

Yoga Journalism and its Application: An Overview

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Abstract

The present research paper clarifies the basic concept and the need and importance of yoga and yoga journalism. Yoga is the science of self-realization. The word 'yoga' is very broad and comprehensive in itself. The pious current of yoga has been ever flowing since time immemorial through self-enlightened yogis and their spiritual discourse. The word 'yoga' is very broad and comprehensive in itself. Yoga is the union of the individual soul with the supreme soul. Yoga is a practical path to self-realization. Yoga paves the way for the physical, mental and spiritual well being of the individual. Yoga can be said to constitute the very essence of the spirituality of India. Yoga, the art and science of right living has come down to us from our seers from time immemorial. Yoga journalism has made a remarkable contribution in propagating the message of yoga worldwide. Yoga related news and articles and different yoga related programs through different mass media are playing a pivotal role in promoting yoga among the masses for the betterment of humanity.

Key words: Yoga, Yoga journalism, Mass Media, Promotion, Well being etc.

Introduction:

Yoga journalism can be defined as gathering, selecting, interpreting and disseminating yoga related news and views.¹ In other words, the reporting of yoga related news in newspapers, magazines and TV Channels can be called yoga journalism. For example The Times of India has a column called speaking tree. The Hindu runs the same information under the column religion, Hindustan Times under the column inner voice, Economic Times, under the column 'Cosmic Uplink', Hindustan.

We Create Our Life: Always wait for something good and it happens, because whatsoever happens, we create. In fact, we

under 'Manasa Vacha Karmana', Dainik Jagran under 'Urja', Amar Ujala, 'Antaryatra', Rashtriya Sahara under 'Satsang'.

The objective of these columns is to report on different aspects of yoga and spirituality as well. We often find yoga and spirituality appearing under these columns in some form or the other. We have taken note of some columns from different newspapers. For example, from the time of India, speaking tree:

create it; we sow the seeds. But we sow the seeds unconsciously, that's why we think that some accident has happened. Accidents never

happen, nothing is ever accidental. It is not a chaos. Everything is absolutely based on a fundamental ultimate law: nothing ever goes wrong. Yes, sometimes it looks to us as if it has gone wrong, because we were expecting something else. That's a problem-we do one thing, we sow one seed and we expect something else. We sow the seeds of one kind of flower and we expect some other kind of flower, so when the flowers come we are frustrated. But flowers come through the seeds, not our wishes. So remember: We constantly create our world. There are people who are constantly afraid that something wrong is going to happen, and then it happens! And when it happens, they are proved right. They have made it happen... People who are afraid will always find situations in which fear grips them. People who are loving will always find situations where love blooms. Life is our project. We are our life's creators. God has created man, but as freedom. So there is an essential freedom inside; now it is up to you to choose what you would like to happen to you in life and then you will see that it starts happening. One thing is linked with another, one thing leads to another, and slowly you have taken a certain route; then all other alternatives are dropped. When a child is born, all the alternatives are open; he is utterly free. He can be a musician, poet, wrestler, a politician, he can be anything.... An Adolf Hitler, a Gautama Buddha; anything is possible. But sooner or later choices start coming and he starts moving in a certain direction. Then that direction remains his world.² Now we take just another example of yoga journalism from Times of India, speaking tree.

Devotion and Knowledge:

Bhakti or devotion is often compared with knowledge. The two paths have little in common, except perhaps their ultimate goal. The two paths converge only at their end. Looking at it from another perspective, one could say that the two paths are like two views of the same path rather than two different paths that converge. If the fruit of bhakti is jnana, jnana intensifies bhakti. They are both as inseparable as two sides of a coin. Jnana is the path that appeals to the logical part of the brain. For that to happen, the emotional part of the brain has to be rekindled through bhakti. While bhakti turns the positive part of the mind outward to achieve union with the supreme, jnana turns the negative part of mind inward to achieve the same. If one looks at the experiences along the spiritual path and realizes them in either bhakti or jnana terms, he would find the same Truth. With a silent prayer as in bhakti or by the practice of negation in jnana, one becomes simple and surrenders all attachments to forms in order to get close to the formless. The easiest way to start is with bhakti or surrendering to the Supreme and acquire jnana. Bhakti is the mother of jnana.³ Now we just have a look at the article taken from The Hindu (published under religion) speaking of the yoga of knowledge and the yoga of devotion:

Becoming a jnani:

When and how does someone who seemed like an ordinary person only the other day suddenly become a gnani? Some people evolve in time. Some people suddenly have a flash of inspiration and shed worldly preoccupations and take to a life steeped in

worship and meditation, said Suki Sivam. An enlightened person should be sought by us, for us to be liberated from our lives of bondage. It is not just the guru who has to be a worthy one. The disciple who seeks knowledge from him must also be worthy of receiving the knowledge. If milk is poured in a vessel that has not been properly cleaned, the milk will get spoilt. In the same way, the person seeking knowledge must have pure thought; otherwise, no amount of instruction from the guru will help him. There is a story of a man who told a king about his guru. The king asked him whether his guru could perform magical deeds. The disciple replied that while his guru could do anything and perform any miracle, he also knew when not to perform miracles.⁴

What can we give God?

