

يَتَّيِّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ
تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنكُمْ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ

رَحِيمًا ﴿٢٩﴾

An-Nisa (The Women) 4:29

O You Who Believe!

- Do not eat up your property among yourselves in vanities.
- But let there be amongst you traffic and trade by mutual good-will.
- Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves.
- For verily Allah has been to you Most Merciful.

Commentary

Allamah Taba Tabai (AR)

The verses have a sort of connection with the preceding ones, inasmuch as these contain prohibition of swallowing up properties by wrongful means, while the former had, *inter alia*, prohibited usurping women's dowries by confining and restraining them and exceeding the limit. We may say that these verses describe a rule in its general form while the former had given one of its specific examples.

The connotation of eating is well-known; it means using up an edible item bit by bit by swallowing. As it implied mastery, control and consumption, they say: The fire ate the fire-wood; as the fire annihilates the wood by burning, it is likened to consuming the food by eating and swallowing. Also they say: He ate the property; i.e. he consumed it by getting control over it. This is because the main use a man makes of a property is to eat it, as taking food is the most essential thing man needs for his existence; that is why, if he uses a thing, it is said, He has eaten it. But the word is not applied to every use; it implies the use with complete mastery over the item in a way that removes all other's control over it; it may be through possession or such other authority. In short, he consumes the goods by having mastery over it as an eater uses up the food by eating.

Why has the clause, "do not swallow up your property", been qualified with the words, "among yourselves?" The qualifying phrase connotes collective earning and joint usage of property. Consequently it implies, or shows, that the forbidden swallowing up refers to that usage where the property is variously rotated and circulated among themselves.

Thus the sentence, when further qualified with, “by wrongful means”, makes such dealings unlawful which do not lead the society to happiness and success, which bring harm to it and push it to corruption and destruction; these are the dealings which are unlawful in the eyes of *shari’ah*, like interest, gambling and deceptive trade, e.g. selling something for stone-fruit or rubble and things like that.

Accordingly, the excepted clause, “except that it be trading by your mutual consent”, is unrelated to the main sentence; it is a disjointed exception; yet it was put here to remove a possible misunderstanding. When the verse prohibited eating up people’s property by wrongful means – and a lot of dealings prevalent in a corrupted society, through which properties change hands, are unlawful in the *shari’ah’s* eyes, like deals involving interest, cheating, gambling, etc. – someone could think that it would demolish the pillars of society, and tear the social fabric to pieces, leading people to perdition and destruction.

At-Tabrisi says in Majmaul-bayan about the words of Allah, *by wrongful means*, that there are two explanations given for it, one of which says that means: *usury, gambling, paying less than fair price, injustice*. And he says that this meaning is narrated from al-Baqir (AS).

Al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (AS) have said that it *means gambling, forbidden deals, usury and (false) oaths*. (Nahjul-bayan)

Asbat ibn Salid has said: “I was with Abu Abdillah (AS). A man came to him and said: “Tell me about the words of Allah,

- *you who believe! do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means.*’ He said:
- He refers here to gambling.
- And as for the words, *and do not kill yourselves*, He refers by it to a Muslim who attacks polytheists on his own, and enters their camps and is killed.
- So Allah has forbidden them to do so.

(at-Tafsir, al-Ayyashi)

The verse is general and covers all unlawful ways of swallowing up. Gambling and other similar things have been mentioned only as examples. In the same way, what has been said in explanation of killing oneself, actually enlarges the circle of prohibition instead of reducing it; it does not limit the meaning to the given example.

Mir Ahmed Ali (AR) and Aqa Mahdi Puya (AR)

Every believer's property is his own-Islam gives the right to own private property.

Fairplay and honesty in trade has been emphasised, and dishonesty has been described as killing one another.

Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars

1- Personal possession is respected while domination in others' properties is unlawful, except for correct bargaining which are perfected on mutual consent.

" O' you who have Faith! do not devour each other's property among yourselves in vanity, except that it be a trade by your mutual consent, ..."

2- A definite society, or an Ummah, has one unit of soul and a common fate.

" ... each other's property among yourselves ... "

3- Any kind of domination which is not based on 'divine truth' is forbidden. Some of its instances are; usurpation, theft, barring from inheritance, gambling, defraud, falsification, and purchasing the means of mischief and sin. It is so, because all of these instances are the examples of vanity.

"...do not devour each other's property among yourselves in vanity, ..."

4- Bargains should be performed on the basis of mutual consent, not compulsively or unwillingly.

" ... a trade by your mutual consent,..." "

5- The life of a person is respectable. Therefore, suicide, and murdering others is 'unlawful'.

" ... and do not kill your (own) selves (one another) ;..."