

Senator: *You ain't no Will Smith!*

It is amazing that Senator John McCain loves himself and his fear mongering so much that he finds it utterly easy to connect everything under the sun to the false sense of security. For example today, out of blue, he became a staunch supporter of NAFTA. Not because of its devastating influence on the American economy or because it has deprived hundreds of thousands of good Americans their livelihood, or that it was the topic of recent debate between the two Democratic contestants. It was rather, his arithmetic as to how the on-going war in Afghanistan will be affected, if Canada decides to pullout from there. Is he really worried about American jobs or our friendship with Canada? One wonders, why he did not mention the other neighbor, Mexico, which also enjoys the benefits of NAFTA. Oh, yes, Mexico has not committed any troops in Afghanistan!

What is even more hilarious is that the state of Arizona where he hails from as a senator since 1986, has one of the most porous borders between the US and Mexico. That state alone has allowed the illegal population of the entire country to swell to the maximum. What has he done to curb that influx? Has he ever talked about the drugs that come through the gaping holes between the United States and Mexico? Has he ever had any intelligent debate with the country on the spike in the crime rate in Arizona alone in the past decades due to the illegal border-crossing, which by the way, has spilled into the neighboring states and messed up the statistics? Has anybody ever heard him talk about the erosion of standard of education in the country? Did anybody hear him talk about the widening cultural, social and economical divide between the two founding races in America, viz., the Whites and the Blacks? That's what happens when you are obsessed all your life only with the 'Yellow Viets', 'Islamic terrorists' and 'Jihadists', have made Iraq the centerpiece as well as the top, bottom and rear piece of your presidential campaign, and, gage your success by the 'surge'!

With all due respect to a decorated veteran, being the son and grandson of Navy admirals, he unfortunately seems to know, believe in, and perpetuate only one definition of patriotism: serving the country on the battlefield, period. It appears that since his PoW days, all that has changed for him is the geography of battlefield: from Vietnam in 1960s to Iraq and Afghanistan, 40 odd years later. His parlance of 'greater cause' does not appear to go an iota beyond the narrow premise of military service. His past and recent rhetoric on the campaign trail are testimony to that deep-rooted belief. His stump speeches in the recent months are nothing but doses of fear that he is administering to the American public with increasing potency. Astonishingly, it seems to be working, pretty well!

Ray Charles once said: I've always thought that people want you to be one of the two things. They either want you to be a clone - meaning just like them - or they want you to be their footstool, so they can control you and tell you what to do. Huh? Who says, this legend was blind?

Do we wish to be portrayed as such? At least, that's what precisely has been the legacy of our actions and policies of the past 6 years in Afghanistan and nearly 5 years in Iraq. Unfortunately, that nightmare has been augmented by the recent resolve of Senator John McCain who wants to perpetuate our unwelcome overstay in Iraq by another 100 years. Now, compared to Ray Charles, here is a man who lacks vision. Not long ago, the senator

also described himself: I'm a Legend! Well, there is a lot of difference between fiction and reality and Senator McCain knows that more than anybody else. Above all, *he ain't no Will Smith!*

Undoubtedly, the stalest Al-Qaeda phobia he is feeding to the country does qualify him to be the next Commander-in Chief. But does it make him the President of the United State, as well? We all know that almost five years ago, the day George Bush attacked Iraq, he became the Commander-in-Chief, but he ceased to be the US president. In this election a lot more than mere smart and cave-buster bombs is important and relevant; this is perhaps one of the most important elections of the 21st century that will set the course for New America.

Honestly, for a multifaceted country such as ours, electing a president who possesses and exercises that intensely narrow a mindset is worrisome, unless we have no qualms about continuing to live in the dense fog of fear for four more years - the same fog that not so long ago his good friend Rudolf 'the man who ran' Giuliani tried so hard and failed so miserably to wrap us into.

