

Oppression Part 2

High Tech Civilization, Fast Life

And Its Effects On Individuals, Family And Society

Oppression is the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner. In the previous article on the topic of oppression, we discussed the concept on personal and social level and suggested Islamic teachings on how to combat this atrocity. In this treatise, we will tackle the issue of oppression from a different point of view and will, by the Will of Allah, give you a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Civilization And Technology

Complementing Or Contending Forces?

Anything that violates the right of a person or hinders him from thinking, behaving, and making decisions based on personal interest and exercising the freedom that Allah has created humans with is considered oppression. Anything from economic, psychological, or technological point of view that prevents a person from living according to his or her innate liking or comfort can be considered oppressive. The daily bombardment on a human brain from demands of fast life, instant communication, microwave and harmonic signal exposure, processed food industry, fashion industry, and media, to the use of chemicals in daily usage products such as medication and cleaning supplies—all have irrevocable effects. Voluntarily or involuntarily, consciously or subliminally, our behavior, emotions, feelings, the way we make decisions—hence our lifestyle is affected by all these entities that we are exposed to. Can we honestly claim that we are living according to what is best for us? Aren't we all oppressed on some level by these non-tangible, non-controllable elements surrounding us?

Humans are an amazing creation of the Almighty; they are able to generate and solve immensely complex situations, yet need simplicity in their sustenance. If we take the example of food and how it has changed in the last century in terms of its complexity and richness, we will find substantial correlations with increased health related issues. Human beings are made up of two components—biological and emotional. The biological wellbeing of a person has a direct effect on his emotional well being and vice versa. In the

same context, if a person is under severe stress, its effects will be manifested physically on the person.

All of the above mentioned elements with high speed style of life generate unbearable amount of pressure— physical, emotional, and mental. As a result we find stress, headaches, confusion, and psychological illnesses to be a norm. Increasing numbers of suicides—especially in developed countries— also cause us to stop and think as to what really is going on.

If we as individuals are under so much emotional stress and anxiety, what effects do you think it will have over our relationships, families, spouses, neighbors, and society in large. If everyone is just as stressed out as the other person, who is expected to behave rationally? And who balances whom?

There is a rat race out there of higher speed devices and more advanced technology; with this increase in technology the expectation level also rises. Now more advanced and complex tasks can be accomplished in shorter period of time; and in a competitive society like ours, human limitations are barely acknowledged. This culture of difficult tasks in shorter span of time is visible in all work places and causes anxiety and mental breakdowns. Due to this *busy-ness*, there is lack of reflection and contemplation time which in turn eradicates moral values from the society to the point mischief, corruption, selfishness, greed, revenge, injustice, oppression, suicides and murder become part of daily lives. This causes humans to lose trust of each other and in turn causes more stress which gives rise to isolation, escape from reality through the use of drugs and alcohol, and unrestricted indulgence in carnal desires.

This attitude is not limited to individuals only. We see a division on the societal level between high, middle and low classes divided based on economy. This is translated to a higher level where nations are also divided between super powers, developed, and third world counties. We see massive amount of riches divided among the few of the society. Larger, more advanced nations usurping the wealth of poorer, defenseless nations to the point 1/3 of earth's population lives under poverty. This harbors misery, ignorance, despair, and discontentment among a large population of this earth. The head of this problem is the greed of those few who are aiming for power, fame, and prestige even if at the expense of others. This individuality of thinking and the diseases of the heart have created unrestrained monsters in three piece suits that are running the world show today. The bankruptcy of internal stability, justice, calmness, harmony, balance, the desire of positive contribution have left us as a society, vulnerable for creating, and from being attacked by such individuals.

