

# Words on the Way

## The Yoga Wordbook



The Golden Glossary of Philosophical,  
Mystical & Spiritual Sanskrit

by Muz Murray  
(Ramana Baba)

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**The Golden Glossary of Philosophical, Mystical & Spiritual Sanskrit**

Refreshingly simplified and readable explanations of deeply esoteric  
Philosophical and mystical terms, devoid of professorial obscurantism.

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## Introduction

### Words on the Way - The Yoga Wordbook

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“There’s glory for you,” said Humpty-Dumpty.

“I don’t know what you mean by ‘glory,’” Alice said.

Humpty-Dumpty smiled contemptuously. “Of course you don’t—till I tell you.

“I meant ‘there’s a nice knock-down argument for you,’” said Humpty-Dumpty.

“But ‘glory’ doesn’t mean ‘a nice knock-down argument’” Alice objected.

“When *I* use a word,” Humpty-Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.” \*

And alas, this seems to be the case with so many gurus and writers of spiritual texts in India.

It is for this reason that this compilation is written by way of encouragement for those spiritual aspirants either new to the teachings, or even for those deeply into the philosophy of yoga. (And also because I always desperately wanted such a book myself, when I was a young seeker wrestling with the badly written and excruciatingly inexplicable texts of so many gurus and pundits in India). Seekers can often get completely lost, confused and discouraged by the welter of unfamiliar and unexplained Sanskrit words that are so liberally sprinkled throughout the Indian philosophical & spiritual writings.

My idea is not to compile a dictionary for scholars. This is *not* a dictionary, so you won’t find every Sanskrit word in it. It is a comprehensive *Working Glossary* for the ordinary seeker.

(The full Indian Sanskrit Dictionary is called the *Nighanthu*).

Most of us only want to understand the spiritual concepts with which we are trying to grapple. Unfortunately, the great majority of writers of spiritual booklets in India automatically pepper their texts with Sanskrit terminology without any explanation or qualification, on the assumption that they are self-evident household words to every Hindu. But even in India this is not the case. The majority of Indians are totally unfamiliar even with many of the Sanskrit terms known to every yoga student in the West. And very few have any understanding of the deeper meaning of spiritual and philosophical terms. Even erudite Indian writers who believe they are writing clearly and simply for anyone to understand, often have the habit of making their writings incomprehensible to the layman, by tossing in Sanskrit words at every opportunity in order to show off their scholarship. For example, here is an example of a typical text you might encounter:

“The *prana*, by nature, is *rajasika* because its *vritti* in the form of *karma* is present in *chitta* and so in the *sattvika* state of *chitta* God should be repeatedly invoked by making *pranava mantra* the means of knowledge.”<sup>1</sup>

Now that should be clear enough for anybody, right? And this kind of writing is typical of the average type of text you might pick up in India. Even the prolific Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, who generally made his writings as simple as possible, often falls into the same habit, as in the following example:

“When your *Advaita-nishtha* is accompanied by the utterance of *Aham Brahma Asmi*, you get *Sabdanuvida Savikalpa Samadhi*. When the repetition drops down, you enter into the pure *Nirvikalpa Avastha*. *Para-vairagya* is *Antaranga Sadhana* for entering into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. All the objects appear as *Atyanta Mithya* like mirage in the sand. Even all subtle desires vanish, when you develop this type of highest *Vairagya*.”<sup>2</sup>

To most of us non-scholarly beings this kind of thing is as clear as mud. And if this is the case with writers such as Sivananda, who are earnestly attempting to get their message across to readers, what to say of the books written by academics? The professorial texts are even more obscure. Here follows an ‘explanation’ for the general reader from a well-meaning Sanskrit scholar:

“There seems to be some confusion between *Ānaṇdamaya* and *Ānaṇdmaya-kośa* since *samaṣṭi* and *vyāṣṭi* aspects of creation are not taken into consideration. *Ānaṇdamaya* is the *kāraṇa-śarira Īśvara* while *ānaṇdamaya-kośa* is that of the *jīva*. The ‘*kośa*’ part of *ānaṇdamaya-kośa* is *avidya* which *Īśvara* is devoid of. In the latter case, it is *Ānaṇdamaya* where the ‘*maya*’ aspect is ‘*maya*’ with *sattva-guna* as *suddha-sattva* giving rise to omniscience etc., to *Īśvara*.”<sup>3</sup>

So I am glad at least *that* confusion is cleared up for you.

