

OPPRESSION

DEFINITION

Oppression Is The Exercise Of Authority Or Power
In A Burdensome, Cruel Or Unjust Manner!
It Is The Opposite Of Fairness, Justice And Kindness
Both On Personal Level And Collective!

Oppression is a vicious cycle which we are all tangled in, one way or the other. We are all oppressed and oppressor on different levels. Unless we understand this complex cycle of oppression, we can never free ourselves or our society from this tangled web.

We Will Inshaallah Break Down The Concept Of Oppression On Personal And Social Level. We Will Suggest The Cure From This Sickness By The Will Of Allah.

PERSONAL OPPRESSION

Sometimes, the reality is painful and it takes a lot of humbleness and humility to accurately analyze one's situation in life. Truth is usually bitter but it is better to deal with the truth than to mask it and pretend otherwise because pretension will not benefit any one, neither will it change the situation.

We are in post colonial era; all the Muslim countries had been under colonial rule for three to four hundred years and have only been freed for approximately seventy years.

During colonialism there was a systematic destruction of structured religion. It was done to prevent masses from collecting under any powerful emotional flag hence avoid rebellion against the ruling power.

Muslims growing up under colonial powers had misconstrued understanding of their religion and they were ideologically defeated to the point they lost Islam. This

understanding and hesitance of religion was transferred to the subsequent generations and its product is the cultural Islam that we encounter today.

Our Biggest Challenge Now...
Is To Free Islam
From Cultural Customs And Ideologies!
And Bring Back
The Original Teachings And Practices!
The Practices Of Prophet Muhammad SAW And His Companions.

This Will Never Be Accomplished Until
We Deny Ourselves And Critically Analyze And Fix Our Situation
No Matter How Pathetic And Dirty It May Be!

When We As Cultural Muslims Look At Our Lives,
You Will Discover That We Have Been Deprived From
Our Basic Individual Freedom And Self Expression!

We Are Taught Religion As An External Force!
An External Force That We Need To Follow
Because It Will Protect Us...
From The Social Harms Prevalent In The Society
Such As Alcoholism, Pre-Marital Sex Etc.

There Is Never Any Internal Connection Established
A Connection With The Source Of This Guidance
Our Lord And Owner Allah SWT!

We grow up to rebel against this structure but continue to follow it in order to satisfy the status quo. We have questions and problems in ourselves that we cannot solve because there is external pressure on us to conform and satisfy our society. This causes us to oppress ourselves and we instead of correcting our faults and problems, pretend they don't exist and mask our eyes from it.

Example

We will give the example of spousal relationship as this is one of the most important yet neglected topic of our lives. In order to have a pragmatic solution we need to analyze it in depth and fit all the misplaced pieces of the puzzle in their respective places.

People in most Muslim cultures usually stress marriages with the understanding that it fulfills part of the deen (Islamic way of life.) But this understanding is missing basic knowledge about every other element from who to marry to how to choose this person, the goal of marriage and what are each person's expectations from the other.

Once All This Basic Knowledge And Understanding Is Neglected
And After A While Of Early Marriage Contentment...
Spouses Begin To Realize The Extent Of The Failure Of The Relationship
But They Get Busy With Satisfying The Society
Whatever That May Require!

A Husband If Not Satisfied With His Wife, Sexually Or Otherwise,
Starts To Abuse Her Verbally, Emotionally Or Physically!

Wife Oppressed By Husband Or In-Laws
In Turn Oppresses Her Husband And Children
In Whatever Way She Can
From Screaming, Yelling And Burning The Food
To Beating The Children!

This Cycle Of Oppression Continues...
Through These Children Who Grow Up...
Knowing No Other Outlet Of Expression
Than What They See At Home!

All this is due to the oppression of external forces which prevent people from even discovering their own identity. They suppress their feelings just to prevent backlash or opposition of the society.

This can be seen from the choices people make in dressing, haircut, the kind and amount of food intake, choices to the school and career they choose...

How Many Times Have We Heard Parents Say?
"I Don't Have A Life, I Am Living For My Children"
"I Don't Even Have Time For Myself!"
How Does A Person Reach This Level?
It Is Self-Oppression Which Our Society Teaches Us!

The challenge is to come out of this reprehensible cycle and define for ourselves what we really want to accomplish from any act that we are involved in.

