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The World's Largest Religions and their Attitudes towards Sports and Recreational Behaviour

One must ask (the gods) for a healthy spirit
in a healthy body.

Juvenalis

Introduction

Religion has accompanied man from ancient times to today and has permeated all expressions of his activities. The literature shows numerous links between religion and culture, politics, medicine and even sport. Although these are two very distant areas, over the centuries, it has been possible to see links between religion and the world of sports, body worship, and physical culture. The following article presents the most important regulations, recommendations and prohibitions on body care, sports and recreational activities and sports contained in the holy books and messages of representatives of individual religions. This article aimed to analyse the various records in world religions on health, physical activity and sport, with a particular focus on the influence of religious teachings in shaping attitudes towards caring for the body and spirit. The author shows how norms, values and princi-

ples derived from religious doctrines influence the promotion of healthy lifestyles, the development of sports and recreational activities and social integration, and points out the differences and similarities in the perception of sports by followers of different religions. The article also highlights the evolution of these views and their contemporary implications, particularly in the context of women's participation in sports and changing cultural and religious norms.

Christianity

Christianity is based on the revelation received by Jesus Christ and transmitted through Christian tradition, mainly through the Bible and the New Testament. The Bible emphasises the value of the human body, created by God, and encourages health as a matter of morality and service to God. Biblical history records the Israelites' interest in sports such as wrestling and target shooting and the construction of sports facilities. However, in ancient times, sports had to wait for acceptance from Christianity, which initially criticised it because of its links to pagan worship. However, some Church Fathers, such as St. Irenaeus, Justin and St. Augustine, opposed erroneous human body views.¹

The origins of the Church's teaching on sport can be traced back to the statements of Pope Pius X, who gave his moral support to the noble initiative to reintroduce the Games. In addition, Pius X pledged to fund a prize for participants in the Fourth London Olympics in 1908. The Pope said young people should love sports because they benefit their souls and bodies.² The next Pope, Pius XI, is often referred to as an advocate of sport and tourism because he himself was a well-known and prominent

¹ L. Gomółka, *Sport w nauczaniu Kościoła katolickiego*, „Siedleckie Studia Teologiczne”, XI (11): 2014, 202.

² M. Pisarek, *Rola sportu w rozwoju wiary i świadectwa*, „Studia Leopoliensia”, 7:2014, 221–232.

mountaineer. This Pope used the expression physical culture for the first time in an official document.³

Words concerning sport were also addressed to the faithful by successive Popes: Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI. John Paul II recognised sport as an essential tool for forming integral human development, both physical and spiritual. He emphasised its role in promoting values such as health, justice, fair play and solidarity. He believed that people develop their bodies, minds, and spirits through participation in sports. The Pope encouraged young people to be active in sports, seeing it as an opportunity to strengthen character, develop cooperation and compete in a spirit of fair play. John Paul II also believed that sport can be an instrument of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, building bridges of understanding and respect. He championed the development of physical education, rehabilitation, physical recreation and tourism, recognising physical culture as an essential element of a healthy lifestyle and complete physical and spiritual development.⁴ Pope John Paul II's successor, Benedict XVI, appealed for the proper nature of sport. The Pope mentioned that certain qualities present in the life of an athlete should be developed and nurtured, including perseverance, determination, commitment, readiness to sacrifice, inner and outer discipline, sensitivity to others, justice, and solidarity.⁵

Pope Francis has also repeatedly expressed his positive stance towards sports. He stressed that sports can be a tool to promote values such as solidarity, cooperation, fair play, and health. He also believed that being part of a team, where all share success or failure, also helps to reject the idea of focusing only on oneself. He also noted that other team members, coaches, fans, and players' families help give their best.⁶

³ Ł. Gomółka, *Sport...*, op.cit., 202.

⁴ R. Grzywacz, D. Grzywacz, Rola Kościoła w kształtowaniu kultury fizycznej młodzieży, „Saeculum Christianum”, 17 (2):2010, 259.

