannot imagine living a day without the assistance of machines in one way or the other. May it be for transportation, communication, agriculture or regular work machines are an integral part of our lives. To dream of an existence without technology turns in to a nightmare. Even the poorest of the poor need technology and the remotest part of the world has traces of technology. A perfect nature picture taken in the hilly region of a remote area might be marred with telephone towers or electrical cables. The extent of the reach of technology in today's world is unimaginable.

**Role and influence of literature:** The writers have tried to study the role and influence of literature in inventions and technology. Science fiction is a genre of fiction which deals with imaginative concepts such as futuristic science, time and space travel, ET, advanced technology etc. Science fiction amounts to vast amount of literature with n number of ideas and concepts which can be built upon for further research or inventions. These literature are called' literature of ideas'. These are grounded in science based facts or theory.

"Wells used the term originally to cover what we would today call 'hard' science fiction, in which a conscientious attempt to be faithful to already known facts (as of the date of writing) was the substrate on which the story was to be built, and if the story was also to contain a miracle, it ought at least not to contain a whole arsenal of them." William Atheling Jr.

Another science fiction writer defines it as, "a handy short definition of almost all science fiction might read: realistic speculation about possible future events, based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and on a thorough understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method." Robert A. Heinlein.

Science fiction differs from fantasy in the sense that the imaginary things are mostly possible with in the present knowledge of scientifically established physics laws. Some of the books written as early as 10<sup>th</sup> century can be considered as forerunners of science fiction. Some of the science fiction books were written in the 1600s like Johannes Kepler's Somnium. It is considered as the first science fiction by Issac Asimov. The most popular or pioneers of Science fiction writers are H.G. Wells and Jules Verne.



**Figure.1. H.G.Wells author of 'The War of the Worlds'**



**Figure.2. Jules Verne**

**Reality And Inventions:** The television documentary 'How William Shatner Changed the World' produced by Discovery Channel and co-produced by History Channel elaborately categorises the impact of Star Trek on real life Scientists. This show is hosted by William Shatner who played the role of Captain James T Krik in Star Trek. The episodes explain in interviews with inventors on how technological advancements were inspired by the television show Star Trek.

**Star Trek – Influence over an Era:** The chief Propulsion engineer at NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Dr. Marc Rayman became interested in Propulsion through Star Trek. NASA's deep space probe's Ion Propulsion was inspired by the episode Spook's Brain in Star Trek. The chief engineer of Motorola Martin Cooper who invented the cell

phone was inspired by the Star Trek communicator. The show later describes the similarities between the cell phone and the Communicator from Star Trek. The concept of computer voice recognition was also inspired by the episodes of Star Trek. The user friendly Personal computer was also inspired by Star Trek episode ‘Amok Time’. The inventor of personal PC, Ed Robert invented first PC Altair8800 and named it after solar system Altair in Star Trek. Bill Gates Later wrote the computer programming language BASIC for it. Some influence of Star Trek has also lead to inventions in the medical field for non- invasive imaging technology.

## 2. CONCLUSION

Science fiction is not just about an imaginative world or technology but also some times the inspiration for many inventions. The concepts and ideas are a base for what might be invented or some advanced technologies of the future. Literature has a wide spread influence and the huge number of writers mushrooming in the contemporary world has opened a vast amount of imaginative science oriented concepts which can be used to develop new technology. What might not be what probably is not has gained a spirit to become a reality in the future.

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