



Consumption Between Abundance and Slavery

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Consumption today is no longer merely an act to fulfill needs. It has become a thorough system that defines a person's value, and creates differences between people. This trend grew with the rise of Western materialism, turning modern culture into a constant pursuit of accumulation and showing off possessions. In the face of this, the Holy Qur'an remains the best proof of the power of divine revelation can free the mind, and guides desires towards balance, blessings, and true meaning.

First: Consumption between Need and Domination

It is impossible to understand the contemporary consumerist trend apart from its cultural context, which redefined humans as consumers before they were rational or moral beings. This trend gradually developed in the West alongside the rise of materialistic philosophy, which was accompanied by the industrial revolution, and later became embedded in a complete civilization that made consumption synonymous with success, existence, and identity.

In the past, consumption was a functional activity tied to fulfilling needs, sustaining life, and ensuring a decent living. Traditional agricultural societies knew clear limits between what was necessary and what was excess. Surplus was rare and seasonal. Religious culture also and local customs curbed wastefulness, maintaining the sufficiency.

However, with the rise of capitalist production, consumption shifted from the level of necessity to the level of self-assertion. Consumption became a symbol of social distinction and a measure of individual and class status. With the technological and media revolution, this meaning evolved into a stage of total domination: Western culture no longer just pushes people to buy, but also instills in them the deep belief that their need to possess is endless, and that their essential value is determined by how much they consume and display before others.

This transformation was the result of a complete economic and philosophical project. At the heart of this trend is a materialistic philosophy that views humans as passive consumers, driven by a constant sense of deficiency, not as free agents who regulate their desires with values of justice and moderation. The capitalist model requires a consumer who relentlessly chases after more, in order for the system to remain intact. Therefore, advertising, media, fashion myths, and image-making were all employed to cement consumption as both identity and lifestyle.

It is no surprise that this collective obsession with consumption has turned into an alternative religion. The major shopping malls have become new cathedrals, frequented by crowds seeking to cleanse their anxieties by purchasing. Thus, consumption has become a civic ritual, transcending cultures and borders, carrying promises of personal salvation, and presenting commodities as substitutes for values and meaning.

In this confusing scene, the Holy Qur'an presents a dual task:

1. Dismantling the illusion that makes consumption a purpose, rather than a means, and reduces humans to slaves of material things.
2. Establishing an ethical and moral standard that liberates consumer behavior from the dominance of uncontrolled desire, returning it to a center of balance and moderation.

It should be noted here that the Qur'anic discourse does not condemn enjoying the good things, but only rejects it when it turns into excess, arrogance, and futile competition. Many verses affirm the human right to benefit from Allah's blessings:

{Say, 'Who has forbidden the adornment of God which He has produced for His servants and the good provisions?'} [Al-A'raf, verse: 32].

At the same time, it links this right with ethical restraint and insight:

{And do not waste, for indeed, He does not like the wasteful.} [Al-A'raf, verse: 31].

This balanced and profound position makes the Qur'an a truly liberating text, offering an alternative to two extreme discourses: the rigid prohibition that sees every worldly pleasure as impure, and the contemporary discourse of indulgence that reduces humans to their instincts.

In a historical moment when meaning fades before the abundance of goods and the proliferation of offers, rationalizing consumption from a Qur'anic perspective becomes both a civilizational project and a resistant stance, because it does not merely regulate spending, but rejects the idea that a person's worth is tied to their ability to buy.

The awareness we need today goes beyond economic considerations, towards reviewing an entire civilizational system that has made consumerist tendency a tool of domination. Here, domination does not only mean flooding the markets, but also dissolving awareness and stripping humans of the standard of values.

