



Spokane Hindu Temple & Cultural Center



In India, it is known by many names:

- ❖ kumkumam (Sanskrit कुङ्कुमम्)
- ❖ kumkuma (Telugu కుంకుమ)
- ❖ kunku (Marathi कुंकू)
- ❖ kumkum (Bengali কুমকুম)
- ❖ Kumkum (Hindi कुमकुम)
- ❖ kunkuma (Kannada ಕುಂಕುಮ)
- ❖ kungkumam (Tamil குங்குமம்)
- ❖ kungkumam (Malayalam കുങ്കുമാ)

Kumkuma is a powder used for social and religious markings in India. It is made from turmeric and is an Ayurvedic facial material along with turmeric. The turmeric is dried and powdered with a bit of slaked lime, which turns the rich yellow powder into a red color.

Kumkuma is most often applied by Indians to the forehead. The reason has to do with the ancient Indian belief that "the human body is divided into seven vortices of energy, called chakras, beginning at the base of the spine and ending at the top of the head. The sixth chakra, also known as the third eye, is centered in the forehead

directly between the eyebrows and is believed to be the channel through which humankind opens spiritually to the Divine".

Thus, the kumkuma is placed where Indians believe to be the most important spot for receptivity to be enhanced.

The 'color' of the womb is yellow and is represented by turmeric. The blood stains on the womb is represented by kumkuma. It is believed that the combination of turmeric and kumkuma represents prosperity.

When a girl or a married woman visits a house, it is a sign of respect (in case of an elderly lady) or blessings (in case of a girl) to offer kumkuma to them when they leave. However, it is not offered to widows.

When visiting a temple, married women from southern India usually dip their ring finger in yellow turmeric powder and apply a dot on their forehead. Men, women, girls, and boys also apply a dot on their forehead of red turmeric powder, when visiting a temple or during a pooja. Kumkuma at temples is found in heaps. People dip their thumb into the heap and apply it on the forehead or between the eyebrows.

In most of India, married women apply red kumkuma to the parting of their hair above their forehead every day as a symbol of marriage. This is called vermilion, or in Hindi, sindoor. In southern India, many unmarried girls wear a bindi every day unlike northern India where it is only worn as a symbol of marriage.

-<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kumkuma>