

REL 505: The Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita

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Glossary of Sanskrit Terms

This glossary is an important pronunciation guide for the vocabulary and terminology introduced in this course. This is a "must use" guide for students and has been prepared without the complication of introducing elaborate diacritical marks to transcribe exact pronunciations. Rather, the attempt has been to focus on the most common basis of mispronunciation - i.e. the difference between phonetically long and short 'a'.

One of them, for example, is intoned with the mouth open and over twice as long a time period as the other. Thus, a closer approximation to the two kinds of 'a' might be 'uh' and 'aah'. In this glossary, the phonetically shorter 'a' has been written as 'a' and the longer 'a' as 'aa'. For example, 'ananda', which means delight, has a long 'a' at the beginning and so has been written as 'aananda'.

Aadesha,	Divine command, divine impulsion.
Aadhaara,	Vessel, the container of consciousness - i.e. mind-life-body.
Aagama,	Body of spiritual literature, pertaining to the <i>Tantras</i> and other esoteric knowledge.
Aajnaana,	Knowledge-Will, the operation by which consciousness dwells on an image of things so as to govern and possess it in power.
Aananda,	Divine Delight, bliss.
Aaranyaka,	Of the forest.
Aarya (Aryan),	The aspiring soul, the warrior of the light and the traveler to the Truth.
Aasana,	1. <i>Yogic</i> body posture, aiming at a specific flow of the vital current; 2. Seat.
Aashrama,	1. Home of the spiritual teacher, where disciples would lodge with the master; 2. one of four successive stages or periods in the development of human life in the idea of the Upanishads - that of the student (<i>brahmacharya</i>), the householder (<i>grihastya</i>), the recluse (<i>vaanaprastha</i>) and the renunciant (<i>sannyasa</i>).
Aatman,	Original and essential sense of identity, the Self.
Aatmasamarpana,	Self-surrender
Achetanaam,	Non-sentient
Achintya,	Unthinkable, inconceivable.

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms (cont'd)

Achintya	
Bhedaabheda	
Vedaanta,	The philosophy of Sri Chaitanya (1485-1533), a Bengali mystic, who taught that simultaneous unity and separation between souls and God in a reality beyond thought was the essence of divine experience.
Adharma,	Not- <i>dharma</i> (see <i>dharma</i>)
Adhikaara,	Capacity, something in the immediate power of a man's nature that determines by Its characteristics his right to this or that way of <i>yoga</i>
Advaita,	Monism, Non-Dualism.
Agni,	<i>Vedic</i> god of Fire, the Divine Will.
Asat,	Non-Being, Non-Existence; that which is beyond manifestation and not contained in the basis of manifestation.
Aham,	I.
Aham Brahmaasmi,	I am the Brahman, a statement from the Upanishads.
Ahamkaara,	Ego-sense.
Akshara,	The Immobile, the Immutable
Akshara Purusha,	The immobile <i>Purusha</i> , the Self standing back from the changes and movements of Nature
Amrita,	1. Immortality; 2. The nectar of Immortality and Divine Delight
Amsha,	Portion.
Ananta,	Infinite, having no <i>anta</i>
Ananta Guna,	Having infinite quality, see <i>ananta, guna</i> .
Anna,	Food; matter or material substance.
Annam Brahma,	Matter as the sole Reality, Matter as the <i>Brahman</i> .
Anta,	End.
Apaana,	One of the five <i>praanas</i> , or 'breaths' in the subtle body, corresponding to expulsion of the vital force.
Apara Prakriti,	Lower Nature, Nature that acts out of the consciousness of its separation from the Truth
Aparaardha,	The lower hemisphere of world existence, characterized by <i>avidyaa</i> , Ignorance
Arjuna,	Name of one of the <i>Paandavas</i> , the hero warrior of the Mahaabhaarata, whose dialogue on the battlefield with Sri Krishna forms the text of the <i>Gitaa</i>
Artha,	One of the four successive goals of life according to Upanishadic ideas.
Ashwa,	Horse, a Vedic symbol of conscious dynamic energy.
Asura	God in the Vedas; in later writings, the titan, beings hostile to the Divine purpose.
Atharva,	One of the 4 Vedas.

