

The Politics of American Values in Barack Obama's Life Narratives: A Rhetorical Analysis of National Ethos

Mahendra Bhusal*

Abstract

Barack Obama weaves a sequence of his personal story rhetorically to evoke American national ethos, with a special emphasis on American values making them an integral part of his memoirs, especially his *The Audacity of Hope* (2006). This paper interrogates why he narrates the story of typical American values in his political memoir in general and ascertain them in a dedicated section titled 'Values' in particular to explore the implicit dimensions of his storytelling. Form the theoretical parameters of Walter R Fisher's 'narrative paradigm' this paper contends that, by way of recognizing (assimilating or internalizing) typical American values, Obama prepares a ground for Fisher's 'narrative rationality' to identify himself with American character and American people, and thereby evokes American national ethos to assume a statesmanship.

Keywords: Rhetorical analysis, American values, national ethos, narrative paradigm

Introduction

The Audacity published in 2006 hit the New York Times and Amazon's best seller list and this happened somehow in the eve of Barack Obama's announcement of presidential campaign in February 2007. The timing of the appearance of the second memoir after the success of the first *Dreams from My Father* (1995) is not a coincidence. Obama's second memoir is replete with pressing American political agendas which he narrates in the form of a personal stories. He divides his stories into several thematic categories as he does in the first memoir like; Republican and Democrats, Values, Our Constitution, Politics, Opportunity, Faith, Race, World Beyond the Borders and Family.

Obama demonstrates a serious anxiousness on how to make his audience realize the larger significance of American values in the contemporary American society. Though he frequently stresses on the America values implicitly in the overall memoir, he feels the exigence of narrating the stories of values which he does it explicitly under the dedicated section titled 'Values' which furnishes the second section of *The Audacity*.

Literature review reveals that the reception of Obama's second memoir has been

* Asst. Professor of English,
Patan Multiple Campus, TU, Lalitpur, Nepal, Email: mahendrabhusal10@gmail.com

multifarious like; reading it as a pure political propaganda to cautionary tale for warning American against the divisions occurring in the contemporary society. None of the critics has examined the memoir from the rhetorical dimension of storytelling in terms of national ethos. Hence, this paper interrogates why Obama narrates the story of American values with a special emphasis in order to explore what he achieves in doing so. Therefore, the objective of the study is to explore the profound rhetorical significance of human stories to answer how politicians like him tell their stories. This helps to understand the trajectory of the development of statesmanship in the person like Obama.

Theory of narrative paradigm is based on a fundamental human tendency of telling their stories. Fisher argues that “human beings are inherently storytellers” (24). Human beings have spontaneously inclined to the coherence and credibility of the events they narrate about their experience in the form of their personal stories. He claims that every human being is a storyteller in one way or other. This means that human beings are storytelling animals and their fundamental instinct is towards narrating their experiences through their stories. When one tells one’s story, he/she tells it with a purpose and the story is never groundless and irrational. Every human story has a rational and this is what Fisher calls ‘narrative rationality’. This paper claims that Obama rhetorically weaves the story of American people with the purpose of evoking American national ethos among the intended audience in his second political memoir. In doing so he stresses on the fundamental American values to which he claims that every American adheres, despite the differences of his race, ethnicity, origin, gender, region, sexuality and so.

The researcher contends that Obama’s emphasis on narrating the stories of American values has a profound rhetorical effect upon his intended audience in particular and American people in general. The narrative rationality behind telling the stories of American values is to bind American people rhetorically finding a common ground in which every American can feel at home despite the differences. Furthermore, in doing so he evokes American national ethos. The act of evoking the sense of national ethos on the eve of presidential campaign has a larger political significance that is; Obama strongly assumes a statesmanship in him which is articulated through his memoir.

Though the paper takes the whole memoir as the ground of analysis, it is more specifically focused on the second section entitled ‘Values’. The research is completely limited to textual analysis and library research based on secondary sources, research articles and relevant books. Moreover, the study primarily stands on rhetorical theory of Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm.

