

Healthy and Positive Journalism through Yoga

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Abstract

Journalism is the dissemination of information through different mass media for the betterment of the society. The functions of journalism are not just limited to disseminating information and entertaining the masses, rather it holds a greater responsibility. This is the reason why it is called the watchdog of society and the fourth-pillar of democracy. The true function of journalism is to educate the public, mind not to stock the public mind with wanted and unwanted impressions. It is not the journalism's job to print news only, but to print what is fit to be printed in the greater interest of the individual, society and the nation. This is possible when yoga and spiritual values like truthfulness, love, honesty, non violence, compassion etc be spread through journalism. As yoga and spirituality when introduced to journalism it could promote a healthy and positive journalism on the one hand and healthy and harmonious society on the other.

Key words: Journalism, mass media, yoga, values, healthy, positive

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Journalism: Meaning and Concept

According to Encyclopedia Britannica: "Journal, a word which came into English from late Latin DIURNALIS, through French Journal with the original meaning of 'daily'. Diurnal and journal were both used for periodical in the 17th and 18th centuries. In the 20th century journal is more frequently applied to reviews and learned publications. Journalism includes the writing and editing of newspapers and periodical. Although this is the basic definition various tasks and processes intimately connected with the production of serial publications are commonly classified as journalistic. Thus, the gathering and transmission of news and views are often thought of as coming within the field of journalism and following the advent of radio and television, there was a trend toward including all communication dealing with current affairs in the term."

Acc. to Chambers Dictionary: "Journalism is the profession of conducting or writing for public journals."

Acc. to New Webster's Dictionary: "Journalism is the occupation of conducting a news medium, including publishing, editing, writing or broadcasting"

David Wainwright is of the opinion that: "Journalism is communication. It is the events of the day distilled into a few words, sounds, or pictures, processed by the mechanics of communication to satisfy the human curiosity of a world that is always eager to know what's new." He further says "Journalism is the day to day operation of gathering and transmitting news."

Leslie Stephens says: "Journalism consists of writing on matters of which people are ignorant."

Eric Hodgins says: "Journalism is the conveying of information from here to there with accuracy, insight and in such a manner that the truth is served, and the rightness of things is made slowly, even if not immediately, more evident."

Roland E. Wolsely says: "Journalism is the systematic and reliable dissemination of public information, public opinion and public entertainment by modern mass media of communication."

Joshep Putizer says: Nothing less than the highest ideals, the most scrupulous anxiety to do right, the most accurate knowledge of the problems it has to meet, and a sincere sense of social responsibility will save journalism."

Acc. to M.K. Gandhi: "The objective of journalism is service."

Jawaharlal Nehru remarks: Journalism is the times and the guardian, the daily mirror and the sun. The press is one of the vital organs of modern life especially in a democracy. The press has tremendous powers and responsibilities. The press must be respected.

Dr. Arjun Tiwari says: "Journalism is the expression of mass feeling. It is the sound of victory of Satyam= Shivam –Sundaram over Asatya—Ashiva—Asundar".

Acc. to Dr. Ram Chandra Tiwari: "Journalism is the powerful weapon to enlighten the national Consciousness."

Thus in the light of these definitions of journalism we can say that the term journalism embraces all the forms in which and through which the news and the comments on the news reach the public. All that happens in the world, if such happenings hold interest for the public, all the thought, action, and ideas which these happenings stimulate, become the basic material for the journalist, and those who practice journalism are known as journalists. Journalism is thus collection, preparation, and distribution of news and related commentary and feature materials through media such as news papers, magazines, radio, T.V., film and books.¹

Yoga: At a glance

Before exploring "The yoga related coverage in print media, it is of course, desirable to know the meaning, concept, history and traditions of

yoga, first. Therefore let us first see what yoga is:

This question can be answered well if we begin with the meaning and definitions of yoga. The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root 'yuj', which means to yoke or to unite. In later times, however, another technical meaning came to be associated with the term, and this is derived from "yujir samadhau", which means "contemplation", or "absorption".²

