

Path to Siva

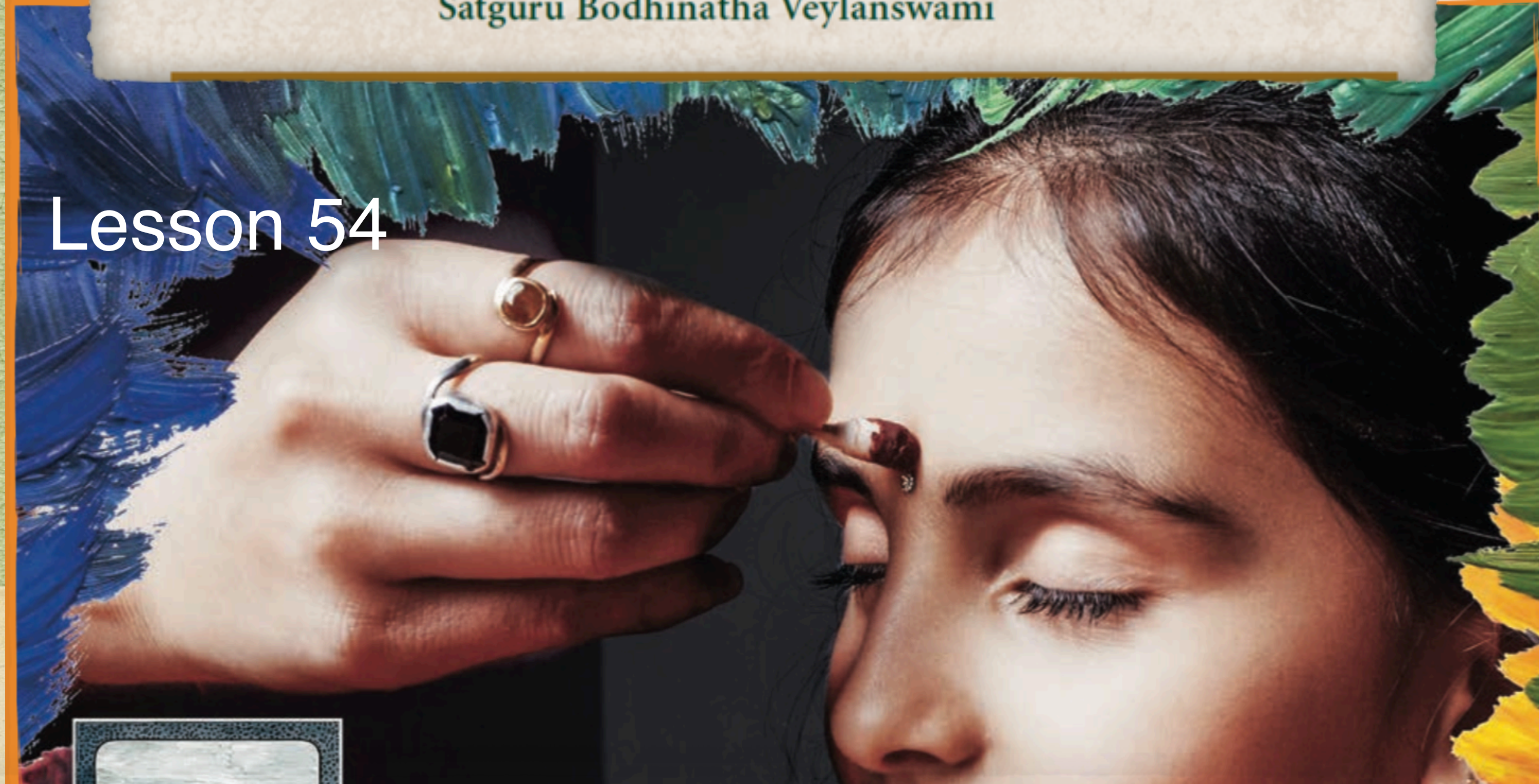
A Catechism for Youth

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

FORE

SYMBOL

Lesson 54



What Are Our Saiva Forehead Marks?

Cultural & Spiritual Practice



Our forehead marks are distinctive Hindu cultural and spiritual practice.

We wear red or black dots, white stripes and designs in sandalwood paste.

Most Marks are sectarian

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They tell the world which Hindu tradition we follow.

Worshippers of Lord Vishnu often wear a U-shaped tilaka made of clay.



Marks for Saivites

Saivites wear three stripes of white sacred ash, called *vibhuti* or *tiruniru*, across their forehead.

This mark is called a *tripundra*.



