

Skandha, Shloka, Stanza, Sutra



Skandha¹

(Sk.) Chapter. The *Bhāgavata Purāna*, for example, the most popular of the eighteen principal Purānas, consists of some 18,000 shlokas in twelve skandhas.

In the *Purānas*, *Skanda* or *Kārtikeya* corresponds to Mars.²

Shloka

(Sk.) A verse generally formed in four half-lines of eight, or in two lines of sixteen syllables each, — the Sanskrit epic³ meter of 32 syllables.

Stanza

(Sk. *lit.*, stay, abode, room.) A division of a poem consisting of two or more lines arranged together as a unit. More specifically, a stanza usually is a group of lines arranged together in a recurring pattern of metrical lengths and a sequence of rhymes. The structure of a stanza (also called a strophe or stave) is determined by the number of lines, the dominant metre, and the rhyme scheme. Thus, a stanza of four lines of iambic⁴ pentameter, rhyming *abab*, could be described as a quatrain. Some of the most common stanzaic forms are designated by the number of lines in each unit — *e.g.*, tercet or terza rima (three lines) and ottava rima (eight lines). Other forms are named for their inventors or best-known practitioners or for the work in which they first were heavily used — *e.g.*, the *Spenserian stanza*, named for Edmund Spenser, or the *In Memoriam stanza*, popularized by Alfred, Lord Tennyson in the poem by that title. The term strophe is often used interchangeably with stanza, although strophe is sometimes used specifically to refer to a unit of a poem that does not have a regular metre and rhyme pattern or to a unit of a Pindaric ode.

Rubaiyat (of Omar Khayyam) *stanzas* are iambic pentameter quatrains with a rhyme scheme *aaba*.

Spenserian (Edmund Spenser's) *stanzas* consist of eight verses of iambic pentameter and an alexandrine with a rhyme scheme *ababbcbcc*.

¹ Not to be confused with the Buddhist term *skandha*, the semi-material life-atoms or bundles of attributes of the astral man. For a brief overview, see Appendix. For an in-depth analysis of skandhas' role in karma and reincarnation, see "Transmigration, Reincarnation, Gilgulim Transmigration differ" in the same series. — ED. PHIL.

² Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (FOOTNOTES TO "THE PURANAS") XIII p. 160

³ A long narrative poem that relates to heroic events at an elevated style. (From *Gr. epos*, word)

⁴ A foot of two syllables, a short followed by a long, or an unstressed by a stressed. (From *Gr. Iambos*, from *iap-tein* to assail, this metre being first used by satirists.)

Ballard stanza consisted of four lines with the first and third lines unrhymed iambic tetrameters and the second and fourth lines rhymed iambic *trimeters*.

Heroic stanza is a rhymed quatrain in heroic verse with a rhyme scheme of *ab-ab* — called also heroic quatrain.

The Stanzas of Dzyan are archaic verses of philosophical and cosmogonical content drawn from the Book of Dzyan, which form the basis of *The Secret Doctrine*. They present the esoteric teachings in regard to cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis, and are the ancient heritage of humanity as preserved by the brotherhood of mahatmas. Every race and nation has drawn from this source through the medium of its initiated or inspired teachers and saviours. Only portions of the original verses are given in *The Secret Doctrine*, and Blavatsky's presentation there represents the first time that they have been set down in a modern European language; her endeavour always was to represent the meaning rather than to give a merely literal rendering of the words: "it must be left to the intuition and the higher faculties of the reader to grasp, as far as he can, the meaning of the allegorical phrases used. Indeed it must be remembered that all these Stanzas appeal to the inner faculties rather than to the ordinary comprehension of the physical brain."¹

Sutra

(*Sk.*, *siv* to *sew*.) A string, thread; the sutras are strings of rules or aphorisms written in *serve* form, composed in terse and symbolic language with the obvious intention of their being committed to memory. This was a favourite form among the Hindus, as among all ancient peoples, of embodying and transmitting rules of ancient religious and philosophic thought. There are sutras written upon almost every subject but the sutras commonly signify those connected with the Vedas, of which there are three kinds: the Kalpa-sutras (rules of ritual); the grihya-sutras (domestic rules) treating of ordinary family rites such as marriage, birth, name-giving, etc.; and the Samayacharika-sutras which treat of customs and temporal duties. The Kalpa-sutras belong to the class of writings called Śrutis (heard or revealed); while the other two types of sutras belong to the Smritis (remembered), carried traditionally from generation to generation by word of mouth.

In Buddhist writings, the Sutras are the second division of sacred works, generally known under the equivalent Pali term Suttas.

¹ Cf. *Secret Doctrine*, I p. 21

Appendix

In Buddhism, skandhas are vibratory impressions, karmic and non-karmic

Skandhas are the germs of life on all the seven planes of Being, and make up the totality of the subjective and objective man. Every vibration we make is a Skandha. The Skandhas are closely united to the pictures in the Astral Light, which is the medium of impressions, and the Skandhas, or vibrations, connected with subjective and objective man, are the links which attract the Reincarnating Ego, the germs left behind when it went into Devachan, which have to be picked up again and exhausted by a new personality. The exoteric Skandhas have to do with the physical atoms and vibrations, or objective man; the esoteric with the internal or subjective man.

