

Batting with a Star

A cheerful odyssey...

Being cheerful is an important professional trait. Everyone loves cheerful colleagues. However, spreading smiles is a serious business. It is not easy. Before we can disburse sunshine, we need to nurture the Sun within us. For only when we are happy from within, can we spread happiness. And to be cheerful from within, we need to be alive first—in a deep connect with our true self.

The above observations are part of my belief system. And this blog is my endeavor to validate my premise.



I first met [Preity Zinta](#) at a friend's party last year. She was sitting with a mutual friend. There was a kind of informal peripheral queue around her. I am not good with queues. But my friend summoned me over. So I sat down to chat for a bit. A bit became quite a bit. She spoke about movies, cricket, and the safety of women. I spoke about IT, IT, and IT. Then we both posed for my friend's camera. She had an un-sipped glass of wine that she had been holding all evening. She hid her hand for the picture. I was unsure what I was supposed to do. So I hid my single malt as well. If a celebrity is doing it, then perhaps it's the right thing to do.

A day later, I was dining on the rooftop of a popular Pune hotel. Coincidentally, there was a big [IPL](#) after-party at the same venue. I ran into Preity again. It had been a heart-wrenching day for her. [Kings XI Punjab](#) had come so close. Yet another playoff-less year! I pretended to sympathize. After all, they had lost to [Pune Supergiants](#). My pretense was unnecessary. She was her usual bubbly self, excitedly rambling about her new social venture on women's safety. Clearly, the subject was close to her heart. I invited her to Cybage to brainstorm over the safety issues faced by women and the winning issues faced by her boys. "Terrific," she confided softly before I left, "I am tired of losing."

The meeting in the Cybage boardroom had mostly one person talking. Her. A prospect should be given a free field to talk, the CEO in me has learnt along the way. The discussion rolled into the wee hours of the afternoon. I extended an impromptu invitation for lunch at my place. As we left for home, I noticed the fountains near the main office entrance were unusually crowded. Scores of Cybagians were 'casually' strolling around the place. How they figured out she was around will remain a mystery to me! Lunch that day was regular home food. She was easy and

appreciative. Before leaving, she sneaked a peek into the kitchen to thank the house staff.

A week later, the Kings XI Punjab CEO visited the Cybage offices, and shortly thereafter, we became the franchise's technology partner. Over the next few months, Preity and I took a back seat as the technology and operations teams on both sides took over. She did visit Pune once in between, and we caught up. She did most of the talking, again. I learnt of her foray into Bollywood by a pure accidental audition. It is a story she must have repeated a zillion times, but each time she does it with the passion of a first-time narration.

A day before the IPL auctions, I, along with the Cybage technocrats, landed up at the venue. The preparatory brainstorming session was exhausting. The evening called for some much-needed unwinding. I decided to skip the IPL party, and hang out with my team in the lounge. Interestingly, Preity too chose her backend team over socializing opportunities with her co-stars. As we walked to the restaurant, there were two unscheduled interruptions. The first time she stopped to chit-chat with a fan from housekeeping, aspiring for a selfie and an autograph. The second time she stopped to exchange pleasantries and introduce me to the heir of India's largest business house. The two contrasting stops had one thing in common—the quantum of time spent was similar.



January 27th. I was the odd one out. Everyone around my table was a heavyweight. Two of my neighbors were scions of India's top industrial houses. Another one belonged to the all-time cricket hall of fame. But the most intriguing one sat next to me. She excitedly chatted non-stop even as her hands trembled wildly with what she termed as her 'anticipating energy'. I was bewildered. Hasn't she been doing this for a decade now? Then how does she still manage to lose herself in the same old stuff? Then something strange happened. As soon as the TV cameras turned on and the hammer signaling the commencement of the [IPL 2018 auctions](#) was raised, my celebrity neighbor transformed in a flash. Her hands stopped shivering. She suddenly had a poise befitting a star. The heart-throb of millions was ready to splurge millions with a steady hand! That's when I realized that my premise had been erroneous.

The reason Preity Zinta is always cheerful is because she lives in the moment. She seamlessly adapts to the changing environment around her. From ensuring her customary wine doesn't go splashing in the social media, hiding her heart-wrenching emotions in front of the competition's fans, not forgetting to thank the household staff after a meal, prioritizing her time with the backend team instead of partying with the 'who's who' of the entertainment world, to making sure a fan from the hotel's housekeeping team is made to feel as important as the country's

richest heir, and of course, taming her trembling hands as soon as the camera lights come on—she does it all with a sense of effortless ease.

The secret sauce of always being positive is not our ability to connect with our self. Instead, it's our ability to connect with our surroundings. Human beings are social creatures. When we are connected with those around us, we are alive. And being alive is contagious. For only when we are alive, all our cheerful colors come shining through!

Dear readers, what do you think? Which trait is more meaningful—connecting with our self, or connecting with our surroundings? It would be my pleasure to ponder on this question with the most inventive (and brief) commenters over a home-cooked dinner.