Literature Review

Critics have multiple responses on *The Audacity* ranging from rhetoric dimension of study to blunt political commentary. However, Willie J. Harrel, Céline Leboeuf and David A. Frank exclusively focus on the rhetorical dimensions of Obama’s memoirs.

Harrell argues that Obama deploys the restoration rhetoric that calls for remaking America great again seeking common ground and consensus building among the general public whereas Leboeuf examines Obama's optimism of hope in *The Audacity* and claims that he rhetorically aims to raise the sense of deeper hope that has potential to redress the social division. Frank discusses about Obama's rhetorical signature of cosmopolitan civil religion. These critics somehow share the notion of rhetorical dimension with the researcher and therefore they are significant. But the other critics focus on the issue like significance of the word 'audacity', presidential campaign and philosophical pragmatism in Obama's narratives.

The Audacity has got a mixed reception among the critics. Willie J. Harrell, Jr. examines it as the "discourse of the American reclamation jeremiad" (164). He reads the memoir more as a cautionary tale. It is therefore a jeremiad which warns the Americans that unless they understand the deeper dynamics of contemporary politics and the past glory of being the great nation and take an instant action to resolve the issues like race, terrorism, economic crisis, fundamental exigencies of health and education, America will succumb to dystopia. However, Harrell claims that Obama deploys the restoration rhetoric that calls for remaking America great again seeking common ground and consensus building. He argues, "Obama's restoration rhetoric in *The Audacity*... functions as the American reclamation jeremiad, in which he employs political discourse to restore a positive vision of America's democratic mission and warns Americans of the dangers of not fulfilling that mission" (165). He further claims that "Obama appropriately utilized elements of the jeremiad to respond to the many challenges Americans face today" (181). He concludes with the notion that Obama generates a profound sense of hope and optimism in seeking a consensus among the Americans in *The Audacity* which only could rescue them from the contemporary crisis that the nation is facing.

Céline Leboeuf also stresses on the functionality of hope in *The Audacity* which she calls a 'social hope'. She compares Obama's hope with the hope of Immanuel Kant and Richard Rorty and claims that "Kant, Rorty, and Obama all espouse the idea that progress must be founded on hope since hope motivates action" (256). She states that the hopes these philosopher, critic and political figure define are not exactly the same but they share some sense of optimism. Kant believes in 'shared humanity', Rorty's hope arises "stitching together" coalitions between groups that share interests" (256) and Obama's hope is expected to emanate from a "set of values shared by all Americans" (256). On the basis of the principles developed by Kant and Rorty Leboeuf examines Obama's notion of hope in *The Audacity* and concludes that Obama rhetorically generates the sense of deeper hope that has potential to redress the contemporary divides in American society on issues like, "Iraq, taxes, abortion, guns, the Ten Commandments, gay marriage, immigration, trade, education policy, environmental regulation, the size of government, and the role of the courts" (275). She asserts that hope can only set the society into the motion which Obama is successful to cultivate in *The Audacity*.

Peyi Soyinka-Airewele claims, rather than the ‘hope’, the term ‘audacity’ gained a greater prominence after *The Audacity* became bestseller. She claims, “Audacity," not "hope" became the new cliché, slithering into the discourse and active lexicon of diverse fields, and conjuring for some an era of celebrated boldness and hope, and for others an alarming potential future of the insolent displacement of ordained hierarchies by individuals who refuse to stay in their place within the prescribed order” (13). She makes a cursory survey of the books with ‘audacity’ as one of the keywords in the title since 1924 to 2005. She finds only few books dealing with the term. But the period after the publication of Obama’s memoir, plethora of books came in the market with the term. By this survey Airewele aims to assert that *The Audacity* not only increased the vibrancy of the word audacity among the academic discoursed implying multiple meanings like boldness and hope for some and alarming threat which could potentially subvert the traditional hierarchies for others. Not only this, but the memoir also set an example of the revocation of marginality in the case of Obama if not others.

Bob Carlton and Ariele Gentiles define *The Audacity* as a political biography rather than a personal memoir since it “is laden with his personal policy beliefs—criticizing George W. Bush for a deceptive and poorly planned war in Iraq, addressing welfare and the escalating energy crisis, and even berating other Democrats for becoming ‘the party of reaction’” (80). These writers further claim that the book “can be understood as a blueprint of Barack Obama’s campaign for the U.S. presidency, which he would launch on the steps of the Illinois state capitol building just a few months after the book’s release” (81). Primarily they have perceived the memoir as politically dominant records of his professional political career.

