

Introduction

What is Pralaya?

Pralaya : state of latency, rest, perfect energetic equilibrium between two life cycles or eras. The moment of perfect balance after all matter has been absorbed and before all new matter is created.

It is the constant change of things that are, the passing from phase to phase (the continuous change of cells...)

In the Samkhya philosophy, one of the six schools of classical Indian philosophy, Pralaya means "non-existence, a state of matter achieved when the three gunas (principles of matter) are in perfect balance. The word pra-laya comes from Sanskrit meaning 'dissolution' or by extension 'reabsorption, destruction, annihilation or death'.

Pralaya – disappearance without a chance of re-emergence

Pralaya Yoga is a series of staged physical processes that have been systematically chosen to balance, protect, rejuvenate and increase the longevity of the joints by identifying and developing the weakest muscles fibers around a joint. The resulting alignment helps to prevent injury, speed recovery from present imbalances, and slowly release emotional charge, resulting in exceptional flexibility, strength, increased energy, and perceptual clarity.

Alignment contributes to joint longevity by creating uniform pressure over the joint, which it turns out has been shown to cultivate spinal decompression for better organ function and subtle energy flows.

The intensity of the practice cultivates the focus and the mental fire to be stronger inside than the outside circumstances. As energetic and emotional blockages naturally ease, one becomes more alive, melting into Life in the expanded, timeless, present moment.

This process has been developed by use of both traditional and non-traditional techniques, viewed from the insights of physics, using systematic analysis of thousands of students, athletes and others with severe injuries etc over more than forty years under the guidance of many great masters and exceptional practitioners of Ayurveda, Chinese traditional medicine, and with modern medical insights and research.

Robert Boustany

Why is Pralaya important?

- I. It respects the ancient philosophical principles of yoga. Exporting yoga to our western world needs to be done with the consideration of the differences in our lives (climate, food, habits, environment, and props such as the yoga mats we use). In order to keep the traditional benefits of yoga, we need to adapt the yoga we do. Pralaya does that.
- II. It is respectful of the body. It is injury focused. Pralaya is a holistic approach with a very specific focus on asanas to help us onto the path of yoga.
- III. It helps increase the flow of energy through the entire body
- IV. It prepares us to learn to trust and find moksha.

Why is it a yoga practice?

It is all based on getting into a meditative state. And to do so, it looks at releasing the tensions in the body

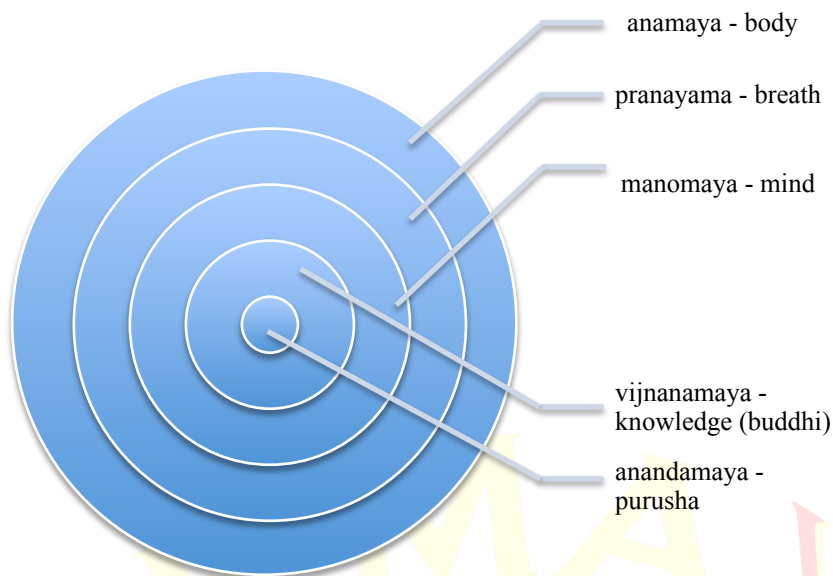
Why is Pralaya different?

The basic Pralaya principles we apply in our postures help us reach a state of stillness between breath, mind and body where we can experience the essence of yoga. Pralaya is an extremely powerful practice that takes us to the origins of yoga.

