

Let's be lefties for a
day



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Let's be Lefties for a Day We often go through life in a monotonous manner. There are things we do observe, albeit unconsciously and there are people whom we see daily: in the bus, in our offices and homes. Some of them are like us: normal, able-bodied men and women. Some of them could be physically challenged people. They are seemingly anonymous in the sea of humanity around us. But look beneath the surface and you see a different picture. In my essay, I attempt to capture some of the nuances of normality and perceptions of normality in business and everyday life. What is it like to be a left-hander in a world of right-handers? (I am a right-hander). To explore this, I woke up one morning and posed a restriction on my right hand by enclosing a ping-pong ball in my right hand and tying it up tightly with a sock. I began brushing my teeth. Noticing that the angles of brushing were going awry, my right hand subconsciously tried to assist. No, I told myself and desisted. (After a couple of hours, I could still detect a faint trace of bad odour). Then, bathing was an absolute horror. My sock got wet in a matter of seconds. I had to sign some cheques and write a letter before leaving for office. The result, on paper looked like a child's scrawl. My daughter tossed me a ball and I ended up overbalancing and falling on the floor, not to mention missing it completely. We also observe people who do not elicit the same treatment meted out to us. For instance, I remember my college days when we had a guy who was good at studies. He would lock himself up and stick to academics. He would not join us in sports, dating or drinking. We used to snigger behind his back. He was considered ' abnormal'. Was it right on our part to label him thus? All of us know the answer. People who do not conform to their peer-set's so-called norms and practices are often scorned. But the attitude is not right. One cannot expect everyone to fall into the

majority. A simple illustration would be the five fingers on our hand. Each is distinctly different and yet has a role to play. In a similar fashion, even people who are considered abnormal or who fall into the minority class need to be treated with respect. During my high school days, I wanted to make some extra income: I took up the job of a pizza delivery boy. One day, I observed my manager, a white-American interviewing people for the position of waiter. Four Hispanic white Americans were interviewed and then there was a black-American candidate. I could sense a subtle change in my manager's stance. The questions were a little too brusque; there was the faintest trace of arrogance in his questions. This led me to ponder. After several decades of independence and harping about equality and non-discrimination, have we been able to root it out of our minds completely? Another facet that we notice often is the lack of facilities provided for physically challenged people. The United States has been able to make provisions for wheel chairs, but for people who have temporary disabilities which call for the use of crutches due to fractures, the facilities in public infrastructure such as malls and transport is still way off the mark. I observed a business executive who was using crutches. He found it difficult to use the escalator at the mall. The lifts were overcrowded then. Reverting to the central point of discussion, how do people who are outside the circle of 'normal' ones cope up? This brings us to the closing stage of our discussion. Whilst trying to conform and fit in, we need to pause and consider those who are not like the majority. They could be of a different race, they could be differently-abled or they could just be of a different attitude and mindset. It is one of the responsibilities of a mature society to integrate them in a seamless manner into mainstream humanity. The situation is often more

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noticeable in a formal setting such as a private or public firm. The majority looks at conformance, the minority seeks just acceptance. Obviously, as responsible citizens of a mature society, we need to recognize cultural and ethnic diversities; we also need to root out gender discrimination. Possibly, one's life time cumulative experiences lead to the mental framework of a certain cultural attitude (Konig, 2009). It is the challenge thrown open to a flourishing economy as to how it can integrate people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds without making them feel as if they do not fully belong. A deeper level of sensitivity and understanding is the need of the hour. References Konig, Jutta. (2009). Moving Experience: Dialogues between Personal Cultural Positions. *Culture Psychology*. 15(1), 97-119.