

## The Science of Upanishads – Part 32: Definitions and Distinctions Between Brahman, Brahma, Brahmana (Brahmin), and Brahmanaas

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The title words **Brahman, Brahma, Brahmana (Brahmin), and Brahmanaas** are often discussed in Vedic texts. Since the words are so similar, they often create confusion and lead to their inadvertently erroneous usage in common public. A conspicuous aspect of all these four words is that they each contain a common prefix of four letters “Brah”, which in Sanskrit means “Great”. Here are the definitions and distinctions between these Vedic terminologies:

**Brahman:** As discussed many times earlier, the Brahman is the Ultimate Reality of this Universe, and is the only one who has neither the beginning (birth) nor the end (death), and has no form nor characteristics. He is the eternal Truth, Conscience, and Bliss (Sachhidananda). The Advait Philosophy presented in many Upanishads is that the individual Atman and the universal Brahman are made of the exact same material. They differ only in quantity but not quality. So, when a person achieves Moksha or liberation, Atman returns to Brahman, to the source, like a drop of water returning to the ocean.

**Brahma:** Unlike Brahman, Brahma is a deity who has both the beginning and the end, although for the comparatively short-lived humans and other living beings he appears to be eternal. According to Upanishads, **Brahma has One Hundred Divine Years of Life, which translates to 312 Trillion Human Years.** Brahma is one of the three deities making up the Hindu trinity, called the Trimurti, which consists of Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara (Shiva), who respectively manifest the creation, sustenance, and destruction aspects of the Brahman. **All beings in a particular cycle of creation of the Universe, which lasts 312 trillion years, are created by a specific Brahma. A different soul becomes Brahma in every new cycle.** Brahma is a deity, and the deities are office holders, so to speak, and so new souls take the stations of Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara in every new cycle of creation.

**Brahmana (or Brahmin in Anglicized Terminology):** The word, pronounced as Braahmana or Braahmin, refers to a person either (a) born into a family of the priestly caste, or (b) has earned the noble characteristics of a Brahmin, such as eating sattvic food, gaining knowledge of the Vedas, controlling anger, ego, material desires, etc.

**Brahmanas:** They are one of the 4 subdivisions of Vedas. **Each of the four Vedas (Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda) is composed of 4 subdivisions, namely, (a) Samhitas, (b) Aranyakas, (c) Brahmanaas, and (d)**

**Upanishads.** Brahmanas are a rich collection of teachings on ritual and the hidden meanings of the Vedic texts. They consist of prose commentaries on the four *Vedas*, including legends, myths, notes on the performance of rituals, as well as explanations of particular sacred words from the Vedas and some philosophy. The details given in the Brahmanas are often precise instructions as to how the rituals described in the Vedas should be properly performed. This may include details about the proper pronunciation, meter, intonation and hand movement for the chanting of mantras. One of the oldest Brahmanas, the "Chandogya Brahmana," contains hymns for marriage ceremonies and rituals for the birth of a child.

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Between  
Brahman, Brahma, Brahmana (Brahmin)**