

Chapter I. Obama's Middle-ground Stance as an Outcome of His Mixed Heritage and Faith in Communitarianism: An Introduction

This study finds out the rationale behind the middle-ground political stance that Barack Obama has taken in his memoir, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts Reclaiming American Dream (2006)*. *The Audacity of Hope* is a part-historical, part-autobiographical, and part-philosophical text. It is Obama's policy analysis with autobiographical tinge: It critically recounts political history through the lens of personal experience. This book was published during the pre-election days when Obama was a presidential candidate from Democratic Party that holds liberal views in American politics. Organized in nine different chapters, *The Audacity of Hope*, addresses a number of "pressing policy challenges", such as partition politics, common values, constitution and US foreign policy (9). Besides, the book contends a discussion on social security plan, health care system, market economy, education, religion, race, marriage, divorce and child-rearing. Obama presents such factual issues of global significance in a fictional manner. He seems much cautious to select the words. The title of the book itself is sounds paradoxical in the surface since it assembles pleasant hope with brevity, ferocity, and shocking steps needed to secure this hope.

Philippe Lejune, a theorist on autobiography, defines autobiography as:

Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is in his own individual life, in particular the story of his personality [...] In order for there to be autobiography [...] the author, the narrator, and the protagonist must be identical. The perspective is mainly retrospective [...] The subject must be primarily individual life, the genesis of the personality; but the

chronicle and social or political history can also be part of the narrative. (4-5)

Lejune defines autobiography as a retrospective prose written by a person about himself where he delineates his own character and personality. *The Audacity of Hope* fulfills the prerequisites forwarded by Lejune. It is also a retrospective memoir written in the prose form. Besides, the author, Barack Obama, himself is narrator recounting his own life and ideas. Since narrator and protagonist are the same it is autodiegetic narration. Obama fictionalizes the socio-political history of the US intermingling into his own individual existence. While doing so he makes use of figurative language and indulges into imagination. Thus, this text can be taken as fictionalization of facts. However, as entitled above, this study focuses on political middle-ground location and its causes thereby making its prime concern.

Barack Obama takes the middle ground political position between liberalism and conservatism. He appears modest; therefore approvable to both conservatives and liberals. As the StudentNewsDaily.com states, Conservatism, generally, is associated with Republican Party, where as liberalism characterizes Democratic Party. Conservatives are traditionalists; the strict enforcement of law and orders, deregulated market economy, opposition to world-government and military intervention overseas along with preservation of religious and moral values are the tenets that conservatives celebrate. On the contrary, liberals are characterized as progressives; they lay emphasis on individual liberty, government regulation of market economy, social security plans, establishment and empowerment of international organizations. But, Obama, even being a Democrat, many times, supports conservatives and does not hesitate to critique rigid liberal agendas. He partly accepts and partly opposes both of the worldviews paving his way in between. He stands for autonomy of the market as

conservatives do, but necessitates proper guidance and regulation from the government to impart social justice and maintain communal harmony. He stands for non-interference and opposes Iraq war but seems unwilling to withdraw the troops instantly. He emphasizes on individual liberty, but approves enforcement of law and order when liberty turns into anarchy. He stands for church-state separation, but approves God and religious expression acknowledged in government buildings and schools. For him, America, at the present, is a society that does not discriminate on the basis of race; but, at the same time, he demands some reverse discrimination too. He takes individual liberty as inalienable part of human life but tries to bring it in equilibrium with community.

This research figures out two factors significantly contributing to Obama's middle-ground political vision. They are: Obama's mixed heritage, and his observance of communitarian political principles. Obama's own statements --"I am a prisoner of my own biography" and "class and race continue to shape our lives"-- make it logical to study his hybrid identity, family, upbringing and schooling as the factors to shape his political vision (10). The metaphorical term "prisoner" stands for the person whose character is essentially shaped by his personal experiences. Thus, Obama's mixed heritage, family environment, and the social conditions he encountered are explicated in the fourth chapter as natural elements to shape his political vision. Besides, second chapter of the textual analysis takes communitarianism as its methodological framework to analyze the text.

To be based on O. P. Gauba's *Political Theory and Thought* and *The Communitarian Constitution* by Beau Breslin, communitarianism is a third way of political thinking between liberalism and conservatism. Communitarians are closer to conservatives in terms of socio-cultural issues, such as, support for character

education and faith based programs, but they do not support Laissez-faire capitalism. Similarly, they are closer to liberals or social democrats on economic and environmental issues, but not on cultural ones. They are primarily concerned with creation of community but their notion of community is different from traditional notion in the sense that modern communities are formed out of largest units possible and governed by democratic mechanism. Members in such a community share the notion of common good emphasizing on commonality and pluralism as well as social integration. The communitarian third way politics tries to restore values and virtues as “functional perquisites of civil society” or the viable state. In order to protect good of all, they try to balance between rights and responsibilities, individuality and community, freedom and morality. They critique the liberal concept of “atomistic” and “disjointed” human beings arguing that individuals in the society are emotionally as well as intellectually linked. Therefore, fraternity is the major principle of politics and conflicts in the society are created, and artificial which can be resolved if the notion of common good gets reinvigorated. Hence, they assert that the governing structure should identify and promote common values so that citizens will act for the common good of the community rather than in their own self interest. Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandal and Charles Taylor are known as earlier theorists promoting Aristotelian view of politics, i.e., communitarianism. But in the recent times, Amitai Etzioni has accelerated the communitarian movement with his colleagues.

Barack Obama observes the aforementioned basic tenets of communitarianism between liberalism and conservatism, thereby turns out to be a middle-ground politician. Seeking to form the community as a larger human association with a sense of belongingness, Obama interrogatively questions: “What is our community, and

how might that community be reconciled with our freedom?” (438). Besides, Obama evidently writes, “We can ground our politics in the notion of common good” (9).

Like a communitarian, Obama lays stress on commonality, therefore he argues: “We had more in common than we publicly cared to admit” (17). Obama seems to critique the liberal political concept of “atomistic individual”. Thus, he says, “Our individualism has always been bound by a set of communal values” (55). By this, Obama seems to argue that nobody can use his freedom in opposition to community unless he has a rational cause. When Obama says that “beneath the surface... we are more not less alike”, he is highlighting the principle of fraternity in politics thereby proving arbitrariness of conflicts in the society (51). Therefore, he calls both parties to shelve away their animosities to govern the nation unanimously.

Barack Obama’s reflection on the controversial issues such as race, education, foreign policy, economy, religion and faith also resembles to communitarian agendas. Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies, an organization in US led by Amitai Etzioni to promote communitarianism, has forwarded its agendas that a communitarian generally demands to be executed from the state. It proposes security first foreign policy strengthening international organizations. Obama’s expressions – “There is no such thing as security for any nation” and “We should be spending more time and money trying to strengthen the capacity of international institutions” –prove Obama as a communitarian in terms of his foreign policy (293-320). Similarly, he demands equal opportunity and respect not only for blacks but also for all minorities and the poor whites. This is what a communitarian stands for in racial issues. In the similar manner, Obama confirms to communitarian policies when he, as stated by this institute, wants religious faith and social values to be used in the project of national renewal. Therefore, he writes, “If America’s religious institutions were to survive they

would have to make themselves relevant to changing time” (199). Obama, concerning with market economy, further writes: “We have always been a constant balancing act between self-interest and community, markets and democracy, the concentration of wealth and power and opening up opportunity” (193). This expression shows that market economy should be conducted to flourish democracy and vice versa; but both market and government should impart social justice by blocking the concentration of wealth and opportunities to certain group. This role of government and market can affirm the bond American people have with one another. In this way, Obama’s loyalty to communitarian agendas has moved him towards the middle-ground statesman.

Fourth chapter proves that Obama’s middle-ground politics is a natural outcome of the sort of affinity he possesses with blacks and whites, Africa and America, the lessons he learnt from his mother, stepfather, grandparents, in Chicago, and the experience of being raised on as a son of single parent leaving his relatives in distant Kenya. This chapter proves Obama’s hybrid political vision as a byproduct of his own hybrid identity, his grandparents’ adoption of Methodism and liberal mode of thought as well as the balance that his mother’s emphasis on human virtues happened to seek with his stepfather’s constant emphasis on power and diplomacy in his mind. Such a mixture of antithetical forces –black and white, African and American, human virtues and hunger for power, reason and emotion, provincialism and modernism, experience of struggling and rogue regimes and strong protective democracy--pulled Obama down from extremity and rigidity giving way to modest, middle-ground reflection on politics, economics, international relations, faith, family and race.

Barack Obama’s retrospective memoir blended with his policy analysis, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts Reclaiming American Dream (2006)* has got world-wide popularity since its publication. Because of the significance it bears for American

voters and the charm that people around the globe find in Obama's texts, this book, too, has widely read, reviewed, critiqued and interpreted from diverse perspectives focusing on various aspects the book contains.

To this context, Daren Briscoe critiques the text, arguing Obama as interrogator who stands in opposition of the then political reality. Briscoe writes:

Obama's own rethinking of where the country should go still contains more questions than answers. How to respect entrepreneurship without allowing corporations to run roughshod? How to balance jobs at home with the benefits of globalization? In a new preface of his memoir, he is better able to describe what he is against than what he's for: "The hardening of lines, the embrace of fundamentalism and tribe doom us all." Softening those lines won't be easy in today's fractious media culture, even with a unifying spiritual appeal. (74)

Briscoe reflects upon Obama's analysis about market economy, globalization, partition politics, religion and the role that media plays with its affiliation to political parties. Briscoe seems to argue that Obama asks more questions about the issues of national significance rather than providing solid solutions. Briscoe is just highlighting the Obama's anxiety to protect low wage native workers from being replaced by distant cheap labor, and Obama's concern to balance business economy with social justice. Besides, he understands Obama's notion of new sort of politics as mere questioning, therefore, seems to be misunderstanding the tenets that Obama presents to end stark ideological division. But, Briscoe rightly critiques Obama's attitude towards the biased media that hinders rather accelerating national consensus. However, Briscoe tries to prove Obama more as an interrogator who best suits in opposition.

Similarly, Michiko Kakutani reviews the book in terms of its style. Michiko writes:

The Volume does not possess the searching candor of the author's first book. But, Mr. Obama strives in these pages to ground his policy thinking in simple common sense—be it “growing the size of armed forces to mention reasonable rotation schedules” reining in spending and rethinking tax policy to low the nation's huge deficit—while articulating these ideas in level-headed non-partition prose. That, in itself, is something unusual, not only in the venomous pre-election days, but also in these increasingly polarized and polarizing times. (7)

For Michiko, the book is structurally weaker than Obama's first book, *Drams from My Father. The Audacity of Hope* does not contain an open and honest way of thinking. But, Michiko appreciates the book for explaining complex policy issues in easy way. Michiko might be hinting at the fictional form this non-fiction has taken. It is the capacity of Obama to link issues like international relations and market economy with individual life that he himself or his colleague or a worker in the factory is living. Moreover, Michiko appreciates Obama's equanimity maintained throughout the book. Michiko rightly recognizes Obama's thinking above rigid ideology in pre-election and increasingly polarizing days. In this manner, Michiko critiques the book from structuralist point of view.