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms (cont'd)

Avasthaa,	A condition of Being, the Upanishads identify four such states - waking (<i>jaagrat</i>), dream (<i>svapna</i>), dreamless sleep (<i>shushupti</i>) and a nameless 'fourth' state (<i>turiya</i>).
Avataara,	The Divine incarnate, God embodied in a human form.
Avidyaa,	Not- <i>Vidyaa</i> , (see <i>Vidyaa</i>)
Avyakta,	Unexpressed, unmanifest.
Avyakta Paraatpara,	The Unmanifest beyond the Transcendent
Bhaga,	Lord of Enjoyment, the divine enjoyer of delight in man
Bhagavad Giitaa,	Literally, the Song of God.
Bhaktaa,	Devotee
Bhakti,	Devotion.
Bhedaabheda,	From <i>bhid</i> , to divide; simultaneously differentiated and non-differentiated
Bhiima,	A character from the Mahaabhaarata famed for his strength, one of the <i>Paandavas</i>
Bhiishma,	A character from the Mahaabhaarata, the grandsire of the warring cousins
Bhoga,	Enjoyment.
Bhrigu,	A seer, son of the Vedic god, Varuna, who features in the Taittiriya Upanishad as a seeker after Reality.
Braahman,	One of the four castes of Hinduism, marked by the urge for knowledge and scholarship
Brahmacharya,	The first of the four ashramas or stages of human life ordained by the Upanishads, pertaining to studentship, also equated with celibacy, as the student was supposed to maintain complete sexual abstinence.
Brahman,	In the <i>Vedas</i> , the sacred or Divine Word of Creation; in the <i>Upanishads</i> and later spiritual writing, the Supreme Being, the one besides whom there is nothing else existent.
Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithyaa,	"The Brahman is true, the world is false" - statement attributed to Shankara, the founder of the Kevaladvaita Vedanta philosophy.
Brihad,	Great, vast.
Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad,	One of the major Upanishads
Buddhi,	Intelligence
Buddhi-Yoga,	The Yoga of the Intelligent Will.
Chaitanya,	Consciousness, the name of a Bengali mystic who founded the philosophy known as <i>Achintya Bhedaabheda Vedaanta</i> .
Chaitya Purusha,	The psychic being, the individualized personal soul in man.

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms (cont'd)

Chakra,	Circle, mystic center in the subtle body.
Chaturvarna,	The four castes or orders in Hindu society.
Chetanaschetanaanaam,	A saying from the Upanishads, consciousness in unconscious things.
Chit-shakti,	Consciousness-Force
Daana,	Giving.
Daasya,	Servitude.
Dama,	Mastery.
Darshana,	Sight, revelation; the systems of Indian philosophy.
Dayaa,	Compassion.
Deva,	God, godhead.
Devi,	Goddess.
Dharma,	Literally, that which one lays hold of and which holds things together; Law, Law of being, standard of Truth, rule or action; the name of a god, the father of <i>Yudhishthira</i> .
Dharma-kshetra,	The field of <i>dharma</i> , (see <i>dharma, kshetra</i>)
Dhri,	Sanskrit verb root, meaning “to hold together”
Dhriti,	Steadfastness, persistence of will
Dhritaraashtra,	Literally, the united nation; name of a character in the Mahaabhaarata, the father of the <i>Kauravas</i> .
Dhyaana,	Meditation.
Dronaacharya,	The <i>guru</i> in martial arts of the royal princes in the Mahaabhaarata
Dur,	Sanskrit prefix carrying the sense of bad, evil
Duryodhana,	The eldest prince of the <i>Kauravas</i> in the Mahaabhaarata
Dwapaara-yuga,	The third time cycle in the Hindu cyclic conception of time.
Gandharva,	Celestial beings, associated with music.
Gitaa,	Abbreviation for the <i>Bhagavad Gitaa</i>
Grihastya,	One of the four aashramas or stages of human life ordained by the Upanishads, pertaining to the life of the householder.
Guna,	1. Quality, character, property; 2. The three modes of Nature (<i>sattwa, rajas, tamas</i>)
Guru,	Teacher, spiritual guide, preceptor.
Indra,	A god prominent in the Veda, Master of the World of Light and Immortality, the Lord of the Divine Mind.
Jaagrat,	The waking condition, one of the four states (<i>avasthaa</i>) of Being.
Jagat,	World, constantly changing, transiting system.
Jeevan-mukta,	One who has achieved the realization of spiritual liberation in life
Jiiva,	1. Living creature; 2. The spirit individualized and upholding the living being in its evolution from birth to birth.
Jnaana,	Knowledge, wisdom; supreme self-knowledge.
Jyoti,	Spiritual light.