Second: The Qur'anic Critique of Luxury and Extravagance as Mechanisms for the Destruction of Nations

The Qur'an presents a harsh critique of luxury, describing it as a pathological condition that goes beyond individual excess to become a collective sickness leading nations to destruction. This analytical thread can be seen as a common thread in the stories of the Prophets and the histories of vanished civilizations. No nation has ever grown wealthy in material possessions and indulged in their pleasures without their prosperity becoming the cause of their downfall. This idea is repeated in various places, to the point where it seems like a law or social principle:

{And when We intend to destroy a city, We command its affluent ones, and they commit sin within it; and thus the word comes into effect upon it, and We destroy it with complete destruction.} [Al-Isra: 16].

This verse clarifies the matter of societal destruction:

1. Luxury becomes a behavioral pattern among the affluent class.
2. Luxury leads to corruption: surpassing the limits of moderation and values.
3. This collective deviation results in the inevitable consequence, which is the destruction.

Here, the verse is not just an isolated moral statement, but also an analysis of a Qur'anic law that applies to all societies. When blessings become a means of tyranny, and material power turns into collective negligence, the countdown to ruin begins. The term "affluent" in the Qur'anic text encapsulates this meaning. They are not just rich individuals; they are a class where material abundance intersects with moral weakness. The Qur'an describes them clearly:

{And similarly, We did not send before you any warner into a city except that its affluent said, "Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are, in their footsteps, following.} [Az-Zukhruf, verse: 23.]

Through this verse, we can identify two dangerous mechanisms: The affluent create a justifying discourse that legitimizes luxury and shields it from criticism, relying on blind imitation and sanctification of what they found their ancestors doing, even if it is false. In the Qur'anic view, luxury cannot be seen simply as excess consumption, but rather as a system of moral distortion and denial of truth. Hence, when the Prophets confronted this luxury, they faced an impenetrable resistance.

One can use the story of the people of "Saba" as a clear example of this. Allah, Almighty, granted them great blessings:

{There was for Saba' in their dwelling place a sign: two gardens on the right and on the left. Eat from the provisions of your Lord and be grateful to Him. A good land, and a forgiving Lord.} [Saba, verse: 15].

But instead of remaining thankful and moderate, they turned to wastefulness and arrogance:

{But they turned away, so We sent upon them the flood of the dam} [Saba, verse: 16]. Here, their turning away was luxury and arrogance, stripping the blessing of its essence.

Luxury is also evident in the story of Qarun, who combined immense wealth with pride and boasting:

{Indeed, Qarun was from the people of Moses, but he tyrannized them. And We gave him of treasures whose keys would burden a band of strong men.} [Al-Qasas, verse: 76.]

Qarun believed that his wealth was the ultimate mark of superiority:

{He said, 'I was only given it because of knowledge I have.} [Al-Qasas, verse: 78].

This deep illusion of possessing the causes of wealth solely through his own efforts represents the essence of arrogance, which refuses to attribute the blessings to God. The result was decisive:

{So We caused the earth to swallow him and his home.} [Al-Qasas, verse: 81]

These stories are vivid reminders of the dangers of luxury when it becomes a collective culture. When we reflect on luxury and arrogance in the Qur'anic vision, we find that they share four basic characteristics:

1. Neglecting the source of blessings: The illusion that abundance is solely the result of personal effort.
2. Pride and boasting: Making material appearance a measure of distinction.
3. Indulgence in desires: Losing all sense of balance and moderation.
4. Rejection of reformist discourse: Resisting any call to reason or frugality.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Qur'anic critique of luxury is that it links it to the collapse of civilization, no matter how powerful the nation. Allah, A, mighty, says:

{And how many a city We have destroyed that was wrongdoer, and We raised up after it another people}. [Al-Anbiya: 11].

Here, the oppression of luxury and the negligence of arrogance, combined with general injustice, make ruin inevitable.

The struggle against consumerist tendency lies in confronting a deep psychological and civilizational structure that repeats throughout history. Luxury is always the root from which corruption and ingratitude spring.

Thus, we understand Allah's verses:

{Indeed, mankind transgresses when he sees himself self-sufficient.} [Al-Alaq, verse: 6-7].

