



# ARABS AND ISRAEL

(An Indian Interpretation of the Palestine Problem)

THIRD REVISED EDITION

**Manorma Dewan**

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## So Said The Mahatma

“I have all my sympathies with the Jews. But sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice. The cry for the national home for Jews does not make much appeal to me. Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong to impose the Jews on the Arabs. If the Jews have no home but Palestine, will they relish the idea of being forced to leave the other parts of the world in which they are settled? Or do they want a double home where they can remain at will? The Palestine of Biblical conception is not the geographical tract. It is in their hearts. But if they must look to Palestine of geography as their national home, it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of British guns—nothing can be said against the Arab resistance in the face of overwhelming odds.”

*Mahatma Gandhi*

*Article in Harijan, November 12, 1938*

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## P R E F A C E

Objectivity, it is said, does not mean an equidistance from truth and falsehood. It is impossible to be impartial between justice and injustice. This book, therefore, makes no pretension of being "objective", if that means being neither here nor there. Nevertheless an attempt has been made to study the genesis and the nature of the Arab Israeli conflict with the aid of authentic records and indisputable facts. Through the study of this material, the author has reached conclusions, which one hopes could remove prevalent misconceptions about the problem.

While committing these pages to print the author deems it her pleasant duty to thank all those who with their advice and guidance have provided her with the fullest co-operation in the completion of this work. I am particularly grateful to Dr. M. S. Agwani, Professor and Head of Department of West Asian Studies, Indian School for International Studies, for his guidance in searching the source material. Thanks are also due to Mr. Ranbir Singh, Chief Editor of Daily Milap and Mr. Yunus Dehlvi, Editor, Shama Group of Publications for their sustained interest in my writings on West Asia. It is needless to say that responsibility for opinions expressed and any error committed, is entirely of author's and none of those who were kind enough to help her could be held responsible for it. Thanks are also due to the libraries of the Indian Council of World Affairs and All India Congress Committee, where the bulk of the research was conducted. I would also like to record my sincere gratitude to Mr. G. H. Jansen for his article "Why Gandhiji Rejected Zionism" published in the "Statesman".

—*Manorma Dewan*

New Delhi,  
May 30, 1966.

## PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

The appearance of the third edition of this work within a period of less than ten months, is highly encouraging not only to the author from a personal point of view, but also because it indicates a growing awareness in this country of the issues involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is apparent that there prevails a great deal of ignorance and misunderstanding about various aspects of this problem. Vested interests have been taking fullest advantage of this, and have been trying to advocate steps which would run absolutely counter to India's national interests, moral attitudes and international policies. Experience of the warm and welcome reception the last two editions of this book have received, encourages the author to believe that our people are on the whole highly sympathetic to the cause of peace and justice and can become equally conscious about the real national interest of this country. This work essentially intended to help all those who wanted to understand the problem dispassionately and objectively from our own national point of view. The author is happy to note that it has served the purpose for which it was written. The author would also like to thank all those who have given their valuable advice and suggestions for the improvement upon the last two editions. Many of their suggestions have been incorporated through a thorough revision of the text. New data regarding fresh problems like the Israeli aggression on Jordan and Syria as also on the present state of the Israeli economy have also been included in the third edition.

March 15, 1967

—M. D.

## Oasis or Mirage ?

A great deal is currently being said and written about the desirability of India establishing diplomatic relations with Israel. This is an admission of India's moral stature in world politics, and the influence she weilds in the Afro-Asian community. Israelis are naturally eager to get as much Indian support as possible, for rendering themselves acceptable in this part of the world. There are also bigger and more intricate issues involving considerations of international politics which we shall consider later.

The Arabs, too, are anxious for India's continued support to their cause. The Indian support represents for the Arabs not only the moral conscience of the Afro-Asian community, but also the vindication of the secular character of Arab nationalism. Indian understanding of the true nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict helps in projecting the Arab struggle against Zionism as an integral part of the Afro-Asian struggle against the forces of imperialism, racialism and colonialism.

As far as India is concerned, her choice will have to be as much based upon legal and moral issues involving rights and wrongs of the case, as upon considerations of her own national interests. Jawaharlal Nehru has once said that for us in India national interest is interlinked with wider considerations of justice, truth and peace. Only what is right and true, can be of real benefit to our national interests in the long run. What is morally wrong, could neither be politically beneficial nor economically attractive.

The choice for India in this case will thus depend not only upon moral and political aspects of the problem,

# Usurpation And Mutilation

We have already examined various aspects of Arab Israeli conflict, from the point of view of our national interest.

