22305 - Which Games Are Haram in Islam?

the question

I read a hadith which says, “Whoever plays with dice, it is as if he dipped his hand in the flesh and blood of a pig.” And I read that what this means is that playing with dice is haram. So an important question came to my mind, namely, are all kinds of games haram, even if they are beneficial especially since there are Islamic games which are based on use of dice? Are all these games haram? Or does the prohibition apply only to specific games? Please explain this matter, may Allah reward you with good.

Summary of answer

There are games which are specifically forbidden in the texts such as playing with dice. There are games which are neither enjoined nor forbidden in the texts and they are of two types: 1- The games which include something that is haram such as games that involve statues or images of living beings, or which are accompanied by music. 2- The games which do not involve anything haram, and which usually do not lead to it, like most of the games we see of football (soccer), volleyball and table-tennis etc.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Types of games

Games fall into two categories:

- Games which help in jihad for the sake of Allah, whether that is physical jihad (fighting) or verbal jihad (i.e., knowledge), such as swimming, shooting, horse-riding, and games which involve developing one’s abilities and Islamic knowledge, etc.

These games are mustahabb and the one who engages in them will be rewarded so long as his intention is good and he seeks to support the religion thereby. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Shoot, O Bani Adnan, for your father was an archer.” Shooting or archery includes by analogy all similar actions.

- Games which do not help in jihad.

Types of games which do not help in jihad

There are two types of games which do not help in jihad.

1. Games which are specifically forbidden in the texts, such as playing with dice as mentioned in the question. These games should be avoided by the Muslim.
2. Games which are neither enjoined nor forbidden in the texts.

Kinds of games which are neither enjoined nor forbidden

There are two kinds of games which are neither enjoined nor forbidden:

a. Games which include something that is haram, such as games that involve statues or images of living beings, or which are accompanied by music, or games which lead to arguments and conflicts among people and result in their saying or doing something bad. These come under the prohibition because of the haram consequences to which they lead or because they are a means to something that is haram. If something is the means that usually leads to something that is haram, then we should refrain from it.
b. Games which do not involve anything haram, and which usually do not lead to it, like most of the games we see of football (soccer), volleyball and table-tennis etc.

Conditions of allowing the games which do not involve anything haram

These games are permissible subject to the following restrictions:

1. They should be free of gambling, i.e., betting between the players.

2. They should not form an obstacle to the obligatory remembrance of Allah, or to prayer, or to any obligatory act of worship, such as honouring one’s parents.
3. They should not take up a lot of the player’s time, let alone taking up all of his time or causing him to be known among the people for that, or becoming his job, because then there is the fear that the ayah (interpretation of the meaning) “Who took their religion as an amusement and play, and the life of the world deceived them. So this Day We shall forget them” [al-A’raf 7:51] may become applicable to him.
4. The last condition does not have a set limit, but should be referred to what is customary among the Muslims; whatever they regard as excessive is not allowed. A person should set a limit for the time spent playing and for the time spent in serious pursuits; if (the time devoted to playing) is half or one-third or one-quarter, then this is too much.

And Allah knows best.