# Tantra Basics Glossary

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| **agama** | Traditional doctrine, sacred knowledge related to Shaivism as revealed by Lord Shiva; tantric scriptures |
| **apavarga** | Liberation, freedom, salvation; established in one's true nature |
| **apurva** | From "a" meaning not, and "purva" meaning before. That which did not exist, now exists by virtue of practice; a ritual-created *apurva* creates a new pattern which projects into the future and creates a new reality |
| **Bhairava** | Vibrant form of Shiva; often associated with destruction; the form of Shiva that destroys ignorance and grants mental clarity and spiritual illumination |
| **bindu** | Drop, dot; seed or source; union of Shiva and Shakti; synonym for sexual potency which must be stabilized along with the mind and prana to achieve the goal of yoga; in kundalini yoga, it refers to the concentrated energy field at or above the ajna chakra (the eyebrow center) |
| **buddhi** | Rational and intuitive intelligence, one of four functions of mind; faculty of discrimination and wisdom; inner observer |
| **chakra** | An energy center in the subtle body along the spinal axis through which consciousness manifests in human form; lit., a spinning wheel |
| **chakra puja** | A special term referring to the left-hand tantric practice that employs liquor, meat, fish, mudra, physical union or its substitute; the tantric practice which is done by a group of practitioners under the supervision of a master; lit., ritual worship of the chakras |



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| **Chamunda** | An aspect of Durga featured in the *Durga Saptashati*; so named for destroying *Chanda* (aggression) and *Munda*(egoism) |
| **dakini** | A tantric deity; a feminine embodiment of enlightened energy; presiding deity of a chakra |
| **dakshina** | South; right hand; a payment of fees |
| **dakshina marga** | Right-hand path of kaula tantra |
| **deva (s)** | Celestial being, gods, forces of nature; beings with bodies of light |
| **devi** | Goddess, feminine aspect of the Divine; Divine Mother |
| **dharana** | Concentration, stabilization, anchoring; the sixth of eight limbs of the yoga system of the Yoga Sutra; the first stage of meditation marked by an inward turning of the mind and transcendence of body-awareness |
| **Durga** | A form of the Divine Mother with the power of will, knowledge, and action |
| **Durga Saptashati** | Tantric scripture dedicated to different aspects of the Divine Mother Durga; consists of 700 mantras from the Markandeya Purana in the form of a dialogue between a sage, a merchant, and a king |
| **dvandva** | Pairs of opposites, such as light/dark, male/female, hot/cold, pleasure/pain, positive/negative |
| **Ganesha, Ganesh** | Elephant-headed deity; in Tantric tradition, he is the visionary within us, the indomitable will within, the remover of obstacles, our own intelligence and conscience, and our constant guide and friend. He stands as the gatekeeper at the door of our conscience. |
| **granthi** | Forces that bind consciousness into individual form; brahma granthi at the muladhara (root) cakra, vishnu granthi at the heart center, and rudra granthi at the ajna cakra; lit., knot |
| **guru** | Teacher, spiritual guide; lit., dispeller of darkness |



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| **guru chakra** | Energy center above the eyebrow center that connects to the inner guru and primoridal master |
| **hatha yoga** | Yoga system that works with asana, pranayama, cleansing practices, mudras, and meditation to balance the solar/lunar, masculine/feminine energies; the yoga of perfecting the body and energy system of the body; lit., forceful |
| **havan** | Fire offering ritual, usually involving, ghee, herbs, grains and other ingredients offered to a sanctified fire with mantras |
| **homa** | Ritual offering, especially of ghee to a consecrated fire |
| **ida nadi** | Left-side axial energy channel in the subtle body; one of three principle energy channels governing states of awareness; terminates in the left nostril, associated with the lunar, feminine, cooling energies |
| **ishta deva** | Personal form of the Divine; a personified form of a mantra |
| **jalandhara bandha** | Chin lock; a hatha yoga practice to stabilize the cervical spine and connect the heart and throat chakras with energy centers in the head |
| **japa** | Mental repetition of a mantra, which gradually awakens the energy vibrations of the mantra |
| **kama** | Desire; an intrinsic aspect of divine will; the first step of the descent of consciousness toward manifestation of the material world |
| **kama tattva** | Primordial will, intention, and desire to embrace the life force; essential nature, true reality |
| **Kamadeva** | Primordial master who sits deep in the cave of our heart and drives the chariot of life to its destination; the spirit of guru shakti, the seer of Sri Vidya mantra, teacher and primordial master of the Sri Chakra |
| **kanda** | Bulb; egg-shaped structure in subtle body which is the origin of nadis; located in lower pelvis at the perineum |
| **karana sharira** | Causal body or linga shariram |



