



**Mehndi - Learn To Create Your Own
Body Paint & Cultural Abstract of
Today's Wedding**

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE BODY ARTS

An Overview of Body Arts:

Body Art is the modification of human body in order to transform or enhance its attraction and appeal whilst looking trendy and fashionable on the other hand.

With the advancement in techniques and equipments, Body Art has quite extensively been modified to suite the versatile desires of today's younger generation.

This form of art is, in most cases, is undertaken to depict one's personality or obsession in form of tattoos or permanent scars.

Whether to exhibit patriotic feelings or deep emotional sentiments for someone, Body Art has and is continuing to gain popularity and fame especially amongst teenagers.

History of Body Arts:

Like many other traditions and customs prevailing in the countries, it is almost impossible to entail the origin of Body Art as to where it was first introduced.

According to a series of archaeological reports, many old mummified bodies have been discovered that show the carvings of tattoos on entire or half of the body and date back to being almost 5000 to 24000 years.

Instead, it has been predicted to have started somewhere in America, South America, Samoa, Japan, Polynesia and Hawaii simultaneously for medical and spiritual purposes by the locals.

Various types of Body Arts:

Becoming quite famous for the last few decades, Body art has developed up various types to satisfy the desires of the applicants to a greater extent.

Body Art Painting and Shaping allow for the augmentation in the appeal and the modification of the body parts through plastic surgeries.

Skin Dyeing can be employed through the use of Henna for formation of temporary tattoos on any part of Body according to the customer's likeness.

Body Art also consists of Piercing, Tattooing and Scarification which, rather, leave a permanent mark on the body through a painful course of action.

CHAPTER 2: HENNA – A UNIQUE BODY ART

Henna- Introduction to a New Type of Body Art

Henna is a flowering plant, the sole species in the genus *Lawsonia* in the plant family of *Lythraceae*.

This specific plant is native to the tropical and sub-tropical regions of Africa, Southern Asia and Northern Australasia in semi-arid zones.

Henna or Mehndi, as commonly known by latter in the Middle-East countries, is a tall shrub or small tree which produces a burgundy dye molecule, Lawsone.

This molecule has an affinity for bonding with protein and thus has been used to dye skin, finger and toe nails and hair as a new type of Body Art.

Production- Cultivation Areas with Specific Temperate Conditions

Henna has been in use for as long as 5000 years due to its viable dyeing and therapeutic characteristics.

Being suited to tropical arid and tropical savannah regions; it is widely cultivated in India, Pakistan, Morocco, Yemen, Iran, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Libya, Egypt and Bangladesh.

Pali district in India alone has over 100 Henna processors operating in Sojat City.

The Preparation Henna Paste

Henna paste can be easily manufactured domestically for one's private uses.

Its powder is an essential requirement for the recipe and is quite easily available in the domestic markets in packs as well as being openly sold.

The Henna powder is fore mostly sifted or filtered of impurities and is then mixed with boiled coffee, which balls it up a little, to make up a smooth, blended and thick paste.

If the paste seems to be runny, add more henna powder and increase the water content if it is much thick.

After this, lemon juice along with Eucalyptus, Clove or Mustard oil can also be added to enhance the aftermaths of the Mehndi.

Place the mixture in cool and dark place for about 48 hours before the application.

Application- Role of Plastic Cones

Mehndi is widely consumed on important occasions and religious festivals.

In order to have perfection and finesse in the artistic designs, the plastic cones are becoming quite common these days which can also be produced in homes with ease and convenience.

For preparing the plastic cones, the following instructions can be quite useful.

Small freezer bags are cut into squares of small sizes.

One bag can form up to two cones.

These bags are then folded, keeping no space free for paste to squeeze out, and ensuring that the sides completely overlap each other.

Leave a hole at the bottom of the cone for the Henna paste to come out. Then the funnel-shaped cone is taped along its sides where the overlapping is done.