Thus it is that so many Sanskrit words appear without any elucidation—or even a glossary—(as ‘everybody-in-the-field-knows-the-meaning’). Such assumptions cause academic writings to be virtually incomprehensible to the layman. It is an unfortunate habit of professors to write mainly for the eyes of other specialists. And their delight seems to be to write as obscurely as possible—the more obscure the better—which makes their work appear more erudite. But for we lesser mortals who only want to understand the meaning, reading their texts can be a torture and an exercise in futility.

Even the much-vaunted *Vedas* are mostly incomprehensible, even to academics. Metaphors in the poetical fancy of the Vedic seers, which were current in the Vedic period of antiquity, are no longer accessible to us for the most part. For example, in the *Rg Veda*,<sup>4</sup> a hymn to the dawn states: ‘*The rising sun lets out his cows.*’ No amount of learning Sanskrit words or breaking the syllables down into root meanings, will give us the remotest clue that the metaphorical meaning here is intended to say that ‘the sun releases its beams.’

And similarly, in another such verse, which calls dawn ‘*the mother of kine,*’ which is intended means ‘the originator of rays of light’ is similarly incomprehensible without knowing the poetical idea behind the allusion. So unless one is steeped in the metaphysical understanding as well as the obscure metaphorical and poetical fancies of the ancient seers, not to mention the intentional cryptic obfuscations of the sages, the reading of these ancient texts bears little fruit.

Alas, that is not the only problem. In countless books by various gurus, swamis and backyard ‘professors’ (who are less poetic but no less obscure) the implied meanings of the same terms are so disparate (as used by each school of thought), that it is difficult to believe it is the same word being used in the different instances.

Another problem is that Sanskrit terms are also subject to widely diverse transliterated spellings. So when a seeker thinks he has come to understand or remember a certain term, the next time he finds the word spelled in a totally different fashion in another text, he has doubts if it is the same word after all. And often it appears to have a completely different meaning or sense in the context.

For example, even a familiar word such as ‘*swami*’ may also be seen written as *swamy*, ‘*svami*,’ ‘*svamin*,’ ‘*s’aami*’ or even ‘*samy*.’ So when it comes to more complicated philosophical terms the confusion can be considerable.

In this volume I present the results of over 50 years of collecting these quirks and anomalies, which will hopefully prevent the bemused seeker from giving up the attempt to read the spiritual texts altogether. And like Humpty-Dumpty, even gurus and swamis do not always utilise a

synonymous term with the same, or correct, meaning, but take it to mean whatever they choose it to mean.

However, as I came across them, whether written in an obscurely spelled or obscurely interpreted fashion, I have added them to the list. You will find them after the sub-heading **Var:** (short for **Variations**). Where it appears that the usage is evidently incorrect, doubtful, or of abnormal spelling, the word is placed in parenthesis. For example (*s'aami* or *samy*) which are the south Indian pronunciations of *swami* in Tamil Nadu.

Where text is taken from an American publication, I retain the original spelling of words such as 'realized' as printed, in place of the English form 'realised.' Also where Sanskrit words are abbreviated in a copied text, such as the northern Indian use of '*pran*' instead of '*prana*,' then the original spelling is retained, although corrected in the subtitle or in my own explanations.

I may not always adhere to the expected 'classical' or literal interpretations of a concept, which often convey little or nothing to the uninitiated, but I attempt rather a *comprehensible* and intelligent understanding of the *spiritual* meaning of the word or phrase, by simplifying the sense of it, after deep contemplation and mystical insight, as well as arduous yoga practices, which have helped me make sense of the texts over which I have pored over for most of my life.

Even the supposedly inviolable and 'immutable' Vedic scriptures have (just like the Bible) come down to us in innumerable versions, their obscurities interpreted in many different ways by both scholars and gurus. So it is not a matter of finding the best 'translation' of a word, but of grasping the essence of its meaning and rendering it as well as possible in modern language. Let the purists scream.

