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## Ethical Concerns in Sports

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When discussing sports, we often picture ourselves as children playing outside or watching games on television, whether it's cricket (T20, IPL, one-day matches, etc.), football (World Cup or ISL), kabaddi premier league, or any other sport or sports analysis. But have we stopped to consider what sport truly is and what it provides?

Sport is acknowledged as an activity that offers opportunities for self-discovery, personal expression, and fulfillment; personal success, skill development, and showcasing abilities; social interaction, enjoyment, enhanced health, and overall well-being. If undertaken with fairness, sport serves as a societal and cultural endeavor that enriches communities and fosters friendships among nations (UNESCO).

However, in today's world, athletes and coaches are often motivated to manipulate the rules when possible to secure a competitive edge against rivals, while neglecting the safety and welfare of



participants. There exists a mentality that emphasizes winning above all else; it's only deemed cheating if one is caught; it's the referees' responsibility to identify rule violations, hence athletes and coaches feel no intrinsic obligation to adhere to the rules; and that the outcomes always justify the means. Players frequently engage in actions such as feigning a foul or injury, trying to gain an unfair advantage in races, altering equipment like modifying a baseball bat to enhance its performance, engaging in covert personal fouls—such as holding onto an opponent underwater during a water polo game—deliberately inflicting injury on an opponent to eliminate them from play, using performance-enhancing substances like anabolic steroids, stimulants, and human growth hormone; provoking or intimidating adversaries, or a coach fabricating an athlete's academic performance to maintain eligibility. Each of these behaviors prioritizes the result of the contest over the integrity of how the game is played.

These issues highlight concerns surrounding internal morality or ethics. By centering our focus on four fundamental virtues—fairness, integrity, responsibility, and respect—we can truly grasp the essence of sports.

### **Importance of Physical Activities for Health**

Physical activities are an inherent aspect of human life, essential for growth and development. The primary goal of physical education is to foster individuals who are physically fit, mentally sharp, emotionally stable, socially balanced, and adaptable.

Engaging in physical activity can contribute to a longer life and help maintain our fitness, allowing us to enjoy leisure pursuits and perform household chores safely. The positive effects of participating in physical activities include a sense of purpose and worth; improved quality of life; better sleep; decreased stress levels; as well as enhanced relationships and social connections. Conversely, insufficient physical activity is linked to heightened risks of anxiety, stress, depression; the development of various preventable conditions like high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, colon cancer, and obesity; and premature death, among other issues.

The types of activities that can be undertaken to boost our health and fitness include:

- Aerobic exercises help us breathe more intensely and improve the health of our heart and blood vessels. These include Walking, Dancing, Swimming, Water aerobics, Jogging & running, Aerobic exercise classes, cycling (stationary or outdoors), Certain gardening tasks like pushing a lawn mower, Tennis, and Golfing (without a cart), among others.



- Activities that strengthen muscles enhance our physical strength. These exercises target various body parts such as legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms, including Heavy gardening (digging, shoveling), Weightlifting, Push-ups on the floor or against a wall, Sit-ups, and Exercising with resistance bands (stretchy rubber strips).
- Flexibility exercises promote a good range of motion in our joints. A decrease in flexibility can contribute to physical problems such as pain or balance issues. Factors like gender, age, and genetics can affect range of motion. Flexibility-enhancing activities consist of: Stretching, Yoga, Tai Chi or Qi Gong, and Pilates.

Today we are looking for answers to our worries about the growing unethical behavior and sedentary lifestyle, yet yoga sutra holds all the answers from ancient times. Its remarkable contribution to the world is undeniable.

### **Importance of Yoga Sutra**

The practice of yoga serves as both an art and a science aimed at creating harmony between the body, mind, and spirit. Its goal is to help practitioners utilize their breath and body to develop self-awareness as unique individuals deeply associated with the cohesive totality of creation. Essentially, it emphasizes finding equilibrium and fostering composure so that people can live in harmony with the larger total, in peace, and in good health. This way of living correctly has been refined and it has been used for thousands of years in India, with the principles of yogic recorded in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra around the year 200 AD. This holy manuscript elucidates the mechanics of thinking and provides a path with eight steps for managing its agitation to attain enduring peace.