Analyzing the content and tone of Obama’s first and second memoirs James T. Kloppenberg argues that the intended audience of these books are not the intellectuals and critics but general American public. This gives the sense that his stories are the stories of American people in general. He insists, “*Dreams from My Father* and *The Audacity of Hope* appear to occupy a different world because they are directed less toward academic philosophers or social scientists than toward the much wider audience of American citizens” (166). However, he further claims that he does not mean Obama is less intellectual. He upholds Obama’s ideas comparing him with the founding fathers like John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Quincy Adams, and Abraham Lincoln. He writes, “Like his eighteenth-century and early twentieth-century predecessors, Barack Obama is a man of ideas” (11). Primarily he evaluates *The Audacity* as a penetrating analysis of contemporary American political issues in which Obama takes the side of philosophical pragmatism i.e. practical ways of solving the problems, to address them.

Unlike these critics David A. Frank reads Obama’s both memoirs and claims that he treats his autobiographies as the resources of his rhetoric which he develops as the rhetorical signature in the several political speeches he makes like in inaugural and

state of union speeches. Frank writes, “The books [two memoirs] have offered him and Favreau [Obama’s speechwriter] source materials for his speeches” (614). Frank claims that his two memoirs helped to develop Obama’s literary signature which “is revealed in his search for identity and his journey to a narrative informed by the civil rights movement and prophetic Christian” (614). It means these books established him as literary character of certain nature. Basically, Obama seems to be ingrained in the concept of cosmopolitan civil religion. His rhetoric revolves around consolidating this idea. By and large this theme turns out to be his rhetorical signature in a border sense.

These receptions on *The Audacity* reveals that they have focused on the aspects like; warning American people of the division among them, creating a sense of hope for a political end, redefining the term ‘audacity’, the memoir as a tool for political campaign, cultivating philosophical pragmatism and development of rhetorical signature. None of them have examined the dimensions of the way Obama tells the stories and their rhetorical significance in terms of evoking American national ethos. This paper delves into these unnoticed aspects of rhetoric behind writing memoir with a key emphasis on the stories of American values.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the qualitative research approach to analyze the rhetorical dynamics of Obama’s stories particularly on American values in *The Audacity*. A close textual analysis of the memoir with a special emphasis on the section ‘Values’ will be done in the light of Walter R. Fisher’s narrative paradigm to explore its rhetorical dimensions. The researcher observes how Obama narrates the stories of values, rhetorically through his memoir, so as to manifest American national ethos.

The focus of the research being the dynamics of life narratives, Fisher’s narrative paradigm is the most relevant theoretical framework to reveal the rhetorical significance of Obama’s storytelling. As central to the narrative paradigm are the ‘coherence’ and ‘fidelity’, examination of Obama’s narrative coherence and his rhetorical skills to add credibility to his story are built on what Fisher calls ‘narrative rationality’. Therefore, Fisher’s narrative paradigm is useful to answer how and why Obama weaves his personal story.

Almost all rhetoric and communication theorists draw a line of legacy from Aristotle in one way or other. Kenneth Burke heavily draws the trajectory of rhetoric from the tradition set by Aristotle. However, he redefines and revolutionizes the tenets of rhetoric. Fundamentally he has developed the concept of ‘identification’ which largely corresponds with Aristotle’s notion of persuasion. Burke’s act of identification is a rhetorical act in which the rhetor finds commonalities in the people to whom he/she addresses as he writes, “two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common...” (21). Fisher claims that “The most revolutionary move in the twentieth century regarding rhetoric

is that of Kenneth Burke” (18). Fisher’s perception of revolution brought about by Burke in rhetoric is primarily based on the idea how Burke defines human communication.

