NIRVAN SUTRA

Nirvan Sutra

Terms & Definitions

A structured seeker glossary for the Path of Knowledge • arranged across 17 stages • with essential visual maps

Words are pointers. Test them in your own experience.

This glossary follows the 17 stages and question-answer teachings of Nirvan Sutra. It does not claim that every term has one final meaning across all traditions. Its purpose is to make the meaning intended in this course precise, so that a seeker does not carry one word through the course with several conflicting meanings.

Best way to read: Do not memorize a definition. Read the term and then ask what it points to in direct experience. Where the word no longer connects with experience, a real question should begin.

01 • Understand the sequence first

The 17 stages, from ignorance to a life of steady wisdom, form a teaching sequence. Do not detach advanced terms from the distinctions established earlier.

02 • What kind of 'knowing'?

Information about an object, intellectual understanding, and recognition of one's own nature are not the same thing.

03 • Be careful with experiences

Peace, light, bliss, emptiness or samadhi may be meaningful, yet anything that comes and goes is not treated here as the final Truth.

04 • This is not escape from life

Non-duality does not erase the body, relationships, boundaries, duties or practical distinctions. Clarity must also express itself in ordinary life.

MAP 01

The 17-stage Path of Knowledge in Nirvan Sutra

This is not a ladder on which each earlier stage is discarded. Later stages refine the same distinctions until understanding becomes ordinary living.

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 01
Ignorance

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 02
Inquiry

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 03
Discernment (Viveka)

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 04
Dispassion (Vairagya)

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 05
Listening (Shravana)

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 06
Reflection (Manana)

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 07
Abidance (Nididhyasana)

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 08
Neti-Neti

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 09
Witnessing

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 10
Experience

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 11
Experiencer

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 12
Self-Inquiry

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 13
Self-Knowledge

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 14
Knowledge of Brahman

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 15
Unobjectifiability

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 16
Emptiness & Silence

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 17
Life of Steady Wisdom

Five teaching movements

- 01-04 • Identity and attachment
- 05-07 • Listen, clarify, abide
- 08-12 • From seer-seen to Self-inquiry
- 13-15 • Self, Brahman and unobjectifiability
- 16-17 • From silence to natural living

MAP 02

Four core distinctions - the spine of the course

When confusion appears, return to these four distinctions. Most of the glossary deepens one of them.

Information ≠ Self-knowledge

Knowing about an object, theory or scripture is different from clearly recognizing the knower.

Seen ≠ Seer

Body, thought, feeling, memory and even the 'I'-thought can be known. What knows them?

Experience ≠ Truth

An experience appears and disappears. The course examines the ground in which experiences arise and subside.

Non-duality ≠ denial of practical life

Recognizing one ground does not erase distinctions of person, relationship, action, boundary and responsibility.

01

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 01

Ignorance

The error of identity

CENTRAL INQUIRY What assumption am I using to define myself?

Nirvan Sutra 01

The name of this 17-stage course. Its films move step by step from ignorance to a life of steady wisdom, with one main film and ten question-answer films in each stage.

Path of Knowledge (Jnana Marga) 01

A path that uses understanding, inquiry and direct recognition to examine truth. Its aim is not to accumulate information, but to recognize the knower to whom information, thoughts and experiences appear.

Knowledge (Jnana) 01

Depending on context, knowledge can mean information about something or clear recognition of one's own nature. The course repeatedly distinguishes these two senses.

Spiritual practice (Sadhana) 01

Living the inquiry through listening, reflection, observation and abiding in understanding, rather than merely thinking about it. Its purpose is not to build a new spiritual identity.

Seeker (Sadhaka) 01

One who honestly tests the inquiry in life. Being a seeker is not a spiritual status; it begins with listening, examining, seeing and admitting mistaken assumptions.

True nature / essential nature 01

The fundamental knowing in which body, thought, feeling, memory and social role are experienced. It is not presented as a new object or personality to acquire.

Ignorance (Avidya) 01

Not recognizing one's true nature and taking oneself to be only the body, mind, story or image. It is an error of identity, not a lack of education.

Ignorance of an object 01

Not knowing an external fact, skill or object, such as not knowing a route. This can usually be corrected through information or practice.

Ignorance of the knower 01

Knowing many things while never examining the 'I' that claims to know them, and automatically identifying that 'I' with body, mind or self-image.

Learned identity

01

The picture 'this is what I am' built from name, roles, praise, criticism and memory. The course asks whether what is learned, changing and observed can be the unchanging Self.

Ego (Ahamkara)

01

Not merely pride, but the claimant 'I am this body-mind', 'I am the doer', or 'this is my experience'. Practical personhood continues; bondage begins when this limited identity is taken as the whole Self.

