

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF SPORTS DEVELOPMENT AS VIEWED FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Isa Muhammad Maishnu

Introduction

Physical well-being and good health are some of the emphatic teachings in the Prophetic guidance brought by the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This is no surprise looking at the fact that the message of Islam is meant to be practiced and spread, as Islam is one of the most missionary religions. It is quite logical and understandable that it is only a sound and physically fit body that can implement the Divine all-encompassing guidance of Islam and perform the onerous task of spreading it to every nook and cranny of the globe.

As the main aim and objective of the creation of man in Islam is so as to live in total obedience and servitude to Allah, the Almighty Creator, anything that can help man achieve that noble goal is seen jurisprudentially as equally noble and desirable. The rule of *Usul al-Fiqh* (the science of Islamic Jurisprudence) in this regard is saying that, if an obligatory act can only be performed by means of another act, the latter act also becomes obligatory. The importance of sport and its development and encouragement can thus be grasped from its relationship with physical well-being of man. It is in order to address these and other issues that this paper is written.

The paper intends to first of all discuss sport as it is generally viewed in Islam. Issues will then be discussed related to Islam's concern with physical health, since sporting activities are always linked with the development of man's physical fitness. The different types of sporting activities practiced at the time of the Prophet of Islam and even before, but were maintained by Shari'ah

as means of entertainment and relaxation are areas that will be touched on in this write-up. This is in order to clear doubts on their relationship with the sublime teachings of Islam. As sports have become an international commodity accepted by almost all cultures and societies, it will be pertinent to know the Islamic dos and don'ts in sports so that the Divine teachings of Islam related to that will be respected and adhered to accordingly.

Sport today is one of the many ways of building relationships and diplomacy, it will be therefore important to know what guidance Islam offers here. We shall also attempt to see which of the two sexes are supposed to participate in what. The last part of the paper will touch on the importance of youths in the society and the maintenance of their physical well-being and the development of sporting activities in a society like ours.

Islam and Care for the Physical Health

Health in Islam is a blessing as well as a trust from Almighty Allah. A Muslim must take good care of his health in order to live up to the expectation of his religion and its demands. It is known that sometimes a little negligence of the principles of healthy living can create serious hazards on man. One is therefore expected to follow the rules of personal hygiene in order to show his gratefulness to the merciful Lord who has given him life and whose trust he is carrying with him. The different faculties of religiosity, morality, knowledge and reason in human life cannot function without a sound health. Even the basic religious duties cannot be performed if one has lost his health. A famous Arabic saying is 'Health is a crown on the head of the healthy; no one sees it except the sick.' This is how one scholar explains this relationship:

'A weak body contains feeble mind and a sick body has a sick mind. And nothing good and great can be delivered through infirm body. Sickness, bad health and infirmity weaken the spirit, and as such it cannot carry on with a life-

long mission, zeal and zest to perform wonders. Lofty ideals and heavy responsibilities of life cannot be shouldered with unsound health. People with weak minds, low morale, lack of enthusiasm and subdued passions cannot make great and dynamic nations.’¹

The believers, as part of their primary duties on earth, will have to perform the gigantic task of spreading the Will and Message of Almighty Allah and establish peace, justice, physical development and prosperity on this earth. This great responsibility requires supreme sacrifices, vigorous will and physically fit, robust and over-hearty persons. Due to this fact, Islam lays stress on a life away from sorrow, grief, iniquity, anxiety, despair, anger, jealousy, ill-will, shortsightedness and mental confusion. A companion of the Messenger of Allah, Abdullah Ibn Haris is reported to have said: ‘I have never seen a person more joyous than the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). (Transmitted by Tirmidhi)

To live a joyous life is an indication of a healthy body free from distress and worries of life. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has not only followed the rules and principles of health, vigor and vitality, but also taught his followers to do the same. A popular prayer he taught them is to always pray:

‘O Allah! I seek refuge in you from anxiety and grief, from inability and sloth, from cowardice and miserliness, from the burden of indebtedness and the overpowering and domination of men’. (Transmitted by both Bukhari and Muslim)

Even though Islam stresses hard work, it also emphasizes preservation and maintenance of energy and health. Undue strain and stress as well as excessive pressure produce a telling effect on health.² Hence the burden of the task on one must not reach

unbearable point. This is the meaning of Islamic moderation, which is a requirement even in devotion.

