

MALAYALAM SCI-FI NOVEL REVEALS A FUTURE IMPERFECT

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WHILE scientific studies often produce facts stranger than fiction, technology strives to fashion reality as per human imagination. That is why what was yesterday fiction is today a fact of life. That is why what is today being written as fiction could tomorrow be a fact of life.

On the converse, imagination takes off from the present technological reality to peep into the future and draw a picture of things to come. Science fiction as a genre concerns itself with this aspect of imagination. That could have been fine. But it is not, given the images of future conjured in some of science fiction written today.

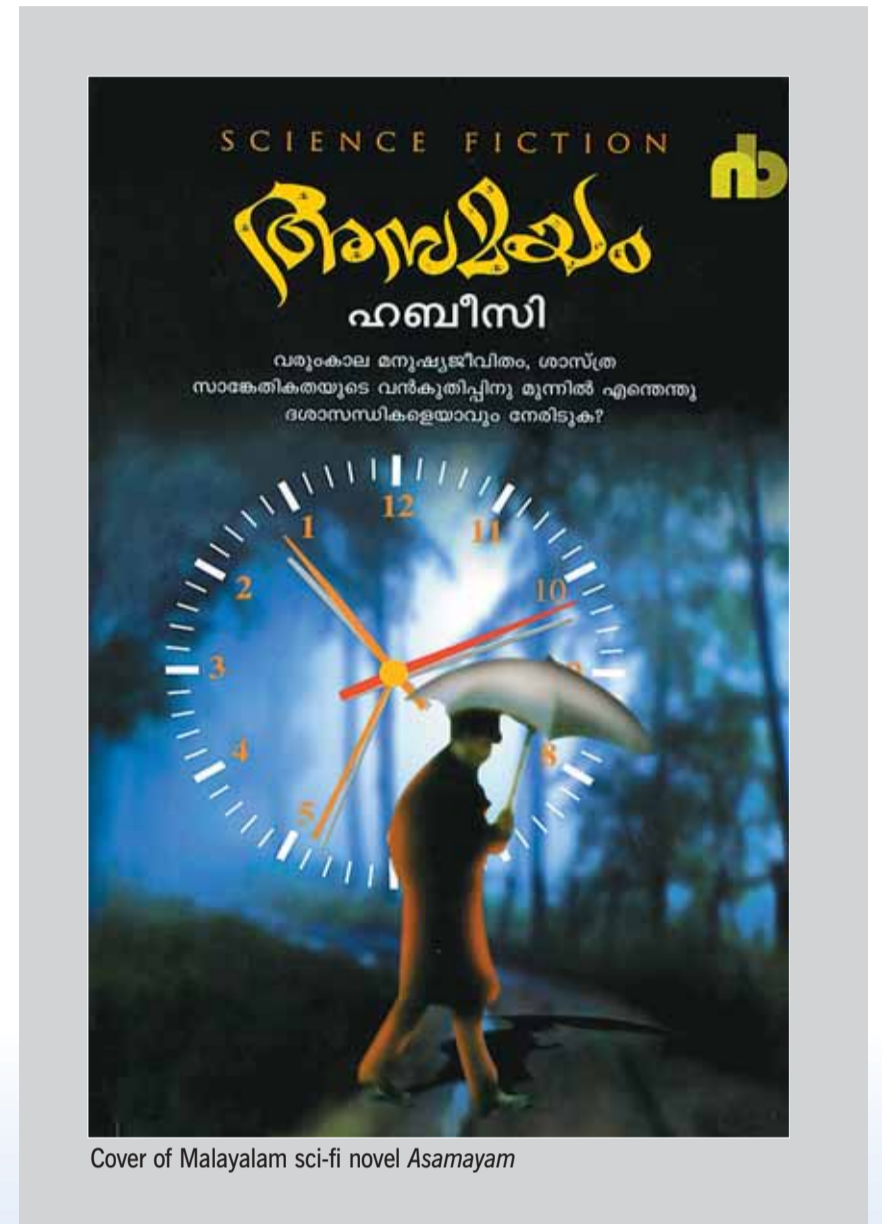
It is true that technological doom-sayers come dime a dozen, but it is equally true that not every science fiction writer is interested in painting a scary picture. What distinguishes the real 'visionaries' from the riffraff is their ability to take in the trends and conjure up an accurate picture. Picking up the ones we should concern ourselves with is a difficult task, to say the least.

In what category Indian writer Habeeci's science fiction novel *Asamayam*, penned in Malayalam the language spoken in the south Indian state of Kerala, and released in Doha recently falls only time will tell. But the world it depicts is not a happy one for humans.

The novel, released by Arabic writer from Sudan Amir Taj al Sir by handing over a copy to Indian embassy Deputy Mission PS Sasikumar, tells the tale of a time when robots and other devices created by humans to make their life easy and comfortable have assumed control.

The story opens with an awful uprising in 'Tharar', an imaginary place. The humans are up in arms over the supply of something as vital for their survival as oxygen-kits. The path of the story's progress is littered with clashes between humans and robots of various descriptions. The author seems to convey a message that if utility, rather than value, remains the cornerstone of human existence this is where we may end up.

While reviewing the book, well known Indian cartoonist in Doha Karunakaran Perambra said, "We can neglect the challenges, worries and uncertainties facing the



Cover of Malayalam sci-fi novel *Asamayam*

people in 'Tharar' at our own peril. While the scenario may seem far-fetched, the speed of technological developments suggests that human beings may lose control over their inventions sooner than later. While the possibility of human life totally controlled by robots may seem mere imagination today, the movement towards such a scenario is inexorable.

Well known social activist in Doha CR Manoj said that the distress and fears of people who are compelled to live in a world managed and controlled by robots are not too far. "The imagination of the writer makes him more likely to feel be an inevitable reality of the future" he said.

Well-known writer among Indian community in Qatar K Madhavikkutty said that the experiences of the characters in the novel predict an unhappy future for humans controlled as they

are by machines, making the work serious reading stuff.

Indian embassy Deputy Mission PS Sasikumar lauded the intellectual groups of the Indian community that offered all support to the book's launch. Suggesting an English translation of the novel, he said that it will widen the readership of the book. The novel first appeared ten years ago as a serial in Indian language weekly *Deshabhimani*. It has now been published by Kerala-based publishing house New Books in the form of a 176-page volume.

A music concert was also held on occasion by AVC Abdullah, Karun Menon and Gayathri Karun. Others who spoke on occasion were social worker Shamsudheen, Chandrika newspaper resident editor Ashraff Thoonery, writer MT Nilamboor besides Habeeci himself.



Habeeci : Author of novel *Asamayam*

(Photos - Shiraz Sithara)