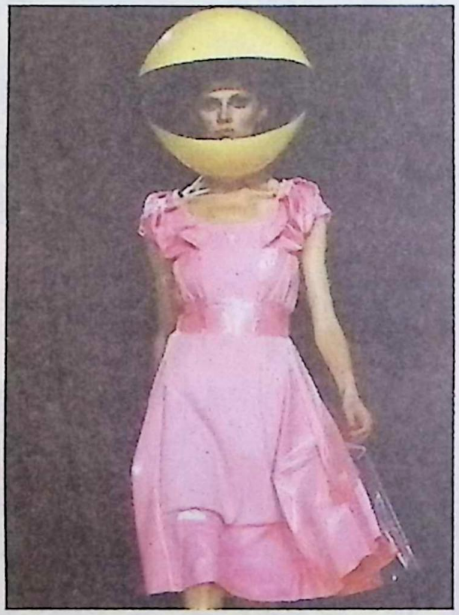
In the Name of Fashion

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Fashion is a baffling affair. One day they say long is better and a tidal wave of ankle-length dresses, skirts, *kameezes* and *kurtas*, start flooding the stores. Then they say 'short' is the way to go so hemlines are shortened (sometimes to dangerous levels) and all is peaceful in the fashionable front. But just when you were getting comfortable about exposing more *shalwar* than would be considered decent, you get the withering look of some stuffy, self-proclaimed, fashionista who will remark: 'You know short *kameezes* have long been out'. Well, what about something in between so people are kept guessing whether it is too short or too long? Another withering look.

Individuals, who are always in the loop of the trendy, hardly ever miss the bus when it comes to the 'latest' fashion. They will stick to the new rules with the tenacity of Super Glue, no matter what shape, size or age they are.

Teenagers are of course the most influenced by fashion trends as they are the ones who have the time, patience and technological know how to tap into whatever is in vogue through their relentless study of fashion magazines, websites and Bollywood and Hollywood fads.



Fashion, which is largely relegated to privileged circles, has given birth to the 'I have nothing to wear' statement despite the storm of clothes waiting to burst out from the cupboard.

But it's not always so frivolous and silly. Sometimes fashion goes quite insane and produces all kinds of bizarre phenomena. And we are not talking about the shoulder pads, sea cucumber *shalwars* and shaggy dog hairdos of the 80s. Nor are we referring to full-body tattoos, painful piercing or even oversized trousers worn around the knees, of recent times.

Having run out of new ideas to get attention, some fashion magazines have opted for morbid, dark, themes as part of their trend-setting exposes. If you think having models in bandages and casts – as if they are recovering from a horrible road accident, is in poor taste just imagine this: a photo shoot glamourizing the serial killer. Yes you heard it right. A Bangladeshi fashion magazine, that otherwise promotes some of the best in local fashion, has decided to make sociopaths, chic and attractive. As part of their Eid issue, they have included a supplement titled 'Fantasy'. In it is a series of images of pretty women in skimpy dresses – lying or sitting dead, yes DEAD, after they have been brutally murdered by a serial killer. This special 'Love to Kill' photo shoot has equally chilling captions. It characterizes the serial killer as being a man who shows no emotion, is calm, collected, even attractive, after slashing a woman's neck, strangling her with a telephone shower, cutting her wrists or just shooting her in a bar. The women are all waiting for their paramour at various places, when the killer strikes. All this may seem like scenes from 'Dexter' a highly inappropriate series, which glamourizes a psychopath who goes on killing sprees (albeit he kills all bad guys) and then gleefully does grisly things to their bodies. If by now you are nauseous with disgust and outrage, you are on the right track and may applaud yourself for being a normal, sensitive, human being. If this sort of thing appeals to you in any way do get some professional help.

At a time when we are screaming ourselves hoarse to stop violence against women it is appalling that a fashion magazine, the editor of which is a woman, would allow a photo shoot that makes serial killing, seem sexy. The editor's (a different woman from the parent magazine's editor) note tries to justify this gruesome photo feature by saying it should make people more sensitive and aware of the devilish killer instinct in them. So that they can be better people. Really. The photographs that also have insets of the parts of the body that have been assaulted, do nothing to condemn these acts. They only serve to objectify women in the grossest way and celebrate the twisted mind of a sociopath.

Eid is supposed to be a time of joy and sharing happiness. And yes fashion is part of it. But let's stick to trends that make us look good, feel good and remain reasonably good humans. ■