Your home-made plastic cone is ready for fill-ins and drawing out of beautiful intricate designs.

The hole can be easily adjusted according to the consistency of your paste and the thin layouts of your design that you require.

The Chemistry of Henna and Human Skin

Henna's dye molecule, Lawsone, has a great affinity to combine with proteins as mentioned above.

Our skin is also made of protein Keratin.

When henna paste is spread upon the skin, the dye molecules, being very small, penetrate through the skin down to the columns of skin cells.

They do not spread out and thus this is why the pattern stays clear and in place till the last day of exfoliation when the old cells are replaced by the new cells being formed.

The cells closest to the henna paste are largely saturated.

Even when the paste is removed, the stain keeps on darkening for the next few days.

This is because of the fact that the stains are oxidized and darken the imprint. You can also force oxidation by putting an alkaline substance on the surface of your skin or by steaming or heating.

As a matter of fact, the more dried out and your skin cells are, and the deeper that layer, and the greater the dye saturation, the darker the stain will be.

Mehndi Tattoo - Creation

Mehndi tattoos or the designs of Mehndi on hands and feet are now being created with ease at homes personally or with the help of an experienced and talented artist, according to the occasions.

The tattoos vary in variety from those of simple floral patterns to those of intricate line formations, from bridal to simple festive decor.

Mehndi tattoos can conveniently be created with the help of a ready-made henna paste or otherwise preparing one domestically.

Henna powder is simply mixed with hot coffee and Mustard, Eucalyptus or Clove oil.

Keep the mixture in cool and dark place for 2 days and then with the help of a Mehndi design guide, draw out your own favorite tattoo on hands and feet.

Whilst sitting near a heater and keeping the Mehndi for 4-5 hours, apply sugar and lemon mixture on the dried tattoo to enhance the color imprint.

Henna- Traditions as a Body Art

Across the continents, the Mehndi traditions are versatile in nature.

From the intricate Pakistani designs to the simply adorable Arabic designs, from the boldness of African traditions to the cleanness of the Indian patterns, every tradition has become a trademark of its creativity and diligence.

TUTORIAL: AN EASY APPROACH TO APPLY HENNA PASTE?

In order to beautify designs with the touch of skill and perfection, following steps can be referred to for your ultimate satisfaction.

1. Before applying the Henna paste, make sure that your specific body part, where you wish to have a Mehndi design, is dry and free of moisturisers or oils as they can interfere with proper adherence of Henna.
2. The applicator, whichever you choose, should have a small opening for neatness and tidiness. Preferably, plastic cones or bottles are good choices.
3. Do not apply the paste heavily anywhere on the body as this could increase the overall required drying time.
4. The design created can also be made shinier and attractive by the application of glitter by simple cones or bottles.
5. Leave the Henna designs to dry out for about 4-5 hours. It can also be left overnight to obtain a darker stain.
6. If your paste has dried out but you are slightly unconfident about its stain, you can spray Super Hold Spray or dab the dry paste with lemon and sugar mixture.
7. By steaming or heating, henna paste is activated which intensifies or darkens the stains.
8. Darker stain can also be obtained by leaving the imprint overnight to dry up by wrapping it up in toilet paper and then the plastic cover.
9. For removing, it is recommended to scrape off the dried paste rather than washing it off with water.
10. The stains obtained, primarily, would be lighter in colour and would darken in the succeeding 24-72 hours.
11. Avoid wetting the imprint for at least 24 hours as it could decrease the colour because of decreasing dye saturation of the nearby skin cells.

12. Chlorinated water and the natural exfoliation process can also lighten your stain. You can use essential oils like Eucalyptus and water-proof sun block to enhance the stain colour and reduce the effect of chlorination respectively.

CHAPTER 4: COMPARISON BETWEEN HENNA AND TATTOO:

Tattooing is becoming an important part of the fashion now days.

This art is practiced in almost all parts of the world being more common in urbanized and developed locations.

