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Mehendi Application

5.1 Introduction

Mehendi or henna, is a natural dye obtained from the plant *Lawsonia inermis*. Its cosmetic use commenced in ancient Egypt, as the mummies of pharonic age testify to its use and popularity. Even during the golden age of Islam, Mehendi was used extensively by both men and women. Men used Mehendi to dye their hair and beards. The custom of using mehendi to decorate hands and feet became popular in India during the Mughal Period.

5.2 Objectives

After readings this lesson your will be able to :-

- know what is henna
- appreciate the use of henna
- learn the applications of henna on hands & feet
- learn various designs & styles of henna application.

5.3 Use and Making of Henna Paste

Today mehendi is used for auspicious occasions throughout India, especially by the brides, because mehendi symbolizes good luck, purity and joy. Delicate hands decorated down to their tapering fingertips with fine and intricate golden red patterns convey beauty and joy.

This elegant form of adornment has not only helped develop various intricate patterns consisting of flowers, leaves and geometrical shapes but has evolved different formats of application. Experts are called in, on special occasions to apply mehendi to all members and guests. The expert charges sizeable fee to carry out this task.

The mehendi paste is made by grinding the leaves to a very smooth paste. Today the grinding process is not required as powdered mehendi is available.

The powdered mehendi is first sieved through fine muslin cloth to remove debris and lumps. Water is added to make a smooth paste. Lemon juice, brewed tea or coffee is added to help deepen the colour.

This paste is put aside for an hour or so and then filled into a cone (plastic) with a fine opening at the pointed end. On squeezing the cone, the mehendi emerges out in a threadlike form. This is applied to the hands and feet in intricate designs. The mehendi is allowed to dry and then washed off. To prevent the mehendi from drying too soon a mixture of lemon juice and sugar is dabbed on the mehendi with a piece of cotton. The mehendi should be allowed to remain for atleast 2-3 hours to get a deep and bright red colour. The mehendi design can last for 2-3 weeks.

To help enhance the colour, one can add a few drops of eucalyptus oil, or tamarind besides lemon, tea or coffee. The colour will be brighter and darker, if the hands and feet with mehendi are not allowed to touch water for atleast 12-13 hours. The henna should be just scraped off on drying and not washed with water. Mustard oil should be applied after scraping off the henna. One can also expose the henna scraped hands to heat of 5-6 cloves heated on tawa or iron pan.

Intext Questions 5.1

Fill in the blanks

- (a) Application of henna became popular during the _____ period.
- (b) Mehendi symbolizes good luck and _____
- (c) _____, brewed tea or coffee are added to deepen the

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colour.

- (d) To prevent mehendi from drying too soon, apply a mixture of _____ and _____.
- (e) Mehendi design can last for _____ weeks.

