

PUPPET ON THE STAGE

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Donald Trump was president for four years from 2017 to 2020. He could not get his second term and is feeling his schedule unfinished. Naturally, he is anxious to get on to the throne again and finish his agenda. When he was contesting in 2020 there was no other person seeking nomination from the Republican Party as he was a sitting president and by convention the field was left to him. Unfortunately, he lost the election. But he was not convinced of his defeat and was provoked to resort to different unworthy tactics to claim victory and it landed him in litigation with the government. They are not yet settled and the time has come for the next election. He could not help contesting again and the party obliged him and left the field for him. When he contested for the first time in 2016, he had to fight against a lady candidate Mrs. Hillary Clinton, the wife of a former president. It was for the first time that a lady got the opportunity to contest for president. She lost and he won and there was no doubt. But when he lost in 2020, he created doubts about the validity of the election process. Now in 2024 he had to contest again another lady Mrs. Kamala Harris, the sitting vice-president. She is neither white nor Christian. In facing the electorate Trump is burdened with a baggage of what he has done and not done as president and also for what he has done after losing election in 2020. The MAGA and White Nationalist cults that are now standing for him were not there in the two earlier elections. The only factor that is continuously supporting him for the last two elections and also at present is the overt or covert support from Russia's Putin. The very fact that he was able to win in spite of open support from a foreign country, that too the archrival after WWII, is itself a surprise. That the support is now open and unquestioned is more than a surprise. Irrespective of all the baggage burden he is stated to stand a bright chance of winning the election. Let voters decide.

The new factor that has appeared on the scene is Elon Musk, the richest man in the world. Naturally, he has so much money that he doesn't care to keep track of every million that he spends. He spent a lot of money experimenting in technology and aeronautics in collaboration with NASA. It is admirable that he is exploring the secrets of nature and expanding the field for human future. That world by itself is not enough for him. In fact, money will not allow you to keep quiet. It tickles, stimulates, cajoles and provokes people to do something more and different. The natural corollary to money power is political power. They are interchangeable. It would not be wrong on his part to aim at it. But there is an obstacle.

Art.II of the American constitution states that "No person except a natural born Citizen or a Citizen of the United States at the time of adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President." The constitution allows two kinds of citizenship – natural citizen and naturalized citizen. Those who are born in the United States are natural (born) citizens. Only those are entitled to the Office of President (consequently also of vice-President). Unfortunately, Elon Musk was born in South Africa and has become a naturalized citizen of America later like many of the immigrants. He has to search for other avenues to get into the power corridors in America. He observed the campaign of Donald Trump and felt the opportunity is there. Trump is notorious for his aggressive statements and extreme haphazard opinions that he expresses even against his

advisers. The campaign finds it difficult to justify what he says. Particularly the support from Putin has become an unjustified connection. Musk too has closer links with Putin. Strange that a capitalist has cordial connections with the head of a socialist, if not communist, state. No scruples on either side for political exigencies! Musk felt he could do better in that respect and jumped into the fray. He could save Trump from the blame of maintaining relations with an archrival from a foreign country by taking that responsibility on himself. In spite of the campaign having connections with Russia, Trump won in 2016. Why not now? Americans do not consider it wrong. They are broad minded!

He formed a Political Action Committee, the 'American PAC' with donation of \$75 million. The campaign caught fire and enlivened by that. Musk jumped on to the stage, flying in the air embraced Trump in full view of the electorate. Trump, on his part, declared that Musk would be an important part of his government if he gets elected. How big is that IF to be seen. But Musk is ensured that he would be in official position of considerable influence if Trump is elected as president. He gets involved wholeheartedly. He would not squander his money without aim. He chose the state of Pennsylvania for his actions. While the \$75 million may be spent all over the country he devised special schemes to influence the voters in Pennsylvania. But there is a law to be respected. He cannot offer money for voting Trump. He offered money to those who get registered as voters in the state. Even that is illegal under federal law. But is permissible in Pennsylvania. He offered a reward of \$100 to every person registered as a voter. In other swing states the offer is only \$47. Strangely the Democrats also are seeking donation of \$47 for the party fund. What is the sanctity of this figure is not clear. That amount was not much and did not attract many. In fact, even those who would vote Kamala also can claim that amount. If not, the offer would be illegal. In addition to that Musk devised another plan. He said he is making a petition to support the first and second amendments to the constitution and those who sign that petition would be allowed to participate in the daily lottery for \$1 million. But it would be until the election date only. That is the only connection with elections in his plans. There is no ground to feel the constitution is under threat. To whom the petition is to be submitted is not known. Can anybody say that it is all to influence the elections? Even if it is stretched to that, what they could do? Even when there are direct evidences of committing offences and exciting people for violence are proved, there is no action. That is how the law applies. So, you could take a chance.

There is no reason to think that Trump will not keep his promise to Musk if he wins the election. What kind of importance would fall on the shoulders of Musk? To what extent Trump would depend on Musk? How long or how deep would be the shadow of Musk in the new administration? Who could be the real power holder? Who will be the puppet and who will be the puppet player?

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