We offer God flowers. We light up incense sticks before him. We light camphor, and we perform pujas. And we are happy in the thought that we have given liberally to God, and that his grace is assured. But what have we given him? And what can we give him? He is the one who made everything. Who are we then to offer him anything? Yes, there is something. We can offer God our love, our devotion and our respects. These are the only offerings he asks of us, and these are the offerings we must make to him, T. Rajarathinam said in a lecture. Why is there so much of stress on devotion? It is possible to offer flowers or milk or other things to the Lord, without an iota of love towards him. But we cannot offer our bhakti without deep-felt love towards the Lord. We can worship in many ways, making a show of our wealth and our status. But true bhakti does not seek such

demonstration. It is offered without pomp and show.⁵ Now we have a look at another two examples of yoga journalism taken from The Economic Times published under the column 'cosmic uplink' with the heading 'little drops make the mighty ocean'.

Little drops make the mighty ocean:

The seeking aspirant, in his pursuit of spiritual growth towards true effectiveness and 'victory over oneself', would identify all the 'minutiae', specifically concerning him. To use the words of Conan Doyle, he would also 'appreciate their importance'. This also is one aspect of the art of action.⁶ Apart from these regular columns we also have yoga related news in newspapers and magazines. Which we will analyze in the chapter entitled "Yoga in contemporary print media. Yoga journalism, in fact, is the key to real treasure of the yogic or spiritual knowledge, by virtue of which yogic knowledge and concepts could be carried to the common man. Thus the common man is benefited with the true knowledge of yoga and spirituality and is able to fight against ignorance, superstitions, social evils, diseases etc and finally attains self-realization which is the ultimate goal of human life. It is yoga journalism by virtue of which the common man could know how to put yoga and spirituality into practice in his day to day life for physical, mental and spiritual well-being. There has been a considerable progress in yoga journalism over the years and as a result several yoga magazines, programs on TV Channels etc emerged but still there are many miles to go to achieve the desired level.⁷

Herein it would be relevant to mention that till now yoga journalism has not been established as a full time and independent, reporting beats like politics, crime, sports, entertainment, business etc. There are almost no separate yoga/spiritual reporters in most of the newspapers. Therefore yoga related story is done either by freelancers or part time reporters working on other beats.⁸ Being aware of this fact, yoga journalism in India has yet to come out of its present state of infancy.

Sources of yoga related news:

After having an understanding of the yoga beat, let us now see what the sources of yoga related news are:

Seminar on any yoga related subject: From time to time many spiritual organizations, yoga institutes/universities organize seminars related to yoga and spirituality. Such seminars provide many valuable tips to reporters.

Yoga camps: Yoga camps organized by yoga gurus/yoga universities/institutes also provide valuable information on yoga.

Workshop on any discipline: Many yoga institutes/universities and spiritual organizations now-a-days organize workshops on various disciplines of yoga for the benefit of their students and followers.

Special lectures: Many yoga institutes occasionally organize lectures on any special yoga related topics/like yoga for health, yoga and social transformation, importance of

Yama and Niyama etc. Such lectures are a good source of news.

Special discourses on yoga: There are regularly some discourses on yoga like jnana yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, etc. in spiritual organizations/Ashrams by saints, yogis. Such discourses provide some interesting information to reporters.

Research work: Many yoga institutes goes on conducting researches on various aspects of yoga. Such research work provides authentic and interesting data. Reporters can use the research to present interesting facts but he/she should be cautious about the findings. First they should cross check the facts from authentic sources before using them as a reference otherwise stories based on wrong facts may create chaos.

Published Literature on yoga: The books written by yogis or any authentic author, the books/ magazines published by yoga institutes/ ashrams also become a good source of information on yoga.

National/international yoga championships: From time to time yoga institutes/universities organize national and international yoga championship in which participants from the country and abroad participate. Such programs provide interesting information to reporters.

Hospitals: Yoga therapists working in hospital may also provide information on therapeutic aspect of yoga.

Audience oriented programs: Audience is an important source in programs targeted at them,

reporters can use the feedback from the audience while writing their reports.

Press conference: Press conference organized by yoga institutes/ yoga spiritual personalities provide a major source to reporters.

Press release: Press release issued by the yoga institutes/Universities is an important source to reporters.⁹

Qualities of a yoga reporter:

Now let us have a brief look at the qualities of a yoga reporter: No doubt, yoga is an important reporting beat. It requires a different kind of skill, different bend of mind. A yoga or spiritual story sounds different and is a very efficient tool to promote cultural heritage of the country. Therefore it is but natural that the reporter covering this beat must possess some specific qualities. The reporter covering this beat must have an understanding and appreciation of spiritual matters. He/she must have the knowledge of the origin and development of yoga. And for this purpose he/she should go through all the literary sources of yoga like yoga Darshan, Hath Yoga Pradipika, The Bhagvad Geeta etc He should have sound knowledge of the great yogis and their yoga sadhanas. He should have authentic knowledge of spiritual organizations/yoga institutes/Universities and the yoga programs/courses running there. He/she must honor all religions and should not show disregard to any particular religion. The tenets of all the important religions must be known to him/her.¹¹

Precautions Required in Coverage:

Interviews: Interviews of the yogis/spiritual personalities are a good source of yoga related information. But for this the journalist must be well versed in the art of interview.¹⁰

International Day of yoga: Worldwide celebration of yoga on 21st June has become a great source of yoga related news.

