

“MUHAMMAD” BY MAXIME RODINSON (AN ANALYTICAL STUDY)

*Muhammad Akram Sajid**
*Muhammad Abdullah***

Abstract: “MUHAMMAD” by Maxime Rodinson (1915-2004), originally, Muhamet in French is a biased view of continually launched blames on the life of Holy Prophet (SWS) by the orientalist. The book has been written in socio-economic perspectives. Maxime Rodinson looks the background, Muhammad (Peace be upon him) instigated the Arabs who were scattered throughout the peninsula, for the lust of wealth that was plundered in the battles. Maxime does not believe in the arrival of revelation, either blames, Prophet (SWS) was a sick man. He criticized the personality of the Prophet (SWS). Infact Rodinson as an agnostic could not understand the miracle of the Prophet (SWS) so he studies Islam in the particular atmosphere of France in the 20th century. His main objections are on later compilation of Hadith, Jihad, a merely looting and plundering, and polygamy. He, as a Marxist could not understand the everlasting spiritual revolution brought by the Holy Prophet (SWS). This paper is going to analyze the “Muhammad”, of Maxime Rodinson in a very impartial manner.

Orientalists have their own approach writing towards Islam and its belongings. They normally criticize the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) commonly, particularly, his personal life and basic teachings of Islam, as is the case with Maxime Rodinson a French orientalist who wrote the book, “MUHAMMAD” originally in French language, in 1961 by “Muhamet”. Before discussing the book, let us have a brief view of his life.

The writer Maxime Rodinson was born at Marcelice, Paris France in 1915 in a very poor communist family. He got his formal education from the primary stage but continued his studies privately merely serving his teachers who did not demand from him any kind of tuition fee¹. Very hardworking, Rodinson came into the professional life i.e. he started his carrier as *Errand Boy. He got admission in 1932 at Ecole Des orientales* where he topped the institution and got proficiency more than thirty languages, particularly Arabic and Ethiopian languages. He got admission in 1937 at “National Council of Research” and studied Islam thoroughly. Maxime Rodinson was a co-librarian in 1940 at French institute of Damcus, the coming seven years he led in Sadoon and Berut (Lubnan)

In 1948 Rodinson was appointed as librarian at Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris, afterwards incharge of Muslim section at the same instituin. In 1955 he was promoted as Director of Studies at, Ecole partique des Hautes Ethdes. In

* Lecturer, Islamic Studies, Government College Township, Lahore. Pakistan

** Associate Professor, Sheikh Zayed, Islamic Centre, Punjab University, Lahore. Paksitan

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- ²⁵ Muslim, al-Imarah, Chapter on the Virtues of Shooting, Vol. 7, Hadith No. 1917.
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- ³⁰ Muslim, al-Imarah, Chapter on the Virtues of Shooting, Vol. 7, Hadith No. 1919.
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While the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) has said:

من ضار أضر الله به ومن شاق شق الله عليه

“Whoever will hurt others, Allah will hurt him and whoever will create problems for others, Allah will create problems for him.”⁵⁷

Fifthly: Rules Related to the Places of Physical Fitness

- 1- A Muslim must avoid the places where both genders are mixing up in physical exercises, as this mixing up is not allowed in Islam. The Prophet (SAW) said:

ما تركت بعدي فتنة أضر على الرجال من النساء

“I have left no *fitna* more dangerous for men than the *fitna* of women.”⁵⁸

- 2- A Muslim athlete woman must not travel far except with her *Mahram*, as the Prophet (SAW) prohibited that. He said:

لا تسافر المرأة إلا مع ذي محرم ولا يدخل عليها رجل إلا ومعها محرم فقال رجل:

يا رسول الله إني أريد أن أخرج في جيش كذا وكذا وامرأتي تريد الحج فقال عليه السلام: اخرج معها.

“No woman will travel except with her *Mahram* and no strange man will enter upon a woman except with her *Mahram*. Hearing this, a man said, O Prophet of Allah! I want to go for Jihad with such and such army while my wife wants to go for Hajj. The Prophet (SAW) said: You also go with her.”⁵⁹

Conclusion/Suggestions

It is noticed that the physical fitness is highly encouraged in the Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Moreover the scholars of Islam throughout the Islamic history have written excellent books on this topic. In the present time it is noticed that the education on this important aspect of our life is not given its due right.

We have sports channels on TV and also in print media we have special issues for sports, but we are lacking the Islamic education regarding the physical fitness. We need specialized books on this topic that could be taught to our athletes and be included in their courses. We need books on this topic for the general public. Few national and international conferences on this topic will surely help to educate our masses regarding this duty which we have neglected for so long.

