

Learning To Win Even When You Lose

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If you can meet with triumph and disaster, and treat those two impostors just the same - Rudyard Kipling. Has Rahul Gandhi read Kipling, and taken a tip from him? Maybe, or maybe not.

But the Congress leader's comment - which might well go down in the annals of political history as the understatement of the year, if not the decade - that the recently concluded assembly poll results in UP were a 'bit down' for his party suggests that he could have, consciously or otherwise, echoed the sentiments regarding victory and defeat of the author who, for all his drum-beating arch-imperialism, often struck a deep and universal philosophical chord.

Rahul's 'bit down' remark was in stark contrast to the strident triumphalism of BJP supporters about the landslide victory of not so much the lotus party as of Narendra Modi, who

increasingly has become the public face of the organisation and enjoys a devoted following akin to that of Bollywood superstars or record-breaking cricketers.

While analysts will long and laboriously dissect the political and sociological ramifications of the election results, it might make for an interesting detour to take a look at winning and losing in all walks of life, and one's reaction to them.

We live in an increasingly competitive age, in which as an American football coach once famously remarked, "Winning is not the most important thing; it's the only thing."

Whether it's in our examination results, or in our career trajectories, or our social standing, we are in constant competition with colleagues, with neighbours, with friends and family members, to do one better than

them, or at least be seen to be doing so.

The name of the game is winning, often winning at any cost. But winning implies that if you win, someone has to lose. It's a zero-sum equation; victory and defeat have to balance each other out.

Physics tells us that the total mass of the universe - all the matter of which it is made - is a constant, and can neither be reduced nor increased. If one particle gains mass, it is at the expense of another which gives up an exactly equal amount of it to maintain the cosmic equilibrium.

Similarly, in the moral universe which is composed of all our dealings and interactions with each other - be they political, economic, sporting, social, or any other - our gains, our wins, are seen as the obverse of someone's loss, the defeat of someone else. As in the world of physics, so in the

realm of human affairs, gain and loss, triumph and defeat, are two sides of the same coin, which ensures that the sum total of the universe, physical or moral, remains the same.

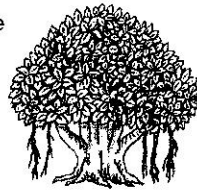
Even as your victory is inextricably bound to my defeat, so is my defeat bound to your victory.

In order for you to win, I must lose; in order for me to lose you must win. Each participates in, and is part of, the outcome for the other.

If both of us, winner and loser alike, realise this, learn to rise above the interdependent polarity of gain and loss and see the unchanging and unchangeable totality of things, we'll have unmasked Kipling's impostors.

And created a truly win-win situation for all, 'winners' and 'losers' equally.

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