

UNIT

F

CHAPTER

FOUR

Dangerous Life Styles III: Gambling and Lottery

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- 1 What is gambling?
- 2 Types of gambling.
- 3 Gambling: haram or halal?
- 4 What are the harms of gambling?

VOCABULARY

Maysir مَيْسِر

Qimaar قِمَار

Rihan رِهَان

Before Islam, gambling was a social evil. When Islam came, Allah strictly forbade all forms of gambling, including betting, lottery, and other games of chance. Gambling has unfortunately become an acceptable practice in Muslim society due to its wide scale promotion by the media. Many governments legalize and even organize gambling and lottery activities. In some cases, they devote portions of the lottery profits to charity.

Islam forbids gambling in all ways and forms. Any money gained through gambling is considered haram.

Taking someone else's money by winning a game of chance is distasteful to Islam. It is a basic principle of Islam that a person should not take money which he has not earned or worked for or exchanged it with halal product. This is for reasons of fairness and justice. Maysir is the Arabic word for gambling in the Qur'an. It is derived from a root word

that literally means “easy” and “something attained easily with almost no effort.” Qimaar is another Arabic word for gambling.

Traditional gambling involves games of chance, like rolling dice or playing cards. If the player happens to roll or pick the right numbers on the dice or cards, he would simply win. But if he misses, he will lose his money in a matter of minutes or even seconds.

Rihan, or betting, was another ancient form of gambling. In old times people used to bet money on horse races, fights and other games and sports. In this case, a person would bet his money on a horse to win the

race or a knight to win the fight. If he bet on the winner, he will double or triple his money, but if he loses, his money is totally gone.

Every transaction in which gain and loss is due to mere luck and chance is considered gambling in Islam. When gambling is involved, it means that the winner takes the money of the loser without having lawfully earned it. Islam teaches us to follow the proper practice in earning money through our halal work and effort, not relying on mere chance. Consequently, gambling was declared unlawful. Today gambling has taken many forms, such as betting and lottery. These are among the most well known forms of gambling.

GAMBLING TODAY

In every era and every land, gambling is practiced in a variety of ways. Gambling today takes countless different forms. Nevertheless, gambling in all its forms is prohibited. Here are the most common kinds of gambling available today:





Games of Chance

Among the most widespread practices today are slot machines, jackpots, roulettes, cards games, Bingo and many other games. Casinos in Las Vegas and elsewhere in America and around the world provide thousands of ways for some gamblers to win and millions of others to lose their money.

Betting

Betting on the outcome of horse and dog races, rodeo, boxing, wrestling matches and other prize fights have become popular forms of gambling. Even very popular sports like soccer, baseball, football, basketball, and hockey have unfortunately become subjects for betting and gambling. Attempts on the part of professional gamblers to fix the outcome of such games have caused numerous problems. Other common forms of gambling include roulette, card and dice games, and bingo. Take the case of two persons competing in a race on the condition that the loser

pays the winner \$100; or that a person says, "If it rains today, I will give you \$100, and if it does not rain, you will have to give me \$100." Since one party gains and the other loses in a mere chance game, it falls under the definition of gambling.

Lottery

You probably heard about some people who won millions of dollars in lottery. How can the lottery companies afford to give out these huge prizes? You know that millions of people buy lottery tickets hoping that they will win the grand prize, but they don't. Over 99% of those who buy lottery tickets or involve in other forms of gambling lose their money to lottery and gambling companies.

Lottery is just one of the most popular forms of gambling today. Each and every kind of lottery is included within gambling and is prohibited. The lottery business has now reached an international level. Usually, lottery is conducted through a big corporation. This corporation makes business selling lottery tickets to its customers. With a lottery,

you buy numbers that are usually on a ticket, and different prizes are given to the winning numbers. The purchaser of a lottery ticket does not buy the ticket with the intention of just buying it, but he or she buys it on the basis of it being a possible winner. That is the reason why this is not merely trade or business venture, but rather it is an act of sin to buy these or even to sell them. When few people win millions of dollars in lottery, millions others lose their money. This is a waste of wealth that Islam strongly prohibits.

Are Free Draws Haram?

