

Sport from an Islamic perspective

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Article History

Received: 17.06.2021

Accepted: 23.06.2021

Published: 28.06.2021



Abstract: The participation of the Prophet (PBUH) in sports such as running, wrestling, horse riding, and so on is a great example of the legitimacy of sports. In regard to the purpose of sports in Islam, the first goal is to strengthen the human body so that it can perform its duties and responsibilities more effectively. Exercise is the nourishment of the body and mind, giving humans the necessary strength and abilities.

Some rules and regulations for sports laid by Islam which should be followed by Muslims are as follow:

- Exercise should not interfere with an athlete's main duties and responsibilities.
- Mixing between men and women is not allowed on sports teams. It is forbidden in Islam and Muslims should avoid it.
- Gambling and betting are not permitted in games, and any game that becomes a gambling tool is haram (not permitted).
- In sports competitions, other living creatures should not be harmed.

Some games that took place during the time of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing upon him are wrestling, shooting arrows, sports with weapons (sword and knives), and horse riding.

Keywords: sport, wrestling, horse riding, nourishment, legitimacy, gambling.

Introduction

Islam is a perfect, heavenly religion and a way of life that caters to all aspects of human life. Humans are a mixture of body and soul, and Islam cares for both equally. To strengthen the soul, prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has prescribed various physical and financial acts of worship and has provided advice regarding clean food, clothing, and general living as well as which sports and exercise are permitted to strengthen the body. There are many other recommended practices that have paid special attention to human health, well-being and strength.

History tells us that the Prophet (PBUH), his companions, and their followers would play sports on their own and take part in sporting competitions and events such as running, horse riding, horse racing, archery, and wrestling. To encourage the Muslims, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said the following as reported by Abu Huraira: *"The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "The strong believer is more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, but there is goodness in both of them.)"* (Saheh Muslim, Vol. 4. Hadith no: 2052)

In Islamic tradition, an overall healthy lifestyle within the framework of Islam is considered to be an act of worship. Islam rejects the view of some people who say that sport is a futile act that has no religious or worldly benefits and should not be allowed. This view stems from ignorance of Islam and its teachings. In Islam, every believer is instructed to be strong, healthy, and prosperous, as well as to exercise to keep their body fit and healthy. Today, sports are one of the most talked about topics in the world with certain groups playing particular sports. There are many different participants involved in sports, some are professional athletes, others play for leisure, while some are simply fans or even make a living through sport. Sport has a global following with many countries also having institutions to promote sports with millions of dollars being invested into the practice. Sport is very important and is practiced all over the world, many people have made it an integral part of their lives, therefore, I would like to explore this issue in the perspective of Islamic Sharia.

Problem: There is a lack of thorough research on the **Sport from an Islamic perspective** proven by Islamic contexts; this absence has contributed to exist problems in Muslim society; Some Muslims, in particular the younger generation, believe that Islam forbid sport and they do not know the rules of the sport in Islam. Due to this, I felt obliged to research the topic to fulfil my responsibilities.

Research Questions:

The main question:

What is the Islamic perspective on sport?

Sub Questions:

1. Are there any rules for sport in Islam?
2. What is the purpose of sports in Islam?
3. What are the consequences of quitting sport?

Research Methodology: In this academic article which is a library discussion I will try my best to adhere to all the academic principles and will focus on, and refer to the main sources such as Qur'anic verses and the prophetic narrations; I will also rely on the researches done by the great Islamic scholars. In the case of any disagreements, I will further explain such cases by providing a critical study, as well as extract ambiguous and similar cases from the texts. In case, I will provide my point of view and state my attitude.

Literature Review: If we look at the historical background of the topic, we find that in the Holy Qur'an there are many verses relating to the sport in Islamic religion and the Prophet (peace be upon him) has also practiced sport as noted in Hadiths, furthermore, Islamic investigators have done researches on this subject and explained the concept of sport in Islam.

In the present era, scholars have had opinions on the topic. This research focuses on exact research and covers all the angles of the issue.

