

# USEFUL TERMS FROM THE YOGA SŪTRAS COURSE

## Abhyāsa

Regular practice.

## Adhyātma

In relation to the ātman or to personal identity.

## Advaita

The philosophical idea of absolute unity between the world, individual living beings, and Brahman, the absolute reality.

## Advaita Vedānta

The particular schools of Indian thought based primarily on the teachings of Śaṅkarācārya who sought to show that the Upaniṣads and Bhagavad-gītā reveal the truth of advaita.

## Āgama

Literally that which has come down; inherited wisdom or sacred texts.

## Ahaṁkāra

That part of the mind that creates a sense of selfhood in relation to the present embodied identity. The word also means pride, arrogance, and egotism.

## Ahiṁsā

Not harming; acting to relieve others from suffering.

## Ānanda

Joy, usually the joy of spiritual awakening.

## Anātman

The Buddhist doctrine that denies the existence of the spiritual ātman.

## Anumāna

Knowledge based on inference derived from previous perceptions.

## Anuśāsana

Teaching or instruction.

## Aparigraha

Not grasping; removing hankering for material acquisitions.

## Asaṁprajñāta

The state of meditation or samādhi in which the mind transcends the object of meditation and has no specific object.

## Āsana

A seat or sitting posture. One of the eight limbs of Yoga.

## Aṣṭāṅga

The eight limbs (aṣṭa aṅga) or stages of Yoga practice, as taught by Patañjali.

## Asmitā

Egotism, self-centredness.

## Ātman

The true spiritual self. An equivalent term for puruṣa.





**Avidyā**

Ignorance, lack of knowledge, usually in relation to the true spiritual identity.

**Avyakta**

Literally invisible or non-manifest. A term used for prakṛti in its primal unitary state before it evolves into the variegated world.

**Bhagavad-gītā**

A passage of the Mahābhārata in which Kṛṣṇa gives instruction on a range of spiritual ideas and practices, including Yoga techniques.

**Bhakti**

The spiritual path centred on devotion to the Deity.

**Bhāṣya**

A commentary providing an explanation of the meaning of an authoritative text.

**Brahmacarya**

Celibacy, restraint of sexual desires.

**Brahma Sūtras**

An alternative title for the Vedānta Sūtras.

**Buddhi**

That feature of the mind that engages in reflection and decision making and can be used in Yoga practice when brought under volitional control.

**Cakras**

Energy centres within the body as taught in later Yoga teachings.

**Citta**

The mental faculties or thinking process.

**Dhāraṇā**

Concentration of the mind on a single point; one of the eight limbs.

**Dharma**

Right action or proper conduct. Also, an object that is real or the defining quality that makes an object what it is.

**Dhyāna**

Meditation.

**Doṣa**

Faults, obstacles, contaminations.

**Draṣṭṛ**

The one that sees or perceives; a term used for puruṣa.

**Dr̥śya**

That which is seen or perceived; the external world.

**Duḥkha**

Misery, suffering.

**Dveṣa**

Loathing, distaste, hatred.

**Ekāgram**

Fixed on a single point, also ekāgrata.

**Guṇas**

The three pervasive qualities of all things material, designated as sattva, rajas, and tamas.

**Hetu**

The cause or causal factor.

**Hṛdaya**

The heart.

**Indriya**

The five senses of external perception.

**Īśvara**

The Lord; the Supreme Deity in a monotheistic sense.

**Īśvara-praṇidhāna**

Devotion to the Deity or meditation on the Deity.





### Japa

Mental or verbal recitation of a mantra or prayer.

### Jīva

The living being. Equivalent to puruṣa and ātman, though usually when the living being is existing in a state of bondage in this world.

### Jñāna

Knowledge, specifically the spiritual realisation that brings liberation from rebirth.

### Jyotis

Light, radiance, or effulgence.

### Kaivalya

Literally separation in the sense of liberation from rebirth; an equivalent term for mokṣa and mukti.