The eight-limbed route that forms the structural foundation of yoga practice is the essence of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra. It becomes clear that no single limb is prioritized over another in a hierarchical sense as one practices all eight limbs of the path. Each limb contributes to a holistic approach that ultimately brings fulfillment to the individual as they recognize their connection to the divine. Due to our unique individuality, one may focus on one aspect before exploring another as they expand their comprehension.

In summary, the eight limbs, or steps to yoga, are:

1. Yama (universal ethics)



2. Niyama (Individual observations)
3. Asanas (body postures)
4. Pranayama (breathing exercises and control of prana)
5. Pratyahara (control of the senses)
6. Dharana (maintaining focus and cultivating inner perception)
7. Dhyana (devotion, meditation on the Divine) and,
8. Samadhi (union with the Divine).

The first two limbs outlined by Patanjali serve as essential ethical principles known called niyamas and yamas. One could alternatively consider these to be individual recognition and universal ethics. Niyamas and Yamas provide guidance on how we should interact with others and our relationship with ourselves. The attitude we hold towards the external world is yama, while niyama reflects how we connect with ourselves internally. Both primarily focus on how we channel our energy in relation to others and ourselves. The yamas consist of five "wise characteristics." Rather than a mere list of rules, they convey that our inherent nature embodies compassion, generosity, honesty, and peace. They include the following:

### **1. YAMAS (Universal Ethics)**

**Ahimsa (Kindness towards all beings):** The term Ahimsa translates to the avoidance of harm or cruelty towards any being or individual in any manner whatsoever. However, Ahimsa encompasses greater than merely the absence of aggression as Yoga is one way to understand it. It embodies generosity, unity, and thoughtful planning for others and their needs. It also pertains to our duties and commitments. Ahimsa suggests that in all circumstances, we should adopt a compassionate approach and refrain from hurting people.

**Satya (Dedication to Sincerity):** The word Satya means "to convey the truth," but expressing the truth is not always appropriate in every situation, as it may cause unnecessary harm to someone. It is important to think about what we communicate, the way we communicate it, and the potential impact it may have on others. If revealing the truth could lead to negative repercussions for someone else, it is preferable to remain silent. Our dedication to upholding Ahimsa should never clash with the Satya ideal. This guideline is rooted in the belief that truthful communication is fundamental to healthy relationships, communities, and governments, and that intentional deceit, exaggerations, and falsehoods inflict harm on others.



**Asteya (Non-Stealing):** The term Steya refers to "the act of stealing," while Asteya denotes the opposite – taking nothing that does not belong to us. This also means that when we are entrusted with something or when someone confides in us, we must not exploit that trust. Non-stealing involves not only taking another person's belongings without their consent but also using items for purposes other than those intended or extending the time allowed by the owner. Practicing Asteya signifies refraining from accepting anything that hasn't been offered voluntarily. This comprises being mindful the way we request time from others, as requesting attention that is not without restriction offered can be seen as a form of stealing.

**Brahmacharya (Sense Control):** Brahmacharya is primarily referred to in the context of restraint, especially regarding sexual activities. It implies that we ought to foster connections that enhance our comprehension of the most important realities. Celibacy is not always associated with Brahmacharya; instead, it implies engaging in accountable conduct as we strive for the reality. By embracing Brahmacharya, we can strengthen our bond with our spiritual core by using our sexual energy. It also implies that we must not use this energy in ways that might endanger other people.

**Aparigraha (Taking Away the Need to Obtain and Hold Wealth):** Aparigraha means only taking what is necessary, and not exploiting circumstances or being greedy. We should only accept what we have rightfully earned; taking more than that involves taking advantage of someone else. The yogi believes that accumulating or hoarding possessions reflects a lack of trust in God and in oneself to provide for the future. Aparigraha also emphasizes relinquishing our attachments to material items and realizing that the only things that are certain are change and impermanence.

