

## SIKHISM

This religion is practiced by Sikhs all over the world. Sikhism is quite a new religion and was first founded by Guru Nanak in the fourteenth century. Sikhs believe that there is one God, who is the creator of the universe, and whose grace can pardon all sins. Sikhs believe that a normal family life should involve earning an honest living, having a humble attitude and sharing happiness and wealth with others to make up an ideal life. Sikhs believe in the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man. The holy book, which Sikhs follow, is called the Guru Granth Sahib. Sikhs worship in temples known as Gurdwaras. Their main celebrations include Diwali, the festival of lights and Baisakhi, the day when Sikhs celebrate the formation of the Sikh brotherhood.

### Dress

The turban is probably the most striking feature of the dress of Sikh men. However, not all Sikh men wear a turban. Many Sikh women wear shaiwar and khameez, loose trousers with a long top, and scarf. Although some do adopt Western dress.

In a Sikh home you may see pictures of the Gurus of the Sikh tradition on the walls. You may also see pictures of the Golden Temple in Amritsar in the Punjab, the most important place of Sikh pilgrimage. Some Sikh families have a special room where they keep a copy of the scriptures, the Guru Granth Sahib, usually placed on a throne-like table. If you enter this room, you should cover your head and remove your shoes.

## RASTAFARIANS [extracts from Changing Face of Britain]

The Rastafarian movement began in Jamaica in the 1920s and became popular amongst the poorest sections of the Jamaican population. The major influence on the movement is Marcus Garvey, who died in London in 1940. He spent most of his life fighting for the rights of black people in predominantly white cultures. Rastafarians believe that the former emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie, is the living, immortal God. Known as Ras Tafari. Their faith teaches peace and love. It also teaches that salvation lies in the liberation of blacks. They believe that although slavery has ended, blacks will not be free until they return to Africa. As well as a status as a religion, the Rastafarian movement has a cultural aspect. Some people do not follow the religion but adopt the appearance of Rastas, usually the hairstyle. Rastafarians celebrate various festivals such as the birthday of Haile Selassie on 23rd July, Ethiopian Christmas (7 Jan) and New Year.

### Dress

They often wear a head covering called a tam, and their hair is often worn in 'dreadlocks'. Those who do not wear dreadlocks tend to wear their hair long. They often dress in red, green and gold, the Ethiopian national colours.

**Please be aware that this list is not exhaustive, there is diversity within different religions and beliefs.**

Extract from 'Equality and Diversity' - "what's that then?" - LSC

If you want any further information about different cultures or religions please speak to your Tutor/Employee Development Specialist.

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## Just how much do you know about the different cultures and religions that people practice around the world?

Undoubtedly you will meet people who follow some of the customs discussed here, and you will meet others who do not. However, the aim is to give you some guidelines and knowledge about the cultures and faith of people in the ethnic minority communities.

Please note however, that it is possible that some Black, Asian or other ethnic minorities may not practice any of the religions mentioned here.

### BUDDHISM

Buddhism is the main religion of South East Asia and Far East Asia. Buddhism began in India about 2500 years ago. It is based on the teachings of Siddharta Gautama who became Buddha. The Buddha teaching is known as the Dharma. He taught that people suffer because of the desire to cling to the pleasures of this life. To get rid of desire a person must follow what Buddhists call the Eightfold Path, known as the 'Middle Way.' By learning to think, behave and meditate in a new way, a person can learn to control desire. The Buddha formed the Sangha, a community of monks and nuns to help him spread this teaching.

#### Dress

There is no particular dress that is associated with Buddhism. Buddhists come from various cultural backgrounds and their clothing tends to reflect this diversity.

You may see a small shrine or image of the Buddha in a Buddhist home. Buddhists often meditate before this image.

Some Buddhists do not have the custom of shaking hands. So it might be best to wait until the host makes the first move.

### CHRISTIANITY

This religion is widely practiced by Christians all over the world. It is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ (The son of God) in 4 BC. Christians believe that there is only one God, and he is the creator of the universe and everything that is in it. Christianity teaches its followers a way of life. The main beliefs of Christianity include the belief in the Holy Spirit, forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the everlasting life. The main celebrations of this religion include Christmas, when the birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated and Easter, when it is believed that Jesus Christ was resurrected following his crucifixion.