Despite his riding high in the polls, not very different could be the fate of John McCain's bid, if he does not change his mindset from the obsession of ridding the world of 'Islamic terrorists', and paying attention to the more serious problems at home, simply because while the threat of terrorism is real, 'Islamic terrorism' is a myth - just like the Soviet era cold war syndrome was. After all, it was the fog of mistrust spanning two continents that covered the American psyche for a good second half of the 20th century. As a result, all that today's world has to show is a spiraling arms race, genocide, political imbalance, domination and, ruthless derogation. After USSR shattered, we thought, we have defeated the old enemy and our nightmare has ended. Look at Russia today! Emboldened by its rediscovered economic power and renewed strategic global alliances, the old threat of imbalance is lurking just beneath the surface under the stewardship of Vladimir Putin - a very personal friend of President George Bush. Ironically, when bombs kill civilians and armed men in Sri Lanka, we never hear anybody barking 'Buddhist' and 'Hindu' terrorism, nobody ever coined terms like 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' terrorism for almost 40 years of the bloody British-Irish conflict and the havoc created by ETA in Spain was never given the name 'Christian' terrorism.

Agreed that at his age it is hard for Senator McCain to change his ways and convictions, but if he really wishes to lead this country, he must find in his heart the true answers and hence solutions to the following:

- Why this is the first generation of Americans where middle class people say they are not sure if their kids will have better life than they have had?
- What is his definition of 'change' and 'hope'? Can he change the definition of hope of an ordinary cabdriver in New York who said upon asking that he has experienced hope only once before when he came to the US 15 years ago, and he will experience it again, if Obama is elected the next President of the USA?
- Does he acknowledge that for the first time, the minorities of legal immigrants such as the Muslim, Arabs, Latino and Hispanic have gone from margins to the center of the American politics in 2008?

- In the light of the fact that today America is projected by the power of guns rather than by the value of its people, what would he offer as a solution to the socio-economic strains that have chewed up the American values, both at home and abroad?
- How will he turn around the tide when Americans have gone under this war mongering administration from paycheck to unemployment check to welfare check?
- What would be his 'patriotic' strategy to set the Bill of Rights right which by design of this administration has been exploited and transformed into a Bill of Convenience?

What is really scary is the unwavering resolve of Senator McCain to haughtily follow the perilous path of continued hegemony in foreign lands. By doing so he is bidding farewell to America's standing on the world stage as the champion of equality, justice and freedom. Putting decelerating wheels to this terrifying onslaught would be the real fight on terrorism. Otherwise, if the documented level of carnage, misery, blood letting, plundering and torture is any pointer, history will not hesitate nor waiver from judging us on the same level as Al-Qaeda.

Let no James Boswell quote Samuel Johnson again, who said: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel"; though, Boswell later assured that Johnson was not indicting patriotism. So, let not the supporters of the continuance of this protracted war, judge those as cowards or even worse unpatriotic, who believe that non-interference in the politics, culture and way of life of other nations is the most effective way to keep the terrorism and terrorists at bay. Just imagine for a moment, how far have we come since the dawn of 21st century that we take pride upon being called the 'invaders', 'occupiers', 'plunderers', 'prisoner abusers', 'eavesdroppers', and, 'waterboarders' among others?

This country of ours needs a more humble foreign policy in an age of terrorism. And if the litany Senator McCain is delivering in his campaign trail these days is any indicator, his foreign policy will continue to be identical or even worse than his predecessor's.

A forest may be dense and awesome, but it is the unique individuality of each and every tree constituting the very forest that defines it! Our economy is in doldrums, our national debt is skyrocketing, our healthcare system is broken and in tatters - even for the war veterans, jobs are being shipped overseas, and thanks to the deceptive loan schemes, the housing market has crashed. Our prolonged and ill-conceived and poorly-conducted conflict in far away lands has turned the forest ghoulish, giving way to far more serious wars on the home front that need immediate and undivided attention. Not only fighting but decisively winning the domestic wars that are destroying the very fabric of our existence as a strong nation will be the hallmark of the next US president! Getting fixated on banging the terrorists with high precision bombs is not the way to fix the recessing economy, providing health care to all, saving homes and creating jobs at home!

William Shakespeare had said, "Love all. Trust a few. Do wrong to none." Now, only if we could adhere to one - just the last one - of these nuances of the great Bard, our national threat level will pale out overnight. Wow! That will be our defining moment in the 21st century. Perhaps, our future generations would be able to say: *peace is natural; war an accident.*

But who could argue with the Senator?