

The Egg, the Bean, and the Crumpet:

A lighthearted analysis of Praveen's leadership



Rajeev Beotra

In a quiet corner of the office cafeteria, three HT Media Senior Leadership Team members, whom we shall not name, sat deep in discussion. We will euphemistically call them an Egg, a Bean, and a Crumpet. This was not, as one might assume, the prelude to a particularly avant-garde breakfast but rather a serious discourse on the strengths and weaknesses of Praveen Someshwar, before assigning a performance rating to him.

The Egg, a rotund fellow with the air of a man who took great pride in knowing things before anyone else, adjusted his spectacles and cleared his throat.

"Now, let us begin with the obvious," he said, adopting the tone of a barrister about to make a closing argument. "Praveen possesses one of the most insatiable appetites for data I have ever encountered. The man hovers up numbers, charts, and spreadsheets with the enthusiasm of a starving wolf presented with a well-roasted leg of lamb. To him, data is not mere information—it is a living, breathing entity, whispering secrets only he can decipher."

The Bean, a lean and wiry man who had spent years mastering the art of looking wise, nodded gravely. "Indeed. Give him a dataset, and he'll unravel its mysteries faster than a detective in a cheap novel. To Praveen, numbers sing arias, percentages recite poetry, and trend lines tell tales of woe and triumph. Everything else," he added with a meaningful pause, "is just the English language."

The Crumpet, a genial soul who preferred to avoid conflict unless it was absolutely unavoidable, sipped his tea and sighed. "Remarkable, really. But does he ever, you know, relax? Sit back and watch a sunset without attempting to plot it on a graph?"

The Egg sniffed. "If he does, I've yet to see it."

They all nodded in solemn agreement and continued their deliberations with the seriousness of statesmen negotiating a peace treaty. The Crumpet, having finished his sip of tea and feeling the moment was right to weigh in, set his cup down with a soft clink and assumed an expression of great thoughtfulness.

"Now, while I fully acknowledge Praveen's rather alarming devotion to data," he said, stretching out his legs in the manner of a man settling into a long and comfortable speech, "one cannot ignore his contributions to the noble cause of discipline. And I do mean discipline in the grandest, most unrelenting sense of the word. If there is a meeting, it starts on time. If there are pre-reads to be sent, woe betide the soul who fails to send them. If a discussion is scheduled to last thirty minutes, it shall last precisely thirty minutes. There is a military precision to it all, as if he were running not an organisation, but a particularly well-drilled regiment."

A moment of reverent silence followed.

The Bean, who had spent the last few moments stirring his tea with the air of a man contemplating the great mysteries of the universe, finally looked up. "Well," he said, setting his spoon down with an air of finality, "if there's one thing Praveen has done—aside from turning us all into a well-disciplined battalion—it's creating a collaborative culture."

The Egg tilted his head. "Collaboration, you say?"

"Absolutely," said the Bean, warming to his theme. "And not just any sort of collaboration—the real deal. None of this back-slapping, empty talk of teamwork that one finds in the more treacherous corridors of the corporate jungle. No hidden daggers, no Machiavellian

scheming, no hushed conversations in darkened meeting rooms.

The man has somehow managed to banish organisational politics altogether. It's as if he took one look at the usual workplace intrigues—the jockeying for favour, the whispered alliances, the carefully planted traps—and said, 'Not on my watch, old sport.' And by Jove, he meant it."

The Crumpet, who had seen his fair share of office skulduggery, let out a low whistle. "No politics at all?"

"None," said the Bean. "And believe me, I've looked. I poked around for the usual power struggles, the strategic backstabbing, the quiet character assassinations over coffee breaks. But all I found was—" He paused, searching for the right word.

"Transparency," offered the Egg. The Bean nodded. "That's the word. Transparency."

The Egg, who had always considered corporate politics a necessary evil, adjusted his glasses and considered this new world order.

"Astounding," he murmured. "A land of collaboration and transparency. Like Camelot, but with spreadsheets." The Bean leaned back with a satisfied smile. "Precisely."

"No," said the Egg. "The man is

transforming into humourless gargoyles."

The Egg, who had always believed in the value of decorum but was beginning to see the appeal of a well-timed jest, adjusted his spectacles. "So, what you're saying is, he lightens the atmosphere without making a spectacle of it?"

"Exactly," said the Bean. The Crumpet, feeling suddenly inspired, raised his teacup in a miniature toast. "To leaders who don't take themselves too seriously."

