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THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUES OF SPORTS AND GAMES IN ISLAMIC CULTURE AND ORGANISATION OF THE PAN- ISLAMIC GAMES

The purpose of existence of man, as of every other creature is submission to the Divine Will of God. Whereas the rest of nature obeys God automatically, man alone possesses the choice to obey or disobey. Thus man's fundamental role becomes one of moral struggle, which constitutes the essence of human endeavour. Recognition of the unity of God does not simply rest in the intellect but entails consequences in terms of moral struggle, which consists primarily in freeing oneself of narrow-mindedness and being magnanimous. One must go out of oneself and expand one's best possessions for the sake of others.

2. The doctrine of social service, in terms of alleviating sufferings and helping the needy, constitutes an integral part of the Islamic teachings. Islam is the supreme religion on the earth. It provides perfect solutions to all the problems whether they be that of an individual or community in which they live. Islamic unity throughout the world could play a vital role in cementing the bond of faith. The idea of a closely-knit community of the faithful who are declared to be "brothers unto each other" should kindle like an eternal flame. It aims at nothing less than human brotherhood and encourages human efforts more than any other religion in the world. Muslims are described as "the best community produced for mankind". Whose function is "to enjoin good and forbid evil", so that there is no mischief and corruption on earth. It has become increasingly important rather essential that all the Muslims on the earth should be brought on a single broad based platform to fight the wars of evil against them and face the outward challenge posed to Islam in this era as a well-knit community, simultaneously burying their own differences.

3. The burning issues of liberation of Palestine and Kashmir; struggle by the Muslims in Philippines for independence ; political crisis

of Iran, the invasion of Afghanistan by the armed forces of Soviet Union and the threat of further aggression against Afghanistan's Muslim neighbours call for immediate positive measures towards the realisation of their common aspirations for unity and cooperation in political, economic, social and cultural fields. The increasing presence of these threats makes it inevitable for a practicable course of understanding among the Muslim ranks all over the world. The recently organised efforts for Islamic solidarity could be effectively moulded into a single entity and could become the most impregnable force in the world.

4. It has long been recognised that cultural exchanges are one of the first steps towards building friendship between nations and countries and the importance of sports as a part of such exchanges can hardly be over-emphasized. On the recognition of this principle, the foundations of the Olympic Games of the modern era was laid. The Olympic Games originate from the Greeks and is the oldest show on earth. The first Games were held in 776 B.C. and the last recorded Games were held in 394 A. D. which were later suspended by the Roman Emperor Theodosius, a Christian monarch who felt that a festival of Pagan origin was not in keeping with the spirit of Christianity. Over 13 centuries later in 1874 a German archaeologist with the support of the German Emperor began excavations and spent even years in uncovering these ruins. The Modern Games is the outcome of a French, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who in 1892 expressed the desire to hold an international sports competition. It was after four years i.e. 1896 that eventually the first Olympiad of Modern times was held at Athens the capital city of Greece.

5. In the first Olympiad only 13 nations participated and the total number of athletes was 484 while in 1964 at Tokyo Olympiad 94 countries took part with 5711 participants. During these Games the cream of the amateur sportsmen from all over the world compete for the Olympic honours in a spirit of healthy rivalry and friendly competition and for the glory of sports, the Olympic Motto being *Citius, Altius, Fortius* (ever faster, ever higher and ever stronger). The spirit of sports and games have been beautifully summed up by Sir Henry Newbold in a poem written more than half a century ago. It reads as :--

"To see the cause above renown
 To love the game beyond the prize
 To honour, while you strike him down
 The foe that comes with fearless eyes

To count the life of battle good

And dear land that gave you birth

And dearer yet the brotherhood

That leads the brave of all the earth."

6. But unfortunately the spirit of these Games has disappeared with the passage of time largely due to the fact that the Olympic Games are motivated with political influence to a larger extent these days. During 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo, the then IOC President Mr. Avery Brundage considered the political interference as the biggest danger to the Olympic movement. Thus the future of the Olympic Games hangs in doldrums. The Olympic Games of 1964 in Tokyo, 1968 in Mexico and 1972 in Munich were marred by political resentment, agitation, violent attacks, indiscipline and other serious incidents. Partial boycott of 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal and the forthcoming Moscow Olympic Games invites beyond any doubt serious thinking about the future of these Games.

