

SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITIES

Note: Not all the template categories may be covered in this profile by the community writer—some categories may not have been relevant to this culture.



INTRODUCTION

- Traditionally in South Asian communities, a senior is a person who has grandchildren or is unable to perform all the functions required for day-to-day living. Of course, these individuals would be of middle age compared to what is considered a senior here in Canada. Generally speaking these individuals dress differently from younger married individuals. But in Canada things have been changing. A senior is considered a senior according to Canadian standards, but in practice they may not be looked upon as seniors. These individuals try to look youthful by dressing up in fashionable attire of vibrant colours, especially the women. Younger individuals address people older than them as “uncle” and “untie”, but some women get offended by that because they want to feel young.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Global context

- The South Asian community includes people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Assam, Nepal and people of East Indian origin from around world, such as people from the West Indies, Guyana, East Africa, Singapore, Fiji Islands, England etc.
- In 1947, the Indian sub-continent was divided into two countries, India and Pakistan, for the liberation of 200 years of British colonization. During this process the liberation efforts took the shape of a religious-based division.
- The largest religious groups on the Indian sub-continent were and still are Muslims and Hindus, including Sikhs. In what was the largest exodus of its time, a huge number of Muslims from India moved to the areas which constitute Pakistan now, and Hindus and Sikhs on the other hand moved from densely Muslim populated areas to what istoday's India.

Immigration history

- The South Asians started to arrive in Canada at the turn of the last century. Members of the Sikh community arrived in Vancouver over 100 years ago. The South Asian community is much more settled in Canada than some of the other ethnic communities.
- The majority of immigrants of South Asian origin, however, arrived in Canada relatively recently. By 2001, 53 per cent of immigrants of South Asian origin had arrived in the previous decade. The first time a large number of South Asian immigrants arrived in Canada was in the 1960s, when Canada opened immigration to non-European countries. Most of these immigrants were professionals such as doctors, engineers, teachers, social workers etc.

Demographic profile

- The individuals of South Asian origin make up one of the largest non-European ethnic groups in Canada. In 2001, almost 1 million people of South Asian origin lived in Canada, representing about 3 per cent of the total Canadian population. A substantial majority of the population with South Asian origins living in Canada was born outside the country.
- The majority of the South Asian people in Canada are concentrated in Ontario and British Columbia. They live in the cities of Toronto or Vancouver. There are more young people than seniors.
- In Edmonton, most South Asians live in Mill Woods, especially the newly arrived. As it has a big population of South Asians, many of whom own businesses, new South Asian immigrants tend to choose Mill Woods as their first place of residence. This helps them to connect with their own people in their new environment. That way they feel comfortable and experience some familiarity in

- their day-to-day life by building connections and being part of a supportive network.
- Families that have been here a long time and are well established live in affluent areas like Riverbend, Windermere, Twin Brooks, Rutherford and on the South side; Cherry Grove, Moon Lake and on the north side.

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Languages spoken, written and alphabet used

- The three most common languages spoken and understood by South Asians are Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. Spoken Hindi and Urdu are very similar but are written differently. Hindi and Urdu are written in Sanskrit and Arabic alphabet respectively. Spoken Punjabi is a little bit different from Hindi and Urdu, and is written in the Gurumukhi alphabet, which is unique to Punjabi. As India was a British colony until 1947, the English language has been the official language of the Indian sub-continent for a long time and is spoken fluently by people with high education.
- In Edmonton, it is generally presumed that Punjabi is only spoken by Sikhs, but the first language of a large number of Pakistani people in Edmonton is Punjabi, and there are some Punjabi Hindus. “Punjabi” refers to a group of people who speak Punjabi and are from India and Pakistan. At the time of the partition in 1947, half of the Punjabi went to Pakistan and the other half remained as part of India. Most Sikhs are originally from Punjab and they have proudly retained their language. They speak Punjabi with their children at home, whereas the majority of Pakistani Punjabis speak Urdu with their children by choice.

Communication styles

- Generally speaking, there is power distance between individuals based on relationships, profession and hierarchy. The relationship between parents and children normally is not like “a friend” or on “equal” basis. A child is expected not to answer back to parents, a teacher or an individual in a position of authority. When talking to a person in a position of authority, you are not to make an eye contact; it is considered rude. In South Asian culture, there are levels of addressing individuals, people in position of authority, uncles, uncles, older siblings and friends of the parents.
- **Aap (you):** This word is used when addressing people in power positions: teachers, parents, professionals, grandparents, uncles and uncles.
- **Tum (you):** This word is used when addressing a person you consider equal to you, close friends, siblings, and uncles and uncles who are same age as you.
- **Tu:(you):** This is the way of addressing someone of a lower status. For example, a housekeeper, nanny (child-minder) or a person who cleans your latrines.

Notes from author

- This is the way it is supposed to be, but it doesn't necessarily mean people abide by these rules. A child can address their parents using "Tum" depending on the type of relationship they might have between them. Sometimes even close friends and siblings address each other using "Tu"
- Men are not to touch women while conversing with them. They have to maintain distance.
- As a home visitor or health care attendant, especially if you are from their own culture, you should not talk freely, make jokes, smile a lot or even make eye contact. You will be considered a flirt and of loose character.