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms (cont'd)

Kaala,	Spirit of Time.
Kaama,	Desire, one of the four forms of satisfaction of human existence.
Kaarana,	Cause.
Kali-yuga,	The last of the four ages (<i>yuga</i>) in the Hindu cyclic idea of time; the Age of Iron
Karma,	Action, work; law of causation, the power which determines the nature and eventuality of the soul's repeated existence.
Karma-Yoga,	The yoga of desireless works; work as a means to the realization and manifestation of the divine.
Kathaa,	A name of one of the major Upanishads.
Kaurava,	The clan of the <i>Kurus</i> in the Mahaabhaarata, commonly equated with the sons of Dhritaraashtra.
Kena,	A name of one of the major Upanishads, literally, "by whom" or "by what"
Kevalaadvaita Vedaanta,	The school of philosophy founded by Shankara, Absolute Non-Dualism.
Krishna,	An incarnation of the Divine, Arjuna's charioteer and teacher in the Gita
Krita-yuga,	The Age of Fulfillment, one of the ages (<i>yuga</i>) in the Hindu cyclic idea of time
Kshara,	Mobile, mutable
Kshara Purusha,	The soul in nature, the spirit in the mutability of cosmic phenomenon and becoming
Kshatriya,	The second of the four castes of Hinduism (<i>caturvarna</i>), characterized by will, dominance, upholding and fighting for the Truth.
Kshetra,	Field
Kundaalini,	The coiled and sleeping conscious energy within all things.
Kuru,	a character in the Mahaabhaarata, the founder of the royal clan named after him.
Kurukshetra	The battlefield of the Mahabharata, literally, the field of the <i>Kurus</i> .
Leelaa,	The cosmic play
Loka,	World.

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms (cont'd)