Sense of incompleteness

01

The conclusion 'something is missing in me' that arises when one identifies with a limited self-image. The mind then searches for wholeness in achievement, possession, approval or experience.

Desire

01

A movement toward an object, condition or result. It becomes binding when it carries the promise, 'Once I get this, I will finally be complete.'

Fear

01

The expectation that losing a valued object, image, relationship or achievement will diminish or destroy 'me'. The course distinguishes practical caution from fear generated by a false identity.

Comparison

01

Measuring one's worth through another person's position or achievement. It often rests on the belief that 'I' am an achievement or social image.

Suffering

01

The course distinguishes painful experience from the added identity 'I am this pain'. It does not deny pain; it asks whether the knower is limited to the experience being known.

Rope-snake illustration

01

In dim light a rope may be mistaken for a snake and real fear can arise. Light does not create a new rope; it removes the error. The illustration points to ignorance and correct recognition.

02

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 02

Inquiry

When the question turns inward

CENTRAL INQUIRY

Am I seeking more information, or the truth of myself?

Ordinary curiosity

02

The wish to collect new information. It is useful, yet one answer may simply lead to the next fact; spiritual inquiry turns toward the one who knows all facts.

Spiritual inquiry

02

A sincere exploration of questions such as 'Who am I?' and 'What does not change?' It does not close the question with a borrowed answer, but tests it in experience.

Right question

02

A question that is honest, connected to lived experience, and ultimately turns back toward the questioner. For example: from 'When will liberation happen?' to 'Who is the one who wants liberation?'

Doubt / uncertainty

02

The mind's lack of clarity about a teaching. Rather than suppressing doubt or rejecting everything automatically, reflection identifies and examines the specific doubt.

Guru

02

In this course, a competent teacher who understands the teaching and points out errors the seeker may not see. The guru does not experience on the seeker's behalf; the role is to clarify seeing.

Shastra / scripture

02

Especially the Upanishadic and Vedantic teaching used here as a map for inquiry. A map gives direction, but its meaning must still be understood and tested.

Vedanta / Upanishads

02

The teaching tradition and primary texts used here to examine Self, Brahman, ignorance and liberation. Their words are pointers for inquiry, not slogans to be repeated blindly.

Non-duality (Advaita)

02

The view that ultimate reality is not divided into two independent fundamental realities. In this course its central claim is the non-separation of Atman and Brahman, while practical differences remain valid in daily life.

Mumukshutva

02

A deep and serious longing for freedom from ignorance and bondage. It is more than casual curiosity, yet even the identity 'I will become liberated' must eventually be examined.

Bondage

02

Taking one's completeness to depend on a changing identity, object or result. The course locates the root spiritual bondage in mistaken self-identification, even when outer circumstances are also difficult.

Liberation (Moksha)

02

Freedom from the false identity produced by ignorance and from the bondage built on it. It is not presented as travelling to another place or acquiring a permanently special experience.

03

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 03

Discernment (Viveka)

Distinguishing the changing from the knower

CENTRAL INQUIRY

Are what changes and what knows the change the same?

Discernment (Viveka)

03

Clarity that distinguishes the eternal from the non-eternal and the seer from the seen. It is not cleverness or argument; it is a disciplined distinction within one's own experience.

Intellect (Buddhi)

03

The aspect of mind that reasons, decides and solves problems. It is an important instrument, yet its thoughts and conclusions are also known and therefore are not equated with the final knower.

Eternal (Nitya)

03

That which does not come and go with a particular state and in which changing experiences appear. In this course the term points toward awareness, not simply something of very long duration.

Non-eternal (Anitya)

03

Whatever arises, changes and ends: bodily states, thoughts, emotions, roles and pleasant experiences. The issue is not to reject them, but not to make them the basis of permanent completeness.

Seer / Drik

03

The one that sees or knows. Inquiry moves from objects to senses, from senses to mind, and finally toward awareness, which is not itself presented as another seen object.

Seen / Drishya

03

Anything that can be seen, felt or known, including the body, thought, memory, emotion and even the 'I'-thought. 'Seen' does not mean worthless; it means known as an object of awareness.

Fact

03

Something that can be checked in a situation, such as the words actually spoken. Practical discernment separates facts from the fear, interpretation or imagined future built around them.

Assumption / interpretation

03

A learned meaning the mind places on facts, for example 'criticism means I am a failure'. It may or may not be true and should be tested before being treated as reality.

Belief

03

A statement accepted without one's own examination. The course distinguishes belief from shraddha: shraddha remains open to testing, while blind belief avoids inquiry.

Imagination

03

A mental picture or possibility. Like imagining a snake on a rope, it can produce real emotional effects without being an examined fact.

