

Yoga: A self-regulation process

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ABSTRACT

According to the ancient yogic texts, the origin of suffering is the ignorance of the true nature of things (avidya). The yogasutras of Patanjali posit that the main objective of yoga is to cease the origin of suffering by a process of involution called pratiprasava, through the development of awareness and consciousness. From a psychotherapeutic point of view, the cessation of suffering could be explained as the result of a process of self-regulation based on the development of self-awareness. It proposes that yoga practice promotes an embodiment process, providing the integration of the organism's systemic unit: brain, body, and environment. This integration process could be the central mechanism of affective self-regulation.

Key Words: Embodiment process, self-awareness, self-regulation, yoga practice

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YOGA AND PRATIPRASAVA: THE ENDING OF SUFFERING

The yogic holistic approach comprises all the constitutive aspects of an integral management of health: with a healthy diet and a healthy lifestyle, natural environment, physical practice, breath work (pranayama), meditation, healthy thinking, and practicing of an attitude of mindfulness in daily activities. From a therapeutic point of view, yoga focuses on achieving and maintaining a state of psychophysiological balance, through a set of techniques to cope with stress, reducing psychophysiological activation and facilitating a state of mental calm. However, beyond this therapeutic approach, the purpose of yoga is to act on the very origin of the imbalances that lead to illness or lack of health, and thus to be able of promoting the access to a natural, positive, and calm mental state that can remain independent of daily life situations and circumstances, achieving a general state of well-being (Pradhan, 2014).

According to the yogasutras of Patanjali, the first systematization of the principles and practices of yoga, the elimination of

suffering can only be produced by a process of involution called pratiprasava. The sutra 2.3 says: "avidya asmita raga dvesha abhinivesha pancha klesha," what according to Bharati (2007) means that: "There are five kinds of suffering causes (kleshas): (1) forgetting, or ignorance about the true nature of things (avidya), (2) I-ness, individuality, or egoism (asmita), (3) attachment or addiction to mental impressions or objects (raga), (4) aversion to thought patterns or objects (dvesha), and (5) love of these as being life itself, as well as, fear of their loss as being" (p.19). Moreover, the sutra 2.4 points out: "avidya kshetram uttaresham prasupta tanu vicchinna udaranam," what following the interpretation of Bharati (2007) means: "The root forgetting or ignorance of the nature of things (avidya) is the breeding ground for the other of the five sufferings' causes (kleshas), and each of these in one of the four states: (1) dormant or inactive, (2) attenuated or weakened, (3) interrupted or separated temporarily, or (4) active and producing thoughts or actions to varying degrees" (p.20).

From this original teaching, we can understand that the origin or primary cause of suffering is the ignorance of the true nature of things (avidya) and that also is the cause, out of which, the other

Access this article online	
Quick Response Code:	Website: www.ym-kdham.in
	DOI: 10.4103/ym.ym_22_17

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How to cite this article: Roche LT. Yoga: A self-regulation process. *Yoga Mīmāṃsā* 2018;50:16-9.

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