Maayaa,	1. In the Vedic sense, comprehensive and creative knowledge; 2. As used by Advaita Vedaanta, phenomenal consciousness, the power of self-illusion in <i>Brahman</i> .
Mahakalii,	One of the four principal personalities of the Divine Mother, embodying Her aspect of glory, passion and Power.
Mahalakshmi:	One of the four principal personalities of the Divine Mother, embodying Her aspect of sweetness, charm and Harmony.
Mahasaraswati,	One of the four principal personalities of the Divine Mother, embodying Her aspect of Skill in Works.
Maheshwari:	One of the four principal personalities of the Divine Mother, embodying Her aspect of wideness and Knowledge.
Mandukya, Mantra,	Literally, the frog. A name for one of the major Upanishads. Sacred syllable or mystic formula; inspired rhythmic utterance, verses of the Veda.
Moksha, Mukti, Naaraayana,	Spiritual liberation. Liberation. Literally, the Way of Man; the Divine, a form of Vishnu; as an incarnation of Vishnu, one of the two brothers, <i>Nara</i> (Man) and <i>Naaraayana</i> (God) who together achieve the Divine Purpose.
Nachiketas,	The young protagonist of the <i>Katha</i> Upanishad, whose dialog with Death (<i>Yama</i>), leading to the secret of Immortality, is the subject of that Upanishad.
Nara,	Man, the human being; mythically, one of two brothers <i>Nara</i> (Man) and <i>Naaraayana</i> (God) who together achieve the Divine Purpose
Nara-Naaraayana, Neti neti,	The twin eternal companions, the human soul and the Divine Person. Literally, "it is not this, it is not this.." - a spiritual discipline which proceeds towards the Transcendent, through progressive exclusion.
Nitya, Nityo'nityaanaam, Ojas, Om,	Eternal. A statement from the Upanishads, the eternal in transient things. Essential energy, result of sexual abstinence. The mantra or expressive sound symbol of the Brahman; original, causeless Sound.
Paandava, Paandu,	Characters in the Mahabharata, sons of the blind king, Pandu. A character from the Mahabharata, the self-exiled brother of King Dhritaraashtra.
Paraa Prakriti, Parabrahman,	The supreme Nature, the conscious Nature of the Divine. Supreme Being

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms (cont'd)

Paramaatman,	Supreme Self.
Parameshwara,	Supreme Lord
Pitri,	The ancestors, a class of seer-yogis referred to in the Vedas as the Forefathers, who have traced out the journey of the human soul.
Praana,	Life-force, expressed through the action of the vital breaths in the subtle body
Prajnaana,	Apprehending consciousness, knowledge cognizing all things as objects confronting its consciousness
Prakriti,	Literally, “working-out”; Nature-Force
Prashna,	Literally, ‘question’; the name of one of the major Upanishads.
Puraana,	A text in a class of sacred writings dealing with the deities.
Purusha,	Person, conscious being
Purushottama,	Supreme Person.
Purnaadvaita	
Vedaanta,	A modern school of philosophy, founded by Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) which holds that the Absolute, God, world and souls are all one; literally, Integral Non-Dualism
Raamaanuja,	A yogi and philosopher (1017-1137), who founded the school of <i>Vishistaadvaita Vedaanta</i>
Raashtra	Demonic being, giant.
Raashtra	Nation.
Rajas,	One of the three modes of Nature (<i>guna</i>) characterized by desire, struggle and action.
Rig,	The earliest of the four Vedas, a collection of hymns to the gods.
Riju,	Straightness, uprightness.
Rishi,	Seer
Ritam,	The dynamic consciousness of the Right, source of <i>dharma</i> .
Saadhaka,	The aspirant towards divine union
Saadhanaa,	The practisant of conscious processes leading to union with the divine.
Saadhramya,	Oneness in law of being and action with the Divine.
Saadhunaam,	Of the saints
Saadrishya,	Likeness to the Divine
Saalokya,	Inhabiting the world of the Divine
Saama,	One of the four Vedas.
Saamipya,	Nearness to the Divine
Saayujya,	Union in consciousness with the Divine.
Samaadhi,	Yogic trance in which the mind acquires the capacity of withdrawing from its waking state into freer and higher states of consciousness.

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms (cont'd)

