

The official name of our species is Homo Sapiens; but there are many anthropologists who prefer to think of man as Homo Faber — the smith, the maker of tools. It would be possible. I think, to reconcile these two definitions in a third. If man is a knower and an efficient doer, it is only because he is also a talker. In order to be Faber and Sapien, Homo must first be loquax, the loquacious one. Without language we should merely be hairless chimpanzees. Indeed we should be something much worse. Possessed of a high IQ but no language, we should be like the Yahoos of Gulliver's Travels — creatures too clever to be guided by instinct, too self-centered to live in a state of animal grace, and, therefore, condemned forever, frustrated and malignant, between contented ape-hood and aspiring humanity. It was language that made possible the accumulation of knowledge and the broadcasting of information. It was language that permitted the expression of religious insight, the formulation of ethical ideals and the codification of laws. It was language, in a word, that turned us into human beings and gave birth to civilization.

(191 words)

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Précis

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Significance of Language.

Human beings are known as Homo Sapiens, but Homo faber too, according to many anthropologists. Homo must first be loquax in order to be Faber and sapiens. Without language man would be like a horrible creature. Hence, the importance of language cannot be denied as it became a reason for existence of knowledge, religious norms, ethics and laws. Language gave man a meaningful life.

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Nizar Hassan was born in 1960 and raised in the village of Mashhad, near Nazareth, where he has lived with his family. He studied anthropology at Haifa University and after graduating worked in TV. Starting in 1990, he turned to cinema. In 1994, he produced Independence, in which he pokes his Palestinian interlocutors about what they think of the bizarre Israeli notion of their "independence". They have stolen another people's homeland and call the act "independence"! Hassan dwells on that absurdity.

As the world's attention was captured by the news of Israel planning to "annex" yet a bit more of Palestine and add it to what they have already stolen, I received an email from Nizar Hassan, the pre-eminent Palestinian documentary filmmaker. He wrote to me about his latest film, My Grandfather's Path, and included a link to the director's cut. It was a blessing. They say choose your enemies carefully for you would end up like them. The same goes for those opposing Zionist settler colonialists. If you are too incensed and angered by their daily dose of claptrap, the vulgarity of their armed robbery of Palestine, you would soon become like them and forget yourself and what beautiful ideas, ideals, and aspirations once animated your highest dreams. Never fall into that trap. For decades, aspects of Palestinian and world cinema, art, poetry, fiction, and drama have done for me precisely that: saved me from that trap. They have constantly reminded me what all our politics are about — a moment of poetic salvation from it all.

Nizar Hassan's new documentary is one such work — in a moment of dejection over Israel's encroachment on Palestinian rights and the world's complicity, it has put Palestine in perspective. The film is mercifully long, beautifully paced and patient, a masterfully crafted work of art — a Palestinian's epic ode to his homeland. A shorter version of My Grandfather's Path has been broadcast on Al Jazeera Arabic in three parts, but it must be seen in its entirety, in one go. It is a pilgrimage that must not be interrupted.

(345 words)

2021-Precis

Nizar Hassan: A Filmmaker

Nizar Hassan was born in 1960 and lived in Mashhad with his family. He studied anthropology and turned to cinema in 1990. In 1994, he produced 'Independence' in which he talks about Israelis' so called notion of 'independence' which is stolen from Palestinians. Later, Nizar produced another film named "My Grandfather's Land", where Israelis were annexing more land. Here, he talks about the idea that 'choose your enemies carefully for you would end up like them' while referring to the Palestinians. He further added that the Palestinians should avoid the atrocities rather focus on their own art and literature. Nizar Hassan got popularity on this work, which was also broadcasted on Al-Jazeera in three parts. But, it can only be felt realistically if watched live.