



ISSN Print: 2394-7500  
ISSN Online: 2394-5869  
Impact Factor: 8.4  
IJAR 2020; 6(11): 22-25  
[www.allresearchjournal.com](http://www.allresearchjournal.com)  
Received: 09-09-2020  
Accepted: 15-10-2020

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## Viewing online games through the lens of Islam

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### Abstract

Islam is a natural religion by nature. It touches all the aspects of life and lightens the path in which a person moves forward. Islam plays a special attention to soul and body, and commands to protect our mental and physical health. Thus Islam promotes all permissible ways to maintain it.

A major accusation against Islam is it doesn't promote entertainment, and Islam is full of Ibadath. But while we turn over the history of Prophet (S) we can see that he and his companions had played many games and entertained, and has confirmed activities like shooting, swimming and wrestling. Nowadays, there are many discussions about Islamic view on Games, especially Online Games. The paper deals with Islamic perspective of Sports and Games.

**Keywords:** Islam, Quran, sports, online games.

### 1. Introduction

Islam is the complete and universal version of primordial faith that was revealed to many prophets, from Adam (A) to Prophet Muhammed (S). Islam enlightens one's life with right instructions and rules. It touches on every aspect of life and society; from birth to death. Every rule in Islam was to balance the equality and to have a prosperity life to all people.

Islam faces many allegations. The enemies of Islam are trying to paint Islam black. One of the issues they point out is the stand of Islam with Sports activities or Entertainment. Islam has not promoted any of these items, more over it closes all the doors to it. Islam has only worship and all time a Muslim should be in Ibadath to its creator. But while we shake our eyes through the life of Prophet and his companions, we can see that it is a counter without evidence.

The normative example of Prophet Muhammed (S) is called as Sunnah. Prophet's life has been recorded and written by his companions and their followers. We can see that Prophet (S) and wife Ayisha (RA) had played and engaged in racing competition. Prophet has engaged in many Sport activities and Islam has promoted all the activities which will not clash with Shari'ah rulings, more over Prophet has encouraged his companions to study sporting like Swimming, Archery etc.

Islam is a religion which touches all the aspects of one's daily life. It has pointed out many moral values which results to a Model Society. The teachings of Islam are comprehensive and generic in nature. While we turn over the pages of Islamic teachings, we can identify that it has cited many values and rules which relates to life and society.

A main allegation waged by Anti – Muslims against Islam is a religion full of Ibadath. It never gives any freedom and happy for people, entertainment and sports are illicit in Islam. In fact, Islam is the religion which supports and encourage people with all good and permissible activities. Indeed, the activities which fulfil the permissible condition is recognized as Ibadath!

Allah prohibits all that is harmful to the physical, mental and spiritual health of individuals and to overall the society. The activities which are harm is not permissible in Islam. As Muslims need a healthy mind and body to perform their daily needs actively, Islam promotes to have physical and spiritual fitness. A well-balanced and functioning body with worship and physical activities relieves a man from many tires and sadness and connects him to life. Prophet Muhammed (S) had said:

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المؤمن القوي خير وأحب إلى (رح) قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: (فمن أبي هريرة  
 <الله من المؤمن الضعيف وفي كل خير

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “The strong (active) believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, while there is good in both.”

(Muslim, Sahih Muslim – 2664)

The Quranic verses and the prophetic life depicts that Prophet Muhammed (S) and his companions had engaged in sports and entertainments. The ultimate goal of a Muslim through these activities is to attain physical health which helps him in Ibadath. It is accentuated through the verses of Quran.

يقول الله تعالى: ﴿ وما خلقت الجن والإنس إلا ليعبدون ﴾

"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship"

(Sura Ad- Dariyath – 56)

The notion of Ibadah in Islam is quite broad, it should not be dealt with specific worships or rituals only. All the activities or entertainments in which the implementations consider the rules and regulations of Sharia, it will be rewarded. In case of Sport, if the implementations and practice of sport observe the Sharia rules, will be rewarded accordingly. So, Sport is also an Ibadah in Islam. Shiekul Islam Ibn Thaymiyya (RA) describes the meaning of Ibadah as it encompasses all matters of Allah's love, either through verbal or physical actions, seen and unseen. Ibadah is a form of obedience to Allah by fulfilling all his ordains through the speech of all Prophets. So, all the entertainment activities or sport which does not fulfil the requirements of Sharia and are against the principles of Sharia, is considered as Forbidden.

