



## THE PHILOSOPHY OF DEFEAT IN R. K. NARAYAN'S NOVELS



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### ABSTRACT

*As we all know that R.K.Narayan is considered as one of the major Indian-English novelists. He has thrown light almost on all the essential parts of life, manners, style, status and psychology of Indian people with his creative skill and extraordinary talent of writing realistic novels and short stories. His highly interesting novels with his philosophy of life has assured him a permanent place in the history of Indo-Anglian Literature. In this research paper, I have attempted to focus on a very different aspect of his novels that's philosophy of defeat. To him, the sense of defeat is not only confined to the battle fields and courts but this one is a part of our common day to day life also. It means when a man's hopes and expectations are not materialized, he /she is victimized by the sense of defeat. R.K.Narayan wants to convey his philosophy of defeat to his readers in his so many popular and realistic novels through several touching events which take place in the life of different major characters.*

**Key words** – Philosophy, defeat, failures, pangs, unexpected, despair, separation, vagueness, uncertainty, victory

### INTRODUCTION

Founding his concept of defeat on the Gita and testing its universality from his own failures, Narayan came to the conclusion that defeat is not an isolated phenomenon in human life. "My failure at the examination, and seeing my classmates marching ahead, induced a mood of pessimism and martyrdom which, in some strange manner, seemed to have deepened my sensibilities." What he had inscribed on the wall of the topmost chamber of the tower of the

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Chamundi Temple has its relationship with the philosophy of defeat: “The view of Mysore City from the height was breath-taking and I retraced the steps after inscribing my name and address on the wall with the message “Past is gone, present is fleeting, future is vague”. I think my name with the message must still be there, if the renovators have not reached that height or the depth of the care-cellars in Chamundi Hill.” The novelist, R.K. Narayan, depends on his propensity towards the tragic predicament made it incumbent on him to think, about things connected with defeat- ruin -“it’s a sacred duty of every enlightened citizen to leave a perfect ruin above. A ruin is not achieved in a day; it’s a result of a long maturing process; unhampered vegetation, thorns, brambles, reptiles, wild beasts, fauna, flora, weather, mud and all the elements have to combine to create a perfect ruin, I would view any improvement on this an act of Vandalism.” Defeat, ruin, vagueness, and uncertainty keep alike on the run.

R.K. Narayan saw defeat surrounding the efforts of every man for success; he experienced how success was transitory and fleeting; and he came to the conclusion that what remains longer and firmer was in the end more and more painful and unwanted Keeping his mind on defeat, he says about death: “The loss of my wife was sudden and not even remotely anticipated by me although my father-in-law had his doubts while looking into my horoscope earlier. But now I had to accept her death as a fact. One had to get used to the idea of death, even while living. If you have to accept life, you are inevitable committed to the notion of death also”. It means that if man has to accept victory, he will have to be committed to the notion of defeat. He further says, “Perhaps death may not be the end of everything as it seems- personality may have other structures and other plans of existence, and the decay of the physical body through disease or senility may mean nothing more than a change of vehicle.” When life continues after death is some other shape, it is clear that victory goes on even after defeat in a better way. Things that are foreign of life are more attractive, but defeat is so close and so familiar to life that it cannot be foreign to life- it is very close and common to life. Naturally, the phenomena which are closely connected with defeat have more and more touch of life in them; and such phenomena are part and parcel of the life that we live without grudge or grouse.

The elements and sources of defeat are conterminous with the aspects of life. The body is as such susceptible to pain and despair as the mind. The mind is as much troubled by disturbances caused by defeat as the heart. The heart is as much downcast by the consequences of defeat as the soul. The soul in human body suffers pangs of defeat as severe as are suffered by the body, mind, and heart. Narayan’s ‘The Dark Room’ supports our conviction Raman and Savitri have come to feel that they are defeated in their respective battles. Strangely enough, nobody has the feeling of victory. Savitri left her house of her own accord, and she came back without anyone’s invitation. Raman too felt guilty when his wife

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disappeared; and no change came over him after her return. It is true that Savitri found it hard to swallow “bare rice, cooked in water, without adding even salt, but it was worth it because it enhanced one’s sense of victory.” It may be pointed out that domestic disturbances present a situation of conflict in which nobody wins and nobody loses. However, the sense of defeat leaves its harmful effect on the parties concerned. This kind of defeat emerges from the wrong conception of rights and privileges, Both Savitri and Raman are equal and have no special right and duty.