Oppression does not begin with poverty, but with the illusion of material self-sufficiency. Luxury is not confined to the upper class in contemporary Western societies; it has become a generalized culture that pursues people across all social strata through advertising, propaganda, and the normalization of luxury as an absolute right, unbound by values or needs.

Therefore, the Qur'anic project links luxury with the corruption of the entire system,

as material oppression often turns into political and social injustice. Luxury, in its profound sense, represents the moment when the moral dignity of things collapses, turning them into consumerist idols worshipped by people unconsciously.

This vision makes the critique of luxury and arrogance central to liberating humans from their silent servitude to material abundance, and returning them to a state of balance, gratitude, and humility. With this Qur'anic critique, rationalizing consumption is not just an economic policy, but also a prophetic discourse confronting the Western consumerist project of hegemony, which replicates the models of Qarun and Saba in a modern guise.

Third: Consumption and Identity

The Qur'an addresses consumption as an existential issue, closely tied to how a person perceives their own self and the meaning of their life. Excessive consumer awareness brings about a fundamental shift in identity: from a free person to a follower subject to the power of desires and appearances.

This shift from freedom to servitude is the most dangerous effect of consumerist tendency on both the individual and society. Therefore, the Qur'an repeatedly warns against the material obsession that leads to forgetting the ultimate purpose of existence.

Let us reflect on the following verse: {Let them eat and enjoy themselves and be diverted by [false] hope, for they are going to know.} [Al-Hijr, verse: 3]. This verse brings together three key elements of excessive consumer culture:

1. Excessive eating and enjoyment: the unrestrained fulfillment of desires.
2. Distraction by hope: creating a false sense of future promises, where a person is constantly preoccupied with waiting for more pleasures.
3. Existential negligence: immersing oneself in this cycle without awareness.

Thus, it is no coincidence that the conclusion of this verse carries a clear threat: {for they are going to know.} [Al-Hijr, verse: 3]. This is an indication that this path will ultimately lead to a calamity that a person realizes too late.

The Qur'anic identity of a human being is based on a delicate balance between permissible enjoyment and continuous awareness. As stated in the verse: { But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world.} [Al-Qasas, verse: 77], Allah, Almighty, has set a clear standard: this world is not forbidden, but it has a known share. One can easily connect the term "share" to the concept of contentment. The original purpose is for this world to be a means to achieve the ultimate goal of the hereafter. However, a culture of excess overturns this balance, turning the worldly life into an end in itself and transforming the individual into a constant consumer.

The most dangerous aspect of this transformation is that it creates a false sense of fulfillment, hiding the true spiritual poverty. As Allah, Almighty, says: { Competition in

[worldly] increase diverts you* Until you visit the graveyards.) [At-Takathur, verses: 1-2]. This short verse points to the root of the problem:

- Accumulation: This is not merely the increase of wealth, but also a frantic race to possess the largest share of everything.
- Distraction: A state of absent-mindedness, where a person believes that accumulation increases their value and peace of mind.

In the Qur'anic discourse, human identity is built on what truly matters: honesty, gratitude, conscious detachment, and insight. Material abundance, if not guided by insight, turns into a chain that restricts human freedom. In our modern age, consumption is no longer merely an individual act but has become a condition for social belonging. People now define themselves by their purchasing identities: what they wear, eat, and drive. The Qur'an rejects this consumer-based identity and exposes its falsehood. Allah, Almighty, says: {And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.} [Aal-Imran, verse: 185]. Notice: Allah, Almighty did not say: "a lawful enjoyment" or "a lasting enjoyment," but called it "enjoyment of delusion," meaning it deceives a person and blinds them to their true self.

This Qur'anic awareness is what is missing in a world dominated by consumerist tendency. The competition for appearances has become part of building modern identity. When people are asked: "Who are you?" they implicitly respond: "I am what I own and what I show." However, the Qur'an places human value in awareness and guidance. Allah, Almighty, says: {And those who are guided - He increases them in guidance and gives them their righteousness.} [Mohammad, verse: 17]. Where does the consumerist mentality fit in this context? It destroys this awareness and instead creates a false identity based on appearances and momentary satisfaction.

