

Etymologically the word is derived from *brahmân*³ which properly signifies the Brahma priest who must

³ *Brahmân* is derived from *brahma*. This is an abstract noun, in the neuter gender, of a root *brih* (original form *barh*), to which the two meanings "to raise," and "to grow" are given by the Indian grammarians. The latter thought both meanings so irreconcilable that they substituted two roots *brih*. But there is certainly no necessity for that. What grows, becomes bigger, and higher, and thus "rising in height," is a necessary consequence of growth. It is, however, very doubtful whether the root *brih* without a preposition (such as *ud*) can convey the meaning "to raise." The meaning "to grow" is at any rate the original one. Thus derived *brahma* means originally "growth." That this was the original sense of the word can be proved from other reasons also. *Brahma* is the same word, in every respect, as the *bares'ma* of the Zend-Avesta, the *h* of Sanscrit being changed according to the phonetical laws of the Zend grammar, into a sibilant. This means a bunch of twigs tied together by a reed which is used up to the present day by the Parsi priests when performing the Homa ceremony. The Brahmans use at all their sacrifices a bunch of kus'a grass which is also tied together. They call it *Veda* (see As'v. S'r. S. 1, 11 *vedam patnyâi pradâya vâchayet i. e.* after having handed over to the wife of the sacrificer that bunch of kus'a grass, which is called *Veda*, he should make her repeat this mantra, &c). *Veda* is a synonymous word for *brahma*; for the latter term is often explained by *veda* (so does Kaiyata in his notes on Patañjali's explanation of Pânini's Sûtra 6, 3, 86, in the Mahâbhâshya), and thus identified with the designation of the whole body of sacred knowledge of the Brahmans. In the Nighantavas, the ancient collection of Vedic words, *brahma* occurs twice, once as a name for "food" (2, 7), and another time as that for "wealth." Both these meanings, principally the former, can easily be connected with that of "growth." They appear to be founded on passages of the Brâhmanas, where is said, that the Brahma is food. In the Sâmhita, however, these meanings are never to be met with; but from this circumstance it certainly does not follow that they never existed. The meaning attached to the word in the Sâmhita appears to be that of "sacred hymn, chant." Sâyana explains it often by *stotra*, *i. e.* the performance of the Sâma chanters (see his Commentary on Rigveda, 7, 22, 9) or by *stotrâni havîmshicha* (7, 23, 1) *i. e.* chants and offerings. This meaning is, however, not the original one, and does even in the Sâmhita hardly express its proper sense. It cannot be an equivalent either for *mantra*, or *sâman*, or *stotram*, or *havis*, and if it appear to be used in one of these senses, it means their common source; for the hymn, repeated by the Hotar, as well as the chant of the Sâma singers, and the oblations given to the fire by the Adhvaryu, are all equally made sacred by means of their