The Crumpet set down his teacup with a decisive clink, surveying his companions with the sort of expression one adopts when preparing to unveil a truth long known but rarely spoken. "Gentlemen," he said, "there is one quality of Praveen's that we have yet to discuss, and in my opinion, it may well be the most important of all." The Egg, sensing weightiness in the air, adjusted his spectacles. The Bean, ever one for theatrics, drummed his fingers on the table expectantly.

"Integrity," the Crumpet announced.

A brief pause followed as the weight of the word settled over the gathering.

"Ah," murmured the Egg, nodding sagely. "A rare commodity in these modern times."

"Indeed," said the Crumpet. "Praveen, you see, does not merely possess integrity—he embodies it, enforces it, and expects it from those around him with the unwavering resolve of a headmaster inspecting collars before morning assembly."

The Bean, who had seen many a workplace where ethics were treated as more of a decorative suggestion than a guiding principle, raised an eyebrow. "How strict are we talking, here?"

The Crumpet, who had been uncharacteristically silent for a few moments—perhaps contemplating the sheer weight of all that had been said—finally leaned forward, resting his elbows on the table. "Now, let's not paint too saintly a picture of the man," he said, with a knowing grin. "For all his discipline, transparency, and the terrifying ability to make numbers tell stories, Praveen is not, thank heavens, one of those stiff-collared, humourless types who think workplace banter is a punishable offence."

The Egg looked mildly surprised. "Oh? You mean to say he actually engages in the occasional bit of tomfoolery?"

"Engages?" The Bean chuckled. "My dear fellow, he thrives in it. The man appreciates a well-timed quip the way a connoisseur appreciates a fine wine. And—this is the remarkable part—he doesn't just dish it out; he takes it as well. You can poke fun at him, tease him, even lay a particularly cheeky remark at his doorstep, and he won't summon the HR department or mark you down in some invisible blacklist. Instead, he'll laugh, fire back, and before you know it, the entire room is in better spirits."

The Crumpet, who held strong views on the importance of a light atmosphere (especially when accompanied by good biscuits), nodded approvingly. "A rare trait, that. Many a leader claims to have a 'sense of humour,' but the moment the joke's on them, they suddenly

more flexible than a well-oiled weather vane in a strong breeze. If someone prefers meticulous detail, he becomes a stickler for precision. If another thrives on big-picture thinking, he ascends to the clouds and discusses grand visions. He does not demand that others match his rhythm; instead, he listens, observes, and then—chameleon-like—adjusts his own approach accordingly."

The Crumpet, who had always found it exhausting to work under leaders who treated their own style as divine law, sighed happily. "Refreshing"

A long silence followed. The Crumpet, overwhelmed by the weight of this truth, reached for another biscuit. The Bean stirred his tea with deep contemplation. And the Egg satisfied that he had said his piece, leaned back, looking rather pleased with himself.

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er a pronouncement that might very well be inscribed on tablets of stone for future generations.

"Gentlemen," he began, adjusting his cuffs, "while we have waxed eloquent on Praveen's many virtues—his unholy appetite for data, his iron grip on discipline, his baffling yet effective tolerance for mistakes—there is one aspect of his leadership that I find most intriguing."

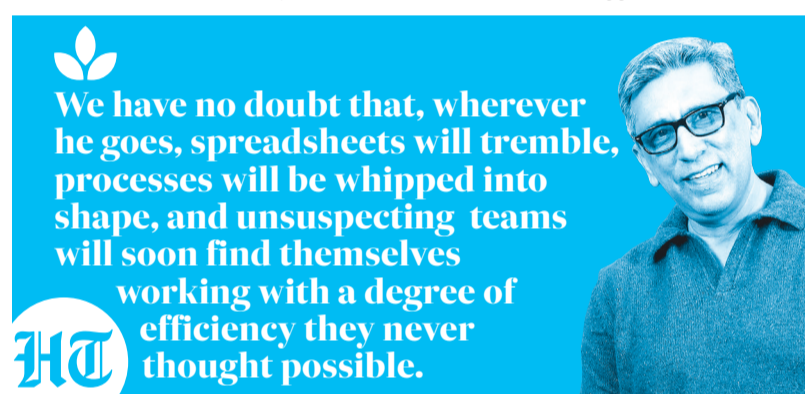
The Bean, who had been idly tracing a pattern in the condensation on his teacup, looked up. "Oh? And what's that?"

The Egg leaned in, as if about to divulge a closely guarded secret. "He does not, like so many others in his position, demand that everyone bend, twist, and contort themselves to suit his preferred way of working. Instead, he does the unthinkable—he adapts himself to the styles of his colleagues."