This work is an ongoing labour of love.

#### References:

<sup>1</sup> *Science of Divine Sound (Divya Shabad Vijnana)*, Sri Yogeswaranand Paramahans (Yog Niketan Trust, Delhi. 1984/1997)

<sup>2</sup> *Mediation on OM*, Swami Sivananda (Divine Life Society, 1941/1997)

<sup>3</sup> *Self: the Truth Absolute—A Review of Advaita Vedanta* — G. Subramanian (Giri Trading Agency, Madras. 1995)

<sup>4</sup> *Rg Veda*, Chap. 3, *Diva duhita*, v. 81

#### USING THE GLOSSARY

In the definition of any word meaning, whenever a different Sanskrit word appears for the first time of necessity during the explanation, it will be printed in **bold** letters. This is for quick reference, indicating that the new word itself can be looked up elsewhere in the Glossary for further clarification. If the same word is repeated again in the same section, in a quotation for example, it will be bolded only in the first instance.

Where my own interpolations occur in any quoted text, in order to clarify an issue, these additions will be inserted in between square brackets [like so]. As in the following example:

“...The Principle which passes rewarding and punitive judgement on the individual soul and works within every soul as Absolute Judge is called **Ishvara**. [Ishvara is thus also our inner self-judge, or what we term 'Conscience': the psychological manifestation of 'Godness or Goodness' in the psyche]. Since Ishvara eternally guides consciousness it is called Teacher.”

In other instances, to save the reader from having to look up yet another unfamiliar word,

my interpolations in brackets may enclose a concise meaning of a Sanskrit term, to enable you to understand the gist of the text without searching elsewhere in the Glossary. As in the following example:

Ramana Maharshi stated that: “a *jnani* [an enlightened being] is a most natural person. He may have *sankalpas* [intentions or desires of will], but those *sankalpas* are not binding in nature. They arise either because of *prarabdha* [karma which has to be worked out in this lifetime] or due to divine promptings. They do not bind a person whose mind is dead.”

Purists may object to my choosing to spell *Shiva* rather than *Siva*, or *shraddha* (faith) rather than *sraddha*, but my preference is for this fashion of transliteration as it makes the pronunciation instantly clearer for Westerners. Thus the title- word for reference will usually favour the ‘*Sh*’ transliteration, except perhaps where the word is more commonly known without the ‘h’, such as in *Sri*, instead of *Shri* or *Shree*.

If, while reading an Indian text, you find a word that begins with an Ś, with this flying accent above it, or ṣ with a dot beneath it, then you may generally look under *Sh* in the Glossary for its explanation.

### **Pronunciation:**

A simple form of pronunciation is appended in parenthesis after each word; for example — **Padmāsana** (*pad-maa-sannah*) with the syllable to be stressed in bold italic.

As the letter Ś is pronounced more as ‘Sh’ as in sheep, but more softly, with a bit of a lisp, as if you can’t pronounce your *s*’s properly, with your tongue between your teeth, the suggested pronunciation will generally be written as ‘sy’ or ‘syuh’ or perhaps ‘shya’, whichever looks better for any given word.

But the Ṣ with the dot under it, will be written as ‘sh’ and is pronounced with the tongue tip at the palate and flicking across the roof of the mouth towards the teeth.

### **LAYOUT**

Beneath each main word in the Glossary are sub-headings, such as:

**Var:** (short for **Variations**); Many Sanskrit words are so variously transliterated that one is never sure if it is the same word one has learned when one comes across it with a different spelling. In this section, in order to assist the reader in recognising the word, where it is evidently incorrectly spelled, it is entered in parenthesis as an example of usage, at the end of other more currently acceptable variations, i.e., *Swami*, *Svami*, (*S’aami*, *Samy*).

All such words listed in this Glossary with obscurely transliterated spellings (unbelievable as they seem) have been taken from *actual* examples I have come across over the years in books, booklets, journals or pamphlets in India.

A northern Hindu habit is to drop off the final ‘a’ from Sanskrit words, such as when writing *asan* instead of *āsanā*, or *pranayam*, instead of *pranayāma*. Although this form is currently acceptable in Hindi usage, in Sanskrit terms it is not considered correct and I have therefore placed such usage in parenthesis, i.e. **Var:** *Aasanaa*, (*asan*).

