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Henna sey Eid

Discover the history of henna and its long roots with Islamic tradition around the world.





HENNA AND EID



Eid-ul-Adha and Eid-ul-Fitr are the holiest and grandest festivals of the Muslim calendar. These Islamic festivals are always celebrated with henna. Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan as a gift from Allah and has a special significance for Muslims.

Eid ul-Adha is a Muslim holiday, an annual springtime sacrifice of animals, accompanied by henna, to secure God's blessings, which dates back to at least 2200 BCE and probably as early as 7000 BCE. One of the keys to timing the sacrifice was henna's springtime growth surge. When the henna plant sprouted new shoots and leaves for the beautiful bright red henna, it was time for sacrifice. And, for the sacrifice and celebration, the women hennaed. Eid no longer coincides with the spring, but henna is still part of the celebration.



Applying Henna on hands and feet is the most important custom for Eid in Pakistan.



HENNA CULTURE IN THE SUBCONTINENT

Women across the subcontinent indulge in decorative henna tattoos (mehendi) on Eid ul Fitr, Eid ul Adha, weddings and other festive events, rendering henna as a symbol of celebration. There have been claims that the darker a bride's henna, the more she shall be loved.

It is a common tradition for a bride to have her husband's initials hidden in the detail of the artwork.



Pakistan:
The Mehendi ceremony is referred to as Rasm-e-Henna and is often one of the most important pre-wedding ceremonies, where the bride's family gathers for a ceremonious application of henna on bride's hands and feet. This event is held a few days before the main wedding ceremony to give a perfect colour to the bride's henna on the wedding day.



Bangladesh:
Henna is applied on hands and feet by brides before their wedding and by many women for Eid ul Fitr and Eid ul Adha. Often the female friends and relatives of the groom design or choose the design for the hands and feet of the bride. In some communities of Bangladesh, the bridegroom's hands too are adorned with mehendi designs for men.



India:
Henna is an important part of many Hindu festivals such as Karva Chauth, Vat Purnima, Diwali, Bhai Dooj, Teej etc. Henna is also applied during wedding ceremonies. The groom's initials are drawn into intricate floral and paisley patterns. The groom must find his initials on his wife's palms on the wedding night, otherwise it is believed that he will be dominated by the wife in their marital life.



HENNA CULTURE AROUND THE WORLD

Henna symbolises fertility and rebirth since time immemorial. Thus, earlier civilisations have used henna to celebrate rites pertaining to marriage, sacrifice and renewal of spring with the fresh shoots of henna plants sprouting from the ground. The crimson colour of henna have adorned the palms of women in intricate designs across the globe. The ceremonial tradition of applying henna has always been an event that brings women from different generations together.



Turkey:
Henna is applied as broad patterns made through threads, bounded by straight lines, along with detailing within the hennaed areas. The bride's family and friends dance around her and sing sad songs until the bride starts crying (as a good omen). They later decorate her hands with henna.

Africa:
In Algeria, Sudan, Somalia, and Tunisia, Henna is applied through different techniques on hands, arms, feet, and necks during weddings, Eid ul Fitr, Ramadan, and other festive occasions. Henna parties are usually held before a wedding takes place.



Egypt:
Henna is an ancient tradition practiced by women on many occasions. At weddings, women gather the night before the big day and apply Egyptian Henna drawings on their hands and feet. Egyptian women also use Henna in different colours as natural and healthy way to dye their hair; locally made Henna is applied on hair to make it soft.



Malaysia:
Henna is used to adorn women's palms, arms and feet as part of pre-wedding celebrations, Eid ul Fitr and Eid ul Adha. Often, a henna ceremony was called as 'Berina'.



Europe:
Europeans observed and recorded henna practices during their conquest and colonization of North Africa between 1881 to 1914.

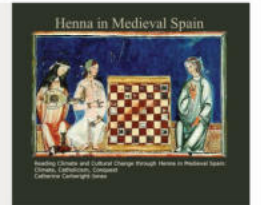


Morocco:
Henna is applied to a bride's hands and feet during a ceremonial henna day, prior to the wedding. Her hands are then wrapped in cotton and sprinkled with rose water. The wrapping of the hands allows the henna to deepen into a crimson tint.

Middle East and Saudi Arabia:
Originally applied by brides across the Middle East from 800 CE to bring good luck to their nuptials. Henna is a significant part of an Emirati woman's wedding presentation. In Saudi Arabia, traditionally the bride's hands are painted with henna by one of her female relatives, with the belief that the relative will be happily married.