Truth (Satya)

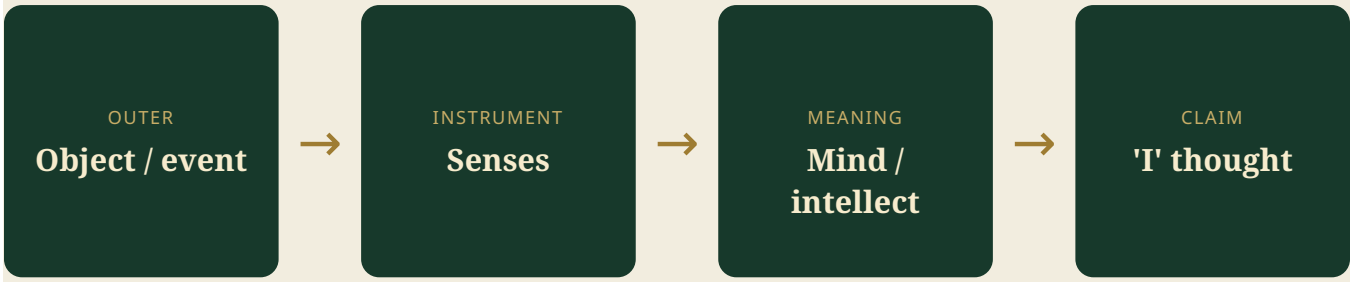
03

In the Vedantic sense used here, that which does not depend on something else for its reality and is not cancelled by changing states. It is distinguished from both temporary experience and ordinary factual correctness.

MAP 03 • DISCERNMENT

From the seen toward the seer

This map does not install a tiny observer inside the mind. It simply identifies each known layer and asks whether knowing itself belongs to the same category.



IN WHAT ARE ALL THESE KNOWN?

Knowing / Awareness

Awareness does not appear as one more seen object; this is the subtle direction of seer-seen discernment.

04

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 04

Dispassion (Vairagya)

Inner freedom while living in the world

CENTRAL INQUIRY **Does my completeness depend on an object, person or outcome?**

Attachment / attraction (Raga)

04

Clinging to an object, person, role or result in such a way that peace and identity seem to depend on it. Enjoyment and care do not automatically equal raga.

Dispassion (Vairagya)

04

Inner freedom from the grip of attachment. It is not an instruction to abandon family, work or the world, and it is not emotional dullness.

Clinging (Asakti)

04

Attachment in which another person or object is expected to fill an inner lack, often producing fear of loss and a wish to control.

Love

04

Open care for another's well-being and freedom. The course separates love from possession and control; wise boundaries and responsibility are compatible with love.

Despair / indifference

04

A heavy or shut-down state that may follow hurt. Vairagya is different: it is freedom born of understanding, with room for life, action and love.

Suppression of desire

04

Forcing a desire down instead of understanding it. The deeper inquiry examines the promise that an object will provide permanent wholeness.

Enjoyment (Bhoga)

04

The experiencing of pleasure through objects or states. It may give temporary relief, but does not necessarily remove the underlying conclusion of incompleteness.

Escape / external renunciation

04

Leaving a situation, which can sometimes be practically appropriate, but is not automatically vairagya. Inner clinging can continue after outer renunciation, and freedom can exist while remaining in ordinary life.

05

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 05

Listening (Shravana)

Receiving the teaching as a teaching about oneself

CENTRAL INQUIRY **What is this teaching saying about my own experience?**

Shravana

05

Careful, repeated listening to a clear teaching about one's nature from a competent teacher and scripture. Merely hearing or memorizing words is not enough; their intended meaning must be understood.

Shraddha

05

Open trust that treats the teaching and teacher as worthy of sincere examination. It does not require shutting down questions; it supports inquiry rather than replacing it.

Mahavakya

05

A principal Upanishadic statement that points directly to the identity of Atman and Brahman, rather than merely providing information about an object.

Tat Tvam Asi

05

'That you are.' 'That' points to the ground of the whole, while 'you' points not to the limited body-mind image but to the knowing Self.

Shama

05

A capacity for inner quiet and for managing mental distraction. It is not warfare against thought, but a mind sufficiently available for listening and inquiry.

Dama

05

Wise regulation of the senses: not automatically chasing everything seen, heard or desired, so attention is available for understanding.

Uparati

05

Freedom from unnecessary outer and inner agitation, allowing the mind to rest in appropriate duties and inquiry. It is not arbitrary withdrawal from the world.

Titiksha

05

The maturity to endure discomfort, opposition and changing conditions without immediately being swept into reaction. It does not mean silently accepting genuine harm or injustice.

Samadhana

05

Steadiness of attention and intellect that repeatedly returns to the central inquiry. This discipline should not be confused with a special meditative samadhi state.

Six disciplines

05

Shama, dama, uparati, titiksha, shraddha and samadhana: qualities that prepare the mind to listen and understand. They are not presented as proof of final realization or spiritual superiority.

