**CYBERSPACE And the Repositioning of Corporations** by S. Shiva Ramu, Universities Press, 1999, 298 Pages, Price Rs. 295/-

To quote the author the book has been an attempt *"to facilitate an overview of the present status of industries forming the infobahn system."* Primarily meant for the students of management and executives of industry the stated objective of the book *"is to give an overview of the changing scenario of technology and its impact on the restructuring of the major original dominant players in the erstwhile segmented market with a restricted technology of its own sector"*. Given the rapid changes and the consequent turbulence in the business environments worldwide, essentially due to developments and use of information and communications technologies, the author's effort is well timed.

The book is broken up into eleven chapters of comparable sizes. In the first chapter, entitled *"Cyberspace and the infobahn"*, the author conveys the notion of information superhighway in terms of *"possible uses"*. The main emphasis to this end has been a brief description of about a dozen terms each spanning a couple of sentences. Examples of such terms include *"Remote-control"*, *"Invest"*, *"Stereo"*, and *"Learn"*. For example, *"Remote-control"* has been defined (or described) as *"To keep track of all these smart machines, there is a superzapper. Advanced object-oriented software makes it simple to work digital wonders"*. While the selection of the terms and the definitions given are certainly not irrelevant the reader might be inclined to wonder if this was one the best ways to be enlightened about the much talked about cyberspace. The discussion strays on to *cybercash* (a company that deals with *digital cash)* and then switches to enlisting· Alan Deutschmann's sixteen precepts (like *"Do not make critical decisions until you really have to".).* The chapter ends with a cursory discussion on the national information infrastructure of USA, Singapore, UK, and Japan. A more structured approach on issues relating *backbone, last mile, network access equipment, and infrastructure convergence* in this context could have enhanced the readers' knowledge of cyberspace. The next Chapter on *"Infotech"*, starts with the history of computers and communications and then dwells on very short descriptions of new technology offerings like *"Multimedia PC"*, *"ISDN"*, *"Virtual Reality (VR)"*, *"Agents"*, and *"ATM Technology"*. It is unclear how the technologically uninitiated (or the initiated) readers could be benefitted much from the sprinklings of technology details sprayed over these terms and concepts.

The succeeding eight chapters on *"The computer industry"*, *"Major computer companies"*, *"Semiconductor industry"*, *"Software industry"*, *"The telecommunication industry"*, *"The communication industry"*, *"Information services"*, and *"Merger and alliances"* essentially concentrate on the activities and rankings of the major companies

in the respective sectors. The effort appears to be more on the presentation of raw data rather than on their interpretations. Not much enlightening findings apparently made themselves explicitly visible in uncovering the *trends* in these sectors the reader had perhaps been looking for. Given the objective of the book the reader would have expected a much more detailed treatment of the strategies, particularly of software and communication industries, struggling for product acceptance and market dominance. The final chapter of the book has been aptly devoted to the *"Indian scenario"*. It discusses the products and services made available by computer and telecommunication companies operating from India. Major products launched by *C-DAC, TCS, CMC,* and *HCL InfoSystems* have been discussed in brief. The national telecom policy and the activities of TRAI have also been addressed. The impact of government policies on the Indian telecom sector would have been of much interest in the context but the issue failed to attract adequate attention.

The strength of the book lies in the facts and figures presented on the activities and performance profiles of computer and telecommunications industries operating in India and other parts of the world. The data provided in the book could be analyzed to see deeper into the nature of changes taking place in these sectors. Moreover, quite often the need is felt to look into the products and services in these sectors offered by companies operating from India on which not much data are readily available in one place. To a certain extent the book could serve that need as well.

The main drawback of the book is its poor logical development – it's rather hard for the reader to guess what could come next. Most chapters appear to be a collection of definitions, descriptions, and facts which, notwithstanding their values in isolation, are not always coherent enough in conveying the intricate concepts of possible impacts of cyberspace on the topic under discussion.

The book lacks focus. Within its limited physical size it had a tendency to encompass too many issues and concepts with an inadequate justice to those addressed. Some of these could perhaps be dropped to conserve space towards a more meaningful treatment of others retained. For example, while attempting to summarize a topic as involved as the *"security system for operating systems"* the author essentially makes only a passing mention of *Pretty good Privacy (PGP)* and *RSA Data Security Inc.* Ironically, the reader gets a little stunned to find RSA expanded in the glossary as *"Revenue-sharing arrangement used in Indonesia"* – the context would make one believe the acronym stood for *Rivest Shamir Adelman* after the names of those who did the notable work on cryptography. Such apparent slips were visible in other places as well.

The book intended to depict the industry scene forming the *"infobahn"* system along with current strategies of major players in the industries. The former goal is reasonably met but the latter is not quite apparent. The onus seems to be on the reader to extract from the discussions what those strategies actually are. The title of the book would bias a reader, not wholly without reason, towards expecting more on *"repositioning"* of corporations rather than on raw facts and figures about individual companies.

The quality of printing and the general appearance of the book is good. The language is quite easy to follow. The price is affordable for an average target reader. The References Section does point to some interesting reading materials. Moreover, there is a general dearth of affordable books, especially in India, on such topics. Although the thirst of an average reader might not get fully quenched on reaching the last page, it is worth going through the book and appreciating the author's ways of looking at things related to the cyberspace.

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*Intelligent Manufacturing* by Lynn Underwood, Economic Intelligence Unit Universities Press (I) Ltd., 1994

The search to find new ways to make productive use of information technology (IT) for carrying out business, never seem to come to an end. It is hard to say to what extent the search is driven by the needs of an aging business system, but the set of models, all designed to alleviate the problems, seem to expand. The claims of these models are often tall. The real benefits do not always match up to the claims but they cost the firms quite dearly. Most of these require information technology as an enabler and they often complicate the business processes and involve major organisational change. One specific case in point is that of ERP, the latest entrant in the arena. For the uninitiated it's a business model that tries to integrate almost all functions of a business. Integration is at the heart of the ERP model because that seems to hold the key to many business problems. The integration is made possible by IT. Implementation of ERP involves organisational change to incorporate the 'industry best practices' to replace a firm's own and time tested business practices. The expenditure towards cost of software and consultant fees runs into crores. The costs of organisational change or the lost competitive advantage are usually ignored.

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