Therefore, the Qur'anic critique of consumption is directed at the essence of identity: {So leave them in their confusion for a time.} [Al-Mu'minun, verse: 54]. [Ghamrah] The confusion refers to a state of total negligence that blinds the mind and heart.

Excessive consumption does not make people fulfilled, but rather submerged in a confusion [ghamrah], from which they will only emerge once they realize their true relationship with things. On a spiritual level, the heart consumed by appearances turns into a sealed heart, as Allah, Almighty, says: {Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil. And for them is a great punishment.} [Al-Baqarah, verse: 7]. This result is due to a continuous neglect and the chase for pleasure.

Rationalization, from a Qur'anic perspective, is a return to one's identity, not just a reduction in expenses. It is a moment of awareness that frees a person from false values and reawakens them to their self-awareness as a vicegerent, not as a consumer. This is why Allah, Almighty, says: {Nor strain thine eyes in longing for the things We have given for enjoyment to parties of them, the splendour of the life

of this world, through which We test them: but the provision of thy Lord is better and more enduring.) [Taha, verse: 131]. This verse summarizes the Qur'anic philosophy of liberating identity from the worship of appearances:

- Do not strain thine eyes: Do not make your gaze a prisoner of comparison.
- What We have given them for enjoyment: Temporary beauty that does not last.
- The provision of your Lord is better and more enduring: The values that endure are greater than the fleeting appearances.

In the face of the consumerist tendency trend, the Qur'an brings the human being back to the core of their identity: awareness, humility, gratitude, and conscious detachment. This identity is what protects them from the continuous loss of meaning.

Fourth: The Prophetic Economy, the Concept of Sufficiency

The Qur'anic discourse does not merely warn against luxury and excess, but rather presents an alternative economic vision that emphasizes moderation and sufficiency as noble goals, not signs of incapacity or deficiency. In contrast to the culture of accumulation and the relentless pursuit of more, the Qur'an learns humankind the value of sufficiency: that one should be content with what is sufficient, regulating their needs according to deeper purposes than mere desire.

Allah, Almighty, says: {And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor stingy, but hold a just balance between them.} [Al-Furqan, verse: 67]. This verse summarizes the philosophy of the prophetic economy in one word: "balance", a firm equilibrium that prevents both extravagance and miserliness. This balance is a moral standard that frees a person from the lust for accumulation and the fear of poverty at the same time.

It is important to note that the Qur'an does not set a numerical limit for spending, but rather a moral and spiritual limit that varies according to individual circumstances. Moderation is a relative concept, but its main criterion is that neither blessings turn into a test nor needs into humiliation.

In another verse, Allah, Almighty, explains the wisdom behind the variation in provision: {Allah extends provision for whom He wills and restricts it* Indeed, He is, of all things, Knowing.} [Ash-Shura, verse: 12]. This provision is a test by which Allah, Almighty, examines the gratitude and patience of His servants.

From this, it becomes clear that the prophetic economy in the Qur'an is based on three main objectives:

1. Achieving individual sufficiency without excess: So that a person lives with dignity, and do not enslaving themselves to accumulate what does not benefit.
2. Achieving social balance: So that wealth is not a cause for arrogance, nor poverty an excuse for humiliation.

3. Achieving spiritual liberation: So that the heart remains greater than the world and does not make its possessions the measure of dignity.

In Surah Al-Baqarah, this concept is clearly stated: {They ask you what they should spend. Say, 'The excess beyond your needs.'} [Al-Baqarah, verse: 219]. The "excess" here refers to what goes beyond one's immediate needs. The original concept in Islam is that a person should retain what suffices them and their family, and then give beyond that to others. This concept is fundamentally different from the Western capitalist philosophy, which makes accumulation an end in itself and considers excessive abundance a measure of success.

