



The Bindi

The bindi is arguably the most visually fascinating of all forms of body decoration. Hindus attach great importance to this ornamental mark on the forehead between the two eyebrows -- a spot considered a major nerve point in human body since ancient times. Also loosely known as 'tika', 'pottu', 'sindoor', 'tilak', 'tilakam', and 'kumkum', a bindi is usually a small or a big eye-catching round mark made on the forehead as adornment.

In southern India, girls choose to wear a bindi, while in other parts of India it is the prerogative of the married woman. A red dot on the forehead is an auspicious sign of marriage and guarantees the social status and sanctity of the institution of marriage. The Indian bride steps over the threshold of her husband's home, bedecked in glittering apparels and ornaments, dazzling the red bindi on her forehead that is believed to usher in prosperity, and grants her a place as the guardian of the family's welfare and progeny.

The area between the eyebrows, the sixth chakra known as the 'agna' meaning 'command', is the seat of concealed wisdom. It is the centre point wherein all experience is gathered in total concentration. According to the [tantric](#) cult, when during meditation the latent energy ('kundalini') rises from the base of the spine towards the head, this 'agna' is the probable outlet for this potent energy. The red 'kumkum' between the eyebrows is said to retain energy in the human body and control the various levels of concentration. It is also the central point of the base of the creation itself — symbolizing auspiciousness and good fortune.

Traditional bindi is red or maroon in color. A pinch of vermilion powder applied skillfully with practiced fingertip make the perfect red dot. Women who are not nimble-fingered take great pains to get the perfect round. They use small circular discs or hollow pie coin as aid. First they apply a sticky wax paste on the empty space in the disc. This is then covered with kumkum or vermilion and then the disc is removed to get a perfect round bindi. Sandal, 'aguru', 'kasturi', 'kumkum' (made of red turmeric) and 'sindoor' (made of zinc oxide and dye) make this special red dot. Saffron ground together with 'kusumba' flower can also be used. Today however all sorts of commercially made bindi's are made used.