David Lammy, On the other hand, searches for the roots of a political phenomenon in Barack Obama's *The Audacity of Hope*:

The book is an extended meditation on the three main themes of that speech. First he argues that the partition bitterness that has characterized American politics since the mid 1990s is unnecessary

and self-indulgent. Second, to earn their legitimacy, he believes politicians need to abandon the “culture war” rhetoric and focus on the modest, everyday aspirations and concerns of moderate majority. [...] Third, this will require he argues, not just a different set of issues but a different way of talking about them [...] His exemplar is Abraham Lincoln, another Illinois politician, whose appeal to common American values allowed him, with only two years congressional experiences to attain presidency, and provide leadership during American civil war. The lessons of Lincoln’s leadership for contemporary American politics are a recurring motif of the book as they have been Obama’s presidential campaign. He announced his candidacy from the steps of the old state capital in Springfield, the very spot where Lincoln had once declared that “a house divided against itself will not stand.” (2)

David Lammy presents Obama as a legacy of Lincoln. For him, Obama has followed Lincoln’s ideas throughout the text. Like Lincoln, Obama is also willing to end the partisan politics establishing “new kind of politics” which would have to focus on the common concern of majority of the Americans—decent jobs, competitive education, proper healthcare, security of future and common American values. As Lincoln who announced to end the divided senate, Lammy seems to argue that Obama also calls to shelve away ideological thinking, animosities and acrimony to govern the nation with national consensus. Obama’s success in politics, as Lammy argues, is the result of his acceptance and implementation of Lincoln’s ideas and strategies

Though the book has been reviewed and critiqued in aforementioned ways, no critique seems to fathom out the rationale behind the middle-ground political stance that Obama has taken while discussing a host of “pressing policy challenges.” This

research, therefore, attempts to justify Obama's middle-ground political position as a resonance of his own personal experience along with his consistent observance of communitarian political principles. Thus, this thesis presents two causes working behind Obama's middle-of-the-ground political position: personal and communitarian. Methodological tools, therefore, encompass communitarianism and analysis of Obama's own expressions and experiences which he himself has accepted as contributing factors to shape his political vision.

This project is divided into three major sections: introduction, textual analysis and conclusion. Each section is unique, but not self-sufficient in itself. The first chapter introduces overall dissertation in precise – it provides the structural as well as thematic outline of the project. Besides, it highlights the worth that the study contains. Second part is critical analysis of the text, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts Reclaiming American Dream (2006)*. This section contains three chapters discussing separate aspects of the project. Final and third section is concluding one that encapsulates the whole argument in precise.

Chapter II. The Issues of Controversy, Obama's Middle-ground Stance and Its Causes

Highlighting the way in which Obama has taken the middle-ground political stance on controversial issues makes easy to reflect on those issues in the following chapters. Therefore, this chapter demonstrates the controversial issues in American politics that Barack Obama has discussed; it demonstrates how Obama takes recourse to the middle ground position and communitarian as well as biographical causes working behind. The market economy, partition politics, common values, constitution, social security plan, health care system, market economy, education, energy crisis, religion, race, US foreign policy, marriage, divorce, child-bearing, and the notion of individual liberty are the issues Obama has discussed. But it is the concept of new politics that consumes larger part of the book.

Though Barack Obama is a Democrat, he does not follow liberal principles in most of the cases; he accepts conservative ideas, and most often seeks new political practice. According to StudentNewsDaily.com, a website prepared for school students, conservatives are traditionalists and anti-socialists; they support preservation of rule of law and Christian religion, defense of western civilization from the challenges of modernist culture, deregulation of market economy, resistance to world government and environmentalism, American military intervention overseas, opposition to abortion and homosexuality, Christian education in public schools, emphasis on rule of law over civil liberties, a return to original values of founding fathers, and an appeal to family values. But liberals are reformists; they emphasize on unalienable liberty of an individual, protection of environment, government provision of social services, welfare state and state regulation of economy, social security plans, international organizations as well as freedom of speech, religion and press. Obama

stands in between with his own worldview. Obama is annoyed by the policies that “constantly favor wealthy and powerful over average Americans” and insists that “government has an important role in opening opportunities for all” (10). Here, Obama expresses his disagreement with conservative ideals of ‘competitive capitalism’ and demands government regulation in all areas of economy to promote public interest. This standpoint constitutes Obama’s identity as a Democrat whose views “corresponds more closely with editorial pages of *New York Times*” (10). At the same time, Obama believes in free market, competition and entrepreneurship which are conservative ideals. Here Obama’s views correspond also with “Wall Street Journal” (10). Wall Street Journal symbolizes conservative ideals. Thus, Obama is somewhere in between in terms of political principles. But it is his communitarian view of politics that tries to balance free market with social justice and common good of the general public.

Obama’s stance is problematic when he explains cultural values and religious matters. According to StudentNewsDaily.com, conservatives try to formulate national policies respecting Christianity while liberals deny any religious expression in the government and in its policies. But Obama takes his way between religious fundamentalism and secular belief. He is “suspicious of government to impose anybody’s religious beliefs on nonbelievers” while at the same time is also worried about the breakdown in culture, values, and spiritual life (10). He writes, “Our values and cultural life matter at least as much as our GDP” (11). He suggests progressives to shed out their biases about faith and appeals all to take it seriously which is required in the “larger project of American renewal” (216). Obama opposes those who do not allow any reference to God and religious expression in public places. For Obama, both of them are extremists harming to community. Recognizing the importance of

religious faith, religious language and law as a “codification of morality”, Obama appears as a conservative rather than liberal. But, he cannot be categorized with in any of these two political principles--liberalism or conservatism rather he is closer to communitarians. It is the communitarians who recognize the importance of faith in nation building but deny religious tyranny. Besides, Obama seems to be influenced by his mother who used to teach him the fundamental human values that can be ingrained more easily by religious texts, and his working with Black Churches in Chicago.

Most of the issues of national and international significance, for Obama, are maltreated by partition politics and doctrinaire thinking. As Obama says, everything is caught into stark ideological division, such as, education policy, health care system, foreign policy, and religious matters. Though it is hard to find satisfactory solution on either side of the divide; politics, “instead of resolving those tensions and mediating the conflicts, fans them, exploits them, and drives American people apart” (23). The purpose of such partition politics, for Obama, is “not to persuade the other side but keep their bases agitated and assured of the rightness of their respective causes” (24). Acknowledging the falseness of such readymade choices being presented, Obama says, such type of politics keeps American people “locked in either/or thinking” (40). This argument implies that it is the parties and their overemphasis on concerned ideology directing US politics to never ending deadlock. Hence they need new kind of politics which will stress on national problems and wellbeing of the people. And, politics based on communitarian principles is the best option that Obama emphasizes throughout the text. When common good, common interest, communal harmony, fraternity and unbreakable bond between individuals become principles of politics, state of indecision fades away.

Barack Obama partly opposes and partly accepts standpoints on education presented by both liberals and conservatives. As per StudentNewsDaily.com, both of the parties agree that there are problems in the education system. But, they differ about the causes. For liberals, public school system is the best mechanism to educate; lack of funding and overcrowded classes are the causes behind weak performance. On the contrary, conservatives deem voucher system as the best; therefore they try to hand over the whole responsibility to Vouchers. But, Obama disagrees with conservatives who argue that “money doesn’t matter in raising educational achievement; that the problem in public school are caused by hapless bureaucracies and intransigent teachers unions ; and that the only solution is to break the government’s education monopoly by handing out vouchers” (161). He also disregards those liberals who have been “defending an indefensible status quo, insisting that more spending alone will improve educational outcomes” (161). Obama says, “Both assumptions are wrong” (161). He proposes middle ground solution, that is, “to identify those reforms that have highest impacts on student achievement, fund them adequately and eliminate those programs that don’t produce results” (161). It is the communitarianism working under the argument since communitarians focus only in wellbeing of community; therefore they demand welfare state.

Obama’s vision about trade and market, too, is middle-of-the -ground. Cautiously supporting free trade Obama writes: “Free trade may well grow the world-wide economic pie but there is no law that says workers in United States will continue to get a bigger and bigger slice” (174). He further writes, “The free market is the best mechanism ever devised to put the resources to their most efficient and productive use. The government isn’t particularly good at that. But market isn’t so good at making sure that the wealth that’s produced is distributed fairly or wisely” (190). For

Obama, free market is the product of both efforts from private sector and guidance of government. Hence, for Obama, neither the market in itself nor the government alone can successfully lead the market economy. For him, today's economy should be guided by Lincoln's simple maxim: "We will do collectively, through our government only those things that we can't do ... individually and privately" (159). This concept of mixed economy denies both competitive capitalism as well as complete state-regulated economy. In order to promote wellbeing of all at the heart, Obama proposes to balance between "self-interest and community, markets and democracy, the concentration of wealth and power and opening up opportunity" (293). And, this is the communitarian view in economy. Communitarians believe in free market, but "market getting-and-spending is not a whole of life"--market must cooperate with broader goals of the society (1).

Barack Obama's stance about race also remains in between liberal and conservative policies. As the StudentNewsDaily.com states, conservatives regard America as a nonracist society at the present and go for strict enforcement of law and order for all involved in crime. But those on the left argue that America is still racist in its core since Blacks are subjected to low wage jobs, poverty, and unskilled labor. For them, blacks are lagging behind because of the dehumanization in the past; therefore government must create some reverse discrimination. Unlike liberals, Obama thanks America for its nonracist attitude on the surface. As he says, America judges people on the basis of the content their character contains rather than on the basis of skin-color they possess. According to Obama, nobody in America is obliged to restrict his "loyalty on the basis of his race" and "measuring his worth" on the basis of his color (231). Through the example of Robert, a white assistant of Obama, he seems to argue that there are whites who empathize to the victims of racist attitude.

But, he does not seem to hide the scars of racism. Keeping in view the disparity reflected in living standard of whites and nonwhites, Obama supports affirmative government action – “through its prosecutors and through its courts” to make things right. For Obama, Blacks “filling up prisons”, “unable to read” and “sleeping in grates” are byproducts of racism in America (253). Such blacks are symbols used by Obama to present America as a discriminatory society. Blacks “filling up prisons” “unable to read” and “sleeping in grates” provide mental picture of the pathetic side of America. As Obama contends, conservative roadmap to strong police action can rarely be helpful; government should create some reverse discrimination to those people. For Obama, such slight Government action can create new circumstances, which, in long run, can create new culture of greater social harmony. It is biracial identity that makes him modest about race. Since he is born from black father and white mother, Obama cannot take harsh action against any of them. The humanitarian environment of his maternal family has inspired Obama to place humanity above mere racism. This aspect is explained in fourth chapter in detail with evidences. But when he speaks for all races in minority he also becomes a communitarian since they seek equal respect and opportunities for the people of all races.

Although Obama is a Democrat by his party affiliation he appears more as conservative in case of his vision on immigration. According to StudentsNewsDaily.com, both liberals and conservatives support legal immigration, but the former support amnesty even for illegal immigrants basing on the context while conservatives strongly deny it. As per Obama, illegal immigrants, as he envisions, have caused American workers to work in low wages; they are not only cause of loss in the job but also a threat to sovereignty. Supporting Native Americans, Obama says, it is not immigrants but the Native Americans “who are being forced to

adept” into somewhere else. He seems to oppose amnesty to illegal immigrants. He writes, “American citizenship is a privilege and not a right” (267). To get it, one must have “respect for the law” and support for the “meaningful borders” (267). But standing on the humanitarian ground, Obama recognizes the problems of those immigrants already settled in America with loyalty for it and respect for its laws. He tries to be modest when he diplomatically says: “America is big enough to all their dreams” (269).

Religious faith has been one of the central controversies in American politics. As per StudentNewsDaily.com, liberals stand for separation of church and state and allow no reference to God and religion in public places. On the contrary, conservatives argue that there is no mention of clear separation between church and state in the constitution; therefore, God can be acknowledged in schools and public buildings, symbols of Christian heritage should not be removed from public and government spaces. For conservatives, church-state separation does not include removal of religious icons and language from government offices and texts. Obama stands in proximity with both. Responding liberals, Obama says that ninety-five percent of American people believe in God, political movements in the past have also religious sentiments, historical leaders were not only “motivated by faith but repeatedly used religious language to argue their causes” (218). Hence, “secularists are wrong when they ask believers to leave their faith at the door before entering the public square” (218). To solve national challenges, Obama necessitates not only “changes in government policy” but change also “in hearts and mind” of the people for which faith can play greater role. But, as a liberal Obama strongly opposes any changes in the policies about sex, marriage and divorce just because of religion: Such

issues are to be decided according to the constitution. He discards tyranny of religious world over secular or vice versa.