Sports in Islam

Exercise is a set of activities that human beings perform solely or collectively for the purpose of strengthening, growing, and cultivating the body. Islam encourages people to engage in all the beneficial sports that strengthen the human body and benefit physical and mental health. In Islam, all rules,

regulations, and permissions regarding sports and other related matters are derived from the word of Allah (SWT), which says as follows:

“(O believers! Do not forbid the good things which Allah has made lawful for you, and do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors)” – (Alquran, Chapter 5, Verse 87)

This verse, in a general sense, allows profiteering from permitted things and forbids excessive use in all matters. The principle allows for all things unless it is deemed unlawful according to the Quran or Hadith. If we look at the Shariah arguments, not a single argument has come up about the illegality of sports. Its reported from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as follows:

“The Prophet (established a bond of brotherhood between Salman and Abu Darda'. Salman paid a visit to Abu ad-Darda and found Um Ad-Darda' dressed in shabby clothes and asked her why she was in that state.?” She replied, “Your brother, Abu Ad-Darda is not interested in the luxuries of this world.” In the meantime, Abu Ad-Darda came and prepared a meal for him (Salman), and said to him, “(Please) eat for I am fasting.” Salman said, “I am not going to eat, unless you eat.” So Abu Ad-Darda' ate. When it was night, Abu Ad-Darda' got up (for the night prayer). Salman said (to him), “Sleep,” and he slept. Again Abu- Ad-Darda' got up (for the prayer), and Salman said (to him), “Sleep.” When it was the last part of the night, Salman said to him, “Get up now (for the prayer).” So both of them offered their prayers and Salman said to Abu Ad-Darda', “Your Lord has a right on you, and your soul has a right on you, and your family has a right on you; so you should give the rights of all those who have a right on you). Later on Abu Ad-Darda' visited the Prophet (ﷺ) and mentioned that to him. The Prophet, said, “Salman has spoken the truth” (Saheh Ibn Heban Albusty, Vol.2, P. 23).

The participation of the Prophet (PBUH) in sports such as running, wrestling, horse riding and so on is a great example of the legitimacy of sports.

Purposes of sports in Islam

- 1- In regard to the purpose of sports in Islam, the first goal is to strengthen the human body so that it can perform its duties and responsibilities more effectively. Exercise is the nourishment of the body and mind, giving humans the necessary strength and abilities. A strong and powerful Muslim can perform religious and secular responsibilities well and be a source of service to themselves, their family, other Muslims and their homeland. Participating in sporting activities helps to strengthen muscles and joints resulting in an increase in overall strength and has a positive impact on mental health. Unfortunately, people may suffer from a variety of serious health issues, however, exercise is able to reduce the risk of such illnesses. This article focuses on sports in Islam and does not cover the health benefits of exercise, however, the topic will be addressed in a future article.
- 2- Secondly, people should maintain their strength in order to be able to face any harmful situations they may encounter. Where there is a threat of war for example, it is important that physical strength and overall health are maintained to ensure the individual is fit to defend themselves and others. Allah (SWT) mentions the following in the Quran:

“Prepare against them whatever force you can, and the trained horses whereby you frighten Allah’s enemy and your own enemy and others besides them whom you do not know. Allah knows them.

Whatever thing you spend in the way of Allah, it will be paid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged.” –(Alquran, Chapter. 8, Verse.60)

It is the responsibility of Muslims to prepare to the best of their ability, any necessary equipment for any hardship they may encounter. During the time of prophet Muhammad (PBUH), horse riding, sword fighting, archery, and other military exercises were among the efforts made for Allah (SWT).

- 3- Thirdly, another purpose of sports is to create useful activities for the youth. If young people's free time is not filled with useful pursuits, they are more likely to engage in delinquent activities and spend their free time poorly. When young people are free from educational commitments such as lessons, exams, and other academic pursuits, they need more recreational activities to stimulate their minds. For this purpose, in developed countries, very good playgrounds have been built for the students and there they are able to relieve their mental fatigue. Ensuring there is competitive competition for the youth proves to be very useful and encourages young people to prepare for the competition in their spare time to try to succeed. The advantage of this is young people take care of their body and mind while avoiding substances that harm the human body, such as drugs; ultimately this assists the youth to eventually become healthy members of society.
- 4- Finally, exercise strengthens the spirit of cooperation, collaboration, and empathy in people. Those individuals who love social life and want to socialise with others can achieved that through exercise and sporting activities. People can learn self-sacrifice, sacrifice, devotion, loyalty, compassion, community skills, social life skills, patience, and other things through sports.