The oldest use of the word yoga, as found in the vedic literature (e.g. Rigveda 114.9, Atharvaveda VI, 91.1) indicates a union of various things.³

The Kathopanishada states:

"The supreme path begins when the five senses and the mind are stilled and when the intellect is silent. This tranquility of the senses is yoga."⁴

The Yoga Vashistha defines yoga "as a device by which one go across the ocean of suffering; i.e. yoga is a means of living the life of a jivanmukta (liberated soul) which is the ultimate end of human life."⁵

Agni Puran (183/1/3) states;

"When the light of knowledge dawns on chitta, it becomes concentrated and becomes like Brahma Himself; and thus occurs the communion of the individual soul with the supreme soul. Such a concentrated state of chitta is called yoga.

The Gita defines yoga thus:

i> Yoga is equanimity in success and failure.⁶

ii> Yoga is excellence in action.⁷

iii> Yoga is the dissociation of the association with suffering.⁸

Maharshi Patanjali in his Yoga-Sutra says:

"Yoga is the inhibition (nirodha) of the modifications (vrtti) of the mind."⁹

Hatha Yoga Pradipika states:

"The yoga is a state of ecstasy or trance"¹⁰

Swami Vivekanand says:

"Yoga is restraining the mind stuff (chitta) from taking various forms (vrttis). As the reflection of the moon on the sea is broken or blurred by the waves, so is the reflection of the Atman, the true self, broken by the mental waves. Only when the sea is stilled to mirror like calmness can the reflection of the moon be seen, and only when the mind stuff, the chitta, is controlled to absolute calmness, is the self to be recognized."¹¹

He says: "Yoga is a science which teaches how to awaken our latent powers and hasten the process of human evolution." "It is restraining the mind stuff from taking different forms."¹²

Maharshi Aurobindo says:

"Yoga is a methodological effort towards self-perfection by development of potentialities latent within the individual."¹³

Yugrishi Sri Ram Sharma Acharya says:

"The general meaning of the word yoga is to unite. In spiritual language, the communion of the individual soul with the supreme soul is called yoga and the activities which are adopted to begin this is called sadhana (spiritual disciplines).¹⁴

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who had a great respect for yoga wrote:

"It is good to know that the ancient thinkers required of us to realize the possibilities of the soul in solitude and silence, and to transform the flashing and fading moments of vision into a steady light which could illumine the long years of life."

Dr. Pranav Pandya says:

"Yoga is the process of self-discovery or discovering oneself and developing the divinity latent within oneself."¹⁵

Swami Ramdev observes:

Yoga is the gradual awakening of the self and the manifestation of divinity within.

Thus after a careful observation of the meaning and definitions of yoga we can say that yoga is the union of the individual soul with the supreme soul. Just as camphor melts and

becomes one with the fire; just as a drop of water when it is thrown into the ocean, becomes one with the ocean, the individual soul, when it is purified, when it is freed from lust, greed, hatred and egoism, when it becomes satvic, becomes one with the supreme soul. We can say that yoga is a practical path to self-realization, a means of attaining enlightenment by purifying the entire being, so that the mind-body can experience the absolute reality underlying the illusions of everyday life. Yoga can be said to constitute the very essence of the spirituality of India. Yoga, the art of right living has come down to us from our rishis from time immemorial. Many different interpretations of the word 'yoga' have been handed down over the centuries. One of the classical definitions of yoga is "to be one with divine." It does not matter what name we use for the divine-God, Allah, Ishvara, or whatever-anything that brings us closer to understanding that there is a power higher and greater than ourselves is yoga. When we feel in harmony with that higher power, that too is yoga. Thus yoga is the science that teaches us the method of uniting the individual soul with the Universal soul, of merging the individual will in the cosmic will; of experiencing our oneness with the divine consciousness.