Greetings

- Different sub-groups may greet differently depending on their sub-culture or religion.
- **Hindus** greet by saying "Namaste", putting the palms of both hands together in front of their face and slightly bowing their head. They may choose to shake hands also.
- **Sikhs** greet by saying "Sasriakal". They may choose to put their hands together like Hindus and many also shake hands. Some may embrace each other.
- **Muslims** greet by saying "Asslam-Walekum" (meaning peace be with you) and the recipient of the greeting replies back by saying "Walekum- Asslam" (meaning, may peace be with you too).
- Men shake hands using their right hands. They will also embrace each other three times, starting from and ending with the right shoulder. Women shake hands and embrace each other the same way as men.
- Men shake hands with men only and not with women. By the same token, women don't shake hands with men who are not close family members. They would only do so with a brother, father, uncle and close relatives.

EDUCATION

- Higher education is highly desired in the South Asian community. Most parents want their children to be professionals: doctor, engineer, lawyer, teacher etc. Many parents have immigrated to Canada for a better life. For many, higher education has translated into good earnings and a better life. Most parents contribute to the living costs and school fees of their adult children but expect them to pay room and board. Parents usually sacrifice their wants and needs to support their children's higher education.
- Generally speaking, educating males is valued over female education. But today, especially in Canada, females are equally encouraged to have higher education.

- A very small number of seniors have higher education and most likely these are the individuals who migrated in the 1960s as professionals such as doctors, teachers and social workers.
- The seniors who are sponsored under the family class immigration category are not usually highly educated. If they are, they may not be fluent in the English language. They are not expected to move freely in Canadian society. They are cared for and supported by their adult children.
- English language classes are available to newly landed immigrants but generally the seniors are not interested in going to school to learn English. Also, their families do not encourage them to attend school. It is not considered useful. In any case, as it would be very difficult for a senior to learn a new language, family members are expected to meet their needs. In general, seniors are isolated due to language and cultural barriers, and also because all the family members are very busy and have no time for the seniors.
- The seniors in South Asian cultures have great respect for higher education, especially when it comes to matching their children or grandchildren for marriage. If a highly educated person chose a spouse who is not so educated (especially when a girl chooses a boy who is not a professional), they fail to understand the reasons and are very unhappy about it.

RELIGION AND FAITH GROUPS

- Individuals from the South Asian community belong to several religious and faith groups, but most common are Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity.

HINDU

- Hinduism is more than a religion. It is a way of life that includes lifestyle, exercise and diet, as well as faith. Hinduism follows a great number of holy texts, which were both supernaturally and humanly inspired. Hindus believe in reincarnation and that they can be reincarnated as any living thing. The two key concepts of the religion are dharma (the social and physical world) and moksha (release from the cycles of reincarnation).
- Hinduism is the world's oldest extant religion, with a billion followers, which makes it the world's third largest religion. It is a conglomeration of religious, philosophical and cultural ideas and practices that originated in India.
- Moksha is the ultimate goal for Hindus. Hindu religion is different from other religions of the world in that it has no founder. It was not started by a prophet bringing a message of God to mankind.
- Hinduism is characterized by a belief in reincarnation, one absolute being of multiple manifestations, the law of cause and effect, following the path of righteousness, and the desire for liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.

- Hinduism includes the belief that there is only one supreme Absolute called "Brahman". However, it does not advocate the worship of any one deity. The gods and goddesses of Hinduism number in the thousands or even millions, all representing the many aspects of Brahman.

Religious practices and Holy Book or Scriptures

- Hindu festivals have a deep spiritual import or high religious significance. All great Hindu festivals have religious, social and hygienic elements. In every festival there is bathing in the morning before sunrise, in a river, tank or well.
- Every individual will have to say some Japa, prayer, or do some Kirtan, recitation of Sanskrit verses and meditation. Indian festivals are much more than celebrations. They are windows into the history of rich Hindu legends.
- They reveal the mind and philosophy of a nation through the different ages. Festivals have a cultural and social aspect which many feel transcends even their spiritual significance. They bring people together in friendship and love, and help heal broken relationships.
- There are several Hindu festivals throughout the year but the most important and internationally celebrated are Holi and Diwali or Deepawali.

Navratri:

- The beginning of spring and the beginning of autumn are two very important junctions of climatic and solar influence. These two periods are taken as sacred opportunities for the worship of the Divine Mother. The dates of the festival are determined according to the lunar calendar.
- Dasahara, meaning 'ten days', becomes dasara in popular parlance. The Navaratri festival, or 'nine day festival', becomes a 'ten day festival' with the addition of the last day, *Vijayadashami*, which is its culmination. On all these ten days, the various forms of Mother Mahisasura-mardini, known as *Durga*, are worshipped with fervour and devotion.

Holi:

- On the fifth day of the dark half of *Phalgun*, the feast of Colour is celebrated. On this day some people throw coloured powder, called "gulal", or coloured water on each other.
- The feast of *Holi* heralds the spring and stands for the hope for new crops, youth and vigour, as well as an invocation to the New Year. There are many legends associated with the feast.

Diwali or Deepawali:

- *Diwali* or *Deepawali*, literally 'an array of lamps', is the festival of lights and is celebrated on the darkest night of *Kartik*. It is perhaps the most important festival

in India. Originally a Hindu festival, it has now crossed the bounds of religion and is celebrated by all in India with fervour and gaiety.

