

“I think it’s very important to establish equality and respect in the workplace,” Sanjeev explained as he leaned forward in his office chair. “That’s why I’ve decided to make my own tea. I want the staff to know that we are all on the same level.”

Sanjeev had just moved from the US to Delhi to assume the role as country director for a prominent NGO. While he was born in India, he had spent most of his adult life studying and working in the US.

On Sanjeev’s first day in the office, Rahul, one of the administrative staff, prepared tea for him and other executives during a break in meetings. Feeling uncomfortable about being served by a co-worker, Sanjeev reluctantly accepted the tea. The next day at the office, he decided to make his own tea in order to show the staff that everyone in the office was equal. It was important to him to model the values of equality that his organization stood for. He knew he was new to the office, but what could go wrong?

What Sanjeev didn’t realize was that Rahul took great pride in serving tea to a person in such a prominent position. He had worked diligently for years to establish himself in a position of significance. He felt particularly satisfied when the executives entrusted him with the smooth operation of the office and would often drop hints about the importance of his work to other colleagues.

### **Questions for consideration**

1. What cultural values are being expressed by Rahul? Are these necessarily in conflict with Sanjeev’s value of equality?
2. Would you advise Sanjeev to continue to make his own tea?
3. How would you advise Sanjeev to proceed with changes he wants to make in the office?