Holy ash can be seen by devas

These practices have mystical explanations.

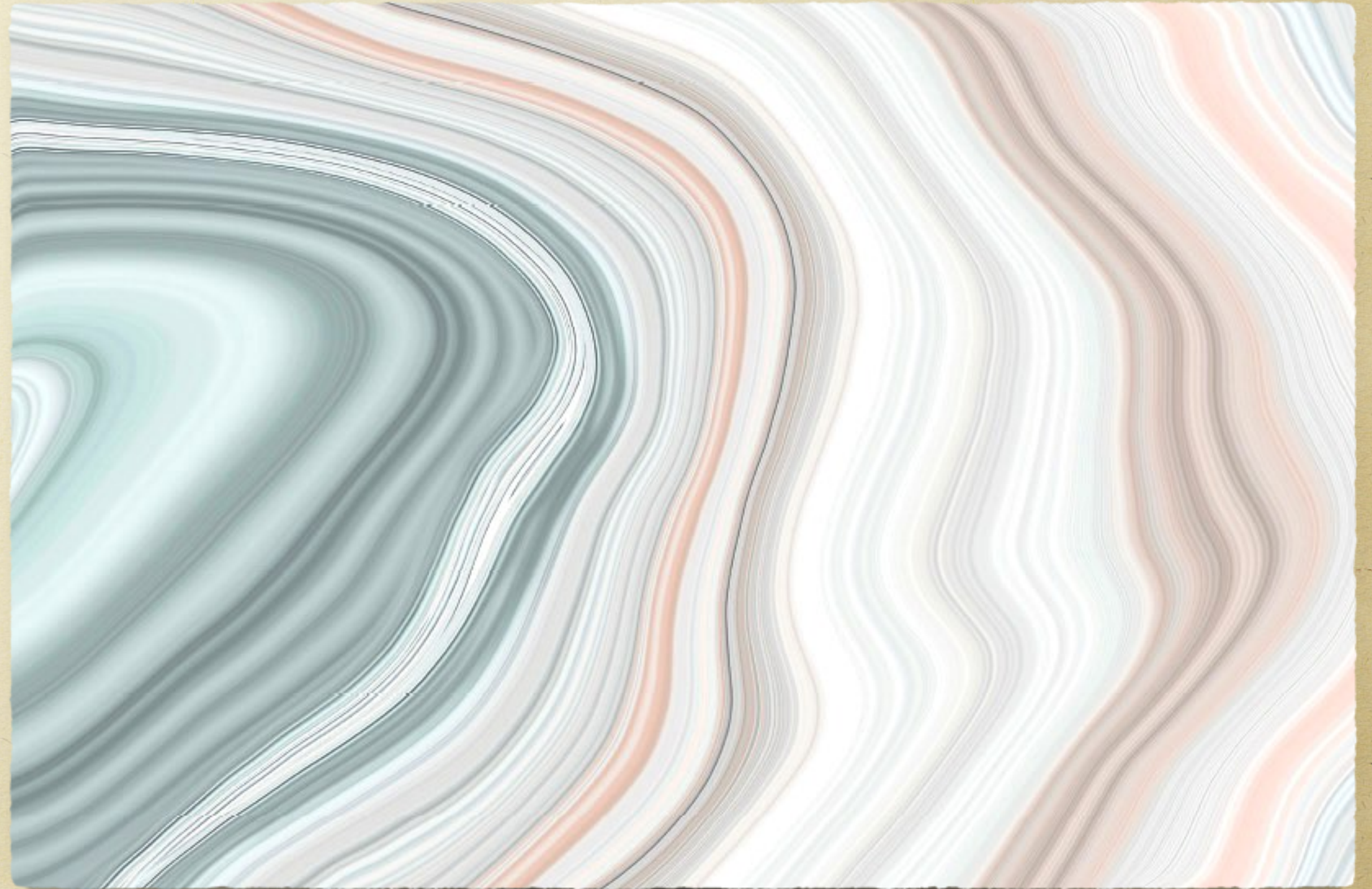
Holy ash can be seen by the devas in the inner worlds, especially during puja.

This allows them to better help us.



