

## Question 82: What Is The Decree Regarding The Game of Chess?

**Question:** Is there in Islam any problem in playing chess? Indeed you know that generally there is no betting in chess. It can almost be claimed that in some cases this game presents gambling. Keeping this in view, nowadays, chess is considered a mental exercise and it is becoming popular day by day. I request you to give me a reply supporting by proofs.

**Answer:** In the view of our scholars it is a decided matter that playing with the instruments of gambling is not permitted even if there is no betting. It is possible that in the background of this decree is the philosophy that contact with those instruments needlessly make man attracted to gambling and especially regarding chess numerous traditions of Imam (a.s) have reached us that the use of the instruments of this game is prohibited in every way and by giving it the title of mental exercise it does not affect the prohibition of chess.

Because it is possible that other kinds of gambling can be performed by naming it mental exercise. Because along with playing cards there are many kinds of gambling that have an aspect of mental exertion. But their evils cannot be denied.

The detailed discussion is that chess is a form of gambling. It was invented for this very purpose. Finally it can be said that gambling is of two kinds.

Deliberation is not needed in some cases and the winning of the game is based on chance. While in other games deliberation is also needed. Chess is from the second kind of games.

In addition to this chess is an imagination game because it presents the sketch of an imaginary battlefield which is a reminder of the historical periods of man. Therefore one of the defects of chess is its imaginary nature.

The views of the above statements no doubt remain regarding the prohibition of chess. Even though

there are some people who do not accept anything unless they get its confirmation from the western world. Therefore we consider it necessary that those points should be mentioned that we have found in the writings of western scholars. May be this would help in the spread of chess, which has unfortunately spread to every corner of our country and it is played with an excuse that it helps in the power of deliberation and concentration.

This is the discussion of the famous French chess player, Shantal Shaw Dossian regarding whom it is said: "No one can achieve the distinction to be the world champion of chess except Shantal and the international press and especially the Russian sports writings have praised his expertise and superiority.

Let us see what Shantal himself says:

"It is sufficient to prove that chess is a tiring game by saying that after the 40th step if there is no result the game is postponed as happened in Reg or Veg and it was calculated that after the first four steps the total possible tricks were 318976584 and in the first ten step were 169518829100544...

Then he mentions those people are champions of chess Regarding them he says that it is possible that apart from chess in other matters their capability might be less than the medium stage. That is what I want to say is that chess is really a dangerous game, because it makes the other mental functions useless and weak. It can be said that chess creates mental disturbance.

After this Shantal quotes the statements of another Champion Kheel who always said: In order to win you have to hate your opponent. And in addition to other Leases of chess it is an undesirable ethical harm.

We must remember that chess is a kind of gambling. Here we must understand that Islam has prohibited gambling even if there is no winning and losing. Why is it so? It is because actually no gambling is without the condition of losing and winning. The truth is that when there is no question of winning or losing money, this win and loss is in the mind of the contestants.

## Moral Harms

If the remembrance of Allah leaves ones heart and this love and affection that is there and there is no faith in a person, then what remains? The only thing that remains is evil thoughts accomplishment by a restless, fearful, sorrowful man.

The experts of moral science are unanimous on the fact that the true happiness and success of man is hidden in the balance of his feelings. This is compared to justice. And this word actually denotes the making of one's life compatible to the way shown by the Almighty. This is the straight path or Siraatul Mustaqeem. Because the soul gets peace and tranquility here alone.

In a tradition quoted from our leaders there is indication towards these interesting points: The true man is

that who has faith.

Gambling is one of those varied actions by which man becomes forgetful of the remembrance of Allah becomes deprived of faith and good deeds.

Amir al-Mu'mineen (a.s) saw some people who were busy playing chess. He told them the sentence that idol-breaker Ibrahim (a.s) used to say:

***What are these images to whose worship you cleave?<sup>1</sup>***

In the Islamic law it is haraam to play chess to make others play it and buy or sell the instruments of Chess. This is found in a number of traditions.

<sup>1</sup>. Surah Anbiya 21:52

---

**Source URL:**

<https://www.al-islam.org/philosophy-islamic-laws-naser-makarem-shirazi-jafar-subhani/question-82-what-decree-regarding-game#comment-0>