



## Hindu and Brahmin

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**Abstract:** The two words *Hindu* and *Brahmin* have been in use since ancient times. While the word *Brahmin* may have originated in Vedic period, the word *Hindu* seems to have evolved at a much later time period. These two words have been used for a definite group of people, who could be distinctly identified from the other contemporary groups. Originally, the word *Brahmin* is understood to have been a more general one, and encompassed a large group of people. The word *Hindu* got into parlance for use in a similar fashion. Today the word *Brahmin* is supposed to be a subset of a larger group, termed as *Hindu*. It would be interesting to give a fresh look into the origin of these two words.

**Keywords:** Hindu, Brahmin, Sindhu, Seafarer, Brahma, Human interaction, Migration

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## Introduction

The oldest reference to the word *Brahmin*, can be traced to the Vedic age, believed to have occurred nearly 10 thousand years before present (10 KBP). The word *Brahmin* is itself derived from *Brahma*, the original ancestor of the mankind. It may, therefore imply, that the *Brahmins* are descendents of *Brahma*. A striking similarity between the two words Abraham and *Brahma* is also worth pondering over. It is quite probable that the two names have been used for one and the same person. The historical evidence shows the existence of Abraham in the West Asia. The deluge and the legendary boat, Noah's ark, have also been described. Therefore it is quite probable that the descendents of *Brahma*, or Abraham for that matter, arrived in the Indian subcontinent, for some reasons.

The population arriving at the time of legendary *Manu*, could have been called as *Brahmins*. (Misra, R N (2023). Ancient Humans of Indian Subcontinent, I J A R, 2: 2, pp. 215-224. ). It is also worth noting that a name *Ixvaku* appears in the ancient

Indian literature, who is supposed to be ancestor of legendary *Rama*, the king of *Ayodhya*. The lineage of *Rama* is known as *Ixvaku Vansh*. It has been describes that *Ixvaku* was son of *Manu* who himself was son of *Brahma*. The name *Ixvaku* and the Biblical name *Issac* also have notable similarity, and possibly both these names might as well have been used for the same person. Then the theory of the route of migration gets somewhat clarified. After migration to the Indian subcontinent, the descendent generations of *Brahma*, could remember *Issac* as their forefather, whom they might have pronounced as *Ikshwaku* or simply, *Ixwaku*. The folklore woven around this name describes linkage of *Ikshwaku* to *Ikshu*, another name for sugarcane. May be the person concerned had knowledge of growing sugarcane. Other titles used to designate different groups of people, in the Indian subcontinent, also need to be viewed in the context of these words.

### The two routes of migration

The migration of population possibly took place via land as well as sea routes. Those who had skills for sea travel chose sea route, while the others preferred land route. The group which moved on land might have faced difficulty in crossing the mighty river *Sindhu*, and therefore settled on the west side of the river. The terms *Gandharva* and *Yaksha* may have been used for these such groups. The people, who travelled via sea, probably chose to travel along the shore line. The different groups, arriving at different times, settled on the way right from Kutch island to the western coast of Indian peninsula.

### Local Population

The word *Jambudweep* or *Jambu* island has been used for a landmass, now referred to as Indian subcontinent. Thus, with in its geographical extent, it has been a place inhabited by several types of human populations with varying amount of interrelations ranging from enmity to fraternity.

(Genetic Affinity of the Bhil, Kol and Gond Mentioned in Epic Ramayana, Gyaneshwer Chaubey, et. al. PLoS One. 2015; 10(6): e0127655. (online) 2015 Jun 10). A few words like *Devata*, *Rakshas*, *Yaksh*, *Gandharva*, *Kinnara*, *Vaanara*, *Naga* are commonly seen in the ancient Indian literature. These titles have been used to address different humans, who migrated to Indian subcontinent at different time frames and settled in a particular area. These titles are apart from the two words *Brahmin* and *Hindu*, as used in different contexts. The interrelations between

different groups may be a subject of guesswork, based upon events like wars and calamities, described under various episodes. (Homo erectus lived recently enough that it may have met Denisovans, New Scientist 18 December 2019) . A detailed study would require some insight to the events described in the literature as well folklore.

