

For centuries, poets and playwrights alike have tried to describe her beauty through their literary creations and artists have tried to capture her elegance on their canvases. Such is the mystique and allure of a Bengali woman's grace.



wherever you go, and enchant those around you.

There used to be a time when women of every household would swear by the beauty concoctions whipped up in the kitchen. Homemade kajol was most popular, as it was a safe and hygienic option over the commercially-produced, toxic ones available in the market. Teep, an indispensable element of a Bengali woman's vanity, was also made at home using powdered colours before the stick-on version was invented. Various other face packs and hair oils were made at

home. So the next time you have some free time ask your mother or granny for recipes and whip up some of your own makeup, in your own kitchen!

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# BANGALIAANA

## REINVENTED!

A modern Bengali woman is many things in one. She has to be smart, independent, with a mind and a career of her own. She has to make her mark in the world, both at home and abroad. With her wit and sophistication, she has to have a global outlook and attitude. At the same time, she has to stay true to her heritage and culture, for her heart is rooted in tradition. With time and modernisation, some aspects of a Bengali woman's erstwhile detailed charm have lost their place in a modern life. In keeping with trends seeping in from all over the world, these nuances are slowly creeping out of the general consciousness. With a little bit of imagination, some of these lost traditions can be reinvented and implemented into a modern woman's wardrobe and lifestyle, while keeping our age-old traditions alive.

Women of the Tagore household in the turn-of-the-century Kolkata were quite the trendsetters. Their style statements were meticulously copied by fashionable women of that era, which in turn set the trends all over Bengal. Frilly, three-quarter sleeved blouses were highly fashionable and coveted by fashionistas of the time. This style can be modified and worked into a

modern woman's wardrobe by pairing it with lightweight chiffon and georgette sarees. When worn with flowing fabrics, it will not look dated or boring, but trendy and exciting. With subtle embroideries around the neck, back and sleeves, and the frill in a contrasting colour, it will be a major update on the same old short sleeved blouse. It can be a great option for fun events like Mehendi, Sangeet or Holud. The humble petticoat was also given its due recognition by putting frills and cutouts of embroidered swatches on its lower hem back then. The modern rendition can be a version in a shimmering, shiny fabric such as lame (metallic) or moonlight. When worn underneath chiffons in solid colours chiffon or a French lace saree, the subtle shimmer gleaming from underneath will look very glamorous and sophisticated. Perfect for evening soirees and parties, this petticoat will make one stand out in a crowd.

Speaking of sarees, the traditional handloom sarees of yore are being quietly replaced by mass-produced, synthetic fabrics mimicking the look of cotton but failing to provide its comfort and elegance. A Dora saree in a soft pastel shade can be your ideal partner for the

next lunch gathering, or a Biti saree could be perfect for a rooftop tea party. Skip the imported fabrics for once and embrace a local weave. You are bound to look fresh and get complimented! And you could give good old glass bangles a shot, skipping gold bangles for once. They not only look pretty but their musical presence will bring a spring in your step!

The next time you are getting your hair done, give the old favorite Bira Khopa a shot. Whether you are opting for a saree or a lehenga-gown, this hairdo has a lot more going for it that it gets credit for. Simple yet stunning it will tie your whole look together. And tuck in a divine *Chaapa phool* or two while you are at it, skipping the stale, imported carnation or gerbera. The fresh flowers' heady fragrance will envelope you