No. Various companies and organizations sometimes do promotions for their products and services by making free draws. People don't have to pay money, they only have to fill out forms or write their names on cards to qualify for certain prizes like cars or air tickets. Then the company officials draw one or more forms that carry winners' names and grant them different prizes. This kind of free draw is not haram, as long as you don't have to pay money and the prizes are halal.

PROHIBITION OF GAMBLING

In the jahiliyyah era, the time before Islam, a person would gamble away his wealth, possessions, and even his wife. When losing them, he would go so disappointed at his quick and unexpected loss that his anger would be inflamed. He would be angry to see his belongings suddenly in the hand of the winner. This situation created much hatred between people so much that fights and quarrels would erupt between different individuals. Often, these fights would involve an entire tribe, and it would last for many years. Arabian history tell us that a war erupted and continued for forty years as a result of horse race between two hoses called "Dahis" and "Al-Ghabraa."



In Islam, gambling is strictly prohibited. In the Glorious Qur'an, we see that gambling is mentioned while being associated with wine (khamr). Wine, games of chance, idols and dividing arrows are Satan's handiwork. In the early days of Islam, the Prophet ﷺ was questioned regarding the permissibility of gambling and alcohol. God describes maysir, which we often translate as "games of chance" or gambling, as "abomination devised by Satan" which all Muslims should avoid at all costs. The first verse that was revealed regarding this, is in Surah Baqarah, which is as follows:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ
وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِنَّهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا ﴿٢١٩﴾

"They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say, 'In them is great sin and some benefit for people; but the sin in them is greater than their benefit.'" [2:219]

In the above ayah, the permission to deal with wine and gambling is not clarified. Soon after understanding this verse, the highly ranked companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ abstained from them. General public, however, were still involved in them and the Prophet ﷺ had not said anything that indicated their prohibition, until Allah revealed the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ
وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ
فاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

“Oh believers! Intoxicants and gambling, worshipping stones and divination by arrows are impure, of Shaytan's handiwork: refrain from such abomination that ye may prosper.”
[5:90]

In the above verse, the total prohibition of alcoholic drinks and gambling has been clearly revealed. As you can see, alcohol and gambling have always been associated together. This is true in almost every society that offers gambling as a form of entertainment. Getting drunk and gambling have many things in common. Both are created for the temporary pleasure that at the same time allows us to lose focus on more important things, such as the remembrance of Allah ﷻ and worshipping Him. There are many ahadeeth that speak of different games often used for gambling, showing that they are all forbidden to play.

Fiqh Matter

Suppose that a Muslim committed the sin of gambling and happens to win some money or lots of it. Then he or she realized that this was an awful thing to do. What should he or she do with the money he or she won?

Contemporary scholars of Islam said that it is haram for the winner of lottery, betting or any other forms of gambling to keep the money and use it. Scholars advise the person to give it to poor people or charity organizations. Some scholars, however, recommend that poor people or charity organizations should be told not to use this money for buying food or spending on spiritual matters like buying Qur'ans, prayer rugs, or going to Hajj. The wisdom behind that is not to make people eat food or worship Allah the use haram money. This type of money, they say, should be used in paying utility bills, buy gas for the car, buying appliances and other household items, repairing broken machines, buying travel tickets, etc.

Gambling Statistics

What is unique about the current gambling situation is the speed at which it has gone from an undercurrent in American society to high-profile, socially recognized activity.

The gambling industry has grown tenfold in the U.S. since 1975.

Thirty-seven states now have lotteries.

15 million people display some sign of gambling addiction.

Two-thirds of American adults placed some kind of bet every year.

Gambling profits in casinos are more than \$30 billion, while lotteries are about \$17 billion annually.

"Players" with household incomes under \$10,000 bet nearly three times as much on lotteries as those with incomes over \$50,000.

In 1973, state lotteries had \$2 billion in sales. By 1997, the revenues reached \$34 billion.

Gambling among young people is on the increase: 42 percent of 14-year-olds, 49 percent of 15-year-olds, 63 percent of 16-year-olds, 76 percent of 18-year-olds.

There are now approximately 260 casinos on Indian reservations (in 31 states and with \$6.7 billion in revenue).

Internet gambling has nearly doubled every year since 1997 – in 2001 it exceed \$2 billion.

The Internet boasts 110 sport-related gambling sites.

