

Ruling on Participating in Pigeon-Flying Competitions and Betting

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(Dawateislami)

Question

What do the Honorable scholars of Islam say about the following matter: In villages, pigeon flying competitions are held from mid-May to mid-July. Pigeon keepers spend the whole year raising a specific breed of pigeons for this. They feed them saffron, raisins, almonds, silver leaf, etc. Then they give them some injections before flying them. They have the birds take off around 5-6 in the morning and don't let them land. The pigeon that lands last is declared the winner and the last ones typically land till 5-6 in the afternoon. In other words, they make the bird fly continuously for 12 hours. Furthermore, people bet a lot of money on these pigeons. The person who puts his money on the winning pigeon becomes the owner of all the money bet on the other pigeons. According to this explanation, what is the ruling regarding such competitions and the money earned from betting on them?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْجَوَابُ بِعَوْنِ الْمَلِكِ الْوَهَّابِ اللَّهُمَّ هِدَايَةَ الْحَقِّ وَالصَّوَابِ

Our religion, Islam commands us to be merciful to animals and strictly prohibits us from hurting or bothering them without reason. The Ahadith, by instructing us to be merciful to animals and forbidding us from being cruel to them, warn us of the punishment of the hereafter. Therefore, according to the teachings of the Quran and Hadith, the ruling of shari'ah is that making pigeons compete in this manner that they are kept hungry and thirsty, are made to fly continuously in the severe heat without letting them land for food or water, torturing these poor, voiceless animals solely for the sake of amusement is absolutely impermissible, a sin and a cause for severe punishment in the afterlife.

These competitions in which people bet money on the pigeons, that all the money bet on the losing pigeons is awarded to one person while everyone else loses money, is undoubtedly a form of

gambling. The money that is earned in such a way is 'Mal Khabis' (impure money) and will not be in the ownership of the one who takes it. Therefore, it is Fard upon the one with such money or wealth to return it to the one from whom he took it. If that person is not alive, he should give it to their inheritors i.e. children etc. If he can't find any of those people, it is necessary to, without the intention of Sawab (reward), give the money to a Faqeer Shara'i (Sharia-defined poor person) in place of the owner.

All animals, just like us, are the creation of our Lord عزوجل. It is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

(وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَيْرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَّةٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ ۚ)

Translation from Kanz-ul-'Irfan: And there is no beast upon the earth nor any bird that flies with its wings except that they are nations like you. (Part 7, Surah An'aam, Verse 38)

The renown exegetist, Allamah Qurtubi (D. 671 AH/ 1272CE) writes regarding this verse:

هم جماعات مثلكم في أن الله عزوجل خلقهم، وتكفل بأرزاقهم، وعدل عليهم، فلا ينبغي أن تظلموهم، ولا تجاوزوا فيهم ما أمرتم به

Translation: They are groups just like you in the way that Allah عزوجل also created them, he guarantees their Rizq (sustenance), and he created justice amongst them. So, it is not appropriate for you to torture them. Do not exceed what you have been commanded regarding them. (Al-Jami' Li-Ahkam Al-Quran Lil-Qurtubi, vol. 6, Pg. 419, Cairo)

Mistreating animals leads to punishment in the afterlife. It is written in *Sahih Al-Bukhari*:

عذبت امرأة في هرة سجنتها حتى ماتت فدخلت فيها النار لا هي أطعمتها ولا سقتها إذ حبستها ولا هي تركتها تأكل من خشاش الأرض

Translation: A woman was punished because she tied up a cat for so long that it died of starvation. She was put in hell because she did not feed the cat, give it water, or let it leave to eat the vermin of the land. (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 4, Pg. 176, Beirut)

Forcing a pigeon to fly fast is a sin. Sharih Bukhari Allamah Badr-Uddin 'Aini رحمه الله تعالى عليه (D. 855 AH/ 1451 CE) writes:

والمناطحة في الكباش، والطيران السريع في الحمامة، والمقاتلة في الديك، والخصي في العبد،
فإن هذه الأشياء كلها معصية

Translation: Making Rams fight, making pigeons fly fast, making roosters fight, castration of a slave; all these things are sins. (Al-Binayah Sharh Al-Hidayah, Vol 11, Pg. 272, DKI, Beirut)