Social inequality many a time paves the way for conflict and defeat. Defeat is the law of life which cannot be avoided. “The law comes into operation the moment we detach over selves from our mother’s womb. All struggle and misery in life is due to our attempt to arrest this law or get away from it or in allowing ourselves to be hurt by it. The fact must be recognized. A profound unmitigated loveliness is the only truth of life. All else is false. Krishna is the one character who has understood the elements and sources of defeat. He found no escape from loneliness, and separation. Sometimes defeat is sudden and unexpected. Naturally when it comes before man he either breaks down or is bold to bear it. Sriram in *Waiting for the Mahatma* “felt disappointed with the man’ he had looked on imposing as an underground worker; so precise and clear-headed and purposeful. Now he seemed woolly-headed and vague. The atmosphere of peace did not suit his nature.” Sriram wondered for a moment why he had ever carried out his orders at all. He was disappointed that the other showed so little interest in his own jail existence. It is not surprising that his hope of marriage with Bharati is turned in a direction where defeat is sure.

Defeat shows its power in realizing what wrong a man has committed. Raju in ‘*The Guide*’ tried his best to deceive everyone, and he tried to hide this tragic flaw from everyone. The moment Raju, Rosie, and the Superintendent, reached Raju’s home, Rosie threw a smile at the Superintendent, murmured, *Good Night*’ and vanished into the house. The Superintendent said to Raju, “Let us go now in my jeep.” It was waiting at the gate, Raju sent away the Plymouth. He said, “I say, Superintendent. Give me a little time, please. I want to tell her about it.” Raju went up the stair-case. He followed. He stood on the landing while Raju went into her room, Rosie listened to Raju as if he had been addressing a stone pillar. Even now Raju recollected, Rosie bewildered, stunned expressing as she tried to comprehend the situation. Raju thought Rosie would break down. She often broke on small issues, but this seemed to leave her unperturbed.

Sometimes loneliness becomes a shade of defeat; for man or woman finds it difficult to respect and honour the tradition which had brought them close to each other. ‘*The Painter of Signs*’ is founded on this aspect of defeat. Raman promised Daisy without thinking anything about what was to come. Raman contented himself by shouting. Daisy gave a squeeze to his

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wrist and said that she did not hope for it, it won't work. That day she was going to those villages in the forests and might not be free for three years. She had told Raman that five thousand men and women have to be taken care of immediately. After that they might move her elsewhere- even to Africa. She could not afford to have a personal life. She said, "I want to forget for moments of weakening, and you must forget me, that's all." Daisy knew that the gods, if they were there, would look into her mind and judge whether he was choosing the right path or not. If she was wrong let them strike her dead. She was prepared for it. It is her loneliness that makes her sad and disappointed. This loneliness accounts for her defeat.

Separation, departure, and defection against one's will are the contours of defeat. For instance, in 'The Bachelor of Arts', Chandran was sitting in his office in a very depressed state. Mohan came, sat on the bench, and asked what wrong had been, Chandran lifted a careworn face to him, and said, "No letter even today. This is the sixth day. I don't know what the matter it." Probably she was studying for the examination or something. She would probably write to him the next day. Chandran did not think so. He was in complete despair, for this was the first time she had not written for so many days. Mohan was baffled. He had never been face to face with such a problem before Chandran was ready to get on the cycle. Mohan ran on the door, and said, "Look here, not that I shirk work and don't want to look after the office or anything, but why do you suppose all these terrible things on the authority of absent letters and the mention of a slight cold?" Chandran scorned this question, jumped on his cycle without a word, and pedaled away. Mohan stood looking after the cycle for some time, and turned in, throwing up his arms in despair. But then, it is a poet's business only to ask questions; he cannot always expect an answer. Chandran's separation is the cause of defeatist mentality, and his tendency is always towards that which is connected with defeat.