Unlike Bush administration, Obama locates security prior to promotion of liberal democracy in foreign policy. Obama supports liberals when he advocates John Quincy Adams' notion that America should not go "abroad in search of monsters" or "become the dictatress of the world" (280). But contrary to liberals, Obama supports conservatives arguing that a foreign policy approach that denies the occasional need to deploy US troops will not work. He opposes isolationism. He discards tendency of leftists to view US foreign policy designers, domestic intuitions like CIA and international organizations like World Bank as manifestations of "American arrogance, jingoism, racism, capitalism and imperialism" (287-288). Similarly, he is equally critical of those on the right who laid the responsibility of loss in Vietnam War, decline of American standing in the world, denigration in patriotism, hold to "relativistic world-view," and discouragement in "American resolve to confront godless communism" on protestors, league of intellectuals and liberal media (287-288). For Obama, both of them were "caricatures prompted by activists and political consultants" (288). Obama appreciates those who remained in the middle remaining "still supportive of the American effort to defeat communism but skeptical of US policies that might involve large numbers of American casualties" (288).

Obama adopts the similar middle ground strategy about Iraq war. He stands in between liberals who oppose military action in Iraq and conservatives who support military invention overseas. He is neither willing to withdraw US troops from Iraq as liberals demand nor he supports this war. He writes, "I didn't oppose all wars ... what I could not support was a dumb war. But if we pulled out of Iraq tomorrow, the United States would still be a target" (304). Exposing his independent view, Obama

says: “The objectives favored by liberals have a point. But they hardly constitute a coherent national security policy” (304).

As per StudentNewsDaily.com, both liberals and conservatives emphasize on sound family values but the difference occurs when liberals call attention to individual liberty and conservatives stand more for culture and tradition. For social conservatives, “Hollywood movies and gay-pride parades” are the causes but “liberals point to economic factors from – stagnating wages to inadequate day care” (332). For Obama, both loss in social values and economic factors are responsible for the present state of family. Standing in between, Obama writes: “I consider decisions about sex, marriage, divorce and child-bearing to be highly personal – at the core of our system of individual liberty. When such personal decisions raise the prospect of significant harm to others, [...] society has a right and duty to step in” (335). Obama neither completely opposes regulation nor he celebrates individual liberty. Rather he proposes to balance between rights and responsibilities.

Barack Obama has taken the middle ground position as mentioned above. Obama’s middle ground stance is the byproduct of his mixed identity and unwavering faith on communitarian views in politics. Obama is neither liberal nor conservative, but a communitarian. Communitarianism is a third way political ideology drawn between liberalism and conservatism. Communitarians go to balance rights and responsibilities, freedom and morality, individuality and community. Since fraternity is major principle of communitarians, conflicts in society are not real rather they are created, therefore arbitrary. The notion of common good is a key to communitarianism; for communitarians, it denotes to “uniform good” that comprehends the interest of each member in the society. Alasdair MacIntyre, a communitarian philosopher, argues that if state allows “socially disconnected”

individuals to pursue their so-called “self-appointed goals the result would be “social disintegration and moral disaster” (17). Barack Obama notices similar disintegration in American society. Such disintegration for Michael Sandal and Charles Taylor, the communitarian thinkers, is the result of liberals’ celebration of “disjointed” nature and “atomistic” conception of human beings (17). For them human being, by nature, is “imbedded” and “situated” in particular society that has contributed to develop his personality. For above mentioned communitarians, individuals develop perfect virtues through cooperative human activity for which Obama appeals throughout the book.

Modern communitarians, also known as neo-communitarians have postulated a number of principles relating to different socio-political issues continuing the basic concepts of earlier communitarians.. Obama observes them in most of the issues. Amitai Etzioni, an exponent of modern communitarian view, criticizes liberal political theory for its negligence of social preconditions that enable individuals to maintain their psychological integrity, civility and ability to reason. As Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies, an institute to promote communitarian agendas in US, has forwarded communitarian vision of right implies duty. They make everyone a ward of community and responsible for community rather than their own keeper and responsible to their own actions. For them, community must be formed of largest units possible and should be governed by democratic political power. Crimes, as they argue, are outputs of porous social system, hence must be treated creatively. Bringing children to the world entails a moral responsibility not only to provide material necessities, but moral education and character reformation. They sought to strengthen family to restore child- centered focus to both marriage culture and public policy. They focus in “peer marriage”. In foreign policy, they prioritize basic security of all over promotion of liberal democracy. But they approve international communities’

humanitarian responsibility for intervention. For them, education should not be out of moral touch and parents are first educators to their children. Basic moral education can be given without violating church-state separation. Racial communitarians reflect a search and global movement for equal respect and opportunities for people of all races. On the pejorative side, they highlight racial exploitation, alienation and impropriety of balance between rights and duties of citizens. They emphasize on ethics, moral values and community in economics.

Barack Obama's policies taking middle-of-the-ground way must have some personal factors too. Since Obama himself has says, "I am a prisoner of my own biography" (10). Hence, heredity, environment and social conditions have shaped character and vision of Obama. In precise, it is his mixed heritage, unique family structure, and upbringing in diverse locales with different and almost conflicting socio-cultural values. Obama has a mixed heritage. Highlighting diversity of his extended family, once Obama has said: "It's like a little mini –United Nations" (4). Hybrid identity of Obama produced his hybrid political vision. His multi-racial identity brought transcendence in his vision about race. His close affiliation with US and the nations "beyond the border"--Indonesia and Kenya--and acquaintance with socio-political systems there begot "the third way" in his foreign policy (271). His experience of being brought up by single-parent, his profession as a community organizer, and his root in Kenya prepared him to call for traditional norms in marriage, family and child-bearing. Obama's years in Hawaii and her mother are the source of his emphasis on social values. As Obama recounts his grandfather was a 'freethinker' with an American character and grandmother "an independent and skeptical" by nature (16). Obama writes: "All this marked them as vaguely liberal" (17). In this way Obama's political vision is a product of his own personal experience

of growing up as a biracial child. This aspect of the research is explicated with evidence in chapter four.

Barack Obama demands new kind of politics based on shared understanding that can end divided politics fostering a sense of unity among liberals, conservatives and independents of good will. The new politics should be based on common good, commonality, and best of “American traditions”. By this, Obama seems to invite communitarian politics. America has progressed beyond the stipulation, Obama argues, but “what has been lost in the process, and has to yet to be replaced, are those shared assumptions-that quality of trust and fellow feeling” that bring them together as Americans (37). He is calling for the sort of politics in which “conservation and conservatism” don’t have to conflict. He wants cooperation between liberals and conservatives in new politics. Besides, this sort of politics, as Obama believes, can balance between idealism and realism.

Obama calls for new politics and appeals to avoid doctrinaire thinking and stark partition which have been the factors to turn Americans off of the politics. This new form of politics, as per Obama, would talk about what American people are going through and prioritize people’s problems over political principles that have little to do with country. Such a politics, Obama argues, can form a government that truly serves Americans and represents their general will. He insists that politics must reflect lives of American people as they actually lived. For this, as per Obama, Americans need to remind themselves “despite all their differences, just how much they share: common hopes, common dreams, a bond that will not break” (25). Here, Obama takes government as an instrument of good for all. Obama makes essential the “pragmatic non-ideological attitude of majority of Americans” to build government that can redeem the American people from the hard choice between “radical conservatism”

and “perverse liberalism” (24-34). To revive cooperative nature of human beings, Obama requests both parties to store away their “animosities and acrimony” (19). From communitarian angle, this is the call for social solidarity where the strength of any society lies.

Barack Obama notices commonality among American people which can be strong foundation for new politics. Obama writes: “In the faces of all men and women I’d met I had recognized pieces of myself. In them, I saw my grandfather’s openness, my grandmother’s matter-of- factness, my mother’s kindness” (51). Fathoming out cooperation and harmony in the society like a communitarian, Obama advances that “most rich people want the poor to succeed, and most of the poor are self-critical” (51). Obama says, “Most republican strongholds are 40% Democrat, and vice versa” (51). He finds every parent--whether conservative or liberal--complaining about “coarsening of the culture, promotion of easy materiality and instant gratification, the severing of sexuality from intimacy” (61). Arguing in such a way, Obama highlights created and arbitrary nature of conflicts in the society, and falsifies them.

Barack Obama endeavors to balance individuality with community, freedom with morality, and rights with responsibilities to form healthy society. Generally, modern communitarians lay emphasis on this balance. He argues that “individualism has always been bound by a set of communal values, the glue upon which every healthy society depends” (55). He says, in every society, twin strands-- “individualistic and the communal, autonomy and solidarity”--are in tension. What the society needs, then, is negotiation between these two opposing values that circumstances of America’s birth has taught its people.

Like a communitarian, Obama necessitates sense of belongingness, sympathy and empathy to tilt the balance of the politics in favor of people struggling in society.

Obama appeals to Americans to “stand in somebody else shoes and see through their eyes” to nourish social harmony (66). Republicans have to see the world through the eyes of Democrats and vice versa for the larger wellbeing, but Obama is worried about the country that has been suffering from “empathy deficit”. He writes: “I am obliged to try to see the world through George Bush’s eyes, no matter how I may disagree with him” (68).

Barack Obama’s stance on family makes him a communitarian politician. He tries to rebuild family and restore child-centered focus to both “marriage culture and public policy” (1). Obama says, “Being father meant more than fathering a child; it implies to be in home “physically and emotionally” (347). He stresses on moral responsibility of parents. But this requires to balance “Work and family in a way that’s equitable to Michael and good for our children” (336). Here Michael stands for all American mothers and our children are representative of all American children. Obama considers Michael’s “dreams and ambitions” as important as his own. To materialize her dreams Obama appears to support communitarian concept of peer marriage. Obama believes marriage and sex as personal issues but such decisions cannot be taken irrespective of the community. He writes: “Society has a right to constrain individual freedom when threatens to do harm to others” (56).

Barack Obama keeps social harmony at the centre while discussing race. Like a communitarian, Obama’s discussion reflects his search for equal respect and opportunities for all races. He is worried about not only about blacks but also about Latinos, Asians and whites as well. Obama highlights the kind of America most people want over racist America. He says: “To say that we are one people is not to suggest that race no longer matters” (332). Obama argues that on every “socio-economic indicator Black and Latino-Americans in particular continue to lag far

behind their white counterparts” (232). On the pejorative side of racial communitarianism, Obama highlights the stubborn gap between the living standards of Blacks, Latinos and White Americans. For him, Blacks involved in low-wage professions, crimes, early and abusive marriages are mostly the consequences of sinful racist history. Hence, he calls for government programs, but not those that dissect Americans into “us” and “you”.

Due to his proximity with communitarian agendas on education designed by Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies, Obama demands for “training of transformative principles” and reflection of “wisdom of heart” in schools (163). Transformative principles, to base on Obama’s explanation, can never exclude sense of empathy, sense of equilibrium between rights and responsibilities, traditional values, and religious tolerance. For Obama, “wisdom of heart” is easily rekindled by contextually appropriate religious values. He writes, “I believe in power of culture to determine both individual success and social cohesion” (63). Besides, he puts emphasis on full cooperation between parents and government. Taking parents as primary educator to their children, Obama writes: “Parents have primary responsibility for instilling an ethics of hard work and educational achievement in their children” (160).