Holy ash signifies purity

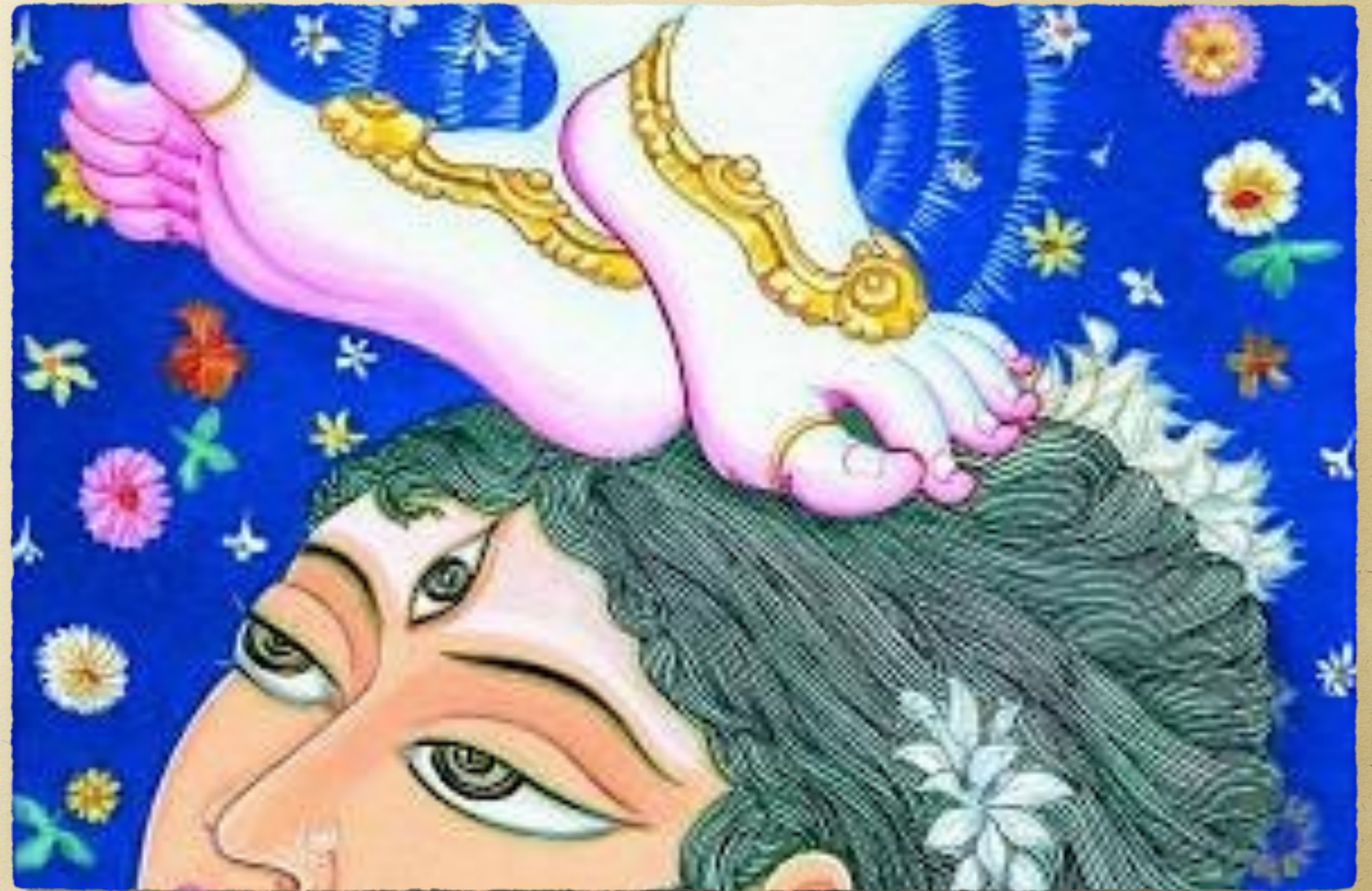
The holy ash signifies purity and the burning away of the soul's three bonds: anava, karma and maya.



Holy ash brings Blessings

Wearing it brings the blessings and protection of God Siva.

It also reminds us of the temporary nature of the physical body and inspires us to strive without delay for God Siva's grace.



The third eye...

A dot is often worn just below the middle of the forehead.

It is called *bindi* in Hindi and *pottu* in Tamil and is used by Hindus of all sects.

Said to represent the “third eye” of spiritual sight, it is a reminder to use our mind’s eye or inner vision and not just see life with our physical eyes.



Red and black dots

A red bindi can indicate a woman is married.

A black one, especially on a child, is intended for protection.



Sacraments after puja

The sacraments passed out after a puja in a Saivite temple include vibhuti, kumkum and sandalwood.

Both men and women apply all three.

