

GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS

Advaita	Non-dualism. The theory that the apparently individual soul is none other than the supreme Self and Brahman, its individuality an illusion.
Ānanda	Bliss. Perfect delight in the Spirit.
Ajapa-japa	Concentration upon the natural sound of the breath which continually repeats the Mantrā "Soham."
Arjuna	In the Bhagavad Gītā, Arjuna is the representative man of his age, the human companion and closest friend of the avatar, Lord Krishṇa, and His protagonist.
Āsana	Fixed posture; a comfortable and steady posture. In Haṭha Yoga, Āsanas are used as a means to prevent and cure disease, to restore flexibility to the spine, and to influence the endocrine system, toning it up. The Āsanas also bring about better circulation and strengthening of the muscles and nerves.
Ashram	A spiritual home for aspirants. Often associated with a central teacher or guru. For beginners, or even for those many years upon the Path, the ashram life is a tremendous aid to the rapid development of spiritual life without the numerous obstacles of living amongst people of a more worldly outlook.
Ātman	Self or Spirit; the Self beyond and outside us. An essential entity or consciousness, it remains above, pure and stainless, unaffected by the stains of life, by desire, ego, and ignorance. It is realized as the True Being of the individual, but also more widely as the same Being in all and as the Self or the cosmos. Atman, or true Self, is Brahman; it is pure indivisible Being, self-luminous, self-delighted. Its existence is light and bliss. It is timeless, spaceless, and free.
Avatār	The Divine manifest in a human appearance; the Incarnation; the Divine Human.
Bhagavad Gītā	The Song Celestial, being the spiritual teachings of Sri Krishṇa to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, given as an episode in the great Indian epic, the Mahābharāta.
Brahmān	The Absolute, omnipresent Reality, the everlasting, spirit-substance, the Eternal, Lord, Self, pure Existence; he is the One without a second; he is All; the One besides whom there is nothing else existent; the one universal and essential fact.
Dhāraṇā	Concentration. The process of fixing the mind on one point.
Dhyāna	Meditation. The steady flow of thought upon one object. Dhyāna is often compared to a thread of oil being poured from one vessel to another, without any break of the train of thought.
Guṇa	Quality; one of the three qualities of Nature (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas); essential attributes.

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Guru	Spiritual guide or teacher. The guru may sometimes be the Incarnation or the world teacher; but it is sufficient that s/he should represent to the disciple the divine wisdom, convey something of the divine ideal. Teaching, example, influence: these are the three instruments of the guru.
Japa	Repetition; the practice of constant repetition of a divine name; a very powerful technique for entering into meditation.
Jīva	The individual soul. Not the mental ego-sense constructed by the workings of Nature for her temporary purpose. The jiva is a spirit and self, superior to Nature. A living reflection or a self-creation of the spirit universal and transcendent. The One Spirit is multiple in the jiva.
Jīvanmukti	Liberated while still in the body. One who is aware of his eternal nature before the hour of physical death.
Jñāna	Knowledge; not intellectual theory but real inner wisdom.
Jñāni	One who knows.
Karma	Action; work; action entailing its consequences; the resultant force of action done in the past, especially in past lives; an eternal action or energy of successive becoming. It is only a machinery; it is not the fundamental cause of existence. It cannot be, for when the soul first entered this existence, it had no Karma.
Kīrtan	A chanting session; a gathering for the purpose of chanting the names of God. Sometimes to the accompaniment of musical instruments.
Krishṇa	In Hindu mythology, the avatar of Lord Hari, or Viśṇu; most widely known as the symbol of the all-blissful, all-beautiful figure in the Bhagavad Gītā.
Mālā	A string of beads (usually 108) with a mount bead called a Meru. It's a physical aid to concentration.
Mantrā	Mystic sounds representing a particular aspect of the divine vibration that were revealed to sages in deep meditation; used by spiritual seekers as an object for meditation.
Mokṣa	Liberation; the final reunion with the One.
Nirvakalpa	The Samādhi in which all thoughts are obliterated, leaving only the light of consciousness. Literally: without seed. The seed is a thought in this connection; one thought upon which is placed total and unrelenting concentration of all the mind's energies. When even this seed is left behind, the state of Nirvakalpa Samādhi ensues.
Niyama	Observances. The second step on the ladder of Rāja Yoga, it is a necessary part of the ethical and moral development which corresponds to the training of the mind in concentration. Aids to meditation.
OM	The Cosmic Syllable. All word and thought are an out-flowing of the