Samaana,	One of the five <i>pranas</i> , or vital breaths, responsible for maintaining equilibrium of the vital forces and their functions
Samarpana,	Surrender.
Samasti,	Collectivity
Samataa,	Equality, equanimity.
Samgha,	Fellowship and union of those whom a personality and teaching unite.
Samjnaana,	Contact of consciousness with its object through essential sense.
Samraat,	Emperor, ruler of one's world environment.
Samsaara,	Cyclic movement, the world, ordinary life in the ignorance.
Samskaara,	Association, impression, habitual reaction formed by one's past.
Sanaatana,	Everlasting, without beginning or end.
Sanaatana Dharma,	Sanskrit name for Hinduism, the eternal religion.
Sankhya,	An analysis through enumeration of the constituents of Reality and their relationships; one of the six traditional schools of Indian Philosophy.
Sannyaasa,	Renunciation, last of the four stages of life (<i>aashramas</i>) according to <i>Vedaanta</i> .
Saptarshi,	The seven rishis or seers of Vedic thought.
Sat,	Being, existence.
Satasat,	Simultaneously existent and non-existent.
Satchidaananda,	Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, essential attributes of the Supreme Being.
Sattva,	One of the three modes of Nature (<i>guna</i>), characterized by harmony, happiness and light.
Satya-yuga,	The first of the four ages (<i>yuga</i>) in the Hindu cyclic idea of Time; the Age of Gold.
Shaastra,	Moral and social code; any systematized teaching and science.
Shabda,	Sound vibration.
Shakti,	Self-effective Power of the Divine, Consciousness-Force, Divine Mother.
Shankara,	Name of the founder of the <i>Kevalaadvaita Vedaanta</i> philosophy.
Shaanti,	Peace.
Shishya,	Student, disciple.
Sraddhaa,	Faith, constituting belief.
Sruti,	Hearing, spiritual audience, inspiration; a scripture "received" from the Divine.
Suddhaadvaita Vedaanta,	School of philosophy founded by Vallabhacharya, translatable as Pure Non-Dualism.
Shushupti,	Deep sleep, dreamless sleep.
Suudra,	One of the four orders or castes (<i>caturvarna</i>) of Hinduism, characterized by service, labor.

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms (cont'd)

Shuunya,	Void.
Shwetaashvatara,	Name of one of the major Upanishads.
Siddhi,	Perfection that comes through the practice of <i>yoga</i> .
So'ham,	A statement from the Upanishads, literally, "That/He am I"
Sri Aurobindo,	Modern seer and yogi (1872-1950) who founded the philosophy of <i>Purnaadvaita Vedaanta</i> .
Sri Chaitanya,	Saint and mystic from Bengal (1485-1533) who founded the philosophy of ecstatic Divine love known as <i>Achintya Bhedaabheda</i> .
Sthira,	Stillness
Sthita-Prajna,	Established in Consciousness.
Sukham,	Happiness.
Sundaram,	Beauty.
Suukshma,	Subtle.
Svapna,	Dream-state, consciousness corresponding to the subtle life and mind planes.
Swabhaava,	Essential nature and self-principle of being of each becoming.
Swadharma,	One's own law of action; truth of personal self-unfoldment.
Swaraat,	Self-ruler, master of oneself.
Swaruupa,	Essential form or figure, self-form.
Tad ejaati tan naijaati,	Statement from the Isha Upanishad referring to the paradoxical experience of Brahman - "That moves and That does not move.
Tad ekam,	Vedic reference to the Supreme Consciousness - "That One".
Taittiriya,	A name of one of the major Upanishads
Tamas,	One of the three modes of Nature (<i>guna</i>), characterized by inertia and unconsciousness.
Tantra,	1. A <i>yogic</i> system basing its central principle in <i>Shakti</i> or the Divine Mother; 2. A text of the <i>Taantrika</i> system
Tapas,	Heat, self-discipline, concentration of conscious energy.
Tapasyaa,	Effort, austerity of personal will, concentration of conscious energy.
Tat,	That, reference to the nameless aspect of the Divine Consciousness.
Tat twam asi,	"Thou art That" - a statement from the Upanishads.
Tattva,	Fundamental cosmic principle (specially according to Sankhya), "thatness".
Trimuurti,	Triple-aspected, the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, representing respectively the cosmic functions of Creation, Preservation and Destruction.
Ttretaa-yuga,	The second of the four ages (<i>yuga</i>) in the Hindu cyclic idea of time.
Tureeya,	The "fourth" nameless state (<i>avasthaa</i>) of consciousness, according to the Maandukya Upanishad, the Transcendent. Absolute.
Tyaaga,	Renunciation; in the <i>Gita</i> , an inward, rather than an outer renunciation of all attachment to the fruits of action.