Though Henna is equally popular all over the world but tattoo making seems to be more profoundly applied Body Art.

In Muslim countries the designing of tattoos on your body, which include piercing into the skin, are religiously prohibited as it is an unjust treatment with the body.

Youngsters are more tempted towards tattooing especially in the European countries as compared to other age groups.

They make designs on different parts of body like arms, chest, back, legs and even lips.

What is a Tattoo?

Making design on your body with an act of pouring ink into your skin is known as tattooing.

Ink is filled in the needle which is pierced in to the body to make different types of designs, which will be permanent and collared.

Some can be made temporary by simply getting a tattoo design on the body by applying stickers and paint colours.

You can make different shapes and designs on your body through tattooing.

People have different reasons to acquire tattoos. Whilst some do it for spiritual reasons, others go for them because they want to look cool and modern.

Some are required to get these tattoos to exhibit relation to a popular tribe or family or to convey religious beliefs to masses whereas few have them simply to express their deep affection for some one beloved.

Tattoos - A Part of History

Tattooing is associated with the culture of almost all the nations in the world.

In prehistoric times tattoos were applied on different parts of the body with the help of natural therapies.

People living near the islands were adapted to making crocodiles, fish and other animal tattoos on their bodies.

Chinese culture portrays that people used to have tattoos on almost whole of their bodies.

In the Middle East countries the concept of tattoos was associated with mourning.

Tattooing has been prohibited from the very start in Christianity. They have forbidden their people to have any cutting on the flesh of their bodies.

Likewise, In Islam it is religiously not allowed to carve pictures on your bodies so, no such history is associated with tattoos in this religion.

Categories of Tattoos

Five types of tattoos have been distinguished by the American Academy of Dermatology.

Traumatic tattoos, also known as natural tattoos are those that are acquired from various injuries and accidents.

Amateur tattoos and Professional tattoos can be made by either the traditional or modern machines.

Then there are Medical and Cosmetic tattoos which are also called 'permanent make up'.

More types of tattoos can be traced out on the basis of their designs and styles.

More popular ones include abstractive, naturalist, dedicative, simplified and intricate tattoos.

They all are specially named on the basis of the techniques used in drawing them out and the artistic boundaries considered with the blend of colour contrasts as well.

How A Permanent Tattoo Is Made?

To have a permanent design on your body you will have to suffer a painful process.

Only experts in this line of work can make permanent tattoos on your body. Ink is poured into your body with the help of machines and needles to carve your flesh and make a design on it.

The needles go approximately 1 to 2 cm into your body piercing your skin to draw shapes on your body part.

It's quite important to go to a reliable operator for tattoo formation in order to avoid subsequent diseases and dangers.

How a Henna Tattoo is made?

Henna is a flowering plant whose leaves are dried, crushed into powder and then turned into a paste that is applied on various body parts in different designs and patterns to make up an adorable tattoo.

Henna is being used for body art for many years. It leaves a burgundy coloured stain after the paste dried has been removed.

Henna tattoo is known worldwide but it is especially famous in the Muslim countries as it is a part of their religion and culture along with being an important custom in other Asian countries.

Advantages of a Permanent Tattoo:

Tattooing leaves a permanent mark on your body if carved instead of pasting. You just have to apply them once not again and again like Henna tattoos.

It saves your time and money in a way. Moreover, permanent tattoos are more in fashion than Henna in most of the urban countries.

If you are going on a party or wedding you don't have to worry about the fading of the tattoo colour.

Advantages of Henna Tattoo over Permanent Tattoo:

Carved tattooing is permanent while the stain left by Henna is temporary. It wears off after a few days or weeks.

To have and undo permanent tattoos, one has to undergo a long procedure which is also very painful and expensive as your skin has to be pierced.

But henna tattoos are simply applied on the skin through a paste that is spread over the desired body part.

Furthermore, applying a permanent tattoo on your body parts is extremely dangerous from health's point of view.