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| **karmashaya** | Storehouse of samskaras; a well-defined group of karmas, stored in one place with the ability to mature at the same time and to be processed in a particular manner; lit., pouch, basket, package, container, repository of karma |
| **Kaula** | School of tantra which uses worldly means and objects and external ritual for spiritual unfoldment |
| **kula; kula devi** | Lineage; family deity; spiritual lineage |
| **kunda** | Pond; fire pit; resting place of kundalini; sacred fireplace |
| **kundalini** | "Coiled up energy"; the dormant potential energy in all living beings; self-contained totally independent locus point; a point of reference which is saturated with the principle of creativity |
| **kundalini shakti** | The primordial Divine force; the dormant energy which resides in the human body in the latent form and can be awakened with yoga |
| **Kundalini yoga** | A systematic method of awakening the dormant force and leading it step by step to the *sahasrara*, the highest center of consciousness |
| **Lalita** | The goddess of Sri Chakra and Sri Vidya; Kameshvara is her consort |
| **Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra** | Famous healing mantra from the *Yajur Veda* and further elaborated in tantric scriptures; the mantra of the great conqueror of death; the form of Shiva that grants immortality and freedom from all pains and miseries |
| **mani** | Gem lit by its own inherent light; in mythology, a cobra has a mani in its hood, and he is lifeless without his mani; a mani bestows special powers. |
| **manipura chakra** | Energy center associated with the navel and solar plexus, and the fire element; *pura* means filled or full; the body is an island of gems of self-efflugence |
| **mantra** | Revealed sounds used for meditation or to effect change on the subtle level; that which guides and protects; usually passed from guru to student via initiation |



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| **Matangi** | A goddess often associated with Sarasvati, the goddess of wisdom and fine arts |
| **mulabandha** | Root lock; an important bandha which restrains downward flowing pranic energy |
| **nadi** | Energy channel of the subtle body in which prana moves; conduit for the life force; the three main nadis are ida, pingala, and sushumna |
| **nadi shodhanam** | A pranayama practice of inhaling and exhaling through alternate nostrils; used to purify nadis and balance the nervous system; lit., channel purification |
| **nauli kriya** | A practice for the navel center; a vigorous rotation of the abdominal muscles, one of the six cleansing actions of hatha yoga |
| **navarna mantra** | The nine-syllabled mantra of the Divine Mother; a particular variation of the mantra which belongs to the Sri Vidya tradition. |
| **Parashurama** | Disciple of sage Dattatreya; the sage who received the knowledge of Tripura; and important sage in Sri Vidya tradition |
| **Patanjali** | Sage who compiled the Yoga Sutra around the second century BC; also authored an authoritative commentary on Panini's Sanskrit grammar and an Ayurvedic text |
| **pingala nadi** | Right-side principle energy channel governing the flow of the life force and states of consciousness; terminates in the right nostril; associated with solar, heating, and masculine energies |
| **prakriti** | Primordial nature, the ultimate cause of the material world; primordial phenomenal world, comprised of three primary qualities (gunas) sattva, rajas, tamas, whose interplay permeates the material world; in Ayurveda, an individual's inborn tendencies and inherent nature |
| **prana** | Life force, the vital force that nourishes both body and mind; the breath of life; five major aspects are prana, apana, vyana, udana, and samana; and five minor aspects: naga, kurma, krikara, devadatta, and dhananjaya; also the cosmic vibratory power underlying creation |