With all the technology at the tip of our fingers we lack knowledge and understanding about the simplest aspects of life— from how to eat healthy to how to have a healthy

relationship with our spouse. We acquire knowledge not for the sake of enhancing our lives, but for the sake of obtaining more money. Instead of caring about ourselves and our souls, we as humans are running around trying to satisfy the status quo and to be accepted by everyone around us—regardless of the toll we pay in the process. Our world does not represent civilization anymore where strong aid the needy; rather it is ‘the survival of the fittest’ and rule of the jungle, with powerful feeding off the needy.

Where Are Muslims In the Picture?

What is the difference between Muslims and others when we analyze this issue? Honestly speaking: There is no difference! Only that we play the game with the logo of Islam. Now the real question is: Is this really Islam? No way! Islam came to eradicate oppression from society. It came to take people from the darkness of injustice to the light of justice; from shackles of slavery to the society to the slavery of one and only Lord; from the tightness of oppression on earth to the infinite pleasure of the hereafter. Allah SWT said in *Surah A'raf*:

أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

أَدْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

وَلَا تَفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ

اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

Is it not His to create and to govern? Blessed be Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds! Call on your Lord with humility and in private: for Allah loves not those who trespass beyond bounds. Do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): for the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good. (7: 54-56)

He (SWT) goes on to say in a *hadeeth qudsi*:

O My servants, I have forbidden oppression for Myself and have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress one another. (Muslim, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah)

What happens when we don't heed the advice of the Almighty and oppress ourselves and others? It generates a domino effect in society that has no end: everyone higher and

stronger in society will exercise oppression on those under their authority. We, as humans, are not limited with our oppression to other humans only; this corruption is perpetrated on our environment, rivers, sea, mountains, trees, animals, fish and everything else in existence.

Going back to our topic, there is a reason Allah SWT always sent his message with the messengers. If He (SWT) wanted, he could have sent the books by any means from which we could derive laws and rules. Allah SWT chose the nation of Muhammad (SAW) to convey the message of Allah and called them the 'middle nation'—the nation that is balanced. It is our duty to develop the quality of real Muslims in our conduct and manners in order to be role models for the world. The humanity is bereft of quality; people are hungry for real essence of humanity and this is the void we have to fill.

Just as important as acquiring the knowledge is its right implementation. If we want to break this cycle of oppression, first in ourselves and then in society, we have to start by seeking out those successful souls who have been blessed by Allah to have the knowledge of purification of the heart. We need to be under their supervision until we develop enough awareness and vigilance to break the cycle.

What has happened to the process of seeking sacred knowledge?

Today majority of the Muslim youth rely on "Sheikh Computer" to gain their knowledge and now there is a new sheikh in town—"Sheikh I-Phone", more convenient and user-friendly. Look at the side effect of such knowledge without the guidance of a teacher, leader, role model or a person with quality. There is massive knowledge available all around us but we forget that the nations before us also had knowledge and technologies yet what became of them? We forget how many verses in the Quran are warning us about nations and civilizations before us that decorated the earth, built and accumulated yet they aggressed and oppressed till Allah finished them completely with their own knowledge, arrogance and accumulation. Similarly today, we meet a lot of young people with knowledge on the tongue and memory but bereft of manners and qualities. When they get married and become parents, they transfer this baggage of selfishness, greed, and individuality to their families; thus they fail to generate a harmonious family and the vicious cycle of oppression continues.

All this is going on in the Muslim world because we have broken the sacred tradition of gaining knowledge and wisdom from our elders. Those who have comprehensive, wide, and in-depth understanding of many elements in life are moved to the side lines as spectators while the self-educated scholars have become the spokespeople of this religion. This generates more individuality, stubbornness, liking of one's own understanding, division, and so on.

Looking at the overall condition of the Muslim *Ummah*, this break in the chain of acquiring knowledge seems like such a minor issue. But when you look at its side effects on the individuals, family and society as a whole, it is anything but a minor concern. When the humility of learning from elders is not developed it has long lasting effects; there is more division; lack of leadership; absence of unity within the community, family, and society; lack of love, compassion, peace, tranquility, harmony, justice, generosity, consideration—bankruptcy from all qualities we Muslims should be famous with. This absence of actual character and quality generates a hollow human being which in turn creates a sick nucleus of a nation (family). This generates children with complex and diminished personalities, broken souls and spirit, weak faith and understanding in life, ignorance, and arrogance. These children will grow up to be future spouses and parents and thus the cycle continues.

