

CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

SUNNAH OF SPORTS / EXERCISE

O Allah (The Exalted) bless our lord and master Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) as much as all that the night has covered and the day has illuminated.

Although the Muslim usually enjoys good physical health, because of his abstention from haram or harmful food and drink, and his avoidance of bad habits such as staying up late or indulging in activities that may be detrimental to his well-being, he must still make a concerted effort to improve his bodily strength.

The healthy eating habits that he practices are supplemented by an organised exercise program, appropriate to his physical condition, age and social status. This gives strength, energy and vitality to his body, and provides immunity of illness.

If he is to reap the benefits of exercise, he plans to exercise regularly and does not give up. All of this is done in an organised and systematic fashion, but in moderation, as this is the hallmark of the true Muslim in every place and age.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would go into the fields for exercise. He had an interest in horse riding, and would ride on Camels, Mules and would also travel on donkeys. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would look after the animals on which he travelled in the same manner he would look after people. He would advise the owners of the animals to give them good food so that they do not stay hungry and not to take too much work from them.

Swimming

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would go for a swim too. ⁱ

In a hadith it states, Teach your children Archery¹, Swimming, and to earn lawfully. ⁱⁱ

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would spend a simple life. He would keep an interest in swimming, as it was the best exercise for the body. Once the companions were swimming with the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), they were put into pairs and each companion would swim to the partner. The Prophet's partner was 'Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) swam towards him and held his neck.

Daggers

'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that, *"By Allah (The Exalted), I remember the messenger of Allah (The Exalted) standing on the door of my apartment screening me with his mantle enabling me to see the sport of the Abyssinians as they played with their daggers in the mosque of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). He kept standing for my sake till I was satisfied and then I went back and you can well imagine how long a girl of tender age who is fond of sports (could have watched it)."* ⁱⁱⁱ

The Wrestler

While the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was lying under a tree alone during the Kattan war, in the third year of Migration, a disbeliever who was a wrestler named Dasur came up to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) with a sword and said, "Who will rescue you from me?" the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied, *"Allah (The Exalted) will rescue me."*

Jibrail (upon him be peace) then appeared as a human being and struck the chest of the disbeliever. Having fallen, the sword fell too. Taking the sword in his hand the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, *"Who will rescue you from me?"*

The disbeliever begged by saying, *"There is no blessed person who will rescue me, except you."*

The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) released and forgave him and after this incident the disbeliever accepted Islam. ^{iv} *Subhanallah!* The Prophet had the strength of 40 men

¹ Archery would be practiced between 'Asr and Maghrib Salaah in Madina.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that, *"I heard the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) as saying, "One is not strong because of one's wrestling skilfully." The companions said, "O Allah's Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) then who is strong?" He said, "He who controls his anger when he is in a fit of rage."*^v Strength is not always of physical but about the intellect.

Walk in the gardens

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) liked to walk about in the gardens to which he sometimes retreated for relaxation. He would go to the green gardens for walks too.

'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrates that once, when she went on a journey with the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), she challenged him to a race, and won. Later, when she had gained weight, she raced him again, but this time he won, and told her, *"This is for that."*^{vi}

Forbidden

Burayda (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, *"Whosoever plays chess it is as if he has placed his hands in the flesh and blood of a pig."*^{vii}

Anas, 'Uthman and Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that *"The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) saw a person running after pigeons and said Shaytan is running after the Shaytan."*^{viii}

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, *"Allah (The Exalted) has forbidden alcohol and gambling, and drums and said everything that intoxicates is forbidden."*^{ix}

Manner of Leisure/Exercise

1. To do archery (for target practice) is a Sunnah.
2. To horse ride is a Sunnah as they (horses) were used in the battles. Also it is good exercise for the back.
3. To wrestle and to swim. Males should make sure that the body is covered from below the navel including the knees and for women, is the same rule but only when in front of other women and when in front of men then all the body should be covered besides the hands and face.
4. To wrestle with the intention of gaining strength is good and rewarding.^x
5. Do not wear tight clothing when doing sports.
6. Exercise with the intention that it is the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and not only will you enjoy it but it would become worship too.
7. Do not waste time in sports in which sins are committed.
8. Do not swear or get angry whilst playing sports.
9. One must not shout or cause mischief.
10. One must not give difficulties to others but enjoy the sport.
11. The Hadith has proved only three types of play, playing with your wife, riding a horse and shooting arrows.^{xi}
12. To keep birds is permissible as long as it is not for flying (racing).^{xii}
13. It is forbidden to make animals fight and to watch it.^{xiii}

May Allah (the Exalted) give us the ability to enjoy sports and physical exercise that pleases him, Ameen.

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- i Shamail-e-Nabawi
ii Kanzul Ummal
iii Muslim
iv Teachings of Islam, Part 2.
v Muslim
vi Ahmad & Abu Dawud
vii Muslim, Ahmad & Abu Dawud
viii Abu Dawud & Ibn Majah
ix Bayhaqi
x Bahar-e-Shariat & Akhlaaq aur Aadaab, p. 165
xi Durre Mukhtar
xii ibid
xiii Bahar-e-Shariat & Akhlaaq aur Aadaab, p. 165