Sports etiquette and rules in Islam

1. Covering the Awrat (prescribed private areas of the body in Islam) is a necessary act. The private areas should be appropriately covered during exercise. It is not permissible for a human to be naked, wear tight-fitting or revealing clothing based on the pretext of exercise. Today, in most sporting competitions, most Muslims dress completely against what shariah (Islamic Law) prescribed. It is forbidden in Islam and Muslims should refrain from doing so.^[1]
2. Exercise should not interfere with an athlete's main duties and responsibilities. For example, prayers should still be performed at regular times. Sporting events and competitions are often held during the prayer times while both the athlete and the spectator are engaged, resulting in them forgetting about the prayer. Sporting events and practices should not be held during the month of Ramadan, especially in summer, as people often get thirsty as a result and end up breaking their fast.^[1]
3. Mixing between men and women is not allowed on sports teams they are forbidden in Islam and Muslims should avoid them. Women may participate in sports either in their homes or outside the homes, provided that men are not permitted to engage, watch or be otherwise present. Today, women's sports teams have been formed and competitions are being held between them through television. Muslim women are not permitted to take part in such competitions because unrelated men are able to then watch them.

4. Gambling and betting are not permitted in games, and any game that becomes a gambling tool is haram (not permitted). [L][SEP]
5. In sports competitions, other living creatures should not be harmed. Live birds or other animals should not be targeted or used as targets. In Afghanistan, our national sports is called 'Buzkashi' and during the sport, a calf is injured or killed under the hooves of a horse. This is haram, it is not allowed, and it is an ungrateful act. [L][SEP]
6. Exercise should be legal and not endanger human life. [L][SEP]
7. Animals should not be slaughtered for fun and entertainment. For example, in Afghanistan, there are arranged animal fights that involve dogs, chickens, and other animals and the animals are forced and encouraged to fight to the death.
8. Other people should not be harmed while exercising, particularly when those people play sports on the sidewalks or in rest areas. Roadblocks are not allowed for games and neither is harassment. [L][SEP]
9. The use of prejudice and bias in the sports can cause animosity and end friendships and relationships. During competitions, inappropriate language should not be used against each other and unlawful actions should be avoided. [L][SEP]
10. One sex should not play sports with the opposite sex. Men are not allowed to play sports such as wrestling, football, and volleyball in the presence of women and vice versa. [L][SEP]
11. Exercise and sports should not be used as a means of occupation while one can find another profession and job. [L][SEP]
12. Moderation should be exercised when winning or losing a competition. Expressing extreme excitement when winning or extreme disappointment when losing can lead to issues such as strokes, heart attacks, and suicide. It is reported by Anas ibn Malik: *"The Prophet had a she-camel called Al-Adba which could not be beaten in a race. (Humaid, a sub-narrator said, "Or could hardly be excelled.") Once a native person came riding a camel below six years of age which surpasses it (i.e. Al-Adba) in the race. The Muslims were shocked by the defeat so much so that the Prophet noticed their distress. He then said, "It is Allah's Law that He brings down whatever rises high in the world." (Al-BuKhary, Vol. 8, Hadith no. 105)*

The following are games that took place during the time of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing upon him: [L][SEP]

- Running - The companions of the Prophet (PBUH) used to compete with each other in running races and the Prophet (PBUH) would approve of them. It is narrated that Hazrat Ali (Karamullah Wajah) was a good runner. The Prophet (PBUH) also used to race with his wife, Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her). She said, "The Prophet (PBUH) competed with me in the race, and I was ahead of him, then later I got fat and he ran with me for the second time, he won and said this for that (this winning for that losing)." Saheh ibn Heban Al-Busty, Vol. 10 Hadith no. 545)
- Wrestling - Companions wrestled each other and knocked each other down without hurting or mocking each other. The Prophet (PBUH) himself wrestled with Rakana, the strongest man in Madinah, and won against him. [L][SEP]

