

Palestine-Israel: Myth and Reality

Prem Singh

1

It would be right to say that Hamas is responsible for the genocide of Palestinians being carried out by Israel in the Gaza Strip for the last two weeks. Hamas, which came into existence in 1987, is responsible for the current genocide of Palestinians, but for the killings of Israeli civilians in Hamas's October 7 attack, Israel and its supporting countries are responsible even before Hamas. This fact has come to light from many sources that in order to eliminate the strength/solidarity of civil resistance based on Arab/Palestinian identity, Israel had created the terrorist force of Hamas based on Islamic jihadist identity. Israel collaborated with Hamas co-founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin to weaken the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Fatah. Sheikh Yassin, who used to walk in a wheelchair, was assassinated in a target-killing by Israel in 2004.

It is not that the PLO, established in 1964, or other Palestinian fringe groups fighting for their cause did not carry out violent ambushes and attacks on Israelis in Israel and even in several other countries of the world. Yasser Arafat himself had announced to abandon the path of violent conflict under the Oslo Accords of 1993. Only then the PLO gave up its pledge to destroy Israel, and also accepted its right to exist at the same territory. By then, a lot of blood had been shed from both sides in the never-drying river of Palestine-Israel conflict. However, there was a hope from the Oslo Accords that at least there would be some check on the bloodshed taking place from both the sides. But Hamas came forward and took charge of the path of bloodshed. The Israeli army, definitely one of the most powerful armies in the world, was already there to make the bloodshed plans of Hamas successful.

Israel was fighting its 'religious war' against Palestine on the pretext and the strength of its religious Jewish identity, and the support of powerful countries like the mighty United States and several European countries. It had a state recognized by the United Nations (UN) and major powers, and a powerful military on her side. Palestinians were fighting for the restoration of their forcibly snatched Arab/national identity and for their homeland. They used to wage their struggle from countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia etc. They did not have an army or reservists so that they could take "military action" like Israel for their natural right to defend their motherland. There was probably no scope for the mode of action of Satyagraha/Civil Disobedience against the manner in which they were suddenly attacked, captured and driven out by the bigger powers in 1947-48. They embarked on the path of "terror action" interspersed with civil resistance.

Gandhi had said as early as 1938: "Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same way as England belongs to the British and France to the French." Gandhi had deep sympathy for the Jews because of their treatment as "untouchables" in the Christian world and their genocide by Nazi Germany. However, he was completely against the act to establish a Jewish state by expelling the Palestinians in the name of religion by force of arms. Gandhi believed that Jews could live in

Palestine only with the goodwill of the Arabs. In the matter of Palestine-Israel, the influence of Gandhi's ideas remained for a long time on the foreign policy of independent India. Yasser Arafat had very good relations with India. Despite this fact, no leader (or organization) from Yasser Arafat to Mahmoud Abbas adopted the means of Satyagraha to achieve their goal. The process of military actions from Israel's side and terror actions from Palestine's side continues till this moment despite all the agreements and peace talks in the past.

Until the establishment of Hamas in 1987, Palestinians did not wage their struggle in the name of their religious Islamic identity. Israel emboldened Hamas to confront the PLO/Palestinian National Authority in order to permanently nullify any possibility of a Palestinian state in any part of Israel, including Gaza and the West Bank. This was possible only if the Palestinian struggle followed the terrorist path in the form of religious jihad. Hamas, in collaboration with Lebanon-based Hezbollah and radical Islamic countries/forces, started fulfilling Israel's intentions. When the PLO supported Israel's existence under the Oslo Accords, Hamas clearly refused to accept Israel's right to exist on the land.

Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, taking 44 percent of the votes and 74 out of 132 seats. The ruling Fatah party got 41 percent of the votes and 45 seats. In 2007, while having a direct violent confrontation with Israel, began a conflict even with Fatah tearing apart the Palestinian National Authority. It not only forced Fatah leaders to flee to Egypt and the West Bank, but also murdered a few of them. By occupying Gaza with its complete monopoly, it refused to accept all previous agreements and decisions taken under the peace processes. The October 7 attack is the latest in a series of terrorist attacks that it began carrying out against Israelis in 1994. At the moment it seems that Hamas has made Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who was confined to the West Bank, irrelevant.

2

If Hamas had not fallen into their trap, Israel and America would have taken some other measures to Islamicize the struggle of the Palestinians for their motherland. If Hamas had not carried out the terrorist attack of October 7, some other major incident would have taken place in the Palestinians' 'open air prison' in Gaza Strip or of the West Bank. Because the Zionist mentality that lies at the core of Israel's establishment advocates continuous violent conflict with the Palestinians and their annihilation on that path. It does not truly believe in compromises and peace talks. When governance of Gaza and the West Bank was handed over to the Palestinian National Authority under the Oslo Accords; And when Hamas started carrying out terrorist attacks, a radical Jew assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. When Prime Minister Sharon decided to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip in 2003, he was opposed by Zionist/right-wing elements inside and outside the Likud party. Israel rejected the Palestinian National Authority's 2011 proposal for a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital as unilateral. Despite recognition by the UN General Assembly as a non-member state, no Palestinian state yet exists on the earth. No matter how much there are talks of creating two states simultaneously on one territory, it does not seem that this will ever happen. Even if this happens for some time, it is difficult to believe that the existence of the Palestinian state will last for long.

