

Glossary of Theosophical Terms*

Ākāśa, (Sanskrit) “brilliant, shining, luminous,” the fifth cosmic element, the “quintessence,” called Aether by the ancient Stoics; the subtle, supersensuous spiritual essence which pervades all space.

Arūpa, (Skt) “formless,” in the sense that the forms in the spiritual worlds are more ethereal than are those of the rūpa (form) worlds. In the septenary cosmos, the three higher planes are termed arūpa planes.

Ātma-buddhi, (Skt) the divine-spiritual part of a human being.

Ātman, (Skt) “self,” the highest part of a human being: pure consciousness, that cosmic self which is the same in every human being. Ātman is the first principle in man; used also for the universal self or spirit.

Auric Egg, ranges from the divine to the astral-physical; the seat of all the monadic, spiritual, intellectual, mental, passionate, and vital energies and faculties.

Buddhi, (Skt) “to enlighten, to perceive, to awaken,” the faculty which manifests as understanding, discrimination, and intuition. Buddhi is the second principle in man and the garment or vehicle of ātman.

*Adapted from G. de Purucker’s *Occult Glossary* and the *Encyclopedic Theosophical Glossary* (www.theosociety.org/pasadena/etgloss/etg-hp.htm).

Buddhi-manas, (Skt) the higher ego, the principle of essential self-consciousness, especially when considered as enlightened by ātman.

Chāya, (Skt) “shadow, copy,” the astral body or image of a person.

Dhyān-Chohans, (Skt-Tibetan) “lords of meditation,” cosmic or planetary spirits. As the summit of the Hierarchy of Light, they embody the ideation of the cosmic Logos. Man in his higher nature is an embryo dhyān-chohan.

Kāma, (Skt) “desire,” the fourth principle in man, the impelling force in the human constitution; colorless, neither good nor bad, and becomes such only as the mind and soul direct its use. It is the seat of impulses, desires, and aspirations, considered in their energetic aspect.

Kāma-rūpa, (Skt) “desire body,” the part of man’s inner constitution in which dwell desires, affections, hates, loves — the various mental and psychical energies.

Laya-center, (Skt) “dissolution,” a point of disappearance, a zero-point; any point in space which becomes the center of active life, first on a higher plane and later descending into manifestation through and by the laya-centers of the lower planes; also any point where substance re-becomes homogeneous.

Loka(s), (Skt) “place, locality,” more frequently a “world, sphere, or plane.” There are rūpa-lokas and arūpa-lokas. Lokas are inseparable from *talas* as the two poles of a magnet.

Mahat, (Skt) “great,” cosmic mind or intelligence, the fundamental cause of the intelligent operations of nature seen as an organism; the cosmic noumenon of matter.

Manas, (Skt) “to think, to cogitate, to reflect,” the center of the ego-consciousness in man. When imbodyed manas is dual, gravitating in its higher aspects toward buddhi and in its lower aspects toward kāma. The first is intuitive mind, the second the animal, ratiocinative consciousness, the lower mentality and passions of the personality. Manas is the third principle in man.

Mānasaputras, (Skt) from *manas*, “mind,” and *putra*, “son,” “sons of mind.” *Mānasa*, “belonging to the mind or spirit” indicates beings who are endowed with the fire of self-consciousness which enables them to carry on trains of self-conscious thought and meditation. Hence the mānasaputras are children of cosmic mind, a race of dhyān-chohans particularly evolved along the lines of the mānasic principle. The mānasaputras are a mystery in the human constitution: they are both ourselves and a descent into us of our higher selves. They are entities from the buddhic hierarchy of compassion, from the luminous arc of evolving nature.

Māyā, (Skt) from *mā*, “to measure,” and by extension of meaning “to effect, to form, to limit,” translated as “illusion,” however, not meaning that things do not exist, but that we are blinded and our mind colored by our own thoughts, and do not as yet arrive at the real interpretation and meaning of the world around us. “Maya or illusion is an element which enters into all finite things, for everything that exists has only a relative, not an absolute, reality, since the appearance which the hidden noumenon assumes for any observer depends upon his power of cognition” (*SD* 1:39).

Māyāvi-rūpa, (Skt) from *māyāvi*, “illusory,” and *rūpa*, “form,” a “thought-body” or “illusory-body,” a higher astral-mental form.

Monad, “individual, atom,” from the Greek *monas*, “one, unit.” A spiritual entity which, to human awareness, is indivisible; a divine-spiritual life-atom in contrast to that of the physical atom which is divisible, a composite heterogeneous particle. Monads are eternal, unitary, individual life-centers, conscious-ness-centers, self-motivated, self-conscious, in infinitely varying degrees, the ultimate elements of the universe.

Mūlaprakṛiti, (Skt) from *mūla*, “root,” and *prakṛiti*, “nature,” root-matter or root-nature; undifferentiated cosmic substance in its highest form, the abstract substance or essence of what later through various differentiations become the prakṛitis, the various forms of matter.

Parabrahman, (Skt) from *para*, “beyond,” and *Brahman*, “universal self or spirit,” that which is beyond Brahman; the self-enduring, eternal, self-sufficient cause of all, the one essence of everything in the cosmos.

Paramātman, (Skt) from *para*, “beyond,” and *ātman*, “self,” the “primordial self” or the “self beyond,” the universal spirit-soul. Paramātman consequently means the “supreme self,” or the summit or flower of a hierarchy, the root-base or source of that cosmic self.

Planetary Chain. Every cosmic body or globe, be it sun or planet, nebula or comet, atom or electron, is a composite entity comprised of inner and invisible energies and substances, and of an outer and often visible physical body. These elements all together are the principles

or elements of every self-contained entity or individual life-center. A planetary chain is an entity composed of seven, ten, or twelve such multiprincipled globes, and which taken as a unit, forms one planetary chain. All celestial bodies are multiprincipled entities as man is, who is a copy in the small of what the universe is in the great.

Prajāpati, (Skt) from *pra*, “forth,” *jan*, “to be born,” and *pati*, “lord,” lord or master of progeny. Brahmā as Prajāpati symbolizes the collective creators of the universe with all its numberless hierarchical productions of things movable and seemingly immovable.

Prāṇa, (Skt) from *pra*, “before,” and *an*, “to breathe, to blow, to live,” usually translated “life,” but rather the psycho-electrical field manifesting in the individual as vitality, commonly called “life principle.” Prāṇa is the fifth principle in man.

Root-races. During evolution on our earth, mankind as a life-wave passes through seven evolutionary stages called Root-races. Each such Root-race contains many and various races as the word is commonly understood. All human beings alive today are part of the fifth Root-race.

Rūpa, (Skt) “form, image,” signifies an atomic or monadic aggregation about the central and indwelling consciousness, forming a vehicle or body thereof, and is contrasted with arūpa (formless).

Sthūla-śarīra, (Skt) *sthūla*, “coarse, gross,” bulky, differentiated matter, *śarīra*, “form”; the physical body, the seventh principle in man.

Svabhavat, (Skt) from *sva*, “self,” and *bhū*, “to become, to be,” that which becomes itself, which develops from within outwardly its essential self by emanation or evolution.

Tala(s), (Skt) “inferior world,” used both in contrast to and in conjunction with *loka* (place, world), stands for the material aspects or substance-principles, in contrast to the lokas which denote the spiritual aspects of the universe.