



Playing is a natural activity for a child and is even important for the correct, healthy development of a child. For a child, playing is not merely a pastime. Rather, it is a developmental and educational process through which the child learns many basic principles such as cause and effect, effort and reward, etc. It is due to the process of playing being such an effective medium of education that teachers seek to capitalize on playing and use it to engage the students in games through which they will be educated in a subtle yet definite and enjoyable manner.

However, since the world has taken the route of technology, the nature of ‘the game’ has changed. Now, games are seldom played on fields and in backyards. Rather, the computer, tablet and phone screen has become the new field of play, and once the game begins, players become glued to the screen.

For many parents, ‘parking’ the child before the PC or placing an iPad in their hands is a daily solution to occupying the child, leaving the parent free to attend to their own responsibilities or even relax. This has led to children becoming increasingly addicted to these games. As a result, if a child is invited to play soccer in the backyard, it is not farfetched to imagine him replying, “Why should I kick a ball when I already have an app for that!” The result? The virtual world is now preferred to living life in the real world.

The dangers that accompany these games are numerous. Games that contain music, pictures of animate objects, indecent content and other similar elements of haraam are impermissible, and playing these games causes devastating damage to the imaan of the player.

However, even if the game is void of these haraam elements, these games teach different, subtle messages to these young, impressionable players. Children who grow up playing car racing games generally grow up mimicking the same behaviour by living life “in the fast lane”. Similarly, when games are played that depict and encourage violence, such as fighting, shooting and war games, then the child develops violent tendencies as his natural, inborn aversion to

violence is desensitized.

In many cases, children who pulled a gun on their classmates and went onto a shooting rampage, murdering innocent people, were found to be avid players of these games.

The fundamental difference between these games and the real world is that there are no real consequences in the gaming world. Rather, when one encounters difficulty, one can easily escape by pressing the convenient ‘reset’ button. In real life, there is no reset. When reckless driving leads to an accident and the loss of lives, there is no reset. When a gun is pulled and lives are lost, there is no reset. In real life, there is only one result – the child’s life is ruined and it’s GAME OVER.

Furthermore, the playing of the past almost always benefited the child in some way or another. If the child was running in a field, his body benefited. If the child was playing in the kitchen, they were perhaps learning a basic skill such as peeling potatoes, rolling dough, etc. If the child played in the garden, they learnt how to wield a spade, etc. Hence, even though the child was playing, the child was developing a practical skill with which they would be able to benefit themselves and others.

On the contrary, most children glued to their screens suffer obesity, anti-social behaviour and a range of other physical and psychological problems.

If we truly love our children, let us wake up to the damage that these devices are wreaking on our innocent children. At the very least, let us limit their screen time. Switch off the game before it’s GAME OVER.