Aim of Yoga

The ultimate aim of yoga is to unite the human soul with the universal soul. The aim of yoga is to tear the veil that keeps man confined within the human dimension of consciousness. Yoga is radically different from the normal consciousness of human beings. This is a point of paramount importance for every seeker of yoga to bear in mind which one passes beyond death only on realizing Him. There is no other way of escape from the cycle of births and deaths.¹⁶

Moreover yoga is the only way to sustain one's spiritual reality in the midst of life's turmoil and to discipline one's inner awareness until he attains liberation. Yoga can be considered among those highly developed spiritual disciplines that enable man to cope with the

tragic aspects of life. Ordinarily a man is lost in his own confused thoughts and feelings, but when yoga is attained the personal consciousness becomes stilled like a lamp in a windless place and it is then possible for the embodied spirit to know it as apart from the manifestations to which it is accustomed, and to become aware of its own nature. Yoga is, of course excellent for physical, mental and spiritual well being. The goal of yoga is essentially to cause the mind to become like zero. In fact, the goal of yoga is to zero out thoughts, to zero – out the mind and realize the supreme and become like the supreme.

Impact of negative journalism

Needless to say that the media is a great power. It can effectively help in the formation of public opinion and can play a substantial role in making the individual, society and the nation more civilized, sophisticated and enlightened. But it is equally true that just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countryside and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled media serves but to destroy. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct, would journalism of the day stand the test? How many press and TV channels would stand the test?

Be it the press or TV channels, all are flooded with negatives news and views like crime, murder, violence, vulgarity, sensation, corruption, obscenity and what not? Which have negative impact on the readers and viewers? Is not even a single divine deeds done or happened on the earth or in the whole Universe? But unfortunately the press and TV channels mostly cater to the lower taste of the readers and viewers, through sensation mongering rather than educating and enlightening them for better citizenship and better human beings. It is really a short cut to success. It is always easier to appeal to the lower passions of persons than to that the aim of journalism is service. We have heard media person's say- that the public has to be given what it wants. Any prostitute could say the

same. Can public should be served even poison on this ground?

That journalism is essentially service to society, has been vitiated by profit-oriented-business-soaked journalism. Journalism which first and foremost duty is to find out those truths which are in greater interest of society is associated now with sensationalism, exaggeration of unimportant facts and even manufactured truth.

The news and views which are advertisement friendly are prominently published and the adverse news is killed. Crimes and terrorism as well as other cruel and inhuman activities are being glorified and this trend is on increase. Celebrities and models are being projected as the icons of the society. The private lives of the so-called celebrities are given undue importance and sometimes crucial issues are neglected. How does it matter if two actors are having a feud? How does it matter if an actor is having an affair with some one? Somebody steals and rapes-what is the point of reporting it? Why make it news unnecessarily to fill the space with absolutely non-essential things? All told, today, the journalism has become a puppet in the hands of capitalists and industrialists, and they are running channels and press as they run any other factory, therefore most of what we read and view in newspaper and channels is the product of such factories.

This situation is beautifully summarized in the pithy saying:

"If you do not read the newspapers, you are uninformed. If you do read the newspapers you are misinformed."¹⁷

Need and Importance of Yoga in Journalism

Therefore, today when the journalism is suffering from several serious ailments like commercialism, sensationalism, corruption and populism, when the fourth pillar of democracy itself is in the need of a pillar, when the watchdog of society itself, needs to be watched-a new dimension needs to be added to all forms of journalism- the spiritual dimension which is for the time being happening but only on a

small scale in main stream journalism which is not enough³. The need and importance of yoga journalism can be understood well in the light of what Osho says:

"Scanning the media, newspapers and listening to the news, both locally and globally, have not you ever felt that something is seriously lacking? Something is missing. A new dimension needs to be added to all forms of journalism, the spiritual dimension-a positive message about the celebration of life. Spiritual journalism is happening on a small but expanding scale throughout the west, and if we could also integrate it into our local media, and at the heart of our journalistic endeavors, it would be an innovative and very healthy goal for small but growing and evolving nations. But to a great extent the west does not believe in spirituality, and it is suffering great anguish and great anxiety for it. The suicide rate is four times more than in the east. In the east, people commit suicide because of hunger and starvation-you have to be compassionate towards them. But in the west people commit suicide because they have everything, and they feel life is meaningless. They have all that money can purchase, but they cannot purchase silence, they cannot purchase love, they cannot purchase meditation. Spirituality is the very meaning of life, the very essence of life without a spirit, a man is only a corpse. And without spirituality, anything-sports, education, economics, science, politics-journalism, they are only corpses, they stink.¹⁸