06

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 06

Reflection (Manana)

Testing what has been heard until doubt becomes clear

CENTRAL INQUIRY

What exactly is my doubt, and does examination resolve it?

Manana

06

Reflecting on the received teaching with coherent reasoning, experience and, when needed, the teacher's help until specific doubts are resolved.

Reasoning (Tarka)

06

A tool for testing contradiction and mistaken assumptions. It clears the path; it is not an instrument for turning awareness into an external object.

Conviction / clarity (Nishchaya)

06

Firm understanding that remains after examination has removed substantial doubt. It is not confidence manufactured by repeating a statement.

Vision / way of seeing (Drishti)

06

When a remembered conclusion becomes something directly evident in lived experience. Mature understanding begins to shape reactions and choices.

Empirical / practical level (Vyavahara)

06

The everyday level where objects have different functions and people have roles, relationships, decisions and responsibilities. 'All is one' is not used to erase these distinctions.

Ultimate standpoint (Paramartha)

06

The standpoint in which changing names and forms are understood as dependent upon one ground. Practical and ultimate statements must be read according to their level and purpose.

07

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 07

Abidance (Nididhyasana)

Resting repeatedly in clear understanding

CENTRAL INQUIRY How can clear understanding become natural in life?

Nididhyasana

07

Repeatedly and naturally abiding in the understanding clarified through shravana and manana, so the old habit of false identification weakens. It is not mechanical repetition or the production of a special state.

Meditation (Dhyana)

07

A practice that can make the mind steady, subtle and observant. In Nirvan Sutra, nididhyasana is centered not on producing an experience but on remaining clear in the recognition already understood.

Concentration (Ekagrata)

07

The capacity to keep attention on one theme. It supports study and meditation, but duration of focus on an object is not itself Self-knowledge.

Return of old identity

07

Even after understanding, the feeling 'I am only this body-mind' can return through habit. It is not necessarily failure; the returning identity itself can be observed and re-examined.

Vasanas

07

Old mental tendencies, preferences and habitual reactions shaped by conditioning. They may continue to arise after understanding and can be seen without turning them into a new self-judgment.

Signs of stabilizing understanding

07

Less reactivity, quicker recovery, less compulsion to protect self-image, more compassion and fewer unresolved doubts. These are practical signs, not certificates of spiritual perfection.

MAP 04 • THE THREEFOLD PRACTICE

Shravana → Manana → Nididhyasana

Do not treat these as unrelated practices. They are one movement: receive the teaching, clear doubt, and allow clear understanding to become natural.

SHRAVANA

Hear the intended meaning clearly

→

MANANA

Examine and resolve specific doubt

→

NIDIDHYASANA

Abide repeatedly in clear understanding

Result: a change of vision

A remembered answer gradually becomes a living way of seeing, and that clarity begins to express itself in reactions, relationships and decisions.

08

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 08

Neti-Neti

Removing mistaken identity

CENTRAL INQUIRY If something is observed, am I only that?

Neti-Neti

08

'Not this, not this': a method of refusing to equate the final Self with anything that can be seen, felt or thought. It does not destroy body, emotion or world; it removes false identity with them.

Mental modification (Vritti)

08

A wave of thought or feeling arising in the mind. Because it can be noticed, it belongs to the 'seen' side of seer-seen inquiry; the 'I'-thought is also a vritti.

Body

08

The real practical instrument through which life is lived. Its sensations and states change and are known; 'I am not only the body' does not mean neglecting the body.

Memory

08

A present mental reappearance of a past experience, often carrying fresh interpretation and feeling. The course questions identifying one's whole being with memory or life-story.

Senses

08

The capacities of seeing, hearing and so on that bring information into experience. They are necessary instruments, yet what knows their information remains the focus of inquiry.

Role / self-image

08

Social and mental identities such as parent, employee, scholar, successful or unsuccessful. They can be useful in life but are changing and known.

Mind

08

The activity of thought, desire, emotion and meaning-making. Quiet and disturbed states of mind are both known, so changes in mind do not automatically mean changes in the knower.