Burke defines human as instinctively symbol using animal. This definition sets the ground of his rhetoric theory. Fisher in reference to Burke, hereby sets his own foundation of rhetoric, human communication and narration theory upon slightly modifying Burke’s definition of human beings. Fisher coins a term *Homo narrans* and further claims that “The *Homo narrans* metaphor is thus an incorporation and extension of Burke’s definition of ‘man’ as the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal” (63). Since human being is essentially a narrator, Fisher adds a new term, *Homo narrans*, to the lists of the metaphors that belong to man like; “*Homo faber*, *Homo economicus*, *Homo politicus*, *Homo sociologicus*, psychological man,” “ecclesiastical man,” *Homo sapiens*, and, of course, “rational man” (62). Fisher henceforth, defines human beings fundamentally as storytelling animals.

His theory of narrative paradigm has its root on this definition. Fisher argues, “The narrative paradigm proposes that human beings are inherently storytellers who have a natural capacity to recognize the coherence and fidelity of stories they tell and experience” (24). Narrative paradigm is based on the logic of narrative rationality. James A. Herrick upon clarifying Fisher’s narrative rationality writes, “narrative paradigm suggests that arguments are, in fact, a species of narrative, and that all narratives have a rational structure that can be analyzed and evaluated” (254) This means all human communications are essentially human stories and they are intrinsically logical. Human stories are based on a rhetorical logic unlike the traditional or technical logic.

Technical logic is formal and mathematical. It is based on the rational world paradigm of western elitist tradition, scientific investigations and formal education. According to Fisher, “Technical logic aims at true knowledge; its procedures and criteria are formal and removed from context; and its conclusions are pan-historical, true always and everywhere” (28). However, rhetorical logic is the informal logic inherent in human storytelling. It is pragmatic and informal. Fisher further writes, “Rhetorical logic deals in probable knowledge; its procedures and criteria are analogs to those of technical logic or are distinct in content and function; and its conclusions are time bound, contingent, civic and cultural” (28). Narrative paradigm is context specific therefore, narrative rationality stems from the rhetorical logic in general but “does not deny the limited but necessary use of technical logic in assessing inferences or implicative forms that occur in human communication” (48). Rather than being all time true and universal this logic is specific and stands for the context and relevance of storytelling.

Fisher’s narrative paradigm is therefore based on this narrative rationality. Narrative rationality stands on two foundations; 1) principles of probability or coherence, 2) fidelity (truthfulness and reliability). Principles of coherence has further three dimensions; 1)

structural coherence, 2) material coherence and 3) characterological coherence. In sum, a story must have coherence and truthfulness. Basically, narrative rationality (narrative logic) is distinct from the technical logic which is based on rational world paradigm, in one fundamental way, that is the dimension of characterological coherence. The technical logic shares the other dimensions of narrative rationality but not the characterological. The ancient root of the dimension of the character in story telling dates back to Aristotle. He places central importance to the character of the speaker or narrator, in finding the available means of persuasion in any given text or human communication. He defines human character “in regard to their emotions, habits, age and fortunes” (172-73). Emotions are anger and desire. Habits means virtues and vices. By age he means youth, prime and old age. And by fortune he means good birth, wealth and capacities and the opposites are misfortunes. Values shape the character of a human being.

Characterological coherence means the trustworthiness of the characters involved in the stories whether they are narrators or actors. The characterological dimension is directly associated with Aristotelian sense of ethos. But Fisher adds on a significant element to the ethos or the characterological dimension that is; values. Fisher insists, “Central to all stories is character. Whether a story is believable depends on the reliability of characters, both as narrators and as actors. Determination of one’s character is made by interpretations of the person’s decisions and actions that reflect values” (47). Human stories are value-laden. They are based on the sensibilities of contemporary times. They regard something more than other according to the contexts and needs. This is how human values are determined.

Technical logic is fundamentally based on sound arguments. It is mechanical. Arguments form the core of technical logic and they create a basis of persuasion. But in narrative rationality arguments are not as important as human values according to Fisher. He argues, “The concept of narrative rationality asserts that it is not the individual form of argument that is ultimately persuasive in discourse. That is important, but values are more persuasive, and they may be expressed in a variety of modes, of which argument is only one” (48).

