

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms

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Advaita ("Non-duality"): The teaching that there is only one reality (Atman, Brahman), especially as found in the Upanishads; see also Vedanta

Ahimsa ("Non-harming"): Non-violence to self or others in thought or action

Ananda ("Bliss"): The condition of divine joy, which is an essential quality of the ultimate reality

Anga ("Limb"): A fundamental category of the Yogic path, such as the eight limbs of Ashtanga—asana, dharana, dhyana, niyama, pranayama, pratyahara, samadhi, yama

Angustha: Big toe

Asana ("Seat"): A physical posture originally meaning only meditation posture, but subsequently, in Hatha Yoga, this aspect of the Yogic path was greatly developed

Ardha ("Half"): Used often in descriptions of asana; "Ardha Chandrasana" or half-moon posture

Atman ("Self"): The transcendental Self, or Spirit, which is eternal—our true nature or identity

Avidya ("Ignorance"): The root cause of suffering (Duhkha)

Ayurveda ("Life knowledge"): One of India's traditional systems of medicine

Baddha: Caught; Restrained; Bound

Bakasana: Crow posture

Balasana: Child's pose

Bhakti ("Devotion"): The love of the Divine or the Guru as a manifestation of the Divine

Bhakti Yoga ("Yoga of devotion"): A major branch of the yoga tradition, using emotions to connect with the ultimate reality

Bhujangasana: Serpent posture

Brahmacharya: (From brahma and acharya—"brahmic conduct"): The discipline of self-restraint, pertaining to sexual conduct

Brahman: ("That which has grown expansive"): The ultimate reality

Chakra: ("Wheel"): A psycho-energetic center of the subtle body

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Chaturanga Dandasana: Four-limbed staff posture

Cit: ("Consciousness"): The super-conscious ultimate reality

Citta: ("That which is conscious"): Ordinary consciousness, the mind, as opposed to cit

Danda: ("Staff")

Dandasana: Staff posture

Drishti: ("View/Sight"): A point of gaze such as at the tip of the nose or the spot between the eyebrows

Gayatri-mantra: A famous Vedic mantra, one of the oldest in the yoga tradition

Guna ("Quality"): Refers to any of the three primary "qualities" or constituents of nature – tamas (the principle of inertia), rajas (the dynamic principle), and sattva (the principle of lucidity)

Hasta: Hand

Hatha Yoga ("Forceful yoga"): A major branch of yoga emphasizing the physical aspects of the path, notably postures (asana) and cleansing techniques (shodhana), but also breath control (Pranayama). Hatha refers to the relationship of opposites

Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika ("Light on Hatha Yoga"): One of the classical manuals on Hatha Yoga

Janu: Knee

Jivan-mukti ("Living liberation"): The state of liberation while being embodied

Jnana ("Knowledge/Wisdom"): Both worldly knowledge and world-transcending wisdom

Kali: A goddess embodying the fiery aspect of the Divine

Kali-yuga: The dark age of spiritual and moral decline, said to be current now. An age where light is needed desperately

Karma ("Action"): Activity of any kind

Karma Yoga ("Yoga of action"): The liberating path of self-transcending action

Karna: ear

Kona ("Angle"): As in Baddha Konasana (bound angle pose)

Kosha ("Casing"): Any one of five "envelopes" surrounding the transcendental Self

Kumbhaka ("Pot-like"): Breath retention during Pranayama

Kundalini-shakti ("Coiled power"): The serpent power or spiritual energy, which exists at the lowest energetic center of the body which must be awakened and guided to the center at the crown to awaken fully

Kundalini Yoga: The yogic path focusing on the kundalini energy as a means of liberation

Mantra: A sacred sound or phrase, such as om or om namah shivaya, that has a transformative effect

Mantra Yoga: The yogic path utilizing mantras as the primary means of practice

Matsyendra ("Lord of Fishes"): An early Tantric master—the seated twist is named after him

Maya ("She who measures"): The illusory manifestation of Consciousness

Muhka: face

Nada ("Sound"): The inner sound, as it can be heard through the practice of Nada Yoga by closing the flaps of the ears