Knower

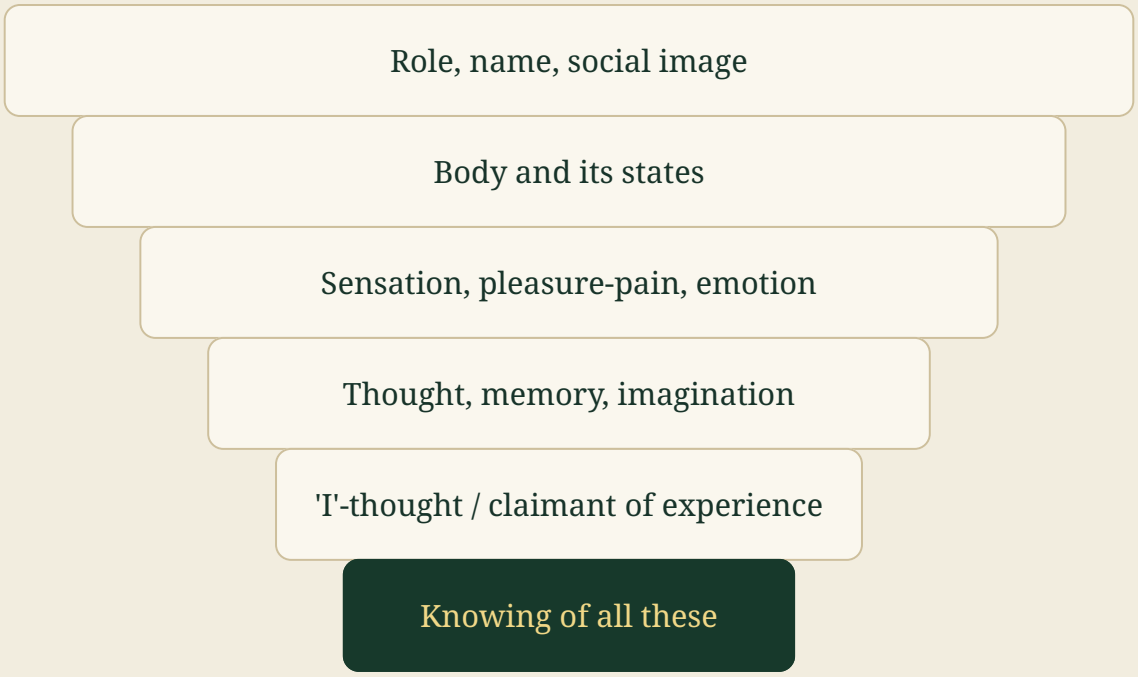
08

The awareness by which body, mind, thought, emotion and even emptiness are known. Trying to capture it as one more object simply adds another object to the inquiry.

MAP 05 • NETI-NETI

Layers of identity - what can be known?

'Not this' does not destroy a layer; it only refuses to equate that layer with the final Self.



Important: Neti-neti is not a philosophy of denial. Body and world remain valid in practical life; the inquiry concerns the equation 'I am only this'.

09

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 09

Witnessing

Being present without being lost in experience

CENTRAL INQUIRY

Experience changes; what knows that change?

Witness (Sakshi)

09

The awareness in which experiences appear and are known. 'Witness' is a pointer, not a second little person sitting inside the mind watching everything.

Atman / the Self

09

The person's true knowing nature, presented here as awareness rather than the changing body-mind. It is not a private possession, a place or an occasional experience.

Witnessing attitude (Sakshi-bhava)

09

Allowing thought, feeling and action to be fully present while remaining clear that they are known. It is not emotional numbness, dissociation or abandonment of responsibility.

Self-luminous (Svayam-prakasha)

09

That which does not require another knower or another light in order for its knowing presence to be established. Awareness is not explained by adding an endless series of inner observers.

Awareness / consciousness

09

The basic knowing by which a thought, sensation, emotion, perception or emptiness is evident. Here Atman and witness language points to this knowing, not to a glowing object located inside the body.

Experience of witnessing

09

A temporary state of calm distance or spacious observation. Because that state comes and goes and is known, it should not be confused with the witness itself.

10

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 10

Experience

Separating an event from its ground

CENTRAL INQUIRY **Is every experience an event that appears and disappears in time?**

Experience (Anubhava)

10

Whatever is directly felt or known and appears in time as a changing event. The course distinguishes the experienced object, the instruments, the knowing, and the meaning later added by memory.

Object / content (Vishaya)

10

What appears in an experience: a sight, sound, thought, pleasure, fear or even inner quiet. Inquiry then asks about the knower of that content.

Instrument of experience

10

The senses and mind that make a particular object available. A limitation in the instrument should not automatically be treated as a limitation in awareness itself.

Spiritual experience

10

Unusual events such as light, energy, bliss, deep peace or samadhi. They may be meaningful, but because they arise and pass they are not treated as conclusive proof of Self-knowledge.

Samadhi

10

Here, a special state of very deep meditation, concentration or peace. It may be highly valuable, yet if it has a beginning and end it is not automatically identical with abiding Self-knowledge.

Experience versus Truth

10

Experience is what appears; Truth is the ground that does not depend on one particular appearance. Pleasant, painful, luminous and quiet experiences can all change.

11

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 11

Experiencer

Who is the one saying 'this happened to me'?

CENTRAL INQUIRY **Who is the experiencer that claims 'this happened to me'?**

Experiencer

11

At the practical level the body, mind and ego-sense combine into the claimant 'this is happening to me'. That claimant feels continuous, yet the feeling 'I am experiencing' can itself be known.