⁵ M. Stryczek, *Aksjologia sportu*, Lublin 2011, 37.

⁶ K. Bronk, *K. Pope on Vatican document on sport*, <https://www.vatican-news.va/en/papiez/news/2018-06/pope-francis-letter-sport-christian>. 2018.

According to Francis, the Church also values sport because of its potential to shape many virtues. In addition, beauty, kindness, truth, justice, nobility and joy can be experienced through sport. What is important is that this kind of experience is available to all people, regardless of nationality or community, regardless of the form of sport - whether at a recreational, general, professional or spectator level.⁷

The Church devotes much space to the issue of sport and its educational potential. It is often expressed through activities in various Christian formations: parish sports teams, youth oases, religious camps and colonies, academic sports, and religious societies. The many different Catholic organisations and associations involved in sports often focus on promoting values in line with Church teaching. Organising sporting events and teams creates a space where different community groups can meet, cooperate and integrate.

Islam

In Islam, practising a sport is not only permissible but also a religious obligation - a prophetic tradition. The Prophet participated in sports activities, including walking, running, wrestling and swimming. The practice of sport is not contrary to the spirit of Islam unless it violates Shariah principles.⁸ The practice of sport by men was and is supported by a hadis handed down by the caliph Umar that is often quoted, including by contemporary religious authorities: "Teach your children to swim, archery and horse riding", sometimes given in a different form:

⁷ Z. Dziubiński, *Sport w służbie osoby i wspólnoty w perspektywie papieża Franciszka*, Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego Józefa Piłsudskiego, Salezjańska Organizacja Sportowa RP, Warszawa 2020, 26.

⁸ R. A. Lone, *Sports in Islam*, „International Journal of Research”, XI, 04(14):2017, 1989–1998.

Teach your sons to swim (*sabha*) and to throw a spear (*rami*), and women to weave (*maghzal*).

The fact that Muslims so often invoke it is a clear indication that it is and has been needed as a justification for sporting activities.⁹

Analysing the history of Islam, it is possible to conclude that the religion's attitude towards selected sports has been benevolent, both for practical and ethical reasons. Islam encourages integrated personality building and emphasises sports such as swimming, archery and horse riding, encouraging both men and women to engage in physical activity to maintain a healthy lifestyle.¹⁰ Hadiths from the classical period mention that the Prophet spoke positively about the need to take care of the body and work on it to strengthen it, including diet and food, as well as exercise to strengthen the body. The Prophet himself was considered an athletic person. There are references in numerous hadis to the physical strength of the Prophet and that God is more pleased with a strong believer (in spirit and body) than a weak one. In addition, the Prophet also appreciated the spectatorial role of certain types of physical activity.¹¹

In addition, the harsh conditions of the Arabian Peninsula have always encouraged its inhabitants to engage in physical activity; only the strong, fit and healthy enough could survive. The tribal system similarly mobilised, forcing people to practise martial arts through competition and the struggle for territory or food.¹²

⁹ K. Pachniak, *Czy przez sport można doskonalić i kształtować ciało? – Ciało i sport w kulturze muzułmańskiej*, in: *Ciało w kulturze muzułmańskiej*, red. K. Pachniak, M. Nowaczek-Walczak, Uniwersytet Warszawski, Katedra Arabistyki i Islamistyki, Warszawa 2016, 62.

¹⁰ Women's Sports Foundation, *Muslim women in sport: a minority within a minority*, 2015, <https://equalityinsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/wsf-muslim-women-in-sport-a-minority-within-a-minority.pdf>.

¹¹ K. Pachniak, *Czy przez sport...*, op. cit., 62.

¹² K. Górak-Sosnowska, *Sport w świecie islamu. Religia – rozrywka – polityka*, Smak Słowa, Sopot 2016, 22.