We have to force ourselves not to ignore the situation, rather accept it and put it in the right perspective so atleast we will know what is going on. If you know something, you will eventually learn how to deal with it.

"But What Happens If You Don't Even Know What Is Going On?"

You remain ignorant and surrendered to the status quo and do not gain except defeat in all your decisions. When you have figured out what you really want deep down inside, you take steps in that direction.

There are only three things that can happen from this point onwards...

1. Either You Make The Right Decision And Feel Happy For Accomplishing What You Wanted.
2. You Get What You Wanted And Realize That You Were Wrong In Assuming That Was Good For You.
3. The Last Thing, That Can Happen Is That You Realize That You Can't Get What You Want So You Alter Your Plans.

The most important thing is to know what you want because it brings peace of mind and emotional stability.

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SOCIAL OPPRESSION

Upon analyzing our lives closely, honest people will come to the conclusion that it is embedded in us to accept oppression as the norm to the point we do not even want to change it.

All Of Us Are Oppressed And Oppressors In Turn!
Be It An Individual, Family, Society Or Nation!

This cycle of oppression seems to have no end; a husband oppresses his wife, wife oppresses in-laws or children, boss in the office oppresses his subordinates, his subordinates in turn oppress janitors or others subservient to them and the list continues.

Larger, more powerful nations oppress poorer needy nations by usurping [to seize

and hold by force] their wealth and resources. Government employees oppress ordinary citizens of the nation, and the higher government officials oppress anyone and everyone they need to in order to win the power struggle.

Is This Really What Allah Intended From Us,
When He Sent Us Down To The Earth As His Vicegerent?
Why Have We Sunk So Low?
Why Can't We Apply The Simple Hadith Of Prophet Muhammad
(Peace Be Upon Him)
"Love For Your Brother, What You Love For Yourself."???

The Story Of the Ant

In the Qur'an, Allah SWT has given us the story of a little ant that supplicated to Allah to divert the army of Suleiman so it won't crush the ant colony. Allah SWT glorified this ant by mentioning it in His magnificent book and it will be glorified till the end of time.

Think!
How Did This Little Creature Enter The Book Of Allah SWT?
How A Little Ant That You Can Crush With Your Finger,
Reached This Honor And Status?

It neither had any material status, nor high official degrees. It was a considerate creature that was simply trying to save her fellow ants from the marching army of Prophet Suleiman, lest they in their ignorance trample upon the colony. This tiny creature wanted to save the life of its fellow creatures.

It was probably thinking that its life is not worth living if it doesn't save its fellows from a certain misery. This ant was above what we humans have sunk down to.

It Was Neither An Oppressor Nor Oppressed.
It Cared For Others Before It Cared About Its Own Self!
And This Caring And Consideration...
Should Be The Most Basic Quality Of A Human Being!

How To Tackle The Problem Of Oppression?

It is vital that we break this cycle of oppression in our personal lives and societies in order to receive victory from Allah SWT. We have to fix the problem rather than fake it. We have to discontinue this pretentious behavior and have to be just to ourselves, our feelings, emotions, and knowledge.

Unless We Remove Self Inflicted Oppression
And Start Seeing Things In A Just Light,
We Can't Ever Hope To Eradicate The Problem From The Society.
So How Do We Establish This Justice In Ourselves And Our Societies?

Justice is guidance from Allah SWT. It is the ability to put everything in the right perspective. Allah SWT has called Qur'an Al-Furqaan, the Criteria. The more we implement Qur'an in our lives, the more we will have criteria to judge things; And the farther we are from Allah, the more unjust we will be. Allah SWT gave us advices in the Qur'an which are a constitution for our lives as well as a relief during hardships.

Allah SWT reminds us that we are in this world for a short period of time during which we are going to be trialed with things that we like and dislike. If we keep this point in mind then, when situations arise, instead of oppressing ourselves and others, we will be able to give it the right perspective.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَنَبَلُّوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ



Every Soul Shall Have A Taste Of Death;
And We Test You By Evil And By Good By Way Of Trial.
To Us Must Ye Return.

(21:35)

Allah SWT Knows Our Weakness And Impatience

That Is Why He Is Reminding Us In The Quran.

لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

He Cannot Be Questioned For His Acts,
But They Will Be Questioned (For Theirs)!
(21:23)

It is very important to remember at this point that Allah SWT has a sunnah or way of doing things which never changes. As we know that we will face trials in our lives, it becomes very important for us to prepare ourselves and our Iman to face them. The sunnah of Allah never changes though time, place, and people may change. We will discuss this issue here to maximize the benefit of our topic, InshaAllah.

Allah SWT Says

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُم مِّن دُونِهِ مِن وَالٍ ﴿١١﴾

Verily Never Will Allah Change The Condition Of A People
Until They Change It Themselves (With Their Own Souls).
But When (Once) Allah Willeth A People's Punishment,
There Can Be No Turning It Back,
Nor Will They Find, Besides Him Any To Protect.
(13:11)

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ
حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾

Because Allah Will Never Change The Grace
Which He Hath Bestowed On A People

Until They Change What Is In Their (Own) Souls:
And Verily Allah Is He Who Heareth And Knoweth (All Things).

(8:53)

Examples

Almost all of us are aware of the great Muslim history of Al-Andalusia (Spain). Eight hundred years of Muslim supremacy was eventually annihilated, plundered and butchered. We have heard talk about this in great length in mosques and sermons as well as complains about the situation and condition prevalent at the time.

We hear about the atrocities perpetrated against Muslims and innocent human beings all across the globe. The condition of Bosnia and Palestine is not such distant history.

We hear our learned men lament and say that the opposing forces perpetrated this against us, and the conditions were too destructive etc. Or if we had done this or that, this would not have happened.

But The Real Question Should Be...
"Why Did Allah SWT Allow It To Happen?"

This Ummah (nation) has a duty. We are not simply a nation, we are the representatives of the deen of Allah SWT. We are left in charge of spreading the message of Islam to the world.

When We Left Our Duty As Muslims, Allah Changed Our Condition; When We Changed The Inner Status Of Our Hearts From Being A Slave To Allah SWT To A Slave For Duniya [world], Allah SWT Allowed Us To Be Weak, Humiliated, And Disgraced.

We were supposed to be a mercy for mankind, but we are engaged in oppressing ourselves and others.

We are supposed to be just and honest, yet we have become the most unjust and dishonest herd on the face of earth.

We were supposed to sacrifice this duniya [world] over the love of Allah and His message, yet we are engrossed in accumulating the richness of duniya.

Once we realize our faults and weaknesses and resolve to correct them, Allah SWT will be with us and allow us to engage in the honest struggle of self purification and this struggle will last till the end of our lives.

The Importance Of A Teacher

We also need to have a person in our lives with more knowledge and superior spiritual status; Someone who can guide us in our lives and advice us in decision making. The following analogy will help us understand this point, InshaAllah.

The Pencil Maker

The pencil-maker took the pencils aside, just before putting them into the box."There are 5 things you need to know before I send you out into the world" he told the pencils. "Always remember them and never forget, and you will become the best pencils you can be"...

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You Will Be Able To Do Many Great Things,
But Only If You Allow Yourself To Be Held In Someone's Hand.

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You Will Experience A Painful Sharpening From Time To Time,
But You'll Need It In Order To Become A Better Pencil

You Will Always Be Able To Correct Any Mistakes You Might Make.

The Most Important Part Of You Will Always Be What's Inside.

On Every Surface You Are Used, You Must Leave Your Mark;
No Matter What The Condition, You Must Continue To Write

If we implement these advices in our lives, we will be able to maintain justice towards us and others.

Conclusion

Allah SWT Reminds Us Who The Owner Of All Conditions Is In Quran;

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ
وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِإِذْنِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ



Say: O Allah. Lord Of Power (And Rule),
Thou Givest Power To Whom Thou Pleasest,
And Thou Strippest Off Power From Whom Thou Pleasest;
Thou Enduest With Honour Whom Thou Pleasest,
And Thou Bringest Low Whom Thou Pleasest;
In Thy Hand Is All Good.
Verily, Over All Things Thou Hast Power!
(3:26)

The practice of referring to Qur'an and sunnah for guidance, consultation and obedience keeps our nafs (self) in check and allows us to be humbled to those above us; this in turn brings more guidance and justice from Allah. Thus the more we have humility to others and Allah, the more we will be just and have the ability to alleviate oppression from ourselves and our societies.

May Allah SWT grant us the ability to break this vicious cycle and grant us internal freedom to help us attain the external freedom and dignity
InshaAllah. Ameen.

Da'ee Ahmed Moait

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