5.4 Henna Application Styles

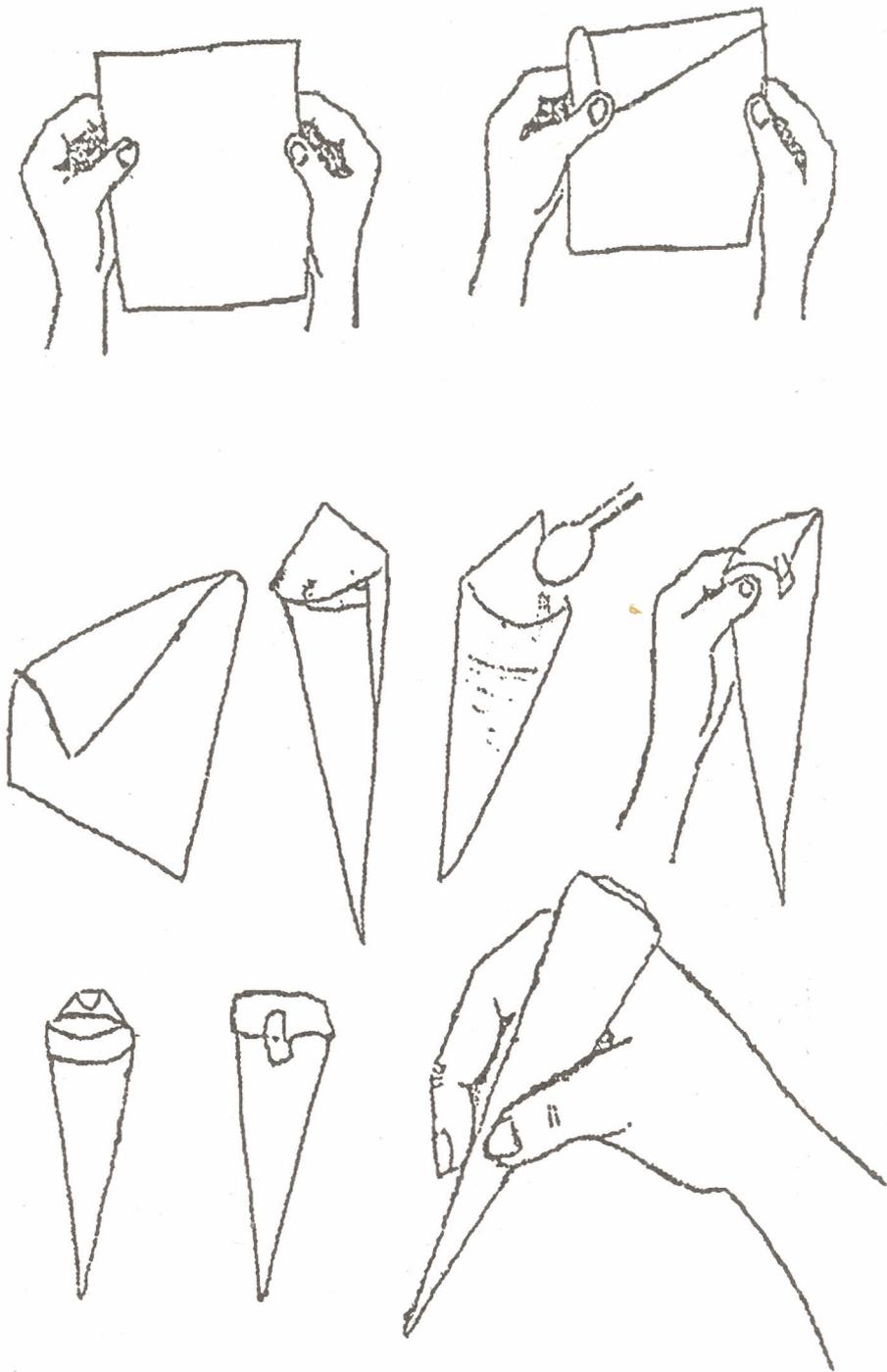
Each region has its own style and design for application of Henna on hands and feet. The region from which the styles originate, have evolved and perfected specific designs, shapes and motifs to be used in their particular style.

1. **Rajasthani style Mehendi** : The use of geometric shapes is common and popular. Design are added both outside and inside big circles, squares, triangles and rectangles. Vines and small motifs are used to fill and decorate the basic shapes. This style lays great emphasis on etching the bride and the bridegroom. The bride is drawn seated in a 'doli', while the groom is shown riding an elephant, horse or a camel.
2. **Marwari Style Mehendi** : The paisely or the mango is the basic shape and is intricately decorated using flowers, fancy edging, small circles, and squares. Other popular motifs used in this style of mehendi are peacocks, gardens with vines and creepers, parrots, fishes, betel leaf, shehnai, tabla, sarangi, dholak and the bride and the bride groom. Fine thread like lines and pin head dots and decorations are used.
3. **Arabian Style of Mehendi** : The designs are larger and thicker. Floral designs are outlined using dark Mehendi or dyes. These are then filled with green mehendi. Silver and Gold paints are also used to highlight and add to the decoration. The designs are drawn thicker as compared to other styles of mehendi.
4. **Sticker Mehendi** : Nowadays readymade mehendi design stickers are available in the market. These are made using plastic or any other water proof, but flexible material. The design are carefully cut, to give it a stencil format. These stickers are placed and pressed flat on the palm, and the mehendi paste

placed on it, and spread evenly. The stencil is carefully removed, so that the design is not disturbed or smudged. Another format of the sticker form, in which the sticker is placed and pressed hard on the palm. The top plastic sheet is carefully peeled off, allowing the design to stay stuck to the palm.