### Some prominent population groups

The word *Devata* refers to a human group of people, having fair complexioned and tall in stature, somewhat closer to Neanderthals. The second prominent group is that of the *Rakshasas*, who may be interpreted as defenders of their territory from the incoming hordes of new settlers arriving from elsewhere. It is worth noting that *Raksha* implies protection and therefore, the title defenders as translation for *Rakshasa*, could be more appropriate for those who protect the territory from external invaders or outside settlers .

To extend the discussion still further, the three entities *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Mahesh* or *Shiva* have some distinct link to different population groups. The common reference for *Rama* and *Krishna* being Avatar of *Vishnu* implies, that they were descendents of *Vishnu*, who himself was descendent of *Brahma*. The title *Shiva* has been referred to as the chief of the *Nagas*. The words, *Naga* as well as *Kinnara* have been used as a title used for persons living in the snow clad mountains . The term *Vaanara* has been referred to humans living in deep forests and in natural caves of mountainous regions. The group of hill people, *Naga* and *Kinnara* had maintained good relations with the new arriving population, and intermixed with each other well. The details about some of the groups have been given in Table 1 . The idea of interbreeding between different groups of humans was known to the then population, and was aimed at improvement of progeny. (Ed Yong, Our hybrid Origins, New Scientist, 2823, 30 July 2011, pp 35-38). This has been referred to many a times as *sankar* child or the one borne out of union of two persons from very different lineage.

### Origin of the word Sindhu

The earliest reference to the word *Sindhu* as used for a person, albeit indirectly, may be traced to Ramayana. The word *Sindhu* appears in Ramayana, wherein it has been used for the sea, a stubborn and cunning human being, who did not budge from his point, until subdued by coercion. ('Ramacharitamanas'(Hindi), Tulasidas,

**Table 1: Some of the populations of the Indian subcontinent**

S. No.	Title	Description	Remarks
1	<i>Sindhu</i>	Present day Hindu	Migrants via sea route
2	<i>Gandharva</i>	Inhabitants of Afghanistan, (Kandahar), Gadhvi of Gujarat	Migrants via land route
3	<i>Yaksha</i>	Present day Jat	Migrants via land route
4	<i>Naga</i>	Hill People	
5	<i>Kinnara</i>	Hill People	
6	<i>Jambavanta</i>	Homo erectus	
7	<i>Vanara, Hanumana</i>	Forest dwellers	

Sunderkanda, Doha 57- 60). Later, the person agreed to share the knowledge about path to Lanka as well as means to cross the seemingly infinite extent of sea. He grudgingly helped legendary Rama, build the adam's bridge, or the bund. The sea or *Sindhu* also described about his relations with other local population around there, which was far from satisfactory. He, thereafter, requested legendary Rama, to teach his enemies a lesson too. There is an element of surprise in visualising *Sindhu* as a person who is knowledgeable about sea, the island and way to cross to the other side. In other words *Sindhu* holds secrets of sea travel. Therefore, it it would not be difficult to imagine, that the *Sindhu*, who has been described in Ramayana as a person incarnate, had in fact been a human being, having prior experience of travel in the high seas. He might as well have had deep knowledge about voyages as well as construction of jetties and bunds. This could be termed as the first reference to the word *Sindhu* being used for a person, the forbearer of Hindu.