Sometimes the word I have chosen for the heading may not be the most accepted version of its spelling (according to nit-picking Sanskrit scholars) but it will be the most current and widely used form that you are likely to encounter. For example, where a word is more currently known by its popular rendering, such as *Bhajan* (devotional worship by musically accompanied singing) it will be listed as such, whereas the original (and much less frequently used) term is *Bhajana*, which will then be listed under **Var:** for variations on the word *Bhajan*.

For words that begin, for example, sometimes with *Sva* and sometimes by *Swa*, I use the most frequently used prefix that appears in the majority of texts. And the same for words that variously begin with **B** or **V** or **W**, depending on regional differences in pronunciation. But in most cases the word will be listed under different spellings with cross-reference to the section in which it is more fully explained.

Remember, the *Glossary* is also cross-referenced throughout with **Bolded** words referring to their definition in their own appropriate alphabetical section. When new Sanskrit words appear in a quoted text, each one bolded (**like this**) will be mine, in order that you may look it up elsewhere in the *Glossary*, if a potted definition in brackets [like this] is not available.

Also, to avoid too much repetition, some words that are explained elsewhere will be given a cross-reference such as: **Paśupatiśiva** — see **Shiva**.

**Synon:** (for synonymous terms which have virtually the same meaning and are often used interchangeably, even if not precisely the same).

**Sense:** This section gives a succinct and concise meaning of the sense of a word for quick reference and easy memorising, in between single quotes such as ‘Abidance in the Self’. It is then followed by a fuller explanation.

**Lit:** (short for **Literally**); here the literal meaning of a word is given, where possible, which may not be the way the word is presently understood. An elaboration of the possible various meanings may follow.

**Eso:** (**Esoteric**); this section gives the secret or hidden meaning of a word as opposed to its meaning in current use. However, this sub-heading will not always appear as such explanation may have already been clarified in the main text.

**Quotes:** Here you will find quotations from ancient scriptures and also explanations by contemporary masters to clarify the different meanings, or their own particular conception of the word under scrutiny.

**Other:** This section gives completely different meanings for commonly used philosophical terms where the same word is used for everyday objects. As with the word ‘*Nada*’ which esoterically means ‘subtle sound current’, in this section the different meaning of the word *nada* is ‘a species of grass.’

**Bib:** (short for **Bibliography**): where books and texts relating to the specific word or subject matter are listed for your further research.

**Refs:** (**References**); this is a numbered list referring to the sources of the quotations used in the

preceding explanations.

Some of these sub-headings may not appear if they are not relevant to the word in question.

This is not simply an ordinary glossary just explaining words (although there are a great number of simple explanations), but constitute a mystic's understanding and deliberations over a lifetime's study and experience. Therefore certain entries will go further in answering a seeker's long-standing questions and throw light on little known secrets of yoga, ultimately revealing the hidden mysteries of spiritual life.

**This Glossary is constantly being updated and developed, as and when time allows. Some words with only a brief description you may find with a fuller explanation at a later date. Occasionally, you may find words with no description at all, which indicates that they will be explained later. Also please remember, that if you don't find the word you are looking for now, it may appear in the Glossary in the future: keep on checking.**

N.B. At Deccan College in Pune (Poona) a team of scholars have been working on a massive Sanskrit-English dictionary since 1948 — and they are still on the letter *A*! So please forgive any shortcomings, as this is a one-man's dedicated lifetime's work, between many other commitments.

Therefore you can understand that it is a monumental task to compile even this comprehensive Glossary: so please forgive any of my shortcomings. This is a one-man's dedicated lifetime's work, with many a midnight-hour updating, between many other commitments, and which will continue as long as I am still in the body, for the benefit of all.

However, if you can find a more useful and more deeply insightful dictionary anywhere, let me know, and I will gladly relieve myself of this arduous and lifelong labour of love.