- *Diwali* is a public holiday all over India. It is also perhaps the oldest festival still celebrated today and is mentioned in the Ramayana. The celebrations include the lighting of lamps and candles, and the bursting of crackers. Friends and neighbours exchange special sweets.
- The *Dewali* festival marks the beginning of the New Year for a large majority of Hindus, especially the trader community. Preparations for the festival begin many days prior to the date. It is time for a thorough cleaning of the house, for the belief is that *Lakshmi* will enter clean and nicely decorated houses. The scientific reason is that the monsoon is a time for insects and fungus to breed. With the end of the monsoon, homes need to be cleaned and painted, and belongings aired and dried before the onset of winter. The festival itself extends over about a week, even though the most important day is that of the new moon.
- Since *Diwali* falls on the new moon night, lamps are lit to brighten this moonless night. According to a myth, *Lakshmi* will not enter a dark house. The lamps also welcome home the spirits of dead ancestors, who are believed to visit on this auspicious night. In addition, the light frightens away any evil spirit that might be wandering about near the house.
- In Orissa, lamps light up the dark path that the spirits of the ancestors use to go back to heaven. In modern times, *ghee diyas*, have been replaced by wax candles and colored electric bulbs.

FOOD AND DIETARY GUIDELINES (HINDU)

Religious or other guidelines

- Most Hindus are vegetarians. They should not eat any kind of meat but fish or eggs, and they avoid alcohol. Some Hindus will not eat eggs. However, it has been observed that other Hindus will choose to eat meat but not beef. A cow is a sacred animal for Hindus.

Concept of ‘hot and cold’ properties of certain food items

- In South Asian culture, foods are often classified as “hot” and “cold.” These properties have an impact on the body and the health of an individual. The seniors, especially, strongly believe in these concepts and they prefer to eat meals guided by the **hot and cold** food formula.

Some of the Hot and Cold food items from South Asian Community

Hot	Cold	Hot	Cold
Wheat	Rice	Carrots	Green Tomatoes
Potato	Plantains	Radish	Pumpkins
Buffalo Milk	Cow’s Milk	Fenugreek	Spinach

Fish	Butter Milk	Garlic	Ripe Mango
Chicken	Peas	Green Mango	Bananas
Horse Gram	Green Gram	Paw paw	Guava
Groundnut	Beans	Dates	Lime
Drumstick	Green Onions	Eggs	Coriander

Source: Hunt, 1976.

FAMILY STRUCTURE (HINDU)

- The family is the first place most people receive their socialization, which means that boys and girls learn their place in society. Once they have been socialized, the majority prefer to stay that way. Gender roles are clearly defined and the prevailing role distribution between husband and wife is reflected in their society.

Familial roles, responsibilities and relationships

- The family is the basic and the most important social unit. Most of the families in this community live in extended family set ups. The man is the head of the family, from the father to the oldest adult son, who is deemed responsible for the welfare of the entire family, including extended family.
- Normally the son and his family take care of the elderly parents, physically, socially and financially.
- If the oldest son moves out with his nuclear family, the next son in line becomes responsible for providing for the family. But this dynamic is changing in many families in Canada. The person who sponsored the parents or siblings becomes responsible for the family affairs.
- This may cause tension within the family due to power disruption. Back home, parents and older family members would have the power of decision making on important matters i.e. how the pool of resources is shared and used by the entire family. In Canada, usually the person who sponsors the family members holds that power, which is unlike traditional roles people have been accustomed to for generations.
- Therefore, it is really difficult for a senior to adjust to the changing roles in the family. Normally, husband and wife both work outside the home to make ends meet and to keep up with the economic demands of today's society. The seniors in the family end up caring for the grandchildren, preparing food for the family and doing other chores around the house.
- These seniors may be responsible for the household but they can't exercise the same power as they would have back home. Seniors are viewed as wise, experienced and resource persons for family values, customs and traditions to be kept alive and passed on to the next generation.
- Children are expected to respect, listen and obey parents, older siblings and family members. Girls are expected to stay with parents until they get married. Children

generally are not expected to do household chores. Although there are increasing cases of intercultural/cross-cultural marriages, arranged marriages are still prevalent in the South Asian community.

HEALTH BELIEFS, CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTH AND HEALING (HINDU)

- The seniors have great respect and put a lot of trust in highly educated professionals. For example, they want a doctor to make a decision about their health and treatment because of their strong trust in him or her as a professional. Generally speaking, they have more trust in a male doctor's words than a female doctor. However, they have more trust in a doctor's words (male or female) than a nurse's.
- Hindus believe in preventative medicine. Food in particular is considered medicine that maintains health. Hindus believe that the vegetarian diet is pure, and by not eating meat they avoid consuming reincarnated beings, which would bring bad *karma*. They also believe that exercise and yoga should be practiced daily to maintain good health.
- If the body has a problem, various things are done before taking western medication. If your back aches, yoga might provide a cure. If you have a problem with your arm, exercise might help, and if you have, say, a stomach problem, a specific diet that excludes dairy products might eliminate symptoms.
- *Ayurveda* is very popular among Hindus. It has been passed down through the generations and generally deals with preventative measures, particularly administering food and exercise as a daily medicine. Homeopathy, which is of western influence, is also widely practiced and came into popularity in the 1800s.
- Hindus believe that an animal killed for medicine might have been a person and perhaps even a close relative in another life. Therefore, medications made of animal products are not acceptable, since they invite bad *karma*.
- Prayers are said when the person is in hospital and then right after the death. Wherever a person dies, whether in a hospital bed or at home, rites are performed. After death, the body is cremated and the remains are dispersed in water

SOCIALIZATION AND HOSPITALITY (HINDU)

- Socialization and learning about hospitality take place in the context of the family and close friends from early childhood. Like many other ethnic communities, the members of the South Asian community are graciously hospitable. They will go out of their way to offer you the best of whatever they can afford. They consider having guests a blessing from God that opens up doors for more guests. The more guests one has, the better.