Because of his communitarian view in politics, Obama prioritizes basic security over promotion of western system of democracy. Obama says; “There is no such thing as security for any nation- or individual” (283). Amitai Etzioni has encoded exactly the same principle in his book, *Security First*. This ‘security’ concerns not only with interest of US and its allies but also with inhabitants of the land that is under invasion. Their security depends more on delivery of basic elements of decent life as well as on their liberation from the grip of corrupt leaders and

arbitrary rule. Thus Obama writes, “Our challenge is to make sure that US policies move the international system in the direction of greater equity, justice, and prosperity – that the rules we promote both our interest and the interests of the struggling world” (316). Here he seems to support Etzioni’s concept that “global architecture” should be based both on western principle of right and liberty as well as eastern notion of community and authority. Obama opposes US attempt to promote democracy through “barrel of gun” and funneling “money to parties” but approves international community’s humanitarian responsibility of military intervention. Like a communitarian, Obama prioritizes domestic security over global security at the critical moment, and he is willing to strengthen the capacity of international institutions to resolve crises of poverty, corrupt rule and conflicts (320).

To conclude, Obama pursues a way in between liberalism and conservatism. His concept of new kind of politics resembles to communitarian view of politics and his reflections on aforementioned issues are closer to the agendas that Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies holds. Obama’s political vision is shaped by his own personal factors as well as his faith on communitarian politics. His vision is partly-liberal, partly-conservative, but completely communitarian.

Chapter III. Obama's Middle-ground Way: Communitarian Principle of the "third way" Politics

Barack Obama in his book, *The Audacity of Hope*, pursues communitarian worldview. Obama observes most of the premises of communitarianism rather than being loyal to liberalism or opposing conservatism. Since communitarianism is a third way of political thinking drawn between liberalism and conservatism in U.S. politics, Obama becomes middle ground politician in terms of his political vision. This researcher, in this chapter, states communitarian principles, demonstrates how Obama observes them, and proves Obama's middle-of-the-ground stance as an output of his observance of communitarian political principles.

As O.P. Gauba has stated in his book, *Political Theory and Thought*, Community is at the centre for communitarians. They are primarily concerned with creation and preservation of communal feelings thereby community itself. They posit humanity as an integral part of community; hence for them, such a community can work as a remedy for alienation, social disintegration and moral disaster. Since community oriented expectation rests on viable citizen to citizen communication, communitarians propose computer mediated conversation systems in the era of globalization where an individual born in Hawaii gets his schooling in Jakarta and finds true community in Nairobi where his root lies. Creating a sense of community among these diverse locales is also at the heart of Obama, but being a strong political representative, his concern is to restore the bond of community within the United States between oppressor and oppressed, blacks and whites. Therefore, he writes: "I had to ask myself whether the bonds of community can be restored without collectively exorcising the ghostly figure that haunted black dreams [...] Could Ruby love herself without hating blue eyes?" (195). Here, "ghostly figure" stands for White dominated America

that had subjected Blacks to dehumanization. Ruby symbolizes the black community while the phrase “blue eyes” is used as synecdoche to signify whole White society. Obama tries to reconcile two antithetical opposites –blacks and whites –within a community. Since community, in the eyes of communitarians, shares a sense of commonality, sympathy and empathy communities are like families in their micro architecture. It is quite difficult for Ruby, a symbolic representative of oppressed and dehumanized black individuals who have “arisen out of a very particular experience with hate” for whom past remained as an “open sore”, to fade away feelings of revenge and harbor feelings of “we and us” with blue eyes, the representative of “some cruel, some ignorant”, white people (195).

Besides this, Obama seeks to establish the feeling of communal harmony among the people from distant places. He writes:

I hear the voices of Japanese families interned behind barbed wire, young Russian Jews cutting patterns in lower east side sweat shops; dust bowl farmers loading up their trucks with the remains of shattered lives. I hear the voices of the people in Altgeld gardens, and the voices of those who stand outside this country’s borders, the weary, hungry hands crossing the Rio-Grande. I hear all of these voices clamoring for recognition, all of them asking the very same questions that have come to shape my life What is our community, and how might that community be reconciled with our freedom?”... How far do our obligations reach? ... How do we transform mere power into justice, mere sentiment into love ... I find myself modestly encouraged, believing that so long as the questions are still being asked, what binds

us together might somehow, ultimately prevail. That faith, so different from innocence, can sometimes be hard to sustain. (438)

In this extract, Obama seeks to form a global community. He highlights the need of distant and small communities –Japanese families, young Russians, Jews, people in Altgeld garden and people “beyond borders”--to be recognized in a larger and almost global framework. Such voices of various communities can be recognized in a wide all-encompassing social web framed on the basis of prevailing element--faith--that binds all of them together. Though Obama is dealing with the facts he uses the imagery of “weary, hungry hands” as metonymy to represent frustrated and the poor people. Such representative victims, as Obama seems to argue, are the byproducts of western system to overemphasize on individuality.

Obama, like a communitarian seems to build up and embolden the community of blacks and whites, people within the US and beyond America for common well being. Dan Sabia, a communitarian, states: “The communities can and does bring people together in virtual spaces; ...felicitate the sharing of ideas, engender a sense of belonging, and help dissipate feelings of alienation and anomic” (4). Besides, as per Sabia, such a community can promote critical reflection and encourage forms of personal and collective action. To meet this end and to make newly created community less authoritarian and more democratic both blacks and whites, US citizens and people beyond U.S, conservatives and liberals, the rich and the poor, traditionalists and reformists, all have to abandon their extremities and adopt what works. This underlying notion directs Obama towards the middle of the existing ways. That is why, he expresses: “Throughout my years in Springfield, I had clung to notion that politics could be different” (183). To make clear, “different” means that all the opposing groups and values can be submerged into national consensus. This national

unity, in communitarian term, is the communal harmony as modern communitarians differ from traditional notion of community. For them, a community must be formed out of largest units possible and governed by democratic regime. O P Gauba writes:

The idea of common good is keynote of communitarianism. Its notion of the common good is different from that of the liberalism. Liberalism holds that if individual is allowed to pursue his self interest, common interest would be served automatically as a consequence. On the contrary, communitarianism does not believe that isolated individuals could have different interest apart from the interest of the community itself. (17)

For communitarians, common good denotes to “uniform good” that comprehends the interest of each member in the society. They view politics as an instrument of pursuit of common good which can be materialized when commonality, “sharedness” and the unbreakable bonds are focused. For them, essence of human nature lies in the spirit of cooperation; therefore, mutual aid must be the foundation of political organization.

Barack Obama, too, focuses on commonality and shared values among American people in order to start the new kind of politics. That is why he says: “What binds us together is greater than what drives us apart” (2). For him, the collective conscience and a common set of values are the things that bind Americans together despite their differences which are still alive in the hearts and minds of most of the Americans. Such things inspire American people for pride, duty and sacrifice –the things needed for better future and social harmony. Since there is commonality among American people Obama appeals both parties to shelve away their created animosities in order to erase the gap between politics of need and politics of reality. This politics of dream is possible when politicians base themselves and their political principle on

fundamental values of tolerance, equality and standing for the disadvantaged. It is the communitarians who stand for those faith-based values. Besides, when one stands for those almost universal demands in the society, though depending on their own context, the rigid and unnaturally important doctrines fade away giving a way to something modest. This is what actually happens in Obama's case. What Obama seeks is natural unity that can be achieved neither by opposing Reagan's standing for those who worked hard, obeyed the law and cared for their families nor accepting his domestic policies heavily favoring economic elites. In order to foster communal unity in the U.S. Obama creates an image of a "white southerner who growing up heard his dad talk about niggers this and niggers that but who has stuck up a friendship with the black guys at the office and is trying to teach his own son different who thinks discrimination is wrong, but doesn't see why the son of a black should get admitted into law school ahead of his own son" or "the middle aged mother who still mourns her abortion, and Christian woman who paid for teenager's abortion" (42). What Obama emphasizes here is the sense of urgency over adopted doctrines, sense of harmonious present with awareness to bitter past, and, in crux, the sense of "we" over "I" and "he". He criticizes liberal conception of "disjointed" nature of human beings and tries to build whole community as a larger family. This is where national consensus takes its shelter melting down the stark division between left and right, conservatives and liberals. In fact, it is the third way –the middle-of-the-ground way – produced automatically while seeking to build up and embolden the harmonious community.

Obama demands a new kind of politics based on the notion of a common good: "One that can excavate and build upon those shared understandings that can pull us together as Americans" (9). He further writes, "We can ground our politics in

the notion of a common good (9). He says, “An absolute belief in the authority of majority might slow our inexorable march toward the New Jerusalem”. Since politics is talking less about what Americans are going through and has become business more than a mission Obama stands for a new kind of politics which can reflect American lives as they actually lived. Such a politics, as per Obama, can easily form a government that truly serves and represents American people. Since the system of liberal democracy is transforming the concept of majority into an “irrefutable mandate”, Obama, unerringly like a communitarian, feels uncomfortable with it. Thus he says, “What is needed is a broad majority of Americans –Democrats, Republicans and independents of good will –who are engaged in the project of national renewal, and who see their own self interest as inextricably linked to the interests of others” (40). Here, Obama keeps in view the whole American society and emphasizes on their common interest. Such a majority which can only be formed if politicians are prepared to make tough choices and sacrifices being open to new ideas as well as programs. This shift in attitude can change hearts and minds to initiate a serious energy policy, build up popular support to craft new foreign policy that can meet the challenges of globalization or terrorism without resorting to isolationism or eroding civil liberties. Such a politics can lift large number of American citizens out of poverty. In such politics winning matters less and delivering service matters more. Therefore, Obama is overemphasizing common good, common interest, majority of all, and third way between isolationism and intervention .To form majority of all means to seek national consensus on issues. He is obliged to pursue middle ground solution leaving out something his own and approving something of the others, ultimately, promoting all that community needs.

According to Amitai Etzioni, communitarianism is the third way drawn between liberalism and conservatism in U.S. politics. It is characterized as a radical “centrist ideology” often marked with leftism on economic issues and conservatism in socio-cultural issues. Barack Obama seeks similar way out of the then political deadlock. Like a conservative, Obama emphasizes on social values, religious faith and both of them guiding American society towards optimum wellbeing. Therefore, Obama writes, “Like many conservatives, I believe in the power of culture to determine both individual success and social cohesion, and I believe we ignore cultural factors at our peril” (63). But as a liberal, Obama supports Keynesian economics, New Deal of Roosevelt and social security plans. He stands for church state separation and health care system not only supported but also sponsored by the state. For him, blacks lagging behind in almost all the social indicators and involved in crimes, abortion and early marriages are effects of wide disparities in the past; hence, government need to intervene into it and create some reverse discrimination. That is why he writes: “We should support targeted programs to eliminate existing health disparities between minorities and whites” (74). As per Obama, neither liberalism nor conservatism but the “shared values, standards and principles that majority of Americans deem important in their lives, and in the life of the country should be the heart of our politics, the cornerstone of any meaningful debate about budgets and projects, regulations and policies” (53). This makes Obama modest in his policies.

Communitarians critique the liberal conception of human beings as “atomistic” and socially disconnected individuals. Alasdair MacIntyre argues that individuals develop and perfect virtue through cooperative human activity. MacIntyre argues: “If the state allows socially disconnected individuals to pursue their so called self-appointed goals the result would be social disintegration and moral disaster”.

Hence, their stress lies on the need to balance freedom with morality, autonomy with community and rights with responsibility. Amitai Etzioni proposes: “Respect and uphold society’s moral order as you would have society to respect and uphold your autonomy” (11).

