

Yoga Glossary

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TERMS	DESCRIPTION
Abhyasa	practice - the act of practicing
Acharya	teacher
Adwaita	a philosophy according to which there is no duality - only a singular state of consciousness
Agni	fire
Agnisar kriya	one of the shatkarmas (cleansing practices) - intestinal cleansing
Aham	ego
Ahimsa	non-violence, non-injury - one of the yamas of ashtanga yoga
Ajapa japa	spontaneous repetition of 'soham' mantra
Ajna chakra	energy center located behind the forehead, also called psychic centre - one of the seven energy centers
Akasha	ether, space
Anahata chakra	energy center located in the heart region; also called pranic centre - fourth of the seven energy centers.
Ananda	bliss, ecstasy
Antar	inner, internal
Antar dhauti	internal yoga cleansing (shatkarma) techniques
Antar kumbhaka	internal breath retention. The stage of pranayama where breath is retained after inhalation.
Antar mouna	internal silence - a meditation practice.
Anubhava	experience, realization
Ardha	half
Ardha dhanurasana	half bow yoga pose
Ardha matsyendrasana	half spinal twist yoga position
Ardha padmasana	half lotus pose
Asana	yoga position or yoga pose, also called yogasana. A balanced position for smooth energy flow in specific areas of the body and mind.
Ashrama	residential place of people living together in yogic tradition.

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Ashtanga yoga

the eight fold path of yoga as outlined by Patanjali:
yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara,
dharana, dhyana, samadhi

Ashwini mudra

practice of contracting the anal sphincter.

Atman

soul.

Aum

see Om

Avidya

Ignorance

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Bahir	outside, external
Bahir kumbhaka	external breath retention. The stage of pranayama where breath is retained after exhalation.
Bahiranga trataka	concentrating the attention (gaze) upon an external object such as a candle flame.
Bandha	a posture in which organs and muscles are contracted to create energy lock in a specific area.
Basti	a colon cleansing technique (shakarma), yogic enema
Bhagvad Gita	a part of the famous Hindu epic 'Mahabharata'. Teachings of Lord Krishna to his disciple Arjuna at the commencement of the battle of Kurukshetra, with explanations on sannyasa yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, and jnana yoga.
Bhakti	devotion
Bhakti yoga	the yoga of devotion.
Bhastrika pranayama	'bellows' breathing technique in which the breath is forcibly drawn in and out through the nose in equal proportions, like the pumping action of the bellows.
Bhramari pranayama	breathing practice in which a soft "humming-bee" sound is produced during exhalation to stimulate the Ajna Chakra
Bhujangasana	cobra' pose.
Brahman	supreme consciousness, absolute reality.

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Chakra	literally meaning circle or wheel, in yoga this refers to the energy centers lying along the confluence of the nadis (energy channels)
Chandra	moon
Chandra nadi	ida nadi
Chidakasha	psychic space in front of the closed eyes, just behind the forehead.
Chin mudra	hand gesture in which the first finger is kept at the root of the thumb, the last three fingers are unfolded.
Danda	stick
Danda dhauti	one of the cleansing techniques (shatkarmas), used to clean the oesophagus with a stick.
Danta dhauti	teeth cleansing technique
Dhanurasana	bow' pose; backward bending yoga pose
Dharana	practice of concentration; sixth of the eight fold path in ashtanga yoga
Dharma	duty, righteous path
Dhauti	second of the shatkarmas; cleansing technique of the eyes, ears, tongue, forehead, oesophagus, stomach, rectum and anus
Dhyana	meditation; single-pointed focus of mind on either a form, thought or sound.
Diksha	initiation given by the guru.
Dosha	three humours of the body; see kapha, pitta, vata
Dugdha neti	nasal irrigation or cleansing technique using milk
Ghrita neti	neti (nasal cleansing technique) performed with ghee
Gomukhasana	cow's face' posture
Gorakshasana	Yogi Gorakhnath's' pose
Guna	quality of nature viz. tamas, rajas, sattwa
Guptasana	the 'secret' pose
Guru	spiritually enlightened soul, who can dispel darkness, ignorance and illusion from the mind and enlighten the consciousness of a devotee/disciple

Hatha yoga	science of yoga which purifies the whole physical body by means of shatkarma, asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha and concentration
Hridaya akasha	psychic space of the heart centre
Ida nadi	one of the main energy channels running on the left side of the spine from the mooladhara (base) chakra to the ajna chakra in the head.
Jala	water
Jala basti	the yoga technique of enema using water - one of the yoga shatkarma
Jala neti	a shatkarma technique - cleansing of the nasal passages with water by alternating the flow of water in the nostrils, preferably using a neti pot.
Jalandhara bandha	'throat lock' to restrict the flow of breath through the throat - done by resting the chin on the upper sternum (chest).
Japa	continuous chanting i.e repetition of a mantra
Jihva dhauti	one of the shatkarma techniques for cleansing the tongue.
Jnana	knowledge, understanding, wisdom
Jnana mudra	the gesture of knowledge - in this the index finger is bent so that its tip is joined with the tip of the thumb, the other three fingers are spread out.
Jnana yoga	the yoga of knowledge - attained through spontaneous self-analysis and investigation of abstract and speculative ideas.