Nowadays, as in the classical period, the main argument in favour of practising sport is to consider the body the most perfect organism God has given man, so he should take care of it. Muslim doctors emphasise the importance of exercise and a fit body for fulfilling duties owed to God, such as prayer or the *hajj*.¹³

Modern Islamist theologians agree that followers of Islam should practice sports but place numerous conditions on them. No swearing or engaging in vandalism is allowed. Body covering rules apply, particularly strict for women, who should practise in areas where men cannot see them, avoid gestures considered inappropriate and avoid being photographed or recorded. Women should not listen to music when doing sports, and exercise should not interfere with their domestic and religious duties. According to research, Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries do not support women's sports and even discourage them, a Human Rights Watch report from February this year suggests. Women have limited access to sports arenas because some clergy believe their place is at home, not in the gym.¹⁴

Furthermore, Islam does not permit sports that require the involvement of both sexes at the same time, as this leads to seduction, enticement and corruption, and there is no permission for types of activity that cause sexual temptation (for example, men should not watch women dancing). Since, according to the theologian, Islam sees sport as a means of fostering mutual love and cooperation between people, the competition should be fair, and neither exaggerates the joy of winning nor humiliate the defeated opponents. Nor should such unworthy feelings as jealousy be revealed.¹⁵

¹³ Women's Sports Foundation, *Muslim women in sport...*

¹⁴ A. Zagner, *Arabskie olimpijki w Londynie – po raz pierwszy*, 2012, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/ludzieistyle/1529505,1,arabskie-olimpijki-w-londynie-po-raz-pierwszy.read>.

¹⁵ S. F. Mawlawi, *What Is Islam's Stance on Women's Practicing Sport?*, 2019, <https://aboutislam.net/counceling/ask-the-scholar/sports-games/islams-stance-womens-practicing-sport>.

Some Muslim clerics have reservations about sporting activities, especially extreme sports, because of the risk to health and life. The exception is when the sport serves a military purpose. Muslims also have different views on sports, and these views come from Asian culture. Due to its Hindu roots, yoga is considered inappropriate, while tai chi is acceptable due to its relaxation qualities. Karate, on the other hand, is forbidden because, according to Islamic teachings, a follower cannot bow to a non-Muslim.¹⁶

Religious controversies over sports are normative, especially among Muslim scholars, but they do not apply to all adherents. Arab countries have many talented athletes, including women, who achieve success on the international stage despite some limitations. In 2012, Saudi authorities allowed women to participate in the London Olympics for the first time under certain conditions. Despite changes in Islam's approach to sport, many norms and prohibitions remain. Organisers and sportswear manufacturers often adapt to the needs of players of the Islamic faith, as do sports venues, to allow fans of different genders and religions to participate.¹⁷

Hinduism

In Hinduism, the concept of sports is understood differently than in Western societies. It links to religion and aims to develop awareness and experience oneness with the divine. The writings of Ayurveda emphasise the importance of a healthy body for fulfilling life's tasks, which is why Hindus pay attention to keeping physically fit. Yogis take special care to ensure that the health of the body does not interfere during meditation, using various techniques to cleanse the body of toxins.

¹⁶ K. Górak-Sosnowska, *Sport w świecie islamu...*, op. cit., 23.

¹⁷ A. Zagner, *Arabskie olimpijki...*, op. cit.

Hinduism has preached a proper 'theology of the body' since pre-Christian times, although it never uses such a term. According to the Hindu religion, man experiences the world outside him through his body. In and through his body, he has a glimpse of the principle of life called 'atman'. Man's salvation lies in being freed from this surrounding 'shell'. However, man will not achieve liberation without the involvement of the body. The physical and bodily practices described in detail are intended to serve a philosophy of life, allowing the divine energy hidden in man to be discovered. This is the task of the yoga system, which keeps the body disciplined and is a school for discovering the divinity present in man. The body should be cared for as a tool to achieve any, including transcendent, goals a person is striving for.¹⁸