It can cause many dangerous diseases like skin cancer and AIDS if contaminated needles are utilized on various applicants. However, henna has lack of health risks and no fear of infection on your skin.

No harm can be done if you have Henna tattoo unless you are allergic to its constituents. If you ever want to remove a Henna tattoo from your body you don't have to go through an aching procedure instead it vanishes in days or sometime weeks.

Besides permanent tattoos are illegal for young kids however henna can be applied to people of any age.

Who should go for Which Type of Tattoo?

Tattoos are a very personal thing and unlike Henna they would stay with you forever.

So you should speculate properly about which one you want to acquire as a Body Art.

If you are younger than 16, it is better if you go for temporary tattoos as in most countries, it is illegal for to get a tattoo at this small age.

If you belong to show biz or fashion industry, you should go for permanent tattoos like cosmetic tattooing since you would not have to worry about them wearing off and besides you can afford them as well.

However, if you are just doing it for the sake of fashion and to look cool and trendy, go for amateur tattoos rather.

Many girls and women also go for Henna tattoos especially if they feel the urge of tattooing for a while and to keep on changing designs and patterns according to their desire.

Tattoos and henna both have their own significance and are used worldwide.

In case of any type of permanent tattooing, it is extremely important to search for reliable operators and avoid small-scale artists doing the task at cheaper rates for they are most likely to be unregistered, careless in the case of ensuring cleanliness and main reasons for spreading of lethal diseases.

CULTURAL PROSPERITY WITH REGARD TO MARRIAGES

Evidence of Presence as a Heritage:

Though, Mehndi found its origin in the outskirts of the African countries, it has spread across the whole world in almost 5000 years with excessive developments and modifications according to the specifications of the locals. It has developed in to a Marriage Tradition rather recently with special events dedicated to it in many countries along with other special activities solely organized for the Mehndi event.

Even though the culture is still gaining popularity in the West, it is more ceremoniously celebrated in the Asian countries, where before Marriage Day; an entire day is dedicated to embellishing the body of the Bride and all the women with Mehndi. This tradition though dates back to the Egyptian Era, where also the women were found to be decorated with Mehndi on special days and events indicated by their mummified body excavated by the archaeologists and the hieroglyphics present on the discovered ancient ruins.

Bridal Mehndi Art Traditions:

With the versatility in the cultural and traditional norms, there is likely divergence in the normal techniques of Body Art that are followed in different countries. Wedding make-over also differs across the seven seas and skies with different ideas and styles prevalent everywhere according to the customary requirements and ancient traditions being followed.

European culture is mostly dominated with simplistic ideas in the beautification procedure on important and extravagant occasions as well as on normal festivals and days which naturally creates an elegant atmosphere with an exceptional and distinctive blend of grandeur and sophistication. Matching their aptitude, Mehndi tattoos have found their place in the heart of the Europeans which enhance the body appeal in a plain style as per their custom and tradition. The number of applicants joining the queue of Mehndi tattoo's desirers has shown an upward increasing trend.

On the other hand, Middle East and Asian countries are quite extravagant in the use of Mehndi on special occasions. Weddings are styled with pure complexity to give a magnificent tribute to the Mehndi culture prevailing in the continents. A complete day is dedicated to the applying procedure of Mehndi to the Bride and her female friends and relatives.

Bride's hands are extravagantly decorated along with hiding the name or letter of the groom. This tradition has been quite popular amongst the Hindu communities mostly. The groom has to spot out his name or letter before he can meet up with his wife. Besides the bride, the groom is also beautified by the Mehndi to compensate his good looks with those of the bride before the wedding day.

Bridal Designs and Specific Motifs:

Whilst prospering in a specific culture, Mehndi has developed up different versatile arrangements across the seven continents to feed the various aptitudes of the common people. The traditions of the Bridal designs have remained common in a specific area with more widespread ideas over other places.

