

Brahma: The Hindu God who Created the World

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Level **540L**



Brahma statue in Thailand. Image from Flickr.

Brahma is the highest Hindu god. Hindus believe he made the world and everything in it.

Brahma the creator

Brahma created light and dark from his own body. He also created gods, demons, men and animals.

The evil demons were born from Brahma's leg. When this happened, Brahma left his body behind. His body then became Night.

After Brahma created good gods he left his body once again. It then became Day. For this reason, evil demons rule at night, while good gods rule the day.

Brahma then created men, and picked the god Shiva to rule over them.

Brahma creates women

In time, the gods began to fear that men had too much power. They worried that men might push them aside and rule themselves.

The gods asked Brahma to stop this from happening. Brahma's solution was to create women.

Women excited men. Soon, men were busy fighting over them. Their power was weakened and they were no longer a danger to the gods.

The death woman

The first woman Brahma created also served as Death. She was given the job of destroying all beings when their time comes. Brahma did not want the world to become too crowded.

Death was kind-hearted, though. She did not want to kill anything. She begged Brahma to not make her do it. Brahma would not listen and sent her on her way.

At first Death continued her protests. She stood in water in complete silence for 8,000 years. Then, she stood on one toe on the top of the Himalayan mountains for 8,000 million years. Yet, Brahma would not give in.

In the end, Death did what she was told. She brought endless night to all beings when their time came.

Death was still very unhappy about what she had to do, though. She cried as she killed. Her tears fell to the earth and became diseases.

Brahma in Indian art



Brahma is often shown dressed in red and with four heads. The four heads stand for the four Vedas. The Vedas are holy books of Hinduism.

Brahma is also shown with four arms. One right hand holds the brahma-tandram. It is used to mark men's foreheads with their future in life. The other right hand holds a string of beads.

One of Brahma's left hands holds a vase of water for washing. Brahma also sometimes holds a bow or the Vedas. He may also be shown sitting on a lotus flower.



Quiz

- 1 Read section "Brahma creates women."

Select the paragraph from the section that explains how women stopped men from taking power from the gods.

- 2 Read the following selection from the section "Brahma the creator."

The evil demons were born from Brahma's leg. When this happened, Brahma left his body behind. His body then became Night.

Which word from this selection MOST helps you understand the meaning of the word "demons"?

- (A) evil
 - (B) born
 - (C) Brahman
 - (D) Night
- 3 Read the sentence from the section "The death woman."

She brought endless night to all beings when their time came.

Based on the information in this section, what does the phrase "endless night" mean?

- (A) She gave people long dreams.
 - (B) She made people fall asleep.
 - (C) She made people go blind.
 - (D) She killed people.
- 4 Read the section "Brahma in Indian art."
- Which question is answered in this section?
- (A) Who makes Brahma into art?
 - (B) What does Brahma look like in art?
 - (C) Where do people make art that shows Brahma?
 - (D) What do people do with art that shows Brahma?