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms (cont'd)

Udaana,	One of the five <i>praanas</i> or life-breaths, responsible for an upward movement, connecting the lower to the higher existence.
Umaa,	A name of the Divine Mother.
Upanishad,	Body of Indian spiritual literature; literally, “to sit near”, signifying utterance which proceeds from an intimacy with the Truth.
Vaanarastha,	One of the four aashramas or stages of human life ordained by the Upanishads, pertaining to retirement from active life and withdrawal to the forest.
Vaayu,	The <i>Vedic</i> god related to the wind.
Vaikuntha,	The heaven of Vishnu.
Vaishnava,	Follower of Vishnu or Krishna, follower after Divine Love.
Vaishvaanara,	Aspect of the Divine Self that supports the waking consciousness, sometimes Equated with the god of Fire-offering, <i>Agni</i> .
Vaisya,	One of the four orders or castes (<i>caturvarna</i>) of Hinduism, characterized by circulation, through such means as business, communication, etc.
Vallabhaacharya,	A saint who founded the philosophy of <i>Shuddhadvaita Vedaanta</i> .
Varuna,	Vedic god of Oceanic Vastness; literally, “he of the Wideness”; father of <i>Bhrigu</i> .
Veda,	The earliest ‘scriptural’ literature in Indian spirituality accepted by all later schools as <i>shruti</i> or revealed utterance.
Vedaanta,	Another name for the Upanishads, an early body of Indian spiritual literature; literally, “the end of the Veda”, signifying a continuity with the Veda, as also the of the Veda
Vibhuuti,	Efflorescence of the Divine’s powers; embodied World-Force or human leader.
Vidyaa,	Knowledge in the spiritual sense; consciousness of Unity.
Vijnaana,	A form of Knowledge which sees all things as part of itself, in their essence and in their particulars
Vishishtaadvaita Vedaanta,	A philosophy founded by <i>Raamaanuja</i> , which holds that the Individual soul is a part of God; literally, Qualified Non-Dualism
Vishwaruupa,	The universal form of the Divine.
Vrikodara,	Another name of <i>Bhima</i> ; literally, wolf-bellied.
Vyaana,	One of the five life-breaths or <i>pranas</i> , responsible for pervasion of the body and circulation of vital energy throughout the system.
Vyashti,	The individual.
Yajna,	Sacrifice, action consecrated to the gods or to the Divine Consciousness.
Yajnavalkya,	One of the seers mentioned in the <i>Brihadaraanyaka</i> Upanishad.
Yajur,	One of the four <i>Vedas</i> .
Yama,	Literally, Controller; the Lord of Death, also the Lord of the Law, <i>Dharma</i> .

Glossary of Sanskrit Terms (cont'd)

Yama-niyama,	Rules of moral self-control in <i>yoga</i> .
Yantra,	Engine; in <i>Tantra</i> , a geometrical diagram for meditation which serves as a dynamic Device for realizing a state of consciousness.
Yoga,	1. Union of the human soul with the Divine; 2. Methodized effort towards this union.
Yogi, Yogin,	One who practices <i>yoga</i> .
Yuddha,	War.
Yudhisthira,	A character from the <i>Mahaabhaarata</i> ; the eldest of the <i>Paandavas</i> , noted for his truthfulness; the son of <i>Dharma</i>
Yuga,	An 'age' in the Hindu cyclic idea of time.
Yuga-dharma,	The law of the age, the principles that manifest Truth in the age.
Yuga-Sandhyaa,	Period of transition between two <i>yugas</i> ; the twilight of an age.

Acknowledgements in preparing this glossary of terms:

- 1) "*Glossary of Terms in Sri Aurobindo's Writings*" Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1978.
- 2) "*The Language of the Gods*", Judith M. Tyberg, East-West Cultural Center Los Angeles, 1975.