Mostly Mehndi is used in the Asian nations as proper jewellery for the Bride of versatile designs and patterns according to the customs and prevalent fashion. The designs specifically respond to the practices carried out on the occasion and represent particular objects, floral patterns, dresses, leaves or the birds associated with the event. Popular designs include those of the inclusion of Scorpion, a symbol of love and romance, as well as the Peacock, Lotus flower and the Fish, especially in the Rajasthan area of India.

Bride's hands are mostly elaborately decorated with intricate patterns and designs to give her a distinct look as compared to her friends and other women and stretch up to the arms and calves.

Reasons and Significance as a Tradition:

Many traditional beliefs have been associated with the usage of Mehndi in Wedding ceremonies. Though, with widespread awareness and increasing acknowledgement, all the past superstitions are being ignored but still these traditions seem to have a lasting impact on the lives of the users of Mehndi. Especially due to these

beliefs, it is given a customary importance in the important occasions of one's life.

It has been believed as a special agent for warding off the evil and blesses the life of, especially, the Brides from many preceding years. The intricateness of the designs and motifs drawn from Mehndi are believed to bring up Luck for the newly-to-be-weds along with fortune. It acts as an emblem for prosperity and goodwill among the Couples and in-laws.

Religious Portrayals and Implications:

Amongst many societies, the use of Mehndi has been regarded as contradictory to the respective religious beliefs. But by far, no argument has been proved against the use of the dye for beautifying the body. Instead, the use of Mehndi has been quite impressive in the masses belonging to different religions and customs.

Muslims, Hindus, Jews and Christians, all apply Mehndi in different forms to enhance their body appeal, following the examples of their ancestors. Religious saints and Prophets have also encouraged the use of Mehndi for both men and women. According to the Muslim legend, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) also supported the use of Henna for beards and hair. Many ancient Goddesses belonging to versatile religions, that have been excavated, also exhibit the presence of Mehndi on their body parts along with other hieroglyphics showing the possible marks and stains of Mehndi.

As this shrub has proved to be quite beneficial for the human race, this might be the main reason of why it has been declared as thoroughly safe and healthy for the

body and can safely be utilized for embellishing one's personality by various Religions and their senior saints.

MEHNDI- THE LOCAL MYTHS AND AN EMBLEM

Existing Beliefs:

Being existent and ubiquitous for quite many centuries, Mehndi has developed up many beliefs and myths about its origin and impact on people's life. Apart from its herbal outcomes, many psychological emotions have been attached to this shrub.

It has been long believed to be a sign of goodwill for the people and the opportunity for them to be lucky in their lives. Many patterns that are drawn now-a-days are actually an a consequence of the beliefs that people withhold.

Amongst the common designs, a "bud" refers to the start of new life whilst being an emblem of love just like "scorpion", "growing vine", "peacock" and "paisley symbols". The "camel lips" and the intricate designs of "flowers and leaves" respond to fertility and the "mandalas" to wisdom and spiritual enlightenment.

All these beliefs, though are mere superstitions, have had a great influence on the lives of nomadic and ancient worshippers who had limited know-how on the working of the universe and the sudden apprehensive appearance of luck and fortune.

Misconceptions concerning Mehndi:

With the expansion in the demand of Mehndi, many oppressive societies sprung up to lower down the market of the Mehndi through various made-up myths and delusions. But as there was inadequacy of proofs behind such talks, soon enough realistic ideas and concepts rose up with various professors involved in the deep research of this natural herb like the one in Kent State University.

As the scientific reports began to be released with true facts about *Lawsonia inermis* or Henna, satisfactory sighs were exchanged throughout the globe. This shrub or a small tree possesses some viable qualities that can be expected to be inherited in single plant specie.

Mehndi is a natural herb which if combined with other chemicals or elements, can give undesired or unpredictable results. Compound Henna, which has become quite popular in the Hair Product's shops, is a mixture of the Henna herb with other artificial and herbal chemicals. It has been involved in producing undesirable effects on the hair with a variety of lethal chemical reactions. Henna is a pure compound and thus if your sample contains any other ingredients except for the Henna then its an amalgam of versatile chemicals and can prove to be quite lethal for your body and thus should be prevented.

