



In many Bengali households, wearing it was once as routine as combing one's hair or putting on bangles. It was an ordinary act: a mother stepping out for a visit, a teacher getting ready for school, a bride's aunt preparing for a wedding function, a university student dressing for Pahela Baishakh, all might reach for a sheet of bindis almost automatically.

"I have been a teacher for almost two decades now, and I cannot remember a single day I entered the classroom without wearing one. Without it, the face just does not feel complete," says Runa Mehedi, a 48-year-old schoolteacher, voicing a feeling shared by many women across generations. That sentence captures something important. The teep is not worn merely as an add-on. It often serves as the point that completes the face's composition.

**From sari to jeans: The changing life of the teep**

A teep can be the last thing someone puts on before leaving home, but it is often the first thing people tend to notice. Small, circular, elongated, matte, glossy, black, maroon, or bright red — it

sits on the forehead with a presence larger than its size. In Bengali culture, the bindi has never been just a beauty accessory. It has functioned as a sign of style, ritual, memory, and, increasingly, self-definition.

Today, it no longer belongs only to the familiar image of a woman in a white-and-red sari on a festival morning. It appears with cotton kurtas, office wear, handloom outfits, and just as naturally with jeans, shirts, crop tops, and sneakers.

"I am not wearing it to look traditional," shares Mrityika Saha, a 22-year-old university student in Dhaka, in a composite voice that captures a common sentiment among younger wearers. "I wear it because it feels like a part of my face now. Even with jeans, it does not feel out of place."

That shift is worth paying attention to.



**From household habit to cultural marker**

The trend grew through repetition. It appeared in homes, festivals, theatre, films, literature, and everyday life until it became part of the region's visual memory. The red dot on the forehead in particular became deeply tied to the cultural image of Bengali femininity. Paired with a sari, kajal, a loose bun, or fresh flowers, it became one of the most recognisable elements in Bengali dress.

This is partly why it carries such weight in public culture. It can locate someone socially and culturally very quickly. It can suggest familiarity with a certain style world, a certain domestic rhythm, a certain visual inheritance.

"I don't wear a sari every day, but I still wear a teep with my office clothes," says Farzana Rahman, a 35-year-old bank executive. "Sometimes it is the smallest thing in the outfit, but it changes how polished I feel."

In that sense, the teep does not require a fully traditional look to make sense. It has learned how to travel.

**Jeans, sneakers, and street style**

Perhaps the most interesting change is how the bindi has entered contemporary urban fashion. It is no longer restricted to sarees, shalwar kameezes, or festive attires. It now appears confidently with denim jackets, oversized shirts, tank tops, sneakers, and fusion wear.

This shift matters because it shows that it is no longer only inherited. It is being reinterpreted.

"I love to wear a black dot with blue jeans and a white shirt," says Tania Haque, a 24-year-old graphic designer. "Otherwise, the outfit feels too plain. The teep gives it a little sharpness."

Another composite voice, that of Tasfia Mumtaz Kankhita, a 28-year-old dancer, frames it differently: "I like mixing things. I can wear sneakers, a loose top, silver earrings, and a small maroon teep. None of those things cancel each other out."

These voices reflect how young people often style themselves now. They are not always interested in choosing between modern and traditional rigidly. They mix both. The teep becomes one of the easiest ways to do that.

**Expression, not obligation**

As an accessory, the teep is no longer governed by one rulebook. For some, it remains linked to ritual or family habit. For others, it is a style statement. For some women, it carries emotional memory. For others, it expresses confidence. It can be soft, bold, playful, minimalist, or dramatic depending on shape, size, and colour. Their significance of in Bengali culture lies in its flexibility. It has survived because it adapts without losing recognition. It can belong to ritual without being trapped by ritual. It can belong to fashion without becoming empty of meaning. It can appear on the forehead of a woman in Jamdani or on that of a girl in denim and still make cultural sense.

And in Bengali culture, it has become a small but steady way of saying who you are, where you come from, and how you choose to be seen.

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