Allah, Almighty, says: {So that you do not grieve for what has escaped you and not rejoice for what He has given you. And Allah does not like every arrogant boaster.} [Al-Hadid, verse: 23]. This verse establishes the balance of the heart: that a person does not attach their value to what they possess or lose, because sufficiency is primarily a matter of the heart. The Qur'an redefines wealth, making it a servant to the human being, not its master.

In Surah Al-Qasas, Allah, Almighty, directs Qarun to turn the surplus of his wealth into a spiritual investment: {And seek by means of what Allah has given you the home of the Hereafter.} [Al-Qasas, verse: 77]. In this guidance, there is a great lesson: wealth, in and of itself, does not disgrace a person as long as it does not make them its servant.

One of the most beautiful aspects of the prophetic economy appears in Surah Saba: {Work, O family of David, in gratitude; and few of My servants are grateful.} [Saba, verse: 13]. Gratitude here is not verbal, but action: using blessings in their rightful place and turning them into sufficiency and productive work.

In reality, the concept of sufficiency opens the door to the meaning of blessings – that hidden energy that makes a little enough and makes contentment substitute for boasting. Allah, Almighty, says: {And if the people of those cities had believed and feared Allah, We would have opened to them blessings from the heavens and the earth.} [Al-A'raf, verse: 96]. Here, the blessing is the result of the value balance: neither excess destroys nor stinginess severs ties, and neither relentless striving humiliates.

Today, Western consumerist tendency promotes the model of "infinite abundance," which leads people to consume many times more than they need. In this model, the concept of contentment is completely absent, and things are constantly replaced before they fulfill their purpose.

The Qur'an, however, presents a contrasting model: sufficiency with what is enough, purposeful consumption, and wise spending. Allah says: {And give the relative his due, the poor, and the traveler. That is best for those who seek the face of Allah, and it is they who are the successful.} [Ar-Rum, verse: 38]. In this verse, Allah combines: righteous giving, seeking the face of Allah, and true success. Thus, the prophetic

economy becomes a spiritual practice, not just financial management. One of the most beautiful expressions of this balance appears in the verse: {Eat and drink, but do not waste. Indeed, He does not like the wasteful.} [Al-A'raf, verse: 31]. It is a call to enjoy what is permissible, restrained by moderation and awareness.

With this measure, sufficiency becomes a civilized methodology that protects a person from losing their identity, prevents society from the diseases of fierce competition, and frees the soul from the pain of comparison. The prophetic economy is the other face of liberation from contemporary servitude, because rationalization is not deprivation, but liberation: the liberation of the mind from illusion, the heart from greed, and identity from bondage.

Fifth: From Individual Rationalization to Critical Civilizational Project

The rationalization that the Qur'an proposes does not stop at the level of individual guidance, but goes beyond that to a critical civilizational project that confronts the tendency of consumption as a tool for cultural dominance and spiritual enslavement.

In today's world, consumption has become a soft power tool used by the West to dissolve identities, undermine value systems, and create a consumer-driven individual detached from his heritage and deeper purposes.

Allah, Almighty, says: {O you who have believed, do not follow the actions Satan. And whoever follows the footsteps of Satan - indeed, he enjoins immorality and wrong.} [An-Nur, verse: 21]. The actions of Satan here are not limited to obvious vices but refer to any path that lures humans into worshiping appearances over essence. It is clear that the excessive consumerist tendency today falls into this path when it transforms human life into an endless cycle of artificial desires.

The submission of nations to this consumerist pattern implicitly means accepting the West's leadership of the global civilizational model, with all its materialism, triviality, and degradation of meaning. Perhaps the most striking verse in this context is: {And do not incline toward those who wronged, lest you be touched by the Fire.} [Hud, verse: 113]. Here, "inclining" refers to immersing oneself in their value system and lifestyle, causing a nation to lose its identity and uniqueness. Rationalization, in this perspective, is a form of resistance against the soft occupation of the mind and soul.