Whenever the Messenger of Allah noticed any kind of deviation in this aspect of Islamic religious life, as in other areas, he immediately caution the *Sahabah* (may Allah be pleased with them). In one of such occasion according to his wife A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

Act as much as lies within your ability, for the Lord will not feel wearied but you will get weary. (Transmitted by Bukhari)

The Messenger of Allah in many *Ahadith* taught his followers not to ruin their health and torture themselves through daily fasting, which is one of the highest forms of devotion to Allah. He even said anyone who fasts daily has not fasted.³ The import of this message can easily be discerned. Islam does not accept self-mortification as it is a natural religion with simple and natural teachings. It does not command what is humanly impossible. A companion of the Prophet, Abu Umamah reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said in what was reported by Abu Dawud:

Simple living is the symbol of faith.

In an authentic Hadith, which is very central to the issue of discussions, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

A strong believer is better and more lovable to Allah than a weak one. Be eager (on attaining) what is beneficial to you...'

It is very clear according to this statement of the Messenger of Allah that a believer who takes good care of his health and maintains it is better and carries more weight in the sight of Allah than an ordinary weak believer, who can do little in the course of

Allah.⁴ In order to maintain good health and enhance their energy, many types of exercises were suggested by the Prophet to his companions as will be discussed below.

Islam and Sports

The Islamic message brought by the final messenger of Almighty Allah to the whole humanity and to the end of the worldly life, has its fundamental principles and objectives. It has come to establish first and foremost the total obedience and subservience of man to the guidance revealed by his Creator in the glorious Qur'an. The most fundamental objective of man in life, Islamically speaking is to attain Allah's pleasure and acceptance. All what a believer does in life has to be seen from this perspective. Whatever man does in life in order to achieve those objectives are means and not end in them. Whatever one does in his devotion to his Lord and in striving and struggling to enlighten others regarding Allah's message, so that they live in accordance with it or in helping others in a good way, he is doing all that within those principles of Islam mentioned above. The means of achieving noble goals have to be noble. Islam never accepts the dictum 'The end justifies the means'.⁵

It is pertinent here to clear an issue very much related to our discussion, the issue of a dreaded word in Islam – Jihad. Jihad is one word that has so much been misinterpreted and misapprehended either mischievously or ignorantly, in order to show that Islam is an intolerant religion. In fact, Islam is the most tolerant of religions that has a Divine principle that says: 'There is no compulsion in religion, as guidance is henceforth distinct from error and misguidance.' Simply put, the word *jihad* has been derived from the Arabic word of '*jhd*', which means to strive and exert effort. The meaning given to the term '*jihad*' in line with the etymology of the word and the understanding of jurists and scholars, is to strive and do whatever is humanly possible for the

spread of Allah's final, everlasting and perfected guidance by any means. This is saying in other words that, one can do jihad by preaching Islamic truths, or by writing on Islamic message and disseminating the knowledge, as well as by using one's wealth or influence to further the cause of Allah and His religion. The last resort in order to spread this guidance is to use force if all other avenues and means of spreading it have been suppressed and denied.

From the above discussion it is clear that maintaining physical health and fitness is a basic requirement in carrying out any one of the Jihad types mentioned.

A cursory look at the history of the Arabs before and after Islam, will confirm a simple fact of how Islam refined many a good aspect found in their lives towards sublimity, respect, decency, honor and dignity. The attributes of bravery, generosity and partisanship were upheld after refinement, reorientation and redirection, so that they continue with them but in manner that is acceptable to their Lord and Creator. A new boost was given to them with the promise of reward and Allah's acceptance and paradise.⁶ Islam did not completely abolish all aspects of the 'Jahili' life of the Arabs. Whatever was good and natural in their pre-Islamic life is maintained after being properly clothed in Islamic garb.