The Sutra of Yoga articulates the consequences that arise when these five behaviors become integrated into an individual's daily existence. Consequently, yamas are the ethical principles that, when practiced, enhance societal happiness and well-being while purifying human nature.

## **2. NIYAMAS (Individual observations)**

The term niyama translates to “rules” or “laws.” These are rules for individual observation. The five niyamas, like the yamas, are not only exercises or easy behaviors to master. They represent more than simply a mindset. The niyamas are more private and intimate than the yamas. They have to do with how we view ourselves as we develop a meaningful way of living.



- **Sauca (Purity):** Sauca, the first niyama, means isolation and innocence. Sauca encompasses both internal and external dimensions. External cleanliness pertains to maintaining our physical hygiene. Internal cleanliness relates to both mental clarity and the healthy operation of our body's organs. For one to develop this inner sauca, asanas or pranayama are crucial. Asanas help the body get stronger and get rid of toxins, while pranayama cleanses our lungs, enriches our blood with oxygen, and clears our nerves. "However, more crucial than the physical cleansing of the body is the purification of the mind from disturbing emotions, such as hatred, passion, anger, lust, greed, delusion, and pride."
- **Santosa (Satisfaction):** Another niyama is satisfaction, which encompasses modesty and the feeling of satisfaction with one's possessions. Finding peace within and being satisfied with one's way of life, even amidst challenges, allows life to unfold as a journey of growth in various circumstances. We should acknowledge that everything happens for a reason, often referred to as karma in yoga, and we nurture contentment by accepting whatever occurs. This implies finding happiness in what we possess rather than feeling discontent about what we lack.
- **Tapas (Disciplined use of our Energy):** Tapas pertains to maintaining physical fitness or managing inner urges without outward displays. Literally, it means to heat the body in order to purify it. The thought that we can direct our vitality to actively engage with life and accomplish our goal of becoming one with the Divine is part of the tapas concept. Tapas aids in eliminating desires that hinder this objective. Another aspect of tapas involves being mindful of our diet. Paying attention to body posture, dietary habits, and breathing patterns is all part of tapas.
- **Svadyaya (Self Study):** The fourth niyama is svadyaya. The term sva means "self," while adhyaya translates to "inquiry" or "examination." Any practice that nurtures self-reflective awareness qualifies as svadyaya. It involves deliberately seeking self-awareness in all our endeavors and even embracing our restrictions. It instructs us to maintain centeredness and not react impulsively to dualities, helping to get rid of undesirable and destructive habits.
- **Isvarapranidhana (Honoring the Spiritual Life):** Isvarapranidhana signifies "offering all your actions to God." It involves contemplating God (Isvara) to attune ourselves to the divine will. It acknowledges that spirituality pervades everything, and through our mindfulness and care, we can align ourselves with our role as a part of the Creator. This practice requires dedicating some time



each day to recognize an omnipresent force greater than ourselves, that is guiding and steering our life's journey.

### **3. ASANAS (Body Postures)**

The term asana describes the bodily postures that are practiced. For those not familiar with the other seven limbs of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, this is the most recognized aspect of yoga. The act of moving the body into various postures provides numerous benefits, the most fundamental being enhanced health, strength, balance, and flexibility. On a more profound level, the practice of asana, which translates to "staying" or "abiding" in Sanskrit, serves to calm the mind and connect with the inner essence of one's being. The challenges posed by different positions give the practitioner a chance to examine and control every aspect of their feelings, concentration, purpose, faith, and the harmony of the bodily and spiritual bodies.

In fact, challenging and opening the physical form with asanas serves as a means of connecting with all the invisible forces that shape our lives through our responses to the physical world. As we learn to let go and experience a state of grace that occurs from building equilibrium between our material life and spiritual path, asana therefore becomes a channel for exploring our mental viewpoints and strengthening our will. Through practicing asana, calming the mind is encouraged, making it both a preparation for meditation and an effective form of meditation. Surrendering to the flow and inner strength fosters a deep spiritual grounding in the body. The physical component of yoga poses turns into a method for expanding the awareness that pervades all part of who we are.