## 2. Sports in the light of Quran and Hadees

Why Islam has given so much weight to entertainment? Once a man came to Imam Ali (R) and said that he has moulded his nature in a way that he does not feel the need for pleasures in life. Imam replied to him: “For now you do not know. Satan flows in man like bloodstream; you won't even realize when he attacks you.” Even the best of pious or religious people lose interest in religion and become astray if they don't reserve a break for entertainment”. Involvement in legal pleasures serves as a balance between the soul and body. Imam Abu Bakr Al Jassas, writer of the famous book ‘Ahkamul Quran’ sites the verse

“أُرْسِلْتُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَرْتَعُ وَيَلْعَبُ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ”

(Send him with tomorrow, that he may eat and play and of course, we will remain as guards for him) from Sura Yusuf as the evidence for legalization of entertainment and sports activities in Islam.

Prophet Muhammed (S) and his companions had engaged in many such activities. Ai'sha (may Allah be pleased with her) says: “I competed with the Messenger of Allah (in running) and overtook him. Later, when I had put on some weight, I once again competed with him, but this time he overtook me and said: “We're even now”. (Sunan Abi Davud).

Salamath bin Aqwa (R) says, while they were returning after a battle, a ansari man challenged them by saying

"الا مسابق الى المدينة"

“Who is there to run with me until Madeena” and Salama asked Prophet (S) to accept his challenge, Rasool gave the permission and competed with him. (Sahih Muslim).

Ibn Umar (R) narrates that Muhammed (S) had engaged in many sport activities. Rasool (S) had encouraged Muslims to learn Swimming, Archery, Horse Riding and Wrestling. Moreover, Prophet has practiced it also. Prophet Muhammed (S) has wrestled three times with famous wrestler named Rukana, and defeated him every time. And later he accepted Islam. (Abu Dawuud)

عليكم بالرمي فإنه خير - أو من خير " : عن سعد بن أبي وقاص رفعه قال  
 " - لهوكم

(Practice Archery, it is better entertainment for you)

Prophet had participated in the Horse race also.

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ يَحْيَى التَّمِيمِيُّ، قَالَ قَرَأْتُ عَلَى مَالِكٍ عَنْ نَافِعٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَابَقَ بِالْخَيْلِ الَّتِي قَدْ أُضْمِرَتْ مِنَ الْخَفِيَاءِ وَكَانَ أَمْدُهَا ثَنِيَّةَ الْوَدَاعِ وَسَابَقَ بَيْنَ الْخَيْلِ الَّتِي لَمْ تُضْمَرْ مِنَ الثَّنِيَّةِ إِلَى مَسْجِدِ بَنِي زُرَيْقٍ وَكَانَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ فَيَمِّنُ سَابِقَ بِهَا.

(It has been narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) had a race of the horses which had been especially prepared for the purpose from Hafya' to Thaniyyat al-Wada' (the latter being the winning post), and of those which had not been trained from Thaniyya to the mosque of BanuZuraiq, and Ibn Umar was among those who took part in this race).

Ali (R) says in his book ‘Nahjul Balagah’ that “The believer's time has three periods: the period when he is in communion with Allah, the period when he manages for his livelihood, and the period when he is free to enjoy what is lawful and pleasant. And the last part is a tonic and refreshing for the other parts.” From all these its clear that Prophet Muhammed (S) encouraged companions in developing healthy body and practiced Sports and Games which does not clash with Sharia rulings.

In fact, Prophet has intended to develop good health through these activities, on the other hand it is clear that he has forbidden the activities which does not fulfil the rulings of Sharia. For instance, He has forbidden all the games which affects to the life of beings. Prophet has encouraged to study Archery, but he stated that if it directs to the life of any animal, it is Haram.

"لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ شَيْئًا فِيهِ الرُّوحُ غَرَضًا"

("The Messenger of Allah cursed those who take anything that has a soul as a target." (Sahih)

In like manner, all the activities which comes with gambling is Haram in Islam.

"إِنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " مَنْ لَعِبَ بِالنَّرْدِ شِبِيرٍ فَكَأَنَّمَا صَبَغَ يَدَهُ فِي لَحْمِ خَنْزِيرٍ وَدَمِهِ "

(He who played Nardashir (a game similar to backgammon) is like one who dyed his hand with the flesh and blood of Pig).

If the activity relates to Shirk, Psychological impacts, Nudity, which away a Muslim from his obligatory duties like Swalath also considered as Forbidden in Islam.

In contrast, the activities which are permissible in Islam are those fulfil the rules and regulations of Sharia, and those relates against the rulings of Sharia are Haram. Allah prohibits that which is harmful to the physical, mental and spiritual health of individuals and to overall health of society.

### 3. Terms and Conditions

Muslims have rules and regulations governing them in every aspects of life. Those which fulfil these and can done are lawful – Halal, and those are prohibited known as forbidden – Haram and the detestable as Makruh. In relating to the engagement in Sport activities the scholars have numbered many rulings.

- The Games based on Gambling are Haram in Islam. Gambling is the wagering of money or something value on an event with an uncertain outcome, with the primary intent of winning money or material goods. It is also known as betting. Allah says:

"يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ"

(O believers! Intoxicants, gambling, idols, and drawing lots for decisions are all evil of Satan's handiwork. So avoid them so you may be successful) (Sura Al Maeda: 90)

Prophet (S) had instructed his companions to be away from such games. The games which had the element of gambling at the time of Prophet, had concerned as Forbidden. For example 'the stacks', 'Chess – with gambling' all were considered as Haram and warned those who plays them like they are dying their hands to the flesh and blood of the Pig. Many Scholars had said that Gambling is a play of Luck. The all games which draw from many people and giving all those to one are also prohibited.

- The games which are harmful to the life of beings are prohibited in Islam. There are many Hadees which Rasool (S) prohibits this action. Imam Muslim has reported from Jabir (R) that 'All those activity which involves hurting to animals are prohibited'. There is another Hadees which state this instruction. ("The Messenger of Allah cursed those who take anything that has a soul as a target." (Sahih)

Striking or branding animals on the face is also prohibited.

نَهَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنِ الضَّرْبِ فِي الْوَجْهِ وَعَنِ الوَسْمِ فِي الْوَجْهِ

(Allah's Messenger (S) forbade (the animals to be beaten) on the face or cauterisation on the face.)

- The activities which makes fall into Shirk or forbidden activities like drinking wine etc are Haram. Games which are based on hatred of Islam and Muslims, like speaking and acting against Islamic principles and Rulings like Speaking against Prophet, Throwing stones to Kaaba likes are also Haram.

There is a Principle 'What ever makes fall to Haram is Haram'.

- Should not away from the obligatory duties of the person.
- Should not promote Violence, Nudity, Psychological defects etc.

### 4. Online era

As Islam is a religion which is apt for all time, it would engage all the activities which arose in every era. Now, it is an online era. An era of Internet, Social Media, Online Games etc. Social Era should make the relations social, unfortunately our relations have been narrowed through Social Medias. The Games and Sporting activities which were done outdoor changed to Indoor especially playing alone.

Internet is compared as a Informative Highway, anything wants will be available through it. The important principle which should remember while engaging with Online Platform is that "All those are forbidden in offline is forbidden in Online also "and "Those rulings which should be consider in offline is to be considered in Online also".

### 5. Online Games and its permissibility

Online Games are being grown rapidly nowadays. And it is difficult to identify the good and bad from it. So a Muslim should be more aware on it and should fulfil all the requirements and obey all the rulings of Sharia.

The permissibility of Online or Electronic games is as same of the Hadees which narrated for Sport activities. So, all the Online Games which fulfil the recommendations and rules of Sharia are permissible in Islam. The rules like should not have the element of Gambling, Nudity, promoting Violence etc. are to be considered.

