



NORTH AMERICAN HINDU ASSOCIATION



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BINDI:

WHAT: A bindi is a dot typically worn on the forehead by Hindu women. Bindis are available at most Indian stores in packets. They are available in all kinds of materials, sizes, and shapes. One side of the bindi has adhesive similar to ‘post-it’ notes, thus allowing bindis to be used again and again. Bindis have a religious and social significance which are often ignored. In recent times, they mostly have fashion significance.

WHO: Typically a bindi is worn by women. Bindi worn by men is known as Tika. Tika is usually associated with some religious ceremony.

SIZE: The size varies from a tiny dot to the size of a quarter and depends on the individual’s preference.

SHAPE: Bindis come in all shapes, colors, and forms. They are limited only by the imagination of manufacturers.

SIGNIFICANCE: There are many explanations for the bindi. The most popular ones are as follows:

Religious:

1. The Lord Shiva (The Lord of Destruction) has three eyes. The third eye is in the center of the forehead. When the Lord Shiva destroys the evil, all his energy is centered on the third eye, which then opens.
2. The third eye of the Lord Shiva is symbolic of his energy (Shakti). His consort, Goddess Parvati is the personification of this Shakti. Thus, all women are considered to possess this Shakti and the bindi is a symbolic representation of her powers.
3. Whenever the religious ceremony or worship is performed, a priest or performer will wear a Tika. This Tika is typically made from a red dye and/or ash mixed with water. Thus, it is either red or gray in color. Red is a symbolic holy color. Ash represents Lord Shiva’s destructive powers. It is to remind us that we all go back to ashes.

Social:

1. The bindi symbolizes that a woman is not a widow. Thus, both married and unmarried women wear bindi. Only widows do not wear bindi. Bindi symbolizes Sowbhagya, the “blessedness of marital status.” The unmarried women wear it because it is assumed that every woman has a man who is destined to be her husband. Amongst urban and educated population, bindi is worn by all women.