The second pillar of the narrative rationality is fidelity. It is not other than the truthfulness of the story told to the extent of being accepted. Truthfulness stands on what Fisher calls “good reasons”. The human values add the credibility to the story and they form the basis for “good reasons”. Fisher claims, “narrative rationality focuses on ‘good reasons’-elements that provide warrants for accepting or adhering to the advice fostered by any form of communication that can be considered rhetorical “(48).

What follows after the groundwork of this theoretical premise is an examination of how Obama narrates the stories of American values and his personal conviction. Thus, three aspects of the Fisher’s narrative paradigm come into play. The first, is to observe how Obama weaves the sequence of the story (symbolic action), second is to read the story in

its historical context and the third is to observe how the story stands with or against the other stories in the similar contexts. Therefore, next section explores his rhetorical efforts in connecting the stories of American values with the American character. This character, beliefs and values of the narrator himself and his intended audience (Americans) together rhetorically constitute the American national ethos. Moreover, Obama feels the exigence of narrating the stories of American values to summon the audience in a common civic ground so that he could trigger their national sentiments. Here lies Fisher's narrative rationality.

Rhetorically, Obama sets his narrative paradigm and thereby establishes narrative rationality in such a way that he substantiates who he is, who Americans are and what their values are. By way of this he establishes a characterological coherence and cultivates fidelity or "good reasons" so that the audience believe in what he narrates. Ultimately this evokes the sense of American national ethos.

Rhetorical Analysis of Obama's Memoir

As discussed in the theoretical framework, examining any text through the narrative paradigm involves three important things according to Fisher. First, reading the texts as the verbal phenomenon with "good reasons", second, these "reasons can appear in and through arguments, metaphors, myths, gestures, and other means of creating communicative relationship" (143) and the third "whatever the genre of the discourse, the narrative paradigm allows one to view it as rhetoric" (143). The analysis that follows focuses on exclusive American values and how these values furnish Fisher's "good reasons" to render his story credible, coherent and rhetorical.

Obama begins *The Audacity* with a compelling conviction that strongly urges the American public to believe in it. He opens the memoir with the story of American public psyche amidst disappointing and degenerating American politics but abruptly switches off to claim that "there was -and always had been- another tradition to politics, a tradition that stretched from the days of the country's founding to the glory of the civil rights movement, a tradition based on the simple idea that we have a stake in one another, and that what binds us together is greater than what drives us apart..." (2). With these remarks Obama rhetorically articulates two significant things; the first that there are obviously some factors that divides the American people but the factors that bind them together are more powerful than that divide and the next, that he belongs to that tradition, which binds them together.

Obama henceforth, deliberates to justify what factors bind them. Furthermore, he narrates the stories of American values he adheres to, since he belongs to the glorious tradition of binding not dividing. This forms the primary premise of his story. This is the point of departure that Obama makes in his story. He weaves the story in such a manner that accounts the sequence of "good reasons" for binding Americans together. In narrating these

stories, he rhetorically establishes that his character is essentially American that strongly associates with the general American public. He sounds like a mouthpiece of general public who speaks for and with the general public.

Obama while narrating on the typical American character he asserts that most often during the phase of his political career development he was extremely restless. Despite the blessings of success, he used to see flaws in his life. He attributes this tendency to the typical American character. He claims, “In me one of those flaws had proven to be a chronic restlessness; an inability to appreciate, no matter how well things were going, those blessings that were right there in front of me. It’s a flaw that is endemic to modern life, I think- endemic, too, in the American character...” (3). By this he means the way I feel is the way every other American feels. He associates his feelings with a typical American feeling, an American ethos.

Obama emphasizes a lot on traveling, meeting and talking with the people of different walks of lives, extensively during his political campaign. He could feel what the people feel about their livelihood matters. While in interaction with the people what surprised him was not their big ambition but he writes, “what struck me was just how modest people’s hopes were, and how much of what they believed seemed to hold constant across race, region, religion and class” (7). He finds the aspirations of the common people were modest and they are same despite the differences in origin, creed, class or whatsoever.