In line with the above facts, any noble means that will lead to the fulfillment of one of Islam's noble principles is given the same position in Islamic jurisprudence as seen above. Therefore noble and legal means that will help a Muslim achieve physical strength in order to worship his Lord or help His cause is equally noble and reward-able. It is in this light that many scholars of Islam view physical exercises and sporting activities. Dr Yusuf al-Qardawi in his famous work, *Al-Halal wa al-Haram fi al-Islam (The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam)* has stated that Islam has given due importance to sports and entertainment. This, according to him, is because Islam is a practical religion that will not ignore any

genuine human requirement. Accordingly, the scholar opines, there is no harm if a person entertains himself to relax his mind or refresh himself with some permissible sports or play with his friends. He however, cautions that sport, which obstructs or hinders religious obligations are not permissible. (See his book, pp. 299-300).⁷ Another of today's leading scholars, Sheikh Muhammad Salih Al-Munajjid has made the following statement in response to this question:

What is the ruling on our body building in Islam? Are we allowed to put our bodies in structures like the wrestlers so long as we don't show it out and it's to our own good?

Praise be to Allah. Bodybuilding aims to make the body strong and sound, which is an important and desirable goal. If the purpose of sport is to prepare the body to be fit to carry out the duty of jihad so as to make the word of Allah supreme, then sport is essential... If the aim is relaxation and maintaining good health, then sport is permissible. If it involves something haram, such as missing prayers, uncovering any part of the 'awrah or mixing with women and so on, then it is haram.

Those who engage in bodybuilding uncover their 'awrah when practicing this sport, which is undoubtedly haram. The 'awrah of a man extends from the navel to the knee, and it is not permissible for him to uncover it in front of anyone other than his wife. It is also not permissible for him to look at the 'awrah of anyone else.

Some of those who engage in this sport are motivated by self-admiration and love of pride and showing off before others because of their beautiful bodies and strong muscles... and other bad motives, some of which are worse

than others. The believer should shun such things and seek the adornment of good attitude, humility and fairness.

Going to extremes in making the body look good, and being concerned with that, is not a good thing. What is good in this regard is that which helps the Muslim to maintain good health, to practice Islam, to engage in jihad for the sake of Allah and to do the acts of worship which require physical strength such as Hajj.

But doing more than that and going to extremes usually distracts the Muslim from doing things that are more important, as it happens in the case of those who practice many kinds of sports nowadays, so you see them training for many hours each day. What benefit can a Muslim gain if his body is as strong as a bull, but his heart is devoid of faith and all virtue?

The statements or fatwas of the two scholars almost concurred on some important principles related to sporting activities as practiced today. These include the requirement that any sporting activity should not obstruct Islamic obligations, especially prayer; the other principle is the covering of the *awrah* (parts of the body that should not be exposed in public); that sport should also not be harmful to the sportsman, for example boxing that even lead to death or Alzheimer disease later in life, etc.

Islam has therefore affirmed some sporting activities not as ends in themselves, but means to the great end of upholding, strengthening and spreading Allah's guidance and developing life on earth in accordance with that guidance. Establishing Allah's message and developing the material world in line with that message will necessarily require strong and physically fit bodies and healthy minds. Sluggish and feeble bodies can be of little or no help here. Sporting activities like body building can help achieve

strong and healthy bodies for the task of global development both spiritually and materially.

Sports also serve as means of entertainment and relaxation as well as ways of straightening behavior. Relaxation is necessary because the heart get bored and weary of a single continuous act. Sayyidina Ali (R.A) is reported to have said: 'Find a (legal) means of relaxing your heart, as it get bored and weary like the physical body.' Al-Jahiz also reported in his book *Al-Bayan wa At-Tabyeen* that `Umar ibn Al-Khattab wrote to his governors saying, "Teach your children swimming and horsemanship." In another narration, `Umar was reported to have added "Tell them to jump on the horses' backs, and narrate the stories of famous proverbs and good poetry to them."

In fact, many Islamic obligations include physical activities. Prayer, for example, is a spiritual purification as well as motions for the body. Hajj also involves physical effort in its various rituals. So do visiting fellow Muslims and the sick, and walking to mosques. All kinds of social activities in Islam can be considered to be physical exercise of the body and a way to strengthen it, as long as these activities are done moderately and in the right manner.