Barack Obama not only critiques the atomistic conception of individuals rather he attributes current problems in American society to the valorization of individualism. The partition politics is the result of extreme celebration of this freedom. He writes: “The country was divided and so Washington was divided more divided politically than at any times since before World-War II” (16). There is widespread disagreement on the scope of disagreement, the nature of disagreement and the reasons of disagreement. This disagreement is the result of overemphasis that western society lays on individual freedom which allowed American people not only to follow but also to be rigid about the doctrines irrespective of society and social needs. Because of this doctrinaire thinking there are rampant problems of war, race, poverty and the relations between sexes. Once to focus on these problems and to implement their solutions, Obama like a communitarian, appeals to focus on social values--sympathy, empathy, and common good. Obama says, “The value of individual freedom is so deeply ingrained in us that we tend to take it for granted” (53). The partial and incomplete understanding about right of individual liberty has created problem. Therefore, Obama appeals to maintain balance between freedom and morality, autonomy and community reminding that “individualism has always been bound by a set of communal values, the glue upon which every healthy society depends” (55). In the most elemental level of individual freedom, values of self-reliance, self-improvement, risk-taking, drive, discipline temperance, and hard work are deeply rooted. Moreover, these values are rooted in the basic optimism about life and a faith in free will –“A confidence that through pluck and

sweat and smarts, each of us can rise above the circumstances of our birth” (54). Here, “pluck and sweat and smart” signify essential qualities—courage, hard work and talent—for progress.

Obama, like a traditional communitarian, approves that the “society has a right to constrain individual freedom when it threatens to do harm to others” (56). Obama as a communitarian seeks a balance between individuality and communality. He clearly writes, “In every society (and in every individual) these two strands--the individualistic and communal ,autonomy and solidarity--are in tension and it has been one of the blessings of America that the circumstances of our nation’s birth allowed us to negotiate these tensions better than most” (56). In this way, Obama establishes a close relationship between individual and community. He is ready to permit any liberty that doesn’t harm the society. This means to say that every individual has to take care of his community. According to communitarianism, as Etzioni has dictated, healthy community is formed out of constructive coherent values which an individual internalizes to develop his potentiality. After developing himself, he cannot remain indifferent to his society--he must forsake something for his society, and this sacrifice is the best chance to contribute or pay back to his community. Community can be strengthened when traditional values, law and order are respected. Over emphasis on individuality may undermine those faith-based values. Such belief makes Obama to take middle-ground location while seeking a way in between community and individuality.

Communitarians view politics as the arena of mutual co-operation, not of conflict. OP Gauba writes, “According to communitarian view, the essence of human nature lies in the spirit of cooperation, not conflict” (16). Therefore, communitarians take mutual aid as the foundation of political organization. Barack Obama demands for

the similar kind of politics in which liberals and conservatives, Republicans and Democrats, traditionalists and reformists, cooperate with each other to meet an agreement about the issues of national significance. That is why, Obama opines: “Our democracy might work a bit better if we recognize that all of us possess values that are worthy of respect” (57). The strong sense of empathy that communitarians postulate as an essential element of a community is needed to tilt the balance of current politics in favor of those people who are struggling in the society. As per Obama, it can work “if liberals at least acknowledge that the recreational hunter feels the same way about his gun as they feel about their liberty books” (57). To materialize that dream of empathy in the politics, Obama exposes: “I am obliged to try to see the world through George Bush’s eyes, no matter how much I may disagree with him” (68). For Obama, as a country they seem to be suffering from an empathy deficit. When there is majority of Republicans in the Senate, Democrats get feared and when the case is vice-versa they work being irrespective of the will that the opposition holds. Nothing, but this trend in the country has worsened the reality. To get out of such bitter reality, Obama, like a communitarian, appeals to stand in “somebody else’s shoes and see through their eyes” (66). And, that moves Obama towards the middle of the ground.

Like a communitarian Obama sees fraternity as the guiding principle in the human society. Social solidarity is already there which has disappeared because of stark ideological bickering and moral collapse. Since all Americans are mutually connected units, such solidarity can be regained if the system of participatory democracy is revived. This tenet of participatory democracy is communitarian principle in which decisions are made by democratic consensus, discussion and deliberation rather than majority rule. This communitarian premise is implicated in Obama’s vision of politics when he says: “The absolute belief in authority of majority might slow our inexorable

march toward New Jerusalem” (38). New Jerusalem symbolizes the state of perfection and divinity. It is because absolute authority in majority may turn one man’s freedom into another man’s tyranny. In order to reinvigorate a sense of fraternity in politics, Obama proposes the quality of trust and fellow feeling which has been lost in the process of evolution of liberal democracy. Besides, for Obama, social institutions--family, public schools, churches and clubs--can play greater role for the revival of social values. Here, Obama seems to share the arguments of Beau Berslin, a communitarian, who says: “Within the communitarian political universe, all organizations, cultural habits and individuals understand and share a single conception of good life” (9). When Obama focuses on trust, fellow-feeling, common good, common interest, and emotionally as well as intellectually linked human nature, the middle ground stance is automatically pursued.

Communitarians regard community as a base for the primary moral and political value. Barack Obama seems to support Beau Berslin who in his Communitarian Constitution says: “Cultural factors can provide moral foundations for distinctive political practices and institutions or at least different from those found in western style liberal democracies” (5). In political practice it means that government has an obligation to provide the social and economic conditions that felicitate the realization of duty to the state. Such moral and political values are formed in the society from where an individual internalizes them. As per Obama, religious and faith based institutions can best promote such values, but they have to make themselves relevant to changing times. Highlighting the importance of religious organizations, Obama says: “Religious sentiment and religious activism have sparked some of our most powerful political movements” (199). For him, faith helps to develop ethics of hard work, honesty, integrity, and delayed gratification. Such values can be gained even being a

secular but in a religious society like America where 95% people are religious, secularism leads to alienation. As per Obama, faith helps to make a way out of no way and maintain hope and dignity. But keeping communal harmony at the heart, Obama says: “In a pluralistic society ... I can’t impose my religious views on another” (212). This is the sense of tolerance that a communitarian stands for. For him, faith can “fortify young woman’s sense of self, a young man’s sense of responsibility and the sense of reverence all young people should have for the act of sexual intimacy” (215). That is why, like a communitarian, Obama argues that solving the problem in U.S society will require change in hearts and minds. Hence, Obama overemphasizes faith to develop social values, but in no way, Obama accepts faith that ruins social harmony. He accepts faith just to build up social virtues of patriotism, personal responsibility, optimism, honesty, empathy, discipline, delayed gratification and hard work. Such values help to scorn poverty and injustice. To seek communal harmony resolving artificial conflicts in the society, Obama pursues middle of the ground way. It is the necessity to reinvigorate those virtues in society that makes Obama to seek reform in schools and family. Here, Obama implies Sandal’s view that persons without loyalties to their family, their community, nation or people are persons without character.

The Responsive Communitarian Movement works to strengthen the ability of all aspects of community including families and schools in order to introduce more positive values. The Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies has stated:

We strongly urge that all educational institutions, from kindergartens to universities recognize and take seriously the grave responsibility to provide moral education ... We ought to teach those values Americans share, for example, that the dignity of all persons ought to be respected that tolerance is a virtue and discrimination abhorrent ,that peaceful

resolutions of conflicts is superior to violence, that generally truth telling is superior to lying ,that democratic government is morally superior to totalitarianism and authoritarianism, that one ought to give a day's work for a day's pay ,that saving for ones country's future is better than squandering one's income and relying on others to attend to one's future needs. (1)

Obama also envisions schools as the basis for better future of America. For this purpose, Obama necessitates more investment in education which helps America to be free of current political stalemate. Along with higher investments and need for good teachers, Obama necessitates recruitment and training of transformative principles and the wisdom of heart as the major reforms to be done in American schools. Here, transformative principles denote those values and virtues that can develop feeling of community, responsibility empathy and hard work. Obama is emphasizing these values throughout this text. When such transformative values will be established, Obama believes, Americans do not have to choose between an “oppressive government run economy and a chaotic unforgiving capitalism” (158). At that time the dispute of economic structure between liberals and conservatives will be disappeared and economy will run in the tradition of Lincoln, that is, public-private partnership. Thus, Obama opines: “How American economy performs in the years to come may depend largely on how well we take such wisdom to heart” (163). He places feeling of family or community above individualistic sentiment which is determined when Obama cites a teacher opposing his colleague responding –“they are not these kinds; they are our kids.” (163). From here, the clarity appears that by “good teachers”, Obama not only denotes to those teachers who have done better in their academic life but they must have instilled the values and virtues which the America,

as a nation, is desiring to instill in its children. The moral education, the sense of service to community, social and political life skills and sense of rights and responsibilities inherent within citizenship that communitarians demand in educational system are the elements Obama necessitates in the “good teacher”. Only then, wisdom of heart will become visible.

Obama’s vision of middle ground strategy in education takes place when he emphasizes in outcome not in process. Achievement will be greater when there is greater individual effort recognized and assisted by community, that is, by state. No single sector can do well. For him, it is the parents who can instill social values and virtues of faith in children successfully and it is the state which has to sponsor successful management by abundantly financing them. Therefore, Obama writes: “Parents have the primary responsibility for instilling an ethics of hard work and educational achievement in their children but parents rightly expect their government through the public schools, to serve as full partners in the educational process just as it has for earlier generations” (160). Here, as a communitarian, Obama emphasizes on family as a primary moral educator and best source from where children get character education. That is why, Obama writes: “The more I learned about system the more convinced I became that school reform was the only possible solution for the plight of young men I saw on the street, that without stable families ,with no prospect for blue color work that could support a family of their own” (156). He seems to argue that it is the lack of proper education that relegated the more blacks to thieving, abortion, child marriage and divorce. This is the communitarian philosophy which demands creative dealing with the serious case of social crimes, leading Obama towards the middle ground.

Similarly when Obama contends his discussion about marriage and family he speaks from the standpoint of the Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies. The Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies writes:

Communitarians have been in the fore front of efforts to strengthen and rebuild the family and to restore child-centered focus to both our marriage culture and public policy. At the same time communitarians have sought to strengthen marriage in a way that preserves the rights of both women and men favoring “peer marriage” in which partners cooperate as equals. Rather than coerce a new marriage contract, communitarians have tended to favor changes in economic and other incentives under the law that will encourage the kind of strong families that society needs. (1)

Obama’s discussion, too, centers on how to strengthen and rebuild family in the developed societies like U.S. Child marriage, divorce, abortion, and economic insecurity are major challenges to traditional healthy family structure. Since liberals stand for individual liberty they talk less about this erosion but conservatives blame growing flow of feminism and liberal emphasis on individual liberty. Obama proposes communitarian solution suitable to both stripes of thinking. He gives greater stress to family because married couples live healthier, wealthier and happy life as well as majority of Americans still considers marriage to be the best foundation for personal intimacy, economic stability and child rearing. Obama encourages young people to show more reverence toward “sex and intimacy” and he applauds “parents, configurations, and the community programs that transmit that message” (335). Besides, it is Obama’s communitarian belief that prepared him to appeal the “couples to understand the value of commitment and the sacrifices marriage entails” (336). By

arguing in such a line, Obama endeavors to transform marriage culture but he also wants the policies and legal systems to support this culture. Therefore, he writes: “Policies that strengthen marriage for those who choose it and that discourage unintended births outside of marriage are sensible goals to pursue” (334). His middle ground stance becomes clear when he appears unwilling “to consign a teenage girl to a life time struggle because of lack of access to birth control” and to use “force of law to keep couples together regardless of their personal circumstances” (335). Rather Obama implicitly tries to argue that breakdown in family is the result of imbalance between individual liberty and communal values; therefore, new culture of social mores should be created with new circumstances. He seems to be influenced by communitarian principle: “Divorce laws should be modified not to prevent divorce, but to signal society’s concern” (1).