Many Online games are promoting violence like killing others by missions, conquering others things, seducing etc all these games are prohibited in Islam. They are considered as Haram. Games like Vice City, GTA, PubG etc. are promoting these bad values in the minds of the players.

Some games promotes nudity and shows nudity throughout the game. Those games all are forbidden. Some games give missions which make negative impacts to Islam like throwing stones on Masjid all are considered as Haram.

Physical harm, such as damage to the eyes and nervous system; harmful to the body, such games are to be avoided. Modern studies have shown that these games may be addictive as well as causing stress and nervous tension in children.

In contrast, the games which contains negative moral values should be avoided. A basic discipline of Islam is "A thing which should not be done is not to be think in his mind also". And all the things which promotes bad values are not to be promoted and should be avoided.

A new tendency rapidly growing in the mind of Online players is playing by giving money, adding a group of people a specific amount of Money and drawing, the one who wins will get all the money. It is same as Stacks which we play offline, which has the element of Gambling.

While, a player can spend money to get better players and game. It is considered as spending small amount of money for entertainment. Shafi Scholar Imam Ibn al Qaas has said 'It is not forbidden to spend money for entertainment which are permissible in Islam'. So it is important that the game or entertainment should be permissible.

## 6. Analyzing some electronic games

Many online games have the elements of Haram like Gambling, Nudity etc. So it is mandatory to a Muslim to note those games and to be away from all those games.

### a. PubG

Players Unknown Battle Ground is an online multiplayer game, where dozens of players compete for the top spot, with sessions lasting up to an hour at times. The base of this game is a Non – Islamic value because it is promoting to kill the players and promoting violence. Killing people and looting others is a negative value in Islam, So all those promote this value is to be avoided.

Islam is a religion which promotes great moral values. The things which are not to be done is not to be think in the mind also. So, such games are to be avoided. PubG also promotes idolatry. There were a mission in which the player should be a idolater. Many scholars had given fatwa that playing PubG is Haram due to these elements and also it make many psychological defects.

Many statics depicts that there are many family problems and negative impacts on children. A 15 year old boy has shot his friend to know how is death!. A boy who is caught in a criminal case and robbery said he has done it to know how it is, the game had made him such a mind. Many Islamic Scholars has given Fatwa that it is Haram, and some government agencies also promoted not to play PubG.

### b. GTA

Games like GTA Vice City, San Andreas promotes violence and nudity. Throughout the game it promotes nudity, dancing, seducing etc. These games also have missions like idolatry to get codes and guns. Thus it is not permissible in Islam.

### c. MPL, Packino, Video pocker

These games are based on the element Gambling. The participants who are wishing to participate should give an amount of money and the one who is won will get all the amount of money. Recently there are many readings by forbidding such games. Majority of such games cheats the participants and later they will have a mass loss in money.

### d. Rummy

Rummy is an online platform of playing stacks. Common people considers playing stacks as a bad thing but no any attention on its permissibility while playing online. It is mainly based on the element Gambling.

### e. Ludo: A new interpretation

Ludo is a game in which the players race their four tokens from start to finish according to the rolls of a single die. Many Salafi Scholars had given Fatwa that playing ludo is Haram. Because it is a play which is the one which Prophet has forbidden which is named as Nardasheer. They says it is a play with dice and chance. But the online game Ludo is it similar to Nardashir?

While we look to Nardashir, we can see that it is mainly based on the element Gambling. Imam ValeedBaji says that Rasool has prohibited the Nardashir due to it was considered as devotion for Magus, so it has the element of Shirk also. Thus it has been considered as forbidden. But, in the Ludo app which is a common game in online doesn't have the element of Gambling.

Thus the researcher comes to the point that Ludo is not a forbidden game, but when it is played for money or it has the element of Gambling it is considered as Haram in Islam.

## 7. Conclusion

Sport activities help a person maintain his body healthy. As Islam is a religion which deals with all the aspects of life, it considers all the sporting activities which fulfil the rulings of Sharia. While dealing with Online Games all the rulings which should be consider in offline is also to be obey in Online also. In contrast all the Games which does not clash with principles of Sharia and those fulfil the rulings of Sharia are lawful in Islam, and sometimes considered as Ibadath relating to their intentions.

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