

Lower Your Expectations

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Recently, when I voluntarily tipped an autorickshaw driver and he accepted the money without any acknowledgement, I was irked. Later, it occurred to me that my expectations about his behaviour, rather than his behaviour per se, may have put me off. I was conditioned to expect at least a symbolic 'thank you' from him for the 'gesture' I had shown.

Psychology Today reported that an MRI study of the brain, conducted by the London University, had shown that low expectations were the driver of happiness. Eric Weiner, who has investigated happiness, points out that the Dutch are happy due to their lower expectations.

The Bhagwad Gita advises that one should do one's duty without expectations. In this age of competitive and complex lifestyles, expectations exponentially grow and extend beyond our duties; they form the foundation for professional success, buying prestigious brands, experiencing a sense of well-being in relationships, aspirations, the 'likes' on social media.

As we move up the economic spectrum and become used to our 'buying power', we may develop unreasonable expectations from others. Should we lower our expectations? Jeremy Sherman, social sciences researcher, provides a simple formula taking a cue from 'Alice in Wonderland'. If you want improvement, develop higher expectations, and develop lower expectations if you want contentment. Self-analysis will ensure that we do not become a victim of our own expectations.