Different types of sports in Islam

Islam has affirmed many of the sporting activities of the Arabs and gave them new meaning, direction and aims and objectives. The first and foremost objective of sporting activities in Islam is, of course Jihad, or physical combat to spread and protect Islam. Due to this, horseracing, archery, wrestling are among the types of sports practiced and encouraged by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). Here are some of the sporting activities practiced by Muslims at the advent of Islam:

Running/ Jogging

Running is implicitly included in the command to hasten to do well, which is both a spiritual and physical hastening. It was reported by Ahmad ibn Hanbal that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) raced `A'ishah and she outran him. Then they had another race where he outran her, whereupon he said, "This time makes up for the other." Some versions of the same hadith mention that his outrunning in the second time was due to the fact that `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) had gained weight. It is also confirmed in this incident that the Prophet (peace be upon him) made sure that men were in the front and A'ishah in the back. One of the famous Arabs known for running was Hudhayfah ibn Badr, who once attacked An-Nu`man ibn Al-Mundhir ibn Ma'As-Sama', and crossed in one night what people could cross in eight.

Horse-racing

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was also reported to have held races for horses that had been especially prepared for the purpose, from Al-Hafya' to Thaniyyat Al-Wada` (about 6 or 7 miles from Madinah), and for those that had not been trained, from Thaniyyat Al-Wada` to the mosque of Banu Zurayq (about 1 mile).

In Sahih Muslim it is reported that Allah's Messenger said, "Ride horses, for they are the legacy of your father Isma'il (Ishmael)." Also, in Sahih Al-Bukhari, the Prophet himself is reported to have participated in a race while riding on his unbeatable she-camel, Al-`Adba'. Once a Bedouin rode on a young camel that beat Al-`Adba' in a race; the defeat was hard for the Muslims, so the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "It is Allah's law that He brings down whatever rises high in this world."

Archery

A number of hadiths show that this sport was popular among early Muslims:

`Uqbah ibn `Amir said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) saying while he was on the pulpit, 'In the verse, [And make ready against them all you can of power, including steeds of war], the word power means archery; the word force means archery.'"

Salamah ibn Al-Akwa` narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) passed by some people of the tribe of Banu Aslam who were practicing archery. The Prophet said, "O children of Ishmael! Practice archery as your father Ishmael was a great archer. Keep on shooting arrows and I am with (the team of) Banu so-and-so." So, one of the parties ceased shooting; thereupon the Prophet said, "Why do you not shoot?" They replied, "How should we shoot while you are with them (i.e., on their side)?" On that the Prophet said, "Shoot and I am with all of you" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

`Uqbah also said, "I heard Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) saying, 'Allah will cause three persons to enter Paradise for one arrow: the maker when he has a good intention in making it, the one who shoots it, and the one who hands it. So shoot and ride, but your shooting is dearer to me than you're riding. If anyone abandons archery after becoming an adept because of his distaste for it, it is a blessing he has abandoned; (or he said: for which he has been ungrateful)'" (Abu Dawud, An-Nasa'I, and Al-Hakim).

Fencing

Arabs knew a sport by the name niqaf, which is in fact the origin of fencing as known today. One of its forms was a special dance that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon) witnessed

being done by Abyssinians inside a mosque. This niqaf refers to some movements being performed with arrows. In a narration reported by Abu Salamah, those Abyssinians were playing with their spears.

Wrestling

The Prophet wrestled with a number of men, one of whom was Rukanah ibn `Abd Yazid ibn Hashim ibn `Abdul-Muttalib, who lived in Makkah and was a skillful wrestler. People used to come to him from distant territories and challenge him in wrestling. Ibn Ishaq narrated the story of Rukanah: Once the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) met him in one of the mountain paths of Makkah, whereupon he said to him, "O Rukanah! Will not you fear Allah and accept what I am calling you to?" Rukanah replied, "O Muhammad! Do you have a witness to verify your truthfulness?" So the Prophet said, "If I beat you in wrestling, will you believe in Allah and His Messenger?" The man replied, "Yes." The Prophet wrestled him and defeated him. Rukanah was astonished with that, and he asked the Prophet to acquit him of their agreement, which is belief, and to have a rematch. So they had a second and a third rematch where the Prophet also defeated him. Rukanah was astonished and said, "This is very strange indeed!" Then he immediately embraced Islam. Other narrations state that he embraced Islam after the conquest (fath) of Makkah" (Al-Hakim, Abu Dawud, and At-Tirmidhi).

