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The Prohibition of Gambling: A Study in the Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study is to enlighten the new emerging issues i.e. "Gambling". In this modern era, the different forms of gambling are growing so fast in so many ways. Islamic economics covered a wide range of socio-economic issues, which are very catastrophic for the well-being and prosperity of Muslim States. Gambling is the most important yet unnoticeable issue of the current era. Generations are getting addicted to online gambling day by day. In this paper, the major factors have discussed which promotes the modern trends and forms of gambling. The prohibition of Gambling has clearly discussed through the lens of Islam. Major reasons and factors like, "Poverty, Unemployment and Lust of wealth" have discussed to cope up with this illegal action inspired by Satan. The gambling has many socio-economic impacts which can destroy Muslim society, Individuals and their personal life in this world and hereafter. These impacts include financial hardships and debt, employment issues, crimes and social inequality. The recommendations have presented in order to sum up this issue in Islamic society and prevent our generations from this prohibited and catastrophic action

Keywords: *Gambling, Islam, Islamic law, Islamic economics, socio-economic.*

1: Introduction:

Gambling is the fourteenth greater sin in Islam. The temptation of gambling has reached in many corners of Islamic society. From traditional forms of gambling to online platforms, many individuals are earning from modern gambling; online games, betting and lotteries in the form of rewards and bonuses. As per Islamic teachings, gambling is strictly prohibited in Islam. It encompasses any activity, where a person gains or loses wealth purely by chance. Essentially, it's a game of luck, in which one party benefits at the expense of another. In such transactions, the winner gains unlawfully. Meanwhile, the loser parts with their wealth without receiving a fair value in return. This prohibition extends to activities like betting or horse races, soccer matches, lotteries and similar games of chances. Gambling, known as maysir in Islamic law, is a subject of considerable moral, legal, and economic discussion in societies where Islam is the predominant faith. Sharia has

explicit rules concerning gambling, deeming it impermissible due to various reasons that stem from both spiritual principles and economic morality. Analyzing gambling through the lens of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and Islamic economic ethics, offers understanding into its perception as not only a societal problem but also a detrimental economic activity.

1.1 Definition of Gambling:

“The act of betting or staking something of value, undertaken with an awareness of risk and a hope for gain, on the outcome of a game, contest, or uncertain event—where the result may be determined by chance or accident, or may appear predictable due to a miscalculation by the bettor.”¹

1.2 Forms of Gambling

Traditional Forms of Gambling

These are the physical or in-person types of gambling:

1. **Casino Games**
 - Roulette, blackjack, poker, slot machines, etc.
 - Found in casinos or private clubs.
2. **Sports Betting**
 - Betting on the outcome of football, horse racing, cricket, boxing, etc.
3. **Lottery & Raffle Tickets**
 - Purchasing a ticket for the opportunity to win a substantial cash prize.
4. **Dice & Card Games for Money**
 - Playing Ludo, cards, or board games with money at stake.
5. **Betting on Animal Fights or Races**
 - Camel races, cockfighting, dog races (still common in some cultures).
6. **Wagering in Local Contests**
 - Betting on things like car races, video games, or even neighborhood competitions.

Modern / Online Forms of Gambling:

Technology has made gambling more accessible and hidden. Some examples are mentioned below:

1. **Online Casinos**
 - Websites or apps offering poker, blackjack, slots, etc. with real money.
2. **Online Sports Betting Platforms**
 - People can bet on any match or sport worldwide via mobile apps or websites.

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/gambling>

3. **Crypto Gambling**

- Using Bit coin or other crypto currencies to gamble anonymously.

4. **Online Lottery & Virtual Raffles**

- Buying digital lottery tickets or entering draws online.

5. **In-Game Betting & Loot Boxes**

- Video games where you pay real money for random “loot” or upgrades considered gambling by many scholars.

6. **Fantasy Sports with Entry Fees**

- Platforms where users build virtual teams and win real money based on real-life player performance.

7. **Social Casino Games**

- Apps that mimic gambling (like poker or slots) with virtual coins some let users buy coins with real money.

2: Gambling; in Islamic Terminology:

In Islamic terminology, the word “gambling” is termed as “Qimar” and “Maysir”. Both terms are slightly different from each other.

