3895 - Ruling on doing dangerous sports

the question

What is the ruling on doing dangerous sports, such as walking across tightropes in high places, jumping down from high places and staying in a cage with snakes?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Just as Islam has commanded the Muslim to take care of his physical wellbeing, so too it forbids him to do any kind of harm to his body. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “There should be no harming or reciprocating harm.” (Narrated by Ibn Maajah, Kitaab al-Ahkaam, 2332; Ahmad, 2719; Maalik, 1234).

The scholars have discussed the matter of doing dangerous sports.

The author of al-Durr al-Mukhtaar said: “According to the Hanafi fiqh, ‘… all kinds of dangerous sports are permitted to the one who is skilled and is most likely to be safe from harm, such as archery/shooting, or hunting snakes. Watching these sports is permitted in such cases.’” (See al-Durr al-Mukhtaar, 6/404)

The first condition:

Complete skill and proficiency in these kinds of sports. That cannot be achieved without a lot of repeated practice and training, until that level of proficiency is achieved. If this training results in neglecting obligatory duties or ignoring Sunnah or recommended actions, then the view that it is haraam is applicable in this case. But if no such neglect results from this practice and training, then the view that it is permitted is applicable, and it is also permitted to watch.

The second condition:

That it is most likely that the person will be safe. If there is the slightest possibility that he will not be safe, or there is doubt that he will be safe, then the sport is haraam, because it may lead to his death. We are forbidden to reach towards such things, because Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“…and do not throw yourselves into destruction…”

[al-Baqarah 2:195]

The third condition.

The sport should not be done for money. It is haraam to take payment for such sports, because this is regarded as consuming people’s wealth unlawfully, as there is no benefit in it.

See Bughiyat al-Mushtaaq fi Hukm al-Lahw wa’l-La’b wa’l-Sibaaq, p. 156-157.

I say: these things should be limited to special occasions and celebrations, provided that they comply with the conditions mentioned above. The soundness of this opinion is based on the reports about the Ethiopians playing in the mosque, so these matters should be restricted to the days of Eid. By analogy they may also be done on other special occasions and celebrations. Similarly, such sports are regarded as permissible on the condition that there is no mixing of men and women, and that the ‘awrahs of the players are not visible, and that no games of magic are involved.