The Prophet also wrestled with Abu Al-Aswad Al-Jumahi, who was so strong that he would stand on a cow hide, and ten men would pull the hide to take it from under his feet, but in the end, the hide would be torn and he had not moved an inch.

Weight Lifting

It was known to Arabs as rab`, which men used to practice by lifting a stone with their hands to show how strong they were. It is also reported that the first person to invent this game was Jabir

ibn `Abdullah Al-Ansari, who was known for his physical strength. Among those who were famous for being strong was `Ali ibn Abi Talib, who, in the Battle of Khaybar, lost his shield so he used a door of the fort as a shield. Amazingly, that door was too heavy to be carried by seven persons (see *Ar-Rawd Al-Anif*, vol. 2, p. 239).

High Jump

It was known to Arabs as *al-qafizi*. In this sport, the players used to place a piece of wood to jump on, and the game had special rules (see *`Uyun Al-Akhbar*, by Ibn Qutaybah, vol. 1, p. 133).

Swimming

`Ata' ibn Abi Rabah narrated that he saw Jabir ibn `Abdullah and Jabir ibn `Umayr Al-Ansari while they were practicing shooting, but one of them felt bored, so the other said to him, "Do you feel bored? I heard Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) saying, "All things in which there is no remembrance of Allah are frivolity and idle play except for four things, and he mentioned teaching another to swim" (At-Tabarani). Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Once, `Umar ibn Al-Khattab say to me, 'Let's compete in water and see who can hold his breath under water longer than the other.'" It is also reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) had swum while he was a child when his mother visited his maternal uncles in Madinah. That is why when the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) immigrated to Madinah, he looked at the place where his father had been buried and said, "Here is where my mother brought me."

It is also reported that the Prophet could swim well in the well of Banu `Ady ibn Al-Najjar. Through this incident, As-Suyuti could prove that the Prophet knew how to swim. As-Suyuti also reported that Abu Al-Qasim Al-Baghawi narrated on the authority of Ibn `Abbas that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)

and some of his Companions once swam in a stream. That day, the Prophet said, "Let everyone among us swim towards his friend." The Prophet himself swam towards Abu Bakr until he embraced him saying, "Here I am and my friend" (see Al-Zurqani's comment on Al-Mawahib Al-Ladunniyyah, vol. 1, p. 194).

Islam has given as we can see vividly, due importance to sports and entertainment. As seen above, racing, wrestling, archery, spear-play, horse riding and hunting are some of the sports in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the companions of the Prophet (may Allah be pleased with them all) used to participate.

Of course, many other new types of sports and games have been introduced after the advent of Islam. All these sports and games can be treated as permissible in Islam if such sports or games do not involve anything which is prohibited in Islam, such as betting of money, undue mixing of the sexes, negligence of prayer, etc. In order to grasp fully what is to be avoided in the practice of sports, the following discussion is pertinent.

The Lawful and Prohibited in Sports

Allah has revealed complete guidance in all spheres of life, as he affirms:

....And We have not been remiss in respect of anything in the Book; then unto their Lord they shall be gathered. (Surah al-An'am: 38).

Allah Almighty also says:

....And We have revealed unto you the Book (the Qur'an) as an exposition of everything, and as a guidance and mercy and glad tidings to the Muslims. (Surah al-Nahl: 89).

Any sort of game played with money, which has an element of gambling, is prohibited in Islam. Playing cards with money as well as playing backgammon, while betting with money is not permissible in Islam. As regards playing chess, which is a popular game, the opinion of jurists concerning it varies. Some of the

companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and some of the second-generation scholars, such as Ibn Abbas, Abu Hurairah, Ibn Sirin and Said Bin Al-Musayyib upheld the permissibility of chess. They have interpreted the traditions against chess as applicable when played with money. (Ref. "The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam"; by Yusuf Al-Qardawi cited above).

As mentioned above, a Muslim must avoid undue and unnecessary mixing of the sexes. This is part of the well-known and popular teachings and clear instructions of Islam, on the relation between the sexes. Another issue of importance that has to be taken of is that of praying the five daily prayers regularly and at their appointed time. The instruction in this regard is also explicit and unambiguous. Allah Almighty categorically says:

...and establish prayer: verily the prayer is prescribed to believers at definite times. (Surah al-Nisa: 103).

