

GAMBLING: A RISING PLAGUE AFFECTING THE UMMAH!

The allure of instant wealth, the anonymity offered by the internet, the constant advertising, and the relatively easy access have all contributed to a new challenge facing the Muslim Ummah. Under the guise of online “trading”, “betting” and “predictions”, the sin of gambling, once taboo in Muslim society, has been gaining traction. This is a dangerous trend that we must address with urgency and concern.

In days gone by, to gamble, one needed to travel and physically visit a casino. The fear of being seen and the subsequent disgrace that may ensue deterred many, saving them from falling into this sin. Now, hidden behind the veil of the screen, many more are being enticed into what **the Qur’ān describes as being from among the actions of shayṭān.**

Allah Ta’ālā mentions: *“O you who believe! Wine, gambling, idols and divining arrows are filth, made up by shayṭān. Therefore, refrain from it, so that you may be successful. shayṭān wishes only to plant enmity and malice between you through wine and gambling, and to prevent you from the remembrance of Allah and from Salāh. Would you, then, abstain?”* (Al Qur’ān 5:90,91)

Gambling, like wine, **causes disputes, breeds hatred and animosity, and contributes to an unstable society.** Mufti Muhammad Shafi Rahimahullāh writes: “Similar to wine, the effect of gambling is that one becomes recklessly involved, unable to focus on the remembrance of Allah and Salāh. Perhaps this is why the Qur’ān Sharīf has mentioned wine and gambling side by side in an identical manner. Gambling has an intoxicating pull of its own, which causes one to ignore concerns of what is good or bad for him.” (Ma’āriful Qur’ān 2/219)

Make no mistake, gambling is an addiction. It is a habit that needs serious rehabilitation. The thrill of winning often becomes an obsession; an obsession at the door of which many have lost their entire life savings, their sanity and even, Allah forbid, their Imān.

This behaviour often leads to a cycle of mounting debt. Confronted by debt collectors, threats, and a growing compulsion to gamble, some individuals tragically resort to other Harām acts, such as stealing or selling off their honour and that of their families, simply to finance their obsession.

As Muslims, we differentiate between something being legally allowed and something being permissible. **Anything legal doesn’t necessarily mean it is permissible.** Our standards are based on what Allah Ta’ālā and His Nabi Sallallāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam have permitted.

The Islāmic prohibition on gambling (rooted in the terms ‘maysir’ or ‘qimār’) involves any activity where a person stakes money or an item with the chance of gain at the expense of another person.

The essential elements that include an activity under the ambit of gambling are:

Wagering: All parties involved contribute a stake, be it money, a fee or an item of some value.

Uncertainty: The outcome is based on chance or luck.

Zero-Sum Game: One wins at the expense of the other. The winner gains what the other has lost.

This definition applies to everything from a casual bet between friends to structured lotteries, casino games, sports tournaments, prediction markets, insurance, online games, and fantasy football or cricket leagues that involve financial payments.

Suppose we are involved in any activity, game, etc., that resembles the above definition. In that case, the onus is upon us to enquire from our Ulama regarding its permissibility, lest we unknowingly consume Harām. Remember, Nabi Sallallāhu ‘Alayhi wa Sallam said: “A body nourished with Harām will never enter Jannah” (Tabrāni 5961)

Sa’id ibn Jubayr Radiyāllahu ‘Anhu reported: Ibn Abbas Radiyāllahu ‘Anhu said, “Allah has decreed the lawful sustenance of every believer and sinner. If he is patient until the time decreed to receive it, Allah Ta’ālā will grant it to him. On the other hand, if he becomes anxious and chooses to consume from the unlawful, his lawful provisions are proportionately decreased.” (Hilyatul-Awliyā’ 1/397)

How to save ourselves from this scourge?

- Return to Allah Ta’ālā and make an effort to please Him. It is only Allah Ta’ālā that can save us from this evil. Make sure we are performing our five times daily Salaah as prescribed. This is a sure way to save us from evil.
- Inculcate the realisation that Allah Ta’ālā is watching us at all times. Spending time in the path of Allah Ta’ālā and in the company of the pious are very effective ways to achieve this.
- Be wary of the company you keep. Often, by associating with those who gamble, one is enticed into this evil habit.
- If you are already caught in this web of gambling, make sincere Tawbah and employ all means possible to break this addiction. Having someone monitor your finances, restricting access to gambling websites, etc, are some of the techniques that have proven effective.
- Plan your time well and avoid spending time idly browsing the internet. The constant advertisements and prompts may tempt one to click, and sometimes it takes one look to hook a person for life! May Allah forbid! In fact, many of the algorithms employed on these sites are designed to let users win a few times, increasing the appeal and drawing them in.

May Allah Ta’ālā protect the Ummah from this scourge. Āmīn

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