Warmly yours,  
**Muz Murray**  
(Ramana Baba)

**Other abbreviations used in the Glossary:**

- Acc.** According to
- AD.** *Anno Domini* (in the 'Year of our Lord')
- BC.** Before Christ
- B.C.E.** Before Common Era
- CE.** Common Era (or 'Christian Era')
- Ch.** Chapter
- Cent.** Century
- Chap.** Chapter
- Comp.** Compiler of the book
- Dr.** Doctor
- Ed.** Editor/Edited by
- Fem.** Feminine gender
- Fr.** French
- Hse.** House (i.e., Publishing House)
- Ibid.** (Ibidem) 'In the same book' (as the previous quote)
- Info:** Information extracted from the book here named.
- Lit.** Literally
- N.B.** *Nota Bene* (Please note:)

**No.** Number  
**Pron:** Pronounced  
**Pub.** Publisher  
**Ref.** Reference — the book or Journal from which a numbered quotation was taken.  
**RV.** The *Rig Veda*  
**Sw.** Swami.  
**Synon.** Synonyms—words that have virtually the same meaning, or are used as such.  
**Tib.** Tibetan  
**Tr.** Translator  
**V.** Verse  
**Var.** Variations—different ways of spelling the same word.

**For your interest:** Yoga teachers have long sought an alternative to ‘*shavasana*’— the ‘corpse pose,’ which does not exactly have a pleasant ring to it. However, after long reflection I have come up with two possible alternatives which I offer to the yoga community: 1) *Tārakāsana* ‘the floating pose’ from *tāraka* — a float or raft , pronounced *taar-rak-kaahs-sannah*;  
Or 2) *Niradhāsana* — ‘the surrender pose’; from *niradh*—to surrender or deliver up, as in this pose we surrender our mental forces and ego, let go and deliver ourselves up to the Absolute. Pron. *Nir-rad-dhar-sanna*.

## A — WORDS on the WAY

Ā

Var: *ā, aa,*

**Sense:** ‘Not’— used as a prefix denoting the negative condition, indicating the contrary or ‘opposite to.’ As *vidya* means ‘knowledge,’ so *avidya* (*a-vidya*) means ‘not-knowledge’ or spiritual ignorance.

Aarati — see Ārati

Abedha-Nishta (*ah-bed-ha-nish-ta*)

Var:

**Synon:** *Abheda nishta, Atma Nishta, Sahaja Nishta, Self-realisation*

**Sense:** ‘Unificatory abidance in the Self:’ that state in which the movement of ‘mind’ is stilled when lost in the Self, just as water is lost when poured into milk.

Ābhāsa (*ah-bhaa-sah*)

Var: *aabhaasa, abhasa*

Synon:

**Sense:** ‘Unreal appearance, reflection (as moon in water).’

Ābhāsana (*ahb-bhah-sanna*)

Var: *aabhaasana, (abhasan)*

Synon:

**Sense:** ‘Making something appear which is actually of an unreal nature,’ such as in the process of ideation, when one mentally thinks pictures into being on the ‘screen of consciousness.’

If we take the unmanifest state of Universal

Consciousness as the ‘ground of Reality,’ then even the Divine Ideation (or the Creative Thoughts of God’) in which the universe is thought into being is manifesting ‘unreal’ phenomena, i.e., a passing and ever-changing universe as compared with the Reality which is eternal and free from differentiation and change.

**Abhaya(m)** (*a-bai-ya* or *a-buyer*, or *a-bhai-yam*)

**Sense:** ‘Absence of fear; fearlessness, freedom from anguish;’ also safety and inner peace. (See also **Mudra**)

**Abheda-bhakti** (*ab-bedda-bhak-tee*)

**Var:**

**Synon:**

**Sense:** ‘The culmination of devotion resulting in the total identification of the worshipper with that which is worshipped.’

**Abhedabhāva** (*ab-bhedda-bhar-vah*)

**Var:** *Abedhabhaava*,

**Sense:** ‘Non-separateness, union:’ the sense of being totally One with the Omnipresence and all creation. This is often the result of *abheda-bhakti* (or the sense of devotional unity).

**Abhimatha** (*ab-bhi-mah-tah*)

**Var:**

**Synon:**

**Sense:** ‘That to which the practitioner of yoga finds his mind becoming naturally attached.’ — *Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra*.

However, according to Krishnamacharya of Madras, this is the very tendency which yoga seeks to overcome, and therefore states that the correct rendering of Patanjali’s *Sutra* should be *yeth-abhimata*, or “according to one’s religious practice.”