Buddhism

Many people consider Buddhism a philosophical and ethical system to be a philosophy rather than a religion. It is based on the Four Noble Truths as promulgated by Siddhartha Gautama. In contrast to the complex and often incomprehensible Brahminical cosmological doctrines described in the Upanishads, the Buddha's teaching focused on the spiritual problems of the ordinary person and carried a simple message: refrain from evil and do good, and avoid extremes.¹⁹

However, the Zen philosophy has survived most strongly in modern times in Eastern martial arts such as karate, aikido, jujitsu, and judo. The history of martial arts in Southeast Asia shows emphatically that Buddhist monks and centres of Buddhist

¹⁸ E. Sakowicz, *Ciało ludzkie w niechrześcijańskich tradycjach religijnych*, „Forum Teologiczne”, X: 2009, 20.

¹⁹ J. Różycka-Tran, *Nie ma Buddy bez Buddy*, „Przegląd Religioznawczy”, 4(278):2020, 59–69.

thought (physically existing or only so-called 'spiritual' monasteries) have played an important role in creating and spreading the most diverse fighting styles with and without weapons.²⁰

As well as having a direct impact, martial arts systems indirectly affect the practitioner and their immediate environment. Martial arts are a vehicle for certain ideas. Their secondary influence has led to interest in the West in natural medicine (acupuncture, shiatsu-do, herbal medicine, bioenergy therapy), breathing and meditation exercises (*t'ai-chi*, *ch'i-kung*, *zen*), Eastern religions (e.g. Buddhism), the art of flower arranging (*ikebana-do*), care of potted trees (*bonsai*), tea making (*chanoyu*), paper folding (*origami*), Japanese theatre (*kabuki*, *no*), etc. Above all. Therefore, there has been a transmission into sports culture and, to some extent, the culture at large.²¹

Sikhism

Sikhism is a religion that is a combination of strands of Islam and Hinduism. From Islam comes the concept of a God who is impersonal and has no image or incarnation, but who nevertheless has 'a million names'. From Hinduism come meditation practices, the belief in the possibility of gaining direct communication with God through meditation leading to enlightenment, the belief in reincarnation and, finally, many other outward manifestations of worship. It is one of the most prominent monotheistic religions in the world and one of the most interesting world religions.

²⁰ A. Borkowski, *Impact of Buddhism on the Martial Arts*. 2010 http://www.samuraj.konin.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=162:wpyw-buddyzmu-na-sztuki_martial&catid=45:texts&Itemid=67.

²¹ W. Cynarski, *Sztuki walki budo w kulturze Zachodu*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, Rzeszów 2000, 59. See also: J. Góźć, *Rozwój duchowy w sztukach walki na przykładzie karate*, in: *Człowiek – Duchowość – Wychowanie. Impulsy myśli o. Anselma Grüna*, red. A. Fidelus, J. Michalski, t. I, Difin, Warszawa 2020.

Sikhism has taken some doctrines from both Islam and Hinduism. However, they have been modified in such a way that today, Sikhism is an entirely separate religion—it is not only a philosophical system but also a distinct culture whose distinctive features have been shaped over several hundred years. Sikhism rejects ritual, preaches the equality of all before God, and emphasises the value of work. The cradle of Sikhism is the Punjab, a region in northern India, a land through which the region's five largest rivers flow, from which it takes its name. Currently, the number of followers of Sikhism is estimated to exceed 26 million, 75 per cent of whom live in the Indian Punjab.²²

Sikhism is a religion that requires its adherents to follow detailed rules on morality, diet, and dress. Sikh ethics are based on three fundamental principles: work, piety, and charity. These three principles should govern the whole of a person's life. Every Sikh should constantly study the scriptures and meditate on God, live according to the instructions given by the Gurus, and actively serve the community.²³

Graham F. West, director of media and communications for the organisation Sighcoalition.org, confirmed in an email to the author of the article that the Sikh religion does not restrict or recommend physical activity or sport but that every Sikh should follow a diet, remain abstinent from psychoactive substances where possible, and maintain health and general fitness.

Fauja Singh has become known as the world's oldest marathon runner. He completed his first marathon in London at the age of 89 and his first marathon in Toronto at the age of 100. Despite his advanced age, he continued to compete, breaking

²² T. Jędrysiak, I. Wyszowska, *An encounter with one of the world's most interesting religions in travel in India*, 2019, <http://turystykakulturowa.eu/wp/2019/10/spotkanie-z-jedna-z-najciekawszych-religii-swiata-w-podrozach-po-indiach>.

²³ E. Breuilly, J. O'Brien, M. Palmer, *Religie świata. Przewodnik*, Polskie Przedsiębiorstwo Wydawnictw Kartograficznych, Warszawa–Wrocław 1998, 138–149.

world records in younger age categories. Singh believes that his achievements stem from the principles of Sikhism, such as a healthy lifestyle and abstinence. Other runners from the 'Sikhs in the City' group also highlight the benefits of physical activity. Adherence to religious principles has a positive effect on sporting achievement. However, other factors, such as a sense of purpose and determination, in addition to spiritual motivations, result in a focus on sporting achievement.²⁴

Judaism

Judaism places more emphasis on deeds than faith, focusing on present life. It is a religion that promotes self-control, responsibility and full control over one's behaviour. Followers must care for their health by following hygiene rules, following a regular daily rhythm, practising religious practices such as prayer and fasting, and avoiding alcohol, drugs, and physical activity.²⁵ In addition to the study of books, physical activity is given great importance in education. The most outstanding Jewish physician made a major contribution to the promotion of physical activity and, at the same time, philosopher and theologian Moses Maimonides, who, in his works on hygiene, dietetics and psychosomatics, strongly emphasised the value of prevention (above all, exercise and a proper diet).²⁶ In the Jewish tradition, practically until modern times, sport did not exist. Judaism and Jewish tradition as a whole rejected the Greco-Roman principle of a healthy

²⁴ D. Jones, *Fauja Singh: the world's oldest marathon runner*, 2023, <https://www.runners-world.pl/ludzie/fauja-singh-100-letni-maraton-czyk,5044,1>.

²⁵ E. Jaksz-Recmanik, *Kulturowo-religijne zróżnicowanie zachowań zdrowotnych wyznawców wybranych religii: diagnoza i edukacja zdrowotna*, rozprawa doktorska, Uniwersytet Śląski, Katowice 2020.

²⁶ J. Pawlikowski, K. Marczewski, *Religia a zdrowie – czy religia może sprzyjać trosce o zdrowie? Cz. 1 – wartość zdrowia w wielkich religiach świata*, „Kardiologia po Dyplomie”, 7 (10):2008, listopad/grudzień.

spirit in a healthy body, and gymnasiums and sports stadiums were seen as places of depravity.²⁷ Apart from recommendations for a healthy lifestyle, the sources and literature do not mention Jewish participation in sporting activities. In ancient times, Orthodox Judaism banned all activities that distracted from Torah study and prayer, including participation in games. In those days, only men without any signs of mutilation were allowed to participate in the Games, which disqualified many Jews due to circumcision. However, at the turn of the 20th century, physical culture began to gain importance in Jewish communities. A watershed moment came in 1898 when Max Nordau at the Second Zionist Congress called for a change in the image of the Jews.²⁸ Max Nordau, a doctor by profession, promoted the concept of the ‘muscular Jew’, emulating the idea of the ‘muscular Christian’, who promoted daily physical exercise, control of urges and harmony of body and spirit. Nordau encouraged physical activity, believing that a body suffering under the harsh conditions of the ghetto entailed a degeneration of the mind. He stressed that the political and cultural revival of the Jews also required physical education to dispel the myth of their physical weakness. Sports clubs named ‘Maccabi’, which is a reference to the Maccabean warriors, started as apolitical sports organisations but, over time, became an important element of Zionist activity. However, these initiatives were met with resistance from religious factors such as the ‘Agudah’ party, which considered these activities ungodly and condemned all Jewish sporting activity.²⁹

²⁷ C. Rybicki, *Działalność żydowskich stowarzyszeń gimnastycznych i sportowych w Łomży do 1941 roku*, „Studia Łomżyńskie”, Łomżyńskie Towarzystwo Naukowe im. Wagów, Łomża 2012, 23, 7–55.

²⁸ P. Kowalik, *Żydowskie ABC: Makabi – sport po żydowsku – Muzeum POLIN*, 2021, <https://polin.pl › wydarzenie › zydzowskie-abc-makabi>.

²⁹ J. K. Rogozik, *Ideologia muskularnego syjonizmu, czyli sport w naszym przeglądzie*, „Zeszyty Prasoznawcze”, XLV, 1–2:2002, 126–127. See also: A. Zawadzka, *Wojna polsko-polska w Izraelu*, „Studia Litteraria et Historica”, 1:2012, 9.

A frequently asked question concerns the possibility of sports and recreation on Shabbat. According to the teachings, Shabbat prohibits only work that bears the hallmark of creation, i.e. changing existing reality. This means that walks, sporting activities and various types of children's games are allowed as long as they do not involve creating or destroying anything that would be against the rules of Shabbat.³⁰

Summary

Religious beliefs influence dietary choices, and they also affect attitudes toward physical activity, health care, and health-promoting behaviors. Some faiths may promote physical activity through communal activities, pilgrimages, or specific rituals, linking physical activity with spiritual devotion and social cohesion.³¹

The degree of importance placed on religion can significantly impact an individual's personal identity and value system, subsequently influencing their health choices and behaviors.³²

The table below summarises the most important findings related to approaches to sport and recreational behaviour in the world religions described in the article. It shows how different religions integrate sports and recreational activities with spiritual values and the differences in approaches to physical health care across belief systems (Table 1).

³⁰ Łapaj-Kucharska, J. 2015, *A culture of time, a culture of life, or what is shabbat?* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337733042_kultura_czasu_kultura_zycia_czyli_czym_jest_szabat (16. 06. 2022).

³¹ D. Swihart, S. Yarrarapu, R. Martin, *Cultural Religious Competence in Clinical Practice*, StatPearls Publishing, 2023.

³² N. Aliman, Z. Ariffin, S. Hashim, *Religiosity Commitment and Decision-Making Styles Among Generation Y Muslim Consumers in Malaysia*, „International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences”, 8 (1), 2018, 555–572.

TABLE 1. Sports and recreational behaviour in religions

RELIGION	APPROACH TO HEALTH
Christianity	Concern for health as a moral obligation; the body as a gift from God; acceptance of sport in the context of spiritual and physical development.
Islam	Health and fitness seen as a gift from God; physical activity encouraged but with strict rules on dress and behaviour.
Hinduism	A healthy body essential for spiritual development; yoga and cleansing techniques as part of religious practices.
Buddhism	Health and physical activity are not directly related to the doctrines but are present in the context of martial arts and meditation.
Sikhism	A healthy lifestyle and care for the body are part of morality; physical activity is not restricted.
Judaism	Concern for health a religious obligation; physical activity as part of hygiene and prevention; sport only recognised since the 19th/20th century.

Source: own study

PROHIBITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS	IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
Criticism of excessive competition and pagan games in the past; promotion of healthy forms of sport.	Promoting integral human development (body, mind, spirit); sport as an educational tool.
Bans related to mixed teams and body display; restrictions for women; avoidance of extreme sports.	Physical activity is recommended for health, capacity for prayer and pilgrimage, and development of the body as a form of service to God.
No uniform prohibitions; bodily practices mainly related to spiritual purification.	Physical exercise as preparation for meditation and the development of spiritual awareness.
No prohibitions; martial arts as a spiritual and health tool.	Martial arts are part of Zen philosophy, and physical health is supported by meditation.
No restrictions to promoting physical activity as part of a healthy life.	Physical activity supports a healthy lifestyle, a tool to promote abstinence and self-discipline.
The sport was once rejected as a pagan concept; now, reality-changing activities are prohibited on Shabbat.	Physical development is important in the context of hygiene and regeneration, and sport has been part of community building since the 19th century.

In contrast, the next table brings together the key differences in religious attitudes towards women's sports. These differences are due to historical, cultural, and theological backgrounds; nevertheless, contemporary changes in most religions favour a greater acceptance of women's physical activity, reflecting global societal changes (Table 2).

TABLE 2. Women's participation in sport: restrictions and contemporary developments in world religions

RELIGION	APPROACH TO SPORT
Christianity	Supported, especially in contemporary Christianity, sports are promoted as a tool for physical, spiritual, and social development.
Islam	Restrictions related to dress codes and gender segregation; women can play sports in areas isolated from men, with modesty.
Hinduism	There are no explicit religious prohibitions; women's sport depends on local traditions, and yoga is particularly popular.
Buddhism	Neutral religious approach: Women engage in martial arts, such as karate or judo, without religious restrictions.
Sikhism	Gender equality promoted by religion; women are encouraged to be physically active and take care of their health.
Judaism	Access to sport has traditionally been restricted, particularly in orthodox communities; the contemporary approach is more open, promoted by movements such as Maccabi.

Source: own study

MAIN LIMITATIONS	CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS
No significant constraints or criticism of excessive competition in the past.	The increasing involvement of women in sports at the professional and amateur levels.
There is a need for gender segregation, a ban on mixed teams, and strict dress requirements.	Progress has been made in enabling women to participate in sporting competitions and create religiously compliant sportswear.
No uniform restrictions; dependence on local traditions.	The popularity of yoga as a universal form of physical activity is growing.
No formal restrictions; the influence of local cultural norms.	More and more women are getting involved in martial arts and sports related to spirituality.
No restrictions, emphasis on healthy lifestyles and abstinence.	Promoting healthy lifestyles and physical activity equally for women and men.
Prohibition of work and creative activities on Shabbat; restrictions in Orthodox communities.	The rise of women's sports in Jewish communities, mainly through the Maccabi movement.

Sports can have different meanings and roles in each community, depending on a particular religion. However, in all beliefs, physical activity is viewed in a way consistent with the spirit and teachings of the particular religion. Its health and educational role is a vehicle for many great values; it shapes positive attitudes,

teaches responsibility, regularity, and respect for rules and others, and acts as a stimulant between individuals, groups, nations, and even states. In addition, it plays a reliable didactic role, is an excellent school of life, develops such personality traits as courage, combativeness, enthusiasm, dedication, and organisational skills, and teaches competition. Moreover, although it is not directly an area of economic life, it also plays an important role. It is also a way to understand and implement fair play in life. Sport is a universal language that unites different religions through shared values and goals. It allows one to express the spirit of competition, cooperation and improvement in all beliefs. In this way, sports have become a powerful tool for integration, cooperation, and strengthening ties between different religious communities. ■

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SUMMARY

The article presents the main ideas of sports in the world's major religions, highlighting that physical activity is integral to spiritual practice in many cultures. Authoritative religions such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Judaism differ in many aspects, yet sport serves as a point of convergence in their teachings and practices. The article aimed to compare the world's major religions in terms of their approaches to sports and recreational activities, care for the body, and women's participation in sports.

The article emphasises that despite differences in beliefs and practices, sport remains a universal tool for fostering values such as health, discipline, cooperation, and the spirit of competition. At the same time, it serves as a platform where various cultures and faiths can meet, integrate, and strengthen community bonds. The ideas of sports in the world's major religions demonstrate that physical activity and spiritual practice can mutually support each other in pursuing harmony between body and spirit.

Keywords: culture, health behaviour, physical activity, religion, sport

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