5. **Tattoo Mehendi** : This is temporary style of Mehendi application. The point of application is first treated to make it waterproof. This area is then covered with designs using water colours or fabric colours. The designs are made using different sizes of brushes. These have to be protected from moisture and friction. They can be easily removed with warm soapy water. Moisturizer should be applied after use and removal of the design.

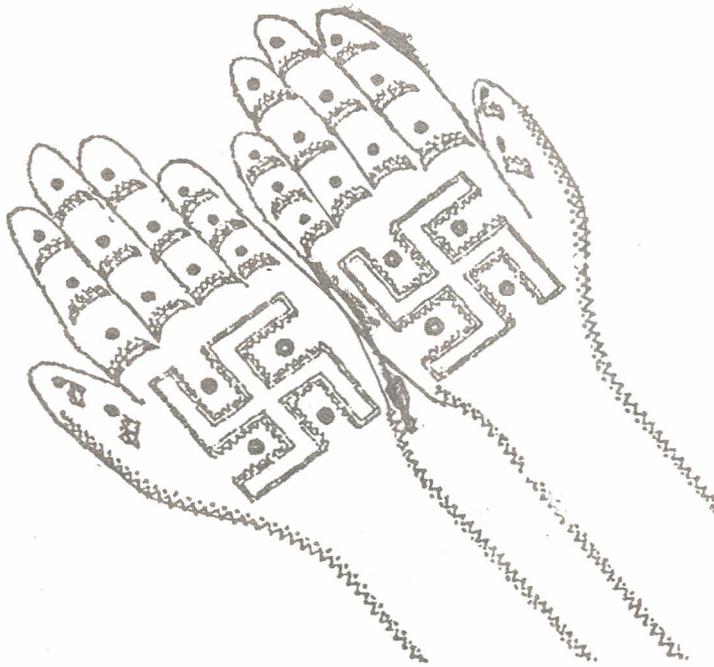
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MAKING THE CONE FOR HEENA

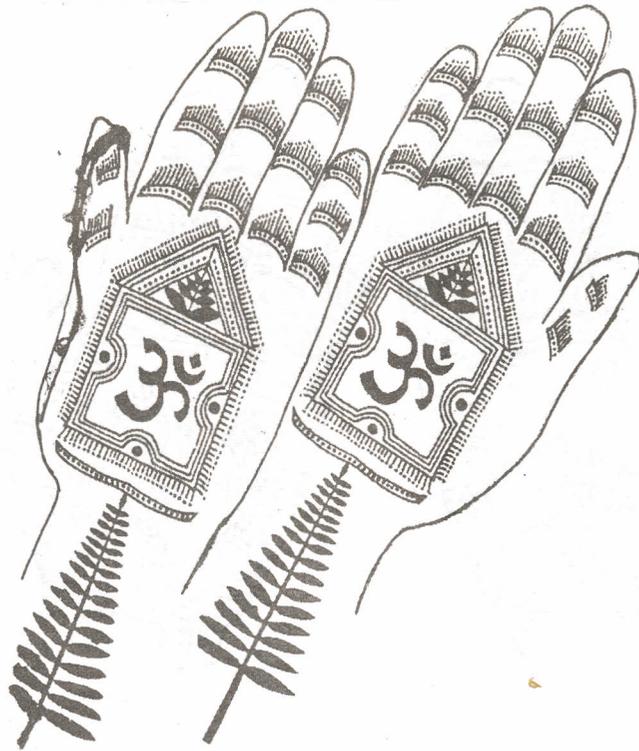


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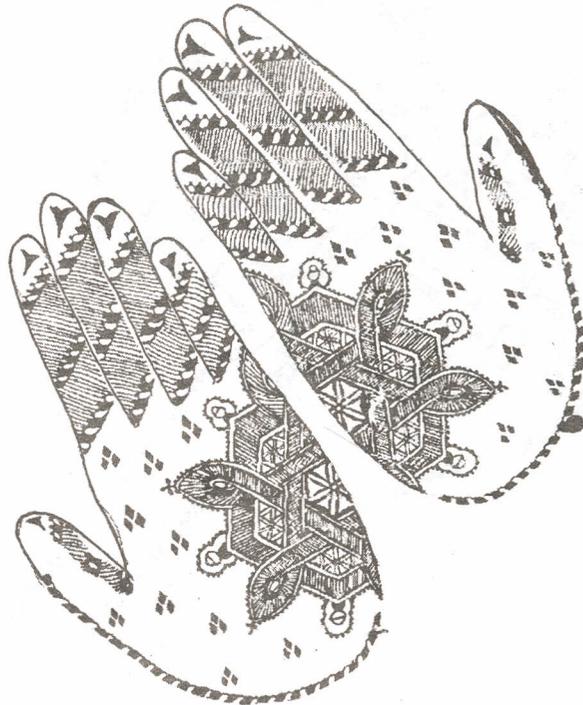