On the other hand, many retailers have boosted of the presence of a range of colour shades of Henna present with them, for either they dyeing of hair or tattoos. Henna or Mehndi gives only one stain colour or imprint, that is, of burgundy or orange-red colour and more shades can be not produced except by the involvement of

other chemicals that might hurt your purpose of beautification. For resemblance with the permanent tattoos that are also an in-thing in the fashion industry these years, a product so-called "Black Henna" has been introduced. Primarily, it is not henna because it is a derivative of the herb "Indigo" which is an entirely another plant and does not possess the same chemical and physical properties like Henna or Lawsonia inermis.

During 1990s experiments had been carried out with Henna whilst mixing it with another synthetic molecule of PPD (para-phenylenediamine). This mixture resulted in giving a black stain colour whilst producing various detrimental side-effects for your health. It resulted in severe allergic reactions and spontaneous deaths in many cases as well.

Quite recently, various applicants assured to the fact that Henna causes lightening of the hair. While discussing the versatile properties of this shrub, it has been described as being good at nurturing the hair and encouraging their subsequent growth but the prospect that it can actually cause lightening of the hair is a mere optical illusion or highlighting. Mehndi has proved quite beneficial for increasing the natural bounce of the hair whilst increasing their appeal and attractiveness.

Likewise, Mehndi's constituents have been found to be quite supportive for the protein treatment of hair, the main reason why hair growth is augmented to great extents. The belief that it might cause damage to the hair is quite absurd and false as proved by many successive medical and scientific reports.

Mehndi leaves a permanent stain on the hair and cannot be easily washed out. So many people with the confidence that it can be conveniently used as a temporary hair colour are quite wrong on their assumption. It is not at all gentler or weaker in leaving the stain colour and is quite a valuable antidote for creating a permanent hair colour. It might be possible to remove the stain colour or imprint by repeated oil and honey treatments or bleaching or repeated dyeing of the hair but the chances are half-half. Its certainty varies from person to person due to different hair texture.

Importance in the Communal Life:

Mehndi has proved out to be quite beneficial for the human race for its distinctive genetic characteristics that are quite specific for this particular plant genus in the family Lythraceae. These qualities were discovered slowly and steadily by different ancient societies and civilization for their personal leisure and motives.

The concept of beautifying oneself has been quite prevalent amongst masses across the globe. Various techniques have been employed in this matter like tattoos and surgeries for modification purposes. However, amongst all the options, the safest and healthiest one is the employment of Henna.

Henna can be used to create intricate as well as elegant patterns on any part of the human body with no possible side-effects. Recently, the introduction of Henna tattoos has given a boost to the market of the

potential applicants of Mehndi. These tattoos are provisional in nature with versatile offering designs.

As compared to the presence of permanent tattoos, these tattoos are more popular due to their simple application technique. These do not need to be pierced into the skin with subsequent loss of blood or the danger of transmission of lethal diseases by reusing of contaminated needle and syringes. The procedure is quite painless and can be quickly completed. For the community, this option is the most apt as to avoid the possible dangers posed to the individual's health.

Likewise, individual design demands can be easily fulfilled by the variety of offers available with the professional artists and decorators. These designs can wear off after some time and give a chance to apply more designs according to changing attitudes, fashion and occasion's requirement.

CONCLUSION

The *Ancient Art of Mehndi* is gaining popularity all over the world.

After reading this book you must have felt enlightened about almost all the aspects related to Henna. This book is all what you need to know about Mehndi.

You learned about virtually everything related to Mehndi. The need of hour is that you practice more and more designs (you can make you own even!) to give yourself the ultimate perfection.

Remember *Practice makes a man perfect* and in most cases women too.