Nadi ("Conduit"): one of 72,000 subtle channels along which the life force (prana) circulates, of which the three most important ones are the ida-nadi, pingala-nadi, and sushumna-nadi

Nadi Shodhana ("Channel cleansing"): The practice of purifying the conduits, especially by means of breath control, which moves the body's subtle energies (Pranayama)

Namaskara: Greeting or salutation

Nava: Boat

Niyama ("Self-restraint"): The second limb of Patanjali's Eightfold Path, which consists of purity (saucha), contentment (santosha), austerity (tapas), study (svadhyaya), and dedication to the Lord (ishvara-pranidhana)

Om: The original mantra symbolizing the ultimate reality

Pachima: West

Pada: Foot

Padma: Lotus

Patanjali: Compiler of the *Yoga Sutras*

Prana ("Life/Breath"): The life force sustaining the body

Pranayama (From prana and ayama): The practice of movement of prana by the use of the breath

Pratyahara ("Withdrawal"): Sensory inhibition, the fifth limb (anga) of Patanjali's Eightfold Path

Parsva: Side

Parivrtta: Twisted or revolved

Prasarita: Spread out

Purusha: The transcendental Self (atman) or Spirit

Raja: King

Sadhana ("Accomplishing"): Spiritual discipline leading to siddhi ("perfection" or "accomplishment"); The term is specifically used in Tantra

Samadhi ("Putting together"): The state in which the meditator becomes one with the object of meditation, the eighth limb (anga) of Patanjali's Eightfold Path

Samsara: The inconstant world of change, as opposed to the ultimate reality

Samskara: The subconscious impression left behind by each act of volition; akin to a predisposition for certain behaviors which results in Karma

Sarvangasana: Shoulder-stand posture

Sat ("Being/Reality/Truth"): The ultimate Consciousness

Satya ("Truth/Truthfulness"): Truth, A designation of the ultimate Reality; Also the practice of truthfulness, which is an aspect of moral discipline (yama)

Shakti ("Power"): The ultimate Reality in its feminine, creative aspect

Shakti-pata ("Descent of power"): The process of initiation by means of the transmission of shakti by an advanced or even enlightened adept (siddha)

Shankara: The eighth-century adept who was the greatest proponent of non-dualism (Advaita Vedanta)

Sirsasana: Headstand

Shiva ("He who is benign"): The Divine, The unmanifested energy

Shiva-Sutra ("Shiva's Aphorisms"): Like the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, a classical work on yoga, as taught in the Shaivism of Kashmir; Authored by Vasugupta (ninth century C.E.)

Shodhana ("Cleansing/Purification"): A category of purification practices in Hatha Yoga

Shraddha ("Faith"): A pure and constant state of faith

Siddha ("Accomplished"): A Tantric adept

Siddha Yoga: A designation applied especially to the yoga of Kashmiri Shaivism, as taught by Swami Muktananda

Spanda ("vibration"): Kashmir's Shaivism's understanding that ultimate Reality itself "vibrates"; a non-sequential pulse of creation

Supta: Sleeping, lying down

Surya: Sun

Sushumna-nadi: The central prana current in or along which the serpent power (kundalini- shakti) must ascend toward the crown chakra

Sutra ("thread"): A short verse; A work consisting of aphoristic statements, such as Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* or Vasugupta's *Shiva-Sutra*

Svana: ("Dog")

Tantra ("Loom" or "To weave"): Sanskrit work containing Tantric teachings; the trition of Tantrism, in which the human body is seen as a condensation of the Supreme

Tapas ("Glow/Heat"): Austerity, A purifying heat of discipline

Tattva ("Thatness"): A fact or reality; A particular category of existence; The manner in which universal consciousness has stepped itself down in vibration to create the physical world—the "Tattvas"

Tri: Three

Upanishad ("Sitting near"): A type of scripture representing revealed wisdom

Upavistha: Seated

Urdhva: Upward

Utthita: Extended

Vairagya: ("Dispassion")

Vasistasana: Side arm balance