A mental change or a glimpse of spiritual truth, may make a man change to the truth, even at his death, thus creating good Skandhas for the next life. The last acts or thoughts of a man have an enormous effect upon his future life, but he would still have to suffer for his misdeeds, and this is the basis of the ideas of a death-bed repentance. But the Karmic effects of the past life must follow, for the man in his next birth must pick up the Skandhas or vibratory impressions that he left in the Astral Light, since nothing comes from nothing in Occultism, and there must be a link between the lives. New Skandhas are born from their old parents.

It is wrong to speak of Tanhās in the plural, there is only one Tanhā, the desire to live. This develops into a multitude, or, we might say, a congeries of ideas. The Skandhas are Karmic and non-Karmic. Skandhas may produce elementals by unconscious Kriyāśakti. Every elemental that is thrown out by man must return to him, sooner or later, since it is his own vibration. They thus become his Frankenstein. Elementals are simply effects producing effects; they are disembodied thoughts, good and bad. They remain crystallized in the Astral Light, and are attracted by affinity and galvanized back into life again, when their originator returns to earth-life. You can paralyze them by reverse effects. Elementals are caught like a disease and hence are dangerous to ourselves and to others. That is why it is dangerous to influence others. The elementals which live after your death are those which you implant in others; the rest remain latent till you reincarnate, when they come to life again. “Thus,” H.P. Blavatsky said, “if you are badly taught by me, or incited thereby to do something wrong, you would go on after my death and sin through me, but I should have to bear the Karma. Calvin, for instance, will have to suffer for all the wrong teachings he has given, though he gave it with good intentions. [. . .] Even Buddha made mistakes; he applied his teaching to people who were not ready, and this has produced Nidānas.”¹



¹ H.J. Spierenburg (Comp. & Ed.) *The Inner Group Teachings of H.P. Blavatsky*. San Diego: Point Loma Publications, Inc., 1995 (2nd ed.); pp. 209-10 [INSTRUCTION No. VI]

Suggested reading for students.



More commonly confusing words.

- ADULTERY, LUST, MALICE
- ADYTUM AND ASYLUM
- AETHER AND ETHER
- AGNOSTICISM, ATHEISM, MONISM
- AION, ETERNITY, DURATION
- APPREHENSION AND COMPREHENSION
- ASTRAL LIGHT IS A TERM VERY LITTLE UNDERSTOOD
- AURA AND MAGNETISM
- BUDDHA AND PRINCE SIDDHARTHA BUDDHA
- BUDHISM IS INNER WISDOM
- CELIBACY, CONTINENCE, MONASTICISM
- CHEMIST AND ALCHEMIST
- CHILIASTS, MILLENNIUMISTS, MILLENARIANS
- DARKNESS IS INNER LIGHT
- DEVOTION, WORSHIP, LOYALTY
- EMANATION AND RADIATION
- EMBLEM AND SYMBOL
- GRAIKOS, HELLENE, HELLAS
- HIGHER SELF AND HIGHER EGO
- IMAGINATION AND IMITATION
- JIVA AND JIVATMAN
- JNANA AND YAJNA
- KAMIC VERSUS MANASIC ACTION
- KARMA AND KRIYA
- KARMA, NEMESIS, ADRASTEIA, THEMIS
- KOSMOS AND COSMOS

CONFUSING WORDS SERIES
SKANDHA, SHLOKA, STANZA, SUTRA

- KRONOS AND CHRONOS
- LAUGHTER, SMILES, TEARS
- LIGHT AND HEAT
- LUST, JEALOUSY, PHYSICAL LOVE
- MAGNETISM, MESMERISM, HYPNOTISM
- MATERIALISM, SPIRITUALISM, MONISM
- MUZIRIS, MNIZURIN, MNOUZIRIS
- NIRVANA AND PARINIRVANA
- PANTACLE AND PENTACLE
- RAJA AND RISHI
- REMEMBRANCE, RECOLLECTION, REMINISCENCE
- SPIRIT, SPIRITS, SPIRITUALISM
- SPIRITUALISM IS A PHILOSOPHY OF YESTERDAY
- SVABHAVA AND SVAYAMBHU
- TELETE, MYESIS, EPOPTeia
- THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL OCCULTISM
- THEOSOPHIST AND THEOSOPHER
- TRANSMIGRATION, REINCARNATION, GILGULIM
- TRIRATNA AND TRISHARANA
- TRUE AND FALSE PERSONALITY
- UNITY AND DUALITY
- VACH IS NOT MERE SPEECH
- VEDANTA, BUDDHISM, THEOSOPHY
- VRIL AND BOVRIL
- WILL AND DESIRE
- YOGIS AND MAHATMAS

