

stone image, nor the mercenary worshipper. The traditions which have grown around it then become living to me.

The hope, devotion and faith which millions have offered at the shrine for centuries become mine for the moment, and the memory of our fore-fathers who found solace and strength by worshipping at a shrine gives me inspiration.

When I visit a shrine I feel humbled.

I feel inspired by something

unfamiliar and I come away stronger in spirit. For the moment my weaknesses fall away from me; a new light is shed for the moment on the path I tread. It is an experience which I would never like to miss.

The *Puranas* assure us that to bathe at a sacred place ensures a better life when we are born again. But I can sincerely say that a visit to such places gives me a better life even as I am-- though it may be only for a few short hours.

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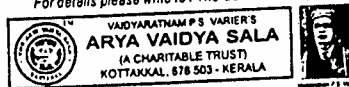
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From the Bhavan's President Forensic Science

R. Venkataraman



A forensic expert is neither a witness for the prosecution nor for the defence. He is a witness of the Court.

In these days, some people are lured into crime for unjust gains, misuse science and technology, develop crafty devices and try to dodge the ever-watchful eyes of law.

They compel police officers and forensic scientists to act in close collaboration, and harness scientific techniques to deal with the menace of crime effectively. The police investigations on-the-spot have to be supported and supplemented by scientific tests in the laboratory to arrive at an accurate re-construction of a

crime. The awareness of the full capability of forensic science in shedding light on crimes encouraged the Government of India to set up the first Central Forensic Science Laboratory in the 1950s in Kolkata.

Subsequently, many other central laboratories were established to give a lead to all the States to set up their own forensic laboratories to enable them to take up advisory and referral roles in complex cases. A national facility of this kind is available at the Bhabha

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Atomic Research Centre for neutron activation analysis of forensic specimens. Another facility has initiated a pioneering programme for basic, advanced and refresher courses in forensic science for the police officers, scientists and the members of the judiciary.

The inclusion of forensic research as a subject at Central institutions, is a step in the right direction. The State Governments might also consider doing so in their plans, as the Government of India is assisting them under various parallel schemes, such as those for the police modernization and supply latest equipment to the State forensic science laboratories.

If the States include expansion of forensic science facilities in their plans, it would go a long way towards bringing about a uniform development of forensic science all over the country.

At this point I might define the ethics, as a profession of forensic science. By definition,

forensic opinion should be detached and objective.

A forensic expert is neither a witness for the prosecution nor for the defence. He is a witness of the Court. Objectivity is axiomatic in his testimony. Judicial officers, law-enforcing agencies and practising lawyers should, therefore, look upon this instrument with faith.

Forensic science has a role in civil disputes as well, such as in questions pertaining to material situations. It can assist regulatory activities of Government in matters like environmental pollution, food adulteration, and in non-litigious matters such as preventive measures through forensic methods.

These social obligations of forensic science should be fully appreciated and forensic scientists should devote greater attention to developing their techniques in these directions as well. On a reciprocal basis, there should also be greater awareness of

the value of forensic science in society. This has become particularly necessary as crimes have acquired chicanery and cunningness, while forensic science is still wrapped up in mystery.

It is my view that forensic science should not remain an enigma to the people. In fact, the term forensic is derived from 'forensis' and 'forum' which connote open courts of law. As the crime incidence takes new or ugly forms, the procedures of forensic science should be better-known to a larger cross-section of the public.

Further, the two main branches of forensic science, namely, medical knowledge and law, are 'open' disciplines.

In other words, barring the more technical dissertations, the latest techniques of medical diagnosis and refinements in legal concepts should be made available to the public information system for wider dissemination.

With the heightened awareness of forensic services,

the demand for greater knowledge of criminal acts should grow in the public.

In fact, being an amalgam of many branches of knowledge such as pathology, biology, serology, anthropology, dentistry, psychiatry, toxicology, to name a few, it should attract a wide variety of professionals to help in crime detection.

Likewise, the forensic psychiatrist can lead to a major breakthrough by evaluating the testimony of witnesses. There are other related areas of specialization calling for expert inquiry. With increased economism, added to mercantilism, economic and social crimes have multiplied in the shape of forged signatures, alterations and fakes.

These 'crimes' infringe codes of social and business morality, and forensic scientists should have to equip themselves with fuller knowledge of type, print and computer fraud. To detect such

social crimes, many devices are used, for instance, infra-red and ultra-violet phonography to decipher erasures, obliterations and alterations in documents. The camera's eye, combined with advances in microscopy and photography, have developed forensic science to hitherto unprecedented levels so that the criminal is kept at bay.

I understand that the forensic experts argue that this investigative methodology should be given the status of science and technology.

This might help, but it should be preceded by a structural re-appraisal of forensic units and establishment of linkages with the investigating agency on the one hand and the judiciary on the other.

It is also necessary to impress upon the investigating officers the need to recognise the forensic method not as an optional facility of an exotic nature but as an able ally of investigators.

A fuller review is needed of

the present system of interaction between the laboratory and the court. Like all scientists, forensic experts must update their knowledge continually.

While theoretical or academic research is useful, the thrust of this research should be to intensify application of new instrumentation, particularly at the police level.

Simultaneously, we should educate police personnel in the use of simple aids and devices in their day-to-day work.

This will improve the quality of investigation, bring offenders to justice and reduce dependence on inquisitorial methods which have brought the police system into disrepute.

It is also necessary to ensure that investigation and prosecution of criminal cases are completed without undue delay.

In this, the forensic scientist can play an important role by giving the results of laboratory tests speedily.

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