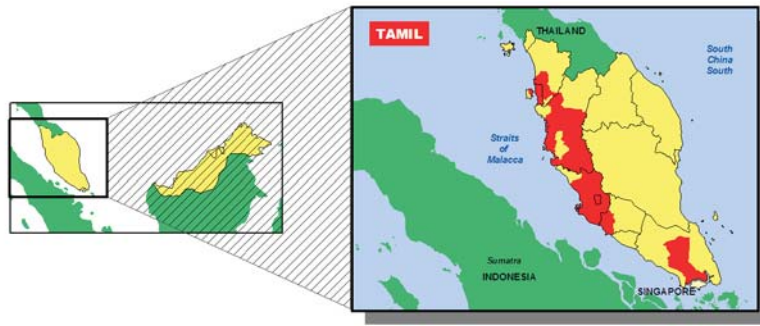


# BRUNEI INDO-PAKISTANI



Population	Major Religion	Language
4,300	Hinduism	Hindi

## Who are the Brunei Indo-Pakistani?

The ancestors of the Indo-Pakistani in Brunei were originally migrant workers from the subcontinent of India. They came as laborers to work on the construction of buildings, roads, and bridges. The present generations of Indo-Pakistani are citizens of Brunei and have taken residency in the country. Since many peoples of Indian origin in Brunei do not know specifically which language group they belong to, Indo-Pakistani is a general term used by the government to describe these groups—they may actually be Tamil, Gujarati, Hindi, or Punjab. They speak Tamil as a common language as well as their vernacular languages and dialects.

## What are their lives like?

Back in India the lives of Indo-Pakistani have traditionally been governed by a rigid system of social classes known as caste (pattern of social classes in Hinduism). One of the main reasons the Indo-Pakistani willingly left their homeland for Brunei was because of the caste system practiced in their country. Under that system, those who are born into the lower castes can never improve their standing in society. They are mostly Hindu Tamils from Southern India. In Islamic Brunei, they receive no special treatment and they do not enjoy the special privilege accorded to the Brunei Muslim Malay. Many laborers work in positions that are shunned by the Brunei Malay. A handful of them find employment as white-collar workers, holding jobs like clerks and hospital assistants.

Islamic influence is strong among the Indo-Pakistani in Brunei. This influence is seen in their clothing. Still, some of the Hindu Indo-Pakistani continue to wear saris (cloths that are wrapped around their waist and over the shoulder or head). Most of them also continue to eat their native Indian foods. Although

the Hindu religion commands vegetarianism, most of the Indo-Pakistani living in this Islamic State eat some types of meat.

## What do they believe?

The majority of the Indo-Pakistani are Hindus but close to half the population adhere to either the Islamic faith or Baha'is. A small percentage are Christians. Hindu Indo-Pakistani are polytheistic, which means that they worship many gods and goddesses. The most important gods worshipped are Brahman, the creator of the universe; Vishnu, its preserver; and Shiva, its destroyer.

Hindu tradition remains strong until today in Indo-Pakistani community of Brunei. The community celebrates the Deepavali or Diwali (Festival of Lights)— this celebration marks the triumph of good over evil, the victory of light over dark and it is not called the Festival of Lights for nothing, for it is celebrated with a joyful vivacity, with bright lights and even brighter smiles, as though to underline the traditional meaning and message behind it. Even the word Deepavali is etymologically derived from the Sanskrit word that literally means “row of lights”.

## What are their needs?

The majority of the Indo-Pakistani in Brunei Darussalam have to settle for hard labor and low paying jobs. They do not enjoy the privileges of the Brunei Malay people. Pray that local believers will help the Indo-Pakistani in all their needs. Pray that culturally sensitive believers will find ways to minister among each of the Indo-Pakistani groups.