**Abhiniveśha** (*ab-bhi-nee-vesh-syah*)

**Var:** *Abhiniveśa*

**Sense:** ‘Instinctive clinging to material life and fear of death.’

**Other:** Infatuation.

**Abhiṣhekam** (*ab-bhee-shay-kam*)

**Var:** *abisheka*,

**Synon:**

**Sense:** ‘Anointing, consecration, empowerment.’

It is the ritual oblation of liquids or holy water poured over an idol, person or object, generally the ritual bathing of a person or idol in a temple.

Anointing is a ritual initiation, for which reason *abhisheka* is sometimes translated as ‘initiation.’ In Hinduism, it generally refers to the ritual sprinkling of a temple image, idol, or **Shiva lingam**, by a **Brahmin** priest, pouring substances over them, such as coconut water, saffron, honey, rice-flower, limewater, rosewater, sandalwood paste and milk.

When a temple is to be dedicated, pots of liquid are prepared days in advance and consecrated before they are finally poured over the images amid general rejoicing. This is often known as *abishekam kumbha* ceremony. (**Kumbha** - retention, holding, gathering or convocation. It is also the form of a pear-shaped pot or pitcher.)

In Tantrism, *abhisheka* is a formal ceremony of empowerment, a transmission from teacher to student assisting his development from one grade to the next.

**Quotes:**

**Other:**

**Bib:**

**Refs:**

**Abhva** (*ab-vah*)

**Var:**

**Synon:** *Ghora*

**Sense:** ‘Monstrosity, horror, terrifying, a monster’: from *a-bhu*, ‘non-being, nonexisting.’

**Abhyantara** (*ab-bhee-yan-tar-rah*)

**Sense:** ‘Internal.’

In *Hatha Yoga*: the regulation of internal respiration.

**Abhyāsa** (*ab-bhee-yaa-sa*)

**Var:** *Abhyaasa*,

**Synon:** *Sadhana*,

**Sense:** ‘Repeated and sustained spiritual practice, or *yoga sadhana*.’

The state of *yoga* (union) achieved through the constantly repeated practice of inward concentration, preventing the mind from straying outwards towards things of the world.

**Root:** *Abhi* — ‘in the direction of’ and *āsa* — ‘remaining’: that is, the attempt to remain continuously in the state of mental tranquillity.

One who constantly practises such inner awareness is an *abhyāsi* (aspirant.)

**Other:**

**Bib:**

**Refs:**

**Abhrasadaśhi** (*ab-rah-sa-da-shyee*)

**Var:** *Abhrasadaśi*

**Synon:**

**Sense:** ‘The seat of Consciousness’ — that is, the Heart Centre of one’s being.’

**Ācala** — see **Āchala**

**Ācamana** (see **Āchamana**)

Ācchā (*aah-chah*) (Hindi)

Var. *Aacchaa*.

Sense: ‘Clear, lucid, transparent.’

Lit. ‘Not dark’ (*a*-not, *cha*—dark.)

- a) In colloquial Hindi it has a wide and very loose range of meaning, inferring: ‘Clear, I see, good, I understand, I agree, or okay,’ (usually expressed with a sideways wobble of the head).
- b) In a great many instances — especially coming from bureaucratic officials behind desks, it often means ‘Yes, I-see-and-understand-your-problem-and-sympathise-entirely-but-I-have-no-intention-of-doing-anything-about-it-whatsoever.’)

Āchala (*aah-cha-lah*)

Var. *Aachala, acala, āchalam*

Sense: ‘Motionlessness, immobility, immovability.’

Also ‘the restful or steady phase of dynamic mediation— a condition that comes after energy has matured during meditation and spontaneous movements (**Kriyas**) have ceased.

Lit: *Ā-chala* — ‘without movement.’ When spontaneous jerks, or other movements occur, it is called *cala* or *chala*.

**Other:** a) A hill or mountain, such as **Arunachala** — the ‘Red/Rose,’ ‘Light of Fire,’ or ‘Mountain of the Dawn’ at Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, South India.

b) ‘*Achala* signifies perfection.’<sup>1</sup> — *Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi*.

