



TILAK CHANDLO

“Male devotees shall mark their forehead with Urdhvapundra Tilak (‘U’ shaped mark of Gopichandan or sandalwood paste) with a round Kumkum Chandlo in the middle. Married women shall only make a round mark of Kumkum on their forehead”...(*Shikshapatri Shlok 52*)

“Widows shall not mark their forehead with a tilak or chandlo. All my devotees shall then meditate upon Lord Shree Krishna and mentally offer him sandal wood paste, flowers etc.”...(*Shikshapatri Shlok 53*)

- Lord Swaminarayan himself introduced the Tilak Chandlo
- Tilak is the symbol of the Lotus Feet of God and will lead you to Akshardham (Pundra means a lotus and Urdhva means upward).
- Tilak is yellow in colour, Chandlo is red in colour.
- Chandlo is a symbol of Bhakti and of Radhikaji/Lakshmi (i.e. spiritual prosperity)
- Just like other symbols the Tilak Chandlo signifies Bhakti and devotion to God. It shows that you are a devotee of God and can be trusted by other devotees.
- Tilak Chandlo is primarily applied on the forehead because it is the place of Agnya Chakra, i.e., the commanding centre of spiritual power.
- The scriptures declare that without the Tilak mark meditation, charitable work and the study of religious books are a waste of time, i.e. it is not fruitful.
- For the males when the tilak chandlo is put on the following mantras must be said:
 - Forehead - Aum Vasudevaay Namah
 - Chest/heart - Aum Sankarshanaay Namah
 - Right Arm - Aum Shree Pradhyumnaay Namah
 - Left Arm - Aum Shree Anirudhaay Namah

For the males and females when the kumkum chandlo is put on, the following mantra is said:

Aum Maha-Laxmi-Narayanaay Namah



MALA

Many years ago, Saints were asking devotees to say God's name many hundreds of times a day. It was difficult to keep count; as a result the Mala was introduced to help keep a count.

Mala is a form of Bhakti. Therefore, when we do Mala we should surrender ourselves to God. Other major religions also have an equivalent of the Mala, which are known by different names.

- Mala has 108, ideally Tulsi, beads – representing the 108 names of God – Jana Mangal Stotram.
- Mala helps concentrate our mind on God and get rid of worldly thoughts from our mind.
- The Gaumukhi (cloth bag) is used to keep the Mala clean.

How to do Mala

- Hold the Mala in the Middle Section, of your Second (longest) Finger, of your Right Hand
- Each bead is moved one-by-one, by the right thumb, towards yourself
- When doing mala, one should keep the index finger away from the mala, as it is considered impure; this is why it is left on its own.
- For each bead moved, you should recite 'Jay Swaminarayan', clearly and carefully.
- When the large bead (Sumaro/Mer) is reached, the Mala should be reversed (not crossed over) and restarted using the right hand's second finger and thumb only.
- According to scriptures, the solar system revolves around Mount Meru, therefore when doing Mala, when we reach the Mer, we touch it and return in the opposite direction but do not cross it.
- The Mala should not be rushed and the beads should not be skipped.
- To maintain the purity of the Mala, it should not touch your feet, the floor etc. In the absence of a Gaumukhi, the Mala can be worn around the neck rather than be carried in dirty pockets.



KANTHI

"All Brahmin, Shatriya and Vaishya devotees who have taken Diksha of Lord Shree Krishna by a spiritual master, descended from Dharmakul, shall always wear a two-fold kanthi made of tulsi wooden beads around their neck..." (*Shikshapatri shlok 41*)

Lord Swaminarayan gave us Kanthi to remind us that we have God on our side for help if we need him. It signifies our sampraday. Other religions also have these types of symbols, e.g. Christians wear a cross around their neck.

- The origin of the Kanthi dates back to the time of Ramanand Swami and his guru Ramanuj Acharya. Ramanand Swami was the first to adorn a double stranded necklace made of Tulsi.
- Kanth means neck, and something to wear around the neck is called Kanthi. It is made of Tulsi (Holy Basil).
- Kanthi signifies our friendship with God, just like friendship bracelets amongst friends.
- Kanthi has two strings – the double stranded kanthi symbolises Krishna and Radha.
- Kanthi has to be long enough to touch the top of your heart, because this is where God resides.
- Kanthi must be worn on the inside of garments to protect it from damage and to ensure it does not break accidentally during play or at work.
- When a Kanthi is given to us by a saint or a holy person, the Kanthi becomes sacred.