Expose this weak spirited, hollow individual to the psychological and emotional stress, pressure, and confusion prevalent in our society, and we have a failed human being. We reap the outcome of this failure in the form of domestic violence, theft, deception, alcoholism, drug indulgence, and bankruptcy of moral values. This generates emptiness and sadness inside a human being which they then try to fill with more tech toys and other material wealth. The real happiness is to be found inside the human soul. This happiness and tranquility is obtained through high moral standing with the Almighty Creator, proper understanding of life, and true consideration and justice for all human beings.

The real problem arises when everyone is in the state of taking and no one is willing to give. If everyone is concerned about what they need, like, love, and desire then what happens to *others*? Yet at the same time those who *are* willing to give, what *can* they give? Can blind lead another blind? Can a cup give except what is inside? So if we do not develop ourselves, then even if we desire to spread goodness, we will not succeed except in causing more harm and confusion in society.

We will relate verses of the Qur'an that Allah SWT revealed as warning against heedlessness and arrogance of humans over their advancement. We will notice that any time a nation became arrogant over its achievements and forgot its Creator, He (SWT) brought it low or destroyed it completely.

أَوَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ
مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَأَنْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ

بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

Do they see nothing in the government of the heavens and the earth and all that Allah has created? (Do they not see) that it may well be that their terms is nigh drawing to an end? In what message after this will they then believe? (7:185)

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ
كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا
وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۖ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَٰكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ
يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them? They were superior to them in strength: they tilled the soil and populated it in greater numbers than these have done: there came to them their apostles with Clear (Signs). (Which they rejected, to their own destruction): It was not Allah Who wronged them, but they wronged their own souls. (30:9)

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ
وَكَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعْجِزَهُ مِن شَيْءٍ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَلَا
فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيمًا قَدِيرًا ﴿٤٤﴾

Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the End of those before them, - though they were superior to them in strength? Nor is Allah to be frustrated by anything whatever in the heavens or on earth: for He is All-Knowing. All-Powerful. (35:44)

﴿ أَوْ لَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الَّذِينَ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَانُوا هُمْ أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَعَآثَرًا فِي
الْأَرْضِ فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَاقٍ ﴿٢١﴾

Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the End of those before them? They were even superior to them in strength, and in the traces (they have left) in the land: but Allah did call them to account for their sins, and none had they to defend them against Allah. (40:21)

﴿ أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ
كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ قُوَّةً وَعَآثَرًا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا
يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the End of those before them? They were more numerous than these and superior in strength and in the traces (they have left) in the land: Yet all that they accomplished was of no profit to them. (40: 82)

﴿ أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ
دَمَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ أَمْثَلُهَا ﴿١٠﴾

Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the End of those before them (who did evil)? Allah brought utter destruction on them, and similar (fates await) those who reject Allah. (47:10)

أَسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ
فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتِ الْأَوَّلِينَ فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا وَلَن تَجِدَ

لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٤٣﴾

On account of their arrogance in the land and their plotting of Evil, but the plotting of Evil will hem in only the authors thereof. Now are they but looking for the way the ancients were dealt with? But no change will you find in Allah's way (of dealing): no turning off will you find in Allah's way (of dealing). (35:43)

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ

عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

And they rejected those Signs in iniquity and arrogance, though their souls were convinced thereof: so see what was the end of those who acted corruptly! (27:14)

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ انظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ ﴿١١﴾

Say: "Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth." (6:11)

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا
اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَقَّتْ
عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ

الْمُكْذِبِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

For We assuredly sent amongst every People an apostle, (with the Command), "Serve Allah, and eschew Evil": of the People were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom error became inevitably (established). So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the Truth). (16:36)

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

Say: "Go ye through the earth and see what has been the end of those guilty (of sin)." (27:69)

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ

كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

"Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those before (you): Most of them worshipped others besides Allah." (30:42)

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا

فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ

خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

Nor did We send before you (as apostles) any but men, whom we did inspire,- (men) living in human habitations. Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them? But the home of the hereafter is best, for those who do right. Will you not then understand? (12:109)

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُون لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ
 بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ
 وَلَكِن تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ ﴿٤٦﴾

Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts. (22:46)

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
 الْمُكْذِبِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

Many were the Ways of Life that have passed away before you: travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth. (3:137)

Achieving the Balance:

Is this the beginning of modern civilization or the end? I believe mankind is running full speed to its downfall and destruction. Majority of people, including Muslims, are in a state of heedlessness, blindness, and arrogance; and instead of following the guidance, wisdom, mercy and peace of the teachings of the Almighty and His prophet (SAW), we are determined to cause our destruction. We are all so busy, yet so empty in our lives—bereft of purpose, goal, and quality; is that what we are created for? We have to achieve balance in our lives which is not a matter of choice anymore, rather a matter of intense importance and necessary for spiritual elevation.

Technologically:

William Powers wrote a book titled Hamlet's Blackberry which is a soulful polemic that challenges the sacred dogma of the digital age. He presents both positive and negative effects of being attached to technology and its side effects on humans. An important point the book forces one to think about is “what is technology doing to human relations? Is it keeping us more connected or is it in fact separating us?” Today husbands and wives text message each other and declare their love in digitally written text. Does it have the same effect that the close human interaction and verbal transaction produces? Is checking on the

person via text equal the visit and the smile? Can email and text messages convey warmth, love, and consideration which in reality are the core of human relations? What is next—a picture of a fruit basket in place of the actual fruit?

Environmentally:

So the idea is to wean ourselves off of technology to attain balance in our lives. We want to use everything at our disposal but not abuse it. The minimum we owe ourselves is to acquire information about main elements affecting our lives to figure out how we can minimize their effects on us; so that we are more influential than these elements in our lives. This acquisition of knowledge transcends all areas of life from foods we eat to the air we breath. We have to start making wise decisions, not only keeping our interests in mind but the interest of our environment and entire humanity. When we learn about these elements affecting us, we will eventually learn to control their effects on us and will be able to bring back the harmony in earth the way Allah SWT had intended it to be.

Emotionally:

This justice and peace in earth is a reflection of the peace and justice we have inside us. If we are not at peace inside, we will not be able to develop a peaceful environment around us. If individuals are not at peace, it reflects in the form of injustice on the societal level; this in turn is shown in the form of oppression one nation perpetrates on another. This ability of establishing balance and justice is a gift from Allah for humans; therefore it is possible for us to achieve it. Allah SWT says in *Surah Rahman*:

الرَّحْمَنُ ۙ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ خَلَقَ الْإِنسَانَ ۚ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ۚ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ ۝
وَالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدَانِ ۚ وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ ۚ أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ ۝
وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ ۝

(Allah)) Most Gracious! It is He Who has taught the Qur'an. He has created man: He has taught him speech (and intelligence). The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed; And the herbs and the trees - both (alike) bow in adoration. And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice), In order that ye may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance. (55:1—9)

Let's take the example of nuclear waste; it is the product of developed countries which is often dumped in oceans and lands near the third world nations. Therefore, poor people have to pay for the luxury of the rich in the form of severe health and environmental crises. Another example is the life of honey bees and how human greed to produce more lead to

experimentation with pesticides which ended up eradicating entire colonies of bees. This natural method of pollination is at risk which will oppress masses in terms of food shortages and higher cost prices.

Is There A Solution?