Refs:

<sup>1</sup> ‘The Necklet of Nine Gems’ from *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi* — Ed. Arthur Osborne.

**Āchamana** (*aah-cha-ma-na*)

**Var:** *aachamana, acamana, acaman,*

**Sense:** ‘The offering of pure water to God or to devotees (or the action of sipping it from the hollowed palm of the right hand.’

To be practiced during ritualistic worship; generally observed by taking three sips at the commencement of a ceremony, or after puja when *tulsi*-leaf flavoured water is passed around; or after ritually sprinkling water around one’s plate before eating.

The water is usually spooned into the right palm and ritualistically sipped three times, while mentally repeating one of God’s names. Tradition states this should be done while sitting. This is also a part of the traditional Sixteen Steps of worship in *Mantra Yoga* when propitiating a diety. (See **Sodasopacara**).

**Ācharā** (*aah-char-rah*)

**Var:** *aacharaa, achara, acara*

**Sense:** ‘Right conduct’— that is, the social mode of conduct according to customary practice.

In a spiritual context, **sat-ācharā** (true observance) means ‘abidance as **Sat**, the reality.’

**Other:** In *tantrā*, the external rituals utilised during meditative practices are also known as **āchāras**.

**Ācharana**

**Var:** *Aacharana*

**Sense:** ‘The code of behaviour; the external observance of established rules, laws or scriptural injunctions.’

‘...*charana* means the one who has to behave.’<sup>1</sup> [That is, according to the rules].

**Ref:**

**1** Nisargadatta Maharaj — *Prior to Consciousness: Talks with Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj* — Jean Dunn (Chetana Pvt. Ltd, Mumbai, 1998) ISBN: 81-85300-35-6

**Āchārya** (*aah-chah-ree-yah*)

**Var:** *Achaarya, acharya, ācārya*

**Sense:** ‘A spiritual guide or preceptor — one who has mastered the code of **āchāra** (the spiritual rules of behaviour) and cultivates others to observe them properly.’

Hence *ācharati* — to practice what one preaches.

Originally, an *āchārya* was teacher of the Vedas; a spiritual guide who performs initiation. The word was in current use even earlier than the appellation ‘guru.’

**Other:** Now colloquially used to denote ‘teacher’ of any kind.

**Āchārya-Abhishekam** (*aah-chah-ree-yah-ab-bhee-shey-kam*)

**Var:** *Achaarya-abhishekam, acharyabhishekam*

**Synon:**

**Sense:** ‘A ceremonial ritual bath given by a spiritual preceptor to a spiritually advanced soul, as a form of initiation.’

**Āchārya-upāsanam** (*aah-chah-ree-yah-oop-paa-sannam*)

**Var:** *Acharya-upaasanam, acharyopasanam, acarya-upasanam*

**Synon:**

**Sense:** ‘Serving the teacher.’

It means to completely surrender to the teacher in order to receive knowledge from him, with faith in his integrity. This does not mean blind faith and a willingness to follow the injunctions of the guru without question, but a reverential attitude tempered by your own sensibilities and conscience.

**Achit** (*ah-chit*)

**Var:** *Acit*

**Synon:**

**Sense:** ‘Not ensouled or sentient—i.e., dense matter.’

**Adbhuta** (*ad-boo-tah*)

**Sense:** ‘Wonder.’

**Ādesha** (*ard-desh-shah*)

**Var:** *aadesha*,

**Sense:** ‘A divine command arising from within the being’.

**Ādi** (*ar-dih*)

**Var:** *Adi, ādi*

**Sense:** ‘Source, beginning, first, foremost.’

The sound of the **pranava** or **Om** is called *Adi* in the *Chhandogya Upaniṣhad*, as it was the first emanation out of the mysterious universal substratum known as **Brahman**.

The great 8<sup>th</sup> century sage Shankaracharya is also known as **Ādi** (the first) Shankaracharya, to distinguish him from many other Shankara’s that came after him.

