

**Culture Report: Asian Indians**

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## **Overall Culture**

The overall culture of Asian Indians is based on their close familial bonds. The whole family will typically live together. The husbands and their wives, their kids, and the grandparents intertwine their lives together. Traditional Asian Indians wed through an arranged marriage. This may be based on their socioeconomic status, education, or astrology. The man runs the house, with the wife being expected to follow (Schwartzberg and Raikar, 2025). However, urbanization and modernization have overcome this lifestyle. Now, more job opportunities and education have been offered to everyone. Kids will break away from their parents. Marriages are more collaborative and not domineering (Thompson, 2023). Depending on where each person was raised and who raised them may determine how traditional they may be.

## **Core Values**

### **Religion**

Most people in India practice Hinduism. It is more so a way of living as opposed to a set religion. They serve many gods and goddesses, but their main one is Brahman. They believe he created everything and everyone. Samsara and Karma are important in their belief. Samsara is the cycle of life, death, and reincarnation, which will never end until they reach moksha, which means they become the superior soul. Karma is the belief that the thoughts and actions one has will determine their course of life, whether it's good or bad. Hindus try and achieve dharma. This is their set standards of how one should act. It involves good conduct and morality. They have sacred books called the "Vedas." (History.com Editors, 2025).

Since those who practice Hinduism believe in Karma, their medical decisions will be dependent on that. They want Karma to treat them well, so they try their best to make decisions

that will be pleasing. Because Hindus dress with modesty, they tend to be reluctant on seeing a provider of the opposite sex. It would be important for the mother to have a female doctor from the start till delivery. Both men and women may wear a special necklace. If these need to come off, this needs to be discussed with the patient before removing them (Queensland Health, 2011).

### **Healing Beliefs and Practices**

Pain and suffering are very black and white regarding the Hindu religion. They believe suffering comes upon someone if they are desiring or have an attachment to something that is not acceptable or is Karma coming back. Dharma, which is the ultimate way of life and being, must be met to break free from the pain and suffering (Singh, 2022).

Due to their beliefs, Hindu patients accept their pain and suffering. To them, they are facing the consequences from Karma. Patients may downplay their pain or simply deny pain as a whole because they feel they are being punished, and they need to accept what is happening. Additionally, if a Hindu patient is nearing the end of their life, they do not feel the need to prolong it anymore. They believe that their ending has come and should not be lengthened (Queensland Health, 2011).

Additionally, they do have some ceremonies they may do to the baby while they are still in the hospital. The father may perform the Jatakarma ceremony. The father will touch and smell the baby and then whisper verses into the baby's ear. The family may want to keep the umbilical cord to bury it. Lastly, they may perform another ceremony where they draw the shape of the Om symbol behind the baby's ear. They may even place a chain with that symbol on it and hang it around their neck (Queensland Health, 2011).

### **Family Life**

As previously discussed, Indian families will live together. They share the home, income, and food. Everyone takes care of each other, especially when the older ones in the family get sick. Males are considered the superior gender. Since birth, males are demanded more respect and obtain certain privileges. They are raised to be controlling and independent. Females, on the other hand, are taught to be submissive and adaptive. They take care of the home, the children, and the elderly when they get older (JRank Articles, 2025).

The elderly run the family until they pass. They have the most knowledge and wisdom. Because they cared for everyone else, they feel they need the upmost respect. Their older kids will still discuss important issues, such as money and health, with their parents. Everyone lives together. Respect is just a one-way street for the men (JRank Articles, 2025). They demand it but will not give it to the women.

### **Communication**

Because women are behind the scenes of their family, husbands will typically speak for them. The wife may even refer to the husband to answer the questions she is asked (JRank Articles, 2025). Regarding their overall culture, Indians do not like confrontation with those they do not know. Therefore, they try to be polite and indirect. They have a hard time saying 'no' because they do not want to come off as harsh. Instead, they may simply stay quiet when asked a question that they do not want to verbally say 'no' to. For non-verbal cues, they do not participate in physical touch, especially with those of the opposite gender who are not their marriage mate. Their eye contact is kept to a minimum. Pointing, touching someone's head, and openly displaying the bottom of someone's feet is considered rude and offensive (Scroope, 2018).

## **Diet**

Many Indians, especially those who practice Hinduism, are vegetarian. They view the cow as sacred. If they do eat meat, they may eat lamb or chicken. They like to eat lots of bread and a variety of spices and herbs. Wheat and rice make up a significant portion of their meals. They make thicker sauces called chutneys from fruits and vegetables (Gordon, 2022).

Postpartum birth givers will follow the Ayurvedic diet. It consists of beans, ghee, rice, broths and soups, vegetables, legumes, grains, and dates. These foods contain lots of protein and nutrients. They will avoid fruits for about a month after. They like to start with foods that are easy to digest and then slowly add more (Kaufman, 2024).

Hospital food is very bland and plain, and their options are limited. They are not going to offer such a diet like this. This could impact the quality of care the patient receives. The patient will have to prepare ahead or have family bring the food choices that will support the patient's wants.

## **Implications**

With their religious beliefs, this will affect their childbearing experience because Karma will affect their medical choices. They also will not want to see opposite sex providers. This could come as a challenge if the only available doctor is a male. In regard to their pain and suffering, they believe it is Karma coming back onto them for their bad choices in life. They may deny or underscore their pain. Additionally, in traditional Indian families, the husband will speak for the wife, so he may underscore her pain too. This also effects the family life too. Women should be seen, not heard. Even if they wanted pain medication, the husband would have to be the one that would ask for it. With their communication styles, they tend to avoid conflict. They

feel that saying 'no' is disrespectful. This will impact their care because what if they consent to something they do not want to do but give in or say nothing because they do not want to hurt the healthcare team's feelings? It makes overall communication ineffective and challenging. Their diet is also not going to be available in the cafeteria. Their diet is going to lack in a way because it is not the diet that they want.

### **Interventions**

My first piece of advice for anyone working within this culture is to understand their communication techniques. Lack of eye contact, touching of some sorts, and their submissive responses need to be noted. This will help ensure that respect is being maintained and that everyone is on the same page. My second piece of advice would be to ask any and all questions when appropriate, especially questions about their diet. This way, the weeks and days leading up to their delivery, the discussion about their diet can be had. Encourage them to bring their own food or have family bring the foods they would like. Ask about their birth plan and help set it up before the baby comes. The third piece of advice would be to understand family dynamics. Never would anyone on the healthcare team want to make an accusation of abuse because the husband is talking for the wife when, in reality, it is just the culture. It is different than the culture here in America, but that is okay! It just means an opportunity to learn is available.

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