

'OBAMA... My World!'

As the King dreamt that someday his children would not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character... the day dawned to see it come true

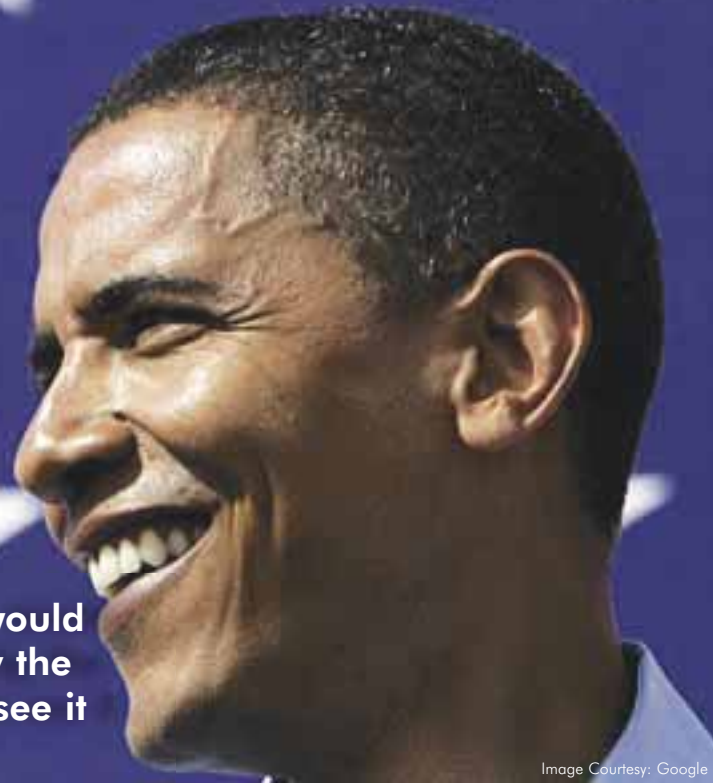


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At 10am in India, as the whole world held its breath, Barack Obama was declared as the first African American President of the United States, in other words, making him the most powerful man in the world. While America gasped through his victory, the phenomenon called Obama affected masses across the globe. And as the prophecy of this change in American leadership was witnessed across the globe, Obama's win touched the cords of several hearts in India.

"They said - This day would never come!" were Barack's first few words after winning the Iowa caucus. But watch him make history after the remarkable victory, the speechless world back home, gathered words to express its sentiments. "Barack is the rage! He is exactly what America needed, something radical yet still catering to their sentiments, wrapped in a different exterior. America needed a little shaking up!" said Shivi Kumar, 25, a Documentary Film Maker.

"American elections this time were not just about issues concerning the Americans but they were also about charisma and personality!" says Prachi Jatania, 28, senior correspondent, CNN IBN. And this seemed pretty evident as Obama's charismatic presence and spontaneity managed to attract people across sections of the American society. The substance in his speeches did not reflect predispositions towards any one race or community but in fact appealed to everyone who has been living in the melting pot i.e. America, for generations. Thus, truly making him a global icon!

Obama's vision to strive for world peace has had more of India's youth fall head over heels in love with the new US President, not to mention his bolstering promises of 'change'. "He's definitely a refreshing change. People look up to him as a radical young leader vis-a-vis John McCain who is a war veteran," continued Prachi. Youth across India as well as across the globe were impacted and seemed quite in awe of the young Obama, who took on the race to the White House with great vigour as against 72 year old Senator John McCain's restrained approach. "Obama represents modern America! He appears to be more liberal and dynamic compared to McCain who is much like the

other presidents with the same old policies!" says Pushkar Shah, 25, a young business professional.

Barack's campaign had effectively promoted Brand Obama across youth portals like Facebook and Youtube in an attempt to grab a stronghold amongst the younger audience. Being the youngest candidate in the 2008 Presidential elections, Barack had his age working in his favour. His distinct guise and enthusi-

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asm backed by powerful campaigning not only pooled in votes from most Americans 'under-30' but also aspired local youngsters in India hoping for such a go-getter in local politics as well. "Obama's win is good because he is young with new ideas and fresh energy. He is a youth icon because he has come up in politics without a godfather that really doesn't seem possible in India. But we hope someone will one day...!" says Amberish Diwanji, Deputy Editor, Businessline. Clearly, his modest upbringing and political journey has been an inspiration.

As a child, Obama became conscious of racism and what it meant to be African-American in the fifth grade at the Punahou Academy. He was one of three black students at the school. Although racial discrimination came to be perceived as socially unacceptable and morally repugnant since the ban in the mid-20th century, racial politics remained a major phenomenon. Obama, too, was not spared by criticism on racial grounds. But his landmark victory this week has symbolized a strong change of attitude of people who for the first time, overlooked the skin of his colour and actually voted him for the vision he had to offer. "A Black President is something that America would have thought was blasphemous many years ago, but now people went out of their way to support him. I think it's inspiring and that instead of all the bizarre people that everyone's titling as role models, he's the one we should be looking at" says Shivi Kumar.

It has taken this long for a Black man to hold office in the White House. However, this event has indicated that the racial divide in America is fading. It seems like just the beginning and the world is looking forward to the changes Obama's leadership is likely to bring.

At times when sub-prime crisis and the economic doom ruined many in States and the world over, a new leadership in the form of Barack Obama poses as a ray hope in despair. "If there's anything US needed in these crisis situation, it's a man with a strong vision and integrity. Obama will prove to have either one of them, if not both!" said Husain Bandukwala, 25, Media Planner, Mediacom. So while America celebrates its new President, the world sits back to wait and watch if he can prove to be the change everyone wants to see...



▶ In 2006, Senator Barack Obama won a Grammy Award for Best Spoken Word Album for the audio book edition of his book *Dreams from My Father*.

▶ Barack Obama wrote a book called *The Audacity of Hope*.

▶ Senator Barack Obama is running for president as one of the few candidates who opposed the Iraq war from the beginning.

DEEPA MISHRA & DISHA GADHIYA
deepa.r.mishra@gmail.com
disha.gadhiya@gmail.com