

Modern Oppression

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 topic at personal and social level and suggested Islamic teachings on how to combat this atrocity. In this piece, we will tackle the issue of oppression from a different point of view by the Will of Allah, and will 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 interests and exercising the freedom that Allah has created people 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, media, the use of chemicals in daily usage products such as medications and cleaning supplies—all have irrevocable effects.

Voluntarily or involuntarily, consciously or subliminally, our behaviors, emotions, feelings, and decisions—in other words our entire lifestyle is affected by 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 lives. 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 processed food and increased health 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. Vice versa, if a person is under severe stress its effects will be manifested physically on him.

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 this will have on our relationships, families, spouses, neighbors, and society at 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 levels also rise. Now more advanced and complex tasks can be accomplished in shorter periods 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 indulgences 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 based on economy. This is translated on international level where nations are divided between super powers, developed, and third world countries. 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 discontent 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, and 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 spouses. 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 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 the

slavery of society to the slavery of one and only Lord; from the tension of oppression on earth to the infinite pleasure of the hereafter. Allah SWT says in *Surah A'raf*:

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى
الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ
مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ ۗ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

أَدْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ۚ إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ
اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

Indeed, your Lord is Allah , who created the heavens and earth in six days and then established Himself above the Throne. He covers the night with the day, [another night] chasing it rapidly; and [He created] the sun, the moon, and the stars, subjected by His command. Unquestionably, His is the creation and the command; blessed is Allah , Lord of the worlds. Call upon your Lord in humility and privately; indeed, He does not like transgressors. And cause not corruption upon the earth after its reformation. And invoke Him in fear and aspiration. Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of 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 expands to 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. Messengers were sent to set the example of righteous behavior and to be role models for people.

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 correct 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 effects of such knowledge without the guidance of a teacher, leader, role model or a person with quality. There is massive amount of 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 Qur'an 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—regardless of their 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 continues to generate 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 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, and consideration

Meaning 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 produces 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 live the way they have learned from their 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 material wealth.

Material wealth can never bring true contentment and happiness in a person. 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 further harm and confusion in the 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 أَجْلُهُمْ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ
 بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

Do they not look into the realm of the heavens and the earth and everything that Allah has created and [think] that perhaps their appointed time has come near? So in what statement hereafter will they believe? (7:185)

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ
 كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا
 وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ
 يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٩﴾

Have they not traveled through the earth and observed how was the end of those before them? They were greater than them in power, and they plowed the earth and built it up more than they have built it up, and their messengers came to them with clear evidences. And Allah would not ever have wronged them, but they were wronging themselves. (30:9)

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

Have they not traveled through the land and observed how was the end of those before them? And they were greater than them in power. But Allah is not to be caused failure by anything in the heavens or on the earth. Indeed, He is ever Knowing and Competent. (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﴾

Have they not traveled through the land and observed how was the end of those who were before them? They were greater than them in strength and in impression on the land, but Allah seized them for their sins. And they had not from Allah any protector. (40:21)

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

Have they not traveled through the land and observed how was the end of those before them? They were more numerous than themselves and greater in strength and in impression on the land, but they were not availed by what they used to earn. (40: 82)

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

Have they not traveled through the land and seen how was the end of those before them? Allah destroyed [everything] over them, and for the disbelievers is something comparable. (47:10)

أَسْتَكْبَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ
فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا وَلَن تَجِدَ
لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٤٣﴾

[Due to] arrogance in the land and plotting of evil; but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people. Then do they await except the way of the former peoples? But you will never find in the way of Allah any change, and you will never find in the way of Allah any alteration. (35:43)

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ
عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

And they rejected them, while their [inner] selves were convinced thereof, out of injustice and haughtiness. So see how was the end of the corrupters. (27:14)

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

Say, "Travel through the land; then observe how was the end of the deniers." (6:11)

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا
اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ ۗ فَمِنْهُمْ مَن هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن حَقَّتْ
عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], "Worship Allah and avoid Taghut." And among them were those whom Allah guided, and among them were those upon whom error was [deservedly] decreed. So proceed through the earth and observe how was the end of the deniers. (16:36)

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

Say, [O Muhammad], "Travel through the land and observe how was the end of the criminals." (27:69)

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلُ
كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّشْرِكِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

Say, [O Muhammad], "Travel through the land and observe how was the end of those before. Most of them were associators [of others with 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﴾

And We sent not before you [as messengers] except men to whom We revealed from among the people of cities. So have they not traveled through the earth and observed how was the end of those before them? And the home of the Hereafter is best for those who fear Allah ; then will you not reason? (12:109)

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

So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts. (22:46)

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

Similar situations [as yours] have passed on before you, so proceed throughout the earth and observe how was the end of those who denied. (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 this 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 our spiritual elevation.

Technological Balance:

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 digitally. Do they have the same effect that close human interactions and verbal transactions produce? 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—picture of a fruit basket in place of the actual fruit?

Environmental Balance:

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 and in control than these elements over our lives.

This knowledge should encompass all areas of life from the food we eat to the air we breathe. We have to start making wise decisions, not only keeping our interests in mind but the interest of our environment and the entire humanity. When we learn about these elements affecting us, we will eventually begin to control their effects on us and will be able to bring back the harmony in earth the way Allah SWT had created it.