**Adhama** (*ad-dham-mah*)

**Sense:** ‘Low, inferior, degraded.’ (Not to be confused with **adharma** — ‘beyond the prescribed code.’)

**Ādharma** (*aah-dhar-mah*)

**Sense:** ‘Conduct opposed to **dharma** (religious duty); unrighteous conduct, vice.’

**Lit.** ‘Not *dharma*,’ (*a-dharma*), viz., the type of action that is prohibited by the **Shastras** or scriptural texts.

**Ādhibautika** (*aad-dhee-bow-tee-kah*)

**Var:**

**Sense:** ‘Relating to beings’ — one of the three ways of interpreting Vedic texts from an anthropological point of view, rather than from the god-centric theological (**Ādhidaivika**) or spiritual (**Ādhyātmika**) viewpoints.

**Other:** a) In contemplative practice: ‘Relating to matter, in which one focuses one’s mind on an image of one’s guru, or a candle-flame, a crystal, a statue, picture, or other material object.’

b) ‘Disease due to drought, earthquakes, floods, famine or insect bites’ as classified in Svātmaṛama’s *Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā*.

**Ādhidaivata** (*aad-dhee-dai-vatta*)

**Sense:** ‘Cosmic.’

**Ādhidaivika** (*aah-dhee-dai-vi-ka*)

**Var:** *Aadhidaivika*

**Sense:** ‘Relating to the Gods’ — a particular method of interpreting the Vedic texts from a theological point of view, rather than the anthropological or cosmological aspects.

**Other:** a) Another meaning is ‘Astral’ — relating to celestial bodies in contemplative practice (**dhāraṇa**) in which one focuses on celestial regions or on the sun, the moon, a star, etc.

b) Disease through the influence of planets — “which in modern language is termed ‘allergy’” — *B.K.S. Iyengar*.<sup>1</sup>

c) In **Tantric** practice, it relates to that area of the subtle body, where three secret **chakras**, *Lalata*, *Golata* and *Lalana*, exist in the region of the head and are activated only when **kundalini** is aroused and reaches that level.

**Refs:** <sup>1</sup> p.6, *Spectrum* (British Wheel of Yoga journal, Spring, 1983)

**Ādhikāra** (*aah-dee-kaar-rah*)

**Var:** *Aadhikaara*, *adhikara*

**Sense:** ‘The qualification or eligibility of a person which fits him for the right to follow the practices enjoined by the scriptures.’

**Other:**

a) ‘One’s sphere of competence in interaction with other

domains.’ (acc. Jaimini, author of the *Mimāṃsā Sūtras*).

b) ‘Having to do with’ (acc. Roger Marcaurelle), who also states ‘...we contend that Śankara sometimes uses the word *adhikāra* to identify the relevance or non-relevance of the sphere of action and the sphere of renunciation and Self-knowledge.’<sup>1</sup>

c) “Complete or full *adhikara* is to be made a Deputy. A permission to teach everything according to need.”<sup>2</sup>

d) There are apparently many other nuances with regard to the usage of this word, but which are as yet unknown to me. —*Author*.

Ref:

<sup>1</sup>*Freedom Through Inner Renunciation: Sankara’s Philosophy in a New Light* — Roger Marcaurelle (Sri Satguru publications, Delhi, 2002). ISBN: 81-7030-769-4

<sup>2</sup>*The Chasm of Fire*—Irena Tweedie (Element Books, UK, 1979). ISBN: 0-90654001-1

**Ādhikārika puruṣha** (*aah-dee-kaar-ree-ka poo-roo-shah*)

**Var:** *Aadhikaarika puruṣa*

**Synon:** *Īśvarakoṭi*

**Sense:** ‘A released soul that assumes another form after death or by a new birth in order to work for the welfare of the world.’

The great masters Vyāsa and Vaśhiṣṭha are said to have been such.

**Adhiṣṭhāna** (*add-dhish-taa-nah*)

**Var:** *Adhiṣṭhāna, adhisthaana,*

**Synon:**

**Sense:** ‘The primeval matrix; the great ‘Void’ before creation, from which all emerges.’

Otherwise ‘abode,’ as in *Svadhishthāna chakra* — ‘one’s own abode.’

**Adhiṣṭhāna-kāraṇa** (*add-dhish-taa-nah-kaa-ranna*)

**Var:** *Adhiṣṭhāna kāraṇa, Adhisthaana-kaarana*