The pathway to enhancing this consciousness and knowledge starts with breath control, which is the fourth limb—Pranayama. According to Patanjali, a combination of asana and pranayama techniques will result in the intended level of health; controlling one's breathing and posture will balance the body's energy flow and foster a spiritually enlightening atmosphere. "This practical, tangible practice is one of the most straightforward and efficient ways to connect with yourself... This aspect of yoga practice reconnects us to our bodies. By reestablishing our connection with our bodies, we also take on the responsibility of leading a life informed by the inherent wisdom of our physical form." In addition, B.K.S. Iyengar emphasizes: "The requirements of the body mirror the necessities of the divine spirit that resides within. The yogi does not seek God in the heavens, for he understands that He is within."

### **4. PRANAYAMA (Breathing Exercises and Control of Prana)**



In pranayama, the breath is measured, controlled, and guided. It facilitates evolution while regulating a living being's prana, or energy, to protect and improve health. A state of complete relaxation and body balance is attained when the inflow and outflow of breaths are balanced. Harmonizing the flow of vital energies and guiding them upward toward the crown chakra and inward toward the chakra system are the main goals of yoga practice.

Pranayama, or the method of breathing, plays a crucial role in yoga. It complements asana, or physical postures. The Yoga Sutra states that asana and pranayama are the ultimate kinds of self-discipline and purification for the body and mind, respectively. Tapas, also known as the inner fire of purification, is the physical experience of heat produced by these practices. This heat is thought to be crucial for clearing the body's nadis, or subtle energy channels. This purification process promotes better health and leads to a calmer mind. As the yogi adheres to the appropriate breathing rhythms of deep, effortlessly breathing, "these patterns enhance the respiratory system, calm the nervous system, and reduce cravings. As desires and cravings lessen, the mind becomes liberated and transforms into a suitable vessel for concentration."

## **5. PRATYAHARA (Control of the Senses)**

Pratyahara refers to the act of pulling back or retreating. The term ahara translates to "nourishment", so pratyahara can be understood as "withdrawing oneself from that which nourishes the senses". In yoga, pratyahara is releasing the senses from their connection to things outside of themselves. As we continually return to the path of self-realization and the achievement of inner calm, it can be seen as developing non-attachment to sensorial distractions. This means our senses cease to thrive on the stimuli around us; they become independent of these external influences and no longer derive sustenance from them. In pratyahara, we disconnect the relationship between the mind and the senses, allowing the senses to withdraw. When the senses are detached from external stimuli, restraint or pratyahara is achieved. With our vital energies redirected inward, we can concentrate without being sidetracked by outside distractions or the urge to perceive externalities. Pratyahara often happens instinctively during meditation due to our deep engagement with the meditation object. Because the mind is intensely focused, the senses obey its lead rather than the reverse.

As the senses cease to operate in their typical fashion, they become remarkably alert. Typically, the senses rule over us rather than serve us. They tempt us to crave various things. In contrast, pratyahara





reverses this tendency; when we eat, it is merely out of necessity, not because of hunger. In Pratyahara, we aim to position the senses appropriately within our actions without eliminating them.

Much of our emotional turmoil stems from our own doing. An individual who is swayed by external occurrences and sensations cannot attain inner peace and calm. This is because such an individual uses a significant amount of energy both mentally and physically to intensify positive sensations while suppressing undesirable ones. Ultimately, In the end, this can cause discomfort on a mental or bodily level and frequently leads to illness.

Patanjali asserts that this process underlies human discontent and unease. When individuals turn to yoga in search of that elusive inner peace, they often discover that it has been within them all along. Simply put, yoga is a technique that enables us to stop and look at how our thoughts are functioning; only by doing so can we understand the nature of happiness and sadness and be able to transcend both.