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| **prana anusadhana** | Examination, study, research, or investigation of prana; usually in the context of breath awareness training or pranayama |
| **prana dharana** | Concentration and stabilization of the pranic force using pranayama and inner focus to direct and hold prana in a specific inner field; activating, intensifying, and stablizing prana shakti |
| **prana pratishtha** | Establishing and localizing prana, often in a physical object; invoking a divine energy in the heart for meditation |
| **prana shakti** | Awakened aspect of the primordial pool of consciousness and energy; the life force, resulting in vigor, self-confidence, motivation and insight |
| **pranayama** | Breath control; restraint and augmentation of prana; the most important technique of hatha yoga; the fourth limb of ashtanga yoga of the Yoga Sutra; breathing techniques leading to the mastery over the pranic force; the science of prana that enables an aspirant to gain access to the pranamaya kosha, the pranic body that lies beyond the physical body |
| **prarabhda karma** | Karmas that have begun producing their fruits, and are in the process of manifesting in the form of destiny |
| **purana** | Collection of legends and myth-like stories carrying the message and meaning of the Upanishads and Vedas; lit., ancient |
| **purashcharana** | The practice of completing a specific amount of mantra japa in a specific period of time while observing a specific set of disciplines; lit., moving ahead, or taking the next step |
| **Rudra** | Another name for Siva, especially the aspect that destroys the world or those tendencies that keep us caught in the worldly net |
| **rudra granthi** | Rudra's knot; one of the three knots which block pranic flow through *sushuma* nadi |
| **sadhana** | Spiritual practice; spiritual path to realization; spiritual discipline |



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| **samaya** | The purely meditative school of tantra in which all practices are done while maintaining an awareness of oneness with the Divine within |
| **samsara** | Cycle of birth and death; the phenomenal world, worldly cycles, the constant flux of events which is the realm of karma, birth, death, suffering, and ordinary human life |
| **samskara, sanskara** | Subtle impressions of our actions stored in the unconscious mind; latent mental or behavior pattern produced by past experiences |
| **sankhya, samkhya** | Philosophical system related to yoga; one of six darshanas of Indian thought, based on duality of prakriti (material and mental nature) and purusha (pure spirit); systematized by Sage Kapila circa 600 BC |
| **Saundarya-Lahari** | Important Tantric text attributed to Shankaracharya, delineating the practice and philosophy of Sri Vidya |
| **shakti** | Creative principle of existence; the feminine active power of a deity; the Divine Mother; consort of Shiva; the vibrant self-conscious energy through which the whole universe evolves |
| **shakti sadhana** | Spiritual discipline that leads to the realization of Shakti, the divine force within |
| **shariram** | Body; the three bodies are the causal body (karana or linga shariram), the subtle body (sukshma shariram), and the gross body (sthula shariram) |
| **Sri Chakra** | Geometrical form of Sri Vidya; the highest yantra which is a complete map of the microcosm and macrocosm; the chakra of the Divine Mother Sri |
| **Sri Vidya** | The most complete and comprehensive of the ten Mahavidyas, or paths to ultimate realization; presiding deity of Sri Cakra; lit., auspicious wisdom. |
| **sthula shariram** | Gross body composed of material elements (bhuta) |
| **sukshma shariram** | Subtle body; inner or psychic level of existence which remains after death of physical body |



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| **surya bhedana** | A pranayama practice for enlivening the solar plexus and navel center; similar to bhastrika pranayama, surya bhedi strongly activates and expands the pranic body from the navel center, and like nadi shodhanam, equally stimulates the flow of energy in the two master nadis, ida and pingala |
| **tanmatra** | The five sensory potentials or subtle elements, the subtle aspect of the material elements of sense experience; the potentials of sound (*shabda)*, touch *(sparsha)*, form (*rupa*), taste (*rasa*), and odor (*gandha*) |
| **Tantra, Tantrism** | Spiritual path which includes philosophy and practical instruction in use of hatha yoga, pranayama, meditation, mantra, yantra, mudras, rituals and hundreds of esoteric techniques for engendering worldly and spiritual prosperity |
| **tattva (s)** | Principles or elements; according to Samkhya philosophy there are 24 and according to Shaktism there are 36; lit., that-ness |
| **uddiyana bandha** | Upward flying lock; one of three important bandhas in hatha yoga which connects energy from pelvic centers and the heart center; a contraction and upward drawing of the abdomen |
| **vasana** | Traits of personality; combinations of samskaras (subliminal activators); inclinations produced by samskaras; lit., fragrance |
| **yajna** | Ritual; fire ceremony; the ceremonial ritual of life; a key concept in Vedic philosophy and practice; sacrifice of lower desires to achieve cosmic awareness |



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