**An Illusion Called Peace**

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October 30, 2023

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When the rich make war, it’s the poor that die - Jean-Paul Sartre
The world seems helpless in putting an end to the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel. The West is siding with Israel while looking away from death, destruction, and human suffering. The East is apparently waiting for the right moment to step in. As it is not an Arab-Israel war, the Ummah would not go beyond condemning the oppressor, of course, in the strongest possible words. Iran and Turkey, the two militarily strong Middle Eastern powers, have their own political and economic issues to address. The adjacent brotherly country of Egypt has outrightly refused to welcome the Palestinian refugees let alone play its due role. With all sorts of security fears in mind, the rich kingdoms are waiting for Allah to send some divine help. The UN Secretary General is clearing his throat in the face of his organisation losing the plot. He has not gone beyond verbally reprimanding Israel for the unjustified ‘collective punishment’ of Palestinians.
However, the entire world is pressing for distributing health and food supplies in Gaza. What does that mean? In simple words, it means that Israel has a license to kill, and it must not be stopped from achieving its stated strategic objectives. As human rights are more important than human beings themselves, the violation of human rights must be deplored. For the Palestinians to have their rights unwittingly violated, they must live. Hence, humanitarian aid and assistance must reach them immediately.
Meanwhile, the idea of Palestine, being a laboratory, is giving the skeptics s few sleepless nights.
The question as to why the world is silently watching a whole population being maltreated in such a way is likely to remain unanswered. It seems immaterial if history will remember the oppressors in not-so-kind words. Creating fresh history seems to be more important to the powerful. Otherwise, why would the democratic, civilized, and developed world turn a blind eye to what has been happening in the besieged Gaza? In all probabilities, future history students will be reading a whole chapter on How Gaza Was won by Israel and how conscientiously the world stood by the ‘oppressed’ in the pursuit of justice and humanity.
Claiming a territory as one’s own is not a new phenomenon. In fact, according to Rousseau, a Swiss philosopher and writer in the 18th century; ‘the first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying This Is Mine, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society.’ Whilst concluding his argument, he would warn us that ‘you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.’
The world did not pay heed to what Rousseau said or meant when he pointed out the dangerous dimensions of one of our basic instincts- the sense of belonging and enforcing others to accept that This Is Mine. Referring to the case in point, respective claims over the ‘promised land’ make perfect sense. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Israel and the Palestinians will forgo their claims, even after the eagerly awaited truce.
Over millennia, the quest for peace has remained a cherished goal for humans. Whether one likes it or not, many still believe that war is an indirect way to achieve peace. From the Trojan Wars of the Greek era to the Hundred Years’ Wars to WWI and WWII- one set of people fought with another mainly to satisfy their instinctive and material needs. The Vietnam War and the wars that followed involving Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria also prove the same point…overpowering others to gain more influence or access to energy corridors or to flourish in business. In the process, not only the objectives remained the same, but the façade also stayed as such…we must fight for peace...!!
The 17th-century philosopher, Rene Descartes, showed us another way of looking at this. Through his exultant declaration, cogito ergo sum, he explained how the power of thinking makes our existence possible. I think, therefore, I am. Note the word ‘I’ and its relevance to one’s own thinking and in turn one’s own existence. Instead of Israel or Palestine, put ‘I’ in the centre of the discussion and see how easy it is to explain what has been going on in the ‘promised land’, particularly since 1948.
On the other hand, certain concepts like a country’s ‘national interest’ or for that matter, the term, ‘terrorism’, have deliberately been kept undefined. The loose interpretation of events, actions, and reactions, thus, have been producing perplexing and distinct viewpoints. The same war is ‘repression’ for one party while it is the extension of one’s national interest for the other. One man’s hero could be a terrorist for another. Depending on which side of the table you are sitting at or who has the power to prevail, the justification for any act or omission will always be there. Surely, the explanation provided by the rich and powerful would invariably prevail. I think, therefore, I am. And I am right because I am mighty. Hence, just like previous similar events, the ongoing war in Gaza is likely to be won by Israel, one way or the other.
That brings us to an intriguing set of questions. Is humanity willingly destroying itself on one pretext or the other? Where does this fatal streak lead us? Contrarily, is there any end to the meaningless discussions such as ‘peace for all’ or saving the planet from the hazards of Climate Change? What exactly is wrong with us? The simple answer is ‘man as a man is a man throughout the world.’ Unless one overcomes ‘I’ and replaces it with ‘we’, there is no way things would change. Considering the unchanged nature of ‘my’ instincts, it seems impossible. The bottom line? The elusive peace will keep on justifying present and future wars.
One explanation was provided by Albert Camus in his award acceptance speech in 1957. This statement answers one of the questions more aptly. ‘Each generation doubtless feels called upon to reform the world. Mine knows that it will not reform it, but its task is perhaps even greater. It consists in preventing the world from destroying itself.’