I-thought / ego-vritti

11

The mental 'I' that links itself to a body, role, action or experience and says 'I did' or 'this happened to me'. Self-inquiry asks what knows this thought.

Doer / sense of doership

11

Practical action requires a functioning person; the heavy claim 'I, a separate limited entity, independently make everything happen' is the doer-identity examined by the course.

Enjoyer / sufferer (Bhokta)

11

The experiencer that appropriates pleasure and pain as 'this happened to me, therefore this defines me'. The course examines whether the knower is exhausted by that experience.

Waking state (Jagrat)

11

The ordinary waking condition in which senses, thoughts and an external world are prominent. It is treated as one changing state of experience, not as the final knower.

Dream state (Svapna)

11

The experienced world that appears in sleep, with its own experiencer and objects. When waking arrives the scene changes, raising the inquiry into what knows changing states.

Deep sleep (Sushupti)

11

The state in which the ordinary ego-sense and waking/dream objects are not manifest. It is used to question whether 'I' can be limited only to waking mental content, not to invent a special visual spiritual experience.

Open the sentence: 'This happened to me'

01 **Object** + 02 **Senses / mind** + 03 **Felt experience** + 04 **'Happened to me'** + 05 **Memory / meaning**

The whole sequence is known

Self-inquiry does not deny experience; it examines the nature of the 'I' that claims ownership of experience.

Waking

Senses and external world are prominent

Dream

Mind presents its own experiential world

Deep sleep

Ordinary objects and ego-sense are unmanifest

All three states change. Inquiry asks whether the Self is limited to any one of them.

12

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 12

Self-Inquiry

Taking the question back to the questioner

CENTRAL INQUIRY

Where does this 'I' arise, and what knows it?

Self-inquiry (Atma-vichara)

12

Using 'Who am I?' not as a verbal puzzle but to turn from each thought and each 'I'-claim back toward its source. 'To whom has this arisen?' - 'to me' - 'who am I?' gives the practical direction.

Source of thought

12

Not a hidden physical location, but the knowing in which every thought, including the 'I'-thought, becomes evident. A felt center in the body is also an experience being known.

Who am I?

12

The guiding question of self-inquiry. A ready-made answer such as 'I am the body' or even 'I am Brahman' does not fulfill its purpose; the inquiry examines the arising and knowing of the 'I' itself.

When emptiness or fear appears

12

Do not treat these states as either the final answer or proof of failure. They are also experiences; gently ask what knows them, and slow the practice if fear becomes overwhelming.

Intellectual answer 'I am Brahman'

12

Even a correct sentence can remain merely a thought in the mind. Its intended meaning must open into clear, relatively doubt-free recognition rather than verbal assertion.

13

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 13

Self-Knowledge

Recognizing what was always present

CENTRAL INQUIRY **Is the Self something to acquire, or the truth to recognize?**

Self-knowledge (Atma-jnana) 13

Clear recognition of one's true nature as awareness beyond exclusive identification with body and mind. It is not the acquisition of a new object, power or rare state; it is the removal of ignorance.

Intellectual understanding 13

Correct ideas, statements or theories about the Self. They are useful in learning, but the course does not equate them with Self-knowledge until identification itself becomes clear and stable.

Recognition, not attainment 13

No person acquires a new object called the Self. When the mistake is removed, what was already present is recognized - like discovering a necklace that was already around one's neck.

Personality after Self-knowledge 13

Body, mind, emotions and ordinary behavior can continue. Old tendencies and life circumstances may remain, while the grip of 'I am only this' becomes weaker.

Compassion 13

Taking another person's experience seriously and responding with care and sensitivity. The course treats reduced fear, reduced image-protection and natural compassion as more meaningful signs than dramatic spiritual claims.

Prarabdha 13

The already-begun momentum of karma through which the body-mind and some life circumstances continue to unfold. Self-knowledge does not magically cancel practical processes and consequences.

Karma / fruit of action 13

Karma is action at the level of the person, and karmaphala is its result. Inquiry into doership is not a permission to avoid action or deny responsibility for consequences.

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 14

14

Knowledge of Brahman

One ground, many forms

CENTRAL INQUIRY

Are Atman and Brahman two independent ultimate realities?

Brahman

14

In the Advaita-Vedanta sense used here, limitless reality that does not depend on another ground and is the basis of all names and forms. It is not imagined as a giant object located somewhere else.

Brahma-jnana

14

Recognition that Atman - the fundamental knowing in one's experience - and Brahman - the ground of all names and forms - are not two separate ultimate realities.

Sat

14

Being or existence: the aspect of Brahman that does not borrow existence from something else. It does not mean merely lasting for a very long time.

Chit

14

Consciousness or knowing by which experience is illumined. Here it is not an added property of Brahman but a pointer to Brahman's nature.