In Islam a Muslim is not allowed to do anything that is injurious to his health or to kill himself, except if it is in a legal Jihad or physical combat. Allah says in this regard:

...and kill not yourselves. Verily Allah is to you ever Merciful. (Surah al-Nisa; 29)

Allah also says:

...and do not cast yourselves into perdition, and do well, surely Allah loves those who do well. (Surah al-Baqarah: 195).

Islam also permits humour and jokes in proper proportion. The Muslim is, however, forbidden to joke and laugh at other people's values and honour. Allah says:

O you who believe! Let not some people mock at other people; it may be that they are better than them." (49:11). It is also not permissible for Muslim to cut jokes on what is untrue in order to make people laugh.

As stated in Sunan Abi Dawud: Narrated Uqbah ibn Amir:

I heard the Apostle of Allah say: Allah, Most High, will cause three persons to enter Paradise for one arrow: the maker when he has a good motive in making it, the one who shoots it, and the one who hands it to the shooter; so shoot and ride, but your shooting is dearer to me than your riding. Everything with which a man amuses himself is vain except three (things): a man's training of his horse, his playing with his wife, and his shooting with his bow and arrow. If anyone abandons archery after becoming an adept through distaste for it, it is a blessing he has abandoned; or he said: for which he has been ungrateful.

From the foregoing discussion it is evident that Islam has given due importance to entertainment and sports. However, Islam has put limitations on the way a Muslim conduct himself in them, so as to free him from indecencies, excesses and harmful practices.

Muslim Women Participation in Sports

The role of women in Islam is enormous. They are the bedrock of the inculcation of Islamic values of bravery, courage, fearlessness, spiritedness, etc in the Muslim societies. In other words, the onerous task of character-building rests on their shoulders and they are the first models for man in life. Only a sound and healthy woman can manage all those responsibilities adequately. This can be achieved through sporting activities and other means. Women's participation in sports is an undeniable fact according to Islamic principles; there are however, many conditions to be met in this regard. These conditions and restrictions are set in order to protect the dignity Islam accords to women, and to preserve the purity of progeny. Islam being a Divine religion guides its followers of all times and places with guidelines in every department of life. These guidelines are permanent features of Islam that constitute its essence. They are also the basis of the

rulings given by scholars in Islam in different matters. From the Qur'anic and Sunnatic teachings, regarding the participation of women in sports, the following conditions have been outlined:

1. Women must not adorn themselves for the purpose of being seen by men;
2. They must not unveil any of their private parts that Islam orders them to cover;
3. They must not intermingle with men in any way that brings them to physically close together;

The Sunnah text quoted above on the racing of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) with his wife A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) after he told all the men to go forward. According to Al-Qara Daghi in a ruling on women practicing sports, this narration '... have two significances: First, the permissibility of woman's practicing sport and second, the requirements to be met in this respect.'⁸

Muslim participation in Modern Sports

The one organization that unites all the Muslim countries in today's world is Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). By virtue of Resolution No.17/11-C of the Eleventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Islamabad, Pakistan, in May 1980 (1400H) and Resolution No.7/3-C of the Third Islamic Summit conference held in Makkah Al Mukarramah/Taif in January 1981 (1401H), it was decided to establish the "Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation". It was formally established on 6th May 1985.

Objectives of the Federation

Some of the objectives of the Federation are enumerated as follows:

- 1- To strengthen Islamic solidarity among youth in Member States and promote Islamic identity in the fields of sports.

- 2- To inculcate the principles of non-discrimination as to religion, race or color, in conformity with the precepts of Islam.
- 3- To reinforce the bonds of unity, amity and fraternity among youth in Member States.
- 4- To introduce OIC goals to the youth in the Member States.
- 5- To boost cooperation among Member States on matters of common interest in all fields of sports activities.
- 6- To preserve sports principles and to promote the Olympic sports movements in the Muslim world.
- 7- To encourage the spirit of sportsmanship, principles of fair play and non-violent behavior in sports events.
- 8- To promote principles of peace and the related efforts in the field of sports all over the world.
- 9- To pay due attention to sport education, health and recreation.
- 10- To promote the sports culture and
- 11- To develop women's sports in line with the teachings of Islam.