Qimar: refers to betting and wagering, and technically involves acquiring ownership of wealth (māl) through the mechanism of a wager.

Maysir: it encompasses all forms of gambling, not just specific games of chance and much broader in scope than gambling.²

Explanation

Qimar:

- Qimar particularly refers to the betting or wagering, where one party wins on the expense of another.
- It is a type of Maysir.
- It takes ownership of wealth through wagering.
- It is strictly prohibited in Islam because one party’s gain is directly connected to other party’s loss.
- Example: Horse Races.

Maysir:

- Maysir refers to the acquisition of wealth by chance or luck.
- It covers all form of gambling.
- This term is used to describe the game of arrows where people gambled for a share of reward in the pre-Islamic era.

² <https://fincyclopedia.net/islamic-finance/questions/what-is-the-difference-between-qimar-and-maysir>

- Maysir is forbidden by Sharia because it is motivated by immoral inducement and wishful hopes of gain without taking into account the possibility of loss.
- Example: Lotteries and Casinos.

2.1 Prohibition of Gambling in Quran & Hadith:

Quran:

In Quran, Allah Almighty has strictly prohibited the evil action or activities like drinking, gambling & riba. The Quranic Verses are mentioned below:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا ۚ
وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْغَفْوَةُ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ³

“They ask you, O Prophet, concerning khamr (intoxicants) and maysir (gambling). Say: 'In them is great sin and some benefit for people, but their sin is greater than their benefit.' And they ask you what they should spend in charity. Say: 'That which is beyond your needs.' Thus does Allah make His āyāt (revelations) clear to you, so that you may reflect?”

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ
فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ⁴

“O you who believe! Verily, khamr (intoxicants), maysir (gambling), ansāb (idolatrous sacrifices), and azlām (divining arrows) are all abominations from the handiwork of Shayṭān. So avoid them, that you may attain success.”

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ
ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ⁵

“Shayṭān only seeks to sow enmity and hatred among you through khamr (intoxicants) and maysir (gambling), and to hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and from ṣalāh (prayer). Will you not then desist?”

Explanation:

As per above mentioned verses of Al-Quran, Allah has made it Haram for all Muslims to participate in activities like drinking alcohols, gambling and idols because it is harmful to individuals and society, leads towards destruction; greedy & envious behaviours.

³ Al-Quran, 2:219

⁴ Al-Quran 5:90

⁵ Al-Quran 5:91

Hadith:

Narrated by Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه):

"The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) forbade selling wine, dead animals, pigs, and idols. It was said, 'O Messenger of Allah, what about the fat of the dead animal, for it was used to grease the boats and to oil the hides, and people use it for lamps?' He said, 'No, it is haram (forbidden).' Then the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: 'May Allah curse the Jews, for when Allah forbade the fat, they melted it and sold it, and consumed its price.'"⁶

Narrated by Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه):

"The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Whoever says to his friend: Come, let us gamble, must give charity.'"⁷

According to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, gambling is strictly prohibited in Islam. It is regarded as a sinful act to divert believers from prayer and Allah remembrance, which was inspired by Shaytan. Participation in games of chance like dice, which the Prophet forbade as forms of gambling (maysir), was considered disobedience to Allah and His Messenger. It is discouraged to even suggest gambling, and the individual is advised to give to charity as a sign of repentance. Islam condemns gambling because it promotes greed, harms individuals and society, and involves gaining wealth without rightful effort or work.

3: The Ethical Basis for the Prohibition of Gambling in Islam

Islamic law (Sharia) has a strong ethical foundation that revolves around justice, equity, and the preservation of wealth, health, and family structure. Gambling contradicts these principles in several ways:

a: Social Harm and Injustice: Islamic law (Sharia) has a strong ethical foundation that revolves around justice, equity, and the preservation of wealth, health, and family structure. Gambling contradicts these principles in several ways.

b. Corruption of the Human Soul (Nafs)

Islamic ethics stresses that a Muslim must guard the health and morality of their soul (nafs). Gambling is seen as spiritually harmful because it encourages greed,

⁶ Bukhari, Muhammad bin Ismail, Imam, Arabic-English translator: Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Sahih Albukhari, The Book of Sales (34), Chapter: The sale of dead animals and idols (112), Hadith: 2236, Darussalam Publishers, Lahore, Vol: 3, P. 242.