According to the American Psychological Association, the Internet could be as addictive as alcohol, drugs, and gambling.

After casinos opened in Atlantic City, the total number of crimes within a thirty-mile radius increased 100 percent.

The average debt incurred by a male pathological gambler in the U.S. is between \$55,000 and \$90,000 (it is \$15,000 for female gamblers).

The average rate of divorce for problem gamblers is nearly double that of non-gamblers.

The suicide rate for pathological gamblers is twenty times higher than for non-gamblers (one in five attempts suicide).

Sixty-five percent of pathological gamblers commit crimes to support their gambling habit.

EVIL EFFECTS OF GAMBLING

Some people claim that they gamble just for fun and don't spend a lot of money. Such people are doing a great sin, because they are not avoiding gambling, but instead they are using it for entertainment. This may eventually drag them to become addicted to gambling and over the years they lose so much money on this insanity. Gambling indeed is a very addictive entertainment.

Gambling entails religious, social, moral and economic harms. Some of them are enumerated below:

1. Gambling distracts those who partake the game from the remembrance of Allah and prayer. When a gambler sits continuously for hours together, he is so absorbed in it that he forgets everything around him; rather he becomes unconscious of his own self. He forgets his households and family. How, then, can he take care of his prayer?

2. Gambling sows the seeds of disputes and quarrels among the gamblers which ultimately assume hatred among them. This point is made clear in the following verse :

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ
وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْحَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيُصِدِّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ
اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنتَهُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

“Only would Satan sow hatred and strife among you, by wine, and games of chance and turn you aside from the remembrance of Allah, and from prayer. Will you not, therefore, abstain from them?” (5:91)

3. The sin of gambling is greater than its benefit.

4. It corrupts morals, making people sluggish in waiting to get wealthy by luck and chance. It turns their heads away from

hard work and production through agriculture, industry, business-the foundation stone of social living and human prosperity.

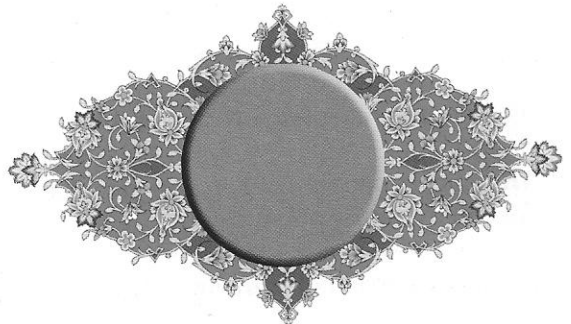
5. It enslaves the gambler, who becomes a mute slave in the hands of gambling and seldom succeeds in abandoning it. When he earns some benefit, his greed for gambling increases and when he loss the game, even then his interest in the games of chance increases to make good the loss. In this way, he remains awfully engaged in gambling until he becomes poor.

6. It brings about a sudden chaos in the countries due to sheer waste of wealth by losing the game.

7. It usurps the wealth of towns and transfers it to the hands of the mischief-mongers within and outside the country. Thus gambling is a root-cause of countless economic evils, reducing many rich people to poverty and ultimately forcing them to commit suicide.

8. Gambling is usually associated with increase of crime, suicide, divorce and other major epidemics in the society.

We seek refuge in Allah from gambling and its ancillary sins.





FAITH IN ACTION

Always avoid:

- ★ Being part of betting and gambling.
- ★ Buying lottery tickets.
- ★ Paying money on games of chance.
- ★ Watching gambling related shows or activities.

CHAPTER REVIEW

Projects and Activities

1. Develop a list of gambling games that people do in current times.
2. Share a story with your classmates about the harms of gambling.



Stretch Your Mind

1. What are the reasons behind the prohibition of gambling?
2. Compare and contrast gambling and trade. Explain why Allah prohibited gambling while He permitted trade.
3. What are the similarities of drinking khamr and gambling, in terms of harming people?



Study Questions

- 1 Define: a. Gambling b. Lottery c. Betting
- 2 What are the Arabic words for gambling and betting?
- 3 What is the Islamic ruling on gambling? Support your answer with evidence from Al-Qur'an.
- 4 List four harms of gambling.
- 5 Suppose you made a mistake and won some money in gambling or from a lottery ticket. What should you do in this case?