

USA
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Will Kerry carry?

The News

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Both Bush and Kerry are brothers under the skin as they reflect imperialistic ego; conceiving a role model for USA, to be the ultimate arbiter of the destiny of the world. They are different too. In make-up and temperament they embody stylistic variations in achieving the same objectives. Kerry has finesse and gives the impression of being 'politically correct' most of the time, while Bush abandons political correctness equally often. Bush is blunt and is driven by 'cowboyish' propensity. Kerry depicts Bostonian grace and sophistication, as an upper crust over the 'colonial mind-set'. Who will make to the White House is enigmatic. It cannot be predicted in clear 'white' and 'black' terms. Both are in the grey zones. A see-saw game is on. The poles are utterly confusing. The popularity graphs rise and fall for both the contenders. The ensuing election is increasingly becoming a political thriller as 'suspense' boils to the brim. The world inter-connected as it is, through satellites and internet, is watching with rapt attention, who would be the supreme head of the unipolar power — USA. It is not merely an election; linked with it is the global hope.

Leaders traditionally viewed are men of right dispositions — honest, upright, intelligent and so forth. Traits define them. This dictum does not hold true any longer. The man of the moment is all that matters. Situation determines the suitability or otherwise of an incumbent. A nation may need a sword brandishing macho figure, when the chips are down or a docile white-flag-bearer when peace is the dominating agenda. Clinton's victory over his adversary John Bush Sr — is a clear testimony to the fact that the archetypal 'man-on-the-horse-back', was no longer a requirement after USA had routed Iraq and humbled Saddam Hussein despite his much-trumpeted Republican Guards. It was, a much needed 'victory' to compensate for the 'bruised' US ego, as a consequence of the Vietnam debacle. The first Iraq war served as an equalizer. Bush sr had done his job; Clinton was then needed for mopping up and consolidating the gains. In this situation, 'economy stupid' was the catchy slogan, which did fit the moment. It is analogous to Churchill losing the election despite the fact that he had won the war. The constituency desired 'peace' and voted the opponent. In Carter-Reagan elections the nation needed a bit of morale-boosting as a sequel to the fiasco of the Tehran hostage operation. Carter appeared too soft and compromising. The screen's hero was thus accepted the nation's hero. Reagan perfectly acted the role what public wished of him. In the context of

Kennedy-Nixon bout, it was charisma which was the winner. A typical co-ed when asked, 'why did you vote for Kennedy', the answer was 'he is so cute.'

The US public faces a dilemma this time around. When they look at Bush, he is a reincarnation of his father — aggressive, dashing and oblivious of consequences. A glance at Kerry is not very encouraging either. Both appear to be the two faces of the same coin. If Bush lied, so did Kerry. The latter's boastful claims of Vietnam heroism boomeranged on him. His 'shifty' disposition aroused doubts. Masses, in general, do not favor 'wishy-washy' characters. They have to make unequivocal and firm commitments to be acceptable to the people. It is, however, a different matter whether the promises are fulfilled or not. Kerry had an edge over his rival

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in the debates and on that account his popularity rating surged up a little. Bush on the other hand has the full support and blessings of the most powerful Jewish lobby including the defence-industrial complex and the oil barons. The recent proclamation of anti-Semitic law by George Bush is a shrewd maneuver to entice the Jewish voters.

Kerry is capitalising on regaining the power and credibility which America has lost due to the thoughtless war on Iraq. His assertion that America cannot be "vetoed" is a palliative to heal the wounded pride. Common between the two rivals is that America is a sacred cow and it can do any thing at its will. Pre-emptive doctrine of Bush reflects the same sensibility. Ironically, it is an assault on the glorious and enviable identity of the US which was built by its great forebears — Jefferson, Lincoln,

Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D Roosevelt. It appears that the US is regressing into a mould of 'Caesarism', which it had always detested. In his book 'Coming Caesars'. A French analyst Amaury de Riencourt had predicted in 1957; 'Caesarism is therefore the logical outcome of a double current very much in evidence today. The growth of a world empire that cannot be ruled by republican institutions, and the gradual extension of mass democracy, which ends in the destruction of freedom and in the concentration of supreme power in the hands of one man. This is the ominous prospect facing the western world in the second half of the twentieth century.' The 21st century is increasingly seeing its confirmation.

There is a type of conflict situation, where one is faced with a choice between two alternatives each having equal negative valence. This is known as "avoidance-avoidance" conflict and per force, an individual has to make a choice. The worst choice is making the choice. American voter is caught up in this predicament. There is a Persian adage "Gao amad wa Khar raft" Translation: "The cow (elephant is the Republican symbol) enters and the donkey leaves". It could be vice-versa. But what difference would that make? If Bush looses, it would build up the image of the American voters as a discerning public and not passive recipient of media-manipulated 'images' and realities and that they are also conscious of the curtailment of their fundamental rights through infamous 'Patriot-law' which was an aberration of the US Constitution. More specifically, they would convey that a President can't get away by telling lies and hoodwinking people at home and abroad. They would also be making it explicit that war on terrorism has multiplied terrorism, beyond control and that the sympathy wave for USA which was spontaneous occurrence on 9/11, has turned into hatred for USA not only among the Muslims but a very sizeable chunk of humanity. Kerry accordingly could be a hope for the future.

One is reminded of the story of a disciple, whose 'guru' (teacher) had died. Being a man of piety and high principles, the disciple thought that his guru would get all the bounties in heaven, including the beautiful 'hurs' (damsels). It so happened that the disciple also died. In the heaven he saw his revered teacher surrounded by 'hurs'. He went near him and said: "I always knew you would be rewarded in the heaven". "No my dear son", the guru retorted, "I am their punishment". Could Kerry be the punishment for Bush?

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