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great OM. OM, the Word, the Eternal. OM is the sovereign source, seed, womb of thing and idea, and name; it is itself, integrally, the supreme Intangible, the original Unity, the timeless Mystery, self-existent above all manifestation in the world of nature.

Pratyāhāra	The withdrawal of the senses from the sense objects. Deliberate absence of curiosity, imposed as a mood of the mind in preparation for a period of practice of concentration and meditation. When practicing, deliberately instruct both mind and senses to ignore outside interests, confident in the complete obedience of the senses.
Puja	Formal worship service, done to one's chosen deity to help center and focus the mind and purify the heart.
Rāma	Another avatar of Lord Viśṇu. The central figure in the heroic epic, the Ramayana. Adored as the Ideal Man.
Rishikesh	A small town on the banks of the Ganges at the headwaters in the Himalayas. For centuries, the abode of saints and sages, and the dwelling place of Swami Sivananda.
Sahāja Samādhi	The natural state wherein Samādhi is functioning at all times in any action. One retains awareness of the Peace within while interacting in the world.
Samādhi	The state of absorption or super-consciousness. There are different types of Samādhi, but basically they fit into two groups: those with seed or support (savikalpa), and those without seed (nirvakalpa).
Saṃskāras	Latent thought-impressions, stored in the subconscious mind. Seed-thoughts which are wiped out totally during Nirvakalpa Samādhi. Samskaras return to our conscious perception when either memory, sense perception, or the motion of the mind draws them to the surface. We then are either drawn to it (pleasure), or away (pain), and follow up with action creating new, fresh samskaras, which become latent in the subconsciousness.
Sat-Chid-Ananda	Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute; the Nature of Brahman, or the One. Not to be thought of as three separate qualities, as each contains the other two. Upon discovering his own true nature the sages rejoice "I am Satchidānanda!"
Satsang	The gathering together of people in the name of Truth; often the satsang involves listening to a Realized Being.
Sattva	One of the three gunas, or qualities. The mode of goodness, or purity: light, calmness, serenity. The manner of a true Yogi, as he has transmuted Tamas and Rajas into Sattva, and, though even transcending Sattva, he remains in the Sattvic mode when upon the dualistic level.
Self	The Reality; not the ego-idea. The underlying life which causes all change,

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yet remains unaffected by the change. This is Full, and That is Full. This Fullness has been projected from That Fullness, all that remains is Fullness. This Fullness is the individual self, and That Fullness is the Self. The Self is not born; it does not die. Only the physical body dies.

Self Realization

When a person becomes aware of his own nature, of his immortal Self, it is said that he is Self-realized. This may or may not involve giving up the physical body; it is the choice of the Realized One.

Śānti

the great Peace of the Self.

Śiva

A form of God in the Hindu Pantheon. He is pictured as being both the static and dynamic principles of the universe and is, therefore, worshiped as the All. He is also the patron God of the Yogi, as He is constantly absorbed in Samādhi.

Swami

One who has taken the vow of Sannyas, or monkhood. Often, but not necessarily, a being of spiritual insight or power.

Tamas

The quality of darkness in nature: the unmoving quality. In people it manifests as laziness or stubbornness.

Tratak

Steady gazing on an external object or on parts of one's body (usually the tip of the nose or the space between the eyebrows). Develops concentration and helps improve eyesight.

Vedanta

The philosophy of Oneness; of advaita, or non-dualism.

Yantra

A mystic symbol in the form of a geometric diagram.

Yoga Nidrā

An extended form of deep relaxation.