

Religious Symbols

The following symbols are some of the most common symbols found in Hinduism.

Aum/Om

Hindus consider *Aum* (or *Om*) to be the sound of creation and the universe. It is composed of three syllables: ah, oo, and mmm.

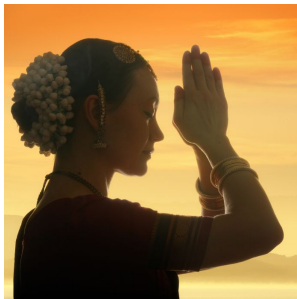
The Mandukya Upanishad, an ancient Hindu scripture, is entirely devoted to *Om*. It begins like this:

Om is the imperishable word
Om is the universe, and this is the exposition of Om
The past, the present, and the future, all that was, all that is, all
that will be is Om
Likewise, all else that may exist beyond the bounds of time, that too is Om



Hindus believe that the very vibrations created by the chanting of *Om* are sacred and powerful. They believe that the vibrations of *Om* help the person chanting to align their mind, body, and spirit with the vibration of the universe.

Namaste



Hindus traditionally greet each other by bringing their palms together in the middle of their chest and saying *namaste*. The word *namaste* means “the divine within me bows to the divine within you.” The greeting reflects the respect that Hindus have for the divinity all around them. [This short video](#) depicts this thought.

Bindi/Tilak

The "red dot" or *bindi*, once primarily a symbol of marriage, has largely become a fashionable accessory for Hindu females of all ages, regardless of their marital status. Traditionally, *bindis* were red or maroon in color and made of vermilion paste (*kumkum*). Today, *bindis* come in all shapes, sizes, and colors.

The male version of forehead markings is called a *tilak* and can be made of *kumkum*, sandalwood, or sacred ash in a variety of shapes