### **Hindu Civilization**

The descendents of *Brahma*, or *Brahmins*, possibly travelled via sea route to land in the Indian subcontinent, known as *Jambudweep*. The route possibly happened to be along the sea shore, and entry to mainland, via river channel. When they disembarked on the shore, the local people saw them arriving from the sea, and called the newcomers as seafarers, or *Sindhu*, another name for sea in the Sanskrit language. It is well accepted that the word *Sindhu* got modified as Hindu in due course. It is worth noting that *Sindhi* community visualizes its deity “*Jhulelal* “ to arrive and rise above a the river Sind. This hints towards the event of landing of newcomers travelling via sea route, disembarking from boats . The river was probably very wide in those days to be named as *Sindhu* or sea. The two rivers *Saraswati* and *Sindhu*

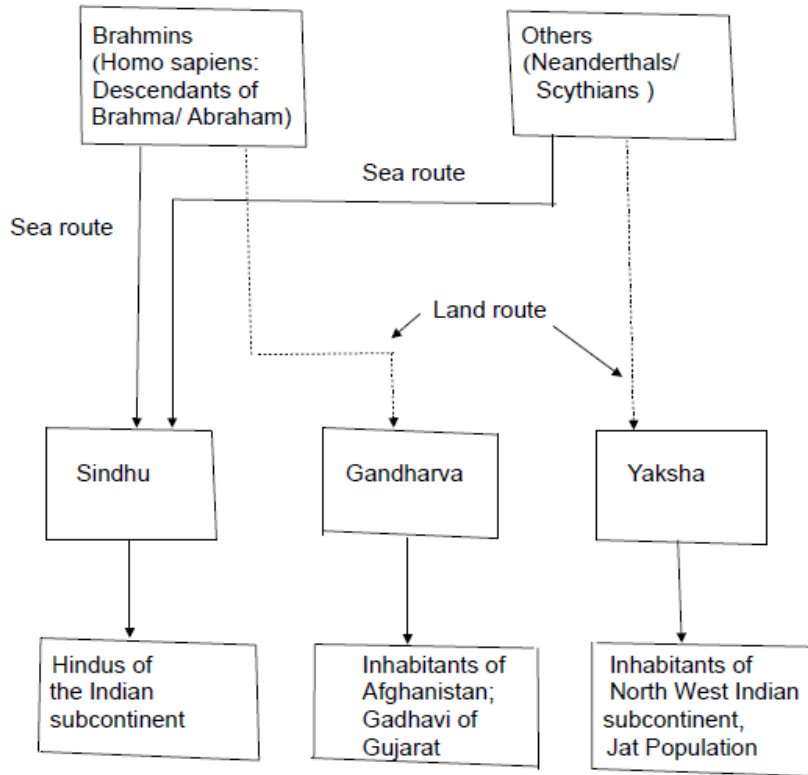


Figure 1: Population migration to the Indian subcontinent

could have been meeting each other quite away from the sea up stream. (Chatterjee, A, et. al., On the existence of a perennial river in the Harappan heartland, Scientific Reports, volume 9, Article number: 17221 (2019)). The geological changes caused separation of two rivers and later total disappearance of *Saraswati*.

The seafarers or Sindhu's, did not arrive in one lot. The trickle could have started much before Ramayana era. It might have turned into large scale migration much later, probably after the legendary deluge. In the initial phase, those who landed on the eastern bank of the mighty river *Saraswati* or *Sindhu* proceeded east to occupy the vast land, occasionally facing resistance from the earlier settlers. The defenders were termed as *Rakshasas*, while the newcomers called themselves as *Brahmins*. The large waves of humanity arriving at a later time period, tried to settle on the banks of the rivers *Sindhu* and *Saraswati*, after winning the confidence of local population . The new arrivals were named as *Sindhu's* by the then local population. Therefore the

terms *Brahmin* as well *Sindhu* could have been used for the same stock of population arriving in different time frames.

## Conclusion

Migration of population to the Indian subcontinent, most probably, occurred via two distinct routes, land as well as sea. Those, who chose the sea route have been addressed as *Sindhu*. The term Hindu evolved from the word *Sindhu* for the new population in due course. Therefore the *Sindhu-Saraswati* civilization could be termed as a broad category of Hindu civilization. The term *Brahmin* is more general, and depicts descendents of *Brahma*, irrespective of the path travelled.

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