Obama’s concern to balance work and family in a way that is equitable to the mother and good for children takes its link with communitarians. Unlike social conservatives, who blame feminist movement for inspiring women to enroll into work places, Obama argues that the decision to work is not simply a “matter of changing attitudes, it is a matter of making ends meet” (337). Obama, here, seems to address the parents affected by consumerism who, being preoccupied with personal advancement, are unable to discharge their most elementary duty to their children. As per Obama, it is the issue directly linked with those mothers who want to stay at home for their kids simultaneously excelling in their profession. Here as communitarians do, Obama is seeking the policies that allow mothers to pursue their goals in life without delegating mother’s duty to professional child care centers or baby sitter which rarely can provide moral education to the children. For this purpose communitarian concept of “peer marriage” is the best which Obama promises

signaling Michelle “that her dreams and ambitions were as important as mine” (340). Obama has vibrated communitarian slogan about parenthood when he says: “Becoming a father meant more than fathering a child ... that even those of us who were physically present in the home are often emotionally absent” (347). The Institute of Communitarian Policy Studies states: “We must insist once again that bringing children into the world entails a moral responsibility to provide not only material necessities, but also moral education and character reformation” (1). Obama, throughout his analysis of family, is focusing in this simple premise. Obama keeps on view Etzioni’s measures that mothers and fathers should donate more time and energy to parenting, labor unions and employers ought to make it easier for parents to work at home, and the government should force corporations to provide six months of paid leave and another year of unpaid leave.

Communal harmony and vision of beautiful American society without any discrimination is at the centre in Barak Obama’s discussion about race. He writes, “To think clearly about race requires us to see the world on split screen –to maintain in our sights the kind of America that we want while looking squarely at America as it is, to acknowledge the sins of our past and the challenges of the present without becoming trapped in cynicism of despair” (233). Although Obama has his bitter past in which white people had dehumanized him, he is emphasizing the America of his dream over that bitter experience. While expressing this consciousness, he might be guided by Sandel’s communitarian view that persons without loyalties to their family, their community, and nation are persons without character. Therefore, Obama appreciates present America for its non-discriminatory attitude and demands for some reform in legal system through direct government action.

Like a communitarian, Obama, too, accuses social system formed out of racist and discriminatory slave culture for the existing crimes and inner-city children trapped in self-destructive behaviors. Unlike liberal and conservative options, Obama directs his provision towards communitarians when he says that culture matters but that culture is by constituted by circumstances and if the circumstance in inner city will be changed, and in long run, their plight might also be changed. Guided by communitarian principles, Obama necessities wisdom and empathy and self-critiquing from both of the tribes--blacks and whites--to understand present society and reform it accordingly. He suggests black society to deter self-doubt being encouraged by the Robert-like whites who are worried about remaining traces of racism.

According to Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies, racial communitarianism reflects a search for global movement for equal respect and opportunities for people of all races in the pursuance of their duties as human beings and citizens of global civilized society. It is this fundamental principle that directs Obama to recognize problems not only of blacks but also of the Latinos, Asians and white workers. But on the pejorative side of racial communitarianism, Obama recounts his own experience of being chased by security guards and pulled over by police cars for no apparent reason; he also highlights the “concept of black underclass –separates, apart, alien, in its behaviors and in its values” (233). This statement by Obama produces an imagery of black people in White preferring America. It is nothing else, but obama’s dream for healthy community which also is primary search of the communitarians. This search for healthy society presents Obama as modest about controversy of race.

Dictating communitarian principles in foreign policy Etzioni writes:

The next leaders of our nation – the next president, congress, and opposition – will have to come to terms with the demise of democratization as a rationale for US foreign policy. Now is the time to determine which leitmotif can legitimate US role in the world ... I suggest the security first foreign policy drawing on the principle of the primacy of life is both principled and pragmatic. At its core is the recognition that all people have an interest in and right to security, understood to include freedom from deadly violence, maiming and torture. (1)

Barack Obama implies the above mentioned strategy in his analysis of foreign policy. That is why he supports FDR's statement – "There is no such thing as security for any nation – or any individual – in a world ruled by principles of gangsterism" (287-288). He adds, "We cannot measure our security in terms of miles on any map any more" (288). These lines demonstrate security first foreign policy as Obama's foreign policy and he prefers America being vigilant to transnational threats even to those from remote regimes. Since all humans are concerned with security from poverty, violence, maiming and torture caused even by internal ups and downs in politics; US intervention in such case can become leitmotif to legitimize the way America has taken. This is what Obama has done in Libya. But Obama is diplomatic enough when he writes: "We will have to align our policies to help reduce the spheres of insecurity, poverty, and violence around the world, and give more people a chance in the global order that served us as well" (315). Still Obama is concentrating on security but locating security of developing nations somewhere else towards their daily hardships, such as, poverty, remoteness and deficiency of goods and services. Obama writes:

The growing threat, then, comes primarily from those parts of the world on the margins of global economy where the international “rules of the road” have not taken hold – the realm of weak or falling states, arbitrary rule, corruption, and chronic violence; lands in which an overwhelming majority of the population is poor, uneducated and out from the global information grid; places where the rulers fear globalization will loosen their hold on power, undermine traditional cultures, or displace indigenous institutions. (305)

To eliminate these transnational threats Obama, as a communitarian, takes the security first approach. But for him, security of those ignorant and exploited people in such regimes depends on what they are looking for –not just “electoracy”, but basic elements of decent life, such as, food, shelter, electricity, basic health care, redemption from corruption and arbitrary rule. Hence, to win the hearts and minds of these people, American policy makers have to make sure that the international rules America is promoting enhance rather than impede people’s sense of material and personal security. Now, Obama becomes a global communitarian who is concerned not only with American community but also desires to win the feelings of humans in distant communities that are under invasion. Besides, he tries to make US government responsible to the people living in “margins of global economy”. Etzioni’s concept of security first foreign policy can be noticed here. Etzioni says: “Security first foreign policy is centered on precisely ... that democratization first requires security ... When I refer to “security”, I mean basic security, the conditions under which most people, most of the time, are able to go about their lives, venture on street, work, study and participate on public life” (2). Obama recognizes that it is the internal factors like poverty, illiteracy, exploitation and corruption sponsored by hypocrite leaders of

underdeveloped regimes that hinders basic security of the people there.

Democratization is essential but any endeavor to democratize those regions without empathizing and providing the people the basic security would produce reverse output and repeat Vietnam War again. To warn in such a way is an attempt to form global community, to bring about global harmony and to pay back to the communities –in Indonesia, Kenya and in other locales--that he really owes.

Coining out the strategy to democratize the world, Barack Obama writes:

we can inspire and invite other people to assert their freedoms, we can use international forums and agreements to set standards for others to follow; we can, providing funding to fledgling democracies, to help institutionalize fair election system ... we can speak on behalf of local leaders whose rights are violated ... apply economic and diplomatic pressures to those who repeatedly violate the rights of their own people ... But when we seek to impose democracy with the barrel of gun, we are setting ourselves up for failure. (316-17)

This is the communitarian argument that takes into account the communitarian thinking of Etzioni. Etzioni says: “The United States and its allies should promise to forego coercive regime changes, and largely let internal forces lead domestic political progress” (2). Obama also stands for noninterference respecting sovereignty of the people, not of the regimes. Besides, he hints towards formation of global institutions to govern, that is, the global government which communitarians pressurize for. This thinking becomes clearer when Obama writes: “We should be spending more time and money trying to strengthen the capacity of international institutions so that they can do some of this work for us” (320). Here, Obama rejecting isolationism and aggressive militarism supports global mechanism to maintain peace for his

community that lies within the border, and to develop the communities that he has left “beyond the borders”. Obama also considers international community’s humanitarian responsibility for intervention when he writes: “If we pulled out of Iraq tomorrow, the United States would still be a target” (304). In a nutshell, it is Obama’s communitarian thinking that leads him towards middle ground stance.

According to The Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies, Communitarians associate the operation of market economy with the notion of welfare state. They demand cooperation between market and government, and approve only that sort of economic freedom that meets the goals of community. They approve free-market over command-and- control-approach, but market getting and spending is not a whole of life for them. As they argue market economy should be developed in a way to protect social values, such as, child rearing and moral formation; and economic greed should not be allowed to shape the culture. “The key to communitarian approach to economics is the quest for balance free market and social good, between the market place and government, between economic freedom and society’s broader goals” (1).

Obama’s discussion about market economy resembles to above mentioned prerequisites of the Communitarian Network. While dealing with market economy and globalization, Obama keeps common good and communal harmony at the centre. Obama’s support for free market in the line of Lincoln makes him a communitarian. For him, market economy should impart the social justice, implicate the notion of equity and promote entrepreneurial innovation. Thus, he writes: “The free market is the best mechanism ever devised to put resources to their most efficient and protective use...But the market isn’t good at making sure that the wealth that’s produced is being distributed fairly and wisely” (190). To ensure the justice to the majority of workers in US economy, Obama proposes the concept of welfare state, which in the past too,

enjoyed broader consensus. It is the notion of welfare economy that we can notice easily in this argument –“We should be asking ourselves what mix of policies will lead to an economic security, entrepreneurial innovation and upward mobility” (159). To execute those concepts government has to structure the social compact between business and workers in economy. He opposes capitalist economy since it leads to “chaotic and unforgiving capitalism” and negates socialist economy as it may create “oppressive, government-run economy” (158). Therefore, he favors that sort of economy in which “government policies can boost workers wages without hurting the competitiveness of US firms” (182). The principal rationale behind the generation of such economy is to maintain the notion of communitarianism in politics, in society and in market too. That is why Obama says, “As the pace of change accelerates with some rising and many falling, that sense of common kinship becomes harder to sustain” (193).

To sum up, Barack Obama’s Observance of communitarian principles has produced the middle ground political position. Obama focuses on common good, common interest, commonality, fraternity, and welfare of all. He critiques liberals’ overemphasis on ‘atomistic’ and disjointed nature of human beings and proves an unbreakable bond among American people; he proposes to balance between rights and responsibility of an individual on the behalf of community. Moreover, Obama follows communitarian tenets on market economy, race, education, socio-religious values, foreign affairs, marriage and family. Since, Obama is closer to communitarianism he is neither liberal nor conservative but a communitarian.

Chapter IV. Obama's Middle ground Stance: A Resonance of His Mixed Heritage

The middle of the ground stance that Barack Obama has taken in *The Audacity of Hope* (2006) is the resonance of his own biracial identity, varied experience in various locales with diverse and almost conflicting socio-cultural values, and politico-economic structures there. Obama's own expressions--"I am a prisoner of my own biography" and "Race and class continue to shape our lives"--make it logical to study his heredity, biracial identity, social conditions and environment in US, Kenya and Indonesia where he has his family, got his education and worked as a community organizer (10). Thus, Obama's personal history also has shaped his political vision. Obama's middle ground stance on the issues stated in the first chapter –politics, market economy, cultural values, religious matters, international relations, race, marriage and family – is, to some extent, an output of his own heredity, environment and social conditions. In this respect, Obama says:

I saw that my life in America—that the black life, the white life, the sense of abandonment I'd felt as a boy, the frustration and hope I'd witnessed in Chicago—all of it was connected with this small plot of earth, an ocean away, connected by more than the accident of a name or the color of my skin. The pain I felt was my mother's pain. My questions were my brothers' questions, their struggle my brightness.

(438)

This evocative extract best explains Obama's identity. Obama is an American citizen linked with Africa by his sentiments; he is born from white mother and black father in a racist society of 60s and 70s. This mixed identity has created a sense of frustration in Obama in his youth. He is incomplete without these antithetical forces –America

and Africa, oppressed blacks and oppressor whites. Thus, he has to associate both of the forces to have complete existence.

Obama's vision of politics above ideological and doctrinaire thinking directed towards fundamental social values and optimum service to common people — common people even of the distant regimes--has much to do with the locales where his root lies and he spent his past years. He was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, raised in Jakarta and Hawaii, and has his roots in Kenya. Each of these locales is strong representative of different socio-political systems, living standards, as well as cultural and religious beliefs practiced around the globe. America is an epitome of strong, protective democracy; Indonesia symbolizes upheavals of those developing nations in which peoples' lot is not only an output of domestic politics and policies but also of the sort of relationship its leadership generates with power holding nations; Kenya generally symbolizes forbidden regimes where so-called revolutions never meet their end, legal systems constantly go on changing, but rarely in the favor of common people. History of Indonesia and Kenya demonstrate how outsiders holding power-- both in economic and political terms--rule over insiders. As Obama himself has accepted, such socio-political systems give shape to the intellectual and socio-political personalities of the people that come into contact. Obama, not only observed like other U.S. presidents, but also went through highly transparent democracy in US and these struggling regimes in Indonesia and Kenya. He has internalized their ideologies and empathized to their fate. Later he began to comment and critique these systems "beyond the border" and system within the border. Since Obama has spent his four years in Indonesian city of Jakarta and had his schooling there in local school, and has his identity affiliated with Kenya, Obama can never be out of feeling of belongingness to these regimes. And evidently, he is a US citizen working as its executive head.