Ananda

14

Fundamental fullness or lack of essential deficiency, not a promise of permanent emotional happiness, sensory pleasure or excitement.

Sat-Chit-Ananda

14

Three perspectives pointing to Brahman: existence, consciousness and fullness. They are not three separate substances, three added qualities or three special experiences.

Identity of Atman and Brahman

14

The knowing Self viewed from the individual standpoint and Brahman viewed as the ground of the whole are one in essence. This does not glorify the personal ego as an all-powerful cosmic individual.

Upadhi

14

A limiting adjunct or medium through which the limitless appears limited, especially body and mind. Like space seeming divided by a pot, the apparent limitation belongs to the adjunct, not to space itself.

Aham Brahmasmi

14

'I am Brahman.' Here 'I' does not mean the limited body, role or proud personality, but the awareness that knows them.

Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma

14

'All this is Brahman.' Diverse names and forms depend on one ground; practical differences and responsibilities among forms continue to matter.

Maya

14

In Advaita Vedanta, the Brahman-dependent principle through which names, forms, causation and apparent multiplicity are experienced. It is not a second independent ultimate reality, and calling the world maya does not mean that nothing appears or matters.

Name and form (Nama-rupa)

14

The name and recognizable form through which one thing is distinguished from another. Like ornaments of gold or pots of clay, forms differ while depending on a common material basis.

World (Jagat)

14

The changing field of names and forms appearing in experience. It has practical function and importance, but is not regarded as independently self-existing ultimate reality.

Satya, Mithya, Asatya

14

Satya is independently real; mithya appears and functions but depends on a ground; asatya has no existence at all. Mithya therefore does not mean 'completely nonexistent'.

Nirguna Brahman

14

Brahman understood in its own nature, free of limiting name, form and changing qualities. Sat, Chit and Ananda are pointers to that nature, not three changing attributes added to it.

Saguna Ishvara

14

Brahman understood with maya-upadhi as the cause, order and intelligence of the universe. In this Advaita framework, Nirguna Brahman and Saguna Ishvara are not two competing ultimate realities.

Triputi

14

The threefold structure of knower, knowing and known. It functions in ordinary experience; in non-dual inquiry the assumption that all three are independent ultimate realities is examined.

Knower (Jnata)

14

At the ordinary level, the person who receives knowledge. Deeper inquiry asks what knows even the sense of being a knower.

Known (Jneya)

14

Anything that can be known, whether an outer object or an inner thought. Turning the Self into one more known object creates the confusion addressed in the next stage.

Atman and Brahman - two standpoints, one ground

The non-dual claim does not grant cosmic power to the personal ego. It removes a mistaken limitation in the meaning of 'I'.

INDIVIDUAL STANDPOINT

Atman

The fundamental knowing of body, mind and experience

POINTERS

Sat • Chit • Ananda

Existence, knowing and fundamental fullness

TOTAL STANDPOINT

Brahman

The limitless ground of all names and forms

Atman - Brahman non-difference

The role of upadhi: Because of body-mind, consciousness appears as a limited individual, just as space appears limited inside a pot. The apparent limit belongs to the adjunct, not to space itself.

MAP 08 • A SUBTLE DISTINCTION

Satya, Mithya and Asatya

Treating mithya as simply 'false' is one of the most common misunderstandings. Keep these three categories distinct.

Satya	That which does not depend on another ground for its reality. In the course, Brahman is the final example.
Mithya	That which appears and functions but is not independent of its ground. A gold bracelet is bracelet by name and form, but not a substance separate from gold.
Asatya	That which has no existence at any level. The traditional example is the horns of a rabbit.

Practical consequence: Calling the world mithya is not a license to neglect it. Body, relationships, laws, causality and responsibility continue to function at the practical level.

15

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 15

Unobjectifiability

Why the knower cannot become an object

CENTRAL INQUIRY

How could the knower itself become another known object?

Unobjectifiability (Ajneyata)

15

Atman or Brahman cannot be known as an external object. This does not mean Truth is forever unknown; the knower is not an object placed before another knower, and is therefore object-wise unknowable yet self-evident as one's own nature.

Unknown

15

An object or fact not yet known but potentially knowable. This differs from the Self, which is not simply a hidden object awaiting future discovery.

Concept

15

A mental framework that can point toward truth. However useful, the concept itself is known and cannot replace the awareness that knows it.

Limit of words

15

Language describes objects, qualities and relations; it cannot completely contain the knower by turning it into an object. Scriptural words function as pointers that remove error.

Rest of the intellect

15

After sincere inquiry, the intellect recognizes the limits of object-making and releases unnecessary conceptual grasping. This is not laziness or abandonment of discernment.

