

Ethics and Sports

Sports and games have always been seen as an integral component in the all-round development of the human personality. Apart from being a means of entertainment and physical fitness, sports have also played a great role in generation of the spirit of healthy competition and bonding within the community. The achievements in sports at the international level have always been a source of national pride and prestige.

With modern sports being highly competitive, the use of modern infrastructure, equipment and advanced scientific support has changed the scenario at the national and international level.

Keeping in line with the growing demands for advanced infrastructure, equipment and scientific support, Government of India has taken several initiatives and is providing the necessary assistance to sportspersons by way of training and exposure in international competitions backed up.

Why do we need Sports?

Sports in personal life:

- The chief object of sports is, of course, bodily exercise. It is a famous quote, “A sound body has a sound mind”. The health of the body is essential for success in life. To keep healthy, one must take an active interest in sports and games.
- Sports are no less important than food grains, fresh water and knowledge. The countries like England, Germany, France, USA, China and Japan etc. have made games as an essential part of education at school level. It is interesting to note that in some countries there are many nurseries and training center for games. They admit boys and girls for necessary training to become future athletes, gymnasts and sportsman.

Sports in Society:

- Sports occur in a given cultural environment and are socially structured. Human individual is a social being and he evolves in a society. An individual perform any physical activity or sports within the society only.
- **Following are some importance of physical education and sports in society:**
 - **Sports Ethics:** Sports develop social values in individuals, which directly or indirectly enhances social ethics in an athlete. In the field of sports, ethics (fair play, respect etc.) is highly required.
 - **Role Play:** The process of physical education teaches us “Role play” as an important aspect. Realization and understanding the responsibilities by an individual makes the society healthy and more progressive.

- **Cooperation and Competition:** Cooperation and competition are two important characteristics of sports. Social interaction gives importance to both aspects and in sports both exist together. Sports teach us that cooperation's as important as competition.
- **Self-Discipline:** Field of sports make the individual more disciplined and determined. This trait makes the individual an asset to society.
- **Team Work & Group Dynamics:** To work in same team or group and putting all effort collectively to gain good performance as a team/or group require group dynamics.

However the advancement of sports has raised many ethical issues which are discussed below:

Ethical Issue: Need for Sportsmanship

Under a sportsmanship model of gaming, healthy competition is seen as a means of cultivating personal honor, virtue, and character. It contributes to the development of respect and trust between competitors and society. The goal in sportsmanship is not simply to win, but to pursue victory with honor by giving one's best effort. Thus the basic tenant is provision of Fair Play.

Fundamental values incorporated in Fair play concept are:

- **Fair competition:** To enjoy the fruits of success, it is not enough to win. Triumph must be measured by absolute fair means, honesty and just play.
- **Respect:** For every athlete, playing by the written rules is mandatory, and respecting the unwritten ones is a must. Fair play requires unconditional respect for opponents, fellow players, referees and fans.
- **Team spirit:** Individuals can be strong on their own, but they are much stronger in a team. Sharing the moment of victory with your team is the ultimate pleasure.
- **Equality:** Competing on equal terms is essential in sport. Otherwise, performance cannot be measured properly.
- **Integrity:** Being honest and having strong moral principles are essential to fair play. Practicing sport within a sound ethical framework is vitally important if you aim to be a true champion.
- **Solidarity:** It is important to support each other and share feelings, aims and dreams. Mutual support brings mutual success on and off the field.
- **Tolerance:** The willingness to accept behaviour or decisions you may not agree with develops your self-control. Ultimately, that could be the deciding factor when it comes to winning or losing.

Sportsmanship encourages character development, which then influences the moral character of the broader community.

Further there should be level playing field for all. A 'level playing field' is a situation in which competitors are required to follow the same rules and are given an equal ability to compete.

This means that no matter what the rules are, as long as they are applied equally and impartially the playing field is still level.

As rightly said by Baron Pierre de Coubertin – *“The important thing in life is not the triumph, but the fight; the essential thing is not to have won, but to have fought well”.*

Ethical Issue: Doping

'Doping' refers to an athlete's use of prohibited drugs or methods to improve training and sporting results. Steroids are the drugs that often come to mind when we talk about doping, but doping also includes an

athlete's use of other forbidden drugs (such as stimulants, hormones, diuretics, narcotics and marijuana), use of forbidden methods (such as blood transfusions or gene doping), and even the refusal to take a drug test or an attempt to tamper with doping controls.

Violations of the anti-doping rule include not only the use or attempted use of prohibited substances, but also: the presence of a prohibited substance, or its metabolites or markers, in an athlete's urine or blood sample; violation of the athlete's obligation to inform about his/her 'whereabouts'; tampering or attempted tampering with doping control procedures; possession of prohibited substances or the means for performing prohibited methods; and trafficking or attempted trafficking in a prohibited substance or the means for performing a prohibited method.

The fundamental idea of sport is considered to be character building, teaching the virtues of dedication, perseverance, endurance and self-discipline. Sport is suppose to help us learn from defeat as much as from victory, and team sports foster a spirit of co-operation, and interdependence, importing something of moral and social values. It is also integrating us as individuals, to bring about a healthy, integrated society. This would mean that drug use has no place in sport.

Doping in sport is cheating. It is fundamentally contrary to the spirit of sport and is detrimental to the positive impact of sport in society.

"Equal conditions for all" are the sports equivalent of the general moral principle of equal justice for all. Equal justice for all implies that the same justice applies to everybody regardless of their class, race, origin, or gender with no special privileges or advantages.

Not only is drug use clearly cheating and an ethical dilemma for coaches, doctors and officials, but it also puts the health of the athlete at great risk.

Doping affects all levels of athlete. It could also affect future generations who may be influenced by what top athletes do. To protect the integrity of sport, the health of athletes, and young aspiring sports people worldwide, we need a concerted and comprehensive approach to the fight against doping.

The elimination of doping in sport requires a commitment by all to ethical practice and upholding standards of fair play. It requires consistent and accountable decision-making and sanctioning of Participants who are found guilty of a doping violation.

Ethical Issue: Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

Discrimination has many faces. Racism, gender discrimination and homophobia are social justice issues plaguing a wide variety of aspects in our society; the sporting world included. Similarly Gender discrimination exists both on the field and in the office.

Further there is presence of sexual harassment and abuse in all sports and at all levels. Prevalence appears to be higher in elite sport. Members of the athlete's entourage who are in positions of power and authority appear to be the primary perpetrators. Peer athletes have also been identified as perpetrators. Males are more often reported as perpetrators than females.

Research demonstrates that sexual harassment and abuse in sport seriously and negatively impact on athletes' physical and psychological health. It can result in impaired performance and lead to athlete drop-out. Clinical data indicate that psychosomatic illnesses, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, self harm and suicide are some of the serious health consequences.

Example: In 2010, a few members of Indian Women's Hockey team complained of being sexually harassed by the then chief coach Maharaj Krishan Kaushik. The scenario came to light when Th. Ranjitha Devi sent an email to HI. She mentioned about being subjected to sexual harassment and that she was eventually not considered for inclusion in the team for not acceding to the coach's 'demands'. It was also noted that Kaushik used his reputation of having coached the Men's 1998 Bangkok Asian Games gold medal-winning side to the fullest to save himself.
