Hello everybody,

I am Deepika Bhatt, a Henna Designer and today you will be viewing a video presentation of a Henna ceremony known as Mehndi Ki Raat. It is one of the most exciting of the wedding rituals. The henna party you will be seeing today is of an Indian wedding. You will see me painting intricate Henna Designs on the hands and feet of the bride to be and later, on her relatives. The video will also show one of the traditional folk dances from India. Before the group dance, the couple will pray to the Goddess for well being. Dancing is an integral part of the celebration. Enjoy the Show.

Henna designing/Mehndi is one of the ancient arts of applying the Henna Paste in various intricate designs on hands and feet. It is also applied to keep hands and feet cool in the sizzling hot Indian summer. It is believed to release stress by helping to relax.

Widely known as a wedding ritual in India, several countries of the Far East, Africa and the Mediterranean, Mehndi or Henna Painting is one of the most popular and ancient folk art forms. The oldest mention in History dates back to the Egyptian Mummies. Currently, it has become very popular in the Western World. It is temporary (1 to 3 weeks), safe and painless.

History: The art of Henna Painting probably originated in Egypt and spread to other parts of the world with invasions and trade. Each country incorporated Henna Painting into their culture. The designs vary from bold floral in Arabic Nations, geometric patterns in Morocco and Africa, to fine and intricate Paisleys in India.

Use and Purpose: Henna Painting, in all of these cultures, is done as a part of the wedding ritual and other happy occasions like baby showers, birthdays, etc. It is a form of cosmetic enhancement. Henna is applied on the soles of the feet by the nomadic tribes for relaxation and cooling in the hot Indian summers. Mehndi has a cooling effect when applied on the body. When the women gather together and apply henna designs on each other, the strong cultural bonds are reinforced.

The most intricate designs are applied for weddings, with symbols for romance, love and fertility, to the bride. Within the designs are written the names of the bride and the groom. On the wedding night, the groom attempts to locate the names. This exercise leads to an intimacy between the couple.

When the designs are applied, the bride is explained the facts of life by her elders. The Henna application calms her anxieties before the big day. Another popular folklore is that the darker the resulting color of Henna, the greater the love and affection amongst the couple. Also, as long as the Henna designs last, the bride does not have to do any household chores.

Henna is a plant (Lawsonia inermis L.) mainly cultivated in the hot and arid regions of India, Africa and the Middle East. Henna is obtained from the dry leaf of the Henna Plant. The powder is mixed with lemon juice & water to make a paste. The paste is, then, used to make designs using various tools. The paste dries in about 15 - 20 minutes and is, scraped off after a few hours. The reddish orange stain deepens to sienna in about 48 hours, lasting for about 2 - 3 weeks. This is also popularly known as 'Temporary Henna Tattoo'. It is safe and painless.

I hope you all enjoyed it. If you have any questions feel free to call me at (919) 851 - 4459