## **6. DHARANA (Maintaining Focus and Cultivating Inner Perception)**

Dharana signifies "unwavering focus of the mind." Maintaining focus or focusing attention on a single thing is the fundamental idea. "Once the body has been conditioned through asanas, the mind has been purified by the intensity of pranayama, and the senses have been regulated through pratyahara, the sadhaka (seeker) attains the sixth stage, dharana. At this point, they become entirely focused on a particular object or task that fully occupies their attention. The mind must be quieted to reach this state of complete immersion."

In dharana, we establish the environment for the mind to channel its focus toward one point rather than scattering in multiple directions. Profound contemplation and reflection can create optimal conditions, allowing us to concentrate intensely on the chosen focal point. We foster one specific mental activity, and as its intensity increases, other mental activities diminish. By focusing the mind's attention on a stable object, dharana seeks to stabilize the mind. The main goal is to keep the mind focused on a seemingly static item to prevent it from wandering around past experiences, desires, or introspective contemplation. The chosen object has no bearing on this goal. B.K.S. Iyengar notes that the goal is to achieve a situation in which the ego, intellect, and mind are "all controlled and dedicated to the Lord for His purpose and service. Here, there exists no notion of 'I' or 'mine.'" When the mind has been purified through yoga practices, it gains the ability to concentrate effectively on one subject or point of experience. We can then unlock significant potential for inner healing.



## 7. DHYANA (Devotion, Meditative Connection with the Divine)

Dhyana refers to worship, or deep, abstract spiritual meditation. It embodies perfect contemplation. It involves directing concentration towards a singular focus with the desire to understand the truth behind it. The principle suggests that when one focuses their mind on an object, the mind takes on the essence of that object. Therefore, when one centers their attention on the divine, they reflect its qualities and come to realize their true nature. "Their body, breath, senses, mind, reasoning, and ego are all harmonized in the focus of their meditation—the Universal Spirit." During dhyana, consciousness becomes further unified by integrating clear insights into the distinctions between objects and the subtle layers of perception. "We learn to differentiate between the mind of the observer, the tools of perception, and the entities being perceived, as well as between words, their meanings, ideas, and all levels of natural evolution."

As we refine our focus and enhance our awareness of the nature of reality, we begin to perceive the world as illusory. "The singular reality is the universal self, or God, obscured by Maya (the power of illusion). As these veils are removed, the mind gains clarity. Discontent and fear—including the fear of death—dissipate. This state of liberation, or Moksha, is the goal of Yoga. It can be attained through persistent inquiry into the essence of existence." Meditation serves to gain clarity and recognize reality beyond the illusions that cloud our perceptions.

## 8. SAMADHI (Union with the Divine)

The final step in the eight-fold path of Yoga is the attainment of Samadhi. Samadhi means "to bring together, to merge". In the state of Samadhi, the body and senses are at rest, as if asleep yet the faculty of mind and reason are alert, as if awake; one goes beyond consciousness. During Samadhi, we realize what it is to be an identity without differences, and how a liberated soul can enjoy pure awareness of this pure identity. The conscious mind drops back into that unconscious oblivion from which it first emerged. Thus, Samadhi refers to union or true Yoga. There is an ending to the separation that is created by the "I" and "mine" or our illusory perceptions of reality. The mind does not distinguish between self and non-self, or between the object contemplated and the process of contemplation. The mind and the intellect have stopped and there is only the experience of consciousness truth and unutterable joy. The achievement of Samadhi is a difficult task. For this reason, the Yoga Sutra suggests the practice of



asanas and pranayama as preparation for dharana, because these influence mental activities and create space in the crowded schedule of the mind. Once dharana has occurred, dhyana and Samadhi can follow.

These eight steps of yoga indicate a logical pathway that leads to the attainment of physical, ethical, emotional, and psycho-spiritual health. Yoga does not seek to change the individual; rather it allows the natural state of total health and integration in each of us to become a reality.

By following the path of eight limbs of Yoga Sutra, we can not only deal with the ethical issues in sports but can lead to a healthier lifestyle as well.

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