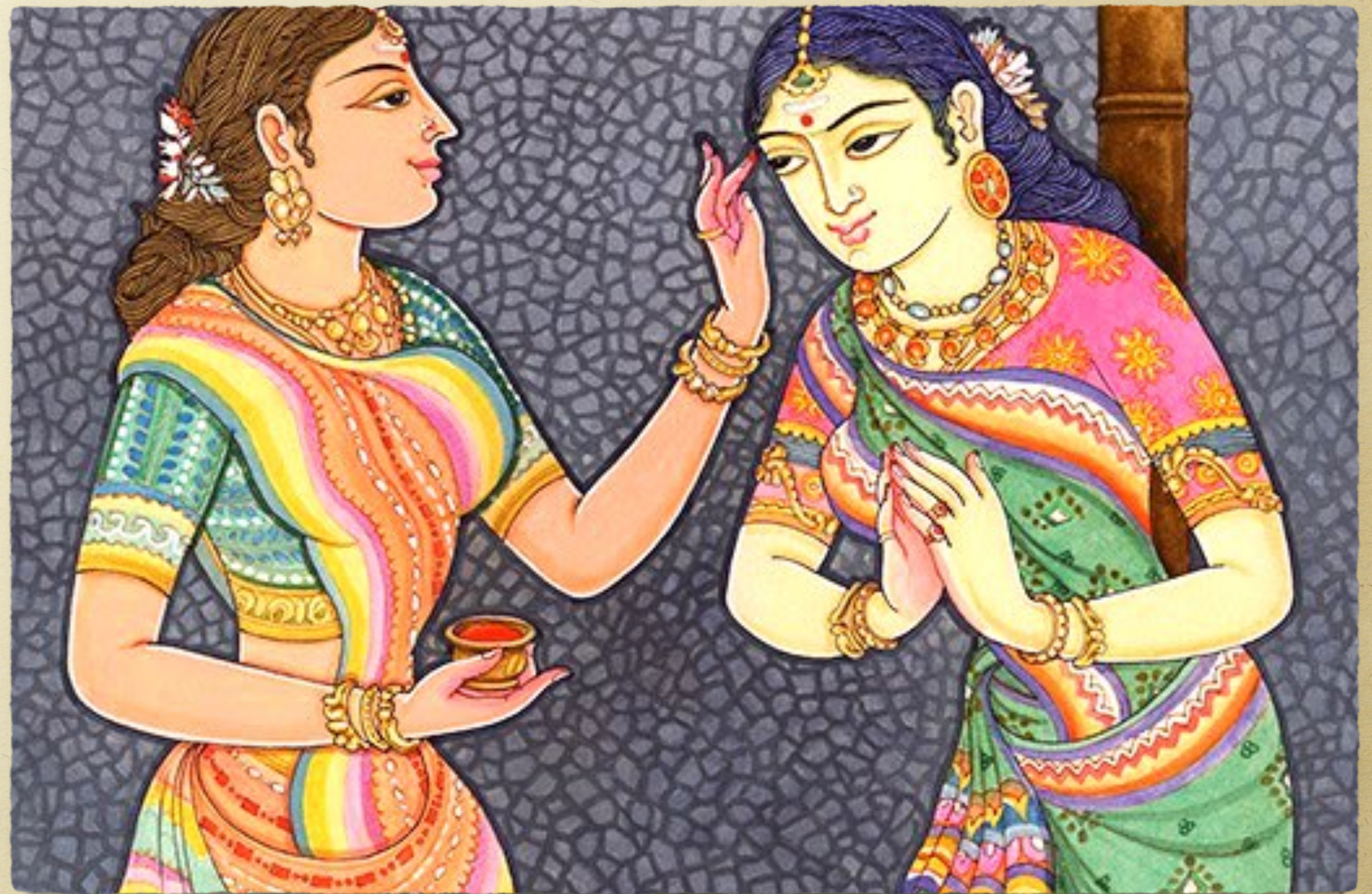
Women usually use a smaller amount of ash on the forehead than men.



Blessing visitors...

Visitors to a Hindu home are often blessed first at the doorway with a pottu.

We proudly wear our forehead marks, knowing they distinguish us as devout Hindus.