### TRAVELLING COMMUNITIES

The term traveller is used to identify groups of people who are or have been traditionally associated with a nomadic lifestyle. These include: -

Gypsy Travellers - The largest group among the travelling communities; Irish Travellers (Traveller of Irish origin); House Travellers - Travellers who choose to live in houses; Barge/Boat People; Showmen (Fairground people); Circus People ; New Travellers - Community of more recent origin; Seasonal Travellers - Commonly found along the coast.

### HINDUISM

Hinduism first developed in India over 4 or 5 thousand years ago. This religion teaches its followers a way of life and is mainly practiced by Indians. This religion has no single founder or prophet, no holy book or organised place of worship. Hindus believe that there is a creator or a supreme spirit that is neither male nor female and is far too complicated for ordinary people to understand and worship. Therefore, they worship this creator through 3 main images: 1) Brahma, the creator. 2) Vishnu, the preserver. 3) Shiva, the destroyer.

Hindus believe in reincarnation or rebirth. The life that a person leads now determines the next life that he or she will lead, so it is important to lead a good and normal life.

Worship takes place in homes, however temples are also used. Hindus have 4 main books that they worship. The two most important festivals are Holi and Diwali.

#### Dress

Women often wear saris or shalwar and kameez (trousers with a long blouse). Some however wear Western Dress. Some women have a large red dot on their forehead, a sign that they are married. At home some men wear a dhoti, or a pair of loose trousers.

Inside the home you may see pictures and statues of Hindu deities. There may be a corner of a room or a small room set-aside as a shrine. If you are invited to look at the shrine room, you should offer to remove your shoes. If you are offered food or drink, it is polite to accept and try a little food. If you cannot it is best to explain why.

It is best to speak to the man in the Hindu home rather than to speak to a Hindu woman on her own.

### ISLAM

Muslims practice this religion all over the world. It was founded by the Prophet Mohammed in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe that there is only one God and Mohammed is his messenger. The holy book, which Muslims follow

as a way of life, is called the 'Qur'an'. The 5 pillars of Islam include, faith in the religion, worship, which includes 5 daily prayers, fasting in the month of Ramadan, charity and pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca at least once in a lifetime. The main celebrations for this religion are Eid ul Fitr and Eid ul Adha.

#### Dress

Most Muslim women cover their head with a scarf and wear long skirts or loose trousers. Some may also cover their face when in public. Many Muslim men wear a head covering when in public or worshipping in the mosque.

In a Muslim home, you may see pictures of Mecca, the holiest city of Islam. There may also be a Qur'an on a high shelf, sometimes covered in a cloth and quotations from Qur'an on plaques on the wall.

Devout Muslims pray five times a day and if you arrive unannounced, you may interrupt their prayer. If possible simply wait for them to finish.

Many Muslim women may not be comfortable in mixed company and will tend to avoid being in the room if there are men present other than their relatives.

### JUDAISM

This religion was first founded by Abraham and is practiced by Jews. There are different groups within the Jewish faith i.e. Orthodox and Non-Orthodox Jews. Jews believe in one God and recite a daily prayer declaring this, The holy book, which they use as a way of life, is called the Torah. Traditionally, Jews practice their worship in synagogues, where they pray 3 times a day. Saturday is a holy day in the Jewish faith. It is a day of rest and is celebrated as the Sabbath.

#### Dress

Many Orthodox Jewish men keep their heads covered with a kippah or skull-cap. Some married Orthodox women cover their heads with a hat or wig when they go out in public. Other Jews do not normally wear any distinctive clothing.

No images of God are found in a Jewish home. You may notice however, a small box attached to the doorpost. Inside is a parchment containing part of the Shema, Jews normally touch this as a sign of peace and respect.

The Jewish Sabbath begins at dusk on Friday and lasts until dusk on Saturday. Orthodox Jews spend that time in study, prayer and rest. They normally do not answer the telephone, write or ride in a car on the Sabbath - this is considered work and work is forbidden