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unintentional mistakes take place, so a Muslim player always controls his/her anger and forgives the mistakes of his colleagues and also shows patience and tolerance towards the mistakes of the opponent team. The Prophet (SAW) said:

ليس الشديد بالصرعة إنما الشديد الذي يملك نفسه عند الغضب

“A brave person is not the one who beats someone in wrestling; rather a brave person is that who controls himself while angry.”⁵¹

- 3- A Muslim player should avoid being biased towards any sect, group, city or province, as it divides the Muslims and creates envy and hatred in their hearts, while Allah the Almighty said:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ

“The believers are nothing else than brothers.”⁵²
While the Prophet (SAW) said:

لا يؤمن أحدكم حتى يحب لأخيه ما يحب لنفسه

“None of you can believe until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself.”⁵³

Fourthly: Rules Related to Taking Care of Athletic Body

- 1- A Muslim must avoid using all kinds of harmful drugs with the intention of getting active or stimulated, as it is *Haram* to use them. Allah the Almighty says while praising the Holy Prophet (SAW):

وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ

“He allows them as lawful all al-Tayyibat (i.e. all good and lawful as regards things, deeds, beliefs, persons and foods), and prohibits them as unlawful al-Khaba’ith (i.e. all evil and unlawful as regards things, deeds, beliefs, persons and foods).”⁵⁴

- 2- A Muslim must avoid those games that are dangerous for the athletic body or are life threatening for him or for others, as Allah the Almighty says:

وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ

“And do not throw yourself into destruction.”⁵⁵

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ

“And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another).”⁵⁶

يَبْنِي أَدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمْ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْآتِهِمَا إِنَّهُ يَرَاكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيْطَانَ أَوْلِيَاءَ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

“O Children of Adam! Let not *Shaitan* deceive you, as he got your parents out of Paradise, stripping them of the raiments, to show them their private parts. Verily, he and his soldiers see you from where you cannot see them. Verily We made the devils friends for those who believe not.”⁴⁶

It is derived from the *Ahadith* that the private parts for males are from belly button to his knees and for the Muslim women it is required that their whole bodies should be covered except the face, hands and feet.⁴⁷

- 2- Males should avoid resembling with females and vice versa, as the holy Prophet (SAW) has prohibited this behavior. Abdullah bin Abbas narrates that the Prophet SAW) said:

لعن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم المشبهين من الرجال بالنساء والمشبهات من النساء بالرجال

“The Prophet (SAW) cursed those men who resemble women and cursed those women who resemble men.”⁴⁸

Thirdly: Rules Related to the Moral Behavior of the players.

- 1- A Muslim player should control his/her tongue from bad or abusive language. He should not abuse anyone even while joking.

Allah the Almighty says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَسْخَرُوا قَوْمًا مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْكُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءً مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْكُمْ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْألقَابِ

“O believers! Let not a group scoff at another group; it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let some women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames.”⁴⁹

While the holy Prophet (SAW) said:

المسلم من سلم المسلمون من لسانه ويده

“A Muslim is the one from whose hand and tongue, the other Muslims are safe.”⁵⁰

- 2- A player should avoid losing his/her temper, be patient and excuse his colleagues for their mistakes. The Prophet (SAW) emphasized on the importance of controlling one’s anger. A Muslim gets angry for his religion not for the worldly matters. In games, many intentional and

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حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوَسْطَى وَقَوْمُوا إِلَهُ فَنِيَتَيْنِ

“Guard strictly the five obligatory prayers especially the middle one (Asr) prayer.”⁴²

Imam Qurtubi, while explaining this verse in his *Tafseer*, says, “In this verse the whole *Ummah* is addressed to establish the obligatory prayers on their fixed prescribed timings, fulfilling all their conditions. The establishing of prayer also means to perform them regularly on a continuous basis.”⁴³ The captain of the team can play an important role in establishing the five daily prayers.

- 2- A player should avoid missing those worships that are highly encouraged, like *Taraweeh* prayers, or worshipping in the last ten days of Ramadan, or playing immediately before Jumu'ah prayer and miss the reward of going early in the Masjid and listening to *Khutbah*. Allah the Almighty says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ

“O believers! When the call is pronounced for the prayer on Friday (Jumu'ah prayer), come to the remembrance of Allah (Khutbah and Salat) and leave off business (and every other thing)”⁴⁴

- 3- A player should specify a particular time for his physical exercises. Allah the Almighty has created the Muslims to live on this earth a successful life through earning *Halal* livelihood. So seeking *Halal* provision is *Ibadah*, and a Muslim must get involved in it and should not waste his time in things that hinder him from working hard in seeking *Halal* provision.

