

Siddhartha: Glossary of Sanskrit Terms, Deities, Persons, Places, and Things

Agni – Hindu fire deity; the divine personification of the “fire of sacrifice.”

Atman – The ultimate essence of the universe; that which animates us, gives us breath and spirit.

banyan – An East Indian tree whose branches sprout numerous trunks that grow downward into the soil.

bo tree – According to Buddhist traditions, the Buddha sat under one when he attained Enlightenment.

Brahman – The eternal essence from which all created things emanate.

Brahmin – A member of the highest-ranking social class, a class of priests.

Buddha – Translates as “One who has awakened” or “the one who has understood”; more of a title or honorific than a proper name.

eightfold path – The path that leads to the defeat of desire and, consequently, the end of suffering; involves 1) right views, 2) right thoughts, 3) right speech, 4) right conduct, 5) right livelihood, 6) right effort, 7) right mindfulness, 8) right meditation.

Four Noble Truths – The Buddha’s four basic principles are: 1) All life is suffering; 2) Suffering leads to desire (which, in turn, leads to suffering); 3) An end to desire will bring an end to suffering; 4) In order to end desire, one must follow the eightfold path.

Krishna – An Indian deity, son of Vasudeva, with several aspects to his nature; one in particular, Govinda Krishna, is the lord of cowherds.

Magadha – An ancient kingdom of India that contains many sites Buddhists consider holy.

Mara – “Lord of the Senses,” one who was bent of distracting monks and Buddhas-to-be during meditation.

Maya – The principle of “appearance,” and the illusory nature of the universe; what we see around us is unreal, but Maya displays it as real.

Nirvana – The highest spiritual state; freedom from passion, suffering, and rebirth; defeating the “wheel” of birth and death (see ***Samsara***)

Om – A mystical word whose simplicity belies its complexity; extremely difficult to pronounce perfectly because its pronunciation requires total concentration (i.e., the elimination of all other thoughts and distractions); it is often the object of meditations, and many prayers and chants begin and end with “Om.”

Prajapati – “Lord of Creatures”; the creator of the Universe.

Sakyamuni – “Sage of the Sakya clan,” a historical designation for Siddhartha Gautama.

Samadhi – The serene, unifying concentration achieved during successful meditation.

Samana – One of a class of wandering ascetics in ancient India.

Samsara – The wheel of birth and death; the unending cycle of rebirth; what we can see and believe to be “existence.” (It is sometimes referred to as ***Sansara***.)

Satyam – The real; that which abides and exists beyond ***Maya***.

Upanishads – The concluding portion of the ***Vedas***, containing the teachings of the ancient sages; they teach that the Self in a human being is identical to/mirrors ***Brahman***.

Vedas – Sacred scriptures of the Hindu tradition, consisting of four books.

Vishnu – One of the principal Hindu deities, the protector and preserver of the world. (***Krishna*** is actually one of his incarnations.)