### Kāma

Desire for the pleasures of sensual delights.

### Karma-yoga

Performance of actions for the welfare of the world without any self-centred desire or attachment, as taught in the Bhagavad-gītā.

### Kleśa

Obstruction, fault, or affliction.

### Kriyā-yoga

Yoga based on prescribed activities.

### Krodha

Anger.

Kṣaya, Diminution, dwindling, wasting away.

### Kṣetrājña

Literally, the knower of the field. An equivalent term for puruṣa and ātman.

### Kumbhaka

The inward retention of the breath during prāṇāyāma.

### Liṅga

The characteristic mark of an object that defines its identity or fundamental nature.

### Lobha

Greed.

### Mahābhārata

An extensive ancient text that tells of the conflict between two factions of the same royal family and includes a number of important passages of instruction on Yoga.

### Mahā-bhūtas

The great elements: earth, space, fire, water, and air.

### Mahat

The great element. The first element to emerge from primal prakṛti as the world comes into being. Equated with the mental faculty known as buddhi.

### Mala

Dirt, contamination, material, ethical, or spiritual.

### Manas

That part of the mind that receives all sensory perceptions, identifies them, and then passes them on to buddhi for further reflection.

### Mīmāṃsā

A system of philosophy that emphasises the primacy of Vedic ritual practices.

### Moha

Illusion, confusion.

### Mokṣa

Release, liberation from rebirth. Equivalent term for kaivalya.

### Nāḍīs

Veins or channels along which subtle energy can be transmitted.





**Nidrā**

Sleep or, more specifically, deep dreamless sleep.

**Nirbīja**

Literally without any seed; typically meditation that transcend any focus on a specific object.

**Nirodha**

Restraint or suppression.

**Niyama**

Positive observances that are spiritually beneficial.

**Rāga**

Desire, passion, hankering.

**Pāpa**

Wickedness, action that is harmful to others.

**Paramātmān**

A manifestation of the Deity believed to be present within each living being.

**Pariṇāma**

Change or transformation.

**Pariṇāma-vāda**

The philosophical doctrine that states that the world comes into being through a process of transformation from one element to another.

**Phala**

Fruits, results, consequences.

**Pradhāna**

Prakṛti in its primal undifferentiated state.

**Prakṛti**

The total material substance out of which this world is formed, including the physical bodies of living beings and their mental faculties.

**Pramāṇa**

A valid source of proof or knowledge in philosophical debate.

**Praṇava**

The mantra or sound vibration om.

**Prāṇāyāma**

Restraint or regulation of the breathing process.

**Prasāda**

Grace or serenity.

**Prātibha**

Intuitive knowledge that comes from within rather than from any external source.

**Pratyāhāra**

Withdrawal of the senses from external perception, one of the eight limbs.

**Pratyakṣa**

Direct sensory perception; a source of valid knowledge.

**Puṇya**

Virtue, righteous action for the welfare of others, or religious rituals.

**Pūraka**

The inhalation of the breath during prāṇāyāma.

**Puruṣa**

The true identity of every living being that is a purely spiritual entity, wholly distinct from its physical and mental embodiments. An equivalent term for ātman.

**Rajo-guṇa**

The guṇa of rajas, which relates to action, passion, desire, and endeavour.

**Recaka**

The exhalation of the breath during prāṇāyāma.

**Rta**

Truth, virtue, an established rule.





## Śabda

Sound. A source of knowledge coming from scriptural revelation or an enlightened teacher.

## Sabīja

Literally along with a seed; usually meditation employing a specific object.

## Sādhana

Regular practice to achieve a set goal.

## Samādhi

The ultimate stage of the Yoga system in which the mind becomes totally absorbed in the object of meditation.

## Samāpatti

The state of mind achieved when the movements of the mind and senses are stilled; the preliminary stage of samādhi.

## Śakti

Power, energy, potency.