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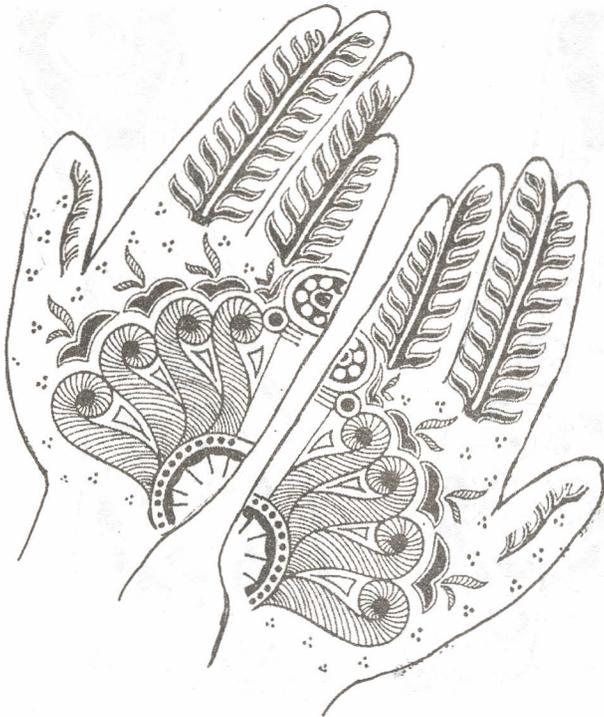
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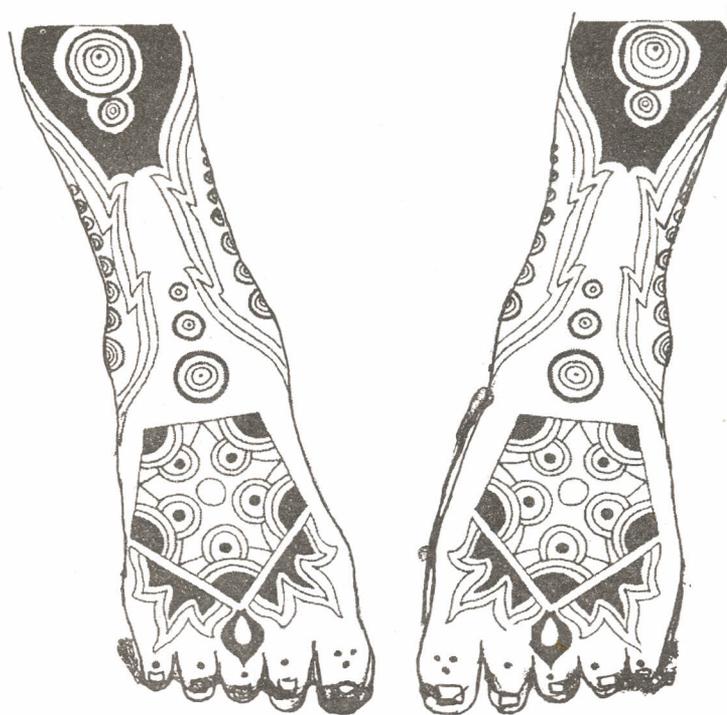
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5.5 What have you learnt

In this lesson you have learnt

- Making henna paste
- Making cone for henna applications.
- Different styles of henna applications
- Methods of enhancing colour in henna applications.

5.6 Terminal Questions

1. Explain the method for making henna paste.
2. What methods would you use to deepen the colour of mehendi?
3. List the various styles of henna applications.

5.7 Answers to Intext Questions

- (a) Mughal
- (b) joy
- (c) lime juice
- (d) lime juice & sugar
- (e) 2-3 weeks