If we go back to the basic teachings of our *deen* and follow the messengers and prophets who were sent as role models for us in terms of thinking, love, behavior, goal in life, and character, do we think we will lose? Allah SWT has a *sunnah* or a decisive way of doing things. This *sunnah* never changes though time, place and people may change. If we look at the way of successful communities in history and follow what granted them this success, we will achieve the same. In the same way, if we follow the footsteps of the destroyed nations, how can we expect otherwise? This destruction from Allah came to earlier nations in the form of earthquakes, volcanoes, drought, floods, mudslides, famine—crisis after crisis until the nation lost its footing and collapsed. Aren't we going through the same? How do we prevent this destruction? Dissolve the cycle of oppression inside of yourself. If each individual is vigilant about not causing oppression to its surroundings, other creatures and humans; and makes wise decisions while keeping the benefit of entire society in mind, we might still be able to prevent further damage.

Allah SWT has promised that this *deen* will rise and be prevalent. The question or matter of concern is, are we going to be part of this elevation or it will take place without us? Allah SWT said in the Qur'an:

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَن يَرْتَدَّ مِنكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ
يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن
يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

O you who have attained to faith! If you ever abandon your faith, "God will in time bring forth [in your stead] people whom He loves and who love Him - humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth: [people] who strive hard in God's cause, and do not fear to be censured by anyone who might censure them: such is God's favor, which He grants unto whom He wills. And God is infinite, all-knowing.(5:54)

We have to break this cycle of oppression in ourselves and our communities. If we don't do it, who will? If we don't stand up for what is right according to Allah and His Prophet and let others—be it our own families—oppress us into making ignorant decisions, how will we face Allah?

Allah SWT allowed Muslims in Makkah to migrate to Abyssinia (which was not even a Muslim land) for the sake of safety—physical and spiritual. If we are in an environment that is oppressing us into living against the teachings of Allah and His Prophet and our *Iman* is not growing, then the door of migration is open. Allah SWT said:

يَعْبَادِي الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّ أَرْضِي وَاسِعَةٌ فَإِنِّي فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

O My servants who believe! truly, spacious is My Earth: therefore serve ye Me - (and Me alone)! (29:56)

For those born into Muslim families, the issue can arise of the filial piety and the responsibility towards the family. Also, so called religious families can discourage any such migration by stating the importance of breaking one's *nafs* and contentment with the *Qadr*. They will be absolutely right but here comes the importance of gaining proper knowledge. There are two kinds of *Qadr*:

1. We have no control over it such as a disease and at a time like this, we should be content and thank Allah for what He gave us.
2. We have control over it. If we are in an environment which is not facilitating to our *Iman* and we are unable to remain focused on our goal of *Akhirah*, then it is incumbent upon us to try our best to change the situation.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّيْنَاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضَ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿٩٧﴾

When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say: "In what (plight) Were ye?" They reply: "Weak and oppressed Were we in the earth." They say: "Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (From evil)?" Such men will find their abode in Hell,- What an evil refuge! (4:97)

Of course, we will be judged based on our intentions. If anyone uses this argument to move away from their families and their intention is nothing but to run away from responsibility or any such idea, then they will be judged accordingly; our job is to only communicate the accurate knowledge.

We have to strengthen our hearts and learn to prioritize Allah and His religion in our lives. If all our decisions come with Islam as their priority, then these will not be decisions of oppressed people but rather winners of their hearts and souls. It cannot be stressed enough that the real victory is internal, no matter what the condition of the physical surroundings might be. Once the person develops this victory inside, it will reflect in his attitude and behavior and he will have strength enough to demand victory outside, or migrate away from oppression.

Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

“There should be neither harming, nor reciprocating harm”

If we develop the right comprehension of the words of Allah and His Prophet SAW, then our lives will automatically be free from oppression and emotional constraints. This will also lead to achievement of real happiness which is to be found inside the human soul.