Secondly: Rules Related to the Dress Code of the Player

- 1- A Muslim must cover his private parts while doing his physical exercises.

Our religion has made obligatory upon us to cover our private parts. Allah the Almighty says:

يَبْنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سُوَاتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا

“O Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover yourselves and as an adornment.”⁴⁵

Ibn Sahnoon (202 – 256AH):

He emphasizes on the importance of weekly holiday (Fridays) and religious holy days, like the two Eids when schools are closed so that the students may take rest and get involved in some extracurricular activities, keeping in mind that these holidays should not be so long to procrastinate the students.³⁹

Ibn al-Qayyim (691 – 751 AH):

Imam ibn al-Qayyim says that it is necessary to know the abilities of the child, and then let him do what he really likes. If we do that, the child will excel in that field otherwise he will fail. If the child is intelligent and has good memory then we should know that he can be good in education and excel in it. But if we see him not fit for education, rather his orientation is towards some sports like horse riding, shooting or javelin throwing, we should happily accept that he was not made for education and we should open heartedly encourage him to learn and excel in that sport. If he excels in horse riding or any other sport, he will still be bringing good name to the Muslims.⁴⁰

Ibn al-Hajj (... - 737 AH):

He is of the opinion that the children should be trained to walk and do some physical exercises every day for a specific time, so that he should not be overcome by laziness.⁴¹

Some Rules that Organize the Physical Exercises in Islam

Our religion did not leave any aspect of our life, but that there is guidance either in the holy Qur'an or in the Seerah of the holy Prophet (SAW). Regarding the physical exercises there are some rules that organize these exercises. Here we may include those players also who play as a team and represent Pakistan at the international level that they should abide by the rules our religion has promulgated. These rules maybe elaborated as under:

Firstly: Rules related to the time of physical exercises

- 1- A player should avoid missing obligatory worships

It is *Haram* that a player should keep himself busy in his game and miss obligatory worships like five daily prayers, as Allah the Almighty says:

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Ibn al-Jawzi (510 – 597 AH):

A parent or a teacher has to train his/her student over cleanliness, purity, manners, generosity and *Haya* from an early age so that the student maybe raised on these good qualities. He/she should not be allowed to stuff his stomach with food rather he should be balanced in his eating and sleeping habits. It will be helpful for him in practicing his religion. He should also be treated with physical exercises like walking.³⁵

Ibn e Sina (328 – 370AH):

Ibn e Sina has organized the whole day of a child in a systematic and practical manner. He emphasizes a lot on the role of physical education in the life of children starting from very early age. He also emphasizes on the importance of taking bath daily, keeping the body clean and developing the habit of eating on fix times. He says that it all should be followed strictly until the age of six then the child should be sent to school so that he may start learning the basic skills of reading, writing, recitation of the Qur'an and its memorization and then he should be gradually trained to attend the school on a regular basis.³⁶

Ibn Jama'ah (639 – 733AH):

It is useful for the heart, brain and eye sight of the students to go to some park and play there for some time without wasting time. It is also recommended that the child should walk and do some physical exercises as they will help him to remain active.³⁷

Abul Faraj Isfahani (284 – 356AH):

He advises the parents and the teachers to pay attention on the psychological education of the children while educating them. He warns the students from studying continuously without breaking for rest or physical exercise. He says that the continuous struggle of the students in their studies will lead them to failure. Moreover he adds that a student should continue his study only as long as he feels active. The moment he feels that his mind is getting lazy he should stop at once and go for some playing, as a tired mind has no vision, hence no good opinion.³⁸

this other group stopped shooting. The Prophet asked them why they stopped. They said, O Prophet of Allah! How can we shoot while you are with them? He said, Shoot, I am with both groups.”²⁸ The Prophet (SAW) gave good news of entering Paradise for those who make arrows and those who shoot them. Uqbah bin Amir says, I have heard the Prophet (SAW) saying, “Allah will let three people enter Paradise for one arrow; its maker who seeks reward while making it, its shooter and the one who helps him.”²⁹

Uqbah bin Amir used to practice this sport of shooting even after reaching an old age. One of his friends asked him: why are you walking between these two targets of shooting in this old age? Uqbah said: It is because I heard something from the holy Prophet. His friend asked him what that was. He said, the Prophet (SAW) said, “Whoever learnt the art of shooting then left it, is not from us.”³⁰

