

### **Family and tribal relationships**

Pakistan's system of extended family has a direct bearing on decision-making and the division of responsibilities. Parents and elders make most decisions. They have unquestioned control over young family members. Every relative is considered a member of the family. Loyalties and obligations extend to each and every member. In the work environment, especially in the government, relatives from one *biradari*, clan, tribe or sub-ethnic group, often work together in the same office. There is a tremendous sense of loyalty among them. If you antagonize one, you antagonize all. In such circumstances it is best to keep frustration or anger to yourself.

### **Indebtedness**

There is a well-established system of favours and reciprocal obligation in Pakistan. Pakistanis keep detailed mental accounts of indebtedness. They

must return favours as a way of settling past debts. They may, for example, hire a cousin in order to honour past favours or respect family ties. As a foreigner, you come to Pakistan without indebtedness. If someone does a favour for you, you owe that person one in return. Foreigners must, however, be completely transparent in their dealings. More than being fair, everything must appear to be fair. Do not be surprised if you are asked to help Pakistanis find jobs or obtain visas to enter Canada. Listen patiently and explain at some length that you are not in a position to get jobs or visas for people. Never make false promises, but if you can help by circulating a curriculum vitae, or bio-data as it is commonly referred to in Pakistan, your Pakistani colleagues will be grateful. You have done what you can to fulfill the obligation. You are not really helping, but you appear to be helping.

### **Islam** ◆ ◆ ◆

Pakistan is an Islamic republic with many of its laws based on the Quran and the Sunnah. Islam is predominant. Christianity, the largest minority religion, is practised by about 3% of the population. Some customs that appear to have religious significance can often be traced back to social conventions. Religion is used to legitimize cultural practices such as *purdah*, the veiling of women, and the

actions of the powerful. It is best to avoid getting into controversial discussions about Islam unless you are knowledgeable about the subject or completely comfortable with the other person. Foreigners can seriously offend someone without ever knowing it when discussing religion. If it happens, the offended person is unlikely to tell you, but may forever hold a grudge against you. On the