The Imam of The Ahl Al-Sunnah, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan رحمۃ اللہ علیہ (D. 1340 AH/ 1921 CE) has written a beautiful and thought-provoking statement regarding pigeon races. He says:

اُن کا خالی اڑانا کہ نہ کسی کی بے پردگی ہو، نہ کنکریوں سے نقصان، خود کب ظلم شدید سے خالی ہے، جبکہ رواجِ زمانہ کے طور پر ہو کہ کبوتروں کو اڑاتے ہیں اور اُن کا دم بڑھانے کے لیے محض بے فائدہ اپنے بیہودہ بے معنی شوق کے واسطے اُنہیں اترنے نہیں دیتے، وہ تھک تھک کے نیچے گرتے، یہ مار مار کر پھر اڑا دیتے ہیں۔ صبح کا دانہ دیر تک کی محنت شاقہ پرواز سے ہضم ہو گیا، بھوک سے بیتاب ہیں اور یہ غل مچا کر بانس دکھا کر آنے نہیں دیتے، خالی معدے شہپر تھکے اور کسی طرح نیچے اترنے، دم لینے، دانہ پانی سے اوسان ٹھکانے کرنے کا حکم نہیں۔ یہاں تک کہ گھنٹوں اور گھنٹوں سے پہروں اُنہیں اسی عذابِ شدید میں رکھتے ہیں، یہ خود کیا کم ظلم ہے؟ اور ظلم بھی بے زبان بے گناہ جانور پر کہ آدمیوں کی ضررِ رسانی سے کہیں سخت تر ہے۔۔۔ بے درد کو پرانی مصیبت نہیں معلوم ہوتی، اپنے اوپر قیاس کر کے دیکھیں، اگر کسی ظالم کے پالے پڑیں کہ وہ میدان میں ایک دائرہ کھینچ کر گھنٹوں اُن سے کاواکاٹنے کو کہے، یہ جب تھکیں، پست ہو کر رکیں، کوڑے سے خبر لے، اُن کا دم چڑھ جائے، جان تھک جائے، بھوک پیاس بے حد ستائے، مگر وہ کوڑا لیے تیار ہے کہ رکنے نہیں دیتا، اُس وقت ان کو خبر ہو کہ ہم بے زبان جانور پر کیسا ظلم کرتے تھے، دنیا گزشتنی ہے، یہاں احکامِ شرع جاری نہ ہونے سے خوش نہ ہوں، ایک دن انصاف کا آنے والا ہے، جس میں شاخ دار بکری سے مُنڈی بکری کا حساب لیا جائے گا، حالانکہ جانور غیر مکلف ہے، تو تم مکلفین کہ تمہارے ہی لیے ثواب و عذابِ جنت و جہنم تیار ہوئے ہیں، کس گھمنڈ میں ہو!

Translation: Even just flying the birds in a way that no unveiling is done nor are they hurt with rocks is still torture. Let alone when done in the way common today i.e making the birds fly continuously and not letting them perch to rest, for no reason other than their immoral pleasure and fun, when the birds tire so much that they fall to the ground they are beaten and forced to fly again. The birds have

digested their food due to all the difficulty of flying; they are now starving, but these people create an uproar and wave their sticks, not letting the birds come down. Hungry, with empty stomachs, tired; the birds have no other way to get down, rest, and have some food and water to the point where they are put through this severe abuse for hours and hours. Is this any less than torture? And those being tortured are voiceless sinless animals; hurting them is many levels greater than hurting a person. A person who feels no pain doesn't feel sympathy for the pain of others. Try and apply this to yourself, If you fall into the clutches of a tyrant and he commands you to walk in circles for hours while keeping watch with a whip—when you tire and stop, he will strike you, and when your strength is exhausted, and hunger and thirst torment you, he will still be ready with the whip, not allowing you to rest. At that moment, you will realize the cruelty you inflicted on voiceless animals. This world is temporary; do not take joy in the absence of the laws of Shari'ah here, for a day of justice will come when even a horned goat will be held accountable by a hornless goat, even though animals are not Mukallaf. You are all Mukallaf and only for you will reward and punishment, heaven and hell be prepared. What are you showing arrogance for?!(Fatawa Razawiyah, Vol. 16, Pg. 309-310, Raza Foundation, Lahore)

Ruling of Betting money on these pigeons:

