

An Imaam with an Avid Interest in cricket

Q: Salaah-590: An Imaam has a great interest in cricket and listens with rapture to the cricket commentary. What is the ruling concerning performing salaah behind such an Imaam?

Answer: Durrul Mukhtar (Vol. Pg.347) states that because of a Hadith to the effect, all forms of amusement are forbidden for a Muslim except for frolicking with one's wife, training one's horse and archery. Shaami (Vol.5 Pg.355) adds that sports and games that have some benefit are allowed when not done merely for amusement. Hidaayah (Vol.3 Pg.459) also echoes this, adding that the reasons for the prohibition are the elements of gambling and wasting time.

Khulaasatut Taf'seer makes it apparent that all forms of amusement and sport that are done merely for the fun of it and for no worldly or religious benefit are Haraam because of the time wasted. There is however no doubt in them being Haraam when they entail involvement in gambling or any other violation of the Shari'ah, or even when there is the possibility of such involvement. These will be Haraam even when people are so enwrapped in it that they become oblivious of everything else. It states further that every game that entails winning and losing falls in the ambit of gambling and is therefore Haraam according to the directive of the Qur'aan.

The following is clear from the above extracts:

1. Sports and games that entail gambling are Haraam.
2. Sports and games that have no worldly or religious benefits are also not permissible because they are a waste of time.
3. There is scope for engaging in sports and games that do not entail gambling and which have some benefit, but the condition is that no act be perpetrated that violates the injunctions of the Shari'ah. This is derived from Shaami (Vol.5 Pg.355).

Hadhrat Mufti Muhammad Shafee RAH. states that sports that entail violating the Shari'ah are not permissible and also amongst these violations is emulation of the Kuffaar. He adds that even permitted acts such as archery and horse riding will be prohibited when gambling or betting is involved and both parties pledge payment (for the winner).

Cricket has become a sport in which many injunctions of the Shari'ah are violated, such as missing salaah and belting. It is for this reason that those neglectful of their duties to the Shari'ah have an avid interest in it. People become so interested that they now even spend nights involved in it. Women also attend the matches and innumerable other evils have attached themselves to it.

Experience proves that the more interest a person shows in it, the more he becomes negligent of his duties. You will see such people thinking about cricket all day and even after coming to the Masjid and making wudhu, you will still find them talking about it inside the Masjid. Matter

reach such a head that even during the month of Ramadhaan, people's minds will linger with a match being played and rather than engaging in Tasbeeh during the Tarwiha's. they are all discussing the match and finding out what the score is.

People then celebrate with fireworks when a team wins, thereby wasting their money and imitating the Kuffaar to the finest degree. There are times when the result of a match leads to loss of life and damage to property. After considering all of the above, how can it be said that such a sport is permissible?

After stating what has been quoted from him earlier, Hadhrat Mufti Muhammad Shafee RAH. writes. "Because these conditions are generally not prevalent in sports nowadays (in tennis, football, cricket), it will be said that such sports are not permissible.

It is therefore inappropriate for a person occupying the honourable post of an Imaam to be have an interest in such ill-famed sports because it would be imitating the behaviour of negligent people, thereby diminishing his respect in the eyes of the people. If a person needs to exercise. there are other permissible ways of doing it If a person becomes so preoccupied with cricket that he misses his salaah or salaah in Jamaa'ah, it will render him a Faasiq, because of which it will be Makrooh Tahreemi to appoint him as the Imaam.

Time is an extremely valuable asset that Allaah has granted us and none is capable of showing enough appreciation for it. Of what use in the Aakhirah will it be for a person to waste time listening to cricket commentary? It distracts him from remembering Allaah and from focussing on the purpose of his life, which make it an accursed act. A Hadith states, "Amongst the factors beautifying one's Islaam avoiding all that which is futile.

Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Mas'ood RADI. reports from Rasulullaah SAW. that a person will be unable to move from in front of Allaah on the Day of Qiyaamah until he answers five questions (1) about how he spent his life, (2) how he spent his youth, (3) how he earned his wealth, (4) how he spent his wealth and (5) whether he practised on the knowledge he had.

One should therefore guard one's time and use it to prepare for death and the Aakhirah without wasting it. Sheikh Saadi RAH. says, "Engaging in anything other than Allaah's remembrance is a waste of one's life and everything done other than in the love of Allaah is useless." And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

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