Therefore the spiritual dimension should be introduced to journalism. And yoga and spirituality does not mean any kind of religious fanaticism. 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? An authentic spirituality will be without any adjective. It will only teach the essentials of all religions. And journalism should give it the first preference, on your

laundry list, it should be the first item and politics should be the last. Why give so much importance to momentary things? Yoga and spirituality means giving importance to something that is of permanent value-which gives life, light and guidance forever.

Eternal values constitute spirituality. Momentary values constitute politics. There introduce eternal values to journalism. Why relegate them only to the cultural page or magazines? They are part of the very fabric of life. They should be your major part, and politics should be just your fourth or fifth page. Push politics as far back as possible, to the last pages of your newspapers. Politics is not our soul; it is yoga and spirituality which is our soul.¹⁹

The negative side is part of life, yes! Death is also part of life. But that does not mean you have to make your funeral ground in the middle of the market. It is part of life, so once in a while you can talk about the funerals, the wars, but do not focus unnecessarily on them for the sake of sensationalism. Death is certain, but life is more important. Talk about life--, make life a celebration. Do not create a phobia with the negative. The media cannot survive on positive news only. That would also be wrong. The negative needs to be brought to the light also, but it should not be emphasized. It should be criticized. The positive should be supported and the negative should be condemned. The negative should be used as a stepping-stone but never emphasized; because that creates the idea in people's minds that the negative is what life is all about, and that is a very dangerous cancer of the soul".¹⁹

Whatever wrong is happening in media and society is due to degeneration of human values. Therefore if remedy remains to destroy the degeneration of human values, it is yoga and spirituality which is the core of human values. The solution of everything lies in yoga and spirituality.²⁰

Conclusion

The sole aim of journalism is service and therefore journalism should never be prostituted for selfish ends. Journalism to be useful and serviceable to individual, society and nation, will take its definite place, only when it becomes unselfish, truthful and moral and such moral values can be endorsed in it only when yogic or spiritual dimension is introduced to journalism. The force of ethics and morality would make it, follow the right path. Thus yoga and spiritual journalism has become more relevant than ever before. The spiritually charged media then would be in a position to give solid solution to all the problems of the individual rather than being the problem itself. Then journalism would unearth those truths and stories which would be in a greater interest of the individual and society, and this positive and healthy journalism, would, indeed usher a new era of love, light and vibrant life for the individual, society, and the nation as well. Yoga and spiritual journalism can introduce a noble element in the field of journalism.

It is its approach, its human approach, which would give its writing a character. It will understand people feelings and give expression to these and can be successful to a great extent, in feeling the pulse of the mute millions. It would then never be a party to exploit the base elements in human beings. It would believe in the nobler trails in a reader and would feed his eternal craving, the quest for truth, bliss and peace.

We agree with Osho that a healthy journalism is journalism, which nourishes the whole personality of a man-his body, his mind and his soul---journalism whose sole concern is to create a better humanity, not just to report what is happening. Journalism should not be just news medium, it should also be great literature, and then it is healthy. Even yesterday's newspaper should remain of some worth so that even today it may be read. But if you are only a news medium then naturally, once the day is passed the news is old. Grate literature remains significant, as long as

humanity remains, and as fresh as ever. Something in Today's journalism should have that quality. It can have space for news and politics, but they should only be secondary yoga and spirituality is part of the very fabric of life. They should be major part. And the time is ripe, and journalism can become the beginning of a new era. And then such positive and healthy journalism based on eternal values like yoga and spirituality, would, indeed become the people's Bible, The Quran, Zenda-avesta and the Gita rolled in to one.

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