While covering an event, a reporter must take some precautions like: A reporter should not allow his/her prejudices and bias to come in the way of his/her writings. The reporter covering this beat should never write anything provocative and should take recourse to balanced writing and should personally verify the things before reporting. He/she must possess a detailed list of yoga related festivals/meets/ organizations/ institutes/ Universities. He/ she must maintain contacts with important yoga personalities and should try to seek their views whenever some controversy arises on any issue. He/she must not hesitate in having clarifications from yoga personalities/spiritual leaders whenever some confusion arises on any point related to yoga. He/she should also consult other sources including books on such an occasion. A yoga or spiritual report should not be written in a half-hearted manner and all necessary information be made available to the readers.¹²

Another remarkable thing about yoga related coverage is that there are some yoga related words that are intelligible to none but to the experts only. This is a kind of writing they may be germane to a specialized journal but

would be out of place in an article intended for the layman. The layman wants everything to be explained to him in language that he can readily understand. In yogic and spiritual writing, therefore, the writer should first ask himself the basic question; for whom am I writing? If this is first cleared, then the rest is easily worked out. If the writing is intended for the knowledgeable, it should be apparent that the writer need not necessarily strain at trying to explain each and every yoga related word. He knows in advance that the words/“jargon” he uses will be comprehended, though even an expert would appreciate the writing more if it is communicative and simple.

But if, the writer is writing for the layman or for a broader audience, it is self-evident that jargon simply will not do. Every yogic/spiritual term then have to be defined. The success of the writer really lies in the fact that whether he succeeds in communicating with and within the masses or not. Therefore the writer must be very careful about his writing. The simple language is the only weapon to communicate with the common masses; and when subjects like yoga/spirituality is being covered which is of utmost importance for the betterment of human life, it must be written in a very-very simple language that can be easily comprehended by the common man.¹³ Thus these are the points necessary to remember while reporting for this beat.

Importance of Yoga Journalism:

The need and importance of yoga journalism can be understood well if we refer to the

problems of the day and their solutions through yoga. We have entered the 2nd decade of the 21st century. But there is a nagging question before us-have we really made progress? Are we living a happy and blissful life? The answer is almost no and not at all? In spite of the pace with which science has progressed, with newest of inventions in all walks of life, increased number of talented and intellectual people, revolution in the field of transport and communications –why is it that we are living such a miserable life? If this is progress, then why are we restless? Why do we see so many people are committing suicides due to mental unrest? Why are students committing suicides due to ragging every year? Why is the number of people suffering from several mental diseases on the rise? Why are families getting broken with increased prosperity? Why are indecency and sexual crimes a on the rise? Why is the crime rate on the increase? Why the modern age is witnessing an increasing dilution of the moral fiber among the youth? Why the rules of social conduct and the norms of behavior developed by tradition are breaking down? Why are we witnessing the rapid deterioration in moral values in all the spheres of life? Why are we becoming more and more western and materialistic and running after transient chimeras of consumerism? We are witnessing communal and caste based violence? Why are we witnessing scam after scam? Why is the corruption at its peak? Why the crime rate is on the increase? Why is media losing its credibility? Media is no longer a mission but a profession? The electronic and print media are over flooded with negative news? Can this be called the progress? ¹⁴ These are some million

dollar questions before us which have posed an alarming threat to the human society.

All these evils and problems show that the root cause of all the evils and agonies in the human society is ignorance. Just as the seed is the cause of the whole tree, so avidya or ignorance is the cause of our misery.¹⁵ Therefore self-knowledge or vidya is the only solution to these problems. This is the reason why our saints and seers have stressed the importance of yoga in human life. It is through yoga that we can attain self-knowledge. Lord Krishna in the Gita 6-23 says: “Tam vidyadadukha sanyoga viyoga yoga sangitam” which implies that yoga is the destroyer of suffering. And therefore there is the great need and importance of the promotion of yoga through Yoga Journalism.

Conclusion: Needless to say that today there is the need of yoga journalism for creating

people’s awareness about yoga and spirituality; for their well being and holistic progress. Today, people are in need of inner peace and calmness and security, which can come from self-knowledge and self-realization. The yoga sadhana is needed not only for leading a successful worldly life but also for the attainment of the spiritual experience or the self realization which is the ultimate goal of human life. Thus keeping in view the problems of the day and their solution through yoga and spirituality, we can say that yoga journalism can very effectively serve the individual, society and the nation. The yoga journalism can therefore be applied for the physical, mental and spiritual well being of the individual. It can be applied for social transformation, for the promotion of sanskar in family life and for nation building and global peace and harmony as well.

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