Spain:
People from Phoenicia, established settlements in Spain during the 11th BCE (Harrison, 1988:9). These people used henna as part of their cultural and religious traditions (de Moor, 1971 p 85 and hook, 1963, p 83). Henna was considered as a symbol of Jewish and Muslim culture although mehendi was not a Muslim tradition but was adopted by Muslims in Spain.



HENNA PATTERNS AROUND THE WORLD



Moroccan Henna Patterns

Stemming from Berber beliefs, many Moroccans still see a henna tattoo as a symbol of good luck. Some people also strongly believe that henna can help to guard against ill fortunes and the evil eye, particularly when designs incorporate the hams, an eye, or diamond shapes. Other common henna designs include twist and swirls, geometric shapes, floral patterns, and linear designs.

Turkish Henna Patterns

Influence of Islam's significant historical impact in the region, Turkish henna reveals deeply ingrained aspects of Muslim and indigenous Turkish culture.



Persian or Iranian Patterns

Persian patterns resemble the traditional wood working patterns used in Islamic domestic architecture known as "Mashrabiya". Mashrabiya is complex latticed woodwork used to create extended window coverings that permit cooling breezes to flow through the house. Patterns were also inspired from ceramic tiles from the mosque, the baths, clothing, carpets, amulets, and talismans.

Subcontinental Henna Patterns

It can resemble 'lace' or have perfect filigree patterns, and in many instances, especially bridal henna, you will see representations of the bride and groom and repeated patterns such as paisleys and negative space is also used widely.



African Henna Patterns

Modern North African Marrakechi style henna patterns parallel North African women's tattooing traditions, textile arts and other domestic visual arts. The more floral "khaliji" (Gulf) style is strongly influenced by Sudanese and Somali henna.



HENNA: A TEMPORARY TATTOO

All over the world people have adopted the ancient traditions of adorning their bodies with the beautiful natural artwork created from the henna plant. It became a very popular form of temporary body decoration in the 90's and since then it has become a growing trend in the US. Celebrities like Madonna, Gwen Stefani, Yasmine Bleeth, Liv Tyler, Xena, and many others proudly adorn their bodies with henna and show them off in public, movies, videos, etc.

People throughout the west have adopted the eastern tradition in their lives by having their hands and feet painted for weddings, bellies painted during pregnancies, heads adorned with henna while going through chemotherapy, scars camouflaged to make them unnoticeable, etc.





HENNA: ITS USES



Henna as a Colouring Agent

The name henna also applies to the dye prepared from the plant. Henna is a very ancient, oriental dye used to colour hair, beard, eyelashes, nails, and skin.



Henna as a Medicinal Herb

Despite that henna has primarily been used as a dye plant, it is also known for its medicinal properties. The leaves are used in traditional folk medicine in India, many Muslim countries and North Africa.



Henna Essential Oil

The essential oil is obtained from the flowers by distillation and it is used as an ingredient in many oriental perfumes. The fragrant oil, also known as Mehendi oil, is used during religious festivities in India and Africa.





HENNA: COLOUR AND CLIMATE

Henna stains are dependent on the amount of lawsone in the leaf, and the length of time between harvest and application to the skin. If henna is grown in cool and moist conditions, the lawsone level is low and stains are pale orange. If henna is grown in severe drought and hot desert conditions, lawsone levels can be extremely high and give dark brown to near black stains.

Pale orange stains indicate low levels of lawsone. Pale stains are typical of henna transported over a long distance and gone stale, or henna is grown locally in conditions of 20°C and regular rainfall.

Dark orange or red stains indicate moderate levels of lawsone. These stains are typical result of henna grown locally in a warm climate, days around 35°C with some rainfall, or henna transported recently from an area with higher daily temperatures and less rainfall.





NATURAL WAYS TO DARKEN HENNA STAIN



Seal your Henna

Lemon Sugar mixture is made of warm lemon juice and sugar. Lemons are a great source of calcium, vitamin C, magnesium and potassium - minerals and antioxidants that improve the appearance and condition of our hair, skin and nails. Lemon juice is an acid and due to its antioxidant properties, it darkens henna. The stickiness of the sugar keeps it, well stuck to the hands/feet. This can be dabbed on the design with a cotton ball or sprayed with a spray bottle on dried henna hands/feet.



Henna Plant

Henna or Mehendi is a dye prepared from the plant *Lawsonia inermis*. It is native to northern Africa, Asia, and Australia. Henna leaves are ground into powder and mixed with water, lemon juice, strong tea or different oils to produce a variety of shades.



Clove

Clove contains eugenol that has antioxidant properties which helps in darkening henna's colour. It is heated on a pan to enhance its effect. Dried henna hands are heated over the pan to get heat onto the design.