7. Sports and games play a very vital role in the development of nations and national unity. It develops coordination, sense of rhythm, physical fitness and mental alertness. The competitors are encouraged to respect the rights of their fellow sportsmen and develop the spirit of working together. The social and recreational values of sports and games cannot be overlooked. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) laid great emphasis on healthy body and healthy mind. So much so that he said of all the treasures in the possession of man who believes in Allah and the last day, the most precious is health. Health for one who fears Allah is better than wealth. For this reason the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) used to pray "O Allah I seek from Thee, health, peace of mind and good conduct". As for two gifts majority of men are deprived of them, health and leisure. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) encouraged such sports and games which contributed towards manly exercised and daily circulation of blood in the body and its different limbs. The sports that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) recommended for this purpose were shooting, archery and riding, because apart from their usefulness for health, these can be of great help during the war. Furthermore the world cannot quote an example other than Hazrat Ali who was a great warrior, a marshall and a great swordsman. For Islam he fought against many idolaters and brought glory single handed.

8. The advent of Fifteenth Century Hijra must prompt in the holding of Pan-Islamic Games—the movement will surely help in

bringing the Muslims ever closer through sports. The Pan-Islamic Games symbolise the renaissance of their spiritual bonds and inspiration of unified spirit representing the fulfilment of their desire to work towards the realisation of their common unity and cooperation in political, economic, social and cultural fields inspired by the immortal teachings of Islam. The idea has manifold objectives and constitutes a powerful factor bringing all the Muslims closer together and fostering understanding between them. The Pan-Islamic Games will surely help in promoting Islamic solidarity and consolidating cooperation among member states in various fields. The move will also help to strengthening the struggle of all the Muslim people with a view to safeguarding their dignity, independence and national rights. On the other hand it will create a suitable atmosphere for the promotion of cooperation and understanding among member states and settlement of any conflict that may arise by peaceful means such as negotiation, mediation, reconciliation or arbitration.

9. Thus it has become imperative to launch a new move of Pan-Islamic Games among the Muslim States on the pattern of Asian, European, Pan-American, Pan-Arab and Commonwealth Games which could be held in rotation in member countries. The proposal was approved in the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference held in Islamabad from 17th to 22nd May, 1980 and Turkey has volunteered to host the First Pan-Islamic Games. The Pan-Islamic Games, therefore, would be a great step towards a viable alternative to the Olympic Games which are becoming victim of international politics day by day. This can also be termed as a sequel to the games of regional character being played in various hemispheres of the world.

10. The membership of 42 in the Pan-Islamic Games Organisation will be one of the major bodies after the membership of International Olympic Committee. Although Turkey has volunteered to host the First Pan-Islamic Games, but there are numerous issues which need to be decided and determined before the Games are actually held. The major problems therefore, concerning these Games are mandatory to be decided through convening a meeting of the member countries. Some of these may easily be enumerated below :—

- (i) Organisational set up of the Pan-Islamic Games
- (ii) Headquarters of the Pan-Islamic Games.
- (iii) Affiliation of the member countries.
- (iv) Affiliation of the new organisation with International Olympic Committee.

(v) The year for holding the Pan-Islamic Games.

(vi) Finances of the new Organisation and contribution of member countries.

(vii) Number of participating games/sports.

11. During this century quite a number of Islamic leaders have expressed the desire to cooperate as an Islamic Bloc within the community of nations. Most of the Muslim thinkers advocate the possibility of Islamic contribution towards the development of a more stable and peaceful world order. The Muslim countries have more in common than geographical location. They are similar in culture and traditions, in social life, in religion and in education. Sports has a capacity for providing alternate modes of inter-cultural communications, cultural exchanges and testing of accepted theories of transnational organisation. We live at the turn of age, and to celebrate the beginning of new Hijra we need a new kind of sports activity fitted to our age and appealing to the people of Islamic World.

12. Today Olympic Games find itself at the crossroads just as the ancient games two thousand years ago. With the advent of the Fifteenth Century Hijra and the decision of the 11th Session of the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference, to fortify the Ummah's cultural identity and the organisation of the Inter-Islamic Sports and Games is a very sound and concrete step towards the unification of the Islamic World. These Games undoubtedly will go a long way in strengthening the existing bonds of our brotherhood and shall preserve the Islamic civilisation through sports.

13. As is quite evident the organisational talents and the required finances are available with the Muslim countries. If the member countries would take the initiative to launch such a movement it would create history in the sports world of Muslim nations and this would facilitate regular meetings of sportsmen of the Muslim world contributing further to the efforts being made to bring them more cohesion of thoughts and actions among Islamic countries. Conclusively one can't ignore for long such a vital matter as Pan-Islamic Games, and the sooner it is discussed the more beneficial it would prove for the solidarity and betterment of the Muslim World.

14. To sum up, the importance and values of physical aspect of human life is evident from the following Hadith of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) :—

إن لجسدك عليك حقاً

“Certainly thy body has a right over thee”.