

# *The Elephant Catchers: Key Lessons for Breakthrough Growth*

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**Subroto Bagchi (2013). *The Elephant Catchers: Key Lessons for Breakthrough Growth*, Hachette India, Price: Rs. 499/-, Pages xii + 232, ISBN: 9789350095836.**

Elephants have been a source of inspiration to humans from times immemorial. In the days of yore, male elephants were used in war; elephants were also used for lifting and transporting heavy or very heavy logs. They help zoos and circuses to earn money. They have also motivated creative people to develop/invent new products. For instance, Juhaim Ibnu Abdul Jabbar developed EDD (Elephant Deterrent Device) that helps elephants as well as human beings. When an elephant becomes wild, not only the life of the elephant but also human lives are in danger. Juhaim Jabbar's product is intended to help both human beings and elephants in such situations. Elephants have inspired elephant catchers who in turn have inspired Subroto Bagchi in framing a caption for this book. Interestingly, the name of the book itself invites one to learn. The enthralling tome under review is an engaging account of the endeavours of a few path breakers and path makers. In the words of Vivekananda, the strongest force on earth is the force of an idea (Singh, 2012). The work under review is a treatise on ideas being converted into actions, idea-generators and working ideas.

Is it possible to educate 8500 students in an institution, ensuring balanced growth with stability, camaraderie and allround development without charging any fee from the students? Is it possible to flourish in the present scenario without sophisticated computerized information systems? Can an organization attain growth without any strategies in place? Can a commercial be made out of people who have left this world for their permanent abode? Moreover what are the advantages that accrue from commercials featuring stalwarts who left this world long ago? Can a road leading to the airport also serve as a second runway for a 747 jumbo jet? How do firms invest in capacity creation for the

future? Are intelligent, intuitive and hardworking individuals necessarily good problem-solvers also? What can be the implications if the CEO and the heads of the HR and finance functions are related to each other by family ties? The book under review provides lucid answers to the aforementioned unsettling queries.

The book under review has been effectively divided into six sections. The first section contains four engaging chapters which set the tone of the book. The second segment contains five chapters which provide deep insights into the modus operandi of some of the real icons of change and development. The third section contains two chapters. The fourth segment contains three chapters which keep the reader glued to the book. The penultimate section contains six chapters and the concluding section contains two captivating chapters.

The first chapter explains how an institution, set up by a religious trust which has been in existence for almost six centuries, provides education and residential facilities with food to almost 8500 students at no cost to the students and yet functions effectively, efficiently and successfully. The chapter dwells deep into an actual self-regulating system which does not use the latest technological gadgets or complex algorithms. The second chapter dissects the complex relationship between strategy and scale. The chapter contains brilliant examples drawn from Unilever, IBM and Apple. Through examples of Marriott International, the third chapter explains how the latest technological developments can be used to provide customers comfort in times of stress. The chapter also throws light on the methods employed in Singapore to build a lasting infrastructure. The fourth chapter traces the trajectory of a business from its inception, infancy, growth to stability phases.

The fifth chapter explains how Subroto Bagchi and his team managed to win a contract from a European Telecom giant despite the propensity of the European firm to build a collaboration with one of the two other well-known companies. The chapter explores the subtleties of emotional reasoning and logical reasoning. The sixth chapter is a monograph on Sales Management and the Peter Principle. The seventh chapter contains the detailed exposition of a strategy used by a firm to reduce a partner firm to merely a resource provider and becomes the de facto service provider. The eighth chapter contains a few important eye-opening facts related to mergers and acquisitions. The ninth chapter explains how the media is unfairly trying to control businesses and alter the mind-sets of the readers/viewers. The tenth chapter enlists the responsibilities and functions of the board of directors. In the eleventh chapter Subroto Bagchi lists the lessons pertaining to consultancy services which he himself learnt while working in a very big organization.

The twelfth chapter is on the brand value and the logo of a company. The thirteenth chapter explains how the fourth estate can be used favourably by an organization or a company. The fourteenth chapter is devoted to corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The fifteenth chapter dwells on the differences between hiring people for their education, years of experience, pedigree, and hiring people on the basis of their ability to build, capacity to think differently. The sixteenth chapter dwells on the role of leaders in an organization and conundrum such as 'White space time', and 'lock-step'. The seventeenth chapter examines the intricacies of the Agile methodology and its benefits over the traditional Waterfall model. The eighteenth chapter focusses on the issues businesses need to focus on at different stages after their inception. The nineteenth chapter lists the key areas that leaders and second-rung leaders need to lay focus on. The twentieth chapter dwells on the travails of succession planning. The twenty-first and the twenty-second chapters dwell on planning for the tough times that a business or a company might have to face.

However the reader may have a misgiving after reading

the work under review. On page 55 the author speaks of Philip Kotler's 4Ps (Product, Price, Place and Promotion). The erudite Philip Kotler has no doubt written several books on Marketing Management but 4Ps was a term coined by E. Jerome McCarthy in 1960 which has since been used by marketers throughout the world. On page 67 the author says, "In India, even after the laws relating to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) have been altered, restrictions remain in certain sectors of the economy" without providing much practical evidence. When the reader pursues a book related to Management he is more interested in finding out which law(s) has/have been altered? Which are the new laws? And how do they directly and indirectly (or adversely) affect businesses? Besides some of the business models touched upon in the book could have been explained more comprehensively. Simply writing a few fancy terms without comprehensive explanation is a well-planned recipe for disengaging the reader.

Nonetheless, the work under review is a fast-paced thriller which simplifies many complex and abstruse theories, hypotheses and conjectures. It will be of immense help to the champions of risk management, disaster management, economics, and business ethics. It contains real-life management practices being carried out at Sparsh Hospital in Bengaluru, Missionaries of Charity (having its caring presence in nearly 133 countries) and a few other multinational companies. In short the book will enable the reader to develop a deep comprehension of C.K. Prahalad's concept of 'next practices' and the hidden insecurities in some of the known business models.

### References

Singh, Jaswant (2012), *The Audacity of Opinion: Reflections, Journeys, Musings, Amaryllis: An imprint of Manjul Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.*, pp 27

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