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Kapal	skull or cerebrum
Kapalbhati pranayama	a breathing technique aimed at cleaning the frontal part of the brain; also called skull polishing - done through rapid breaths with more force on exhalation.
Karma	action; the act of doing
Karma yoga	the yoga of action - aims at supreme consciousness through action; discussed in Bhagavad Gita
Karna dhauti	one of the shatkarma which involves cleansing the ears.
Kati chakrasana	waist rotating' pose.
Kevala kumbhaka	spontaneous cessation of breath without any conscious effort.
Klesha	afflictions or tensions - according to yoga there are 5 such afflictions present in humans from birth
Koormasana	tortoise' pose - an advanced posture.
Kosha	sheath or body; realm of experience and existence.
Kriya	activity, dynamic yogic practice
Kriya yoga	the practice of kundalini yoga
Kukkutasana	cockerel' pose
Kumbhaka	breath retention
Kundalini	man's retained energy or potential energy and consciousness
Kundalini shakti	refers to the human's potential energy lying dormant in mooladhara (base) chakra like a coiled serpent. When awakened it rises up through the sushumna nadi.
Kundalini yoga	philosophy expounding the awakening of potential energy and inherent consciousness within the human body and mind.
Kunjal kriya	a shatkarma (cleansing) technique that involves the cleansing of the stomach by drinking in water and then expelling it by inducing vomiting.
Laghoo shankhprakashana	a shatkarma technique - also referred as the short intestinal wash. Involves the drinking of several glasses of water and the expelling it through stool after a series of exercises (asanas); in the process a thorough cleansing of the colon takes place.
Laya yoga	union with the supreme consciousness through pranayama or devotion. Literally, union by absorption

Maha	great
Maha bandha	the great lock - combines the three locks in yoga - the moola bandha, jalandhara bandha and uddiyana bandha - together with breath retention.
Maha mudra	the great gesture - combines the practice of moola bandha, shambhavi and khechari mudras simultaneously.
Maha nadi	literally means 'great nadi', which is the 'sushumna' in yoga
Makara	crocodile
Makarasana	crocodile' pose
Manas chakra	the energy center above the ajna chakra - is depicted with six petals
Manipura chakra	the energy centre in the spinal column located behind the navel - corresponding to the solar plexus.
Mantra	subtle sound vibration, which through repetition aims at expanding one's awareness or consciousness.
Mantra shakti	the power of mantra
Matsyendrasana	a spine twisting pose
Mayur	peacock
Mayurasana	peacock' pose - advanced pose aims at strengthening the arms and stimulating the manipura chakra.
Moksha	liberation from the cycle of birth and death.
Moola	root
Moola bandha	energy lock created by the contraction of the perineum in the male and the cervix in the female.
Mooladhara chakra	lowest energy centre in the human body where the kundalini shakti (serpent power) resides - situated in the perineal floor in men and the cervix in women.
Moorchha pranayama	fainting or swooning breath' in which the breath is inhaled slowly and retained for an extended period.
Mouna	silence - the practice of silence
Mudra	literally means 'gesture' - mudra expresses and channelizes cosmic energy within the mind and body.

Nadi	energy channels in the body, similar to the meridians in acupuncture
Nadi shodhana pranayama	breathing technique - is the 'alternate nostril breathing' or 'balanced breathing' - balances the energy flow in the channels and purifies the energy channels (nadi) by balancing the flow of breath through the right and left nostrils.
Nasagra/nasikagra mudra	hand gesture adopted during pranayama to alternate the flow of breath through the nostrils.
Nauli	abdominal massage' - a cleansing technique (shatkarma) involving the contraction of the rectus abdominal muscles.
Neti kriya	another shatkarma (cleansing technique) - involves cleaning of the nasal passages or sinus irrigation; jala neti forms a part of the various neti kriyas.
Nidra	sleep
Niyama	rule; there are 5 rules described in the Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali.
Om	the universal mantra; cosmic vibration of the universe; represents the four states of consciousness

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Pada	foot; section of a literary work
Padmasana	lotus pose - a seated meditative posture
Pancha makara	the five tantric practices : mansa(meat), madhya(wine), matsya(fish), mudra(grain), and maithuna(sexual intercourse)
Pancha tattwa	the five elements - earth, water, fire, air and ether
Param	highest, supreme, God
Paramatma	the supreme atma; God
Parichaya avastha	stage of perception of nada
Paschimottanasana	back stretching pose
Patanjali	author of the Yoga Sutras and preacher of the eight-fold (ashtanga) yoga
Payaswini nadi	energy channel terminating at the right big toe, between poosha and pingala channels
Pingala nadi	one of the main energy channels running on the right side of the spine from the mooladhara (base) chakra to the ajna chakra in the head by intersecting various chakras on the way.
Plavini pranayama	breathing technique which involves gulping air and swallowing it into the stomach and retaining it
Poornima	full moon night
Prakamya	fulfillment of desire
Prakasha	inner light
Prakriti	nature
Pramana	proof
Prana	vital energy force sustaining life and creation
Pranayama	technique of breathing and breath control which regulates energy flow and aims at maintaining energy balance
Prasad	an offering usually food to and from the guru or higher power
Pratyahara	sense withdrawal; first stage of concentrating on the mind during meditation
Pravritti	nature of the mind
Prithvi tattwa	the earth element
Purana	eighteen ancient books consisting of legends and mythological narrations dealing with creation, recreation and the genealogies of sages and rulers
Purusha	man; pure consciousness
Purushartha	purpose of the consciousness, of man's existence- the four basic needs or desires, arth, kaama, dharma, moksha