Throughout the twentieth century, Muslim countries have been involved in international athletics events like the Olympics and have achieved some success. The Organization of the Islamic Conference established the Islamic Solidarity Games as a means of encouraging cooperation among Muslim states. The first Games were held in 1980 in Izmir, Turkey and included both men's and women's track-and-field events with participation from nine countries and one unofficial country (Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus). The next Games were due to be held in Saudi Arabia in 1983 but no details are available on whether they took place. However, an Islamic Women's Games were held in 1993, 1997, and 2001 in Tehran, Iran.

Most recently, the Islamic Solidarity Games were held in 2005 in Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

Youth and the Development of Sports

The exuberance of the youth should be properly guided through correct guidance and counseling and through sports. Their energy and leisure should be utilized in the most beneficial way for the good of society. Going by the above issues raised, we can clearly see the need for the youth especially to participate in sports. As future leaders and defenders of the nation, they need to equip themselves well for the two tasks.

Some words of Advice for the Youth

- Don't become so preoccupied that you neglect your religious and other duties.
- Don't play sport to the point that it involves harming yourself or others.
- Don't blindly favor one team over another because Islam is built on unity and love.
- Don't use foul words or behave badly and don't slander other people. If you play sport but lose your good deeds, you've really lost the target!
- Don't play games that involve both sexes as this opens the way for temptation and corruption. May Allah protect us?

Recommendations

In the light of the above discussions, the paper hereby recommends the following:

1. Youth should be encouraged to participate in sporting activities in order to strengthen their bodies and bring glory to the people in national and international competitions.
2. Islamic rules and regulations regarding covering the *awrah* should be respected. Specially designed sport outfit should be worn by our athletes and sportsmen.

3. Women participating in sports should cover themselves properly, and should avoid unnecessary mingling with men to avoid temptation. Their participation should be encouraged when it is exclusively for women.
4. The timings of prayer should always be respected, and sport timings should be designed in such a way that they do not clash with those of prayer.
5. Sporting competitions should be organized to encourage the values of skillfulness, bravery, cooperation, discipline, etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have seen how Islam considered the issue of enhancing physical health. The main stepping stone to that, as is evident, is sports. Sporting activities have been encouraged by the Prophet of Islam who was even reported to have organized different sporting competitions to encourage the values of hard work, valor, bravery, skillfulness in archery, etc. Sporting activities are accepted and have become part of life of all societies and cultures. To avoid cultural annihilation and the independence of our societies, our religious and cultural values must be respected. That is why Islam as a comprehensive way of life has given brilliant guidance in matter of sports. After all, our values are in a way facilities that should be made available to the youth at various levels, so that sports will develop as needed in our societies.

Endnotes

1. Azimabadi, Badr (1993), *Etiquettes of Islamic Life*, Karachi: Low Price Publications, pp. 131-132.
2. Ibid., p. 134
3. Nawawi, Yahya, (1981) *Riyad al-Salihin*, ed, Al-Arnaut, Karachi: Nur Muhammad KarKhana, N.D.
4. Al-Sa'iy, Taha (2001), *Al-Mu'min al-Qawiy*, Cairo; Dar al-Tawzi', p. 3.

5. Al-Hasany, Muhammad bn Alawy, (1999), *Silat al-Riyadah bi al-Din*, Riyadh: N.P., pp. 24-25.
6. Ibid., pp. 27-30.
7. See also www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books as retrieved on 28th December 2007.
8. Al-Qara Daghi, Ali M. (art) 'Women Practicing Sports' retrieved from www.islamonline.net, on 30th December 2007.

References

1. Azimabadi, Badr (1993), *Etiquettes of Islamic Life*, Karachi: Low Price Publications
2. Al-Hasany, Muhammad bn Alawy, (1999), *Silat al-Riyadah bi al-Din*, Riyadh: N.P.
3. Al-Sa'iy, Taha (2001), *Al-Mu'min al-Qawiy*, Cairo; Dar al-Tawzi'
4. Nawawi, Yahya, (1981) *Riyad al-Salihin*, ed, Al-Arnaut, Karachi: Nur Muhammad KarKhana, N.D.
5. www.islamonline.net.
6. www.witness-pioneer.org