

Yoga Glossary – Most important yoga vocabulary words

 [Angela Gonzalez](#) [June 4, 2012](#)  [Yoga Guide](#)

Yoga is one of the few practices that can actually have influence your ways in life. Even as a novice in yoga, you will immediately fall in love with the movements and the benefits of the practice. You begin to notice changes in the way you move, what you eat and eventually the words you use. One of the fascinating things about yoga is when you start talking about it. To some yoga enthusiasts, this elegant ancient language adds a certain charm to this time tested practice of yoga. Sanskrit words begin to flow and flourish from teacher to student as most classes today are taught with the use of the Sanskrit terms and their translations.

A large amount of yoga terminology is Sanskrit. Here is a brief introduction on the Sanskrit language so that even as a new student of yoga, you may gain a better appreciation and a general understanding of its place within yoga.

What is Sanskrit?

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hya	jna	ja	ja	ja	na	cha	cha	na	na	na	na

Conjunct Consonants (There are about a thousand conjunct consonants, most of which combine two or three consonants. There are also some with four-consonant conjuncts and at least one well-known conjunct with five consonants.)

Sanskrit is confirmed to be the oldest language known to man.

According to [Discover Yoga Online](#), all other languages started from evolving from it. It is said to be the very origin of language itself.

The classical text of

yoga was written using the Sanskrit language. The Vedanta or the Vedas which are said to be the first spiritual scriptures were also written in Sanskrit. Today, a great number of historical texts that was written in this ancient language even from vast studies of astrology, astronomy, medicine, architecture are still found.

In order deepen your understanding and guide you through your practice, at some point it would be very helpful to learn these commonly used words.

I'll start by saying "Namaste"

"Namaste." According to yoga teacher Aadil Palkhivala of [Yoga Journal](#), literally means "I bow to you."

A

Acarya (sometimes spelled Acharya in English): a preceptor, instructor; guru

Advaita (non-duality): the truth and teaching that there is only one reality

Ahimsa (non-harming): the single most important moral discipline (yama)

Ananda (bliss): the condition of utter joy, which is an essential quality of the ultimate reality

Anga (limb): a fundamental category of the yogic path, such as asana, dharana, dhyana, niyama, pranayama, pratyahara, samadhi, yama;

Ardha (half)

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Asana (seat): a physical posture; the third limb (anga) of Patanjali's eightfold path (astha-anga-yoga); originally this meant only meditation posture

Ashrama (that where effort is made): a hermitage; also a stage of life

Atman (self): the transcendental Spirit, which is eternal and; our true nature or identity

Avidya (ignorance): the root cause of suffering

Ayurveda, Ayur-veda (life science): one of India's traditional systems of medicine

B

Bandha (bond/bondage): the fact that human beings are typically bound by ignorance which causes them to lead a life governed by karmic habit rather than inner freedom generated through wisdom

Bhagavad Gita (Lord's Song): the oldest yoga book found embedded in the Mahabharata Bhakta (devotee): a disciple practicing bhakti yoga

Bhakti (devotion/love): the love of the bhakta toward the Divine

Bhakti Yoga (Yoga of devotion): a major branch of the yoga tradition.

Bindu (seed/point): the creative potency of anything where all energies are focused; the dot (also called tilaka) worn on the forehead as indicative of the third eye

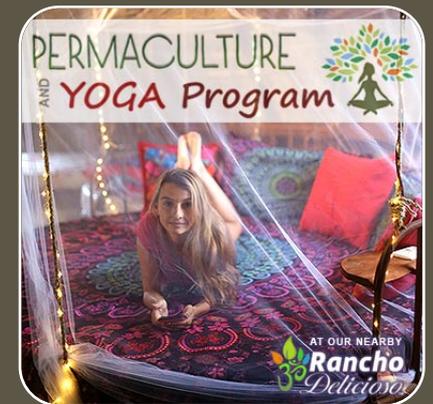
Brahma (Creator): the Creator of the universe

Brahmacharya (from brahma and acarya "brahmic conduct"): the discipline of chastity

Brahman (The Supreme Atman): the ultimate Reality

Brahmana or Brahmin: a member of the highest social class of traditional Indian society

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C

Cakra or Chakra (wheel): literally, the wheel of a wagon.

D

Darshana (seeing): vision in the literal and metaphorical sense; a system of philosophy.

Dharana (holding): practice of concentration, the sixth limb (anga) of Patanjali's eight-limbed yoga

Dhyana (ideating): meditation, the seventh limb (anga) of Patanjali's eight-limbed yoga

Dharma (religious path)

Diksha (initiation): the act and condition of induction into the hidden aspects of yoga or a particular lineage of teachers; all traditional yoga is initiatory

Drishti (view/sight): yogic gazing, such as at the tip of the nose or the spot between the eyebrows

G

Gayatri-mantra: a famous Vedic mantra recited particularly at sunrise:

Guna (quality): a term that has numerous meanings, including "virtue"

Guru (spiritually enlightend soul): a spiritual teacher;

Guru-bhakti (teacher devotion): a disciple's self-transcending devotion to the guru

Guru-Gita (Guru's Song): a text in praise of the guru, often chanted in ashramas

Guru-Yoga (Yoga [relating to] the teacher): a yogic approach that makes the guru the fulcrum of a disciple's practice

H

Hatha Yoga (Forceful Yoga): a major branch of yoga, emphasizing the physical aspects of the transformative path, notably postures (asana) and cleansing techniques (shodhana), but also breath control (pranayama)

Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika (“Light on Hatha Yoga”): one of three classical manuals on hatha yoga, authored by Svatmarama Yogendra in the fourteenth century

I

Ida-nadi (pale conduit): the prana current or arc ascending on the left side of the central channel (sushumna nadi) associated with the parasympathetic nervous system and having a cooling or calming effect on the mind when activated

Ishvara (ruler): the Lord; referring either to the Creator

Ishvara-pranidhana (dedication to the Lord): Devotion to the Lord.

