**America amidst hopes and fears**

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November 15, 2020

Never was the US Presidential Election so polarized nor was ever the American nation more paranoid than it was seen in the recent held Elections, 2020. This will go down as the most contested election with the maximum turn out in US history. Biden set a new record of getting over 74 Million votes, highest ever, cracking Obama’s record in 2008. He has become the oldest to be US President at almost 78. Over 100 Million mail ballots make a unique record in its own right. His deputy, Kamala Harris is the first ever lady to become Vice President and also the first with her Afro-Asian origin and non white skin. By all means, this very election shall be remembered as the most controversial while Mr. Trump is still very reluctant to accept the results or concede his defeat. He has levelled serious accusations of voting fraud and claimed to have his mandate been stolen, though largely without any tangible evidence.

Thanks to constant Biden-bashing by the incumbent in Oval Office, Mr. Trump who himself dug his grave and fell under his own weight. His harsh rhetoric, divisive politics and exclusionist policies drove him miles away from the noble ideals and lofty aspirations espoused by the founding fathers which are deeply embedded in American Dream. As the land of opportunity and equality for all, far above the petty prejudices of race, religion, caste or creed, America promised ever American a decent life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. America stood taller on high moral ground as a nation of nations and, thus, emerged as the sole superpower. The two mainstream Parties, Republicans and Democrats, differed in their perspectives and priorities but they always kept the national interests supreme. They were only political opponents, never the enemies. Their support bases were split in Red and Blue States but these colors were only artificial boundaries drawn during the campaign. Before and after, they were only Americans, all in all. Trump in his four years in office, divided America in Red, Blue, Black, White, and the rest. Thus, he was not only unconventional but in many ways unpresidential, to say the least.

Joe Biden watched all these sharp divisions and astounding aberrations and prepared his counter plans with due care and caution. He took a very serious note of these vivid weaknesses of his self-conceited, maverick and hot-headed rival seeking reelection. With his almost five decades in active political arena, six terms in US Senate, two consecutive terms as Vice President and two unsuccessful attempts in 1988 and 2008 for the covetous Oval Office, Joe Biden had plenty to offer. His cool, consistent, low profile and self-effacing demeanor came in sharp contrast to the whimsically unpredictable Trump. In the troubled times of Corona Pandemic with over 244,000 dead already, millions rendered jobless, Trump looked the other way and brushed aside the deadly virus only as a Chinese conspiracy, a hoax. He only laughed it away when he was expected to rise as a leader with a robust strategy to counter the Covid-19. Like Mr. Herbert Hoover in Great Depression, Trump chose inaction. As they opted for F.D. Roosevelt in 1932, Americans looked to Biden as a seasoned and steady leader whose personal traits and political acumen they could truly trust. Results were similar; they voted Trump out of office and foiled his efforts for reelection as they had done to Mr. Hoover in 1932. Crisis, indeed, is the real measure of a true leader. Trump could not lead his people and was found miserably low and down when he was expected to stand tall and deliver.

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Contrary to the advice of his political aides and campaign managers who were asking for more vigorous and radical slogans appealing popular voters, Biden chose to remain consistent and stayed along the course as always before. He preferred to be himself and pledged American two things- empathy and unity- against the deep divisions and an utter indifference to their woes manifested by Trump. This was, in fact, a very subtle message which kept creeping into the minds and psyche of Americans, slowly but steadily. It surely covered more miles than it apparently seemed. These two magic words promised to heal the wounds and balm the bruises of a nation ripped apart by constant bullying and regular media bashing through tweets by none other than Mr. Trump himself. He withdrew from Iraq, struck a peace accord with Talibans in Afghanistan, and waged no new war. By putting Americans first, he pledged to “Make America Great Again”. But he never stopped waging a war of words and lashed at every body that he chose to belittle or bully. During his entire term in office, he spared none. His tirade against media, abrupt dismissals of his own core team players, selective ban of Muslim immigrants, China bashing, decision to build wall along the Mexican border, venomous words against his political rivals including Joe Biden cost him high, indeed a loss he will live to rue and lament.

Many in US were sick and weary of the culture characterized by pride, prejudice, hatred, abuse, lies and bullying, set to become a new normal in American politics. They were desperately looking for someone whom they could trust and in whose arms they could feel comforted and calmed. Joe Biden, with his unblemished character and impeccable conduct, came as a God-sent blessing to not only the Blue-wall democrat states but also the saner souls and wiser voices in Republican red zones. He promised to restore sanity, forge unity, heal the wounds, balm the bruised, love the disadvantaged, treat all Americans as equal and thus pledged to restore the soul of the nation. He committed himself to act on war footing to control the deadly onslaught of Corona Pandemic immediately after being elected as President. Thus, he pitched himself as the real savior who could not only steer them to the safer shores but also address their woes with a humane heart. Americans believed his every word and voted him with full zeal and fervor. Many Americans in sheer ecstasy went even beyond the party lines and helped Biden flip Michigan, Wisconsin and Arizona and thereby defeat Trump in his home ground.

History is replete with ample examples when many great leaders fell from glory owing to their attitude. Trump despite his noblest of intentions and tallest claims of “Make America Great Again”, and putting “America First” did more harm to America and its image across the world than any good intended. He never stopped vomiting venom and hurled insult on any whom he chose to demonize. He did it at will and with impunity. History will remember him for his pride and vanity, his unbecoming attitude and his abusive language. That remained his tragic flaw. In Oval Office, Americans would not have the like of him elected again for a role larger than life, too serious a business to be left to such a racist President promoting white supremacy. Joe Biden, on the other hand, has three massive challenges ahead- a huge health hazard wrought by Pandemic that Americans have seen in last 100 years, an economy reeling on the downhill and in dire straits bigger only after Great Depression of 1930s and a nation split into racial lines as it was in 1960s. As President-elect, Joe Biden has got not a moment to lose. Stepping into the shoes of F.D. Roosevelt, he must act here and now to heal the wounds, forge unity and lead all Americans as one people, unlike Mr. Trump whose singular focus remained on the 30 states he won in 2016.

The world outside is watching out with great expectations for a meaningful engagement with US, the latter behaving not a benevolent master but as an equal partner. Will Joe Biden choose to behave as another politician or conduct himself as a statesman par excellence? Amidst high hopes and rising fears, only those who live will see!

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