But it has been rightly said that India's response to world problems should not emanate from expediency. It should emulate moral principles enunciated for our guidance by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

The following survey is intended to present a brief outline of the Palestine problem from which the reader could himself form a sound judgment about the rights and wrongs in this conflict.

Palestine has always been a part of the Arab world which stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf. Its inhabitants have always been among the most progressive and ingenious among all the Arab people. As an ancient land, it has been Holy to the three great religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

Palestine was occupied on the dawn of history by Cannanites who emigrated from the Arabian Peninsula. Lying on the cross-roads of the Middle East, Palestine was successively invaded by different peoples ; Philistines, Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, Persians, Crusaders and Turks.

In spite of successive conquests, Arabs of Palestine always remained not only the owners of the most of the

## Crime and Consequence

A few years ago while walking in the Arab part of the Holy city of Jerusalem, I came across an old man in tattered clothes who would every day climb a hill top in the morning and remain perched there till the very evening gazing into far away areas. I saw him in that position during all the three weeks I stayed in the city. I was naturally eager to know who he was and what he was gazing it. With the help of an Arabic-knowing friend I asked this man what was he looking far off.

With deep wrinkles of anguish covering his face the man replied in a sorrowful quietude "My home". Then he pointed his thin and weired finger towards a place about a mile away in the other part of the Holy city, which has since 1948 been occupied by the Israelis. There stood a palatial building looking like an academic institution. After pointing towards that the man again resumed his mysterious gaze and left us to wonder about the cause of his anguish.

We learnt from a nearby shopkeeper that this man had a house right on the place where the Israelis have now constructed military academy for training freshly arrived immigrants. The man was thrown out 15 years ago from his house, his wife, two sons and a daughter were slaughtered cold-bloodly by Israeli terrorists and he had to run for his life into this part of the city. The old man whose name was given as Assem Bin Ahad is a symbol of the suffering which over a million of Arab refugees from the Holy land have undergone during the last 18 years. He along with his over a million compa-

## Sin And Arrogance

Recently, a Member of Parliament, well-known for his legal acumen, had stated in a public meeting that those who do not accept Israel as a lawful State tend to flout the authority of the United Nations under whose resolutions it was established. This is a familiar argument paddled around the world by Israeli propagandists. It is indeed strange that a State who has done more than any other country to flout the U.N. authority should have the impunity to invoke the authority of the United Nations for its totally illegal behaviour.

We have already seen how Israel has consistently been refusing to comply with the United Nations resolutions about Palestinian refugees. It is however not the only point where Israel has tried to ignore the U.N. authority with an arrogance characteristically reminiscent of the Nazis.

According to the U.N. resolution, No. 181 (II) of 29 Nov. 1947 which recommended the partition of Palestine, Israel was allotted only about 55 per cent of the total area of the country. But today it is in occupation of more than 77 per cent of the area. It is a common misconception that this area was enlarged after the Arab-Israel conflict. Records however tell a different story.

Take for instance the city of Jerusalem. About it the U.N. resolution had stated—that the city of Jerusalem shall be established as *corpus separatum* under a special

# Myths And Realities

Arabs like secular nationalists in India have consistently maintained that their opposition to Israel does not stem from their alleged antipathy towards any religion, least of all towards Judaism. It is a matter of common-sense that themselves being Semites Arabs could never be anti-Semitic as the Nazi Germans were, or as many Europeans and Americans still are. The Jewish faith is regarded by Muslims as a sister religion, their prophets are common and the Jews along with the Christians are considered 'Ahl-e-Kitab', the people of the book by Muslims. It is, therefore, inconceivable that Arab opposition to Israel could ever emanate from the grounds on which it came from the Western world.

Arabs however maintain that there is a vast difference between the Jewish faith and the philosophy of Zionism. Whereas a Jew is one who follows a particular religion, the Zionist is one who believes that all Jews are an exclusive nation who can only find salvation under a separate sovereign state, and who cannot and should not be loyal to the country in which they were born and are still living. It is against this fanatical and bigoted approach that the Arabs are fighting for and it is this aspect of the problem which is particularly noteworthy for us in India, who themselves have tried hard to fight the communal monster and are dedicated to the ideals of a progressive and a secular state.