16

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 16

Emptiness & Silence

Knowing beyond the experience of blankness

CENTRAL INQUIRY **Is emptiness final, or is emptiness also known?**

Emptiness (Shunyata)

16

In this course, mainly the experiential blankness in which objects or thoughts are absent. This is not offered as a full technical definition of Buddhist shunyata. Because blankness is also known, it is not equated with the final Self.

Gap between thoughts

16

A brief interval in which no obvious thought is present. It can be a useful pointer, but it also appears and disappears; inquiry turns toward what knows the interval.

Outer quiet

16

The absence or reduction of sound. It changes when circumstances change and should not be confused with the inner silence discussed here.

Inner silence

16

The untouched awareness in which sound, thought and their absence are all known. It is not merely a temporary quiet mind; it can be recognized even in the presence of noise.

Fear of emptiness

16

The fear that the limited 'I' is disappearing, sometimes arising around experiences of blankness. It is neither proof of success nor failure; the experience can be observed gently and the pace slowed when needed.

Not beyond sound - inclusive of sound

Outer quiet

Sound is absent or reduced; it ends when conditions change.

Mental blankness

Thoughts are few or absent; this too may be a passing state.

Experience of emptiness

An experience of 'nothing there'. It is known, and therefore is not identical with knowing itself.

Inner silence

The knowing in which sound, thought and their absence are all present and known.

Do not turn silence into another experience to possess

If silence means only a quiet state, noise will destroy it. Nirvan Sutra points toward the knowing present in both noise and quiet.

17

NIRVAN SUTRA • STAGE 17

Life of Steady Wisdom

Understanding expressed in ordinary living

CENTRAL INQUIRY

How does clear knowledge enter relationships, action and ordinary life?

Sthitaprajna

17

One whose clear understanding of the Self is steady through changing circumstances. In the Gita tradition this includes balance amid pleasure and pain, gain and loss, without requiring the end of emotion or bodily pain.

Prajna

17

Mature, clear understanding - not merely the ability to remember information. In sthitaprajna, this understanding remains relatively stable as situations change.

Equanimity (Samata)

17

Remaining rooted in one's fundamental identity amid pleasure and pain, gain and loss, praise and blame. It is not emotional suppression; feelings can arise without becoming the whole 'me'.

Natural state / natural living (Sahaja)

17

Living from clear understanding without constant self-reminding or force. Practice gradually becomes a natural way of seeing while work, love, decisions and responsibilities continue.

Liberated living

17

Living honestly, lovingly and responsibly without the inner burden 'I must become something in order to be complete'. It is not passivity or withdrawal from society.

QUICK REVIEW

The distinctions most often confused

A compact review of the whole glossary. When a term feels heavy, first check whether two different levels have been mixed together.

Information ≠ Self-knowledge

The first is about objects; the second concerns recognition of the knower.

Ignorance ≠ stupidity

Here ignorance is an error of identity.

Inquiry ≠ suspicion about everything

Inquiry opens toward examination; doubt can also become stuck.

Viveka ≠ cleverness

Discernment clarifies seer-seen and eternal-non-eternal.

Vairagya ≠ despair or escape

Dispassion loosens inner dependence.

Shraddha ≠ blind belief

Shraddha leaves room for examination.

Manana ≠ endless thinking

Reflection resolves a specific doubt.

Nididhyasana ≠ mantra-like repetition

It is abiding in clear understanding.

Neti-neti ≠ denial of the world

It removes only the mistaken equation 'I am only this'.

Witnessing ≠ emotional numbness

Emotion can remain while its knowing is clear.

Experience ≠ permanent Truth

Experience changes; inquiry into knowing remains.

Experiencer ≠ final witness

The sense 'this happened to me' can itself be known.

Self-inquiry ≠ a prepared verbal answer

The question returns attention toward the questioner.

Self-knowledge ≠ a new special experience

It is recognition of what was already present.

Atman-Brahman identity ≠ glorification of ego

'I' refers to awareness, not the personal claimant.

Mithya ≠ asatya

Mithya appears and functions; asatya never exists.

Unobjectifiability ≠ ignorance

The first is the nature of the knower; the second is a removable error.

Silence ≠ absence of sound

Here silence points to knowing in which sound also appears.

Equanimity ≠ suppression

Feelings are known without being turned into permanent identity.



NIRVAN SUTRA • SEEKER EDITION

Do not stop at the final word.

Read the definition - then look for what it points to in your own experience.

The vocabulary of the Path of Knowledge becomes alive only when words return you to direct inquiry. If a definition remains merely remembered and vision does not shift, it is still information. Open it again through listening, reflection and direct observation.

This seeker companion is based on the 17 main stages and their question-answer teachings in Nirvan Sutra. Definitions are specific to this course; other philosophical or spiritual traditions may use some terms differently. This glossary supports, but does not replace, the films, teacher-dialogue or direct observation.