6- Swimming Competition

The Prophet (SAW) encouraged his companions to learn how to swim. He also ordered his companions to teach their children how to swim. Ata bin Abi Rabah narrates that the Prophet (SAW) used to hold swimming competitions for the young companions.³¹ It is also narrated that the Prophet himself used to swim in a pool that was in the garden of his maternal uncles from *Banu Najjar*, when he was young.³²

The Views of the Scholars of Islam Regarding Physical Education

Imam Ghazali (450 – 505 AH):

It is necessary that the children should be allowed to go out for play that contains light physical exercises, after they come back from schools. If the child is made to study all the time, his mental and physical abilities will be affected and he will try to run away from the school.³³

Ibn Miskawaih (320 – 421 AH):

It is one of the rights of child that he should be allowed to involve in those physical exercises that are not very difficult or tiring for him. As physical exercises keep him healthy, make him active and increase his mental capabilities, make him energetic and pious.³⁴

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3- Horse Race Competitions

The Prophet (SAW) used to arrange competitions for horse racing. Abdullah bin Umar says that the Prophet (SAW) held a horse race competition among the trained horses and set two targets between *Hafna* and *Thaniyyat al-Wada'*. The distance between these two targets was seven miles. Then he held another competition between the untrained horses and set a target for them between *Thaniyyat al-Wada'* and *Masjid bani Zuraiq*, which was a distance of one mile approximately. Abdullah bin Umar was among the competitors."²¹

4- Wrestling competition

The Prophet (SAW) used to hold wrestling competitions between the young companions to know who is fit for participation in Jihad, particularly when he refused to take someone on account of his young age he would insist to let him wrestle with the one he had allowed to participate.²² The Prophet (SAW) himself wrestled with Rukana who was a famous wrestler of the Arabs. The Prophet (SAW) talked to him about Islam. He said if I am certain that you are the Messenger of Allah I will believe in you. Then he said, I am a wrestler and if you are a Prophet then fight with me. The Prophet accepted his challenge to fight with him and knocked him down thrice.²³

5- Shooting competition

Shooting is also among those sports that were highly encouraged by the Prophet (SAW). The Prophet (SAW) said while explaining the statement of Allah in Sura al-Anfal:

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ

“And make ready against them all you can of power”²⁴

That the power in this verse means shooting. He said it thrice.²⁵

The Prophet (SAW) was so keen to see his companions excel in the art of shooting that he himself used to supervise their shootings of arrows to encourage them. Anas bin Malik says that Abu Talha was good at shooting, so the holy Prophet used to watch him and then check the accuracy of his targets.²⁶ Once the Prophet (SAW) was so amazed by the shooting of Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas that he said to him in excitement, “Shoot, may my parents be ransom for you”.²⁷

There are many incidents in the Seerah that show us how much Allah's Messenger loved this sport of shooting. It is narrated that once he passed by two groups who were shooting, he said to them, “Shoot O sons of Isma'il, surely your father was a great shooter. Shoot and I am with this group. Hearing

In the holy Qur'an Allah the Almighty says about Talut:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجَسْمِ.

“Verily Allah has chosen him above you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature.”¹⁶

About Musa it is said in the holy Qur'an:

قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ.

“One of the two women said, O my father! Hire him, verily, the best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy.”¹⁷

About the angel Jibreel, Allah the Almighty has said:

ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ

“Owner of power and high rank with Allah, the Lord of the Throne.”¹⁸

Regarding the Seerah of the holy Prophet, we have many *Ahadith* that talk about the importance of physical fitness for a Muslim. Some of the important *Ahadith* are quoted below.

Physical Exercises during the Lifetime of the holy Prophet

The Prophet (SAW) emphasized a lot on the importance of sports. He used to arrange competitions for various sports. For example the following competitions could be seen in the books of Seerah:

1. Running on Feet Competition for Adults
2. Running on Feet Competition for the Children
3. Horse Race Competitions
4. Wrestling Competition
5. Shooting Competition
6. Swimming Competition

1-Running on Feet Competition for adults

Regarding running on feet competition, we see that the Prophet (SAW) participated in running competition with his wife Ayesha, as she narrates that she accompanied the Prophet in a journey and the Prophet (SAW) entered in running competition with her which she won. She further says that when I put on some weight we had another running competition which he won.¹⁹

2- Running on Feet Competition for the children

The Prophet (SAW) held running competitions for children to keep them healthy and active, as it is narrated in the Hadith of Abdullah bin Harith.²⁰