Let us now see what Zionism is and how has it been practised. Through years Zionism has come to acquire two meanings; the first is what may be described as Spiritual Zionism, a kind of spiritual association with the Holy Land where the Jewish Religion developed, and from

# Hoax Or Miracle

An important aspect of the Zionist-state, which is generally overlooked, is the fact that Israel remains dominated by Western immigrants. According to the Israel Year Book 1964-65 about 63 per cent of all immigrants between the period of 1948 to 1963 had come from countries of Europe and America. In a population of little over than 2 million, Western Jews are over 14,00,000 in number. If one ignores about a quarter million of Arabs who enjoy no political status in the Zionist state the overwhelming predominance of the White Jews becomes glaringly clear.

These people not only control most of the skilled professions such as engineering, banking, law, medicine and monopolise bulk of the foreign trade but also enjoy an overwhelming position in the top and the middle layers of the administration.

## Cost of "Progress"

It is this aspect of the racial composition of Israel which must be kept in mind while falling into the temptation of making rash comparisons between the so-called "progress" made by Israel as compared to Arabs. It has been rightly said that Israel is not a State in the normal sense of the term and has little relevance to the conditions prevailing in Afro-Asian countries. The truth of this statement is clear from the fact that the predominance of immigrants in that country has made it virtually a transplanted community. This community in which immigrants from the most advanced countries dominate, is more akin to the white settlements in Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, and in some other colonial pockets than to any country in any part of the world.

As we ourselves had seen in the case of Goa, it is quite possible for a small community externally pampered and its resources inflated through foreign generosity, to claim some 'wonders' in development compared to the

# Solution And Salvation

Many in India, some of whom are genuinely pro-Arab have often expressed a sincere desire for the peaceful settlement of the Palestine question between the Jews and the Arabs. It is sometimes bewildering to them that Arab leadership in spite of its professed faith in the U. N. Charter and principles of co-existence seems rather reluctant to talk peace with Jews.

I myself was under this impression before I undertook an extensive tour of the Arab world a few years ago. Having talked to some of the most important Arab leaders in Arab countries including President Nasser, I have come to the conclusion that the Arab attitude in this regard is both flexible and realistic. It could certainly not be called belligerent or unhelpful. Arabs as a whole are genuinely ready to settle the issue on the basis of justice and peace provided their basic fears regarding the aggressive nature of Israel are removed and some of their fundamental demands whose justice has been recognised by practically the whole world, are fulfilled.

Arabs, however, feel hurt when they hear some of us in India say that they should try to talk peace with Jews. Arabs feel that it is as meaningless to suggest the opening of a dialogue between the Arabs and the Jews as it would be to say that India should talk to Muslims, or America to Christians or Britain to Buddhists. Whereas the Arabs are a political entity comprising at least three of the major religions including Judaism, the Jews are a religious entity.

Moreover, not all the Jews are Zionists and nothing could be more fallacious than to assume that Israel

## **. . .In Mahatma's Footsteps**

**“We oppose Israel not only because of our friendship with the Arabs. But also because we are opposed to the creation of states on religious basis neither can we recognize territorial gains made through aggression.”**

**Prime Minister, Mrs. Indra Gandhi  
Interview to Al-Ahram, Cairo  
July 10, 1966.**

## THE AUTHOR

Mrs. Manorma Dewan is a well-known commentator on social and political affairs, who has made her mark simultaneously in the field of Hindi, Urdu and English journalism. She was born in Lahore in 1935 in a well-known nationalist family. Her father, Principal Chhabil Dass, besides being a famous political writer, was the Principal of National College, Lahore, where revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh studied, after the boycott of the British-run institutions. Mrs. Dewan is married to an eminent journalist and short-story writer, Dewan Berindranath (Zafar Pyami). She is an M. A. from the Punjab University in Political Science with specialization in International Affairs.

After completing a brilliant academic career, which included the highly coveted award of the all-round best graduate of the year, she joined in 1957 the Milap, a leading Urdu and Hindi Daily, as its Special Correspondent. She has had, in this connection, extensive tour of most of the West Asian countries including Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, U.A.R., Kuwait, Iraq and the gulf area.

For over a period of two years she worked as an associate Editor of 'Dost' weekly, a well-respected political magazine in Urdu. Currently she is working as a Columnist for the Urdu daily 'Siyasat', Hindi daily 'Aaj' and the 'Bano' magazine.

From the last eight years she has been specialising on West Asian problems and has regularly been writing for a number of leading Hindi, Urdu and English newspapers and magazines, and also for the Radio. Mrs. Dewan is equally well-known for her flair for interviews and has interviewed President Nasser, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Dr. Zakir Hussain, and the late Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri besides many others.