In pigeon races, the money that is specified from both sides is pure gambling and Allah عزوجل said:

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾)

Translation from Kanz-ul- 'Irfan: O' you who believe! Indeed, alcohol and gambling and idols, and the (casting of) arrows to determine fate are impure, satanic deeds. So, refrain from them so that you may attain success. (Part 7, Surah Maidah, Verse 90)

Abu Al-Ma'ali, Allamah Bukhari Hanafi رحمه الله عليه (D. 616 AH/1219 CE) writes:

شرطوا الجعل من الجانبين فهو حرام وصورة ذلك: أن يقول الرجل لغيره: تعال حتى نتسابق، فإن سبق فرسك، أوقال: إبلك أوقال: سهمك أعطيك كذا، وإن سبق فرسي، أوقال: إيلي، أوقال: سهمي أعطني كذا، وهذا هو القمار بعينه

Translation: If betting is done from both sides, then it is haram. An example of that is: One person says to another “Come let’s compete; If your horse/camel/arrow gets ahead, I will give you so and so thing. If my horse/camel/arrow gets ahead, give me so and so thing.” This very thing is Gambling. (Al-Muhit Al-Burhani, Vol. 5, Pg. 323, DKI, Beirut)

Whoever earns money through gambling, it is necessary upon him to return it to the owner. The Imam of The Ahl Al-Sunnah, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan رحمه الله عليه writes:

جس قدر مال جوئے میں کمایا محض حرام ہے اور اس سے براءت یعنی نجات کی یہی صورت ہے کہ جس جس سے جتنا جتنا مال جیتا ہے اُسے واپس دے، یا جیسے بنے اُسے راضی کر کے مُعاف کرا لے، وہ نہ ہو، تو اُس کے وارثوں کو واپس دے، یا اُن میں جو عاقل بالغ ہوں ان کا حصہ اُن کی رضامندی سے مُعاف کرا لے۔ باقیوں کا حصہ ضرور انہیں دے کہ اِس کی مُعافی ممکن نہیں، اور جن لوگوں کا پتا کسی طرح نہ چلے، نہ اُن کا، نہ اُن کے ورثہ کا، اُن سے جس قدر جیتا تھا، اُن کی نیت سے خیرات کر دے، اگرچہ خود اپنے ہی محتاج بہن بھائیوں، بھتیجیوں، بھانجیوں کو دے دے

Translation: Whatever amount of money is earned in gambling, it is purely Haram and the only way to become free of this is to return whatever each person gave, or he should convince them to forgive this money. If not, then he should return the money to those people’s inheritors or convince those from them who are sane adults to forgive their amount. He must give the rest their amounts as it is not possible for them to forgive it. And for those about whom he has no information nor has any information of their inheritors, he should donate whatever amount he won, even if to his destitute siblings, nephews, etc. (Fatawa Razawiyah, Vol. 19, Pg. 651, Raza Foundation, Lahore)

Societal Ruins:

The aforementioned proofs have outlined all of its problems, but another much bigger societal issue is that people engrossed in such

activities become completely addicted to them and they become ignorant of their duties and their purposes in life. The Renown Muhaddith, Shah Wali-Ullah Dehlawi رحمه الله عليه (D. 1176AH/1762CE) has written:

الاشتغال بالمسليات وهي ما يسلي النفس عن هم آخرته ودنياه ويضيع الأوقات كالمعازف
والشطرنج واللعب بالحمام واللعب بتحريش البهائم ونحوها؛ فان الانسان إذا اشتغل بهذه
الأشياء لها عن طعامه وشرابه وحاجته، وربما كان حاقنا لا يقوم للبول فان جرى الرسم بالاشتغال بها
صار الناس كالأعلى المدينة، ولم يتوجهوا إلى إصلاح نفوسهم

Translation: Becoming involved in amusements with which one distracts himself from the matters of the world and the hereafter and wastes time, such as instruments, chess, **pigeon racing**, animal fights, etc. When a person becomes busy with these things, he forgets to eat, drink, and other necessary things. Sometimes he has a severe need to urinate, but he doesn't go. If such things become common, then people will become a burden on the city and will not focus on bettering themselves. (Hujjat-Ullah Al-Balighah, Vol. 2, Chapter of livelihood, Pg. 297, Beirut)

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

(Allah Almighty knows best and His Messenger صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ knows best.)

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