10427 - Ruling on Boxing

the question

My local mosque is thinking about setting up boxing classes. I wanted to know whether this is permissibile. The reason being that is there not a hadith of the Prophet (SAW) where he sees two men wrestling/ sparring and he tells them to avoid the face for we have been created in the likeness of Adam (AS)? According to this, is it mub'ah to practice boxing with another brother and hit one another in the face?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Islamic sharee’ah permits all things that are beneficial to the body and do not harm it, and it forbids all things that may cause damage or harm to the body. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Your body has rights over you.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, Kitaab al-Sawm, 1839)

If sports are free from things which are forbidden in sharee’ah, then practising those sports is beneficial. Boxing is an ancient sport that was practised by the Greeks.

Boxing is the worst kind of sport, and probably it does not even deserve to be called a sport, despite the fact that western nations, in particular – where boxing is widespread at a professional level – call it “the noble sport” and a form of self-defence. They forget, or overlook, the fact that the main aim of boxing is to harm one's opponent and throw him to the ground, preferably with the “decisive blow” (or “knock-out”), as they call it, which is the highest level of victory in boxing.

“Many voices have been raised in the parliaments of many countries demanding a ban on professional boxing, in view of the harm that has been caused to many boxers. Sweden has succeeded in imposing such a ban, whilst many other nations have failed to do so, despite the many injuries, and even deaths, caused to many professional boxers as a direct result of this

violent sport.

The fact of the matter is that the deaths of so many boxers is the reason for many voices calling for an end to this sport, or at least the imposition of strict rules to limit its violence." (From Huna London magazine, issue # 413, March 1983).

Dr. Roger Whirty, the spokesman of the British Medical Council in Wales, spoke of the aims of the Council's campaign against boxing: "We want to show everyone that boxing is an extremely dangerous sport, not only because of the increasing number of fatalities, but also because of the disabilities which affect many more times that number. In order to achieve that, we are trying to put pressure on various official bodies to condemn this sport, and not to consider it to be a sport at all. I reiterate once again that the danger of this sport lies in the harm caused to hundreds of boxers as a result of the disabilities that they suffer.

The number of boxers who have died as a result of injuries sustained in boxing between 1945 and 1983 is three hundred and fifty." (From Huna London magazine, issue # 413, March 1983).

The Islamic attitude towards this sport:

The principles of Islam are completely opposed to the idea of the ummah accepting this dangerous deviation as a moral or intellectual trend which would permit such violent fights between members of the ummah or of the human race as a whole.

Among these principles we may list the following:

1.Harm. We have already mentioned the harm and danger to human life involved in this sport, and the testimony of western specialists who are motivated by their humanitarian feelings to fight and strive to eliminate boxing from the international sporting lexicon.

2.Violating the sanctity of the face. Boxing is based on allowing punches to the face of one's opponent using the maximum force that one possesses. Blows to the face earn more points than blows to any other part of the body. This clearly goes against the teaching of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), as narrated by Abu Hurayrah: "When any one of you fights,

let him avoid (striking) the face.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, al-Fath, 5/215).

Al-Haafiz said: “This prohibition also includes all those who are struck for the purpose of hadd or ta’zeer punishments or discipline. According to the hadeeth narrated by Abu Bakrah and others, which was recorded by Abu Dawood and others, about the woman who had committed adultery, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) commanded that she should be stoned to death, and said, ‘Stone her, but avoid the face.’ (Narrated by Abu Dawood, 4/152). If that is the command in the case of one who is being punished and is going to die anyway, then the rule is even more applicable in cases of lesser severity.” See al-Fath, 5/216

Al-Nawawi said: “The scholars said: it is forbidden to strike the face because it is soft and all of a person's beauty and most of his senses are located there. If the face is hit, there is the fear that all or some of them may be destroyed or disfigured. Any defect in the face is a terrible thing because it is so prominent and obvious, and usually the person who is hit in the face will not be spared some disfigurement.” (al-Fath, 5/216).

In al-Fath, he says concerning the specific prohibition narrated in the hadeeth:

“Al-Nawawi did not discuss the details of this prohibition. It is clear that it is haraam, and this is supported by the hadeeth of Suwayd ibn Maqran al-Sahaabi, that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) saw a man slap a slave (or a boy) in the face, and he said, “Do you not know that the face is inviolate?” (Muslim, 3/1280.