- If you don't accept an invitation to a meal, or if the host is not in a position to offer you a meal, the least they will do is to offer tea, coffee, a cold drink and cookies
- If you are offered refreshments, usually you refuse a couple of times before accepting, on the host's insistence. It is considered impolite if you don't accept, unless you have a genuine reason such as a health condition or work protocols.
- In Canada, socialization takes place during house parties, which are very popular in the South Asian community. The families invite each other for dinner, mostly on weekends. They spend several hours making special dishes and then they sit around, splurge in eating, and enjoy themselves just talking and sharing a few laughs.
- Women will dress up in colourful attire and beautiful jewelry, and talk about fashion, Indian movies, food, world events and what is happening back home. Generally women and men sit in separate rooms. Sometimes each gender will cluster together in one corner, especially in Muslim families.
- Men often talk about politics, including politics back home, business and world news.
- In the Muslim communities from India and Pakistan, "just being friends" with the opposite sex is not encouraged, even if it is claimed to be platonic. Therefore, dating is strongly opposed in these communities. Although there is an increasing number of cross-cultural marriages in this community, arranged marriages are still the norm.
- Most cultural and religious events are celebrated around food, and there is special food for specific events. The most significant national events for Hindus are Holi and Diwali, for Sikhs it's Visakhi and Diwali, and for Muslims it's Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha.
- Most women from Pakistan and Punjab (India) wear a three-piece outfit (Shalwar, Kameez and Duppatta), but in Canada they will often wear a pair of trousers, a shirt and a coat. Women from Southern India often wear Saree, but during winter they might wear a pair of pants and a top.
- Women generally dress modestly, especially Muslim women. Some might wear a Hijab (an act of covering their head) but most of the senior women cover their head with a duppatta (a long scarf) out of respect.

Eating protocols during a home visit

- Generally speaking, people offer you a drink and some snacks. It is polite to accept. If you don't want to accept food, make an excuse that seems appropriate at the time. Sometimes they may offer you a meal, depending on the kind of relationship you have with the client.

DEATH AND DYING (HINDU)

- Hindus believe in reincarnation and rebirth. They believe that the birth and death of an individual is pre-destined by a supreme God. When a person dies, the spirit goes to God for 365 days, in which time the person will be called to account for the actions of his/her life, and it will be decided in which form he/she will return in the next life and how long he/she will live.
- Although health and protecting life are of utmost importance, the length of a person's life cannot be changed. Even if a patient is put on life support equipment, the death will still take place at the pre-destined time, when the "machines" in the body give way. According to the Hindu zodiac, the maximum amount of time a person can live is 120 years, although in very rare instances, this can be exceeded.
- Hindus always hope for a natural and peaceful death, even early on in life. They pray for a "good death." For instance, it is believed to be better to have a quick death from a heart attack, than to have a long illness and slow death from a disease such as cancer.
- Some Hindus believe they might have done something bad in their past life and that is why they have this bad illness.

Autopsy and organ donation

- Most Hindus do not donate their organs because they are not sure how it will affect them in their upcoming lives. Transplants did not exist when the religion was founded it was therefore not covered in the texts of the time.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (SIKH)

- In 1499, after having a life-altering experience, the founder, Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji (known as Guru Nanak) started the religion in the Punjab region of what is now Pakistan. He was Hindu by birth and upbringing. He was influenced by disciples of both Hindu and Muslim mystics.
- Although Sikhism adopts some Hindu and Muslim concepts, it is a new idea and not a merger of the two religions. "Sikh" means "learner" or "disciple," and the Sikhism' goal is to search for "truth", specifically true love and reality in this world. Sikhs believe in one true God, whose reality can be realized through two perspectives, intellect and love. They also believe that humans can relate to God through meditation and that the human soul is inherently good, but it is fettered by human weakness and faults.
- Sikhs also believe in the concept of reincarnation and that people can move closer to (or further away from) realizing "truth" in each subsequent life. Finding "truth" includes blending the body and the soul with the essence of God to experience perfect bliss. Because of this view, Sikhs do not look at death as a loss, but as the possibility that their loved one has joined God's being.

Sikh way of life

- Sikhism seeks to make religion a uniting rather than dividing force. It teaches all people, male and female, *Brahmin* and *Shudra*. Hindu and Muslim are united as brothers and sisters in devotion to the one God. There is no Muslim and there is no Hindu. All are equal human beings because they are the children of the same father who is God.
- The Sikh way of life is meditation and personal prayers in the morning and evening. Sikhism preaches honesty, hard work, charitable service to humanity, God and *Guru*, and strong family values.

The Five K's

- ***Kirpan***: a defensive sword symbolic of God's power and the Sikh duty to protect the weak and persecuted
- ***Kesh***: long, uncut hair (both men and women). Men wear a turban to cover their hair. ***Kangha***: a comb to keep the hair clean and presentable
- ***Kara***: a steel bracelet worn on the right wrist as a reminder to think of God and do one's duty
- ***Kachh***: undergarments as a reminder of chastity (outside of marriage) and purity
- ***Khanda***: the double edged sword represents God's power. The circle is for continuity, the two outer swords are for spiritual and political balance

FOOD AND DIETARY GUIDELINES (SIKH)

- Sikhs do not eat meat used in religious sacrifice or Halal meat, since they believe the method of killing to be cruel. They believe that smoking cigarettes and drinking alcoholic beverages deters a person from God's way of life, so they avoid these practices.
- Sikhs do not eat any ritual meat prepared by either sacrificing the animal to please God or by killing the animal slowly, draining out the blood. Sikhs are forbidden from eating *Zabiha/Halal* meat, (meat prepared the Islamic way). Vegetarian or non-vegetarian meals are individual preferences. If there are no dietary restrictions, the patient may be asked for their choice.