The Zionists had announced the establishment of a homeland in Palestine under the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century itself. Britain approved this idea under the Balfour Declaration in 1917. In 1947, the UN passed a resolution for the establishment of Israel on the Palestinian land. In 1948, Jews were sent there, there was a war, seven and a half lakh Palestinians were driven out. From then till today, this has been the longest conflict in the world with many ups and downs. If we consider 1947-48 as the starting point of the conflict historically, then the situation that existed at that time is almost the same as it is even today. The conflict is between the Israeli power-establishment and Hamas. The PLO, Fatah, the Palestinian National Authority, i.e. the representative institutions of the regime and their representatives have almost become irrelevant. As per the surveys done by a few forums including Palestinian Center for Policy and Research, 50 to 60 percent of people on both sides consider violent means as the only solution to the Palestine-Israel conflict. That means that only one nation will exist on the territory, not two. Israel would always prevail in violent conflict; and the Palestinians would face genocide.

3

The fight runs deep at the core of the Palestine-Israel conflict. The religious myth of the Jews is that where in reality the Arab Palestinians had been living for thousands of years, that is, the motherland (*matri-bhumi*) of the Palestinians, is the religious land (*dharm-bhumi*) of the Jews. Their religious ancestors were removed from there and persecuted. For almost a century, the Zionists have been running a campaign to convert the myth into a reality and the reality into a myth. Over a period of a few centuries, the reality may become a myth and the myth may become a reality. That means Palestine as a country will become a myth and Israel a reality. Forget about the rest of the world, Israel is more realistic than Palestine among the youth population of West Asia.

If the Palestinian reality is to be turned into a myth and the Israeli myth into a reality, then the Palestinians will have to be driven out of the territory and ultimately the Palestinian identity will have to be destroyed. No matter how much time it takes. There will come a time when people will forget that there was a place called Palestine in the Arab region, on which Palestinians lived. The posterities of Israel will tell their children how the "human-like beasts" were wiped out by their ancestors from their beautiful land. The events related to the Palestine-Israel conflict, particularly the violent ones, will continue to be mythologized. For example, the plethora of 'true' and 'false' news being served in the mainstream and social media regarding the October 7 terrorist attack by Hamas and the massacre by Israel in retaliation, will serve as various sub-plots in that myth-making. This sequence may continue for hundreds of years. The history of the Palestine-Israel conflict can be read from this perspective also.

Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion had said as early as 1948: "We will break through Transjordan, bomb Amman and destroy its army; And then Syria will fall; And if Egypt still continues to fight, we will bomb Port Said, Alexandria and Cairo, ... this will be retribution for what they ... did to our ancestors in Biblical times."

Where there had been plans for the destruction of the entire Arab region, what status do the Palestinians have, who do not have a country of their own? Ben-Gurion, full of religious fanaticism, is completely confident in his statement about the destruction of the Palestinians. Israeli leaders, army officers and even many civilians are speaking the same language after 75 years.

It is true that Palestinians are not outside the framework of modern civilization like the aborigines of the lands like America, Australia, New Zealand etc.; and they are not alone. The present phase of the modern era has been described as a period of clash of civilizations. The conflict between 'good' and 'evil' remains at the core of the creative works of civilizations of every era. The classics often depict the victory of the good over the evil. Claimants of the good in modern civilization have identified the October 7 attackers as the "sheer evil." State-sponsored genocide has been attributed to the accounts of the good. (One may see the US President's first reaction to the Hamas attack.) There is no opportunity here to go into depth on this complex subject. It can only be said that Jewish Zionism and Christian civilizationism have merged together. Both Jews and Christians should be worried about this nasty mentality that distributes cheap certificates of the good and the evil.

Is anyone really on the side of Palestinians, including those in West Asia? I am not talking about those leaders/countries who sometimes advocate the "Palestinian Cause" primarily keeping in mind the international political, economic, and strategic equations. What can we say about UN officials and institutions? The pitiable status of Secretary General Antonio Guterres in this episode is not hidden from anyone. I am not even talking about those who, as Muslims, show enthusiasm for Palestinian Muslims through Hamas. Looking at the situation, it seems that the Palestinians have no true allies in the ruling institutions world over.

But there is a way ahead. The world's civil society, which may be quite large in number, can be helpful in a just resolution of the Palestine-Israel conflict on the basis of international rules and ethics. This would be a continuous and long-term process. However, this is possible only if the Palestinian leadership and civil society adopt the means of non-violence and Satyagraha instead of violent conflict. If the initiative starts from the side of the civil society of the world and the Palestinians, then there would be a possibility of change in the attitude of Israeli leadership and civil society also. In the meantime the process of old and new agreements and peace talks must go on.

(The writer associated with the socialist movement is a former teacher of Delhi University and a fellow of Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla)