

## Universal Peace & Harmony through Yoga Journalism

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### **Abstract**

The present research was conducted under the thesis entitled “a study of yoga related coverage in print media”. The aim of the study was to analyze the need and importance of yoga journalism for global transformation. In this process the journalists were interviewed so as to know their views on the power of media and their role in the formation of public opinion whereas the yoga experts were interviewed so as to know their views on the role of yoga in curbing global problems and the role of media in spreading the message of yoga. The results reveal that yoga works on one’s body, mind and spirit. Therefore it is known as the global art. If our body, mind and soul are healthy and harmonious, we can bring health and harmony to the globe by being a healthy and harmonious organ of the global body of humanity.

Human sufferings are the same whether they be Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews or others. Whether they be Indian, Italians, Britishers or Americans, yoga is universal in appeal and applicable to the world humanity irrespective of caste, creed, religion or nation.

Today on global level we are witnessing several problems like terrorism, religious fanaticism, racial hatred, evils policies of different nations of the world. It is yoga which can give permanent solution to these global problems. There is the need of the moral, ethical and cultural refinement of the individual personality on a worldwide scale by spreading the age-old philosophy of yoga by mass media. Keeping in view the universal application of yoga, the message of yoga must be spread like infectious disease in the world through yoga journalism, then there will come awareness among the masses not only in India but across the globe as well.

**Key words:** *yoga, yoga journalism, mass media*

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### **Introduction**

Talking of global Indian heritage, yoga is perhaps the most recognized one, having travelled all over the world for everyone’s well being. Yoga like many things cultural, is a legacy of an ancient and continuous 5000 yrs. old Indian civilization and yet quite modern with the backing of science. The genesis of the globalization of yoga first came in contact with the west during the times of Plato and Aristotle who paid acknowledgements to Indian values and practices in their arts. These contacts were furthered by Alexander’s arrival in India in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.

Modern yoga gained momentum in the late 1800s after when Swami Vivekananda and other great gurus like Osho, Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Paramhansa Yogananda, Swami Satyananda, Shri Ravi Shankar, Swami Ramdev, Dr. Pranav Pandya and many others travelled to west and introduced the science and practice of yoga in recent times.

**Increasing influence of Yoga:** today yoga’s reach is very widespread. Yoga is a multi-billion dollar industry in the USA, with some 30 million American practitioners’, and more than 700,000 subscribers to yoga journals.

Over 98 percent of yoga teachers, instructors and students in the USA are non-Indians. It is also estimated that there are about, million people in the United Kingdom practicing yoga. This increasing influence of yoga in the west has made Christian evangelists so paranoid that they are demanding a ban on yoga. But still yoga is sweeping the world. In India, Swami Ramdev is particularly well-known for his efforts in popularizing yoga to the masses using mainstream media, claiming to have over 85 million people following his yoga camps via TV channels and video. This is in addition to some incredible work done by dedicated yoga centres like the Bihar School of Yoga, Shivananda Yoga Vedanta centre, DevSanskritiVishwavidyalaya, Gayatrikunj-Shantikunj, Haridwar and others.

**Yoga can't be seen through narrow religious prisms** Despite this explosion of yoga, can yoga be seen through narrow religious prisms? Is it fair when Christian extremists in the US and Islamic fundamentalists elsewhere demand its propagation and practice be banned among non-Hindus? Many orthodox Christian leaders have said that practicing yoga is incompatible with teachings of Jesus. Muslim clerics have banned Muslims from practicing yoga in Egypt, Malaysia and Indonesia, citing similar concerns.

**The role of mass media:** It is therefore the duty of the mass media that they project yoga in its real form to remove the misconceptions of the world humanity about yoga. We may get differences of opinion and factional disputes but yoga was given by the Rishis for the human race, not only for the Hindus. Yoga is not a religion but a science, a way of living. That is why yoga is called sarvabhauma i.e. Universal.

According to the island, a srilankan daily, the Malaysian National Fatwa Council's

chairman, shukorHusin, has said that "many Muslims fail to understand that yoga's ultimate aim is to be one with a God of a different religion."<sup>1</sup>

Yoga is in fact the technique of uniting the individual consciousness with Universal or supreme consciousness. When yoga teaches us to empty our minds, it does not do so with the aim of making space in our mind for a foreign God.

**Yoga is for the whole world and humanity:** Yoga works on one's body, mind and soul. Therefore it is known as the global art. When our body, mind and soul are healthy and harmonious, we will bring health and harmony to the world-not by withdrawing from the world but by being a healthy living organ of the body of humanity. Therefore yoga is for the whole world and humanity.

If someone argues that yoga is only for some particular religions; he should be asked: is there a British cancer, an Italian cancer, or cancer one?<sup>2</sup>

*OshoRajnish* very strongly argues in this regard: "Yoga doesn't mean any kind of religious fanaticism. Yoga is spiritual in its nature and character. And spirituality does not mean that you have to preach Christianity, Hinduism, Islam or Jainism. Spirituality simply means spreading the basic fundamentals of all religions, which are all the same. Can love be Christian or Hindu? Can a peaceful mind be Hindu or Buddhist? Does a man of compassion have to be a Christian or a Jew?"<sup>3</sup>

*Dr. PranavPandya* remarks that: "Yoga does not prescribe the worship of any specific "deity or deities". Yoga does not give specific instructions for the "existence, nature or worship. Yoga is a Universal science that has risen above religion. It is a Universal technique. No particular dogma is laid down, and no particular God is pointed out for your

worship. Yoga does not say that you must repeat any particular name of God. Yoga only says that repetition of one of the divine name is one of the ways of concentrating the mind. It does not specify the name or whom to worship.<sup>4</sup>

*Dr. H.R. Nagendra* states that: “Yoga is a science of holistic living. It is Universal in its approach and applicable to all human beings irrespective of sex, age, caste, creed or religion. Anyone who wants to raise himself from the lowest level to the highest level of human achievement can take to yoga.”<sup>5</sup>

*Prof. Hrudananda Ray* says: “Yoga as a science of reunion can work and is working, fostering the well being of a complete man. So simply it is a human science devoted to serve humanity beyond faith, belief and way of worship.”<sup>6</sup>

Human suffering are the same whether they be Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews or others. Whether they be Indian, Italians, Britishers or Americans. Everyone needs physical, mental and spiritual well being for a peaceful, prosperous and blissful life. And yoga in fact, serves this purpose. Afflictions of the body are the same. Afflictions of mind are the same. Diseases and sufferings know no caste, religion or nation, and yoga is given to cure those diseases. Nowhere in the ancient text is it said that yoga is only to be practiced by the Hindus. On the contrary, Maharshi Patanjali describes yoga as *sarvavhauma*, that means Universal.

*Maharshi Patanjali* in *Yogasutra* 2-31 says: “*Jatideskalasamayana vachchhinnah sarva haumamahavratam*” Which implies that “when practiced universally without exception due to birth, place, time and circumstances they (Yamas) become great disciplines.”

It is recommended that, they (Yamas) should be practiced Universally without exception. There should be no

modification due to differences in country, birth, time, place and circumstances.

Thus yoga is a Universal culture or it has Universal appeal? Just as it works on the whole of the individual, so it is meant for the development of the whole of mankind on the physical, mental, and spiritual levels.

Today on global level we are witnessing several problems like terrorism, religious fanaticism, racial prejudices and hatred, ill policies and plans of the governments of the nations of the world etc. It is yoga which can give permanent solution to these global problems.

*Swami Shivananda* remarks that: “In this age of atomic armament, racial hatred and policies of national greed, intolerance and distrust, our task is not so much the alteration and transformation of the patterns, policies and plans of the govt. of the nations of the world. The paramount importance and the imperative and indispensable necessity for the moral, ethical and cultural refinement of the individual personality upon a world-wide scale is to be realized first and foremost. For, the prime and fundamental unit of all wider groups like class, race, nation and human society the world over is the individual man. This is not an impossible proposition, for the divine exists in all beings and it is an integral part of every individual consciousness. The method to draw it out is right and true yoga or spiritual education.”<sup>7</sup>

*Sri Ram Sharma Acharya* strongly recommends that: “The dream of the creation of a sinless society for the Universal peace, prosperity and bliss can come true only when the ever happening evil deeds be totally banned by refining the thoughts through spirituality, otherwise there seems to be no other way of permanent and real peace and bliss in the world.”<sup>8</sup>

*MaharshiAurobindo* very beautifully remarks that: “The yoga we practice is not for ourselves alone, its aim is to workout the will of the divine in the world, to effect a spiritual transformation and to bring down a divine nature and a divine life into the mental vital and physical nature and life of humanity. Its object is not personal mukti, although mukti is necessary condition of the yoga, but the liberation and transformation of the whole human being.”

*Swami Ramdev* argues that: “All persons in the world want peace and happiness. All the nations of the world agree on this point that peace should be established in the world. All people have some views about it according to their thinking capacity, but no unanimous solution is coming forth.”

Can there be some rules, values and norms which may be acceptable to all the people in the world, which do not trample upon the unity and integrity of an individual or the nation, which do not serve the personal vested interests of anybody, which any individual can, adopt, and achieve complete happiness, peace and bliss in life? It should be a path which every person can follow in the world fearlessly, with full freedom, and can achieve complete happiness, peace and bliss in life. This is the path of astanga yoga propounded by the great sage Patanjali. This is not a creed, belief or sect; it is a complete method of living life. If the people all over the world are really serious about it that peace must be established in the world, its only solution is- observance of astanga yoga. It is only through eight-limbed (astanga) yoga that personal and social harmony, physical health, mental peace and spiritual bliss can be realized.

**Yoga, the solution of the global problems of the day:** The eight-limbed yoga passes the test of religion, spirituality, humanity and science. If the bloody strife in the world can be prevented

by any means, it is astanga yoga only. Astanga yoga encompasses in a unique way the most sublime states of spirituality, right from general activities to dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (self-absorption).<sup>9</sup>

In fact, one who treats Universal and scientific values, ideals and traditions as a religion is a theist, and a religious person but is not a fanatic. One who sees the image of God in all the creatures, including man and all the animate inanimate objects, and allays the pain and misery in the world by dedicating his whole life to the service of all creatures, is a spiritualist. One who rises above all narrow-mindedness and loves mankind, and looks at the whole world like family from the depth of his heart VasudhaivaKutumbakam (panchatantra 5.38) – is a spiritualist.

This is what yoga teaches us. Spiritualism and nationalism are not mutually contradictory ideologies, but for the full freedom and security of every country and its citizens they are equally necessary. We are the citizens of an independent country, and it is our national moral responsibility to defend the independence, unity, integrity and sovereignty of the country. At the same time we are all one and are the children of one and the same God. Therefore, from the point of view of being God’s children, according to the dispensation of that supreme lord, we are all brothers and sisters. This is what yoga teaches us.<sup>10</sup>

Thus today in the atmosphere of uncertainty, distrust and fear caused due to terrorism and religious hatred could be dealt with by spreading the age-old philosophy of yoga by mass media, and there will be peace, bliss and prosperity in the world.

**Yoga journalism is the global need of the day:** Thus considering a Universal

application of yoga we can say that yoga journalism is the need of the day. The message of yoga needs to be spread like infectious disease in the world through journalism and only through the spread of yoga will there come about mass awareness not only in India but across the globe.

As previously pointed out, media possesses immense power in its hands. It can effectively help in the formation of public opinion. Media has shown its power and responsibility on matters of social, national and international concerns, public concerns on several occasions. In a similar manner, media can effectively help in bringing about awareness among the masses about yoga for the welfare of the whole human being. Media can help to send across to the viewers and reader's opinions and suggestions of experts on various issues like yoga for a philosophy of life, yoga for holistic health, yoga for a better family life, yoga for social transformation and yoga for world transformation, etc. through newsroom discussions, interviews, news, views, articles etc. Not only does and can that draw people's attention to the detail of such a particular topic of concern, it also equips the people with wider understanding, thereby enabling better decision-making.

No doubt, by promoting yoga, media can help strengthen and promote our rich

cultural heritage and traditions. Since media has played a significant role in beautifully blending the tastes and colours of various cultures across the world; it can also play a significant role in promoting yoga across the globe. The world is no longer a vast expanse that can not be conquered. Nothing is out of reach today. Small cities and towns have become a melting pot of races. Most of the credit for this goes to the media.

Media is the greatest tool of communication the human society has ever seen. Communication is the main basis of the creation, flowering and continued existence of all civilizations. William Bernbach, an American advertising executive, once said, "All of us who professionally use the mass media are the shapers of society. We can vulgarize that society. We can brutalize it. Or we can help lift it on to a higher level."

Thus by promoting things like yoga and spirituality having potentials for global transformation media can play a substantial role in making the individual, family, society, nation and the world more civilized, sophisticated and enlightened. It should not degenerate into something barbaric or monstrous, but should endorse moral values and ethics, in order that the world we live in could be transformed into a better place.

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