⁷ Bukhari, Arabic-English translator: Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Sahih Albukhari, The book of Oath & Vows (83), Chapter: One should not swear by Al-Lat and Al-'Uzza or by any false deities (5), Hadith: 6650, Darussalam Publishers, Lahore, Vol: 8, P. 341.

selfishness, and a desire for quick wealth. This promotes laziness and reduces the importance of hard work and honest earnings.

4: Socio-Economic impacts of Gambling:

Islamic economic ethics is based on principles of fairness, transparency, and social responsibility. It emphasizes wealth distribution, the ethical acquisition of wealth, and avoiding practices that exploit others. Gambling, by its very nature, runs counter to many of these ethical principles.

4.1: Financial Hardship and Debt: Gambling consumes a significant portion of the earnings of those with lower incomes, putting them in financial trouble. Gamblers had debt issues and some lost their homes as a result of gambling losses.

4.2: Employment Issues: Gambling is associated with job loss and decreased work performance. A significant number of gamblers stated that they lose their jobs as a result of gambling.

4.3: Crime and Legal Problems: Gambling-induced financial stress can lead people to commit crimes like embezzlement, theft, and fraud to pay off debts. It is estimated that gambling accounts for a significant portion of bankruptcies, resulting in additional economic costs.

4.4: Social Inequality: Social inequality is exacerbated by the disproportionately high gambling expenditures of lower-income groups. Because gambling taxes are regressive, those with fewer resources contribute more relative to their income, which widens economic gaps.

4.5: Wealth Distribution: In Islam, wealth should circulate fairly within society, and it is not meant to be hoarded or accumulated through exploitative practices. Gambling, as a method of wealth transfer, is seen as unproductive because it does not contribute to the welfare of society. Instead of creating jobs or promoting trade, gambling simply redistributes money from one individual to another without adding value.

4.6: Encouragement of Productive Effort: Islamic economic principles encourage activities that lead to the creation of wealth through work, trade, investment, and production. It is haram (forbidden) to accumulate wealth without effort or to exploit others for personal gain. This stands in stark contrast to gambling, which thrives on others' misfortune and inaction.

4.7: Charity and Social Responsibility: Islam encourages the wealthy to engage in charity and support their community, particularly the poor. Since gambling is seen as the opposite of charity encouraging a get-rich-quick mentality. It is viewed as harmful not just for the individual but for society as a whole. Wealth acquired through gambling is not conducive to social welfare, and it is generally not permissible to use such wealth for charitable purposes.

5: Conclusion

As per above discussion, gambling is the strictly prohibited in Islam. From Quranic Verses to Hadith, the status of gambling is illegitimate in any form. It is categorized as favorite action by Satan. According to the Islamic Law, every activity or game which includes betting or staking is illegal (Haram). Every action, in which one party wins at the expense of other, is illegal (Haram). Poverty, unemployment and the lust of wealth are the key factors behind the gambling. It leads to serious crimes like theft. Gambling has so many socio-economic impacts on the society. It destroys gambler's personal and professional life as well. A gambler always faces financial crisis and debt, in order to gain more wealth and ended up by losing everything. They put their salary/savings and properties at stake to increase their wealth by chance and ended up by losing their homes and money. Gambling leads to serious crimes like theft and fraud to pay their debt. In order to cope up with this emerging issue, the Government of the State should take some legal action like heavy fines and punishments according to Islamic law. Government should create rehabilitation centers to treat the patients who are addicted to gambling. Religious scholars should focus on this unnoticed issue and educate the Muslims.

6: Recommendations

- Government should impose heavy fines to those who gamble.
- According to Islamic Law, punishments should be given to the individuals by law enforcement agencies/department.
- Government should make rehabilitation centers, in order to treat gambling addicted individuals.
- Department of religious affairs and religious scholars should pay a serious attention to this emerging issue/matter and present fair solutions and remedies to cope up with this illegal action or activity in Islamic states and societies.
- Government should ban all the games/applications which attract individuals towards gambling, in the name of rewards and bonuses. Moreover, every activity which includes betting, staking and wagering with consciousness of risk.
- Awareness seminars should be held to educate the youth of Muslim society.