The Pralaya practice integrates all aspects of yoga from the moment one begins practicing "yoga". Yoga is a process that evolves throughout the different phases of life. Each one of us has different purposes, different duties towards society. We practice yoga with respect to the duties we have to accomplish. At each stage we can go deeper into the yoga. Pralaya prepares us from the start by preparing the body, breath and mind together towards the goal of yoga. Ultimately in a very modest way (we will not all be able to achieve higher levels of yoga in our lives) Pralaya's objective is to release tensions from the body / mind / breath so we can have a better experience of life, a better harmony of our Self with our Dharma and environment.

**In the Upanishads the human being is made up of five layers:*

1 st layer:	annamaya kosha	food – body	asana
2 nd layer:	pranayama kosha	prana – breath	pranayama
3 rd layer:	manomaya Kosha	mind	meditation
4 th layer:	vijnanamaya kosha	intelligence – buddhi	
5 th layer:	anandamaya kosha	consciousness – Purusha	



The first layer : the body is an important start on our path to yoga. Releasing the “gross” tensions in the body has to be done with respect. Pralaya approaches asanas in a very specific way and to illustrate this we can look at the more basic concept of flexibility.

"I am not stretching a muscle, I am strengthening the muscle which opposes the one I want to release. It's a totally different approach. Instead of working on stretch, I work on strength to create flexibility .

In any pose, when you start stretching an area, the weakest area is what you feel first. You say: But it is tight. So why is it tight? A weak muscle always wants to be tight so it doesn't tear!

With Pralaya Yoga you will improve very quickly without any injuries. Then you can do all the other yogas you want..."

Robert Boustany

Pralaya Principles:

A) Keeping the frontline long: decompressing the spine, making room for our organs

The first principle in Pralaya yoga is to keep the frontline long. In doing so, we keep the natural curves of the back and create an axial extension of the spine. More specifically, when looking at the lumbar vertebrae we observe that they are slightly thicker in the front than in the back. Keeping the frontline long respects the natural curve of the lumbar spine. Tightening the abdomen or tucking the tailbone under shortens the abdomen. This will create compression on the lumbar, possibly creating multiple issues. For example, when the abdomen is tight, there is pressure on the front of the vertebrae creating imbalance and wear on the discs. With the imbalance, inflammation is felt, and eventually a disc could bulge out on the other side where the nerves are. This creates pain and can evolve to a herniated disc. Keeping the frontline long, helps prevent this cycle of degeneration of the discs and all other potential issues.

This principle is applied at all times. For example, in a forward bend the frontline has to be long. The rib cage rests on thighs, feet move apart, knees press apart, and the front lengthens.

The other part of keeping the frontline long is expanding upper chest. When sides of the rib cage expand there is a feeling of lightness in the spine. In fact, this is a way to bring us to the second layer: breath. The space in the spine is guided by breath which triggers all the "postural" muscles that hold the spine long. Expanding upper chest relieves all stress and tension from the spine and it becomes possible to experience the flow of breath through the 3 basic areas of the torso: from the pelvic floor to the start of the floating ribs (lower abdominal), from the floating ribs to the start of the sternum (mix : upper abdominal from the front and thoracic from the back), and from the bottom of the sternum to the clavicle (thoracic).

Another benefit is that we create space for our organs to function better.

Note: *We are looking at a spinal extension. Lengthening the front does not mean that we accentuate the lumbar curve and tighten the back. We want to get longer in the front but we do not want to be tightening the back. We want to lengthen the front until everything balances and we do not need to grip the back. This frees the pathway for prana.*

“Every time you tighten your neck, you weaken your arms.

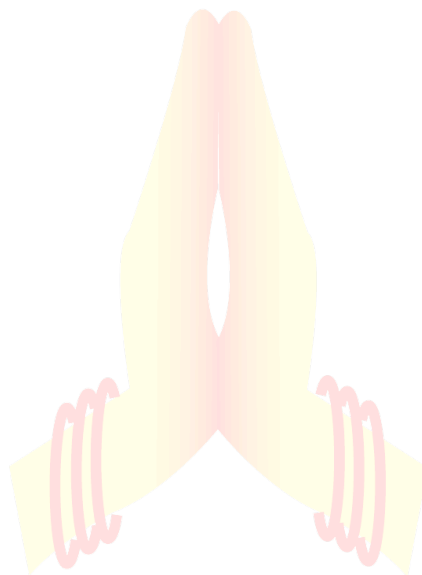
Every time you tighten your back, you weaken your legs.