Hence, though Obama is an American by law he is more Kenyan African by sentiments and partly Indonesian too. Living in US, Obama naturally wants to serve his relatives in Kenya and Indonesia. This contributes to form his middle ground location in political system and foreign policy.

As per Obama, social conditions in Hawaii are responsible for his worldview. Hawaii is the newest of the 50 U.S. states; it has north-American, Asian influences and its own vibrant native culture. White Americans, American Indians, African Americans, Indigenous Hawaiians and multiracial Americans are settled there with their unique life-styles, religions and cultures. Similarly, Hawaii presents religious tolerance among 20.9% of Christians, 9% of Buddhists, 10% of Judaism and 51.1% of unaffiliated secular individuals. Any religious fundamentalism or resurgence of single political doctrine can never long last in the case of such an intermingled society. Such contextual reality of Hawaii was internalized by Obama's maternal family; and of course, influenced Obama. Thus, Obama writes, "The opportunity that Hawaii offered—to experience a variety of cultures in a climate of mutual respect—became an integral part of my world-view and basis for the values that I hold most dear" (20). This environment of Hawaii led Obama to stand for common good, common interest, religious and racial harmony, which are the aspects to present Obama as a middle ground politician.

Obama's childhood with his stepfather Lolo Soetoro contributed to design his world view. Having divorce with Obama's father, his mother remarried with Indonesian student Lolo Soetoro, who was called back when military leader, Suharto, came to power in 1967. Obama went with his stepfather, spent his four years in Menteng neighborhood, Jakarta. Due to subsistence family income Obama had to attend Besuki Public School at first, where his friends were "children of farmers,

servants, tailors and clerks” (276). There he learnt about multifarious existence of power and diverse attitude to look at it. Suharto government was established by overthrowing popular nationalist leader Sukarno; therefore, it was much autocratic one. Thus, Obama writes: “In America, it had generally remained hidden from view until you dug beneath the surface of things. But, here power was undisguised, indiscriminate, naked, always fresh in the memory” (45). For his mother, even the world ‘power’ was a curse and she used to emphasize some values that she deemed important “to grow into a human being” (49). She repeatedly taught Obama about fairness, straight talk, and independent judgment. On the other side, Lolo merely limited himself to explain poverty, corruption, the constant scramble for security. He used to encourage Obama to become powerful. Once, Lolo said

Better to be strong ... if you can't be strong, be clever and make peace with someone who is strong. But always better to be strong yourself. Always! Men take advantage of weakness in other men. They are just like countries in that way. The strong man takes the weak man's land. He makes the weak man work in his fields. If the weak man's woman is pretty, the strong man will take her. (40-41)

The above extract makes the use of simile to compare brutality of individual power with that of a nation. To curb such brutality of power it is to be bound with certain all-approvable rules. In fact, political situation in Indonesia was as such. Military leader Suharto had overthrown popular nationalist leader Sukarno and people had to hold their tongue tight. Power and diplomacy were the themes that Lolo used to emphasize on. Such conflicting pressures in Obama's childhood from his mother and father sought a balance in his mind, thought, character and ultimately in his action. In order to save the weak and those on minority, Obama demands for politics of consensus and

cooperation rather than competition. It is in Indonesia, Obama was struck by the picture of the black man in *Life* magazine who had tried to peel off his skin. It became violent for Obama, “an ambush attack”, which made him to realize the potential of disease to cripples, of accident to maim, of fortunes to decline” (51). The term, “ambush attack” has worked as a imagery since it provokes the ferocious picture in the mind. This ‘ambush attack’ and the lesson by his stepfather in Indonesia prepared Obama to stand for welfare government, security net, government sponsored healthcare system. To materialize these goals Obama calls for the politics based on the notion of common good, sense of empathy and the government formed out of shared values and principles that majority of Americans deem important in their lives and in the life of country. This is one of the factors to form Obama as a third-way-politician--neither conservative nor liberal, but pragmatic to secure this common good in the community. That is why, Obama tries to balance between communal values and individualism, novelties and tradition. In order to secure common good, Obama demands for the White House that would take 51 - 48 victory as a call to humanity and compromise rather than as irrefutable mandate.

Barack Obama’s hybrid origin and family structure has also played greater role to pursue the middle ground political way. Obama says, “We can ground our politics in the notion of common good” (9). The notion of common good includes good of all--good for blacks, whites, natives, foreigners, conservatives and liberals. According to Obama himself, his heredity and family environment are the factors to shape his intellect and thought process. His father was an intelligent and ambitious man and his mother a woman of virtue. Obama inherited his father’s highly ambitious nature mixed with his mother’s fundamental virtues. Besides he was up-brought by his maternal grandparents who were whites. As per Obama, his

grandparents' preference to "Methodism that valued reason over passion and temperance over both" taught him to balance between reason and feelings (14). His grandfather was always searching for new start. Obama describes his grandparents' family as "the awkward mix of sophistication and provincialism, generosity and eagerness to please" (16). Obama writes about his grandfather: "His was an American character, one typical of men of his generation men, who embraced the notion of freedom and individualism" (16). This typical character of his grandfather has influenced Obama himself. He himself began a new start in politics but happened to balance his grandfather's individualism with community and common good or humanity that his grandmother had taught him. Obama perceived his grandfather as "a freethinker". This character of grandfather has influenced Obama too; thus it has helped Obama to think independently for the wellbeing of society. Even being a liberal, Obama supports conservatives for the good cause and does not hesitate to criticize Democrats who are biased and rigid. That tendency to think independently led Obama to be stepped off from the than political reality to call for change —change in politics, political culture and the White House.

Liberal thinking of Obama's grandparents inspired Obama to be associated with the party that holds liberal views. Obama writes, "All this marked them as vaguely liberal" but without adherence to any firm ideology (17). Because of this liberal thought his grandparents who invited a black student named Barack from interior of Kenya for the dinner and agreed to marry their white daughter with this man, resembling to black men who used to come "around the oil fields once in a while, searching for work as hired hand" (18). Here, "Hired Hand" is synecdoche to represent hired laborers. It was in this backdrop of racist society when civil rights movement has just begun, his grandfather inspired him to dream about non-racist

attitude. For them, “race wasn’t something...to worry about” rather this family stressed on humanity (27). Therefore, Gramps told Obama, “Your grandfather and I just figured we should treat people decently” (21). Thus, Obama writes, “Racism wasn’t even in their vocabulary back then” (21). The liberal family environment led Obama to adopt liberal bent of thought in politics—he became a Democrat remaining out of rigid doctrines, strong enough to stand for humanity.

To grasp causes behind Barack Obama’s vision on faith, and social values, it is pertinent to examine and analyze his family structure, upbringing and schooling. Obama himself has described his father as a raised Muslim but confirmed atheist, and mother as raised by non-practicing Methodists and Baptists, “in many ways the most spiritually awaked person” (203). Besides, Obama envisions his stepfather “as a man who saw religion as not particularly useful” (43). Describing his maternal grandparents with whom he spent his childhood, Obama writes: “Religious faith never really took root in their hearts” (205). Moreover, while working with Black Church as a community organizer, he came to understand “the power of African American religious tradition to spur social change” (279). Here, Obama accredits African American churches with the fore to change. In this way, Obama was raised in the environment of mutual harmony among secular and religious people. Besides, he has acquaintance with dominant Islamism mixed with remnants of Hinduism and Buddhism in Indonesia, pure Islam in Kenya and Christianity in Chicago. Obama was born from black father, white mother, raised and taught by brown stepfather and white grandparents. That is why, describing his family Obama has once said: “It’s like a little mini- United Nations” (4). This large family scattered around overseas, of course, requires faith that can easily build up humanitarian feelings but faith without

tolerance cannot work. That is why, Obama stands and appeals for the faith but, being enough cautious, prevents one man's religious freedom becoming tyranny for another.

Obama's transcendence from racial controversy is the byproduct of his biracial identity and nonracist thinking in his family. Obama is a hybrid product of black father and white mother; therefore, he is neither black nor white but biracial.

Describing his parents Obama writes: "That my father looked nothing like the people around me —that my father was black as pitch, my mother white as milk" (10).

Obama makes the use of simile to highlight the color of his parents' skin. He has equal distance and a sense of belongingness to both of the races. Besides, his grandparents' independent, humanitarian and nonracist thinking helped Obama to be out of his boyhood experience of being neglected and humiliated because of being black, to call for racial harmony and pragmatic approaches to deal with issue of Race. His grandparents up-brought and taught him the lesson of humanity. They repeatedly told him that it is not the race but the tendency to work harder that makes one respectable. Besides he has spent his four years with his brown stepfather; hence, he must have fillings for this brown color too. Thus, he calls for equal respect and opportunity for all the races.

The profession of community organizing, family in Kenya, and experience of being brought up by single parent guided Obama to call for traditional family structure. In his first visit to Kenya Obama engaged himself in interrogating family. He questions:

What is family? Is it just a genetic chain, parents and offspring like me? Or is it a social construct, as economic unit, optimal for childrearing and division for labor? Or is it something else entirely: a

store of shared memory, say? An ambit for love? A reach across the void? (327)

Whatever a family may be--a genetic chain, a social construct or an economic unit or an optimal for child-rearing and labor division, or a store for shared memories or an ambit of love--it cannot be complete for Obama without going back to Kenya and embracing it. It is the first and inner circle of those circles that Obama drew around himself; his existence in white family in US is “the second circle—a realm of negotiated love, commitments freely chosen” (328). Unlike in US where he had a feeling of frustration and alienation, Obama finds family everywhere in Kenya —“in stores, at the post office, on streets and in the park” (328). In Kenya, Obama has the people who were really happy because of Obama’s birth and his success. Obama writes the Granny’s words: “We are all happy that this marriage took place, because without it we would not have you here with us” (422). Thus, Obama writes: “Hungry, striving, desperate men, all of them my brothers” (336).

Furthermore, Obama writes about a woman in Chicago: “For this woman family had never been a vessel just for living. The dead, too, had their claims, voices shaping the course of her dream” (338). Obama is much influenced by that woman’s words. Therefore, Obama wants “couples to understand the value of commitment and sacrifices marriage entails” and argues that “being a father meant more than fathering a child” (335-347). Such experiences led Obama to be with his daughters physically as well as emotionally. Besides, it is the experience of being raised up as a child of a single parent working behind this appeal. Realizing hardships of his mother Obama writes: “How hard it had been for my mother and grandmother to raise us without a strong male presence in the house” (346). But encounter with the people caught into

abusive marriages directs Obama to leave the case to be determined by the individual themselves. All these factors mark Obama as a middle-ground politician.

Obama's experience of political economy in Kenya and Indonesia as well as his affiliation with the people there caused him to take middle ground position in economy and foreign affairs. Obama understood about the corruption and tyranny in struggling regimes in Indonesia. Lolo used to assign "the poverty, the corruption, the constant scramble for power" just to politics and power rather than any individual (50). Besides, his experience in Kenya is no less important in this regard. Obama was well-acquainted with created poverty in Indonesia and Kenya; overcrowding image of Nairobi just to evade from the hunger, and response of state to tear the settlements down without any provisions of compensation. Sarah's words—"You should be helping her. And me, your brother's sister. Look how I live. Why don't you help us, instead of those others" --were still ringing to Obama's ears, while drafting out his vision of new politics, welfare states, and Keynesian market economy (333). Thus, Obama writes, "Hungry, striving, desperate men, all of them my brothers" (336). "Too big heart" that Obama's heredity has transformed to Obama is working even within the pages of this policy analysis. Obama wants to "reconcile his blood ties and demands of his siblings with some larger idea of human association" (331). Hence, Obama wants states to allow the people to work freely and hinder them when they encroach into others and assist those who are encroached and hindered by human or non-human forces. This motive of Obama led him to pursue middle-ground stance. That sort of underground reality moved Obama to implicate the security first approach in foreign policy and promotion of living standards of local people dwelling even in the regimes that are under invasion.