Emotional Balance:

The 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; which in turn is shown in the oppression one nation perpetrates on another.

The 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 ﴿١﴾

عَلَّمَ الْقُرْءَانَ ﴿٢﴾

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ ﴿٣﴾

عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ﴿٤﴾

الشمس والقمر بحسبان ﴿٥﴾

والنجم والشجر يسجدان ﴿٦﴾

والسمااء رفعها ووضع الميزان ﴿٧﴾

ألا تطغوا في الميزان ﴿٨﴾

واقيموا الوزن بالقسط ولا تخسروا الميزان ﴿٩﴾

The Most Merciful. Taught the Qur'an, Created man, [And] taught him eloquence. The sun and the moon [move] by precise calculation, And the stars and trees prostrate. And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance That you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient 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 led to experimentation with pesticides which ended up eradicating entire bee colonies. The natural method of pollination is at risk in general which will oppress masses through 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, 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 successful communities in history and follow the procedures that brought 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? The destruction from Allah came to earlier nations in the form of earthquakes, volcanoes, droughts, floods, mudslides, famine—crisis after crises until the nation lost its footing and collapsed. Aren't we going through the same?

So how can we prevent this destruction? By dissolving the cycle of oppression inside of ourselves. 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 a part of this elevation or will it 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 ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن
يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

O you who have believed, whoever of you should revert from his religion - Allah will bring forth [in place of them] a people He will love and who will love Him [who are] humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allah and do not fear the blame of a critic. That is the favor of Allah ; He bestows it upon whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and 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 Abbyssinia (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:

يَعِبَادِي الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّ أَرْضِي وَاسِعَةٌ فَإِيَّايَ فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

O My servants who have believed, indeed My earth is spacious, so worship only Me. (29:56)

For those born into Muslim families, the issue of filial piety and responsibility towards the family can arise. Also, so called religious families can discourage any such migration by

stating the importance of breaking one's *nafs* and being content 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, accident or something against our will. In situations like these we should be content and thank Allah for what He has given 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 تَوَفَّيْتَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا
مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضَ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا
فَأُولَئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿٩٧﴾

Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves - [the angels] will say, "In what [condition] were you?" They will say, "We were oppressed in the land." The angels will say, "Was not the earth of Allah spacious [enough] for you to emigrate therein?" For those, their refuge is Hell - and evil it is as a destination. (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 and understanding.

We have to strengthen our hearts and learn to prioritize Allah and His religion in our lives. If all our decisions are made with Islam as the priority, then these will not be decisions of oppressed people but of those who have won 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” (Ibn Majah)

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 the real happiness which is to be found inside the human soul.

May Allah SWT allow us to develop the sincerity and honesty 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 neither oppress anyone nor let anyone oppress them to the point they lose their own souls. *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 breaking this cycle of oppression. Therefore, Allah SWT stresses the importance of contemplating on His signs in the following words:

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

Indeed in that is a sign for the believers. (15:77)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١١﴾

Indeed in that is a sign for a people who give thought. (16:11)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

Indeed in that is a sign for a people who remember. (16:13)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

Indeed in that is a sign for a people who listen. (16:65)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

Indeed in that is a sign for a people who reason. (16:67)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

Indeed in that is a sign for a people who give thought. (16:69)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾

Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers. (26:8)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers. (26:67)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers. (26:103)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾

Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers. (26:121)

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

﴿١٣٩﴾

Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers. (26:139)

وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ آيَةٍ مِّنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا

مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

And no sign comes to them from the signs of their Lord except that they are from it turning away. (36:46)

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

And We showed them not a sign except that it was greater than its sister, and We seized them with affliction that perhaps they might return [to faith]. (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 انْتظِرُوا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

Do they [then] wait for anything except that the angels should come to them or your Lord should come or that there come some of the signs of your Lord? The Day that some of the signs of your Lord will come no soul will benefit from its faith as long as it had not believed before or had earned through its faith some good. Say, "Wait. Indeed, we [also] are waiting." (6:158)

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

[Theirs is] like the custom of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them. They disbelieved in the signs of Allah , so Allah seized them for their sins. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and severe in penalty. (8:52)

وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَتَكُونُوا مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾

And never be of those who deny the signs of Allah and [thus] be among the losers. (10:95)

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

And nothing has prevented Us from sending signs except that the former peoples denied them. And We gave Thamud the she-camel as a visible sign, but they wronged her. And We send not the signs except as a warning. (17: 59)

كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ
رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ ﴿٢﴾

He arranges [each] matter; He details the signs that you may, of the meeting with your Lord, be certain.(13:2)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣﴾

Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought. (13:3)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾

Indeed in that are signs for a people who reason. (13:4)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ ﴿٥﴾

Indeed in that are signs for everyone patient and grateful. (14: 5)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

Indeed in that are signs for those who discern. (15: 75)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

Indeed in that are signs for a people who reason. (16:12)

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

Indeed in that are signs for a people who believe. (16: 79)

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

Indeed, those who do not believe in the verses of Allah - Allah will not guide them, and for them is a painful punishment. (16:104)