Every time you put your body in a position where there’s muscular effort along your spine, you weaken everything including your organs.

You do yoga poses to keep the spine decompressed. That’s the point. It increases strength, flexibility and energy.” Robert Boustany

So what is core strength? Core strength is what makes the spine longer.

It seems obvious that as a second benefit of keeping the frontline long, we also create space so our organs can function better.



B) Strengthening the outer line of the body: keeping uniform pressure over a joint

Many injuries come from the collapse of one's posture. The collapsing means that the body internally rotates, bringing shoulders and knees inward, back rounding so the head comes forward and down, all contributing to joint injuries, organ malfunctioning and of course decrease in energy and confidence. By strengthening the outer line of the body we help reduce the risk of injuries around joints and we increase the flow of prana.

When there is uniform pressure over the joint, the cartilage that smooths and cushions the movements of the joint will last a long time. Misalignment creates non-uniform wear of the cartilage. This will create discomfort and pain, resulting even into osteoarthritis.

Alignment occurs when uniform pressure is created over the joint's surface. It is fundamental to prevent injuries.

“Alignment of joints is fundamental to avoid injuries, and is defined in Pralaya Yoga as creating uniform pressure over a joint.” Robert Boustanu

C) Finding the right balance between our muscles

Everything is balance. To build strength and flexibility we need to balance opposing muscles. We need to understand that there is some particular relativity and feel at a given point that we are in the optimal posture (that is the posture where the energy can flow more freely because the alignment is best and the muscles are not tense). Before getting to that optimal place, we need to adjust the muscles to hold the pose. In the course of one posture we are adjusting constantly. We never want to tolerate pain. We tweak and we keep the energy moving. When we start feeling the posture fail in a certain way after being in it for a while, then we discover our weakest link. With Pralaya we always look for the weakest link, because it is the one we want to focus on, it is the one we need to work.

Stretch defined: *Stretch means you are moving in a direction to tear a muscle. It is neither good nor bad in itself, but given a choice between stretching a strong or tight muscle and strengthening a weak muscle fiber, Pralaya yoga chooses to strengthen the weakest fibers to balance a joint, and this neurologically causes a release of the tighter side, so stretch can be effective. It also uses less energy overall in progressing to the limits of physical expression. Stretching a hamstring will strengthen the hamstring, and never strengthen the quadriceps, whose strength is needed to cause a neurological release in the hamstring as we bend forward.* Robert Boustany

"I've found that with every injury, there is weakness of the muscle fiber. Everybody has the same weak muscle fiber, some are just weaker than others. They are the ones with injuries.

To correct or prevent injury, you need to strengthen that muscle fiber.

So what I teach is how to strengthen your weakest muscles so you never have to have the pain or problem that comes from weak muscle fiber."

D) Letting go

Finally, once we start applying the Pralaya principles to our asana practice we progress quickly bringing a greater awareness to our body, our movement, our strength. We feel more grounded, more confident and are ready to let go and trust.

When we practice asanas, what we want is the feeling of the pose, not the pose. Everything is working towards a given tune. That feeling occurs when there is no stress on the joints. And the most important joint is the spine. When there is uniform pressure on the spine the nerve channels stay decompressed and the energy and strength that can flow to the limbs increases. The front of the torso should always be relaxed and lengthened, this always results in the activation of the hips, shoulders, the lower and upper limbs. These should be energized and strong when practicing poses, while the spine should be long, balanced and used to a minimal degree, along with the muscles which run parallel to the spine. When we find balance, grounding and strength in our body, then the mind can finally be calm and quiet.

The mind's purpose is to look for what it does not have, to want more and find excuses. In many ways, the mind will always look to do the least possible effort, and it will distract us by focusing on worries and concerns outside of its control. In doing that we waste a tremendous amount of energy, we are distracted and take precious time from our lives in the interest of fears. Rather than following the mind, and missing the experience of our life, we can develop confidence and patience, and trust that a "greater good" is leading us where we need to go.

We need to quiet the mind so we can go into a meditative state where there is no distraction. That's what we look for.