Obama wants to “reconcile his blood ties and demands of his siblings with some larger idea of human association” (331). His love for Africa can be noticed when he says: “With the benefit of distance, we engaged in a selective embrace – the same sort of embrace I’d once offered the Old Man” (302). Just the promotion of liberal democracy cannot make his family in Kenya safer. Of course, they need security, and Obama associates their security with security of America, but their security depends more on fulfilling their basic needs, establishing good governance by taking arbitrary rule, corruption and chronic violence to an end. Security of both sides depends on making sure that “American military power helps rather than hinders” the progress of local people (308). Such progress is possible by establishing and energizing international organizations and diplomatic approaches like Marshal Plan. For that America has to make sure that “US policies move the international system in the direction of greater equity, justice and prosperity” (316). Thus, Obama stands for international organizations.

Obama seeks the chance to pay back his communities beyond the US borders by applying the Security First foreign policy and implementing it through international organizations. Such system can only help the third world people like Zeituni, Obama’s relative in Kenya, struggling “in the flickering light of the kerosene lamp” and African daughters imagining their best future in learning to “grind the millet into porridge, learning to grow vegetables and pack clay for the huts” (396). His overwhelming love for Kenya can be seen when he writes about an imagination he has once indulged into: “I see my grandfather, standing before his father’s hut a wiry, grimfaced boy, almost ridiculous in his oversized trousers, and his buttonless shirt” (427). This statement provokes the image not only of Obama’s grandfather but also of the people living in rural areas with low income and higher ignorance.

Considering their needs, Obama writes: “Just a faith in participatory democracy couldn’t buy Jane a new set of sheets” (329). For this reason, Obama wants US to help people dwelling in the regimes that are under invasion, which automatically leads Obama towards middle of the ground.

All in all, the middle ground stance Barack Obama has taken in the book *The Audacity of Hope* is a resonance of his on mixed identity. Hybrid identity of Obama produced his hybrid political vision. His multiracial identity brought transcendence in his vision about race. His close affiliation with US and “nations beyond border”—Indonesia and Kenya—and acquaintance with socio-political systems there begot “the third way” in his foreign policy. His experience of being brought on by single parent, his profession as a community organizer, and his root in Kenya prepared him for traditional norms in marriage, family and child-bearing. Obama’s years in Hawaii, his mother and grandparents are the source of his emphasis on social values and social harmony. As Obama recounts, his grandfather was a free-thinker with an American character and grandmother an independent and skeptical by nature. Obama writes: “All these marked them as vaguely liberal” (17). Such tendency of his grandparent inclined Obama to join Democratic Party preserving independent and critical attitude.

Chapter V. Mixed Heritage and Belief in Communitarianism as the Rationale behind Obama's Middle-ground Political Stance: A Conclusion

Barack Obama's *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts Reclaiming American Dream* (2006) is his policy analysis with autobiographical touch. In this book, Obama reflects upon a host of controversial issues in US politics that are of national and international significance. Such issues relate to market economy, faith, social values, race, international relations, education, politics, and familial matters like abortion and child-rearing. Though Obama is a liberal by his party affiliation, he takes middle-ground stance between liberalism and conservatism while discussing such issues. He, in many cases, supports Republicans, and in few, does not hesitate to criticize rigid Democrats and their agendas. It has two causes: the communitarian and the biographical.

Barack Obama's middle-ground political position is the byproduct of his mixed identity, family environment and upbringing along with his pursuance of communitarian political principles. Obama's observance, neither of liberalism, nor of conservatism, but of the communitarianism makes Obama a communitarian politician. Since communitarianism is a 'third way' political philosophy drawn between liberalism and conservatism in US anybody who follows communitarian political principles becomes a middle-ground man standing in between Democrats and Republican having proximity to both, but without following any of the ideology completely. Besides, Obama's own expressions—"I am a prisoner of my own biography" and "Race and class continues to shape our lives" –legitimize any effort to prove his middle-ground political location as the resonance of his own mixed heritage.

Obama, overshadowing both liberal conception of individual liberty and conservative emphasis on tradition, law and order, lays greater emphasis on communitarian conceptions of common good, “sharedness,” commonality, mutual aid, fraternity, sense of empathy and community. He regards mutual aid or social solidarity as the way to progress. Besides, Obama accepts and proposes communitarian agendas in the larger project of national renewal. This all makes Obama a communitarian. As a communitarian, Obama supports security First foreign policy, reinforcement of international organizations and international community’s humanitarian responsibility for intervention in terms of international relations. In terms of race, Obama, keeping communal harmony at the centre, stands for equal respect and opportunity for all the races seeking some reverse discrimination to those lagging behind. Obama regards social and faith based values as the basis for solving national problems since change needs reform not only in public policies but also in hearts and minds of the people; therefore, as communitarians do, he envisions parents and school as primary moral educator. As a communitarian, Obama wants adults to have some reverence for the act of sexual intimacy and value of the commitment that marriage entails, but seems unwilling to intervene upon others’ personal matters unless they encroach into others’ rights. He tries to balance liberals’ concept of unalienable rights of individual with responsibility to community and conservative emphasis on strict enforcement of law and order with social justice and communal harmony. Obama neither has trust in Laissez-fair economy nor in control-and-command approach of socialism. Rather he pursues the communitarian sort of economy that imparts social justice limiting concentration of power and wealth to certain group by opening up opportunities for all and promoting entrepreneurial innovation of US firms. Pursuance of such communitarian agendas postulated mainly

by Amitai Etzioni and further forwarded by Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies shapes Obama as a middle-ground statesman.

Barack Obama's middle-ground vision is shaped also by his mixed heritage, family environment and personal experience in various locales. His grandparents' preference of Methodism that values reason over passion and temperance over both, his grandfather's 'a free-thinking' nature which can be marked as of American character always seeking a new start, "vaguely liberal" family environment enabled Obama to step off from current political reality towards new, middle-ground politics. His biracial identity and mixed heritage also contributed to his hybrid political vision. Affiliation with Kenya and acquaintance with the political economy in Kenya and Indonesia produced his concept of welfare economy, state-sponsored health care, and security net. Biracial identity, brown stepfather in Indonesia, and his grandparents' emphasis not in skin-color but in hard work and humanity to become respectable in the society brought transcendence in the race. Obama's experience of being reared up by a single parent, career as a community organizer led him to stand for traditional family system. Realization of responsibility to help his brothers in Kenya and September-11 attack prepared Obama's security approach in foreign policy strengthening international organization. Her mother's emphasis on humanitarian values and stepfather's prominence of power and diplomacy sought balance thereby moving Obama towards the third way politics.

All in all, Barack Obama's middle-ground political stance is the byproduct of his communitarian view in politics and own mixed heritage. Pursuance of communitarian political principles—common good, mutual aid, fraternity, empathy, community, balance between right and responsibility—is the fundamental element to present Obama as a middle-of-the-ground statesman. His grandparents' liberal

attitude, preference to Methodism, emphasis on humanity, mother's emphasis on fundamental human values, stepfather's emphasis on power and diplomacy, close acquaintance with socio-political systems in US, Kenya and Indonesia are the biographical factors to shape Obama as a middle-ground politician. Besides, his middle-ground strategy is directed towards advancement of larger human association that can accommodate his family members overseas with those in US simultaneously bringing ideological division in America to an end.

Works Cited

- Breslin, Beau. *The Communitarian Constitution*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2004.
- Briscoe, Daren. "The Audacity of Hope." *Newsweek* 12 Dec. 2004: 74
- Etzioni, Amitai. *From Empire to Community*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- . *How Patriotic is the Patriotic Act?*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- . *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*. New York: Basic, 1997.
- . *Security First: For a Muscular, Moral foreign Policy*. New Heaven: Yale UP, 2007.
- . *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and Communitarian Agenda*. New York: Crown, 1993: 6
- Gaubha, O.P. *Political Theory and Thought*. Delhi: Mayur, 2007.
- The Institute for Communitarian policy Studies. *Marriage and Family*. New York: George Washington UP.
- . *The Economy*. New York: George Washington UP.
- . *Racial Communitarianism*. New York: George Washington UP.
- Kakutani, Michoko. "Obama's Foursquare Politics, With a Dab of Dijon." *New York Times* 17 Oct 2006: 7
- Lammy, David. "In Lincoln's Footsteps." *Guardian* 5 May 2007:
- Lejune, Philippe. *On Autobiography: Theory and History of Literature*. Minneapolis: Minnesite, 1989.
- Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts Reclaiming American Dream*. New York: Crown, 2006.
- . *Dreams from My Father*. New York: Crown, 2004.

Sandal, J. Michael. *Liberalism and its Critics*. Melbourne: Blackwell, 1984.

StudentNewsDaily.com: Conservatism vs. Liberal Beliefs. 2010.

< <http://www.StudentNewsDaily.com/> >

Work Cited

- Bhambani, Mennu. "Societal Responses to women With Disabilities in India". Hans and Patri. 85-86.
- Bush, Laura, "Khaled Hosseini". *Artists and Entertainers* Vol. 171 19 (2008):1.
- Coleman, Lerita (M). *Stigma: An Enigma Demystified*. City, Press. 217-226.
- Corbet, Bob. "Book Buzz." USA Today 31 May 2007.
- Davis, Lennard (J). ed. "Constructing Normalcy". *The disability studies Reader* New York: Routledge, 1997. 9-13.
- Feldman, David B. and Christian S. Crandall "Dimension o mental illness Stigma: What about mental illness causes Social Rejection?" *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* Vol. 26 (2007): 137-138.
- Foucault, Micheal. "Historical and Political Criticism". *Docile Bodies from Discipline and Punish* Foucault Reader: Paul Rabinow Editor. 1:180.
- Ghai, Anita. *(Dis) Embodied Form Issues of Disable Women*. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2003.
- Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Printice- Hall, 1963.
- Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. Great Britain: Bloomsbury, 2003.
- Jaime, Harris. "Black Issue Book Review". *Black Women carry the Torch of Olympic Glory* 2.4, 2000:79.
- Lauber, Christoph, and Norman Sartorius. "At issue: Anti-Stigma- endeavors". *International Review of Psychiatry*. 19.2, 2007: 103.
- Lerner, Gerda. "The Creation of Patriarchy". *The Communities of Discourse* Eds. Gray D. Schmidt and William J.Vande Kopple. New Jersey: Englewood Cliff, 1993. 142-144.
- Miles, Loyal, "The Kite Runner". *Indiana Review*. 26, 2004: 207-210.
- Noor, Ronny. "Afghanistan: The Kite Runner". *World Literature Today* 78, 2004: 148-149.

Pearson, Geraldine S. "Review: The Kite runner". *Journal of Child and Adolescence Psychiatric Nursing* 20.1, 2007:66-66.

Riessman. Catherine (Koher). "Thousand Oaks". *Gender and Social* 14, 2000:111.

Stella, Algoo Bakhsh "Ghosts of the Past" *Canadian Literature* 2005:184.

Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. "Sociocultural Analyses of the Extraordinary Body". *Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* City Press 1893:31.

Thornicroft, Dr. Graham. "Shunned: Tackling the Stigma of Mental Illness". *Maclean's* 120, 2007: 10-11.

William, Lippincott and Wilkins. "Maintaining Normalcy". *Advances in Nursing Science* 28, 2005: 268-269.