Defeat is implied in the division of humanity between rakshasas and devatas: the former is meant to destruction, and the latter is required to preserve humanity. The good and the evil are at war with each other, and a number of defeats are faced by the good at the hands of the evil. Vasu, a symbol of evil, goes down before Rangi, a symbol of good. "The man had evidently trapped a couple of mosquitoes which had settled on his forehead by bringing the flat of his palm with all his might on top of them. The woman switched on the light and saw two mosquitoes plastered on his brow. It was also the end of Vasu." Nataraj knew that Vasu had one virtue, he never hit anyone with his hand, whatever the provocation. Sastri had a different view: "Because he had to conserve all that might for this own destruction. Every demon appears the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the rakshasas that were ever born." Every demon carried within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Or what is to happen to humanity? Sastri narrated again for Nataraj's benefit the story of Bhasmasura the unconquerable, who scorched everything he touched, and finally

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reduced himself to ashes by placing the tips of his fingers on his own head. Sastri stood brooding for a moment and turned to go. The feeling of defeat that has been visualized in every part of creation has been the subject of his mediation. of his mediation.

The sources of defeat may be found in men's smugness that "never imagines for a moment that other creatures may also possess ego, values, outlook and the ability to communicate, though they be incapable of audible speech. But more than smugness, gradual and constant dissociation accounts for defeat in life. For instance, in 'A Tiger of Malgudi', Raja the tiger lost the power of hearing. He could not hear when his master summoned him. His discourses were much reduced as he understood that Raja could not hear him properly. But finally Raja was assured a new life before him. Both the master and the tiger came to know the worth and span of life on this earth - body without energy has no value, nor does life reach a point of success. Only defeat remains with man.

Rebuke and scolding is also a form of defeat. In 'The Financial Expert', a sense of defeat can be seen in the hero, When he is rebuked by Arul Doss, the chief peon of the bank, for being a nuisance on the premises (normally trying to obtain loan application forms or even new clients), Margayya decides that large sums of money—necessary for the type of life and position in society of which he judges himself deserving—are not to be made from villagers' small transactions; rather, they are to be made by devotions to Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth, whose favors to the elect are almost boundless. To overcome the sense of defeat, he goes to a priest who prescribes special rituals for obtaining the favor of Lakshmi: mixing the ashes of a red lotus with the milk of a smoke-colored cow, exorcising rodents and cockroaches from his house, decorating the doorways with mango-leaf garlands, and repeating a special mantra a thousand times daily for forty days. The result is that Margayya becomes a devotee not of Lakshmi but of money itself

Defeat has a very strong element of desire and emotion. Man embraces defeat the moment his desires and emotion go out of his control. Nagaraj, Gopu, Sita, and Tim live in a happy way so long as they live a reason bound life. "Nagaraj fancied himself a man with a mission." However, he was not clear in his mind about his mission, but always felt he must be up and doing. This state of mind is inductive of ensuing defeat. The reason why he come to find his family in a situation of disorder and disarray was that he did not make use of reason. His way of acceptance of defeat is typical: "I shall also acquire a lot of cotton wool and try and pack it all in my ear so that even thunderclap may should like a whisper." Narayan advises his reader to go slow on the middle way of life. Emotion and reason on the extreme is always direct producer of defeat.

## CONCLUSION

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Thus, the philosophy of defeat, like other philosophies, has a different meaning and a separate scope. Its sources and elements, likewise, are connected with life, since the philosophy of defeat relates itself to humanity, it is directly concerned with man and his world. In the light of its meaning, scope, elements, and sources, my research paper has evaluated R.K. Narayan's novels.

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