J

Japa (speak softly) the recitation of mantras

Jiva-atman, jivatman (individual self): the individuated consciousness, as opposed to the ultimate Self (parama-atman)

Jnana (knowledge/wisdom): both worldly knowledge or world-transcending wisdom, depending on the context

Jnana-Yoga (Yoga of wisdom): the path to liberation based on wisdom

K

Kaivalya (isolation): the state of absolute freedom from conditioned.K

Kali: a Goddess embodying the fierce (dissolving) aspect of the Divine

Kali-yuga: the dark age of spiritual and moral decline, said to be current now;
kali does not refer to the Goddess Kali but to the losing throw of a die

Kama (desire): the appetite for sensual pleasure blocking the path to true bliss

Kapal(skull):cerebrum

Karman, karma (action): activity of any kind.

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

Karuna (compassion): universal sympathy.

Kosha (casing): any one of five “envelopes” surrounding the (atman)

Kumbhaka: breath retention.

Kundalini-Yoga: the yogic path focusing on the kundalini process as a means of liberation

M

Maha (great)

Maha bandha(the Great lock) combines the three locks in yoga – together with breath retention

Mahabharata (Great Bharata): one of India’s two great ancient epics telling of the great war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas and serving as a repository for many spiritual and moral teachings

Mahatma (from maha-atman, “great self”): an honorific tittle

Manas (mind): the mind, which is bound to the senses and yields information rather than wisdom

Mandala (circle): a circular design symbolizing the cosmos and specific to a deity

Mantra (from the verbal root man “to think”): a sacred sound or phrase.

Mantra-Yoga: the yogic path utilizing mantras as the primary means of liberation

Maya (she who measures): the deluding or illusive power of the world.

Moksha (release): the condition of freedom from ignorance

Mudra (seal): a hand gesture or whole-body gesture

Muni (he who is silent): a sage

N

Nadi (conduit): one of 72,000 or more subtle channels along or through 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 (pranayama)

Nirodha (restriction): in Patanjali’s eight-limbed yoga, the very basis of the process of concentration, meditation, and ecstasy.

Niyama ([self-]restraint): the second limb of Patanjali’s eightfold path

O

Ojas (vitality): the subtle energy produced through practice, especially the discipline of chastity (brahmacharya)

Om: the original mantra symbolizing the ultimate Reality, which is prefixed to many mantric utterances

P

Pada (foot)

Padmasana (lotus pose): a seated meditative posture

Parama-atman or paramatman (supreme self): the transcendental Self

Parama-hansa, paramahansa (supreme swan): an honorific title given to great adepts

Patanjali: compiler of the Yoga Sutra, who lived c. 150 C.E.

Pingala-nadi (reddish conduit): the prana current or arc ascending on the right side of the central channel (sushumna-nadi) and associated with the sympathetic nervous system and having an energizing effect on the mind when activated.

Prana (life/breath): life in general; the life force sustaining the body; the breath as an external manifestation of the subtle life force

Pranayama (from prana and ayama, "life/breath extension"): breath control, the fourth limb (anga) of Patanjali's eightfold path

Prasada (grace/clarity): divine grace; mental clarity

Pratyahara (withdrawal): sensory inhibition, the fifth limb of Patanjali's eightfold path

Puja (worship): ritual worship, which is an important aspect of many forms of yoga.

Puraka : inhalation, an aspect of breath control

Purana (Ancient [History]): a type of popular encyclopedia dealing with royal genealogy, cosmology, philosophy, and ritual; there are eighteen major and many more minor works of this nature

R

Raja-Yoga (Royal Yoga): a late medieval designation of Patanjali's eightfold yoga-darshana, also known as classical yoga

Rama: an incarnation of Krishna; the principal hero of the Ramayana

Ramayana (Rama's life): one of India's two great national epics telling the

story of Rama

Recaka: exhalation, an aspect of breath control

Rishi (seer): a category of Vedic sage; an honorific title of certain venerated masters.

S

Sadhana (accomplishing): spiritual discipline leading to siddhi

Samadhi (putting together): the ecstatic or unitive state in which the meditator becomes one with the object of meditation, the eighth and final limb (anga) of Patanjali's eightfold path;

Samsara (confluence): the finite world of change, as opposed to the ultimate Reality

Samskara (activator): the subconscious impression left behind by each act of volition,

Sat (being/reality/truth): the ultimate Reality

Satya (truth/truthfulness): truth, a designation of the ultimate Reality; also the practice of truthfulness, which is an aspect of moral discipline

Shakti (power): the ultimate Reality in its feminine aspect.

Shishya (student/disciple): the initiated disciple of a guru

Shodhana (cleansing/purification): a fundamental aspect of all yogic paths; a category of purification practices in hatha yoga

Shraddha (faith): an essential disposition on the yogic path

Shuddhi (purification/purity): the state of purity; a synonym of shodhana

Siddhi (accomplishment/perfection): spiritual perfection, the attainment of flawless identity with the ultimate Reality (atman or brahman); paranormal ability, of which the yoga tradition knows many kinds

T

Tapas (heat): austerity, penance, which is an ingredient of all yogic approaches, since they all involve self-transcendence

U

Upanishad (sitting near): a type of scripture representing the concluding portion of the revealed literature of Hinduism



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