HEALTH BELIEFS, CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTH AND HEALING (SIKH)

Traditional medicine, herbal medicine and home remedies

- Sikhs have a choice in the type of healthcare and medications they receive. Since Sikhism originates from India, many people combine conventional western healthcare practices with alternative practices, including homeopathy, *ayurveda*, and naturopathy, and it is common to take herbal medicines.

- Sikhism values the sciences and the knowledge of healthcare practitioners, and Sikhs are not prohibited from using any medical procedures. However, since cutting the hair is considered to be disrespectful, some patients resist shaving the hair from the body before an operation.
- During times of sickness and disease, Sikhs pray to seek God's help. The sacred word provides them with physical and spiritual strength and nourishment. Sikh patients may request audiotapes of Keertan (sacred music) to be played by their bedside.
- For cultural reasons, women may not discuss certain health issues with a male doctor, particularly if it is of a sexual nature. The women prefer to be examined by a female doctor and they may speak with the doctor privately to discuss health issues of a very private nature.
- Sikhs, male or female, do not like to openly discuss things of a sexual nature with anyone, since these matters are considered private. Therefore, it may be difficult to find out all of a patient's symptoms through direct questioning.
- The sanctity of life is an injunction and human life is of the highest form. Blood transfusions are allowed. Assisted suicide and euthanasia are not encouraged. Maintaining a terminal patient on artificial life support for a prolonged period in a vegetative state is not encouraged.
- Organ transplantation, both donating and receiving, is allowed. Autopsy is also permitted. Artificial reproductive technology is permitted only during the span of an intact marriage between husband and wife. Genetic engineering to cure a disease is acceptable. To date, Sikhs are opposed to human cloning. Abortion is not advised except for medical reasons. Male infants are not circumcised.

Caring for a senior

- An essential aspect of health care is that health care providers be very attentive and understand the concerns of the patient and family. Communicating these concerns to all those involved in the decision-making process is important. It consoles and comforts the patient and his/her family. That way the patient and family will accept the medical condition and if possible staff should take care of the family's needs beyond the medical aspects.
- The principles used by the ethicists include preservation of the patient's faith, sanctity of life, alleviation of suffering, and respect for the patient's autonomy while achieving the best available medical treatment without causing undue harm. Always be honest and truthful in giving information.
- Important aspects in the care of Sikh patients include respect for modesty and privacy (knock on the door, announce your arrival). Do not interrupt a praying patient for routine care. Respect the patient's personal space by limiting unnecessary touching.
- Be sensitive to the significance of the Sikh's five K's (religious symbols or articles of faith), which they may choose to wear on their person at all times. They also

- have uncut hair (Kesh), a wooden comb (Kangha), a steel bracelet (Kara), underwear (Kachhehra), and a ceremonial sword (Kirpan).
- After removing their headdress, Sikh patients may want to keep their head covered with an alternative covering such as a small turban or a scarf. (A surgical bouffant cap is acceptable.) The headdress should be respected, and if removed, it should be given to the family or placed with the patient's personal belongings. Do not place the headdress with the shoes.
 - Consult the patient, family, prior to shaving or removing hair from any part of the patient's body. This applies to both male and female patients.
 - Sikh women may insist on covering their bodies with more than a hospital gown. They may request that, when possible, examinations be done while they wear a gown.
 - Although Sikhism does not prohibit treatment by a practitioner of the opposite sex, a practitioner of the same gender is preferable, especially if the patient requests it.
 - Many Sikhs are new immigrants from Punjab or other countries, and may have language comprehension problems. Therefore, take time to explain tests, procedures, side-effects and treatments to the patient and appropriate family members. It may be necessary to arrange for a Punjabi language interpreter.
 - Cleanliness is part of the Sikh way of life. Daily bathing and personal hygiene care should be provided unless advised otherwise by the attending physician for medical reasons. Washing and conditioning of hair, including male facial hair, with shampoo or soap should be done as frequently as needed. Hair can be dried naturally or with an electric hair dryer. Hair should be combed daily at a minimum. It is Sikh cultural and religious practice to visit the sick. Be open and understanding of visits by family members, children and well-wishers within reason.
 - Provide specialized shelter and counseling for South Asian victims.

Mysticism, spirituality, supernatural beliefs, superstitions

- A prayer room for Sikhs may be provided. The room should be quiet, clean and carpeted. An inter-religious space sensitive to the needs of persons of diverse traditions is acceptable.
- If possible, establish a relationship with a local *Gurdwara* (Sikh place of worship), and a community leader or a *Granthi* (Sikh priest) who could serve as a religious resource.
- Identify Sikh physicians or other health care providers on your staff who can act as liaisons with Sikh patients. If congregational Sikh prayers are being held at the institution, inform other Sikh patients.
- Inform individuals of their rights as patients and encourage them to have advance directives.

