

Arrows of Time – From the Blackholes To the Nirvana by Subhash Sharma (New Age International Publishers, New Delhi, Price not mentioned)

The ancient Indian thought and its impact on contemporary Indian scene has been engaging the attention of sociologists and other social scientists of ideas alike. The rationale behind this can be summed up in the words of Collingwood : “Knowing yourself means knowing what you can do; and since nobody knows what he can do until he tries, the only true what man can do is what man has done”

It is beyond doubt that the outward physical activity is really function of the underlying mental factors. Whatever man did in the past was made possible by his mental attitudes, aspirations and norms. His success or failure cannot be understood and explained without explicating the moral values on which his attitudes etc. were based. These mental factors in truth provide the key to an understanding of the motivation, and the study of history becomes useful when it brings to light what motivated the progress of any given society in the past.

It is no denying a fact that every society forms certain relatively static patterns of reaction in the course of its historical development. A number of geographical, historical and physiological causes combine to create these patterns. Known as ‘tradition’ these reaction patterns play an important role in all future development of that society. The current denigration of the term ‘tradition’ in some quarters should not make us oblivious to its importance. These reaction patterns are ultimately based on and shaped by the articulate and inarticulate metaphysical assumptions inherent in the thinking of the dominant section of that society. These assumptions influence not only the social organisation and the position of the individual vis-à-vis society but also the policies in regard to the training and education of men.

It should be noted that the basic beliefs not only safeguard the interests of the dominant section but also circumscribe it by imposing on it a particular type of value system. The role of the rebels can certainly not be minimised. However, in many instances, especially in India, even the rebels do not feel like breaking away from the time-honoured world view. The wine might change but the bottle remains the same. The attitude-generating moral values necessarily presuppose one belief or the

other making its comprehension important. It is in this context, Dr. Subhash Sharma's present book is particularly interesting and important, appearing as it does amidst a general crisis of the present day society.

This is a short book but written in a different style, and it is impossible to summarize Dr. Sharma's major contribution to management philosophy in a brief review. However, a first point to be made that Dr. Sharma has a special status. He is a cultivated scholar of the Indian type having established a notable position in Indian management education by virtue of work which has included a strong emphasis on Indian thought and ideas. The book evidences his strong background in a great many respect but notably, on the whole, his insightful discussion on the symbiosis of science and spirituality.

Arrows of Time is an attempt to understand the meaning of the scientific and experimental ideas related to matter, space, time and causality for our day to day existence. Influenced greatly by four different streams (i.e., *Sanskrit* and *Sufi* influences manifest in the form spiritual metaphor, *Subaltern* influences in the form of existential metaphor and the influence of *Science* manifests in the form of scientific terms and phrases), Sharma's arrows move at different speeds in the rhythms of his verses.

Quite obviously, one of the major themes Sharma stresses throughout the various verses concerns the convergence of science and spirituality. Sharma does not merely discuss the deep philosophy of Indian thought but systematically takes the reader in an artistic manner to a realm which is beyond pain and agony and the latter finds himself merged in the cosmos and enjoys the essence of Life (Eternity), Knowledge, Bliss and Unity in Diversity. Sharma emphatically urges the need of blending science and spirituality. In fact, 'the idea of consciousness is entering the field of science from two routes, the routes of artificial intelligence (which is still the matter route) and the route of eastern mysticism (which is a spiritual route to consciousness). A merger of science and spirituality seems to be the future direction of science itself,' reasons Sharma.

While many ideas, concepts and metaphors discussed in *Arrows of Time*, find their echo in Sharma's earlier books in the series i.e., *Creation From Shunnya*, *Management in New Age : Western Windows and Eastern Doors*, *Quantum Rope : Science, Mysticism and Management*. *Arrows of Time* is, in a sense, an extension of these earlier works. More specifically, Dr. Sharma's *Arrows of Time* is a metaphoric representation of Time as the factor in the increase of entropy in nature. No doubt, his use of Time as a metaphor for making the convergence of science and spirituality provides an important insight for today's managers, administrators and policy makers whose professional spadework of time always vary.

Tridib Chakraborti
IIM Calcutta

A Critique of Welfare Economics by I. M. D. Little, A Retrospective Reissue, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003, 302 pages, Price Rs. 595

At the time of its first publication in 1950, Ian Little's *A Critique of Welfare Economics* was perhaps the only comprehensive book on Welfare Economics. It was not of course a conventional goody-goody textbook. It was a dissertation asserting a different methodology and proposing a different emphasis from what was then prevalent in welfare economics. The book was certainly successful in provoking a lively debate in the 1950's. A second edition of the book was published in 1957. That was also the year of publication of Jan Graaff's *Theoretical Welfare Economics* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1957) which quickly became the textbook on the subject. Now after almost half a century, Oxford University Press has brought a reissue of the 1957 edition with a new preface by the author that attempts to put the work in perspective.

Welfare Economics is devoted to building foundations for economic policy. It seeks to replace *ad hoc* prescriptions with rationalizable decision-making. In the designing of economic policy, the slippery question of predicting the consequences of a policy action is of course ever-present, but that question belongs to the realm of