There was a moment of stunned silence. Even the Crumpet, who had been in mid-chew, paused thoughtfully before continuing his mastication.

The Bean frowned. "You mean to say he doesn't stride into a room, declare 'This is how I operate, take it or leave it,' and expect the rest of us to fall in line?"

"No," said the Egg. "The man is



transform into humourless gargoyles."

The Crumpet set down his teacup with a decisive clink, surveying his companions with the sort of expression one adopts when preparing to unveil a truth long known but rarely spoken. "Gentlemen," he said, "there is one quality of Praveen's that we have yet to discuss, and in my opinion, it may well be the most important of all." The Egg, sensing weightiness in the air, adjusted his spectacles. The Bean, ever one for theatrics, drummed his fingers on the table expectantly.

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he began, steepling his fingers in a manner that suggested deep and weighty thought, "we have spoken at length about Praveen's discipline, his integrity, his ability to create a politics-free oasis in the otherwise treacherous desert of corporate life. But let us not overlook another of his most remarkable talents."

The Bean, who had been idly stirring his tea, looked up. "And that would be?"

The Egg tapped a finger against the table for emphasis. "His ability to read people. And not just the surface-level sort of reading—the 'Ah, this chap wears expensive shoes, so he must be important' kind of thing. No, no. Praveen has a rare knack for seeing beyond the exterior. He understands people—their strengths, their motivations, their peculiar little quirks that make them tick."

The Crumpet, who had always been mildly suspicious of people who claimed to 'read' others (having once been assessed as 'lacking ambition' simply because he preferred long lunches), raised an eyebrow. "So, you're saying he fancies himself a bit of a mind reader?"

"Not in the mystical sense," the Egg clarified. "But he does have an uncanny ability to size people up, to understand who they are and what drives them. More importantly, he actually uses this understanding in practical ways—particularly in hiring decisions and responsibility allocation."

The Bean, who had seen far too many promotions based on nothing more than a fondness for PowerPoint transitions, looked intrigued. "You mean he actually assigns people to roles based on what they're good at?"

"Revolutionary, I know," said the Egg, with a slight smile. "But yes"

"As strict as a Swiss train schedule," said the Crumpet. "He holds himself to the highest professional standards—no shady dealings, no cutting corners, no backroom bargains. And if you think you can curry favour by fluttering about like an overzealous courtier, singing his praises at every turn—well, you're in for a rude shock, old sport."

The Bean raised his head. "No tolerance for sycophants, then?"

"Not a bit," said the Crumpet, shaking his head.

The Bean exhaled in admiration. "A true meritocracy, then."

"Exactly," said the Crumpet. The Bean raised his cup. "To the dying art of getting ahead by sheer competence."

The Egg cleared his throat, a signal that a statement of some import was about to be made. "Gentlemen,"

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a great and immutable truth is uttered.

The Egg shifted uncomfortably. The Bean let out a low whistle, the sort one makes when staring into the abyss.

The Bean nodded sagely. "The bell curve. The unholy algorithm that ensures mediocrity is evenly distributed. And, as fate would have it, Praveen is the only chap we're appraising at the moment."

The Egg, a stickler for rules and the sort of man who would insist on a formal written apology if his sandwich arrived without mustard adjusted his spectacles.

"Which means, naturally, that we must rate him as 'Met Expectations' at best. Any higher, and we risk upsetting the cosmic balance. Also, he has shown no improvement. He is just as disciplined, just as data-driven, just as transparent, just as Praveen-ish as he was seven years ago."

The Crumpet nodded, his face a mask of regret. "I am afraid so. We must follow the sacred teachings of the Bell Curve. And since he is the only one we are appraising, he cannot, under any circumstance, exceed expectations. To do so would throw the entire system into chaos."

The Egg sighed, as if deeply pained by the iron grip of logic. "A pity, really. If only he had shown some decline, we could have given him a lower rating and really made the bell curve sing. But alas, the fellow remains stubbornly excellent."

The Bean looked horrified. "This is monstrous."

"This is corporate policy," the Crumpet corrected.

The Bean, still pale from the sheer injustice of it all, looked around helplessly. "So, that's it, then? A met expectations rating for Praveen?"

The Egg nodded solemnly. "It is the only way. Rules are rules, old man. We must uphold the bell curve, lest anarchy descends upon us." The three sat in silence for a moment, each grappling with the absurdity of the situation.

Then, finally, the Bean raised his cup. "To Praveen. And to the tragic comedy of performance ratings."

The room fell silent, as the great bureaucratic machine whirred into motion. The rating was decided. The order had been preserved.

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