SOCIALIZATION AND HOSPITALITY (SIKH)

Cultural celebrations and their significance

- **Vaisakhi:** April 13th, anniversary of founding of the *Khalsa*
- **Guru Nanak's** birthday (November)
- **Baby naming**
- **Amrit:** Baptism (initiation into *Khalsa*)
- **Marriage** (*Anand Karaj*): takes place in the *Gurdwara* with the community before the *Guru Granth*
- **Diwali, Special Day for the Sikhs:** The third Sikh, *Guru Amar Das*, institutionalized *Diwali* as a Red-Letter Day when all Sikhs would gather to receive the Guru's blessings. In 1577, the foundation stone of the Golden Temple at Amritsar was laid on *Diwali*. In 1619, the sixth Sikh, *Guru Hargobind*, who was held by the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, was released from the Gwalior fort along with 52 kings.

Golden Temple

- The Golden Temple is a place of worship, pilgrimage, and seat of worldwide Sikh leadership; open on four sides for access by all people; surrounded by a pool of water for purification rites.

Gurdwara

- The Sikh temple Gurdwara is open daily (in India) with continuous reading and singing from holy books, serving food to all who come. Following worship, all partake in the *Langar*, sitting (on the floor) and eating a meal together (equality).
- In Edmonton, the Gurdwaras offer *langar* (free meal) at the weekend and everyone is welcome.

DEATH AND DYING (SIKH)

- Everything that happens is the will of God. Healing through prayer and through medicine are both possible. However, if a person is meant to recover without medication, they will do so. Many people will willingly accept the will of God (to die or live) rather than go through difficult treatments.
- When a patient dies, scripture reading and prayer are carried out, and a service for the deceased is held about a week later. Sikhs believe in reincarnation. The body is cremated at local funeral homes, where there is provision for cremation.
- In matters of terminal care, the attending physician should consult the patient, the family, the ethicist, and preferably a Sikh scholar, before making a final decision.
- Health care providers, including nurses, physicians and chaplains, should comfort the terminally ill patient, making sure he/she is pain-free, has his/her relatives and friends nearby, and has access to a Sikh *Granthi* (a Sikh priest) who can recite

- Gurbani* (writings of the Gurus) and perform Sikh prayers. At the departure of their loved ones, Sikhs console themselves with the recitation of their sacred hymns.
- It is important that funeral and cremation arrangements be made in advance if possible, in consultation with the family and according to the wishes of the dying or deceased patient.
 - With minimum delay, the body is to be removed to the funeral home for expeditious cremation, unless the family is waiting for a close relative to arrive. Provide routine post-mortem care. The body should be covered with clean linen and shrouded. If the person is wearing any of the 5K's, they should remain on the body.
 - Allow the family and Sikh *Granthi* to follow Sikh traditions for preparing the dead body for funeral. The dead body should be given the same respect as during life.
 - For hospice care, the family may wash and clothe the body immediately after death, prior to removal.

MUSLIM

- There are over 1.2 billion Muslims in the world. Muslims represent 19.2 per cent to 25 per cent of the world's population. One of every five persons is a Muslim. There were 680,000 Muslims in Canada in 1997.
- Islam is the second largest religion of the world. Not all Muslims are Arabs and not all Arabs are Muslims. The Arabs make up only 10 per cent of the Muslim population.

What is Islam?

- Islam is a monotheistic religion. Muslims believe in the God of Christianity and Judaism. Muslims also believe in the prophets of Christianity and Judaism, the most significant being Abraham, Moses and Jesus.
- Prophet Muhammad is the prophet of Islam and messenger of God. He is the last prophet of Islam, the religion taught by Prophet Abraham. Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad was from the blood line of Prophet Abraham's son Ishmael.
- Quran is the holy book of Islam, revealed to Prophet Muhammad by Gabriel in the month of Ramadan over a period of 23 years. Mosque is the place of congregation for Muslims.

FOOD AND DIETARY GUIDELINES (MUSLIM)

- According to Islamic law, Muslims are permitted to eat only *Halal* meat of specific animals. *Halal* is an Arabic word which means "permissible" and "lawful". *Halal* in Islam is as kosher is in Judaism. Muslims eat *Halal* meat only because the meat comes from an animal slaughtered following the rituals and in the name of Allah.

- Muslims are forbidden to eat pork, ham or products. They can eat beef, goat meat, lamb, chicken, camel, buffalo, deer and some selected bird meat, as long as it is *Halal*. Fish and other seafood do not have to be *Halal*. In the absence of *Halal* meat, some Muslims may consider eating *kosher* meat.
- Some Muslims choose to eat meat that is not *Halal* but they would never eat pork, ham or meat bought at a supermarket or restaurant. They will object to the use of the same pots, pans, dishes and utensils that are used to cook and prepare pork dishes.
- They prefer food to be brought from home. If it is not harmful for the patient, allow it or advise the family of food restrictions due to the patient's medical condition.

HEALTH BELIEFS, CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTH AND HEALING (MUSLIM)

- In Islam, the concept of health is demonstrated in *Quran* and *Sunnah*. It means that mankind should be sound mentally, physically and socially well. Ideal health and healing occur when the body, mind and soul are in sync.
- Muslims believe in the will of God. If a person is ill, there must be some reason why God has given them this illness. They see it as test of faith and also blessings in disguise. Life on this earth is simply a journey, and to prepare oneself for life after death. Some Muslims believe the more you suffer in this life on earth, the greater the chances of better life after death.
- For Muslims, health beliefs are deeply rooted in religion. Praying to Allah for healing is very important; you often hear them say “Dawa and Dua” go together. Dawa means medicine and Dua means praying. There are special prayers, prescribed in *Hadith* and other authentic Islamic literature, for different ailments.