## Sāṃkhya

A major school of Indian religious philosophy that examines the composition of the world and emphasises the distinction between the spiritual entity, puruṣa, and the material embodiment formed out of prakṛti.

## Sāṃkhya Kārikā

The foundational text of the Sāṃkhya system composed by Īśvara Kṛṣṇa, probably later than the Yoga Sūtras.

## Samprajñāta

The state of meditation or samādhi in which the mind is focused on a particular object.

## Samśkāra

The subtle impressions left on the mind by all thoughts, ideas, and motivations, which later emerge from a latent state and become manifest in the form of future karma.

## Samyama

Collective term for the practice of dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi.

## Samyoga

Unity, proximity.

## Śānti-parvan

The twelfth book of the Mahābhārata, which contains most of its teachings on Yoga.

## Satkārya-vāda

The philosophical doctrine that states that all effects are pre-existent in a latent form within their cause.

## Sattva-guṇa

The highest of the three guṇas that opens up the path to enlightenment when properly cultivated. It is represented by goodness, purity, light, joy, and wisdom.

## Śaucam

Purity or cleanliness of body and mind.

## Satyam

Truthfulness, honesty.

## Siddhi

Success, perfection, supernatural powers.

## Smṛti

Memory or understanding.

## Śraddhā

Faith.

## Śuddha

Pure, free of any blemish.

## Sukha

Happiness, joy.

## Śvādhyāya

Recitation or study of sacred texts; occasionally self-examination.

## Tamo-guṇa

The guṇa of tamas, which relates to ignorance, darkness, sloth, cruelty and inertia.





## **Tanmātras**

In Sāṃkhya teachings, the subtle or primal objects such as sound, aroma, flavour, touch sensations, and form/colour out of which each specific object of sensory perception is formed.

## **Tapas**

Acts or vows of austerity aimed at removing attachment to worldly pleasures.

## **Tattva**

Truth, reality, a particular subject to be learned.

## **Tṛṣṇa**

Thirst, desire, or longing.

## **Upaniṣads**

Those sections of the Vedas that deal with knowledge, liberation, and spiritual enlightenment rather than ritual practices.

## **Vaināśika**

A term meaning destruction or ending applied to Buddhists because of their teaching that there is no ātman that survives the death of the body.

## **Vairāgya**

Being free of the worldliness that takes the form of passionate desire.

## **Vāsanā**

Equivalent term for saṃskāra, perhaps indicating a group or flow of saṃskāras of the same nature.

## **Vedānta Sūtras**

A philosophical work that attempts to establish the exact nature of the teachings of the Upaniṣads and is regarded as authoritative by all schools of Vedānta. Also known as the Brahma Sūtras.

## **Vibhūti**

Opulences, glories, wondrous abilities, supernatural powers.

## **Vicāra**

Fixed meditation that transcends conscious thought processes.

## **Viśaya**

An object such as sound, form, or aroma that is perceived by one of the senses,

## **Viśeṣa**

Superior, special, or particular.

## **Viṣṇu Purāṇa**

An early text dedicated to the glorification of the Deity Viṣṇu, which gives accounts of the activities of avatāras of Viṣṇu.

## **Vitarka**

Meditation involving conscious thought processes

## **Vitrṣṇa**

Being free of hankering.

## **Vivarta-vāda**

The philosophical teaching that indicates that the variegated world and the individuality of each being is not an ultimate reality but a false perception based on ignorance of the one true reality, Brahman.

## **Viveka**

Distinction, specifically the distinction between spirit and matter, between the true self and its embodiment, between puruṣa and prakṛti.

## **Viveka-khyāti**

Realisation of the distinction between the true self and the body; also viveka-jñāna.

## **Vṛtti**

Movements or fluctuations. An equivalent term for bhāṣya, meaning a commentary.

## **Yama**

Restraint from indulgence in negative actions, thoughts, or words.