May Allah SWT allow us to develop the sincerity and honesty that will allow us to take the message of Islam seriously and realize the extent of responsibility on our shoulders. May Allah SWT grant us strength and courage to remove the shackles of oppression from our lives and stand up for everything that is righteous. May Allah SWT allow us to leave a legacy of goodness and courage in this earth and not let us die until we have pleased Him. May we become those blessed slaves of Allah who do not oppress anyone nor let anyone oppress us till we lose ourselves. *Ameen*

Reminder:

Allah SWT has filled this earth with signs of His existence and proofs of His Word. If we look at the injustices around us and see the extent of oppression perpetrated in our societies we will develop the awareness and eventually, disliking of it in our hearts. This disliking will lead to zealotry to bring about change and will help in dissolution of the cycle of oppression. Therefore, Allah SWT stresses the importance of contemplating on His signs in the following words:

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

Behold! in this is a sign for those who believed. (15:77)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١١﴾

Verily in this is a sign for those who give thought. (16:11)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

Verily in this is a sign for men who celebrate the praises of Allah (in gratitude). (16:13)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

Verily in this is a Sign for those who listen. (16:65)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

Behold, in this also is a sign for those who are wise. (16:67)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

Verily in this is a Sign for those who give thought. (16:69)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾

Verily, in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe. (26: 8)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe. (26:67)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

Verily in this is a Sign but most of them do not believe. (26:103)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe. (26:121)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٢١﴾

Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe. (26:139)

وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ آيَةٍ مِّنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا
مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

Not a Sign comes to them from among the Signs of their Lord, but they turn away therefrom. (36: 46)

وَمَا نُزِرِيهِمْ مِّنْ آيَةٍ إِلَّا هِيَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أُخْتِهَا
وَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

We showed them Sign after Sign, each greater than its fellow, and We seized them with Punishment, in order that they might turn (to Us) (43: 48)

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آيَاتِ
رَبِّكَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيْمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ ءَامَنَتْ
مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا خَيْرًا ۗ قُلِ انْتَظِرُوا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

Are they waiting to see if the angels come to them, or thy Lord (Himself), or certain of the signs of thy Lord! the day that certain of the signs of your Lord do come, no good will it do to a

soul to believe in them then if it believed not before nor earned righteousness through its faith. Say: "Wait you: we too are waiting." (6:158)

كَذَّابٍ عَالٍ فِرْعَوْنُ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ
بِذُنُوبِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٥٢﴾

"(Deeds) after the manner of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them: They rejected the Signs of Allah, and Allah punished them for their crimes: for Allah is Strong, and Strict in punishment: (8:52)

وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾

Nor be of those who reject the signs of Allah, or you shall be of those who perish. (10:95)

وَمَا مَنَعَنَا أَنْ نُرْسِلَ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا أَنْ كَذَّبَ بِهَا الْأُولُونَ وَعَاتَيْنَا
ثَمُودَ النَّاقَةَ مُبْصِرَةً فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا وَمَا نُرْسِلُ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا تَخْوِيفًا ﴿٥٩﴾

And We refrain from sending the signs, only because the men of former generations treated them as false: We sent the she-camel to the Thamud to open their eyes, but they treated her wrongfully: We only send the Signs by way of terror (and warning from evil). (17: 59)

يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ ﴿٢﴾

He doth regulate all affairs, explaining the signs in detail, that ye may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord. (13:2)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣﴾

Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who consider! (13:3)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾

Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who understand! (13:4)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ ﴿٥﴾

Verily in this there are Signs for such as are firmly patient and constant,- grateful and appreciative. (14: 5)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

Behold! in this are Signs for those who by tokens do understand. (15: 75)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

Verily in this are Signs for men who are wise. (16:12)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

Verily in this are signs for those who believe. (16: 79)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَا يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٤﴾

Those who believe not in the Signs of Allah, Allah will not guide them, and theirs will be a grievous Penalty. (16:104)

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