

Culture Report on the Indian Population in America

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N432: Maternal Newborn Care

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## **Description of the Culture**

The Indian culture is based on practices that have existed for thousands of years, such as Hinduism, arranged marriages, and complex architecture demonstrated in the Taj Mahal (Nair, 2021). In the culture, marital relationships between men and women typically see the man leading the household and the wife obeying their husband (Pew Research Center, 2022). This specific idea within the culture may interfere with healthcare practices in America. In Hinduism, women are to dress modestly and not show sexuality to anyone but their husbands (Nair, 2021). Women of the Indian culture would likely prefer a female healthcare team member to treat them, as a male team member would violate their cultural practices.

## **Core Values**

### **Religion**

As identified above, the most prominent religion in Indian culture is Hinduism. Some members of the culture are Muslim, roughly 14%. To practice Hinduism, members seek temples or mosques to worship (Nair, 2021). Marriage is connected to religion in the same way as many other cultures; those seeking marriage typically marry an individual who practices the same religion.

### **Healing Beliefs & Practices**

The most common practice for medicine in traditional Indian culture is Ayurveda, which is based on life experiences. To practice Ayurveda, one must rely on personal experience to identify a holistic approach to their own care (Shi et al., 2021). Other ideas on healing practices include the Five Elements Theory (FET) and the Three Humoralisms Theory (THT). The FET identifies five natural elements of Prithvi (earth),

Jala (water), Agni (fire), Vayu (air), and Akasha (ether); these elements then provide nutrients to the body when ingested. The THT believes in three elements of the human body that influence overall health, which are Vata (gas), Pitta (bile), and Kapha (mucus) (Shi et al., 2021). Treatments involve restoring these elements to their normal level when one is ill.

### **Family Life**

The father is believed to be the controller of the family. The wife is to obey the husband within the Indian culture. When a couple has children, the beliefs towards raising children in the culture include teaching the values of the land and passing on wisdom and life experiences (Nair, 2021). Also, children must live up to the family name and make their family proud. The community that a family grows within is said to be the extended family of the children, and interdependence is taught from an early age throughout the community (Nair, 2021).

### **Communication**

The main language in India is Hindi, with about 45% of the nation speaking it. In Indian culture, the husband is seen more as the leader of the family, which means they do most of the communication. Women generally are not even supposed to shake hands with other people. In India, they greet each other by putting their hands together at their chest, bowing, and saying Namaste. India is also known for their Indian head wobble, this is a nod of the head that represents the word "accha". Accha has multiple meanings, it could refer to yes, no, good, and I understand. The Indian head wobble is a common nonverbal gesture in India (*India: Verbal and NV Communication | Cultural Comparisons COM 272, 2023*).

## **Diet**

The main staple foods in the Indian culture are rice and wheat. Many older Indians are vegans or vegetarians. The Indians that are not vegan or vegetarian will eat fish, lamb, or chicken. However, beef is rarely eaten because cows are traditionally considered sacred animals in the Hindu culture. Fasting is also a common practice in Indian culture, it is done because of the religious belief that it will improve the welfare of the family (*Dietary Practices*, 2019)

### **Description of Core Values**

In India, pregnancy is usually viewed as a normal phenomenon that does not require any interventions by health care professionals. Many Indian women believe they have little or no control over their pregnancy or outcomes. They will only seek medical advice if there is a problem. Otherwise, they prefer to have little to no medical assistance. Indian women also believe cold foods are beneficial and hot foods are bad. They will eat cold foods throughout the pregnancy to avoid miscarriage. They will eat hot foods during the last stages to facilitate labor (*Cultural Dimensions of Pregnancy, Birth and Post-Natal Care - Indian Profile*, 2021).

### **Tips, Suggestions, and Interventions While Working with the Indian Population**

When working with the Indian culture, it is important to make sure you are communicating effectively with them. One way to do this is to be clear and concise. This means using short and simple sentences and avoiding idioms, irony, and other dialect expressions. You should also speak slower by communicating in small chunks with pauses. Reinforcing your message will also help; you can do this by repeating your main points and emphasizing keywords. And finally, the best thing to do would be to ask

open-ended questions to check their understanding. This will allow them to ask questions about something they don't understand and help you see if they understand the message you are trying to deliver (*India – People, Culture, Communication, 2020*).

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