Caring for a senior

- Recent Muslim immigrants may have high expectations of doctors and nursing staff. Generally a patient in their home country would totally be cared for by a nurse in a hospital setting. Also at home, family members would take care of all the patient's needs and the patient would be discouraged from doing certain things independently. There would always be someone present to say, “No, let me get that for you,” etc.
- Before each prayer, they would do ablution called “Wadu” or “Wazu”. They may require a quiet place for prayer. If they are ambulatory, you can direct them to a hospital's prayer room where there is provision for Muslim prayers. They may ask for the holy book, Quran. You can contact the hospital's Spiritual Care and Cultural Services department. They will provide the Quran for your patient.
- Modesty is highly desired by Muslims. Patients may refuse to wear a hospital gown, as it won't cover their body properly, and may ask you for bottoms to

cover their legs. A female patient would prefer to be physically examined by a female doctor. You can talk to them and discuss alternatives.

- The professionals are given a high degree of respect and trust. Muslims generally would expect the doctor to make decisions for them with regards to the treatment i.e. removing the life support.
- Professionals are placed on various ranks of trust and understanding. For example, a male doctor's words would have more value than a female doctor's. A doctor would have more value than a nurse, even if the message is the same.
- Traditionally, a Muslim patient receives a large number of visitors in clusters. The family may seem to you to be in denial (not admitting the truth), but usually that is not the case. Muslims strongly believe in miracles of God to heal and cure. They often say, "If it is his will, no matter how bad the prognosis might be, a person may recover and survive."
- You don't have to worry about preparing them for the worst. They know deep in their heart about the prognosis, but they leave it up to God's will and believe a miracle may happen.
- Personal hygiene: Muslims have a unique concept of cleansing, which is called *Pak* (clean) and *NaPak* (unclean).
- Whenever they wash their hands, have a shower, wash their face or wash their clothes, they read a verse from Quran. It won't be considered "Pak" if it is not washed in the prescribed Islamic way of cleansing.

SOCIALIZATION AND HOSPITALITY (MUSLIM)

Cultural celebrations and their significance

- The Five Pillars of Islam
 1. **Shahadah** (submission to will of God): No one has the right to be worshipped but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.
 2. **Prayer** (Salat): Muslims pray five times a day and before each prayer they perform ablution (Wadu or Wazu).
 3. **Almsgiving** (Zakat): Each year Muslims give 2.5 per cent of their accumulated wealth to the poor and needy.
 4. **Fasting** (Sawm): Muslims fast for 30 days each year in Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar. They do not eat between sunrise and sunset. No food or drinks of any kind are consumed during this time.
 5. **Pilgrimage** (Hajj): *Thul-Hajj* or *Zul-Hajj* is the last month of the Muslim lunar calendar. Muslims (who can afford it) from all over the world go for pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. They celebrate *Eid-ul-Adha* or *Eid-ul-Azha* this month and sacrifice an animal in the name of Allah for thanksgiving. One-third of the meat from the slaughtered animal is distributed to the poor.

Ramadan (Ramazan)

- Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. During the blessed month of Ramadan, Muslims all over the world abstain from food, drink, and other physical needs during the daylight hours. It is a time to purify the soul, refocus attention on God, and practice self-sacrifice.
- Muslims are called upon to use this month to re-evaluate their lives in the light of Islamic guidance. We are to make peace with those who have wronged us, strengthen ties with family and friends, and do away with bad habits. Essentially it is a time to clean up our lives, our thoughts, and our feelings. The Arabic word for "fasting", *sawm*, literally means "to refrain", and it means not only refraining from food and drink, but from evil actions, thoughts, and words.
- During Ramadan, every part of the body must be restrained. The tongue must be restrained from backbiting and gossip. The eyes must restrain themselves from looking at unlawful things. The hand must not touch or take anything that does not belong to it. The ears must refrain from listening to idle talk or obscene words. The feet must refrain from going to sinful places. This way, every part of the body observes the fasting period.
- Therefore, fasting is not merely physical, but is rather the total commitment of the person's body and soul to the spirit of fasting. Ramadan is a time to practice self-restraint and a time to cleanse the body and soul.

Eid -ul-Fitr

- *Eid ul-Fitr* or *Id-Ul-Fitr* (Arabic), often abbreviated to *Eid*, is a Muslim holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting. *Eid* is an Arabic word meaning "festivity", while *Fitr* means "to break the fast" (and can also mean "nature", from the word "*fitrah*").
- *Eid ul-Fitr* starts the day after Ramadan ends, and is verified by the sighting of the new moon. Muslims give money to the poor and wear their best clothes. *Eid ul-Fitr* is a one-day celebration and is called "The Smaller Eid", compared with the *Eid ul-Adha* that lasts three days and is called "The Greater Eid".
- On the day of the celebration, a typical Muslim family awakes very early, does the first everyday prayer, and is required to eat a little, symbolizing the end of Ramadan. They then attend special congregational prayers held in mosques, large open areas, stadiums and arenas. The prayer is generally short and is followed by a sermon (khuṭba).
- Worshippers greet and embrace each other with hugs, in a spirit of peace and love, after the congregational prayer. After the special prayers, festivities and merriment are commonly observed with visits to the homes of relatives and friends to thank God for all blessings.
- *Eid ul-Fitr* is a joyous occasion with important religious significance, celebrating the achievement of enhanced piety. It is a day of forgiveness, moral victory, and peace of congregation, fellowship, brotherhood and unity. Muslims celebrate not only the end of

fasting but also thank God for the self control and strength that Muslims believe God gave them. It is a time of giving and sharing, and many Muslims dress in holiday attire.