Raja yoga	yoga in which union is achieved through concentration of mind
Rakta bindu	red bindu, same as beeja(seed) bindu, shakti bindu; the potentially creative bindu from which creation springs; often refers to the ovum.
Rechaka	exhalation
Rudra	Lord Shiva ; Rudra is said to have sprung from Brahma's forehead and is one of the holy trinity
Sahasrara chakra	highest energy centre located at the crown of the head
Sakshi	witness
Samadhi	the final stage of ashtanga yoga in which concentration becomes one with the object of concentration; supreme union.
Samskara	impressions stored in the mind that form the basis of our beliefs, attitudes and personality.
Sankalpa	spiritual resolve.
Sannyasi	one who has renounced the world in seek of self-realization.
Santosha	contentment
Saraswati	Goddess who bestows knowledge of fine arts and power of speech
Sarvangasana	shoulderstand - an inverted posture
Sat	truth
Satguru	guru who has attained self-realization
Sattwa guna	quality unwavering purity
Satya	truth-one of the yamas
Seetkari pranayama	Breathing technique, which involves hissing leading to a cooling effect upon the whole body.
Shabda Brahman	cosmic causal state.
Shakti	vital force; energy
Shambhavi mudra	a yoga gesture in which one focusses at the mid-eyebrow centre
Shashankasana	moon pose
Shatkarma	the six yogic techniques of purification of the body, viz. neti, dhauti, nauli, basti, tratata, kapalbhati
Sheetali pranayama	'cooling breath' - a pranayama technique that lowers the body temperature by inhaling through the mouth while letting the breath flow in over the tongue.
Shishya	disciple; student
Siddha yoni asana	the female counterpart of the siddhasana meditative posture, in which the left heel presses the entrance to the vagina

Sirshasana	inverted pose - the 'headstand' in which the body is inverted and balanced on the crown of the head
Soham	represents a mantra in meditation; literally means, 'I am That'. Represents the Psychic sound with the sound 'so' during inhalation and 'ham' during exhalation.
Soma chakra	sixteen petalled chakra situated above ajna and manas chakras
Sukhasana	a comfortable meditative pose; also called the 'easy pose' or simply the cross-legged pose.
Surya bheda pranayama	breathing technique in which inhalation is done through the right nostril ; increases vitality
Surya nadi	see 'pingala nadi'
Sushumna nadi	main energy channel in yoga, in the centre of the spinal cord through which kundalini shakti flows.
Sutra neti	yogic technique to cleanse the nasal passage using a special thread
Swadhisthana chakra	second chakra in the spinal column, above the mooladhara.
Swastikasana	auspicious pose -meditative posture similar to siddhasana

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Tadasana	palm tree pose- standing posture
Tamas	the quality of inertia, laziness, procrastination.
Tiryaka bhujangasana	twisting cobra pose
Tiryaka tadasana	swaying palm tree pose
Trataka	one of the cleansing techniques (shatkarma) in which the gaze is focussed upon an object such as a candle flame.
Uddiyana bandha	abdominal retraction lock'; drawing in of the abdomen towards the backbone after exhaling
Ujjayi pranayama	a kind of breathing technique which produces a light sonorous sound.
Utkatasana	squatting position
Uttankoomasana	Tortoise pose
Vajrasana	the 'thunderbolt' pose; a kneeling posture with buttocks resting upon the heels.
Vama swara	flow of breath in the left nostril
Vaman dhauti	yogic technique to cleanse the stomach by voluntary vomiting. There are two types: kunjaj kriya (regurgitating of water) and vyaghra (regurgitating of food)
Varisara dhauti	yogic cleansing technique in which a large quantity of water is drunk in conjunction with asanas to cleanse the entire digestive tract; also known as shankhaprakshalana.
Yamuna river	emanating from Yamnotri in the Himalayas and joining Ganga near Allahabd, North India refers to pingala nadi in the pranic body.
Yoga	state of union between two opposites - body and mind; individual and universal consciousness; a process of uniting the opposing forces in the body and mind in order to achieve supreme awareness and enlightenment.
Yoga abhyasa	practice of yoga.
Yoga nidra	a deep relaxation technique also called 'yogic sleep' in which mind and body is at complete rest but with complete awareness.