In this context, we must understand that the consciousness struggle precedes the behavior struggle. The consumer who is enslaved by the Western imagination cannot free himself from the grip of imitation, no matter how much he is preached moral lessons. Allah, Almighty, says: {And do not follow their inclinations.} [Al-Ma'idah, verse: 48]. This short verse summarizes the philosophy of rejection: do not follow what entices the soul if it deviates from true values, even if it seems attractive.

Thus, confronting the Western consumerist tendency requires the construction of an aware liberating discourse, one that achieves three main objectives:

1. Exposing the false promises of consumerist tendency: This means that happiness does not lie in accumulating possessions or in rapid consumption.
2. Reviving the value of sufficiency and moderation: As a source of tranquility and independence.
3. Redefining success: Not by the size of spending but by the nobility of intention.

Allah, Almighty, says: {And in that let the competitors compete.} [Al-Mutafffin, verse: 26]. Here, the Qur'an redirects competition towards another goal: not boasting of appearances, but striving towards goodness. The Western world succeeded in spreading the myth of infinite abundance, which makes individuals believe that their perfection depends on always possessing the new. Consumption has become a measure of existence and dignity.

However, the Qur'an powerfully deconstructs this myth: {Know that the life of this world is but play and diversion and adornment and boasting among yourselves and competition in increase of wealth and children.} [Al-Hadid, verse: 20]. In this verse, we see five aspects of excessive consumption:

1. Play: Spending without purpose.
2. Diversion: Neglecting higher purposes.
3. Adornment: Attachment to appearance.
4. Boasting: Empty display.
5. Accumulation: An endless race.

Every liberating project should start by removing this veil from the insight. This is a clear call to move beyond individual moral preaching and build a collective consciousness project that redefines the relationship between humans and material things.

In confronting blind consumerist tendency, scientific, media, and spiritual institutions must adopt a critical discourse that exposes the colonial nature of the Western lifestyle model. Allah, Almighty, says: {O mankind, eat from whatever is on the earth [that is] lawful and good, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan.} [Al-Baqarah, verse: 168]. We observe here a combination of permissibility conditioned on awareness, along with a warning against following the hidden steps of destruction.

Therefore, the project of rationalization is not against enjoying the good things, but rather against being led by the spiritual emptiness that makes desire limitless. In this sense, rationalization is a comprehensive movement of liberation from the slavery of the modern age: the slavery of advertising, fashion, comparison, and counterfeit consumption.

The call here is to ask ourselves: What is the standard of human dignity today? What constitutes the essence of one's identity? Allah, Almighty, says: {Indeed, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.} [Al-Hujurat,

verse: 13]. This is the decisive answer: the measure of dignity is the righteousness of hearts, not the adornments of furniture.

In conclusion, rationalizing consumption from a Qur'anic perspective is an existential choice because it frees us from the invisible chains that the West has created around our consciousness. It is a silent yet decisive battle, one that is won not by wealth, but by awareness, and not by the rich, but by the sincere.

With this message, this new issue of "Tabyin" opens the doors for discussion, critique, and analysis of the consumerist tendency in contemporary society, and the role of the Qur'an in rationalizing it. The research and studies address topics of our focus, such as "Globalized Consumption Between Capitalist Hegemony, Guidance of Revelation," "The Causes of Consumerist tendency, Ways to Treat It from the Perspectives of Qur'anic Psychology," "Achieving a Balance Between Consumption, Production to Build Economic Competence from a Qur'anic Perspective," and "Pagan Consumption Patterns of Divine Natural Resources."

In the section on Qur'anic research and studies, there is a focus on the differences in recitations and their impact on interpreting the Qur'anic text, as well as a reading of the book "Livelihood, Management from an Islamic Economic Perspective."

We hope that these researches and studies will contribute to enriching the discussion on this important topic, thus contributing to the revival of an Islamic civilizational project that protects humanity from confusion and restores meaning and dignity to it.

All praise is due to Allah, first and last.

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