- Because the day depends on the sighting of the moon, the exact date varies from country to country, and the sighting can only be possible just after sunset. Many people check with local mosques or other members of the community to see if the moon has been sighted by authoritative parties such as knowledgeable scholars. Although many of us believe the Quran says that the sighting of the moon determines the start of Eid, this is written in other books.

Rituals in Eid

- Common greetings during this holiday are the Arabic greeting EĪd Mubarak ("Blessed Eid") or "Happy Eid". In addition, many countries have their own greetings based on local language and traditions.
- People are encouraged to dress in their best clothes (new if possible) and to attend a special Eid prayer that is performed in congregation at mosques or open areas like fields and squares.
- After the prayers, some people will pay a visit to the graveyards. People spend the day thanking the Creator for all their blessings, as well as simply having fun and enjoying them.
- Children are normally given sweets or money. Women, particularly relatives, are normally given special gifts by their loved ones. Eid is also the time for reconciliations. Feuds or disputes, especially between family members, are often settled.

Eid-UI-Adha (The Holiday of Hajj)

- The twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar is called *Thul Hajji*, meaning sacred month. The *Hajji*, or Pilgrimage as it has become known in the West, is the time of year when Muslims from all over the world (who have fulfilled their responsibility and obligations and can afford to travel) visit the *Ka'ba* in *Makkah*, Saudi Arabia.
- The tenth day of the month signifies the beginning of *Eid-UI-Adha*, the holiday of Hajji. In a divinely inspired dream, Prophet Ibrahim saw that he was sacrificing his oldest son, Ishmael, for the sake of Allah. When he revealed this to his son, his son asked him to do as he was commanded, and that he would be patient. As the blade passed over Ishmael's neck, the Lord did not take Ishmael's life.
- The Lord provided a ram for the sacrifice, and preserved his two faithful subjects. Muslims sacrifice an animal, for example a goat, lamb, cow or camel, in accordance with this tradition, thanking the Lord for that he has given to mankind. Those who are not able to attend *Hajji* also perform the sacrifice. Normally, they keep one-third of the meat from the sacrifice, distribute one-third to the needy and share the rest.
- **Eid-UI-Adha** is a four-day holiday and celebration. It commences on the tenth day of *Thul Hajji* and is celebrated in a manner similar to *Eid-UI-Fitr*. It starts with a special holiday prayer, performed in congregation in the Mosque or other suitable place. It is a

time of celebration, visiting family and friends, and thanking Allah for all the blessings bestowed upon the Islamic people. Fasting is prohibited during these days.

DEATH AND DYING (MUSLIM)

- Death is a part of the life cycle and not to be feared. It is the will of God. God sent you in this world. It is up to him to give life and take it away. When it is time to go, you surrender your life to him. "You were his property and he has a right to it."
- When a patient is near death, they like the scripture from the Quran to be recited so that they can hear it.
- Inform the family members if they are not already present. If you cannot get a hold of a family member or a friend, play a recording of a scripture from Quran.
- When the patient is gasping for air and his/her mouth is really dry, put some drops of water in the patient's mouth. When the patient has died, close his/her eyes, stretch the arms straight down alongside of the body, and tie a piece of cloth from under the chin onto the head to keep the mouth closed.
- Do not wash or move the body until the family arrives, and do not put the body on the floor. If there are some open wounds and cuts, don't tape them up, try to stitch the opening. Cover the body with a clean sheet. Try and have female patients' bodies handled by female staff.
- Muslims do not like to leave the deceased's body by itself in the morgue and would want to stay with the body until the arrangements have been made and the paperwork is completed at hospital.

Preparing the body for burial

- Muslims like to bury the deceased as soon as possible, and therefore no obituary is generally published in the paper. Writing an obituary is not a common practice among Muslims.
- Some families may choose to transport the body to a funeral home for viewing before it is taken to the local Islamic centre for washing and preparing, especially if they are expecting family members from other cities.
- Generally, they take the body to the Islamic centre as soon as possible, where they have arrangements to wash and prepare the body. Female bodies are washed by a female friend or relative and likewise male body is washed by the males.
- The body is washed in a simple way, following the ritual. It is embalmed and wrapped in a white shroud, and then placed in a very basic coffin. The body is not dressed in fancy clothes and no make-up is applied to the face.
- Back home, generally, the coffin is carried on foot by men. Each one of them would try to give the deceased a "shoulder", meaning each man would take their turn in carrying the body to the graveyard. While carrying the body, they would recite "Allah-hu-Akbar", God is greatest of all.

- After the burial, family and friends gather at the deceased's home for consoling, and food is served. Family and friends bring food for several days.

Autopsy and organ donation

- There are no set guidelines or directives about organ donation. It depends on individuals. It has been observed that there is a difference of views depending on the time of stay in Canada, education level and family background. Some families will consult the learned one (Imam) from the mosque and get directions from him. which is called "fatwa".
- Generally speaking, Muslims don't like to have a post-mortem performed on the deceased unless it is required by law, and would shy away from organ donation.