

Getting the twists and whorls straight

Where does Jalebi, the Indian answer to an American pretzel, stand vis-a-vis caviar and smoked salmon in the smorgasbord of high-end delicacies? Get the author of *Jalebi Management* on the subject, and he will deploy his salesman's instincts to hard sell you the idea that it ranks up there with the elitist.

So what did we miss? As an international management strategy consultant, Shombit Sengupta uses his book to parlay the sweet quotient in *Jalebi* to marry off industry with humanity.

In the new organisational culture that the author envisages, the emerging markets, such as China and India, will ride the new wave in business culture. A look back at the annals of history tells us that a discomfort zone created by people, organisations or countries have led to inventions.

Sony wouldn't have wagered on Apple to script a success story with the iPod and eat into its market share. Sony lacked anticipation—and if it had taken steps in advance to change its thinking process—the company could have done some damage control.

In each of these creations, the author makes the case for a historical precursor that would have been behind such a transformation. For example, the Japanese concept of miniaturisation, which helped them establish a marketing approach to product design, had its roots in their tradition of minimalism.

A riff on curses in the book gives it a light-hearted feel. Sengupta cites the example of United Colors Of Benetton, which hung up a provocative billboard, with the privates of men and women shaded in different colours.

Cursing, as a metaphor for thinking out-of-the-box, even at the expense of a scandal, can produce the desired business results, the author contends.

Displacement, one of the three strategies that Shombit Sengupta underlines for any company to flourish, is geared towards making a break with the past. BSN Corporation could not be a productive force until it decided to focus only on three product categories—dairy, beverages and biscuits—and change to Danone.

For a company to be in business, it is imperative that it continues with its brands and maintains what the author terms "aspiration of their products." When the author says that countries such as India and China lack the requisite legacy for their products, we have to take it with a pinch of salt, of course.

Jalebi might be too cloying in its sweetness but the lucre implicit in it for business organisations isn't all that sugar-coated.