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Subroto Bagchi: From 'gardener' to 'elephant-catcher'

Bengaluru: Best selling author, chairman and co-founder of Mindtree, Subroto Bagchi seems to be creating a record of sorts in the world of business publishing. After authoring 5 business bestsellers targeted at young professionals and entrepreneurs in quick succession, from 'The High Performance Entrepreneur' released in 2006, followed by 'Go Kiss the World', 'The Professional', 'MBA at 16', 'The Professional Companion,' Bagchi will launch his 6th book 'The Elephant Catchers' in the city on Saturday.

The book distils years of personal experience to serve as a guide to the organizations who falter and hit the glass ceiling in their attempts to grow. Written in six parts, the book deals with the idea of scale, dotted with numerous anecdotal instances and insights. During the launch, the author will engage Nandan Nilekani in conversation about how he went about building scale.

Is there a consistent thought/theme that runs through all of your 6 books?

Yes there is. All my books attempt to humanize the clinical world of business, for business cannot be an end in itself. While logic is very important in the world of business it must flow together with emotions. People must recognize that business has a human face. So, when you meet a customer or a stakeholder, remember that they are human beings first and relate to them with both logic and emotion, and you will be able to scale your business more effectively. Explain the catchy title 'The Elephant Catchers'

Unlike an operation to catch rabbits, trapping an elephant calls for great expertise and intensive planning over enthusiasm. Those who hunt rabbits (clinch small deals/customers) are rarely able to rope in elephants (big business deals/customers). To achieve scale and grow our business, we need to attract and groom elephant catchers. What are the most challenging aspects of scaling that you faced at Mindtree?

At the start, scaling the business was a huge challenge. While we have successfully scaled intellect, reputation and against adversity, we are now challenged by scaling people who can see the bigger picture and help us achieve our vision to become a \$1 billion company by 2020.

Mindtree is at the cusp of a huge organizational change right now. We are a half a billion dollar firm that wants to evolve into a memorable company. We are bringing in diverse talent from outside, to help us achieve our vision and our internal leadership does not welcome these people.

We have people who have been around for 14 years, do not want to evolve and embrace change or the idea of scale. Availability of talent is not the issue, assimilating and engaging them is the issue. Are you more of an author than a founder-entrepreneur today?

I am a full time founder-entrepreneur and part time writer. I write after work, in the wee hours of the morning and during weekends — about 16 hours of hard writing every week. I choose to have no social life, am not a member of any club and I do not play golf. All of my free time is dedicated to my passion — writing.

Are you an accidental writer or did you plan to be a writer someday?

I knew I could write at 13, when my communist-patriotic poem written in Oriya was published in the local newspaper. I began writing in English only during college where some of my pieces on existential themes were published in the Youth Times. I had no grand plans to become an author someday, it just happened. A friend of mine started a computer magazine called Dataquest and requested me to write an article for it. He loved what I wrote and convinced me to contribute a column, which I did. Then I wrote a column for Times of India, Business World and Forbes India. Penguin Publishers discovered me while I was writing for Business World and asked me to write a book on entrepreneurs. And that's how I became an author.