Obama claims that he discovers during the campaign, why he opted for the political career. He is into politics to render common people’s aspirations come true. After this new discovery of his sense of purpose in life he writes, “I felt like working harder than I had ever worked in my life” (7). With this initial foregrounding of why he came to politics he explicitly writes why he wrote *The Audacity*. He writes:

This book grows directly out of those conversations on the campaign trail. Not only did my encounters with voters confirm the fundamental decency of the American people, they also reminded me that at the core of the American experience are a set of ideals that continue to stir our collective conscience; a common set of values that bind us together despite our differences; a running thread of hope that makes our improbable experiment in democracy work. (8)

Obama hereby makes a dynamite claim that American people have some core values. They adhere to those values and his memoir is the direct outcome of the expressions of the saga of American values which bind them together as the foundation stones of American democracy. These values are not only inscribed in American monumental objects but he writes, “remain alive in the hearts and minds of most American- and can inspire us to pride, duty and sacrifice” (8). This way, Obama implicitly establishes the narrative rationality of his memoir and demonstrates the existence of American values as guiding principles of

American way of life with full of self-assurance. American values that bind together rather than divide are obviously “good reasons”.

What follows is how Obama rhetorically narrates the ideas of American values in the section titled ‘Values’. Obama begins a specially dedicated section on ‘values’ in his memoir with his memory of the first time visiting the White House. Though it is not easy to approach the White House in comparison to the days he remembers but there is profound rhetorical meaning in what he narrates. He narrates:

I marveled not at the White House’s elegant sweep, but rather at the fact that it was so exposed to the hustle and bustle of the city; that we were allowed to stand so close to the gate, and could later circle to the other side of the building to peer at the Rose Garden and the residence beyond. The openness of the White House said something about our confidence as a democracy, I thought. It embodied the notion that our leaders were not so different from us; that they remained subject to laws and our collective consent. (43-44)

Obama’s message is clear in the openness of the White House. It means the House is the symbol of American democracy, its openness is the direct attribute of American values on individual freedom. Not only this he delivers the sense that the people who assumed their office as the presidents in the House in the past were the common people like us. They were sent there by the collective consent of the American people.

Further justifying the ordinariness of the White House heroes Obama writes, when these people leave the office, they returned to be the commoner like every other American. He insists, “It is to say that after all the trappings of office—the titles, the staff, the security details—are stripped away, I find the President and those who surround him to be pretty much like everybody else, possessed of the same mix of virtues and vices, insecurities and long-buried injuries, as the rest of us” (48). Unlike the inherited monarchs and occasional dictators in the world history American presidents are the ordinary citizens with same anxieties and aspirations as the ordinary American possesses. By this Obama rhetorically means every American like himself can be a potential candidate to serve in the White House as he proved to be there later.

Again, he reverts to the experience of travelling and meeting people particularly in Illinois which he represented three times in its state senate. First, he rhetorically compares Illinois to the USA. He claims that Illinois is “a microcosm of the country’ (49). This implies that by representing Illinois he could represent the USA since it is the miniature of the country. Next, he could associate the sentiment of Illinois people so deeply that he admits, “in the faces of all the 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). He stresses how deeply he is attached with the ethos of his

people in an emotional level. He feels at home everywhere and declares to the extent that he comes to realize “Not so far beneath the surface, I think, we are becoming more, not less, alike” (51). Rhetorically, this insistence on ‘we feeling’ and sense of becoming alike in the deeper level is significant.

Being alike in the deeper level means no other than adhering to the same American values. He interrogates, “What are the core values that we, as Americans, hold in common” (52)? With this core question around which his entire memoir revolves, he quintessentially offers the same answers that were offered by the founding fathers and founding documents like The Declaration of Independence. He reiterates that “WE HOLD THESE truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (53). He further justifies that “Those simple words are our starting point as Americans; they describe not only the foundation of our government but the substance of our common creed” (53). He explains that American values set forth by the founding fathers and documents are self-evident. Simply they do not need any clarification. Moreover, he writes, “Indeed, the value of individual freedom is so deeply ingrained in us that we tend to take it for granted” (53). Obama therefore assures that it is the impetus of these core values which directs and sets the day-to-day course of every American.