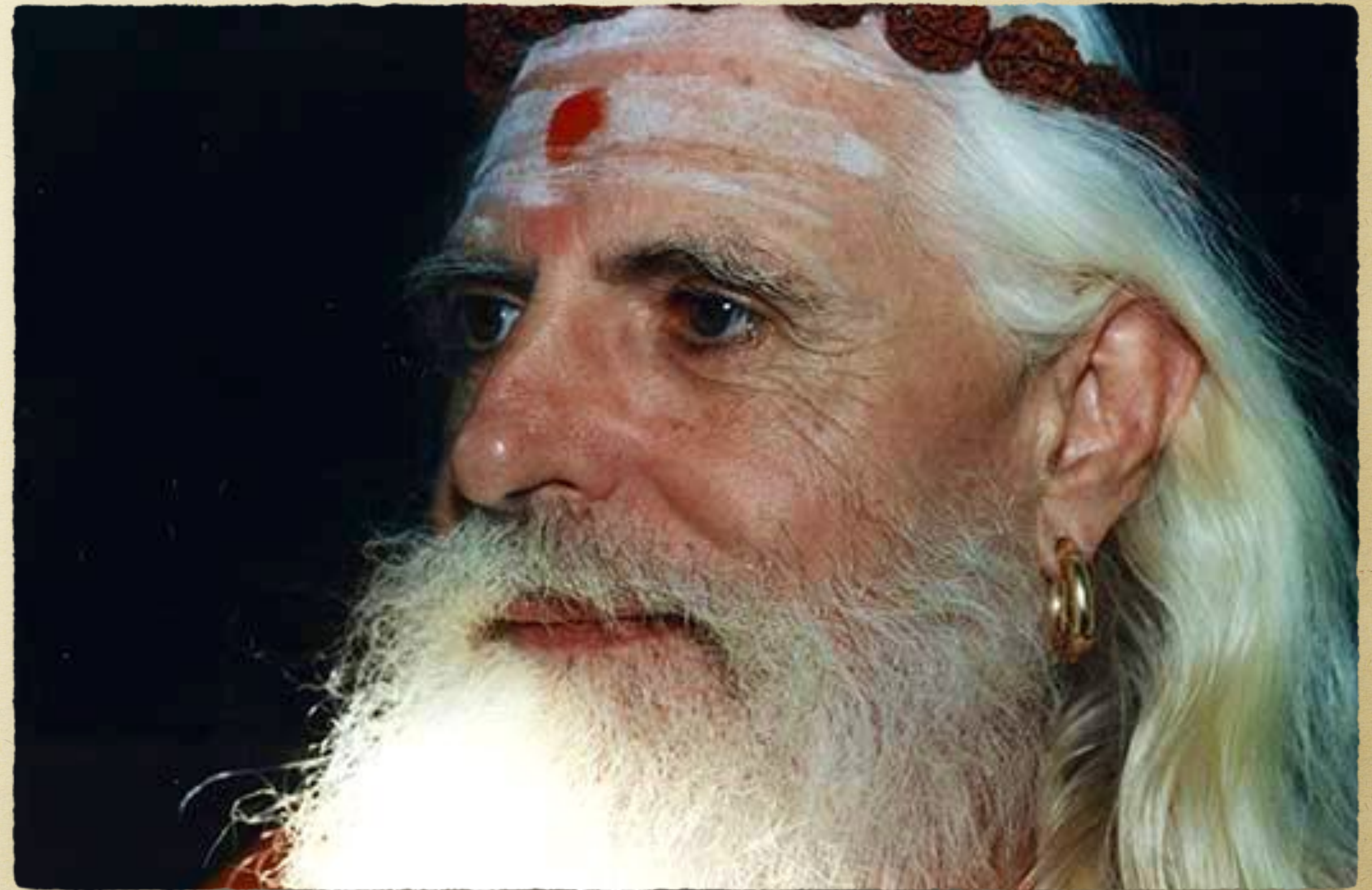
Gurudeva says...

We wear the pure white ash to alert the devas that we are members of this religion.

This vibhuti is a sign, a way of saying, "We seek your help, and we seek your blessings." And by seeing the ash, they can distinguish your face. ...

The dot worn on the forehead is a sign that one is a Hindu. The dot has a mystical meaning.

It represents the third eye of spiritual sight, which sees things the physical eyes cannot see.



QUESTIONS for Lesson 54



54.1 On our forehead we wear red or green dots, white stripes and designs in sandalwood paste.

- True
- False

54.2 Saivites wear three stripes of white sacred ash.
(Check the incorrect answer)

- A. The white sacred ash is called vibhuti or tiruniru
- B. The mark of the three stripes is called a tripundra
- C. The three stripes symbolize Siva's three powers of ichcha, kriya and jnana

54.3 Holy ash can be seen by the devas in the inner worlds, especially when we sleep.

- True
- False

54.4 The dot worn on the forehead is said to represent the "third eye" of spiritual sight and is a reminder to use our mind's eye or inner vision and not just see life with our physical sight.

- True
- False

54.5 A black bindi indicates a woman is married.

- True
- False