- Shooting Arrows - The Prophet (PBUH) would pass by his companions while they were shooting arrows, and the Prophet (PBUH) would encourage them. Salama bin Al-Akwa` narrated the following: *"The Prophet (ﷺ) passed by some persons of the tribe of Aslam practicing archery (the throwing of arrows) Allah's Messenger (said, "O offspring of Ishmael! Practice archery (i.e. arrow throwing) as your father was a great archer (i.e. arrow-thrower). I am with (on the side of) the son of so-and-so-." Hearing that, one of the two teams stopped throwing. Allah's Messenger (asked them, "Why are you not throwing?" They replied, "O Allah's Messenger (How shall we throw when you are with the opposite team?" He said, "Throw, for I am with you all. " (Al-Bukhary, Vol. 4, Hadith no. 147).*
- Sports with weapons (sword and knives) - In the presence of the Prophet (PBUH), Abyssinians would play with swords, spears, and arrows. The Prophet (PBUH) and Aisha used to watch them. The following is narrated from Abu Hurairah: *"When the Abyssinians were playing with their weapons in the presence of the Prophet peace and blessing upon him Umar entered. When he saw them in this state, he stretched out his hand to the little stones and took a few of them He took them and threw them, but the Prophet (PBUH) said, 'O' Umar, leave them alone."* (Al-Bukhary, Vol.4 Hadith no. 38). The sports were not just a pastime but a preparation for struggles, so the Prophet (PBUH) allowed them to continue the sport in the mosque. Anything that benefits Muslims and their religion is permissible in the mosque.
- Horse riding – *"And He created horses and mules and donkeys for you to ride, and also for your adornment. And He creates many things (for you) that you not even know about."* - (Alquran, Chapter.16, Verse. 8). The messenger of Allah said: there is goodness tied to the forelocks of horses until the day of resurrection. (Sunan- al-Daramy, Vol. 3, Hadith no. 1573) In another narration, it is reported by the messenger of Allah, *"Anything that does not remind you of Allah is useless and worthless, but four qualities: walking between the arrows and the target, learning horse riding, having fun with his wife and family members and playing sports. "AL-(Ghaiatul Muram, Hadith n0. 222).* Umar Allah be pleased with him said, *"Teach your children how to swim and ride horses and shoot an arrow."* (Fadayel Al-Rami, Vol.3, P. 16.) It's narrated from Umar Allah be pleased with him that the Prophet (PBUH) organized a competition among the horse riders and awarded the winner. (Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Vol. 11, P. 435) "Horses are of three kinds, one type is used for the sake of Allah, the second type is for human beings and the third type is for Satan. That which is reserved for struggles in the way of Allah, its grass, all things, and even wasteful things will be rewarded for its owner. And the horse used for gambling will be the horse of Satan, the person's horse is the one that is kept for breeding by which he or she will use for business. (Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Vol. 8, P.104)
- Hunting - One of the most useful activities that Islam has endorsed is hunting, and hunting is in fact both a sport and a profession. People run through the mountains and deserts in search of prey and as a result, his body grows stronger and stronger. Also, the use of weapons for hunting makes people learn fighting skills. Islam allows hunting except for in two cases:
 - In the state of ihram for Hajj and Umrah. *"O ye who believe! Kill not game while in the sacred precincts or in pilgrim garb. (Alquran, Chapter 5, Verse.95). If any of you doth so intentionally, the compensation is an offering, brought to the Ka`ba, of a domestic animal equivalent to the one he killed,*

as adjudged by two just men among you; or by way of atonement, the feeding of the indigent; or its equivalent in fasts: that he may taste of the penalty of his deed. Allah forgives what is past: for repetition Allah will exact from him the penalty. For Allah is Exalted, and Lord of Retribution.”
 - In the Holy Haram. The Prophet (PBUH) said: ^[1]_[SEP]“Animals are not hunted in the sanctuary (hunters cannot hunt in Haram), trees are not cut down and no grass is removed.” (Ghaiatul Muram, Hadith no. 4223)

Results

Finally, we come to the following conclusions:^[1]_[SEP]

1. Exercise is a beneficial activity that strengthens the human body, mind, and spirit. Islam does not oppose sports but encourages people to use their bodies, take care of their health and make themselves strong. A fit and the healthy believer can perform his duties and responsibilities well and fulfil his or hers religious and worldly duties while being a source of service to Islam and Muslims.^[1]_[SEP]
2. Islam has laid down a set of rules and regulations for sports that every Muslim must abide by.^[1]_[SEP] In sports, the goals of the Muslim should be to please God, spread the religion of Islam throughout the world, protect and defend Islamic territory and stand against the enemy of humanity.

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