Tactfully, he compares the life endowed with these values in America with the life elsewhere. He brings an anecdote from Michelle Obama’s experience in Kenya when they were traveling together to explore their ancestral roots and the way of life. He remembers Michelle saying “‘I never realized just how American I was,’ she said. She hadn’t realized just how free she was—or how much she cherished that freedom” (54). This is a context in which they found Kenyan life terrible with rampant corruption and kidnapped freedom, owing to ruthless politics.

With this sequence of his compelling stories of American values so far, finally he arrives to the climax of articulating American values in a concrete and straightforward manner. He declares that Americans value individual freedom and individualism but instantly he qualifies this claim and asserts that “Our individualism has always been bound by a set of communal values, the glue upon which every healthy society depends” (55). Finally, he declares:

We value community, the neighborliness that expresses itself through raising the barn or coaching the soccer team. We value patriotism and the obligations of citizenship, a sense of duty and sacrifice on behalf of our nation. We value a faith in something bigger than ourselves, whether that something expresses itself in formal religion or ethical precepts. And we value the constellation of behaviors that express our mutual regard for one another: honesty, fairness, humility, kindness, courtesy, and compassion. (55)

This rhetoric of parallelism with the buzzing word ‘we’ has a tremendous significance which has been juxtaposed with the American individualism’s ‘I’. What Obama insists rhetorically is the idea that though Americans extremely care individual freedom they equally believe in the sense of community and togetherness. By way of respecting individual freedom, they believe they could create a healthy and strong community of sound individuals.

One might assume that American values are out there and the stories based on these values could be told by anybody. Furthermore, such stories are being told for centuries of the nation’s founding. That is obviously true however, in the case of Obama, such stories told by the then would-be president had profound rhetorical significance most specifically in the development of statesmanship, that is necessary to sustain in the nation’s highest office and for that matter its implications even to the world community as well.

Despite being the personal narrative, Obama downplays his private stories of sensibilities and emotions like personal life, family, upbringing and many more. He overplays an arid story of political chores. He could have connected with the general public with his stories of more personal kind that could have take hold of his intended audience in a more impactful manner which he does in his first memoir *The Dreams*. More technical and overt political issues are the limitations of his storytelling since they are of less concern to the general public since his targeted audience are the common American people.

However, rhetorically, Obama evokes the ethos of an individual American first and foremost and thereby creating a nexus of such individuals to build a larger community; an American community with American national ethos through his memoir with the recourse of the aforementioned Fisher’s “good reasons”. This has a larger implication to the world community that cares how statesmanship works.

Conclusion

Obama tells a compelling story of American values in his second political memoir *The Audacity*. There is a profound logic and dire purpose behind Obama’s story. The logic of telling the stories of American values setting a common ground where American can converge despite the differences, is to generate a binding effect upon the American public and the purpose behind telling the common story of values is also to create narrative coherence and fidelity as per Fisher’s narrative rationality.

Thus, three aspects of the Fisher’s narrative paradigm have been functional in this analysis. The first, the paper analyzed how Obama weaves the sequence of the story with reasons behind adhering American values, second is the analysis of the story in its historical context and the third is to observe how the story stands with or against the other stories in the similar contexts. Particularly, Obama takes the recourse of American values to generate what Fisher calls characterological coherence. Rhetorically, he narrates the stories of American character type sequentially on the bases of values they adhere to. Next,

he creates the fidelity of his stories. Here he is rhetorically successful to connect his ethos with the ethos of American public and thereby with the American national ethos. He creates the fidelity of his story fundamentally standing with the values and spirit of the founding fathers and the historical documents that made the United States of America.

There is an enormous prospect for the research of this kind therefore this research reveals the area of research in which one can ask how and why humans are so inclined to tell their stories. More specifically, the research on the rhetorical significance and how rhetoric works in the public are limited in terms of the narratives set by the influential political leaders in the world. This research reveals that human stories have profound rhetorical significance in general. However particularly it examines how a tactful politician like Obama is a good rhetorician or a good storyteller to have a tremendous leadership impact upon the general public. This ultimately reveals how Obama assumes his statesmanship in his life narratives.

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