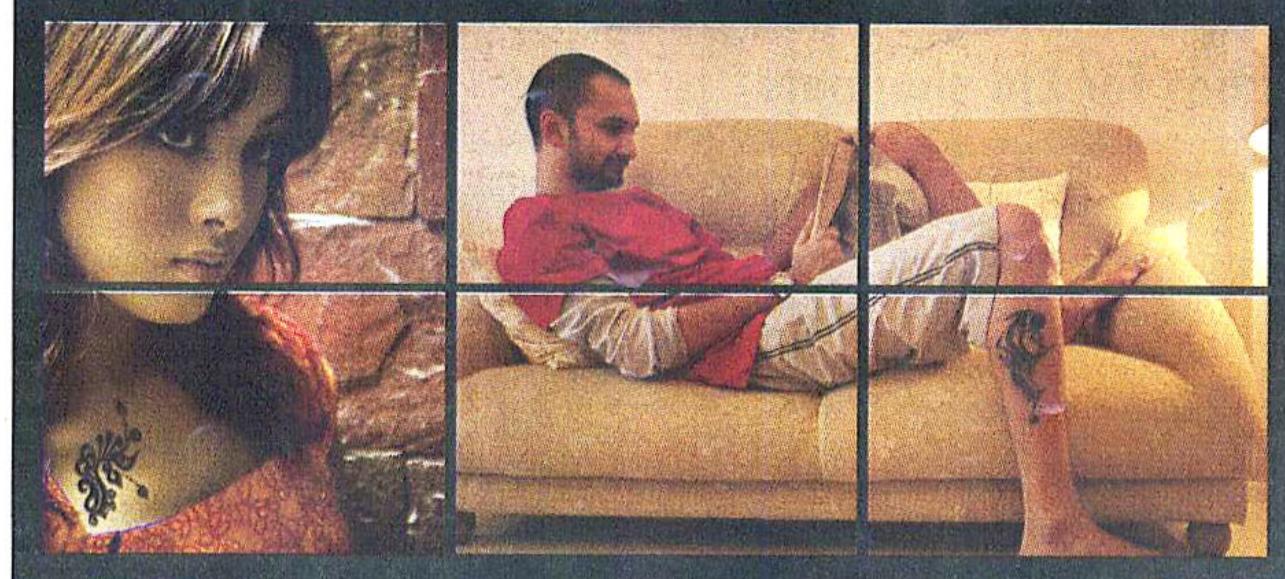


TRENDS



body art

ASIDE from our clothes and jewellery, one can use colours on one's very skin as a means of expressing one's personality. One's own body then becomes the canvas for the artist's imagination. Body art can be both temporary and permanent.

The most known form of body art is the application of henna/mehendi to create temporary designs that last for around seven days and is usually drawn on the hands and feet, where the color will be darkest because the skin contains higher levels of keratin, with which the colorant of henna, lawsone (red-orange dye present in the leaves of the henna plant), enters a strong bind.

Henna paste is usually applied to the skin using a plastic cone and in Bangladesh there is not a single parlour which does not have an idea about it even though many people do it themselves at home. When asked, the girls of a few parlours say that Eid is the time (except for weddings) when mehendi is most in demand. Pakistani designs are most popular as they are thin, prominent and elaborate. The girls are trained first before they are permitted to apply it on the hands of the customer. The current trend for mehendi has moved away from the full hands/feet designs to 'line designs' that cover just one side of the hand/foot. The prices vary from parlour

to parlour but the typical price is Tk 300/hand for a full hand design, Tk 200 for a line design, and Tk 200-250 for the leg. The charges can get higher if more designs are applied.

Another variation is the Black Mehndi which is a dyeing chemical mixed with the henna and looks absolutely gorgeous because the design looks prominent on the skin.

This pattern lasts for a month can be known as a semi permanent tattoo. People with sensitive skin have to be careful before using this Mehndi, because it may cause irritation. The parlours say that most people prefer a one line design on both hand and leg as full designs on black Mehendi look clumsy. The charge for black mehendi is around Tk 300 per line.

For the slightly more adventurous, there is the option of tattoos. Having served as symbols of status, religious significance, marks of fertility, pledges of love, talismans for protection, and marks of slaves and convicts, tattoos have now become a fashion statement.

Tattoos have experienced resurgence in popularity in many parts of the world, particularly in North America, Japan, and Europe and nowadays even in Asia. The growth in tattoo culture has seen an influx of new artists into the industry, many of whom have technical and fine art training.

Coupled with advancements in tattoo pigments and the ongoing refinement of the equipment used for tattooing, this has led to an improvement in the quality of tattoos being produced.

In Dhaka City there are very few safe places to do tattoos, Face Wash and Hairdressing in Dhanmondi, and Ban Thai at Gulshan are some reputed names.

According to Quazi Qumrul Islam of Ban Thai, the tattoos are done with complete attention to hygiene, using disposable needles that are immediately discarded in the presence of the customers.

The machine for designing the tattoos along with the designs, are all brought from Thailand. The usual designs are mostly of snakes, roses, butterflies and other imaginative characters. You can even bring your own design or they can trace it for you before it is applied on the skin.

How is it done? The procedure is simple but painful. The paper with design is pasted on the hand or any other parts of the body where the design is wanted once the design traced on hand the tattoo begins. The colors and shading are done along with the outlines. The tattoo is drawn slowly to make it prominent.

The tattoos are priced at around Tk 200 per square centimetre.

By Tashmia Zaman

Photo: Zahedul I Khan

Model: Simon, Maliha, Priyanka



TRENDS

Tattoo Tales

THE masseuse Hoormati, has tattoos done on the right hand, one just a small flower at the joint of her thumb and a bigger floral design on her wrist. She is now almost 65 and she had it done when she was just a young girl of eight or ten. She cannot remember, exactly (though she still recalls the extremely painful memory and how she hid herself for hours, just to avoid the entire fiasco until she surrendered to the pangs of hunger.)

"It was mandatory for girls in our caste and religion to get tattoos done. Otherwise our elders and also people from our in-laws would not eat or drink the food prepared or served by us," she explains, "Beautiful women clad in lovely saris with big bindis, red sindoor on their foreheads, and handful of lovely multi-coloured glass bangles came to our village from Kolkata and far. They had a neat swing to their steps and their enchanting calls bought to life the otherwise mundane village of ours. Though I was scared and almost died of pain after getting



it done, my paternal aunt insisted on it. All my sisters had this 'ulki' (that is what tattoos are called in Bangla) done on their body, just so that we were not outcasts after marriage. I had mine done for ten 'annas'. It was lot of money, almost 55 years ago."

"Ten fine needles bound together and dipped in black writing ink, were repeatedly pierced in to the flesh where the designs were outlined. It was such a bloody affair. They came from Bihar or Orissa, the men accompanying them had it on their entire chest or arms," Hoormati recalls, nonchalantly so when she saw an episode of Miami Ink on Travel and Living at one of her client's televisions; almost boasting the fact that she has seen and done, what we crave for now.

So there you go. Tattoos were such a mundane thing of the past and right now it is such a suave affair. The fad came back with gusto in the recent times. In fact it is a crazy, sexy, cool, the thing to do now as suggested by VJ Anusha from MTV. If you can show it off with élan, then this festival season go get one done.

However do not forget or ignore the safety and health issues before going for it. Used needles can give you anything from hepatitis C to HIV virus, and medication and antibiotics from certified practitioners or doctors are mandatory. Cleanliness of the salon where it is done should be ensured.

"Keep it stylish" may be the mantra, but do not forget to play it safe.

By Raffat Binte Rashid